Introduction
Co-operation for security in South Asia is the quest. Confidence building in South Asia is still the grave concern in this region. And CBMs are in particular focus. Three broad issues interact in the theme; CBMs, security and the region. It is prudent to recognise them separately, though their intermix is evident. The focus of this article is to watch the interplay of these three aspects within the given rubric.

There have been many efforts at peaceful resolution of the problems that assail the peoples of the subcontinent for over five decades since independence. Yet for all these efforts the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) remains one of the weakest-knit regional associations of the world. This dubious distinction is brought into sharper relief following recent security developments, of the nuclear order, which now make the region a flash point for conflict. Formal peace initiatives have been launched, but their slow progress has prompted consideration of other
means for confidence building. Co-operation for security can be by none other than confidence building itself. The bilateral aspects are manifest. The regional sphere, within which the bilateral issues operate, is however less evident. This lack of balance in all the security initiatives undertaken within the region merits more consideration. This is the crying need of the hour.

Confidence building measures (CBMs) have however figured significantly amidst the negative security developments in the region of South Asia. Security analysts have dwelt on CBMs, their role and their effectiveness. The immediate problem that confronts this inquiry is the precise nature of the concept of CBMs. Following this the question is posed, in what conditions would CBMs serve effectively. This survey of the predisposing conditions would suggest ways and means that might be adopted for the future. This paper therefore would be arranged in that order.

In first section the definition aspects of the concept of CBMs would be examined to highlight the entailing problems, and to find some clarification of the issues that would serve the analysis. Country perspectives of confidence building in South Asia are the specific focus. Yet it is apparent that the regional perspective will be pertinent to the determination of the country perspective.
The second section of the paper would seek to identify the conditions that would help enhance the effectiveness of CBMs. Preconditions that served the effectiveness of CBMs in other regional associations of the world would be identified for their relevance to this region. Lessons for the future would emerge from this survey.

Section three will therefore be focused on the prospects and the possibilities that would hold good for the future.

1. **Concepts and Approaches**

A number of ideas and concepts figure in the subject under consideration. CBMs, confidence building and security co-operation, and the concept of region interplay within the given theme. Where CBMs had specific meaning in the European context in the early seventies, the transplant of that idea to the South Asian context has brought in diverse connotations. Some clarification of these initially is appropriate.

1.1. *Sri Lankan Perspective*

A Sri Lankan perspective of confidence building in South Asia is nearly submerged in the relations between India and Pakistan. The latter dominates the concerns in the region. A Sri Lankan perspective is yet discernible, but this itself is
largely a matter of Sri Lanka - India relations. Confidence building in South Asia from the Sri Lankan point of view is determined by her relations with India. Post-colonial history affirms this overriding position. A Sri Lankan perspective of confidence building in South Asia as a region has therefore barely asserted itself. There have been efforts at identifying the country's own interests with that of the region as a whole, or of forging regional consensus over and above that of narrower national interests and perspectives. These efforts have been intermittent, and hardly of a sustained nature. This is true of the position of other smaller countries of the region. In fact, the perspectives of the other smaller nations in South Asia similarly find very little mention, in that sense, of individual projections. They too are largely dominated by their own relations with India. The Indian dimension then looms large in the country perspectives. And this has been a substantial determinant on the matter of building of confidence in the region as a whole. Yet there is a Sri Lankan perspective to confidence building in South Asia. Other smaller states in the region have their own perspectives in their relations with India. Their relations with the region as a whole are of another order. These several perspectives of all the nations of the region, severally, do add up to the level of confidence built in South Asia.
The issue of CBMs itself, that now engages the current discourse, barely figures in any formal sense in Sri Lankan relations in the region. There are very few of such with India itself, or with the other countries in the region. These are barely referred to as CBMs. From a Sri Lankan perspective then the concept of CBMs in its essential sense has little practical application. It has nothing of the connotation that CBMs offer in respect of relations between other countries of the region, particularly those with adversarial relationships. This is in reference to CBMs in the strict sense of specific measures adopted to ease tensions and avoid hostilities.

In the wider area of state relations, CBMs in the broad sense would have some pertinence to Sri Lanka's relations within the region. In that view, a Sri Lankan perspective limited to her relations with India would not suffice. The relations among all the states of the region and the confidence built among all would be pertinent to the total configuration. Confidence building is thus intertwined with the interstate relations among all the countries in the region. Though the problem between India and Pakistan dominates the total relations in South Asia, five other sovereign nations in the region contribute to the relationships having their own interests and aspirations. And each of these is tied in some way to the larger adversarial relationship and is affected by it. This
suggests a very complex tangle of relationships within the region. Briefly this web can be reduced to an interplay of the dominating principles in the complex, namely the separate national interests, the common supranational imperatives, and the political will of the governments of the region which determine the priorities. This aspect will be referred to in more detail presently. It is sufficient to observe here that confidence building for Sri Lanka would be greatly facilitated by a similar process of goodwill and friendly relations between and among all the other countries of the region.

