If absence of fear is the essence of security, then it rests upon several interlinked variables. Sense of security is enhanced by the confidence that one can resist pressures; political, economic, social and above all military, both from within the country and from outside it. That confidence can come either from the feeling of adequate strength, either individually or collectively, to resist pressure, or by creating an environment of cooperation which helps to lower the threshold of fear. While the first option inevitably leads to a spiral of adversary relations, thereby continuously eroding the feeling of security, the second option strengthens it. The second option is, therefore, always preferable and worth striving for. It also promotes development.

Comprehensive development depends upon optimum resource mobilisation for development purposes not only from within the state, but also from the region as a whole. No single country, unless it is large enough, like USA or the USSR, and endowed with all necessary resources, can hope to plan for its development in total isolation. The region, therefore, plays a crucial role in the optimum resource mobilization. Therefore, environment of regional cooperation not only enhances sense of security and helps reduce defence-related expenditure, but also helps in optimum utilization of regional resources for each of its component units.

Long-term regional cooperation presupposes stable state systems and an agreed common denominator for regional cooperation. Scholars have long recognized the linkage of domestic and foreign policies but very few of them have sought to correlate the inter-
relationship between domestic or systemic stability/instability and regional stability/instability. In a subsystem, where nations are geographically contiguous and also otherwise linked, domestic stability is the root of regional stability. It is, therefore, necessary to search for structures of stability so as to strengthen peace and development not only in a state but also in the region.

Stable State System

Security and development are inextricably interlinked. No government which is beset with problems of security will be able to attend to development. It is also essential to understand that the parameters of security and development of newly independent states of the South are different from those of the North. Unlike the South, the North is an ‘evolved’ society, with near stable structures of state system, whether they be based upon liberalism or socialism, free enterprise or centralized economy or a combination of these variables. South is still searching for such a stability.

Relatively short duration of anti-colonial or independence movement in many of these countries was often inadequate to generate strong national roots. Moreover, borrowed political, economic and social structures in many cases failed to accommodate complex socio-economic, religious and ethnic-related questions that had their inevitable political fallout not only in the domestic but also regional and international scene. Effects of these weak and often unstable structures of state system often spilled-over into the neighbourhood and led to regional instability. The spiral of conflictual relations generated thereby had its impact upon the wide spectrum of developmental processes of the South.

Countries of the South, in the first flush of their independence, failed to realize the need for evolving strong and stable indigenous structures of state system. While they borrowed from the structures of the North, they failed to take into account the inbuilt constraints of the developing society or its unique problems of interplay of ethnicity, religion, poverty and political immaturity. The result is that, in the South, one often sees a trend towards the gradual erosion and often collapse of the state structure itself, or “disinte-

grated sovereignty phenomenon as one scholar has put it. The Lebanon is a glaring example of that phenomenon. Other examples of such downward trend are Afghanistan, Burma, Kampuchea, Sri Lanka etc., to quote a few States in and around South Asia. In these cases, while the state exists as a de jure entity, there is a de facto erosion of the state system per se. It not only affects stability and, therefore, security of the respective state but also poses a potential threat to the stability and security of the region itself.

A stable state system takes cognizance of the diverse socio-economic and political variables reflecting the peculiar characteristics of each state. It evolves over years. Even in the North, it took decades if not centuries before a stable state system could evolve. In Russia and several East European States, evolution of a stable state system is still an ongoing process. Countries of the South too are going through the process of evolving a stable state system due to the basic transition from colonialism to independence. For centuries, their socio-economic and political development was retarded if not fossilized and when they became independent they were confronted with the task of evolving not only a modern society but also a modern state system under tremendous socio-economic, political and foreign policy constraints.

What type of state system one would like to live under needs careful consideration. Also, conscious and sustained efforts are required to move the country towards that direction. There are bound to be differences of opinion about the nature of that system, but it is far better to arrive at it through a process of consensus. That alone can give not only a degree of stability to the system but also legitimize it through the rule of law rather than through force.

It is also essential to note that each State or people need to evolve the denominators of their state systems among themselves. That is a basic condition underlined by the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). The Ministerial Meeting of the Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Countries, at Managua in January 1983, in its political declaration, reaffirmed “the sovereign rights of the people of the region to choose their own political, economic and social systems free from all foreign interference”. Outsiders cannot

3. Ibid., p. 23.
thrust them upon others because it would then be treated as an affront to national sovereignty.

It, however, needs to be noted that since no single state can hope to exist in isolation, if not in a state of hostility in the region, these denominators should also take into account the susceptibilities of the neighbours. That will help lay the foundation for the spirit of regional cooperation and also prevent or reduce the impact of the possible spill-over effect of their policy upon the neighbourhood.

