I. Introduction

The People's Republic of China (PRC) is often perceived as an authoritarian state of sorts, ruled by a single party, the Chinese Communist Party, with dual image as a 'developing nation' and as a 'world power'—an up-and-coming hegemon. It also offers contrasting signals in its foreign policy position, stressing self-image as being "firm on principles but pragmatic" (The Hindu, 18 May 2001; Bessho, 99: 28, 31-32, 36), representing a complex mixture of realism and idealism. Officially it remains a socialist country, though no longer a 'bulwark of socialism' (Kalam, 96). But some still project the PRC largely "as a resentful, disruptive nation willing, at times, to be at loggerheads with the international community" (Bessho, 99: 27).

However, China deeply cherishes an atmosphere of stability and growth in order to overcome its lingering perception as a backward country or a sleeping giant, working its way to convert itself as "wealthy and strong" (fu qiang).
Indeed, the 1993 constitution of China has outlined the notion of *fu qiang* as its national goal, a country that is "a responsible world power working for stability" (Bessho, 99: 27, 32). Keeping in line with this policy objective the Chinese leadership articulates the country’s foreign policy and offers widely variant levels of expressions and moves, ranging from 'constructive cooperation', 'never be superpower or seek hegemony', ‘forever be good neighbor, a good partner and a good friend’ and then extending to a role perception as ‘an equal partner in multilateral institutions.’ Beijing also professes at times to build ‘strategic partnership’ with some of the major powers as far apart as Russia, India, and the U.S. (The Daily Star, 14 May 2001; Bessho, 99: 28-30, 37). It wishes also to set aside the image of an enigmatic revolutionary power, an irrational actor or as a possible strategic adversary, being fully committed to new power equilibrium in international relations that would be peaceable and perhaps multipolar (Kalam, 96).

Any analytical perspective of the cooperative moves of China in such complex setting of its foreign policy articulation and the resulting interacting behavior is a difficult proposition, given the continuing misperception concerning PRC’s world outlook. Methodologically, it has always been difficult to diagnose the underlying concerns of Chinese foreign policy, as China, though no longer attires the old communist lenses, still
remains quite secretive in its decision-making and still appears not very articulate about the track and direction of its foreign policy. Indeed, a distinctive feature of Chinese foreign policy discourse is that its official 'propositions', 'statements', or 'judgments' quite often present its worldview or strategic-security vision in dialectic fashion, offering concepts that are not fixed, or at best appear temporal in character (Despande, 99: 111-112). For analysts looking for pattern of interacting behavior such a security or foreign policy discourse does not offer quite congenial milieu.

In the backdrop of such complex setting of PRC's internal foreign policy formulation and external manifestation of its behavior, the paper considers the evolving Chinese vision of cooperative policy in terms of confidence building measures (CBMs) and argues that the PRC is committed towards cooperative relationships based on CBMs with its South Asian neighborhood, with India to be particular, overcoming the decades of mutual rigidity and hostility. To this end, the paper seeks conceptual light from the Chinese vision of cooperation (section II), and then highlights the generally evolving nature of cooperative ends of Chinese foreign policy internationally (section III). The Sino-South Asian cooperative relationships are then assessed in the context of similar developments elsewhere, focusing on Sino-Indian (section IV), and, finally,
the changing nature of Chinese cooperative policy based on CBMs in the new century are addressed (section V). The conclusions sums up the findings and offers prognosis for policy rethinking and scholarly reflection.

It is pertinent, first of all, to bring together the related conceptual ideas so that China's overall cooperative policies generally and the CBMs, in particular, are understood in right angle before the foreign policy behavior or the interacting aspects of its security relationships are analyzed and placed in their proper perspective.

II. Cooperation and CBMs: International Context and Chinese Vision

International cooperation for both security and economic purposes dates back to the early evolving stages of modern nation-states, but cooperation for regionalism and subregionalism at the conceptual level may be viewed as more recent development in international relations. Considered phenomenologically, it may find its roots to efforts in Europe since the late 1940s that expanded through the 1950s-1990 from Customs Union, and Coal and Steel Community, then on to Economic Community and, finally, to European Union (EU).

Theoretically, the European cooperative effort is projected as a federalist-structural model, as often articulated by structural
theorists. Structural theory perceives states as unitary actors concerned with survival and/or projection of power in an international system preoccupied with positional advantage. The conceptual frame, models and paradigms of various order, articulated by functionalist and/or neo-functionalist schools of thought that largely originate from western liberal-bourgeois literature and experiences (Waltz, 79; Mearsheimer, 90: 5-56; Schmitter, 69; Hansee, 67; Haas and Schmitter, 64; Haas, 58), may not fully correspond to socialist China's thinking on pursuing its relations internationally or with its Asian neighbors. Until 1970s China was committed to 'class war,' the notion of CBMs did not develop until the mid 1970s, and hence it attached little importance cooperative or confidence-building theories of western origin (Liping, 97: 16)

Later, however, being concerned about the evolving global power hierarchy and structure of relations among the major powers in the Asia-Pacific region, China saw the kind of ramifications they are likely to have on her status or on the developmental journey of her people. There is deep concern in China about aspirations for power dominance internationally, the fear of accidental wars and conflict escalation in strife-ridden region, the uncertainty and instability arising from ethnic, territorial, and religious contradictions and disputes, and about proliferation of nuclear weapons and escalation of
arms-missile race that are likely to cast a shadow over the security of the region as well as on its own security and its aspirations for national reunification. China views its Asia-Pacific neighborhood as the most dynamic region in terms of economic development and wishes to fully exploit post-Cold War peaceful environment for interdependent and cooperative development. Hence it has evinced a keen interest in CBMs and has been experiencing a process of gradually deepening its knowledge on significance of CBMs while framing policy of reforms and openness as well as shaping of its external relations (Liping, 1997: 15-17).

