Institutionalising Trust and Communication: Military CBMs and Security Co-Operation Within "A SAARC with Teeth"

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1. Introduction
When security co-operation in South Asia is discussed, an issue, which is usually avoided, is the role of South Asia's neighbours in promoting or preventing such co-operation. Geographically, South Asia's immediate neighbours are Iran, Afghanistan, China (whose Tibetan Autonomous Region could almost be said to be part of South Asia) and Myanmar. Both current events and the political history of the last half a century confirm the vital role these neighbours have played in the security calculus of this region. The issue of the inclusion of South Asia's neighbours in the South Asian security dialogue is essentially a political one. A multi-lateral dialogue, which includes these neighbours, can only result from efforts similar to those that created ASEAN's Regional Forum. For India the larger regional context is the only backdrop in which the challenge of achieving regional security co-operation in the new century can be sought.
One of the major issues of concern to India is the nexus between China and Pakistan which brings the People's Republic of China, at least so far as security issues are concerned, into the South Asian security framework. Recurrent reports of nuclear and missile proliferation from China to Pakistan endanger the possibilities of bilateral engagement between India and Pakistan, and China's future support to Pakistan will be a critical determinant of stability in the region.

A question that must be asked also is whether any institutionalization of security co-operation is possible when there appears to be neither the will to peace, nor the capacity for peace in many parts of South Asia both as a consequence of external as well as internal factors. In this context is there a credible possibility of "giving SAARC political teeth" so that military and non-military CBMs could be institutionalized in the co-operative South Asian structure created sixteen years ago? This question is relevant in view of the fact that the South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation (SAARC) has so far been unable to play a significant role in the most urgent crisis facing the region.

2. South Asian Realities

Even among army officers, the concept of security has widened considerably in recent South Asian debates about the
subject. Lt. Gen. (retd.) V. R. Raghavan, formerly Director of Military Operations of the Indian Army, while delivering the Field Marshal K. M. Cariappa memorial lecture on October 27, 2001 in New Delhi notes that “the idea of security has become a comprehensive concept. This has not only widened the security debate but also enriched it with new insights”.

He states, “the components of comprehensive security worked in mutually reinforcing ways, to improve or lower the security of both the state and its people. The security discourse then changed to incorporate other components of security. This approach to security was validated by the fact that terrorism, as witnessed in its national, regional and global forms, was a consequence of the neglect of the interplay between the components of comprehensive security”. He said the idea of security was increasingly being questioned, in terms of whose security was being ensured, and what was being secured.

A narrower definition is however useful in looking at the issue of strengthening the purely military dimension of security co-operation. According to American scholar Steven Hoffman, Security for India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, China and Myanmar is defined in political, military and economic terms, but “the political and military dimensions have predominated”. For India’s leaders “security is thought to lie partly in deterring
overt conventional and nuclear military attack from Pakistan, the one neighbouring state that is often thought to be fundamentally hostile". The Indian state, he says, "is also committed to preserving the territorial integrity of the nation from a secessionist drive in Kashmir, a drive that is supported diplomatically and semi-militarily by Pakistan". Secessionist movements are active in northeast India and "a Pakistani governmental agency is allegedly furthering the conflict while Myanmar and Bangladesh become involved (at least at the non-governmental level) if and when India's rebel groups operate across their frontiers". The ability "to deter neighbouring China, a massively armed power in both the nuclear and conventional senses, from trying to intimidate India, especially during some possible future crisis", has also been identified by him as an important security goal.

India, he says, desires to "possess the preponderance of conventional military strength in South Asia, employ its military and paramilitary forces to defeat internal insurgencies and other disturbances, and be capable of deterring any possible nuclear threat".

In Hoffman's view, "Pakistan's ruling establishment defines security primarily as preventing external and internal pressures from forcing the country to disintegrate and
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A belief "that India will attack, and that it is constantly scheming to undo Pakistan in order to incorporate that territory back into [India] itself" is a Pakistani elite thought. Faced with India's edge in conventional military forces, the Pakistani state has seen its nuclear weapons as a vital deterrent to Indian attack and intimidation, and as a tool for achieving some degree of strategic parity".