While evolving the social basis of the state system, factors like ethnicity, religion, newly emerging classes etc. need to be taken into consideration. The old class structure is rapidly breaking down and new class structure influenced by a new combination of social, economic and political power equations are emerging. It is essential to harmonize these new factors in the larger national ethos, to minimise their negative impact and avoid using them for short-sighted political objectives, because such short-sighted policies are capable not only of seriously damaging the state system in the long run but also to have a spill-over effect on the neighbourhood and thereby not only destabilize regional harmony but also jeopardize peace and security.

Of late, demands based upon ethnicity, language, religion etc. have started posing a serious challenge to the very foundation of the state structure in South Asia. Undue emphasis upon these factors in state politics invariably leads to disintegrative sectarian divisions and violence. These issues can threaten regional stability even if they may appear to be purely domestic issue of a given state. Several scholars have commented upon this spill-over effect. The poser, in the special issue on South Asia of the *Seminar*, put it very directly in the context of South Asia. It said, “since we are all domestically vulnerable—we in Punjab and Tamil Nadu, Pakistan in Sind, Sri Lanka in Jaffna—we have a common interest in reducing our domestic vulnerabilities”.


Search for the economic system of newly emerging state is a challenging task before the scholars as well as policy makers to which great deal of attention has been paid. South, consisting mostly of developing states (despite the degree of development), is faced with the major problem of transition from a colonial economy, based upon strong colonial-metropolitan linkages, to the economy of an independent state searching for an autonomous base for development. Countries of the South are faced with multiple choice in determining their form of economy. Should it be free-market economy or centralized economy or a mixed economy. The countries of South Asia, have by and large, opted for a mixed economy, and for good reasons, but even then the proportion of the mix of free-market and centralized economy for optimum growth of economy for each state would always remain a subject for heated debate.

A factor that is common to South Asia is the reliance on planning for development and for making the optimum use of limited resources for achieving a desired goal. Also, of late, we have realized the advantage of regional cooperation as an input in national economic development, whether it be in the field of water management or communication. There is now need to combine the two variables; planning at national level and cooperation at regional level. It is time that we seek to plan for the region rather than a ‘State’. Of course, it will face several constraints, mainly political and bureaucratic, but what is good for national development cannot be harmful for regional development.

The political system to be stable needs to satisfy two basic characteristics. It has to be representative and should be resilient enough to respond to the socio-economic evolution of the society over the years. If it lacks resilience, the form of government is likely to change with each little shock. Such a state will lack stability and will gradually become regime-oriented rather than system-oriented. In international relations it is always fruitful in the long run to interact with stable systems rather than with regimes.

Development of healthy democratic institutions ensuring proper participation in all political, economic and social activities by all sections of the population is, therefore, a necessity for internal stability and peace. Stability and resilience of the political system depends to a large extent upon the degree of its representative characteristic. Thus, the form of government needs to reflect the socio-

economic and geographic characteristics of the state. These variables would help to determine whether it should be federal or unitary, should have single party or multi-party system or should experiment with a non-party system, whether it should be republican or monarchical, presidential or parliamentary, secular or otherwise etc. Whatever be the format, it should have the sanction of the people so that their representatives carry the stamp of legitimacy.

Thus, if one seeks to identify the variables that influence the type of the state system, one can identify some of them as ethnicity, religion, classes, pattern of mixed economy, various developmental models, nature of planning at state level, type of political system and above all, the form of government and institutions conferring legitimacy upon it. It is not inappropriate to expect that an optimum mix of these variables, suitable for a given country, would take its own time to evolve over a number of years. But what is important is that the common denominators of state system should be arrived at through a process of consensus and after great deal of deliberation so that all have a stake in its continuity and even survival. It is this lack of stakes in the state system, by a section of population, that is, to a large extent, responsible for the gradual erosion of the state system per se.

