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SOUTH ASIA: THE SECURITY ROUTE TO COOPERATION

This paper, in focusing on the security dimension of the South Asian region, looks at the question of whether South Asia can be viewed as a region and then goes on to examine the manner in which regional cooperation can be developed. Finally, the paper deals with the two main aspects identified as critical for regional cooperation within the overall security issue-area: advanced weapons proliferation and confidence-building measures.

IDENTIFYING A SOUTH ASIAN REGION

The very notion of a South Asian region is still subject to debate and question - given the varying interpretations that exist as to what constitutes an identifiable region. Russett, for instance, focused on specific indices like homogeneity and interdependence and defined regions as "ordinary, common and practical geographical areas for which social and economic improvement programmes have been conceived, planned and undertaken".¹ Often a region is defined in terms of a sub-system or a subordinate system within an overall global system - as Cantori and Spiegel did by defining a sub-system as comprising "one or two or more geographically proximate and interacting

1. Russett, Bruce M., *International Regions and the International System*, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1967) pp. 2-5.

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states, which share in some degree common ethnic, linguistic, cultural, social and historic bonds and whose sense of identity is sometimes increased by the actions and attitudes of states external to the system".²

In relation to South Asia, on the other hand, it is clear that while the region has shared a common colonial heritage in the form of British rule, the linguistic and historic bonds of the region outside of the colonial experience are tenuous at best. The following five outstanding features of the region have important bearing on any consideration of South Asia as a distinctive identity:

1. The preponderant size and politico-military strength of India. Power in the region is not defused and, especially, after 1971 with India's involvement in the creation of Bangladesh, Indian prominence in the region has increased. The Indian nuclear explosion of 1974, its military role in Sri Lanka and the Maldives, and its efforts to gain a permanent seat within the post-bipolar UN Security Council are reflections of its political ambitions regionally and at the global level.
2. The Pakistan-India conflictual relationship - which has been one of the main factors underlying the strategic dynamics of the region, and changes within this relationship.
3. That all the states of the region share a border with India and, at one time or another, most have had a conflictual relationship with it.
4. The conflictual structure of the region has allowed extra-regional powers to play an interventionist role in the region - especially through the maintenance of their military presence in the Indian Ocean.
5. All the states of the region face a multitude of similar socio-economic problems including poverty, population growth and

2. Cantori, I.J. & Spiegel, S.L. "International Regions: A Comparative Approach to Five Subordinate Systems" *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 13, No. 4 December 1969. p. 362.

related problems of underdevelopment. In addition, most states have within their territories fissiparous ethnic movements which create problems of social cohesion internally. Also, as a result of the strategic disunity of the region, inter-state political conflicts have tended to take precedence over regional cooperation to counter problems of underdevelopment common to the region as a whole.

Within the framework of these five features, at a minimum level, South Asia can be identified as a subordinate system within Brecher's framework of the following characteristics which delineate such a system:

1. the scope is limited with the main stress being on a geographical region;
2. there are at least three actors;
3. taken together, the member states are objectively recognised by others as constituting a distinctive community, region, or segment of the global system;
4. the member states identify themselves as such;
5. the units of power are relatively inferior to units in the dominant system using a sliding scale of power or both; and
6. changes in the dominant system have greater effect upon the subordinate system than vice versa.³

Within this conceptualization the member states of SAARC are recognised by others as comprising a distinctive region - just as SAARC itself denotes the member states' recognition of this identity.

Amongst the myriad issues besetting this region then, one major issue area is that of security. The member states of SAARC have primarily inward-oriented regional threat perceptions - with India being the exception in that it sees its threat perception in terms of China as well. Rooted primarily in the historical legacy of the colonial and post-colonial era, and based upon territorial and ethnic disputes, conflictual relationships between states like India and Pakistan have been aggravated by actual wars fought.

3. Brecher, M., *The New States of Asia: A Political Analysis*, (London: 1963) p. 95.

The Pakistan-India conflictual relationship, and the manner in which it has evolved, serves as an interesting case study in order to understand the continuing disunity of this region - especially since this relationship is, in a number of ways, one of the root causes of this disunity, despite global and regional structural changes over the decades.

It has also become equally apparent that economic and social integration will come about only as a result of political motivation - as has been the case in most areas where regional cooperation and organizations for regional integration have developed, be it the EC or ASEAN. Without developing some form of mechanism for dealing with the multiple political conflicts dominating the region, SAARC can only work on the fringes of regional integration and cannot have any impact on conflict resolution.