According to Hoffman, "China's security definition has, at its core, regime survival. The Chinese leadership has seen other communist systems destroyed by internal reform efforts, and (like Chinese ruling elites of earlier times) does not want China to disintegrate into warlordism. In order to deal with a possible legitimacy crisis linked, inter alia, to the eroding role of the dominant ideology, internal corruption, and the development of a more market-oriented economy, the ruling elite has been generating a nationalistic claim to superpower status for China. To allow for that status and the international recognition and respect that it entails, China prefers a multipolar world order to a unipolar one".

Hoffman emphasizes that "maintaining China's national cohesion, in the view of the Chinese leadership, requires that Beijing retain control of frontier zones such as Tibet and Xingjiang, and secure the return of frontier territories that have
been lost, such as Taiwan and Hong Kong. The Chinese political elite, concerned about political system legitimacy and stability, feels that it must dominate frontier regions to check centrifugal forces and deal effectively with any foreign influences which may promote such forces”.

China’s People’s Liberation Army analysts have since 1998 characterized India’s policies as “pursuit of regional hegemony in South Asia”, and warn of a dangerous military build-up. They allege that India now seeks to become a world power by controlling the Indian Ocean and maintaining a nuclear deterrent against China. Mark W. Frazier, on the other hand, contends; “Given that the preponderance of Chinese security concerns is directed towards East and South-East Asia, unsurprisingly, South Asia has stood third in terms of (China’s) priorities.”

About Bangladesh, Hoffman says its security depends heavily upon its relationship with India, the neighbour that nearly surrounds Bangladesh territorially. Security “is largely defined as being able to engage in nation-building while enjoying the maximum degree of independence from India”.

For Myanmar the security definition now in vogue in ruling circles “is based on securing both domestic and external
legitimacy for a particular "model of governance". The ruling military junta wishes "to move Myanmar in the direction of the authoritarian (but capitalist) system found elsewhere in Asia. It also wants a strong political role for the military in any future political structure, as has been the case in places like Indonesia and Thailand".

The smaller South Asian states of Nepal, Bhutan and Sri Lanka also have important security problems and perhaps only the Maldives can be said to have no immediate worries. When it was being practised, India's 'Gujral Doctrine' went a long way to allay the fears of India's smaller neighbours.

Hoffman believes that "despite their different political-military definitions of what constitutes 'security', economic growth has been a prominent concern to the Southern Asian states during the 1990s. But not every one of these governments links economic development and prosperity with military and political security as does China's government. China apparently believes in economic strength as a basis for both military power and diplomatic influence in the new world order, especially now that China is acquiring that kind of strength and is paying for military modernization and force acquisition".

On the economic dimensions of security Hoffman states, "Pakistan and Bangladesh are South Asian countries whose
security positions are adversely affected by their lower level of economic development, when compared to India.... Bangladesh, for its part, has acute poverty problems which help to limit its military capacity, and an adverse trade balance with India. To achieve some modicum of autonomy from India, Bangladesh must seek economic aid and investment from sources outside South Asia. But Bangladesh’s political and economic security picture depends as much on diplomatic dealings with India as on Bangladesh’s other economic and diplomatic efforts. Bangladesh’s overall situation can improve markedly if India remains willing to engage in the kind of concessionary bilateral diplomacy that produced a 1996 accord with Dhaka over the sharing of Ganga river waters, and if the two countries can cooperate in developing both Bangladesh itself and India’s nearby northeastern states. For Bangladesh, diplomatic influence with India and with aid-giving sources is often the main precondition for economic development, and not the reverse”.

According to Hoffman, “the root causes of continued tensions in South Asia are many. Any reasonably complete list would include ‘divergent security perspectives’ among countries but any analysis must emphasize the Indo-centric nature of South Asia. The presence of one centrally-located regional power, interested in asserting some form of regional primacy, results in a pattern of bilateral conflicts between that
state and its smaller neighbours. The fact that most of the less powerful South Asian countries are geographically close to India but not to each other means that they are more likely to have disputes with India than with each other”.