Since their independence, the countries of South Asia have been experimenting with various models. They were largely borrowed either from the ex-imperial power or from the new experiment in centralized planning. They could experiment with various political models like parliamentary form of government or single-party system and economic models based upon centralized planning. But no social mode was available in the North which could be suitable for the countries of the South because factors like ethnicity, religion and emerging class structures were a phenomenon peculiar to the South in the second half of the twentieth century. The nationalities model of the Soviet Union was inadequate because firstly, it did not fit into the liberal-democratic and parliamentary form of government, and secondly, it sought to minimise or ignore the forces of ethnicity and religion.

India tried to evolve a social model because of the urgency of dovetailing it with economic and political models after its independence. It recognized separate identity of these groups as well as sought to provide a framework for their integration in the mainstream of the nation through various socio-economic concession and
political representations, *viz.* linguistic provinces within a federal form of government, reservation and quota system for the scheduled castes and tribes, secularism as the basis of the state system etc. The experiment, despite its short-comings, has kept India united and stable so far.

Some scholars have sought to explain the systemic disparity between India and the neighbouring states as a factor conditioning their mutual security/insecurity perceptions.² Prof. Haq believed that the slower pace of development of political institutions in India’s neighbourhood placed that systemic disparity in sharp relief.³ Undoubtedly, all things being equal, India’s sympathies would be with democratic, secular, socialist and non-aligned forces, but international relations are not based upon systemic symmetry models only.⁴ Else, it will be difficult to explain the close relationship between Saudi Arabia and USA, Nepal and China or USA and China. They are all asymmetrical models. Systemic asymmetry can at best be an explanation and not the cause for adverse relationship between two international actors. The real reason may well have to be searched in the perception of security/insecurity and common benefits of these actors.

Each of the countries of South Asia will have to independently determine the common denominators of the respective state systems. These common denominators cannot be forced under coercion but will have to evolve through dialogue and consensus. That process is still incomplete in several states and is one of the causes not only of instability in the states but also in the region. It is also important to note in this context that regional cooperation is best possible when each constituent unit is stable. Else, relations tend to be confined to the Heads of the State or of the Government, and do not grow roots at the level of the State *per se*. That is not a sound foundation for a long-lasting bilateral or regional cooperation.

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Common Denominators of Regional Cooperation

Regional cooperation can only depend upon the acceptance of the basic principles of state sovereignty, and, therefore, of mutual non-interference. But one must also seek to understand the limits of state autonomy in the context of regional cooperation. It will be difficult to justify the spill-over of the acts of a sovereign independent state in the neighbourhood under the concept of state sovereignty and yet rationalize it as a factor likely to promote regional cooperation. In other words, state sovereignty, in the absolute sense, will have to be redefined in the framework of regional cooperation or else the reactions to the acts of one state might lead to tension, legitimate or otherwise, among the neighbours. That will in turn sow the seeds of conflictual environment and heighten the sense of insecurity.

Search for security in the environment of regional conflict will inevitably lead to arms build-up, increased defence spending and even alliance system. The consequent militarization of the region will have its logical impact upon national as well as regional development. Hence, there is need to search for common denominators that would help to avoid regional disharmony, promote regional stability and thus help accelerate the process of regional cooperation and development.

In this context, it is also essential to reexamine the very concept of international security. One can look at it either from the path of conflictual approach or of cooperative approach to international relations. Unfortunately, today the concept of security is generally based upon the belief in the inevitability of conflict and is based upon the conflictual approach. In an area where there is asymmetry among regional powers, the concept of ‘big power hegemony’ is also added for good measure. The net result is that the region enters into a spiral of conflictual relations which worsens with the entry of foreign powers hostile to one regional power or the other. The framework of security based upon the model of inevitability of conflict and, hence, on diplomatic and military measures directed towards that end, over the years, adds to the feeling of mutual insecurity and directly and indirectly promotes underdevelopment.

The cooperative approach to security, on the other hand, seeks to reduce mutual distrust through regional harmony and cooperation. The usual model of international security is based upon the inevitability of adversarial relations. Even among the Super Powers,
the Cold War remained the central theme in their relations; be they
the SALT or even the INF Treaty. That model was also partly
responsible for the massive arms build-up between them during the
period of the so-called detente. In that context, the logic of mutual
arms reduction, which is being proposed as a measure of confidence
buildup in South Asia, also needs to be reexamined. If relations are
adversarial, war can start even with a low force level. The three
Indo-Pak armed conflicts were fought with much less force levels on
both sides. That disproves the hypothesis that one can control or
eliminate wars or build mutual confidence only by reducing the force
levels.