In actual terms, the current impetus for a security analysis of confidence building measures may be recognised as the launching of a fresh initiative to deal with a problem that appears to be intractable through five decades of post-colonial experience in South Asia. The problem is none other than promoting peaceable relations in this region. In the India-Pakistan context CBMs as technical expedients are critically important. These naturally dominate the discourse. But the form of CBMs applicable to the total situation in the whole region can be as diverse as the means contemplated for peaceable resolution of the emerging security problems. South Asia requires an initiative on a broad front, even as it requires certain immediate measures.
Additionally, the effectiveness of these expedients would vary with the time and nature of the security problem that then confronts the adversarial parties. The nature of hostilities in the region will likewise determine the pertinence of CBMs. The recent nuclear risk situation in South Asia makes the need for CBMs critical. Specific measures are determined to meet that requirement. At other times the need for CBMs is present, though in some other form. The difference is also between the immediate and the long-term measures for confidence building. This may be logically explained. But in a practical sense there is artificiality in the distinction. In fact, short-term and long-term efforts at confidence building would symbiotically contribute to the effectiveness of each other. On the other hand, these expedients contrived in separate compartments can even undermine the positive expectations, in that they do not cumulatively add up to transparent confidence building. A mix of conceptual issues afflicts the singleness of the idea. An indeterminate proposition in CBMs then would hardly serve as an adequate tool for conceptual analysis, nor even help to promote effectiveness in conflict resolution. Some clarification of the scope of CBMs initially is appropriate.

1.2. Definition of CBMs

An interpretation of the terms deployed is useful at this point. While it affords some clarification of the overlap of
meanings, the difficulties encountered in the definition would itself reflect on the limited nature of CBMs and their application. Narrow and short-term expedients will barely serve. It also reveals in sharper relief that a broader front of a regional strategic consensus would be necessary to deal with the problem that yet confronts South Asia.

**Strict definition.** In a strict sense CBMs have a specific focus; risk reduction is surely the need of the hour. Therefore, in this view, the important concern is specifically on the methods and techniques involved in the process. These would apply clearly to military measures, distinct from non-military confidence building measures. The distinction is useful. But confidence itself can hardly lend itself to categorisation, military and non-military. From the Sri Lankan perspective the focus on non-military measures is more relevant than on strictly military measures. In the Indo-Pakistan context the position would be otherwise. With the strict definition of CBMs the emphasis is on the particular measures adopted, than on the product realised at the end. Accounts of CBMs operating in this region often come up against problems of implementation. The specific measure itself for confidence building then calls for review.

**Literal meaning.** A literal interpretation is little different from a strict definition. A definition itself of CBMs or a
delineation of its scope is itself a daunting task. Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema\(^2\) observes that defining CBMs is not a problematic pursuit, if the literal meanings of the three words involved are kept in mind. This would imply 'any action, any development, any measures, any arrangement, any understanding, any agreement or any treaty that generates confidence between adversaries could be interpreted as a CBM'. This definition does confine itself to specific measures for confidence building. It is however open-ended. Such means are conventionally adopted to de-escalate a growing military apprehension. They are of a technical and operational nature. Invariably they are of a military order, and are devised as specific measures to ease tension and reduce risk. These CBMs have no doubt their purpose to serve. This literal definition however seeks an all-inclusive scope of measures, which in the ultimate analysis makes for little difference between confidence building measures and confidence building itself.

Moreover this definition within its ambit acknowledges a process in which confidence is generated between the adversaries at various stages of the progression. In that process confidence is built and the undesirable drift towards open hostilities is arrested. What is addressed here is a crisis. This needs to be managed. CBMs are therefore a preventive
measure to check the drift towards war. Their results though have not been even. The problem has been identified as one of implementation, that is implementation by itself and not a breakdown of a process of confidence building. This begs for further discussion.

1.3. Implementation of strictly defined CBMs

Problems of implementation reflect on the cogency of CBMs. Between India and Pakistan, there have been several critical situations in which war was barely averted. Since the 1980s, both countries have agreed to a number of formal and informal confidence building and conflict avoidance measures. These were in fact a tacit acknowledgement of the potential for conflict between these two states. And these measures grew in proportion to the intensity of the crisis. There were the episodes in 1987 following “Operation Brasstacks”, in 1990 with the escalation of the conflict in Indian administered Kashmir, and in 1999 with the Kargil exchanges. These crises demonstrate that the agreed CBMs between the two countries failed to de-escalate tensions and to build trust. The failure to implement the agreed measures has been repeatedly noted. ‘Hot-line’ communications have failed in the most critical of situations. It is recorded that the effectiveness of CBMs has on occasion declined in direct proportion to the seriousness of the crisis. And in relatively peace times, the effectiveness of
CBMs has been impaired by a failure to ensure their sustained implementation. Clearly then CBMs have only a limited role. And even in this limited scope their effectiveness depends on a host of other circumstances.