Within South Asia (as distinct from Southern Asia) other issues that create conflict can be listed in the following (condensed) fashion:

- territorial disputes inherited from the colonial past and the demarcation of land and maritime boundaries
- the sharing of the water resources of common rivers, including that of the Ganges
- intra-state conflicts involving ethno-linguistic and religious groups with cross-border affiliation
- conflicting economic interests
- smuggling, illegal cross-border activities and a number of other (related) issues

Yet another such issue is what an observer has called “illegal immigration and demographic drift”, which includes migration of Bangladeshi refugees into India and the presence in Pakistan of a large Afghan refugee population.

3. **The post-September 11 Scenario**

Although the Pakistani military-led government has probably not had too much time to reflect deeply on medium
and long term implications of the crisis, Pakistan needs to devise a strategy to address five intertwined crises which have so blighted that country's prospects. These are:

- The Talibanization and Kalazhnikovization of its society and polity
- The grandiose ambition to seek strategic depth from Afghanistan that has gone so terribly wrong
- The unwinnable confrontation with India over Kashmir
- Economic stagnation and bankruptcy
- Internal political collapse

General Musharraf's repeated calls to resume the peace process started at the Agra Summit in July 2001 need to be accepted quickly if a dangerous potential source of instability is not to assume alarming proportions. The Indian leadership, however, is unwilling to take seriously the Pakistani leadership's invitation to renew summit level talks until that country demonstrates its willingness to end all support for violence in India. To the extent that India truly wishes for a "stable, peaceful and prosperous" Pakistan, it is in India's interest to do more than just reassure the Pakistani leadership on the telephone that it will not create more difficulties for that country than it already has. When things settle down Pakistan will become an important market for India's exports of goods
and services and the possibility of a constructive partnership with the rest of South Asia cannot but be a positive factor for sanity and realism in Islamabad in these dangerous times.

4. Lessons from the European Experience

Certain regional conflicts pose significant and unforeseen risks for global security. The Indo-Pakistani conflict over Kashmir and the Arab-Israeli conflict over Palestine can be classed in this category. The nuclearization of the sub-continent has led to a marked increase in the threat perceptions of India and Pakistan. The armament levels of these two nuclear weapon states appear to be growing in sophistication and lethality and their national security strategies vis-à-vis each other are focused on nuclear deterrence. In fact for more than a decade the two countries have been in a state of undeclared war. ‘Nuclear vulnerability’ defines their security environment, so that if the ‘undeclared war’ explodes into a ‘hot war’ the side that is losing the conventional conflict is likely to threaten to, or to inflict nuclear destruction on the side that seems to be winning. A separate question is the possibility of pre-emptive strikes against the other country’s ‘strategic assets’.

While limitations on military forces may be too ambitious a goal in the case of India and Pakistan at this time, locked as
they are into intense cycles of hatred and distrust, military and political confidence building measures (CBMs) deeper than the existing arrangements are feasible. In Europe, CBMs were employed to introduce greater openness or transparency into the military activity of the two alliances. Valuable lessons can be extracted from the unique historical experience of European confidence building, primarily as a source of inspiration but also as a useful point of departure for assessing the general prerequisites of confidence building.

To be able to understand the mechanism of confidence building, it is helpful to consider confidence building as it relates to the sources of conflict and accommodation, and the processes of conflict management and resolution. Although western theories viewed CBMs primarily in terms of arms control objectives, they also implicitly recognized their contribution to resolving East-West differences.

Beyond the specific function of greater military transparency, CBMs were intended, over time, to change perceptions of hostile intent. Confidence building in the sense of greater certainty about military intentions was intended to build confidence as mutual trust. By requiring both sides to cooperate on minor military matters, CBMs could, as Holst said, "embody and project notions of shared interest — a
concept of common security”. Specific military CBMs thus served a broader confidence building process, whose purpose was to build an ethos of cooperation and a habit of trust between or among adversaries. The confidence building process, like cooperation in the economic, cultural or political sphere, was intended to reinforce the underlying forces for accommodation, encouraging states locked in conflict to intensify their cooperation, perhaps over time, even contributing to resolution of differences.