Wars can be avoided primarily by replacing the military thinking
on security by concentrating on evolving an acceptable political
syndrome of conflict resolution and crisis management. Thus, there
is need to evolve a non-military approach to the question of intra-
regional peace and security. In that context, the central strategy
for peace and security in South Asia should be the creation of an
environment of mutual understanding, trust and confidence through
cooperation, especially in areas of common and vital interest having
no political undertones, at least at the initial stages. These over-
tones can develop with time and with the strengthening of mutual
confidence in the region.

The cooperative approach to regional security will also, over the
years, help to realign the security parameters of the states in the
region from inward looking to outward looking. Thus, even without
the need for a regional alliance, the threat perception of the consti-
tuent states will be greatly reduced. It will lead to a rethinking on
the optimum force requirement, keeping in view primarily the extra-
regional threats. It will consequently help not only in redeploying
but also in reducing the military strength of regional powers. That,
in turn, will have an impact upon the reallocation of resources for
development.

Such an approach to regional security, possible only in an
environment of regional cooperation, will also promote development
through regional cooperation. International relations are not
based upon unilateral magnanimity, but upon realistic assessment
of the mutuality of interests and efforts towards their equitable
realization. One can concede to a friend and thereby help strengthen
the bonds of friendship, but one does not concede to an adversary or

to a friend of an adversary and even if one has to do so it only adds fuel to the fire of hostilities, overt or covert.

Scholars and NGOs have a vital role in promoting new ideas and help create a new environment. It is very difficult for Governments to float new ideas lest they be taken as policies. Scholars have no such constraints. Non-official channels have already assumed significant role in international relations in the North. Their potential has been neglected in the South. It is best left to the NGOs to promote and debate ideas and even provide a framework for their operationalization so that they are thoroughly discussed without any Government committing itself to them. If the ideas are feasible, Governments can take them up at the official level if they so wish.

**Framework for Regional Cooperation**

It is not adequate to talk about the structures or common denominators of regional security and cooperation without also providing for the theoretical framework and the plan or instruments for the implementation. Since it cannot be fruitfully based upon the syndrome of spiral of perpetual adversary relationship, it will have to adopt the conceptual framework of non-conflictual approach to security. Hence, containing the conflict and finally eliminating the causes of conflict will have to be the basic norm of this approach. Though the underlying principles behind the policy of non-alignment will contribute a great deal to the evolution of this concept, the theoretical and practical guidelines provided in the Charter of the UNO and also of the OAU, as well as the Panch Sheel and the Bandung Principles will contribute a great deal towards its formulation. Above all, when one studies the SAARC Charter one can see these principles reflected in that also.

The United Nations Organization, that grew out of the holocaust of the Second World War, highlighted the principles of non-conflictual approach to security. Undoubtedly the UN, under Article 24 and Chapter VII of the Charter, provided for use of force by the collective will of all the Great Powers. But, these provisions became redundant due to the Cold War. Hence, *per force*, the UN has emphasized upon pacific settlement of dispute rather than the use of force as the means to settle international dispute. Articles 2, 33 and 54 of the Charter deal with in great details. Also, General Assembly resolutions like 2625 (XXV) of 24 October 1970 and 2732 (XXV) of 16 December 1970 urged the Member States to refrain from threat
or use of force, to settle dispute by peaceful means and refrain from intervening in matters of domestic jurisdiction of other states.

The next major conceptual advance in that direction, outside the UN, was made in 1954, when these principles were highlighted in the agreement signed on 29 April 1954 between India and China and reiterated in the *joint communiqué* issued following the visit of Chon En-lai to New Delhi on 28 June 1954. These principles, also known as the *Pancha Sheel* are: mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty, non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit and, finally, peaceful coexistence.