PRESENT OPERATIONAL MILIEU AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR REGIONAL COOPERATION

Following the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the present geopolitical environments have some innate peculiarities: a) changes at the global level structures which have b) effected changes at the regional level in South Asia in relation to immediate geopolitical environments, while c) the source of threat perception for regional states in South Asia remains unaltered.

Therefore, the system is inherently unstable, especially since states with continuing hostile regional threat perceptions have to formulate their security dimensions within altered global and regional parameters. Equally important have been the psychological operational shifts that need to be discerned as a result of the end of bipolarity - and the emergence of the so-called "new world order". In the post-bipolar international structure, one can see a consistency in the pattern emerging in various regions of the world which reflects the altered global political milieu. The three most outstanding characteristics of the new global milieu are:

1. The increasing utility of military force as the US finds itself an increasingly uni-dimensional power. This has been evidenced in the Gulf crisis and Somalia.
2. With this resurgence of the viability of military solutions to conflicts, and the increasing dominance of the US within the UN organizational framework, there is also growing sense of wanting to impose external solutions in regions beset by local conflicts that tend to pose a challenge to US military preponderance. The attempt at a Palestinian-Israeli rapprochement is one example, and the US interest in Kashmir is another.
3. The resurgence of nationalism which, amongst other things, is threatening the state structures that had prevailed in the post-1945 bipolar world.

Given the primacy of military power and the tendency for greater external interventionism in regions where conflictual structures dominate, there is an urgent need for regional consensus-building. But, successful regional cooperation cannot take place unless there is an underlying politico-strategic commonality of interests. Three differing examples of successful regional cooperation, in different parts of the world, illustrate this very clearly:

1. Where it has been instigated primarily for political purposes as in the case of the ECSC from which the EEC and the EC evolved - the main rationale being to eliminate the historic threat to Europe from Germany and to end Franco-German rivalry by integrating the vital coal and steel sectors of the two countries. Thus, economic integration was initially seen as a means of dealing with a historic political conflict in Europe in order to avoid a repeat of the two World Wars. Subsequently, the move for European integration gained momentum once the countries of Western Europe perceived a greater security threat from outside the region and once they saw integration as a means of forming a politico-economic "bloc" to deal with the power of the US and the old Soviet Union. In the

early years, economic decisions were heavily influenced by political considerations [e.g. British membership and the EEC, and more recently Turkey's membership] and gradually economic integration has taken place alongside the development of a political identity for the EC expressed through the European Parliament and the European Commission on Human Rights.

2. Where regional consensus-building has apparently been motivated by socio-economic reasons, but political issues have come to predominate - as in the case of ASEAN. The main objectives are stated to be the acceleration of economic growth, social progress and cultural development and the promotion of active collaboration and mutual assistance in matters of common interest and stability of the region. Yet, even at the time of its formation, a major incentive was political - reflecting an effort to deal with the instability in the region caused by the Vietnam War, and since the American withdrawal from Vietnam, ASEAN's focus has been increasingly on political issues arising in the region - especially at the peak of the Kampuchean crisis when ASEAN focused on demanding the withdrawal of Vietnam from Kampuchea.
3. Where a group of states of roughly the same size and levels of development and sharing a common background of languages, culture, religion, historical roots and development decide to formalize and develop further an existing close relationship - as in the case of Nordic cooperation. The general objectives for Nordic cooperation were laid down in the Helsinki treaty of 1962 and at the time there were no major disputes existing amongst the Nordic states.

Thus, diverse states have achieved differing forms of regional cooperation through consensus-building, but all show the primacy of first establishing political consensus. It would be absurd to indulge in the obsession with economic utopias and accept the fallacious logic the West would have us believe — that the altered global structures have led to the

primacy of economic power in global politics at the expense of politico-military power. Even a cursory glance at global history since the Gulf War will show the falsity of such claims.

The need for South Asian states to therefore alter the focus of their cooperation agenda has become critical if this region is to preserve its evolving identity - especially with the pulls some member states, like Pakistan, have from other regions such as West and Central Asia. What is relevant now is to focus on two aspects of the security dimension within a regional context: one, on the issue of advanced weapons proliferation, and, two, on the development of mechanisms for creating confidence-building measures (CBMs) and structures for the peaceful resolution of conflicts. As Janne Nolan has pointed out, the advantage of confidence building measures is that the issue of relative military capabilities can be bypassed since the purpose is to assess intent rather than actual capability.⁴ Simultaneously, the need to create structures for the peaceful resolution of conflicts is very critical to CBMs in that numerous efforts for confidence-building and detente between India and Pakistan, for example, have collapsed in view of the resurgence of issues like Kashmir.