1.4. *Political will to promote CBMs*

Inadequacies with CBMs include an indeterminate political will to implement them. This further compounds their ineffectiveness. As with the problem of implementation, a lack of political will undermines prospects of positive development of confidence generation among the countries of this region. The lack of political will is but a function of short-term domestic political concerns overriding long-term positive regional interests. The elite and the decision makers entertain negative and adversarial images of the other party. This has a frustrating effect on any prospects for positive development. That tendency is further reinforced by the activities of the intelligence agencies, which contribute to these negative attitudes. These intrude into the CBM process, which essentially is a matter of promoting transparency and openness in state relations. It is even a matter of record that in a few instances where the political leadership asserted itself the intelligence services which stood across had even to be downgraded.
1.5. **Shattering confidence**

The effectiveness of CBMs will be impaired where other contrary persuasions apply. The problem for CBMs is then equally one of confidence shattering policies short of war and open hostilities. Ameen Izzadeen examined precisely this problem. There cannot be confidence building amidst other circumstances that undermine mutual respect and shatter the trust that is to be built. In that event confidence building is merely suspended. Ameen finds that there are many causes for this breakdown of positive developments. Domestic political concerns are one cause. In the event that there are accusations of interference across the borders, it is difficult for concessions in the form of CBMs to be made. These concessions are embroiled within the whirl of domestic politics in the conceding country. Mere electoral advantage impels this. Invariably, Ameen records, it is the opposition parties that exploit these situations. Governing regimes are therefore slow to take hard decisions. Domestic political concerns thus hold back decisive action for confidence building.

1.6. **Cross border interventions**

External interventions are not calculated for confidence building. A disconcerting feature that inhibits the operation of CBMs in this region is the confidence shattered through interventions across boundaries. This has been very much in
vogue for South Asia. As Chari puts it, "It is no secret that subversion and covert intervention in the internal affairs of their neighbours is national policy in South Asia". Intelligence agencies and the elite bureaucracy contribute to this state of affairs. In fact this disposition constitutes their very raison d'être. Once this process gets ossified that predisposition of the elite and of intelligence agencies becomes their vested interest. In this strain governments and intelligence services seek alignment with domestic politics of neighbouring countries. Cross border interventions of a destabilising nature can hardly reconcile itself with CBMs, which seek to dispel mutual mistrust and suspicion. Chari clearly acknowledges that "Inter- and intrastate insecurity is linked and spill across national borders; they have often been fomented by the regional countries against their neighbours".

1.7. Preconditions for CBMs

CBMs construed in this strict and narrow sense have also faltered on other grounds. Here the survey was specifically related to military CBMs. Samina Ahmed identified these grounds as preconditions that must be present for the successful implementation of military confidence building and conflict avoidance measures. Among these one relates to the importance of a political will to sustain the effectiveness of these CBMs and to help build mutual trust.
The other precondition for the success of military CBMs, she asserts, is that these require parallel political, social and economic policies to build the environment for co-operation between state parties. Clearly then, neither military CBMs nor the more general confidence building are feasible in a limited context. Specific measures will serve only as general conditions, which promote trust to prevail. This is an incremental process. Confidence of course can be shattered on various grounds, and over short-term considerations. Dispelling mistrust and suspicion thereafter is a difficult proposition. Policies for positive developments over a long-term only can create the conditions for effective CBMs.

1.8. CBMs as a process

The problem of definition also flows from reification of a loose abstraction of a host of related considerations. The concept of CBMs is not very definite or specific in reality. In itself there is no precise meaning, nor firm concept. Even models of CBMs do not apply squarely. The confusion can even be with confidence building as against confidence building measures. And the means for confidence building can be confused with the end or the product. CBMs as a concept is then a loose abstraction of ideas. It is much more expedient to regard CBMs as part of a process. "Conceptually, confidence building is a process which can
transform a security situation. There is an objective to be achieved, a product to be delivered. Then confidence building measures per se will not be mistaken for confidence building. With the former, the idea of a temporary alleviation of the problem is the expectation. With the latter a whole restructuring of security relationships is the endeavour. Temporary expedients are conceivable with CBMs. Adoption of CBMs for purposes not more than to placate international opinion has been recorded. Other reasons as allaying heightened suspicions and hostile reactions have been merely CBMs to contain the situation. The underlying levels of hostility and mistrust will not allow ambitious CBMs of a more substantive nature.

The process dimension of CBMs is thus more important than the design of the CBM itself. Effective CBMs will flow naturally from the effort to develop co-operative solutions. And their design and structure will be an accompaniment to the actual process that has been set in motion. It is therefore more expedient to concentrate on understanding the role of the supporting conditions in which CBMs are set than on the CBMs itself. The preconditions are important to determine the prospects of CBMs in South Asia.

