Introduction
The devastating attacks on the United States by terrorist groups in September 2001 gave a grim example of the new challenges of security. Since the early 1990s the debate on security has underlined that traditional concepts of military security have to be replaced by a more comprehensive approach.¹ The likelihood that states will be threatened by military conquest diminished rapidly after the end of the Cold War. The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, small arms and light weapons, the networks of international terrorism, drug and human trafficking, and cross-border problems like migration and environmental degradation replaced the classical threat of a military intervention. More and more parts of the population in both developed and developing countries felt discriminated by the constraints of economic globalisation and the social change involved. The debate on Asian values, the resurgence of religious fundamentalism and the growing militancy of ethnic groups in many parts of the world illustrate these developments. This
new security scenario reinforced the tendencies towards multilateral cooperation that can be observed since the end of the Second World War.

Since the 1950ies, Europe became the main focus for the theoretical debate on the prospects and problems of regional cooperation. But given the extent of its institutions and the degree of supranationality that European nation states transferred to the EU Commission, the European Union (EU) is more the exception than the rule when compared to regional organizations like ASEAN or SAARC. It has often been mentioned that different structural preconditions will limit the practical relevance of the EU experience for regions like South Asia.²

It seems, therefore, to be more suitable to look at institutions in Europe that have more common characteristics with regional organisations like SAARC. Beside the Council of Europe, one of the most prominent institutions is the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) that developed from the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) and the Helsinki process in the mid-1970s. In the following I will give, first, a short historical outline of the different mechanisms that shape regional cooperation in Europe. Secondly, I will describe in short the
process of institutionalisation of security cooperation in Europe. Finally, I will look at the relevance of the OSCE for South Asia and SAARC.

1. Between Supranationalism and Intergovernmentalism: Regional Cooperation in Europe

Regional cooperation in Europe was shaped by the experiences of the Second World War and the Cold War. The trauma of the Second World War made it clear for Western European governments that only closer collaboration between nation-states could overcome national antagonisms in order to prevent another war in Europe. The trend towards cooperation was further strengthened by the confrontation between the U.S. and the Soviet Union during the Cold War. The 'iron curtain' that divided Europe had ambivalent consequences because it divided and unified the region at the same time. In both Eastern and Western Europe it initiated a process of integration that was guided by the endeavour for economic reconstruction, political collaboration, and common defence.

In Western Europe, various approaches towards cooperation emerged that were guided by different principles. The development of the European Community (EC) combined the principles of supranationality and intergovernmentalism, whereas The Council of Europe or the European Free Trade
Area (EFTA) followed the traditional approach of intergovernmental cooperation. With the treaty of the *European Coal and Steel Community* in 1951, the core of the European Community was created. The Treaties of Rome (1957) provided the legal basis for a partial transfer of national sovereignty to supranational institutions especially in the economic field. At the same time, the EC had to compete with the members of EFTA that followed an intergovernmental approach towards economic cooperation. Since the EC turned out to be more attractive, most countries of EFTA have joined the EC in the meantime. In the political field the EC member states followed a new approach in order to overcome the antagonistic politics of national interests. With the foundation of the European Commission in 1967 an independent supranational institution that was not committed to national interests but to the promotion of a European identity was created for the first time.

The development of the EC has to be regarded as a process that was shaped by the permanent tension between supranationalism and intergovernmentalism. Supranationalism refers to the legal transfer of national sovereignty in certain areas to independent institutions beyond the nation-state. These institutions were not established to follow national interests but to pursue the goal of integration.
Intergovernmentalism describes the bargaining process between governments in order to find compromises between their different national interests. Supranationality became the most important principle in the economic field, whereas foreign policy remained in the realm of intergovernmentalism. Both principles require different forms of decision-making and institutions, so that the EU can be characterized as being a process rather than a fixed institution.

Beside economic and political cooperation, Western countries also strengthened their military collaboration. The NATO, established in 1949, became the most prominent organisation, whereas the attempts to create an independent European defence organization failed in the early 1950s. But NATO was dominated by the U.S. and included countries like Canada, Turkey and Norway that did not belong to the EC. Political, economic and military collaboration in Western Europe took place in different institutions with different member states creating a dense system of interlocking institutions between Western European and North America.