It is known that China has a profound interest in regional and subregional cooperation for development and growth, as well as in conflict avoidance, though not always such cooperation has been formalized in cooperative structures. Beijing's membership of the wider regional entities like the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) are indicative of its eagerness as an active participant in cooperative engagement for both economic and security purposes. Its relations with East Asian neighbors, such as South Korea, are based on the same premises of cooperation and development. Investment, capital flow and transfers of technology and management skill and know-how are the basic interests. Not only did the PRC benefit
from investments and technology transfer from countries in East and Southeast Asia but also, in its turn, has made investments in subregional growth projects in Southeast Asia.

Indeed, China has its own unique experience with some modified structure mechanism of growth where there was no large structural entity for coordination and no overt effort to superimpose decisions. Such cooperative effort started in the 1980s by successful growth endeavor in subregions of the South China Sea, in what popularly known as growth triangle (GT), manifesting in the entity of Southern China Growth Triangle (SCGT). In this subregional entity China itself served through deregulation, economic liberalization and reforms as the main magnet to draw the neighboring Chinese territories of Hong Kong, Macao and disaffected territory of Taiwan into closer but informal economic relations with the mainland (Kalam, 2001).

On the other hand, CBMs as may be seen in the context of Sino-Asian experiences have roots to earlier history, when compared in the frame of European and western experiences. The western CBMs started with Helsinki Process of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) and are documented in its Final Act of 1975. It was further expanded by the Document of the Conference on Disarmament in Europe held at Stockholm in 1986). In Asia
somewhat similar process, though not quite seen as part of the same institutional process or articulated as such, had started much earlier. References are made to Indo-Pak Joint Defense Council of 1948, the Sino-Indian *Panchasheel* Agreement of 1954, and the Indo-Pak Simla Agreement of 1971 in this connection (Singh, Nov 97: 6; July 1997: 1; Liping, 1997: 16).

Secondly, there are characteristic traits or features of China’s foreign policy that make their foreign behavior distinctive from others. For, as already said, China still being a ‘socialist country’, at least officially, the Chinese theoreticians and policymakers look for their endogenous explanation for policy formulation, policy outlook and/or policy change. Initially, Beijing held a negative view of the western model of CBMs, perceiving that the process was the manifestation of an appeasement policy towards Soviet hegemony. Gradually, it experienced a process of deepening its understanding of the concept CBMs and saw the CBMs as one of the important means of maintaining peace and stability (Liping, 97: 16). From the conceptual vantage point, the Chinese, perhaps more than their Asian nations, see the CBMs as part of conflict management mechanisms (CMMs), conflict avoidance means (CAMs) or CBMs.

The foregoing terminologies may indeed represent more pragmatic concerns of state policy at some points in time,
representing somewhat different concerns than what seem conceivably inherent in the western model of CBMs. They may perhaps also be more accommodative of the views, image and perception of self- and of others, and pursuit of national self-interests as well as those of others. Inherent also in the terms may be (a) the art or skill of the state’s management or a spirit of accommodation so as to (b) avoid making accusations and counter-accusations on each others’ past actions (c) make mutual compromises and concessions geared towards their future course of normalization, and, finally, take steps to increase transparency and cooperation thus making each others actions more predictable as well as in harmony to the pursuit of their common interests (Zhengjia, 12 Nov 1997: 1-2; Singh, Nov 97: 5-6).

Thirdly, unlike western/European CBMs which are multilateral in nature and almost circumscribed by global factors and often dictated by bloc leaders, Chinese CBMs have been largely bilateral in nature (Singh, November 1997: 7), though Beijing seems also increasingly inclined to the view some kind of multilateral CBMs may also be in offing in the Asia-Pacific region, as efforts continue to build up since 1993 through mechanisms such as APEC and ARF (Liping, 97: 34-35).

Fourthly, unlike Europe, where the fear of imminent and total destruction from nuclear war was so much a factor in
making CBMs a success, no such fear has provided even any stimulant to the process of Asian or Sino-Indian CBMs. The Asian CBMs tend to operate in low-intensity conflict frame that continue to be major irritant amongst many Asian nations (Singh, Nov 97: 7).

Fifthly, unlike European experiments where well-defined boundaries form a fundamental element of their CBM framework, in the Sino-Asian context, their boundaries are generally ill defined, porous and pose as a major irritant in their inter-state relations. This means that seeking resolutions of problems like border disputes form a major objective of CBMs (Singh, November 97: 7).

Sixthly, while western processes and paradigms are generally specific in nature, CBMs in Sino-Asian context appear more broad-based, and are not confined to evolving chemistry amongst political leadership and armed forces alone but also includes larger undertakings like state-sponsored people-to-people, aiming at evolving closer relations between the larger social elite on both sides (Singh, Nov 97: 7-8).