These principles were further consolidated during the Bandung Conference in April 1955. The famous Declaration on World Peace and Cooperation, included in the final resolution of the Conference, said that free from distrust and fear, and with confidence and goodwill towards each other, nations should practice tolerance, live together in peace with one another as good neighbours, and develop friendly cooperation on the basis of the following ten principles:

1. Respect for fundamental human rights and for the purposes and principles of the UN Charter,
2. Respect for the sovereignty and the territorial integrity of all nations,
3. Recognition of the equality of all races and nations, large and small,
4. Abstention from intervention or interference in the internal affairs of countries,
5. Respect for the rights of each nation to defend itself singly or collectively in conformity with the UN Charter,
6. Abstention from the use of arrangements of collective defence to serve the particular interest of any of the Big Powers; and abstention by any country from exerting pressures on other countries,
7. Refraining from acts or threats of aggression or the use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any country,
8. Settlement of all international disputes by peaceful means such as negotiation, conciliation arbitration, judicial settlement, as
other judicial peaceful means of parties' own choice in conformity with the UN Charter,

(9) Promotion of mutual interest and cooperation, and
(10) Respect for justice and international obligations.

The Charter of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), formulated in 1963, not only reiterated most of these ideas in Article III, but also unreservedly condemned political assassination as well as subversive activities on the part of neighbouring states or any other state. The OAU Charter also went a step ahead of other institutions by providing for an institutional framework for the implementation of the non-confictual approach to security. It incorporated the provision for creating a Commission of Mediation, Conciliation and Arbitration. Its composition and conditions of service were to be defined in a separate protocol to be approved by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the OAU. Unfortunately that idea was still born.

Principles like the respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of states, non-interference and non-intervention in internal affairs as well as peaceful coexistence among states with different political and social systems have been reiterated by the NAM since the beginning at the Belgrade Summit in September 1961. The principle of respect for state frontier, as they existed, was added during the Cairo Summit in October 1964. The Colombo Summit of August 1976 defined intervention in all its manifestations like political, economic, military, through information media etc. and rejected any attempt to justify foreign intervention under any pretext whatsoever from any source.12

The NAM, like the UN and the OAU, also emphasized the need for pacific settlement of dispute and regarded that principle as central to the philosophy of peaceful coexistence. The Cairo Summit of 1964 highlighted it and the subsequent meetings reiterated it. For a long time the NAM depended upon the structural mechanism of the UN for its implementation but found that the Cold War and Great Power politics acted as a constraint on the effective functioning of the UN. Consequently, the Minisrial Meeting of the Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned countries, Havana, May 1978, recommended that the Minisrial Conference should consider ways and means whereby the NAM as a whole

could contribute to the peaceful settlement of disputes among non-aligned countries. The Foreign Ministers Meeting in Belgrade considered the question in more details and suggested that the non-aligned countries should render assistance to parties in conflict in promoting peaceful resolution of conflict.13

More concrete steps were initiated at the Havana Summit in September 1979. Sri Lanka circulated a working paper regarding the formation of a commission for the settlement of border disputes within the NAM. Bangladesh, Iraq and Yugoslavia also suggested certain resolutions. No action was taken at that time but the members of the NAM, attending the 36th General Assembly Session, agreed to set up a Working Group to study those documents and other related proposals and to report to the subsequent meeting of the NAM. It is most unfortunate that even that Working Group could not be constituted till 1988. In September 1988, the Foreign Ministers’ Conference in Nicosia itself decided to constitute an ‘open-ended’ Working Group with a core body of five member from Africa, four from Asia, three from Latin America and the Caribbean and one from Europe. The Chairperson of the NAM was also to be its ex-officio member.14 That body also was to report to the next Summit. It is a pity that while the NAM underlines the concept of peaceful settlement of dispute, it did not or could not take for seven long years even the preliminary step of constituting a Working Group to study concrete proposals of its members towards that end. Nothing much has happened since then.

Though a great deal has been written about the need for pacific settlement of dispute, little effort has gone into critically examining the causes of its inadequacy. In that context, the question of pacific settlement of dispute needs to be studied from two angles; conflict resolution and crisis management. Disputes, if they remain unresolved for long, are bound to escalate into conflict. They, therefore, need to be resolved. Details of peaceful methods of conflict resolution are listed in great detail in Articles 2(3), 33 and 52(3) of the UN Charter and Articles II(4) and VII of the OAU Charter. The NAM has also passed resolution on that.

Often the conflict, instead of getting resolved, further escalates into a crisis, like war. It, therefore, calls for the mechanism not of

13. Ibid., p. 237.
conflict resolution but of crisis mechanism. In the UN, the Security Council rather than the General Assembly is better empowered to deal with it under Articles 33 (2) 34, 36 (1) and 39-41 of Chapter VII. But it needs the concurrence of all the Permanent Members which is near-impossible under present political conditions. Other institutions, or movements like the OAU, NAM or regional organizations lack the mechanism for crisis management.