A similar process could be observed in Eastern Europe. But in contrast to Western Europe, the dominance of the Soviet Union was much more obvious in the military, economic and political field. The Council for Mutual Economic Assistance and the Warsaw Treaty Organization followed basically the
interests of the Soviet Union. In Western Europe, the United States dominated NATO in security and military matters, but the EC became an equal partner and competitor in political and economic affairs.

2. The Institutionalisation of Security Cooperation in Europe

As mentioned before, the Cold War did not only divide Europe, but also helped to unify the continent. The Council of Europe established in 1948 was the first attempt to create a common European institution. The massive economic involvement of the Marshall Plan by the United States aimed at the inclusion of Eastern European countries in the beginning. But these attempts failed when the Soviet Union began to support communist regimes in Eastern Europe.

It was the most horrible scenario of the Cold War, the nuclear overkill, that finally led to negotiations on arms reduction and disarmament between the superpowers, which also included European countries. Hence, the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) that started in 1973 brought not only the Superpowers but all European countries from East and West to sit at a single negotiation table. The Helsinki Declaration of August 1975 included three ‘baskets’ on security, economics and human rights and
communication. This kind of institution building helped to tame the Cold War in Europe. The so-called ‘Helsinki process’ offered a platform for regular consultation among the East and West on security, economic and human rights issues. The Helsinki Conference was followed by a series of follow-up conferences that helped to institutionalise various confidence building measures (CBMs) like observation of military manoeuvres. The success of the CSCE is often attributed to its conferences that were more flexible than an organization with hierarchical bureaucracies.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the crisis in former Yugoslavia, it became obvious that a better institutional structure was required to cope with the new security challenges. The CSCE became the central framework for security in Europe. One of its most important characteristics was the Charter of Paris of 1990. It included the commitment of all signatory states towards democracy, the protection of human rights and the rights of minorities. In 1995 the CSCE was transformed into the Organisation on Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). With 55 states it includes all the successor states of the former Soviet Union and is one of the rare institutions that really comprises at least the northern part of the globe. The OSCE established several institutions, introduced mechanisms in order to regulate bilateral relations
and offered different approaches for conflict prevention and conflict resolution.³

The tendency to institutionalise security cooperation can also be observed within the EU. With the Maastricht Treaty of 1994, the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) became one of its main pillars. The Home Ministers agreed to intensify their collaboration in order to fight trans-national crime. The crisis in former Yugoslavia forced the EU to start thinking about reviving the Western European Union (WEU) as the core of a Western European army independent from NATO.

3. The Relevance of OSCE for South Asia

The OSCE and SAARC, as South Asia’s one and only regional organisation, share common characteristics. The member states of both institutions have an equal status, and decisions can only be made on the basis of consensus. In contrast to more sophisticated organizations like the EU, decisions are therefore politically but not legally binding. Moreover, OSCE and SAARC share a number of common principles like sovereign equality, territorial integrity, non-intervention in internal affairs and respect for human rights. Even if not all points are listed in the SAARC Charter, like the respect for human rights, they can be found in the
constitutions of the respective member states. The organisational structure also shows several similarities. The summits between the Heads of State are regarded as the highest body, followed by a Council of Foreign Ministers and a Standing Committee of Foreign Secretaries. The OSCE also took some organisational structures from other institutions like the EU. The chairmanship rotates on an annual basis, with the respective Foreign Minister acting as Chairman-in-Office (CiO). Together with the previous and the succeeding chairmen they act as the troika, similar to the EU.

The Charter of SAARC aims at a broader framework for development whereas the OSCE is more focussing on security issues. The main assumption of the OSCE is "that co-operation can bring benefits to all participating States, while insecurity in one State or region can affect the well-being of all." This citation from the recent OSCE handbook can also be used as a good description for the various domestic and regional conflicts that plague South Asian countries since many years and that contribute to the region's image of "chronic instability."