Lastly, the Sino-Asian CBMs have occurred in a somewhat asymmetric context, i.e. lacking equality of power or status involving China versus other Asian nations, whereas
western experiments of CBMs occurred in a broad balance of power or symmetry involving the potential power enemies and/or power bloc components (Singh, Nov 97: 8).

III. CBMs and the Evolving Chinese Foreign Relations

Geographically China constitutes as the world’s third largest country, with a long coastline, uniquely sharing boundaries with as many as eleven countries of the neighboring Asian subregions such as Southeast Asia (Burma, Laos and Vietnam), South Asia (Bhutan, India, Nepal and Pakistan), West Asia (Afghanistan) and Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan). In addition, it also shares borders in its own subregion of East Asia with North Korea as well as with Mongolia and Russia. It also shares coastal borders with most Southeast Asian countries—though it has disputes with most of them over possession of Nansha islands in South China Sea—and with South Korea and Japan, with the latter having disputes over the Senkaku islands.

For appraising Chinese perspective of CBMs and cooperation in South Asia, it is imperative to address how the Chinese CBMs evolved over time affecting PRCs relations with the neighboring subregions and with the major powers of the Asia-Pacific region, including the leading power players such as USSR/Russia, the U.S., and Japan.
The Sino-Soviet/Russian schism or lack of mutual trust has been the most acute and persistent problem confronting China in its foreign policy formulation. There is both historical and ideological content in the bilateral disputes. For China the establishment of CBMs has been part of an evolving foreign policy process vis-à-vis other countries, the process that started in the 1950s in terminating regional wars, such as the Korean war, and to prevent newly emerging armed conflicts. In the first category features the “Military Armistice Agreement” (27 July 1953) that entailed the establishment of a demilitarized zone (DMZ), withdrawal of military forces, cessation of forces and weapons reinforcement, setting up of a military armistice commission and of neutral nations supervisory commission, high-level political conference etc. All this played an important role in preventing large-scale conflict in the Korean peninsula in the coming decades (Liping, 97: 18-21). Following Sino-Soviet border clashes in early 1969, Beijing came out with official statements on the maintenance of status quo, a position reaffirmed in the level of a meeting between Prime Minister Zhou Enlai and his Soviet counterpart Alexei Kosygin in September 1969 on a temporary agreement for maintaining the status quo on the border, preventing armed conflicts and separating their military forces in disputed areas (Liping, 97: 21-22).

China also unilaterally withdrew its forces along the Sino-Soviet border in the 1980s and early 1990s as part of
policy change under CAM or CMM, though the latter was part of a bilateral de-escalatory process, but subsequently embraced Soviet troops withdrawal from Afghanistan and Mongolia, reduction of Soviet military presence in the Sino-Soviet border region and impelling Vietnam to withdraw its military forces from Cambodia—eliminating thus “three obstacles” hindering bilateral relations.

There was also a bilateral summit held in Beijing in May 1989 that marked a full normalization of Sino-Soviet relations. Subsequent meetings of the working groups of the two countries led to the signing of in April 1990 in Moscow the “Agreement on the Guidelines of Mutual Reduction of Military Forces in the Border Region: and on “Building Confidence in the Military Sphere across the Border”—the first CBM between the two countries. This signing of the “Agreement on the Eastern Section of the Sino-Soviet Border” also followed (Liping, 97: 22-24).

The process was carried forward by exchange of visits of military and civilian officials and dignitaries of the two countries, as well as by top-level exchanges of visits, joint communiqués, and adherence to the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence even after the disintegration of the USSR, and cemented by a number of significant accords.

All the foregoing accords led to a strengthening of mutual trust and establishing friendly relations between the two countries, facilitating regular dialogues at every level to resolve disputes through peaceful means. The mechanisms included boundary negotiations on the basis of the existing treaties, extend bilateral consultations, reduce armed forces in the border regions, strengthen trust and security in the border region, engage in normal military exchanges so as to strengthen mutual trust and cooperation in the military sphere, exchange military observers in the border region, avoid large-
scale military maneuvers within 100 kilometers of the border, prior notification of any troop movement, "hotlines" communication between the regional military headquarters of the two countries, promote regional peace and stability, accelerate multilateral cooperation, curb arms race, strengthen non-proliferation regimes (Liping, 97: 25-27).

The Sino-US CBMs also developed since the early 1970s in the backdrop of their common confrontation against perceived Soviet hegemonism. In the 1970s their mutual relations were largely political and diplomatic, leading to the establishment of full diplomatic ties, but in the 1980s their strategic relations developed to the military level, though often marked by curve and contradictions. Common interests spread to issues such as enhanced beneficial economic and trade bilaterally, cooperation on regional security, preventing and resolving regional conflicts promoting security mechanisms, and halting the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and finally, promote global cooperation on issues such as environmental degradation, the prohibition of drug trafficking, and so forth. Beginning in September 1993 the two sides worked through CBM mechanisms such as high level military exchanges, enhanced military transparency, exchanges of military academic units, coordination and cooperation on preventing proliferation of weapons of mass destruction as
well as on defense conversion, reciprocal visits of naval warships.