ADVANCED WEAPONS PROLIFERATION IN THE SOUTH ASIAN CONTEXT

One of the major problems of the prevailing approach towards the control of advanced weapons proliferation is not only its focus on technology denial but also on the drawing of a distinction between developed and developing states. The underlying assumption of such an approach is that advanced weapons proliferation is primarily the problem of the developing world and, furthermore, that such a problem can be contained through the denial of access to technology to these country by the developed world.

4. Janne Nolan, *Trappings of Power* (Washington, D.C., The Brookings Institution, 1991)

One reason which ostensibly lends credence to this view is the fact that the acquisition of advanced weapons capability, especially in relation to nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles, has not been as rapid and extensive as was feared. However, an equally valid alternative explanation is that not all developing countries have shown an interest in acquiring this capability.

In fact, one of the major drawbacks of the present efforts to control the spread of advanced weaponry has been the focus on a global framework while the targeted states define their weapons and arms control policies within regional parameters. This is true of countries like Israel, India and Pakistan.

In South Asia, the issue of weapons proliferation is primarily relevant within the Pakistan-India conflictual relationship. But, since traditionally, one of the major causes of instability in South Asia has been this relationship - with the two states going to war against each other four times: 1948 in Kashmir, the Rann of Kutch conflict in 1965, the September 1965 war and the 1971 war and the creation of Bangladesh, and each maintaining high levels of defence expenditures and large standing conventional forces, as well as being involved in efforts to develop advanced weapons capabilities in the nuclear and conventional fields - dealing with this issue becomes a basic prerequisite if regional cooperation is to evolve in any meaningful fashion.

Being the weaker of the two states, Pakistan's approach to arms control has been dominated by its regional defence and security concerns primarily in relation to India. Conventional defence has not only proved inadequate for Pakistan, it has also proved to be a heavy financial burden. Given India's qualitative and quantitative advantages in this field, Pakistan's conventional military doctrines cannot provide either a viable deterrence or defence capability.

Within the framework of this Pakistan-India relationship, the nuclear factor has in fact tended to act as a factor of stability in the region in that Pakistan does not seem driven by the same urgency in establishing a conventional arms equation with India. Nor does it suffer from heightened

insecurity in the face of India's preponderant conventional military advantage. The present status of its nuclear capability and limited missile delivery system has provided Pakistan with the opportunity to rationalize its strategic doctrines within a mix of counter-force and counter-value options. It is believed that in Summer 1990, at the height of the Kashmir insurgency, war between India and Pakistan was averted after Pakistan informed India of its nuclear capability. This basically implies that the nuclear factor has and will continue to allow the two states to keep local conflicts limited within an overall nuclear deterrence.

Since the development of missiles by these two states seems rational primarily within a nuclear context, these technologically advanced means of delivery can only lend stability to the threat environment within the region. Any arms reduction efforts in the region can only arise out of regional initiatives which in turn are feasible only when the states concerned feel their security is not being undermined.

Meanwhile, the acquisition/production of missiles, along with nuclear capability also allows India and Pakistan to cut down their huge conventional force budgets and divert scarce resources to the development sector - thereby easing some internal problems - despite the continuance of a mutual threat perception.

The major shortcoming of efforts like the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) is that they focus on the technical capabilities rather than the political will. In addition, such efforts tend to prevent examining issues from a broad perspective by compartmentalizing different aspects of the larger issue in isolated contexts. The civilian spin-offs of developing missile technology, similar to the close linkage between nuclear power and nuclear weapons, make the control of missile proliferation, pursued in isolation, almost impossible.

With the increasing diffusion of technology, space research especially is useful for a variety of nonmilitary applications such as weather forecasting, agricultural surveys, etc. - which are vital for developing countries which suffer from natural calamities with regularity.

Other than the benefits that will ensue to states developing space programmes, the case of South Asia shows that far from creating instability in the region, missile development has stabilized conflictual relationships by preventing limited military confrontations from escalating into all-out wars. Therefore, rather than focusing on measures like the MTCR, the priority should be to evolve CBMs and means for furthering the peaceful resolution of conflicts.

Specifically, within the context of Pakistan, what is perceived as the highly discriminatory approach by the US and its allies towards its nuclear programme has not only acted as a hindrance to regional non-proliferation, it has also politicized the issue. As a result of negative political interventionism, whether in the form of isolation or technology and aid deprivation, the government in Pakistan has found it difficult to renounce the acquisition of such weapons, even a government with the inclination to do so, because of anticipated domestic fall-out. In this context, by focusing almost completely upon the Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT), the USA has detracted from allowing other more viable regional non-proliferation options to evolve.