The nuclear tests of India and Pakistan in 1998 have added a nuclear dimension to the crisis scenario of the region. Beside the nuclear question, most conflicts in South Asia and
the OSCE region can be traced back to similar roots like minority issues, human rights violations and the quests for democratic governance. The OSCE tackled these issues directly by establishing institutions like 'The Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR)' and 'The High Commissioner on National Minorities.' The main task of the ODIHR is the promotion of democratic elections, to support the consolidation of democratic institutions and to contribute to early warning and conflict prevention. The High Commissioner on National Minorities mainly focuses on ethnic conflicts that became a major source of violence in Europe after 1990. The challenges of violent ethnic conflicts made it necessary to deviate from the consensus principle. In 1992 the principle of "consensus minus one" was introduced in reaction to the gross violations against CSCE commitments by member states in former Yugoslavia.

One of the rare examples of cooperation in the field of security is the SAARC Regional Convention on Suppression of Terrorism that was signed during the Third SAARC Summit in Kathmandu in November 1987. It was ratified by all member states and came into force in August 1988. A SAARC Terrorist Offences Monitoring Desk (STOMD) was established in Colombo to disseminate information about the terrorist incidence, tactics, strategies and methods. Because of the
different perceptions of terrorism it is not possible up to now to allow this institution to function adequately.

In contrast to SAARC, the OSCE developed a broad-based ‘toolbox’ in order to deal with conflicts or with domestic situations that can escalate into national or regional conflicts. They include fact-finding missions on a short term basis, missions for long term conflict prevention and crisis management, personal representatives of the Chairman-in-Office (CiO), ad hoc steering groups, mechanisms for peaceful settlement of disputes and peacekeeping activities, although those have not been used yet.\textsuperscript{5}

The relevance of OSCE for South Asia is limited by a number of factors that are inherent in the structure of SAARC like the dominance and asymmetry of India. The SAARC Charter excludes bilateral and contentious issues from the agenda. The ongoing tension between India and Pakistan over Kashmir has therefore prevented a major breakthrough in regional cooperation. The insistence that the “core issue” has to be resolved first before any substantial progress in regional collaboration can be made is not supported by the experiences from regional organisations. The key to successful regional cooperation in Europe as well as in Asia seems to be that cooperation started in the areas of common interests rather
than with contentious issues. Until today, members of the OSCE and ASEAN have a number of long-standing bilateral conflicts. But these conflicts did not hamper the progress of regional cooperation.

As mentioned before, the countries of the OSCE and South Asia share a similar framework of comprehensive security. Security cooperation implies that the countries involved agree on common principles. In the following, I will not deal with CBMs in the military field nor with economic cooperation. First, this question has already been dealt with even in the South Asian context. India and Pakistan have already implemented some military CBMs, but the relations between the two countries have not yet improved. Secondly, regional cooperation is normally associated with economic development. But experiences from regional organisations in many parts of the developing world show that the economic impact is normally over-estimated. All the South Asian countries face the constraints of integrating into the world market. Economic cooperation in the SAARC/SAPTA framework will be necessary, but regional cooperation cannot act as a substitute for sound domestic policies. Finally, the role of the media and communication has always been regarded as an important sector in order to overcome hostile stereotypes. But the role of the media has already found its place within the
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SAARC framework. I will, therefore, concentrate my arguments on political issues because the major security problems for South Asian countries emerge from internal rather than external challenges. From this point of view, issues like democracy, human rights and peacekeeping can be adopted from the OSCE framework.

3.1. Democracy

After the democratic transition in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal between 1988 and 1991, South Asia can claim to be the biggest democratic region in the world despite the military coup in Pakistan in October 1999. Despite widespread poverty and contrary to theoretical debates that economic development is regarded as a prerequisite for democracy, democratic principles have taken root in the region. Even if countries like Bhutan or the Maldives are still far away from democratic governance, the international pressure to establish it will increase in the years to come. It may not be possible to amend the Charter of SAARC with the commitment towards democratic values. Nevertheless the democratic governments in the region should envisage a closer political cooperation in order to deepen the awareness for democratic values.