Similar process of establishing bilateral CBMs has also been pursued with neighboring Japan in the context of the Senkaku islands (Liping, 197: 30-33). China has also reached boundary and security-related CBM accords with its neighboring countries like Laos and Vietnam. It has also been pursuing more active and energetic policy of multilateral cooperation, with mechanisms such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), committing itself to a cooperative security strategy as well as in the APEC. Even on sensitive nuclear issues, China as a responsible nuclear power was the first to make a pledge of no-first-use (NFU) of nuclear weapons and became parties to bilateral accords since 1992 committing to NFUs of nuclear weapons, non-use, and non-threat-of-use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear states and in nuclear-free-zones (Liping, 97: 28-35).

IV. Sino-South Asian Relations and the Developing CBMs

In South Asia China is a direct neighbor, having common borders with Bhutan, India, Nepal and Pakistan. Neighbors like Bhutan, Nepal and Pakistan, though are direct neighbors have no longstanding disputes with China that require management
skill under CBMs. Other countries like Bangladesh and Sri Lanka figuring only as 'neighbor's neighbor' have no contentious issues bilaterally and/or regionally with China, though both may feature as a strategic necessity in Chinese CMMs.

From a notional point of view, CBMs in the context of Chinese foreign policy in South Asia features largely in references to the lingering contentious claims over 3,380-kilometers long Sino-Indian border and their lack of mutual trust. Apart from difficult conflicting bilateral dimensions, there may be some spillover effects of other issues, like Kashmir or arms/technology sales to Pakistan or to Nepal that may have ramifications for Sino-Indian bilateral pair because of the persistent mistrust and mutual suspicions between the two neighbors and their overlapping aspirations for regional leadership. The Sino-Indian CBMs, like the accords of 1993 and 1996, largely contributed to changing the bilateral perception or political landscape. Before being drawn into the details of the two accords it may be useful to have a backward journey to see the changing nature of the Chinese CBMs vis-à-vis India.

The earliest of such efforts, viewed as CAMs (Zhengjia, Nov 1997: 2), were Premier Zhou Enlai's letter (11 November
1959) to Jawaharlal Nehru and then his trip to India. In several proposals and CBMs China suggested maintenance of *status quo* of the borders, not to send armed personnel to the contentious areas, ordering their respective frontier guards to withdraw 20 kilometers from the line of actual control (LAC) in order to maintain peace and tranquility in the border areas and to avoid further border clashes. India, so was the perception, having been preoccupied with its ‘forward policy’ vis-à-vis China did not positively respond to the Chinese feelers (Zhengjia, Nov 97: 2; Liping, 97: 27). The Indian specialists, however, saw the argument of an Indian ‘forward policy’ as a case of misperception and tended to view that China itself was bent on “teaching India a lesson” (Singh, Nov 97: 6). This kind of mutual divergent perception inevitably led to the large-scale conflict between the two neighborly powers in October 1962. China not only repeated the CAM offer both during and after the border 1962 conflict but also in phases unilaterally ordered a ceasefire and then withdrew its troops within 20 kilometers of the line of actual control (LAC) that existed on 11 November 1959, helping to defuse tension and further escalation of the conflict (Zhengjia, Nov 97: 2; Liping, 97: 27).

Normalization of Sino-Indian relations started in the late 1970s. In 1981 both the countries resumed their official talks. China then proposed that both the sides should first restore
and develop bilateral economic-trade and cultural relations, to create a congenial climate for an eventual "settlement of the boundary question on a fair, reasonable and mutually acceptable basis," given the complicated and sensitive history of existing territorial dispute between the two countries and the necessity of building mutual confidence for successfully tackling it. As India did not respond positively to the Chinese proposition and insisted on a "Parallel Policy" i.e. resolve boundary question and improve bilateral relations simultaneously, progress of bilateral relations remained stalemated until 1987 (Zhengjia, Nov 97: 3-4).

Political winds radically changed following the landmark visit—after a gap of 34 years—by Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi to Beijing in December 1988 when both sides agreed to develop and expand the bilateral relations in various fields, pending a final settlement of the boundary question. Momentum towards a long-term and steady good-neighborly relationship continued since then. Two separate Joint Working Groups (JWGs) began negotiations, one on the border issue, and the other on CAMs. Exchange of high level visits emerged as the main mechanism facilitating strengthened understanding. Exchange of defense-related personnel began in 1990 and 1992, when the serving officials of the India's National Defense College and China's National Defense
University exchanged visits. The Gandhi visit was reciprocated by Chinese Premier Li Peng's visit to India in December in 1991. An inter-governmental agreement, along with a Consular Convention, was then signed on the re-establishment of Consulates-General in Shanghai and Bombay. Other agreements included a Memorandum of the Resumption of Border Trade, and a MoU between the Departments of Space of the two countries on Cooperation in Peaceful Applications of Space Science and Technology. Military-to-military dialogue was initiated by the Indian Defense Minister Sharad Power's July 1992 visit (Zhengjia, Nov 97: 4; Liping, 97: 28; Singh, July 97: 2).