For Sri Lanka and for most of South Asia narrow, limited and piecemeal, or for that matter ad hoc measures for
confidence building will hardly suffice. A broader programme requires to be launched. For India-Pakistan interstate relations CBMs of the very specific nature will serve its purpose. Here too though, their real effectiveness depends on the ability to build a more congenial environment in which CBMs would operate.

1.9. **Broader Construction**

The strict delimitation of the scope of CBMs does not suffice. It is inadequate for either the Sri Lankan perspective or for the region of South Asia. The literal meaning to define the scope of CBMs took the concept beyond the idea of a measure. It included various means of that genre that could be adopted, even to include treaties. It also recognised that all these could be stages of a process, which strives to confidence building itself than as only a measure. Problems from implementation were confronted when seen as measures. At the same time the absence of a political will to give effect to such measures was often lamented. And whatever the measures adopted at the time, confidence-shattering circumstances in interstate relations had only the effect of making the measure as but an expedient for the time. It was therefore recognised that measures without congenial preconditions were of little worth. A more comprehensive approach to confidence building will be pertinent to Sri Lanka.
**Scope of CBMs extended.** The scope of CBMs has therefore to be extended, to cover the whole spectrum of the security environment within which specific measures could operate. These extended measures range from the technical to matters political, diplomatic, and even other mechanisms of a social and economic nature. All these constitute the backdrop to the specific propositions offered. The concept of CBMs by itself then loses its focus in this extended view. It entails a number of conceptual problems. The idea is itself diffused, and their cogency to mediate in the security problems is blunted. Their pertinence is likewise relative to the nature of the relationships of the states involved, whether adversarial, confrontational, or even less than benign. CBMs operating in South Asia would accordingly be country specific, depending on the nature of the states’ relationships and their security situation. A Sri Lankan perspective of CBMs would be feasible in terms of her relations with India. Similarly, an India-Pakistan perspective of CBMs is conceivable in a different frame of reference. The two perspectives would hardly relate to each other. In any case taken together, bilateral relations would by themselves barely contribute to any South Asian regional perspective of CBMs. This would apply in like manner to the other countries of this region. Notwithstanding certain deficiencies, CBMs of a broader nature would meet the requirements of security situation of South Asia, to cover a host of issues involved here.
CBMs therefore may defy precise definition. But yet for practical purposes it is clear that the broadest construction of its intent is inevitable. Limited concepts will have limited returns. Even where they are to serve a limited purpose they would operate in some effective way only in a broader context. The precise means in which this would function requires further clarification. Whether specific to the Sri Lankan perspective or in the wider South Asian regional context of security relationships a definition itself of CBMs or a delimitation of its scope barely avails the current requirements. The objective must subsume the whole process.

South Asian Perspective of CBMs. A Sri Lankan perspective of confidence building in South Asia needs therefore to take in both the strict definition of CBMs within the wider compass of the larger process of confidence building itself for the region as a whole. No doubt Sri Lanka - India relations will be paramount to the initial considerations. But these bilateral relations will be enhanced as they function within a broader set of regional relations covering South Asia. Other regional associations of the world may not be models to apply to South Asia, but the broad principles of association remain as important guiding principles.

Prospects for this, and for the effective determination of CBMs for this region, in a broader process of regional activity
are now emerging in the subcontinent. There is the urgent need for nuclear risk reduction methods to be deployed. Many CBMs to meet this threat to security have already been adopted. Some measure of confidence in this respect has been achieved. The position however remains precarious. Other problems remain unresolved. They even remain as a flash point in the relations between India and Pakistan for hostilities of a more conventional nature. It is clear that bilateral perspectives do not suffice. Neither do they add up to a regional perspective of the problem. The definitions and the ideas of CBMs and confidence building, as seen above, vary with the context of the relations.

Much of the preceding discussion will have some meaning only in a larger sense of security co-operation within the region. These concerns must be considered within a broader framework of congenial relations in the whole region of South Asia.

2. Preconditions for CBMs

Certain preconditions for the effective deployment of CBMs were discussed earlier. These were essentially of a technical nature. Sustained negotiations, implementation, transparency, and even political and other aspects of a more general nature were recognised as important prior
requirements for effective CBMs, particularly military ones. Preconditions here refer to the prevailing situation which is opportune for confidence building in general. They relate to the state of relations of the countries and their present disposition to move towards more peaceful relations.