4.1. The Pre-Conditions for European Confidence Building

The evolution of the European confidence building measures can be roughly divided into three phases; (i) Important “precursors” to the Helsinki CBMs included a series of bilateral arrangements between the US and the USSR, whose primary purpose was to create more reliable communication channels for the exchange of information, particularly following unforeseen incidents or accidents. (ii) A packet of multilateral or voluntary CBMs, which were codified into the Helsinki Final Act of 1975, although of minor military significance. (iii) The Stockholm accord (1986) and the Vienna agreement (1990) marked a significant turning point in the development of CBMs, The notification, observation, and access provisions contained in the two accords represented significant steps towards verifiability and formal political commitment.
In general, analysts and negotiators of European CBMs identify three factors as having contributed to the successful negotiation and implementation of the Helsinki, Stockholm and Vienna agreements. The first category encompasses all contextual factors – important historical, cultural, political, institutional and technological characteristics of the East-West conflict in Europe. The second category consists of processual factors, defined as characteristics of the negotiation or confidence building process itself. Factors that appeared to have been decisive during specific phases of European confidence building can be grouped into a third category, that of political developments in East-West relations.

4.2. Adapting Lessons from Europe

The fact is that the existing Indo-Pakistani Military CBMs have proven to be of limited utility for tension reduction, because of the intense and unsolved political, territorial and ideological disputes between these two countries. Their lack of confidence in the CBM process itself has tended to devalue the importance of these mechanisms as war-averting instruments. There is also the tendency to non-compliance of existing CBMs between these two neighbours.

The qualified success of regional confidence building measures in South Asia exhibits striking departures from the
European model. First generation CBMs in South Asia have not been identical to the measures negotiated in Helsinki. For instance, neither India nor Pakistan has recognized, tacitly or otherwise, the territorial claims of adversaries as is the case of the Europeans, yet modest CBMs have been implemented.

The European experience in CBMs holds some lessons for other regions of conflict. Darilek lists the seven following lessons that could be extracted from the history of CBMs in Europe:

- The spectrum of arms control possibilities is quite broad, but Europe's experience suggests that the subset of measures likely to prove to be useful or negotiable among adversaries is rather limited.
- There seems to have been a definite, perhaps a necessary, relationship between political arms control developments in Europe; a similar relationship may exist between C(S)BM (Conflict and Security Building Measures) and other arms control agreements.
- Breaching the wall of secrecy that adversaries tend to erect around their military establishments and activities is the single most important contribution that initial CBM agreements can make.
- As arms control objectives and agreements become more ambitious, the measures developed to verify them become more intrusive.
One of the most important facilities that CBM and other arms control agreements can provide is an institutionalised right for adversaries to ask questions of and expect answers from each other.

Multilateral arms control negotiations and agreements are not necessarily inferior to their bilateral counterparts.

C(S)BM and other multilateral arms control agreements have been relatively resilient to downturns in international politics wrought by East-West controversies in Europe.

Confidence building must be adapted to the unique cultural, historical, political and economic conditions of different regions. A pragmatic approach to regional confidence building would begin by considering the roots of the conflict and the potential sources of accommodation. Then an appropriate strategy for the conflict should be crafted. In case the threats to national security are military in nature then concrete technical tools are appropriate. However, if military CBMs are implemented in isolation it could lead to animosity and mistrust, which is why, as the European experience suggests, an integrated approach would be more helpful in strengthening the sources of accommodation. Moreover, the timing of confidence building should be conducive in resolving a conflict. Richard Haas identifies four such conditions: (i) a
shared perception that an accord is preferable to an agreement; (ii) leaders who are able to agree to an accord; (iii) enough compromise on both sides to ensure that the accord is acceptable at home; and (iv) a mutually acceptable approach or process for settling the conflict.