From then onward exchange of top level of visits and visits of the defense dignitaries and officials became a routine matter. Indian Prime Minister Narasimha Rao's visit to China in September 1993 was particularly significant in raising the Sino-Indian relationship to a new height. Agreements signed during the visit (7 September) included one on the Maintenance of Peace and tranquility along the LAC in the China-India Border Areas, providing for "effective CBMs"—regulating levels of military exercises, creating mechanisms for dealing with intrusions, agreements on environmental cooperation and radio and television cooperation and a protocol on the extension of border trade across the Shipki
Pass. Indian Vice President K.R. Narayanan, now President, during his visit to China in October 1994 signed a MoU between the People's Bank of China and Reserve Bank of India on banking cooperation. The period witnessed a shift in China's South Asian policy, no longer seem very keen to offer support to India's smaller neighbors, including Pakistan, on bilateral matters (like Kashmir, Ganges water, in case of Bangladesh, or weapon-supply to Nepal) that may fuel problems and offset India's pre-eminence in the subcontinent. China may have its growing concerns about the spillover effects of "Islamic fundamentalism" in its own Xinjiang province (Zhengjia, Nov 97: 4; Singh, July 97: 3-5).

The first state visit by the Chinese Head of state, President Jiang Zemin (Nov 1996) to India led to further extension of the existing CBMs to more specific and sensitive areas in the military field. While recognizing their "different perceptions" both sides felt convinced that "friendly and good neighborly relations between China and India served the fundamental interests of the two peoples", affirmed "the principle of mutual and equal security," agreed on force ceilings and to "exchange maps indicating their respective perceptions." The two countries also moved nearer to a no-war pact by undertaking "not to use its military capability against the other side" Other accords include Agreement on CBMs in
the border Areas, and relate JWGs; Agreement Concerning the Maintenance of Consulate General of India in Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of PRC; Agreement on Cooperation for Combating Illicit Trafficking in Narcotic Drugs and psychotropic Substances and other Crimes; and Agreement between China and India on Maritime Transport. In addition, both sides also agreed to add greater economic and technological content to the bilateral relationship (Zhengjia, Nov 1997: 4-5; Singh, July 97: 5-6).

Signing two successive CBM accords resulted in improved politico-diplomatic climate in Sino-Indian relations. Apart from regular meetings of the JWGs there multilevel contacts and network of relationships that developed embracing high level visits, port calls by ships, contacts between research bodies and opinion-builders, ties between armed force units, NGOs, political parties, flight and telecom linkages, festivals etc. Trade and economic contacts between the two countries have also tremendously increased in recent years, as both countries granted each other the most favored nation (MFN) trading status, both also agreed on “avoidance of double taxation” and both facilitated resumption of direct banking links and promoted joint venture projects. The total bilateral trade that stagnated at a very low level of about US$100 to $200 million per annum in the late 1980s increased
to US$262 million in 1991, but then it increased by 434 per cent in five years to US$1.4 billion in 1996.

Though the bilateral trade is still very low, only 0.5% in China's total foreign trade and about 2% in that of India's, indicating that there is a huge untapped trade potential between the two countries; yet India emerged as China's leading trading partner, overtaking that with its closest ally, Pakistan (Zhengjia, Nov 97: 5; Singh, July 97: 6-8). Both sides reportedly also started exploring new areas for cooperation, such as reviving direct flights between various Indian and Chinese cities, rebuilding the old Burma Road (and an Ancient Silk Route), projects such as joint shipbuilding and repairs, railway equipment, manufacture of Light Combat Aircraft (LCA), and civilian aircraft etc. Indeed, there is an increasing realization that their common interests far outweigh their differences and that both should work towards deepening their mutual trust in the post-Cold War environment of the new century (Zhengjia, Nov 97: 5; Singh, July 97: 8).

V. Changing Chinese Dimensions of CBMs in the New Century

Since the mid-1990s there has been some subtle changes in China's foreign policy thinking as a systemic discourse, indicating as to how China is likely to operate within a post-Cold War and post-socialist world in the new century,
while not fully abandoning the state's socialist stance. China officially embraced the notion of CBMs as mechanism to improve the Asia-Pacific security environment (as articulated by the then Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen on 1 August 1995 at the Second ARF Ministerial Meeting), and to bring stability and prosperity to the region in the 21st century. It also sees them as an expression of good and common political desire, as part of an effort to improve both security-military environment and broader cooperation in the political, economic and social fields, ensure high sense of mutual respect and equality, and wishes CBMs as part of step-by-step approach that are pragmatic and feasible, without being blind to imitate old models of other regions, security-wise working with "the spirit of doing easier things first, then taking on more difficult issues," while seeking common ground, setting aside differences for the time-being, focusing on some cooperative projects. Mechanism-wise, establishment of hotlines, prior notification of military maneuvers and troop movements, deployment, or other activities along the border, and declaration of NFU of nuclear weapons, even on-site inspections of its chemical plants etc. became part of many Chinese CBM concepts in its foreign policy thinking (Liping, 97: 17-18).

However, China, as viewed by its Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan in an article in Beijing's Foreign Affairs Journal (No. 50, Dec 1998: 1-13), is also committed to a 'system of
independent foreign policy of peace with Chinese characteristics. The characteristics include (i) uphold independence, (ii) safeguard world peace, and (iii) promote common development—all constituting as the 'three major pillars of China's diplomacy.' Obviously the second and third pillars are subordinate to the first, as upholding the nation-state system and China's place and role in it are central to Beijing's diplomacy (Deshpande, 99: 112-118). The old notion of "alliance and struggle"—if not class struggle—still does seem relevant in Chinese foreign policy outlook (Kalam, 96).