Broadly these are identified as a weariness with the deteriorating security situation; dissatisfaction with the prevailing security policies; the rising costs of pursuing those policies; the need for a fresh lease of experts and policy makers with a flexible approach, even to take a 'leap of faith' over the emotional and conceptual threshold. In that sense, as Elliot L Tepper notes, "It appears that in South Asia the 'preconditions' are not present, though there are intriguing elements"\(^1\)\(^0\). A brief discussion of the preconditions for confidence building in South Asia from a Sri Lankan perspective is then appropriate. Since independence the Sri Lankan security perception was in terms of a major state in India projecting its power over its southern neighbour. This would be natural in the context of a small state juxtaposed next to a very big state. But relations between the two countries for long since independence had not been unfriendly. In fact this period witnessed very positive and good neighbourly exchanges. These made for much confidence building.
2.1. **Confrontational relationships and confidence building**

Since the late seventies however there was a perceptible shift in India - Sri Lanka relationships. Problems arose with the new orientation in Sri Lankan foreign policy to underpin her new economic policy. These ran into the 'security' concerns of India. Specifically the matters over which India took issue were a fear that America would take a foot hold in Sri Lanka, that short wave transmitters were to be installed for the Voice Of America (VOA), that the oil tank farm in Trincomalee would be leased out to American interests and could serve as a military facility, and even the Trincomalee harbour be used as a base. These apprehensions on the part of India were voiced in 1978. Denials and explanations offered were then of little avail. The situation has possibly turned a full circle today in 2001. The VOA transmitter is long installed and operative today. The strategic partnership between India and the USA, and more particularly the close rapport of the two countries after the terrorist attacks on the US in September 2001 and the offer of Indian air bases to the US, reflects on the earlier averred security and strategic concerns of India.

2.2. **Indian intervention and breakdown of confidence**

The ethnic crisis in Sri Lanka was the other issue. The riots of 1983 and the exodus of Tamil refugees in large numbers to India saw India directly drawn into the situation.
Much humanitarian assistance was afforded to them in Southern India. However, the Indian involvement went beyond these humanitarian concerns. The training of Tamil militants through the direct intervention by the Indian intelligence agencies and the consequences that flowed from it were none other than policies to further India’s hegemonic ambitions and serve its strategic interests. Training, funding and supply of arms to would be rebels in Sri Lanka seriously shattered the confidence in the bilateral relations between the two countries. Denials by the official agencies did not allay suspicions nor help in any way to build confidence.

2.3. Confidence building within regional hegemony

These episodes may be seen as essentially bilateral in nature, as between India and Sri Lanka. However, these had their regional ramifications too. Sri Lankan policies were seen as a strategic threat aimed at India’s efforts to be the dominant regional power in South Asia. Sri Lanka’s efforts to forge closer links with the West and with South East Asia were seen as attempts to ‘encircle’ India. The other smaller nations of South Asia like Bangladesh and Nepal were also suspected of being a party to such schemes. And in such diabolical schemes the hidden hand of Pakistan was always suspected. The regional dimension of even bilateral matters was in this perception brought to the fore. Confidence building for South Asia was therefore not merely a matter of bilateral relations but
equally of regional relationships among all the countries in the region. Even from a Sri Lankan perspective the South Asian perspective of CBMs and of confidence building was critically important.

The problems between Sri Lanka and India seen from the point of the smaller countries of the region were none other than following from the Indian objective of consolidating its regional hegemony in South Asia. The thrust of India's actions during the Bangladesh war is seen in that same light. In both cases Imtiaz Ahmed argued that India's support and involvement was to pursue its own national interests, these taking precedence over sympathies espoused for the fighting rebels.

These instances, apart from others of a less dramatic nature, reflect India's power extensions in the region. Mansingh notes: "India's desire for power was a reaction to its earlier powerlessness." In the episode relating to Sri Lanka India's reaction to the communal riots of July 1983, that response reflected an Indian view on the regional security of the region. This view was even referred to as a 'doctrine', a doctrine dubbed the 'Indira Doctrine'. The terms of this doctrine were not spelled out formally. But it was clear that India wanted to exclude any extra-regional involvement in
internal conflicts in the region. This policy even made out that India had no intention of intervening in such intra-state conflicts in the region.

The ‘Indira doctrine’ was in essence a projection of India’s regional power. The intelligence agency in India, the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), was established in 1968 to assist India in the projection of its power. This agency played an active role in East Pakistan in 1971, and in Sri Lanka and in India in support of the Tamil militant groups in the late seventies and the eighties. This type of action was not in keeping with the policy of the ‘Indira doctrine’. That policy held out that “India has no intention of intervening in internal conflicts of a South Asian country...”. Indian interventions in the internal affairs of Sri Lanka, through covert operations of the RAW in the seventies and in the eighties, make clear that the policy in operation was simply the projection of the regional power of India.

2.4. India’s security perspectives and promotion of confidence

Security paradigms in South Asia seriously undermine the prospects of favourable preconditions for confidence building. Lawrence Prabhakar explained the framework within which Indian security perspectives are rooted. The dominant
Indian perspective, he identifies, is that the South Asian system is Indo-centric. "This has endowed for itself a hegemonic role in the region and it beckons commensurate credence to its big power position in the region"\textsuperscript{16}. The operation of the Indira doctrine was clearly within this framework of the perspectives of India’s security. The covert operations prejudicial to the interests of the neighbouring states were easily assumed within that doctrine and the Indian security perspectives.