Finally, the European experience underscores the linkages between other processes of conflict management (like negotiation, mediation, peacekeeping) and CBMs while crafting confidence building measures. The importance of modest expectations, patience and an appreciation of small gains in trust are the most important lesson to draw — incremental progress would define such measures. Confidence takes a long time to build; security, even longer.

5. **Southern Asia’s Experience with CBMs**

Regional arms control measures are thus an important facet of tension reduction. This is more so in the Indo-Pakistani context, because each side engages in coercive strategic behaviour, like proactive troop deployments and military exercises near tense borders, support for militant groups in unstable regions of each other’s country and cross-border firing along the Line of Control (LoC) in Kashmir.

Indeed, confidence-building measures have definitely achieved some successes on the India-Pakistan and India-
Confidence building steps taken by India and China along their disputed border include a ceiling on the deployment

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China fronts. According to Pakistani strategic analyst Pervez Iqbal Cheema, they were intended “to minimize the possibilities of accidental wars, diffusing the charged atmosphere, creating congenial conditions, and preventing a further drift towards undesired stockpiling and improvisation of dreaded weapons.”

Although the CBMs and C(S)BMs in force in southern Asia do not yet match their full potential, they include some highly significant measures. Pakistan and India have installed a telephone hotline arrangement designed to handle provocative incidents. They have agreed to give each other prior notification about military exercises, troop movements, and maneuvers to be staged near their borders. In force since 1991 is a formal agreement not to attack each other’s nuclear installations, including “power and research reactors, fuel fabrication, uranium enrichment, isotope separation and reprocessing plants, and storage facilities”. Another bilateral agreement covers the prevention of air space violations while permitting “over flights and landings by military aircraft”. There is also in place an Indo-Pak “Joint Declaration on Prohibition of Chemical Weapons”.

Confidence building steps taken by India and China along their disputed border include a ceiling on the deployment
of border troops, "non-emplacement of offensive weapons along the border", a mutual commitment "to abjure the use of force to change the existing border position", as well as "prior notification of troop movements". These measures are clearly more far reaching than their Indo-Pak counterparts, and reflect the desire of the two sides to forge a better working relationship between themselves, rather than just keeping a hostile relationship under control. But, while South Asian CBMs and C(S)BMs generally allow for greater military transparency, along with tension reduction and prevention, and better communication, they are at best only temporary substitutes for effective conflict-resolution.

Lt. Gen. (Retd.) V.R. Raghavan, now Director of the Delhi Policy Group, (a think-tank specializing in security issues) stresses that CBMs in South Asia can better succeed if they are joined by nuclear arms control, disarmament and self-restraint measures by the nuclear powers. He emphasizes that India's experience in managing CBMs is unique. No other country has put CBMs in place with both a stronger and a weaker neighbour. Whereas India has fought three wars against Pakistan, China has been a source of anxiety for India since the 1962 Sino-Indian border war. Relations between India and China have been further complicated by China's longstanding weapons supply and nuclear technology support to Pakistan.
Raghavan believes that “Although India has been able to negotiate significant and somewhat similar CBMs with both China and Pakistan, the implementation of Sino-Indian and Indo-Pak CBMs has been different. The Indian experience with the Chinese has been mostly positive and the CBMs proved successful; forces have been pulled back from the border and tensions have been eased. A border dispute that was the cause of high emotions has been put aside so that the two nations can pursue other common interests”.

He also notes that although the implementation of Indo-Pak CBMs “has prevented crises from growing into confrontation, CBMs have failed to create an environment for reducing tension”. The mixed results of CBMs in South Asia can be attributed to certain factors. First, India and Pakistan view CBMs as a means of gaining advantage over the other rather than as tools for creating an environment for peace. The correct use of CBMs becomes difficult when the two sides perceive implementation as a “zero-sum” exercise. Second, the two governments have found it difficult to muster the political strength necessary to build confidence instead of sustaining tensions. For instance, the political will in the Sino-Indian relationship stems from the common desire to normalize relations and improve ties. Finally, the issue of nuclear capability in the sub-continent has added a new dimension to the future of CBMs. As a result, CBMs in the
region can no longer be purely bilateral. The security anxieties of India vis-a-vis a nuclear China and those of Pakistan with a nuclear-capable India would need to be addressed before CBMs can contribute to their full potential. Initiatives from the P-5 would be necessary to bring about regional nuclear stability in South Asia. A no-first-use agreement between the P-5 and a no-first-use assurance from them to all states should form the basis of such an initiative.