In July 2001 China's President Jiang Zemin and his Russian equivalent signed a 20-year treaty of "good-neighborliness, friendship and cooperation", sealing their "strategic partnership into a durable bond", with a common position on missile defense, "identical and unchanged positions" in favor of retaining the existing system of arms control accords, strengthening nonproliferation regimes and keeping outer space free from arms. "Stability and continuity" emerged as key notions in the new treaty signed at Beijing's initiative, both renouncing territorial claims to each other and guaranteeing both that they will never revert to hostilities and border conflicts (The Hindu, 16 July 2001; "Remaking history", 2001: 24). But the new treaty, though not a military alliance nonetheless laid the foundation for a new international order,
in which China and Russia seemed moving towards friendship, never to be foes, and may prove, more durable than the old one by pushing the two sides to find practical solutions to some bilateral problems, such as their now 4,000km (2,500-mile) border, agreeing to crack down on Islamic and Turkik groups either side of it or organizations that challenge the territorial integrity of the other; strengthening bilateral trade of annual $10 billion, build a 2,400km pipeline to carry Siberian oil to China’s northeast, and, most importantly, permitting continued military cooperation, enabling China to procure modern Russian-built fighter aircraft, missiles, surface ships and submarines while ailing Russian economy gains about $1 billion a year from these sales ("Remaking history", 2001: 24).

In this context the problematic power aspirations of neighboring India, as manifested in Pokharan II or India’s nuclear explosions in May 1998 on the presumable ground of ‘China threat’ and countervailing tit-for-tat response from Pakistan (Chaghai) meant sooner to gain nuclear power status—may be viewed as ominous development constraining existing Sino-Indian CBMs. Similarly, China maintained its opposition to ‘hegemonism and power politics’ that always been perceived as ‘the principal root causes threatening world peace and stability,’ and continues to view hegemonism and power politics as undesirable because they threaten Chinese interests like the integration of Taiwan with the PRC and so
on. China sees an irrevocable change in the present unipolar international system and perceives a new balance of power may be in the offing, replacing the unipolar system with multipolar one. Hence, despite worrying development of Indo-Pak nuclearization China seems to have a sense of compulsion not to distance itself from its immediate volatile neighborhood, or rather felt an urge to act as a manager of the global system (Deshpande, 99: 112-118).

Such rethinking may provide additional input and guide Chinese foreign policy on the eve of the new century. The overall nature of the changing Sino-South Asian relations or its attitude towards South Asian CBMs has to be reviewed in the foregoing backdrop. Indeed, a White Paper on 'China's National Defense' (October 1998) sounded a positive and balanced note on improving international relations, reaffirmed its faith in CBMs as the cornerstone of its policy of establishing "mutual trust between nations as an effective way to maintain security" and building strong relations with neighbors. In Sino-Indian context China reaffirmed troop reductions along the border, restricting the scale of military exercises, ensuring tranquility and stability in border areas among the CBMs (Indian Express, 13 Oct 1998: 1-2).

Moreover, having distanced itself from Islamabad during the Kargil crisis and even acted as an informal mediator
between the South Asian protagonists, Sino-Indian the bilateral security dialogue and other CBMs like JWGs were resumed (March-April 2000). Bilateral trade was also picking up, standing at US$2 billion a year. As a CBM tool of expanding business, both sides proposed road through Myanmar linking China and India. However, issues such as military links with Myanmar and Pakistan, strategic partnership with the U.S. and Russia, direction of India's nuclear program, the future of Tibet and Tibetan community in India, and India's pronounced intention to hold naval exercise in the South China Sea feature importantly in bilateral relations between the world's two most populous nations (Frazier, 2000: 5-6).

The weeklong visit (28 May-3 June 2000) of the Indian President K.R. Narayanan, an "old friend" and a former ambassador to Beijing, another 'landmark visit' underlined a renewal of general warmth, renewed commitments to tap unrealized areas of cooperation, a solution to the long-drawn border conflict, and finally, the abatement of needless polemics on India's nuclear policy. Obviously the accent was on improved atmospherics, ending the post-Pokharan-II chill in their relations, with shared views on global hegemony and multipolarity as an inevitable trend. Emphasis was on more productive engagement, beyond widened political contacts and visits, setting up an 'eminent persons' group' to give
intellectual fillip for improved relations and coordinating mutual policies in an era of globalization for purposes such as regulating World Trade Organization (WTO) rules beneficial to both.

There was also a call for more robust trade beyond the current level of US$2 billion annual trade, for greater policy coordination, including exchange of market information and promotion of investment in each others' economy, and promoting the lawful interests and rights of the developing countries (Kalam, 18 June 2000: 2). There was indeed promises of constructive partnership and strengthening of bilateral relations.

Despite enlarged CBMs there are limits to an expanded Sino-Indian relations. Their security perceptions sharply differ, as both are major Asia-Pacific power aspirants. Hence their interests and policies do not converge on a number of issues. They include India's perception of China as a as the major threat to security from the Indian Ocean to the Pacific Rim, India's expanding nuclear aspirations, and the scheduled Indo-Vietnamese naval exercises that are indicative of New Delhi's aspirations in the South China Sea, bringing India and China head-on, the nagging dispute on their long frontier and can agree no more than seeking an "early and proper settlement"
of the dispute, the perceived failure of China to positively respond to India’s aspirations for a permanent seat in the U.N. Security Council (UNSC) etc. (Kalam, 18 June 2000: 2; Bhattacharya, 99: 496)).