Chari, cited above, was uninhibited in recognising that subversion and covert intervention in the internal affairs of their neighbours was national policy in this region. This Sri Lankan instance was no exception. It was in this vein of positive developments that he recommended that the regional states should pledge in the form of CBMs that they should prevent the organisation, assistance or encouragement of any acts detrimental to the maintenance of peaceful and harmonious relations in South Asia\textsuperscript{17}. Implicit in this recommendation is the ultimate aim of CBMs as the maintenance of harmonious relations among the states in the region. Confidence building is itself the need, regional initiatives being the means. Elsewhere Chari examining the prospects for regional co-operation in South Asia observed that the sheer dominance of India in the geo-political structure
of the subcontinent has led to problems for harmonious relations in the region. More specifically, he finds that this reality has led to a deep psychological scarring of the South Asian psyche; India hopes that its natural predominance in the region is accepted as given, while that is resisted by her neighbours. With the smaller neighbours the conviction remains that India wishes to play the regional hegemony. Internecine strife rather than interstate co-operation is thus the post-colonial order both in the region of South Asia as a whole, and in the bilateral relations between India and Sri Lanka. The predisposition of the region has been more towards conflict than co-operation. Confidence building or CBMs per se and their prospects must be figured out within this oft-averred pattern of relationships for this region, dominated by Indian security perspectives.

The strains in regional relationships are not an inexorable consequence of what is described as an ‘ineluctable geo-political reality’ of the predominant position of India in the subcontinent. Benign and positive relationships did yet prevail in South Asia in the post-colonial period. They were however intermittent. From the Sri Lankan perspective in her relations with India, certain positive confidence building interludes are part of the total picture. Various outstanding issues of a bilateral nature were amicably settled. At the same
time during certain regimes of government on either side peaceable and harmonious relations prevailed. These were no doubt due to the active intercession of the political leaders to forge positive relationships between the two countries. Thus the policies followed under what is termed as the ‘Gujral doctrine’ have tended to be neighbourhood friendly, and is held out in contrast to the ‘Indira doctrine’. Prospects for positive development, though, were few and far between. This shows that initiatives for the better could yet be made, against the background of a bleak record of bilateral and regional relations in South Asia.

2.5. SAARC for confidence building

The forum for a regional initiative and open discussion of the fractious issues that plagued South Asia was conceived in the form of SAARC. It is appropriate to consider how far this association has contributed to confidence building in the region. Here again the record is not very encouraging. Its birth itself was laboured. Its growth and progress has been halting. Its Charter and agenda are extensive in many respects, but are of limited effect in the critical areas. Bilateral and contentious issues are excluded, and decisions have to be unanimous. Consequently security related and political issues which have been the basis of hostile perceptions and mutual animosities are thereby not sufficiently addressed
within SAARC deliberations. The practice of Heads of State meeting each other during the 'retreat' at Summit meetings provides an opportunity for discussion of critical issues informally.

The progress itself of SAARC meetings since its inception in 1985 has been bedevilled by political and security issues that find little means for resolution. Summit meetings have been postponed for various political reasons. Congenial preconditions that might have contributed to the more effective operation of SAARC are absent. In these circumstances the SAARC organisation barely avails. There is no room for any multilateral initiative to intervene in critical situations of disruptive relationships.

Confidence building in the South Asian region has therefore to be pursued despite the constraints of the SAARC process for co-operation, even parallel to that process. CBMs find their place in country-to-country relations particularly where crises set in. These are essentially problems of a bilateral nature. The thrust of any conflict resolution efforts remains bilateral. This limitation carries with it the hostile perceptions the adversarial parties had at the outset. The role of CBMs in South Asia is specifically in these limited circumstances. By definition they serve an immediate
requirement. But as seen above, even cumulatively or incrementally, CBMs do not amount to confidence building. Neither are they such as to progressively contribute to confidence building. SAARC then remains, despite its inherent weaknesses, the only means available to build confidence multilaterally, and to promote regional security cooperation. The barest prospects for security co-operation must be identified and the chances seized.

3. Prospects for CBMs in South Asia

"It appears that in South Asia the 'preconditions' are not present, though there are intriguing elements" states Tepper. Challenges for CBMs and security co-operation in South Asia must be examined in this light. The issues identified as preconditions above are daunting prospects for CBMs in South Asia. Predisposing factors that would constitute a favourable environment for confidence building are yet substantially not in place in this region. Future prospects for positive security developments in the subcontinent remain therefore the anxious concern of decision makers and political leaders. This has been so for over half a century.

3.1. Political agenda

Political and security matters are the most intractable of the issues for resolution. The SAARC Charter keeps out of its
agenda bilateral and contentious issues. Political and security issues are thus excluded from the proceedings of this forum. The core concerns for confidence building are thereby not addressed at these formal meetings. Nor is there any other means to alleviate security crises through deliberations and negotiation. The result has been barely promising, with the same reservations that inhibit SAARC deliberations holding back other means for positive security development. There is little change in this respect from just after independence.