6. **The Potential for Additional Military CBMs**

   In the present political climate one could explore the utility of unilateral, possibly reciprocated, forms of military and political restraint. These include the following measures:

I. **Bilateral Measures**

   - Continuous and reliable communication
   - Crisis management should be professionally conducted
   - Transparency (especially on the nuclear doctrines)

II. **Nuclear-specific Measures**

   - A transparent Command and Control System
   - A policy of minimum nuclear deterrence
   - A regional cut-off fissile material production
A regional nuclear test ban
Safeguards on new and existing nuclear facilities
Extension of nuclear no-attack pledge to cover population centres
Elimination of certain classes of missiles in the region
A general protocol to the NPT requiring a wide range of security commitments from the world’s nuclear capable states
Non-deployment of ballistic missiles on borders and population centers

III. Practical Measures

Regional Open Skies and Seas Agreements
A no-war proposal in some acceptable form
Advance notification of flight-testing in designated areas
An agreement on the presence of observers during military exercises
A jointly funded annual analysis and review of force levels should be carried out
Access of NGOs in border areas
RoE along the LoC should be clarified, made public and adhered to
Limited and cooperative aerial reconnaissance of the LoC
Regional risk-reduction centres
Enhanced security assurances
Upgraded hotlines between military and political officials

IV. Unilateral Measures

Doctrinal transparency on thinking and modes of operation of national security forces
Adopt a policy of increased transparency on conventional capabilities and orders of battle
A policy of no-first-use of nuclear weapons (India adheres to this doctrine)
Measures against nuclear flashes i.e. an accident that could be mistaken for an attack

Today, in the aftermath of the September 11 terrorist attacks on the United States, there is a growing difficulty in states being able to distinguish between real and unfounded fears about the intent of or threat posed by a real or potential adversary. CBMs can help eliminate elements of secrecy (particularly in military activity) by encouraging openness, transparency, promoting mutual trust and dispelling concerns. Furthermore, they could help reduce tension and avert the danger of war between adversarial states. A general rule is
that once in place, CBMs must be abided by, for after all the building of trust requires reliability and the political will for its enforcement.

The involved state's national security can be preserved and enhanced by military CBMs. Military CBMs are a type of arms control measure, employing purposely designed cooperative measures to help clarify participating states' military intentions. The primary instruments of CBMs are a) communication measures (hotlines, regional communication centers, regularly scheduled consultations), b) measures of constraint (limited force deployment zones, pre-notification requirement), c) transparency measures (pre-notification requirements, data exchanges, voluntary observations) and d) verification measures (aerial inspections, ground-based systems electronic sensors and on-site inspections).

Swaran Singh, while commenting on "China's Experience of Conflict Avoidance and Confidence Building in India" by Chinese researcher Ye Zhengjia, posits that the process of CBMs represents a spirit of accommodation that is based on an understanding between parties to (a) avoid making accusations and counter-accusations on each other's past actions, (b) make mutual compromises and concessions geared towards their future normalization, and (c) take steps to
increase transparency and cooperation, thus making each other's actions more predictable and in harmony with their common interests. Therefore, CBMs in South Asia in general, and those between India and China, present a different notion, which should not be viewed within the framework of Western paradigms and models. The following features differentiate Asian CBMs from what has been experimented amongst the Western nations.

- The process of CBMs in Asia (The Indo-Pak Joint Defence Council of 1948 and the Panchsheel Agreement of 1954) had started much earlier as compared to the European CBMs, which start with the Helsinki Final Act of 1975.