Indeed, such issues continue to constrain improved bilateral relations through CBMs. It may be recalled that the first Sino-Indian “strategic dialogue” held in Beijing in 1999 got off to a rocky start, with China being firm that India implement the relevant Resolution (UNSC-1172), and that view remains unchanged. Beijing also seems cool to the notion of India-China-Russia strategic triangle, emphasizing increased bilateral cooperation instead (Kalam, 18 June 2000: 2). More critical perhaps is the long held perception in New Delhi of a China-Pakistani proliferation axis. While India did try to play its own China card in a perceived zero-sum game in South Asia, forging a common threat perception against international terrorism and coerce China into forging mutually beneficial ties with India at the expense of nuclear Pakistan, a sort of ‘rogue’ state, Beijing seems no where nearer drawn into such a position. Unwilling to forsake an old ally, China seems willing to use nothing more than generic expressions such as opposing all kinds of terrorism, and continues to remain as a major arms supplier to meet Pakistan’s defense needs and defense-related technology (Kalam, 18 June 2000: 2).
Regionally, China continues to feature as a major challenger to India’s Asia-Pacific aspirations, strengthening its position towards India’s eastern side in Myanmar, expanding its military equipment by purchasing a deepwater fleet and the acquisition of a Russian aircraft carrier as well as developing effective second-strike capabilities. It appears that China’s support for India’s perpetual rival in the subcontinent is unlikely to abate. Despite New Delhi’s desire to play global, China sees India as a mere regional force bogged down in South Asia and unable to pursue wider Asia-Pacific or global aspirations (Kalam, 18 June 2000: 2).

Thus, despite a strengthening of CBMs at the bilateral level between India and China, the Sino-Indian chess game most probably will be delicate. A return to era confrontation is unlikely in an era of global change, as China does seem interested in India as a ‘friendly’ neighbor, though it does not foresee a significant role India in world politics (Frazier, 2000: 11). Given such negative Chinese perception, for India it may be better to try to harmonize and consolidate its relations with its South Asian neighborhood before seriously pursuing its Asia-Pacific or global aspirations (Kalam, 18 June 2000: 2).

It is also fair to say that Beijing indicated, with some logic, its keen desire to cooperate within both regional and
subregional framework of interaction in South Asia for growth and common well-being. Indeed, as a Himalayan neighbor tied to an indivisible ecosystem China can hardly be bypassed in any meaningful regional cooperation when it involves environment, water, energy and trade relations. Secondly, despite counter-deterrence logic put up by New Delhi vis-à-vis China during the Pokharan-II nuclear proliferation, both India and China have now fairly improved diplomatic and trade relations, and are even engaged in strategic dialogue. Thirdly, both also have interactive harmonious relationships at the level of ARF. Fourthly, in August 1999 China hosted a 3-day four-nation conference in Kunming (in China’s Yunnan province) with business leaders, trade and economic experts, strategic studies’ specialists, scholars and journalists from Bangladesh, China, India and Myanmar—signaling its strong interest in being drawn to regional cooperation. Emphasis was then placed reestablishing the 2000-year old missing links among the countries involved (The Financial Express, 99: 1,12).

Fifthly, China’s more recent expressed eagerness that it informally suggested to India itself to join not only South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thialand Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) but also the Mekong-Ganga Cooperation (MCG) forum consisting of Vietnam, Cambodia, Myanmar, Laos,
Sixthly, since China as an emerging economic powerhouse—with the ‘fastest economic growth’—and has an extensive network of relationships with both ASEAN and APEC it seems imperative in an age of cooperative engagement to associate Beijing in all possible cooperative ventures in South Asia wherever there is scope to do so. Finally, Beijing’s association in both regional and subregional cooperation may help promote an ARF pattern of security dialogue in South Asia.

VI. Conclusions

The paper offered perspectives of Sino-South Asian cooperative relations in the light of evolving Chinese CBMs in the region, placing an emphasis on the complex network of multifaceted interactions involving China and India. Such a perspective can hardly be gauged from one single track such as CBMs, though they offered some positive light in China’s rethinking in its relations with South Asia. China’s a cooperative perspective varied over time. It started from CMMs, then extended to CAMs, and finally, to CBMs in the pursuit of PRC’s long-term strategic interests in South Asian subregion, Asia-Pacific region and the international system.

Some prognosis will now be offered, touching on the changes and shifts in its cooperative relations, regionally and
internationally. China may be relatively a new player in international relations, but it follows a long-term game plan that is entrenched in realpolitik (Rappai, 99: 1). Generally speaking, China now sees the CBMs as one of its important means of pursuing its objective national development through reform and openness in a peaceful international environment, in a safe and prosperous Asia-Pacific region. To this end it remains committed to "actively push the establishment" of bilateral CBMs with powers like India, Russia and Japan, as well as work with the U.S. in a framework of "multi-tiered, multi-sphered, and multi-formed" CBMs (Liping, 97: 33).