But that problem for the region is now gaining more attention. Politics is coming more directly to the fore. At the SAARC Summit Meeting in July 1998, the Colombo Declaration "reiterated commitment...to the promotion of mutual trust...and recognising that the aim of promoting peace, stability and amity and accelerated socio-economic cooperation might best be achieved by fostering good neighbourly relations, relieving tensions and building confidence, agreed that a process of informal political consultations would prove useful in this regard...".

The problems remain formidable. The India-Pakistan hostilities loom large over security developments in the whole of the region of South Asia. This colours the relationships of the other smaller states with the bigger nations. Asymmetrical
perceptions and security perspectives, which induce conflict or mistrust, continue to plague the political relations in South Asia. They inhibit more positive development, and insidiously pervade the confidence building drive that engages this region.

3.2. Economics

Progress on the economic front in this region has been much more significant than political development. Where the political and security developments did not proceed satisfactorily economic co-operation was conceived as a strategy to create favourable conditions to deal with political issues. The economic basis for promoting co-operation and peaceable relations in South Asia has been underlined by security analysts. Political understanding is essential for economic co-operation. The progress of the regional preferential and free trade agreements has been impeded by the political problems mainly between India and Pakistan.

Yet economic co-operation cannot be allowed to remain hostage to political discord. Wider and deeper interaction in trade and investment would be a stabilising factor for political and security relationships. Economic interdependence will make for shared stakes in maintaining political stability and promoting co-operation at the regional level. A category of economic CBMs has even been identified and designated as
such. These are of the nature of trade and investment agreements and transit facilities. They are distinct from military CBMs. Their objectives are yet the same. Their strategies are but two approaches to the matter of confidence building. The process of confidence building through the adoption of economic strategies is thus pursued more actively, and this would gain further momentum, as its benefits would contribute to the generality of the people.

3.3. Regional perspectives

SAARC remains the prospective confidence building process in South Asia. A regionalisation process is emerging from within the impasse of interstate relations in the region. It is finding expression in the SAARC forum, and in the related deliberations of the region. A sense of region and of an association in South Asia, through its problems and its potential, is emerging phoenix like from the rubble and ashes of long experience. This idea is taking some form through the SAARC organisation. An impulsion to pursue the idea of the region in dealings with other countries, rather than limit them to bilateral relations, is finding expression through the SAARC forum of deliberations.

The problem addressed is the political and security consequence flowing from a lack of a regional strategic
consensus in South Asia. Even as these defy resolution, the forging of parallel relations on the basis of economic imperatives is propounded. The initial premise for this proposition is that countries fully engaged with each other in trade and financial flows are less likely to have their disputes and conflicts pouring over their economic interests into hostile postures. The next consideration is freer regional trade. This view even advocates non-reciprocal tariff concessions to the smaller states. The impulsion is not simply economic. “It is the contention....that the political rationale is every bit as strong as the economic”\textsuperscript{20}. These arguments do hold and are reflected in the more insistent attention given to the economic matters in SAARC deliberations. At the same time it is of concern that the challenges posed by the world wide globalisation could be faced better through a South Asian economic region than through individual states responses.

The adoption of a regional perspective in dealing with the many dimensions of the problem in South Asia entails a measure of surrender of its several sovereignties. This is at the core of the problem of forging a regional identity, of advancing the interests of all the countries of the region, and of building on the common civilisation base, that a regional perspective necessitates. Confidence would surely be built on this premise of a subordination of separate national interests to the common will.
3.4. **South Asian Community**

India's attitude towards the smaller countries of the South Asian community has been described as hegemonic. As the hegemon or the dominating power exercising leadership this description can have a benign connotation. Such an association within a region can be as of a confederation; the countries in that sphere of influence enjoying certain benefits from that hegemon. At the other end of the meaning of the term hegemon is the domination of the area and the countries within it, with no benefits being extended in return. Regional community association would largely depend on the nature of the hegemonic relationship pervading over the countries in the region.

CBMs or confidence building, as now is the endeavour, would function at some point within this spectrum of state relations. From Sri Lanka's point of view, India's policy of arming and training the Tamil militants was a very shortsighted and perilous policy. It was an exercise of hegemony of the dominant state with no benefits extended to the smaller nation. Clearly it was less than a benign form of influence that made for a leadership role for the region. It was hardly an experience that would promote confidence.

The perspectives of the other countries in the region are of a similar order. Consequently, the prospects of forging a
sense of South Asian community remain to be achieved in the subcontinent, even at this point of time. Over five decades have lapsed since the countries of this region gained independence and had control over their own affairs. The record of progress in the building of a South Asian community during this time has been dismal. Security problems still abound. Some of them are nearly intractable. Others have simply been brought upon by reasons of national interests and narrower policies. This harrowing experience for the parties on both sides of the problem is yet worth the while, if some positive developments would emerge. This is the single quest in the region. CBMs or confidence building, given the preceding experience, is therefore opportune today. Such a proposition could hardly have been contemplated any earlier. Much time had to lapse.