Apart from the inherent inequalities of the NPT, there are no concrete security guarantees against nuclear attack for non-nuclear weapon states which are party to the Treaty. For practical purposes, it is a dead treaty and outdated in its very definition of a nuclear-weapon state.⁵ This aspect has become even more relevant in the wake of the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the emergence of four new nuclear weapon states.

Nonproliferation Policy Initiatives - Regional Level

A prerequisite for any meaningful developments within South Asia, in the field of nonproliferation of advanced weaponry, is a perceptibly more equitable approach towards the target states. More specifically, discrimi-

5. It has a static definition whereby nuclear-weapon states are states that have exploded a nuclear device before 1 Jan. 1967-- Article IX:3.

natory policies aimed only at Pakistan will continue to hinder any real progress in this issue area. In addition, a rational starting point would be to acknowledge the nuclear-weapons capability of both India and Pakistan and seek to evolve a regional nonproliferation regime based upon this premise. Amongst the more feasible policy options would be:

1. A more viable option to the NPT, such as a regional framework for nonproliferation in South Asia. In this context, the Tlatelolco Treaty relating to Latin America as a nuclear-weapon-free-zone offers a viable model.

India has consistently objected to Pakistan's various proposals for a non-proliferation arrangement for South Asia on the grounds that the issue extended beyond the region. Indian objectives reflect first, India's desire to play the role of a regional power and, two, India's reluctance to come to a regional nonproliferation arrangement in view of China's nuclear-weapons' status.

The first aspect is consistently denied by India, but the second consideration has been voiced clearly on a number of occasions.

Again, unlike the NPT, the Tlatelolco Treaty places no time-limit on its definition of a nuclear-weapon state. It also distinguishes between nuclear-weapons and peaceful nuclear explosions, thereby allowing states the economic benefits of the latter.

Protocol I of the Tlatelolco Treaty requires, through signatures and ratification, a commitment by external states with territorial interests in the region "to undertake to apply the statute of denuclearization in respect of warlike purposes" in these territories. This protocol has been ratified by all the concerned states (Britain, USA, Netherlands) except France which has signed but not yet ratified.

Protocol II of the Tlatelolco Treaty commits nuclear-weapon states to respect fully the "denuclearization of Latin America in respect of warlike purposes" and also "undertake not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons" against parties to the Treaty. This protocol has been signed and ratified by all five nuclear-weapon states.

Since these protocols will be an integral part of a similar treaty for South Asia, India's concerns relating to China and other nuclear-weapon states will hold little validity.

2. Multi-national nuclear fuel centres and nuclear cooperation in the energy field also need to be developed.
3. In relation to technology denial, as long as conflicts persist in the region, and no mechanism to resolve them peacefully is available, the option of war and appropriate weapons capability will always be present. Technology denial can at best delay the acquisition of advanced weapons capability.

While regional efforts arising from within the region are essential to contain advanced weapons proliferation, these efforts are premised upon progress in conflict resolution. Otherwise, efforts at regional cooperation will continue to be stymied - as is the case of SAARC.

Not only is it apparent that in South Asia, the regional context predominates but it has a fallout at the global level behaviour of the states of the region. Also, in this region, arms control and disarmament are premised almost entirely on politico-military rationales and, therefore, economic and technical factors are at best secondary.

Nonproliferation Policy Initiatives - The Global Level

To bolster regional nonproliferation efforts at the global level, there needs to be a shift in the focus of the whole debate on advanced weapons proliferation. Arrangements such as the MTCR and the earlier London Suppliers Club cannot prevent proliferation in the long run. Instead, they tend to politicize issues and polarize opinions along developed-developing world parameters which in turn further hinders cooperative behaviour.

Again, the NPT at the very least needs to be revised extensively if it is to have continuing relevance beyond its present tenure. Yet, the NPT should not be taken as **the** nonproliferation regime *per se*. Instead, there should be an increasing focus on the positive disincentives that already exist, as well as those that are in the process of evolving.

1. One such measure is the revival of the IAEA's Committee on Assured Supply (CAS) which would go a long way to meeting the energy needs of developing states without increasing the prospects of nuclear-weapons proliferation.
2. International security guarantees will be central to the long-term success of any global nonproliferation efforts. Such guarantees need to focus on :
 - i) a no-first use of nuclear weapons by all the existing nuclear-weapon states;
 - ii) a commitment by nuclear weapon states not to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon states;
 - iii) a commitment by nuclear-weapon-states to intervene in support of a non-nuclear-weapon state if attacked by a nuclear-weapon state.
3. Defensive advanced conventional weapons systems need to be easily and economically accessible to developing states. Similarly, access to weapons supplies needs to be assured, since a number of developing states attempt to develop clandestine sources of supply and often uneconomical indigenous defence sectors in response to this problem.
4. While verification regimes need to be intrusive to some extent if they are to be effective, a balance needs to be maintained between the needs of these regimes and the need for states to maintain what they regard as desirable levels of security and exclusivity.