As for Sino-Indian CBMs, a genuine process of confidence-building "has not only picked up momentum but even reached a certain level of maturity where these two erstwhile adversaries are willing to even exchange sensitive information on their manpower and equipment, and to participate in training with each other's officers and men as also to show them each other's defence facilities and establishments" (Singh, July 97: 8). However, despite persistent negotiations on border issue since the early 1980s and following CBMs, no substantial progress has been made, except for attaining relative tranquility along the borders and opening of border points for contacts and continuing talks between the two militaries, as well as re-emphasis placed on good-neighborly and friendly relations (Liping, 97: 28). The
CBMs may thus be negated for failure to resolve Sino-Indian boundary question or erase all of their misgivings, but, unlike the romantic *Chini-Hindi* euphoria of the 1950s, the current CBMs evolved on a solid of pragmatism, generated a great deal of mutual trust and understanding, providing hope for the future of Sino-Indian rapprochement. Even on the border question, when compared to the intensity of firing and violence along Indo-Pak border—together with the recriminations that go with them, the Sino-Indian border has been relatively stable for nearly two decades (Singh, July 97: 10). Difficulties remain, however.

First is the intractable boundary question that is complicated by legacies, inability of the concerned technocrats to come to any practical solution (much of the disputed terrain being generally consisted of thousands of miles of deserts, snow-capped mountains and dense tropical forests) and domestic sensitivities. Second is the question of arms and technology transfers to Pakistan, the alleged Chinese clandestine support in building nuclear arsenals and delivery system, viewed as the most sensitive irritant standing in the way of Sino-Indian rapprochement. Third is the alleged Chinese encirclement maneuver by supplies of nuclear designs, components, materials and other know-how/facilities and missile to the wider Islamic world, including to Iran, Syria and Saudi Arabia, and the conspiracy theories that go with it. Fourth is
China's countervailing relations with other neighbors, such as Myanmar, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal, which are seen with suspicion and at times even raise concerns, even generate heat in New Delhi provoking questions in India about still continuing Chinese encirclement maneuvers (Singh, July 97: 8-9: Yasmeen, 98: 328).

In the foregoing context and keeping in mind their evolving relations through CBMs, China and India do seem to be partners, but they also remain potential adversaries. Hence their relationship may be viewed as one of adversary partnership, i.e. they have common interests to keep their relationship peaceful, though not being unmindful of competitive aspects of their regional and global aspirations. Both have commonalities of interests on issues dividing the developing world from the developed, both being opposed to U.S.-led policy of sanctions—economic as well as military—as instrument of state coercion and dominance in international relations, and both have shared views on existing international protocols on non-proliferation, environment, human rights, and trade policy (Frazier, 2000: 2).

Put it differently, Sino-Indian relations most unlikely to constitute as a "new cold war," making it appear as "the dominant feature of Asian geopolitics in the early twenty-first
century” (Mohan Malik quoted for such a view, Frazier, 2000: 9). The pair of relations may still appear ‘puzzling,’ given the legacies of bilateral friction and quite structured approaches originating from domestic think-tank, military and civilian lobbies in each country against current restraint and rapprochement achieved through CBMs (Frazier, 2000: 1-2, 7-14; Rappai, 99: 7-8); yet the order of an intense conflict appear now a matter of history and both the countries have already emerged as “dialogue partners” of sorts, their commonalities of interests far outweigh their differences, both actually are in dialogue bilaterally through CBMs as well as multilaterally in the APEC and APEC. Both need each other as “transition economies” in the global age (The Hindu, 18 May 2001; Agarwal and Sengupta, 2000: 19-26). Both have also made tremendous strides towards normalizing their relations and strengthening their mutual trust, through CBMs at different levels.

However the Sino-Indian bilateral relations can hardly be curved out separately from those of its immediate South Asian neighborhood. This may require some serious policy rethinking in New Delhi’s current ‘go alone’ policy; it needs to develop a wider regional vision, with maturity and sagacity, not excluding security communication involving smaller neighbors. As in Southeast Asia, China may help rather than hinder
developmental voyage and security dialogue in South Asia as in the wider region. India would have to take into account "China's broad spectrum formula and its multilevel relationship with Pakistan" (Bhattacharya, 99: 499), India's perpetual enemy that continues to feature importantly in Beijing's strategic calculations in South Asia as a counterweight to India (Monterary, 2000: 4). Second is the question of including in the framework of Sino-Indian relations other subregional and regional states like Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal and Sri Lanka (in South Asia) and Myanmar (from South Asia) for cooperative purposes in overcoming both the lingering security misperceptions and advancing cooperation in positive fashion within a consistent framework. In all this India would have to play the role of catalyst, and not bypass the smaller neighbors.

A final point touching on the current war on "international terrorism" involving the Asian nations, especially those in South Asia and others in its immediate neighborhood, including China, who together suddenly appear as 'frontline states.' Until recently, China featured as a target in a new U.S. global containment, but has re-emerged currently as a 'partner' in a stylish frame of American extemporizing strategy of identifying Asian enemies—Mao Zedong, Kim Il-Sung, Ho Chi Minh, Imam Khomeni, Saddam Hussain, and now Osama bin Laden and Molla Omar. The current upswing in an
otherwise volatile Sino-American relation may be a momentary affair and keeping the already fragile international coalition together may be a difficult proposition ("Bush urges...", 2001: 9), should the new Afghan war prolong indefinitely and become a real threat to its ally Pakistan. China and its South Asian neighbors must have continuous reappraisal and rethinking about being unquestioned ‘partners in war on terrorism’ in a shortsighted marriage of convenience, spearheaded by lone superpower against illusive ‘super-empowered individuals’ (Friedman, 2000: 13). In that context it seems imperative for China and its South Asian neighbors to engage in collective security dialogue at the earliest so that they may together identify the areas of their collective interests, keeping their strategic options open for the future.

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