Adopting the typology of James Macintosh\textsuperscript{21}, the point may have reached a "security management fatigue" from all that has transpired in South Asia since independence. The prospects for the future are not clear. The security policies that prevailed and the policies pursued may not satisfy the aspirations of the generality of the peoples in this region. Elite and vested interests alone would yet persist with them. At the same time the costs involved in pursuing these policies would now be taking their toll. The possibility of alternate measures
to stem the tide of negative developments as a result is now being seriously considered. These concerns are equally with the smaller nations of the region as with the dominant ones.

A community consciousness and a regional identity for South Asia are emerging through the fatigue. This finds expression in the variety of strategies adopted in the region, initiatives to promote direct contact with the peoples, business communities, academics, legal practitioners, the media and journalists. These devices and the narratives of their exercise strongly point to the depth of man-to-man relationships, and their potential for regional association, otherwise held back by vested interests. A radical new vision for the region then, shorn of divisive and disruptive tendencies and persuasions that have long inhibited positive development, is the objective. This vision could make CBMs or even the larger process of confidence building meaningful.

Conclusion

Confidence building in South Asia is evolving. From the Sri Lankan point of view the process in this development is watched with anxious concern. This indeed would be the interest of all the other smaller states of the region. The smaller countries of the region have very much in stake with confidence building. They have no political advantage to
pursue from continued hostility and mutual animosities. The semantics of CBMs as against confidence building itself and its larger process has little relevance to the aspirations and interests of Sri Lanka. The theoretical discourse that attempted definition of the terms and approaches to the problem barely clarified the issues. These reflected on the adequacy of the perspective adopted. The process is more important than the immediate product. Models were of little avail. The concept of CBMs itself barely accorded with reality in this region.

The reason was that their context was not quite appropriate, and the timing not opportune. It was only in the larger background of a congenial environment and favourable circumstances that CBMs or confidence building could be founded effectively. These related to the preconditions to confidence building at large, not to ways and means of a technical nature to sustain specific agreements. These conditions were but the result of a host of circumstances that impelled more positive confidence building initiatives and endeavours. For this region of South Asia such conducive circumstances were largely absent. There were nascent indications of more positive prospects. These have to be built upon. The Sri Lankan perspective would be complete alignment with those projections. Their empathy is with those expectations.
The merest chances should be availed of, the faintest of prospects seized and built on. Confidence building in South Asia and from the perspective of Sri Lanka would invest in these possibilities. Certain broad recommendations can be offered as principles to guide the process to building confidence. They will be referred to briefly.

An institutional network is useful to help initiate a process of sustained exchange and consultation for CBMs and confidence building. The SAARC process needs to be supplemented by a more regular arrangement for dispute resolution, bearing in mind that the mechanism for economic co-operation would be separate from that which dealt with security matters.

Shared stakes is the critical principle that makes for confidence building. Whether in political terms or more clearly in economic terms, stakes and interests in the agreement equally shared would muster the confidence required. Many agreements have foundered on the imbalance in the stakes; imbalances are none other than in-built national power projections.

National security through regional co-operation is more feasible in the current context. There is the security dimension of anticipated threats from globalisation. These are best
addressed through regional co-operation. This would enable countries of this region to meet the pressures from transactional corporations, external governments and international financial institutions that would ultimately have security implications. This would be a more compelling reason for regional co-operation.

Return benefits for influence and power exercised is another underlying principle in confidence building. This principle is the obverse of the principle of co-operation identified above. The opposite of this is hegemonism in its confidence shattering sense.\(^2\)

South Asia has embarked on a process of confidence building, drawing on the larger concerns for regional co-operation and security. This is a clear step from the resort to CBMs, which is yet the pressing need of the moment. The ultimate vision is to transform a conflict situation in South Asia to move towards the goal of a more comprehensive security, as the means by which confidence would be built in this subcontinent.

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**Endnotes**


2. Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, "CBMs and South Asia", in (ed.), *Confidence Building Measures in South Asia*, (Regional Centre for Strategic Studies, Colombo 1999 ), p29.
3 ibid. p139.


5 P.R. Chari, 'CBMs in Post Cold War South Asia', in Dipankar Banerjee, 1999, op.cit.,p47.

6 ibid. p43.


9 Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, "CBMs and South Asia", op. cit, p29.

10 Elliot L Tepper, "CBMs and the Role of SAARC", in op.cit, p110.


16 Ibid. p62.

17 PR Chari, op. cit. p47.

Elliot L Tepper, "CBMs and the Role of SAARC", op.cit. p110.


Quoted in Elliot L Tepper, "CBMs and the Role of SAARC", in op.cit, p110.

For fuller discussion of hegemonism, see John Gooneratne op.cit, pp 12-13 and 205.