In the final analysis, negative technology denial and economic sanctions can at best have only a limited effect - and that, too, for a limited time-frame, as the case of Pakistan proves. In the long run, positive efforts to control proliferation will need to be evolved. Since politico-military factors predominate the calculations of targeted proliferator states, negative sanctions in the form of primarily economic and technological measures have a limited applicability.

Finally, discriminatory arrangements like the NPT, premised on the distinction between developed and developing states, need to be abandoned in favour of nondiscriminatory measures. For instance, if advanced weaponry is regarded as a problem, then it should not be seen merely as a problem in relation to the developing world - as if such weaponry in itself is not the issue, merely its possession by developing states makes it an issue.

Given the increasing relevance of the military factor in global politics in the wake of the Gulf War, and the use of advanced weaponry by developed states against Third World rivals, the proliferation issue needs a nondiscriminatory approach.

Linked to this is the whole issue of whether weapons control in fact merely reflects efforts to maintain the continuing rationality of war as a legitimate instrument of state policy. For as long as there is no effort to deal with the issue of war itself, states will continue to maintain their right to fight it as efficiently as possible.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION STRUCTURES and CONFIDENCE-BUILDING MEASURES (CBMs)

The linkage between containing weapons proliferation and conflict resolution, along with CBMs to lessen tensions, is only too apparent - as is the linkage of all these issues between the global and regional levels.

Global means of conflict resolution need to be strengthened. The United Nations, which in the post-bipolar system is playing an increasingly activist role in international conflicts, is unfortunately being seen as also becoming an increasingly biased actor in the system. In other words, there is a growing sense of unease with the manner in which this activist role of the UN is unfolding - more in support of US global policy, than as a neutral international actor.

The focus for conflict resolution, therefore, needs to centre on the issue-area of security - and, therefore, on CBMs in the field of arms control.

CBMs: Issue-area of advanced weaponry nonproliferation:

Confidence-building and transparency measures, some of which have already been initiated, although so far they have proven to be of limited value, can go towards reducing the likelihood of preemption. For instance, the Pakistan-India accord on non-attack on each other's nuclear facilities will ease to some degree Pakistan's fears regarding its nuclear facilities. Again, the military hot-line between the two militaries and advance information that is given out to each other regarding military exercises are developments that further stability in the region.

Conventional force reductions:

From the perspective of all the states of South Asia, except India perhaps, conventional force reductions in South Asia would greatly enhance their security perceptions since it is in this field that states like Pakistan, especially, given its India-oriented threat perception, find themselves unable to sustain either a qualitative or a quantitative balance with India. One viable example of a conventional force reduction agreement for South Asia could be based upon the 1990 Paris Treaty which lays the grounds for force reductions in Europe (CFE Treaty). This would require both India and Pakistan to thin out troop deployments along the borders as well as carry out overall troop and weapons reductions within measures instituted to achieve military transparency.

Political structures to resolve conflicts:

Of course, linked to any conventional force reductions would have to be some moves for the resolution of existing politico-territorial disputes amongst the states of the region.

Given the prevailing environment in South Asia, there is not only an increasing interlinkage between the psychological and structural dimensions of the conflictual Pakistan-India relationship, the former is increasingly aggravating the latter. This means that unless the psychological dimension is dealt with, the structural dimension of the conflict will remain inaccessible to resolution by peaceful means.

CONCLUSION

Within the above perspective, for South Asia to evolve beyond the minimal concept of a region as defined by Brecher (see above), the security framework will have to take precedence - with the security concerns of the states being given precedence. One critical aspect of this will have to be a focus on the issue of advanced weapons proliferation and a common regional policy on nuclear energy - perhaps along the lines of the European Community framework, where two nuclear-weapon states have been accommodated and a common policy on nuclear energy has evolved through EURATOM. This in effect would mean that either Pakistan and India would both support the concept of a nuclear-weapons-free-zone in South Asia on the model of the Tlatelolco Treaty, or both would accept each other's nuclear-weapons' capability and formulate a multilateral nuclear policy for the region.

However, none of this can be possible without a substantive mechanism for conflict resolution within the region, supported by CBMs. It is only with the resolution of the political conflicts of the region that substantive moves can be made towards diverting resources from military spending towards socio-economic goals and increased productivity.