- Major initiatives in Sino-Indian CBMs have been strictly bilateral in nature and autonomous from global factors. Rather, they seemed to be influenced much more by domestic factors. On the other hand, European CBMs are multilateral and dictated by global factors.

- The fear of imminent and total destruction does not stimulate Sino-Indian CBMs as opposed to the European experience. However, South Asian CBMs continue to operate in the face of foreign-sponsored protracted low-intensity conflicts that continue to be a major irritant governing relations in the region.

- In the European case, well-defined boundaries facilitated CBMs, while in the South Asian (as also the
Sino-Indian context their boundaries remain generally ill defined and porous. Therefore, the ultimate objectives of the states remain the resolution of border disputes, towards which most of the CBMs serve as the means to do so.

- A broad-based and people-to-people CBM process defines its functioning in South Asia.
- The countries in South Asia lack equality of power, unlike the European experience where there was a broad balance between the two blocs.

Interestingly, Ye Zhengjia calls the two agreements pertaining to CBMs in the military field along the Line of Actual Control in the China-India border areas (signed in 1993 and 1996 respectively) as Conflict Avoidance Measures initially, later moving towards CBMs.

In a recent work (India and China: A Way Ahead After “Mao’s India War”) a former Indian Ambassador to China, C. V. Ranganathan, noted that progress in going beyond CBMs could be based on general principles to which both sides have been committed for twenty years. These are:

- Settlement of the boundary question through peaceful and friendly consultations
 Creation of a favourable climate and conditions for a fair and reasonable settlement

Development of relations in all fields as a contribution to the above

Maintenance of peace and tranquility along the LAC pending a solution to the question.

A solution to the boundary question should be acceptable to the peoples on both sides.

**7. Conclusions**

Although the South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation (SAARC) was designed to pursue mainly economic gains and does not have a political and security agenda (its Charter requires all decision to be taken on the basis of unanimity and the Charter deliberately excludes from SAARC deliberations bilateral and contentious issues), it has a vital political role to play. The SAARC annual summits and meetings between Ministers and high officials provide an opportunity to hold dialogues on vital bilateral and regional issues. As a consequence, SAARC has a significant potential for building confidence across the region. Unfortunately this mechanism has not been in use since the military coup on October 12, 1999 in which Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was removed from office. Subsequent crises, some having nothing to do with Pakistan's troubles, have had a part to play in
preventing SAARC from fulfilling its role as an informal political forum for the region’s leaders to discuss urgent problems.

In his “Approach to Comprehensive and Co-operative Security”, Major General (Retd) Dipankar Banerjee of India, former Executive Director of the Regional Centre for Strategic Studies in Colombo, has identified the following principles for the SAARC fraternity:

- The acceptance of current political realities. He emphasizes that boundaries must be considered inviolable, at least for the near term.
- Non-interference in each other’s internal affairs so that support to destabilizing influences is ended.
- The independent nation-states of South Asia need to follow a determined policy to develop collective resilience in the region to guard against negative outside influences.
- Comprehensive economic growth for the entire region must be facilitated so that the region as a whole and all its constituents benefit no matter where development occurs.
- The security of one South Asian nation cannot be at the expense of another, but can be achieved only through joint effort.
Overall military capabilities must be limited to that which is just 'sufficient' for individual national requirements.

If military capabilities are asymmetric, as they may well be for justifiable reasons, their deployment should be such as to be the least threatening to the affected neighbour.

The initiation of confidence and security building measures does not require the pre-existence of trust. Following the example of Europe where it took two decades for CBMs to become effective, the expectation of quick results should be avoided. At the same time the present grave crisis in Afghanistan makes rapid movement desirable.

Experience shows that CBMs have a better chance of effectiveness if they operate within the context of an ongoing peace process rather than in the absence of such a process. The Agra Summit between the Pakistani President and the Prime Minister of India, despite its partial success, gave hope that the peace process would continue. Unfortunately the tragic events of September 11 and the terrorist attack in Srinagar on October 1 have derailed this process. A resurgent SAARC strengthened in its political role appears to offer the only hope.
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