The OSCE established the “Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights in Warsaw”. Areas of cooperation can include, for instance, regular election
observer missions by SAARC countries. Moreover, training courses can be offered for election observers or election monitoring groups that should include both government as well as non-governmental organisations. A closer collaboration between the Election Commissions would be another interesting field despite the different electoral systems. All election commissions face similar challenges like scarce resources, problems of voter identification, problems of security, voter education and so on. The recent introduction of the 17th amendment to the Constitution of Sri Lanka seems to have opened a new chapter in the independence and competence for national Election Commissions in the region. It remains to be seen whether the power over the bureaucracy and the police can be effectively used for the sake of holding free and fair elections. Regional collaboration in democratic governance should help increase the awareness for democratic principles. To introduce common values like the commitment to democratic principles, as the OSCE did, would mean, on the other side, to introduce some kind of sanctions if democratically elected governments are toppled by the military.

3.2. Human Rights

A second area of cooperation could be human rights which became more important on the international agenda. The common interests between the SAARC countries seem to
be even more obvious than in the field of democracy. Nearly all governments have signed international declarations on human rights and have respective articles in their national constitutions. Again it would be useful to embrace these common norms in the Charter of SAARC. National human rights commission should be established in all member states, if this is not the case already. There should be a regular exchange of information on human rights violations. Common missions should be established to investigate into violations in the respective member countries. Corruption and assaults of the police force offer another arena of human rights violations. Many countries face the problem of rule by law rather than rule of law. Here non-state actors have an important role to play while monitoring the activities of the law enforcing authorities in order to prevent human rights violations.

Following the example of the OSCE, the introduction of a High Commissioner on National Minorities would be an interesting step. One of his main goals is to identify ethnic tensions that might escalate into domestic or regional conflicts thereby endangering peace and security. He is regarded as "an instrument of conflict prevention at the earliest possible stage."

3.3. Conflict Mediation and Peacekeeping

Conflict mediation and peacekeeping is a third major area for security cooperation in the OSEC. The OSCE has
introduced several mechanisms for conflict mediation but does not have a record in peacekeeping up until now. The mechanisms include, for instance, fact-finding missions by a group of eminent persons from inside and outside the region. This should act as an early warning system before domestic conflicts spill over to neighbouring countries. Such a group can pave the way for negotiations between the central government and rebel groups.

In the domestic context cooperation between the police is another interesting field. Terrorism as well as drug and human trafficking are becoming matters of regional and international concern. The Maastricht Treaty of the European Union has acknowledged the need for closer cooperation in order to fight international crime. In ethnic conflicts the creation of a South Asian Police Force can monitor the ceasefire between the conflicting parties. Many South Asian countries have a long record of peacekeeping missions in the framework of the UN. Given this reputation it should also be possible to act within the region.

4. Prospects for Security Cooperation

In contrast to the EU, organisations like the OSCE seem to be much more suited to give new ideas for regional organisations like the SAARC. Both organisations favour the principle of inter-governmental cooperation and decision-
making by consensus. They also follow a similar approach of comprehensive security. Nevertheless, the differences between both organisations are still obvious, especially the dominance of India, as the political, economic, and military centre of South Asia. Economic cooperation was the centrepiece for the success of the EU. The present economic situation of most developing countries and their experiences with economic collaboration have raised doubts whether this strategy can simply be replicated. Cooperation in the field of politics and security seem to be much more decisive. They create the framework in which economic activities and foreign investment can flourish. The comparison with Southeast Asia and the development of ASEAN before 1997 clearly underline this argument. Despite the sensitive situation in South Asia where national, regional and international levels of conflict are closely interconnected, there seems to be scope for collaboration.

The starting points should be the norms and values shared by most countries in the region, like the commitment to democracy and human rights. They seem to overarch different religious values like Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism that have entered the political arena and the constitutions in many countries. At the same time, this mixture of indigenous value systems with western forms of democracy, illustrate that
cooperation between cultures rather than the "clash of civilisations" seems to be feasible.

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Endnotes


5 For an overview see OSCE Handbook, pp. 42-43.


7 Langhammer and U. Hiemenz, Regional Integration Among Developing Countries; Tübingen, 1990.


9 See OSCE Handbook, p. 93.