These two phases of dispute—conflict and crisis—need to be separated because both have different priorities and need different approaches. While conflict resolution requires mechanism for pacific settlement of dispute, crisis management calls for a mechanism that will primarily help to deescalate the situation from that of a crisis to that of a conflict, before it can be resolved. Of course, it would be far better, if the conflict could be preempted from escalating into a crisis. Hence, preventive diplomacy also needs to be strengthened in both cases.

In terms of concept and, as its consequence, in operations, we lack the input of preventive diplomacy. The result is that disputes often tend to escalate into conflicts and then into crisis. They draw extra-regional Powers into their vortex with the inevitable result that an essentially bilateral or even national issues get globalized into Cold War issues with serious consequences not only for crisis management but even conflict resolution. The Afghan and the Kampuchean issues, to name only two, are its glaring examples. Their ill-effects could have been easily mitigated through dedicated efforts at preventive diplomacy.

In the absence of suitable mechanism, every dispute, even if it begins as a minor one, has the potential of escalating into a crisis. An effective mechanism for preventive diplomacy would help greatly in instilling a sense of security especially among the smaller states and thus contribute positively to the creation of an environment of peace, cooperation and development in the region.

Preventive diplomacy and effective mechanism for crisis management and conflict resolution presuppose a broad consensus among nations on the non-conflictual approach to security. The UN, OAU, NAM, Bandung Conference etc. have already debated those points. Such a broad-based consensus, or common denominators based upon the twin pillars of mutual respect and confidence, can be summarized under the following seven points: 
(1) Respect for fundamental human rights and principles of the UN Charter,

(2) Mutual respect for stability of the ‘state system’ and to refrain from interfering in each other’s domestic affairs,

(3) Inviolability of territorial integrity. The change in boundary, if at all, should be through a negotiated settlement and without the use of forces,

(4) Avoidance of politico-military linkage conceived in the context of Great Power rivalry or intra-regional rivalry,

(5) Threat to the security of one to be treated as threat to the security of all and all to take positive steps to contain and finally to remove the threat,

(6) Evolving viable mechanism for conflict resolution and crisis management based upon the norms of pacific settlement of dispute, and preventive diplomacy, and

(7) Conscious efforts to promote and strengthen socio-economic and cultural ties.

These common denominators can be promoted by the SAARC also as the basis of regional cooperation in South Asia.

**Non-Conflictual Approach and SAARC**

The NAM is too large a body for conducting experiments. But, if a smaller organization, that can duplicate the NAM, can help evolve certain guidelines then it would be easier for the NAM to adapt from these experiments. SAARC is a miniature NAM. It has all the diversities of the NAM. Unlike other regional organizations, SAARC is composed of members with a great deal of asymmetry in their political, economic, social and security orientations. Yet, these states have voluntarily decided to come together on the basis of regional cooperation.\(^{15}\) SAARC has, therefore,

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a unique role to play in the context of the evolution of a new approach to security.

The Charter of the SAARC highlights several important themes that can contribute to the evolution of the new security doctrine. Its preamble refers to strict adherence to principles of UN Charter and non-alignment, respect for the principles of sovereign equality, territorial integrity, national independence, non-use of force, non-interference in the internal affairs of other states and peaceful settlement of all disputes. These principles are reiterated in Article II(1) of the SAARC Charter and also in the Banglore Declaration of November 1986.

These are universally accepted points. But, of greater importance is the fact that the Charter seeks a broader definition of security based upon the spirit of regional cooperation. Para 2 of the Preamble says that objects of peace, freedom, social justice and economic prosperity are best achieved by fostering mutual understanding, good neighbourly relations and meaningful cooperation among the countries of South Asia.

Unlike some other regional organizations, SAARC focuses upon the people of the region. Para 4 of the Preamble emphasises that the Member States are “convinced that regional cooperation among the countries of South Asia is mutually beneficial, desirable and necessary for promoting the welfare and improving the quality of the life of the people of the region”. This focus on the people of South Asia as the object of regional cooperation was reiterated in Article 1a of the Charter. Thus, SAARC emphasises the non-conflictual dimension of regional security through the spirit of cooperation and highlights the role of the ‘people’ in this context.

Undoubtedly, SAARC does not discuss directly or indirectly the military dimension of regional security. It is too early for that. But, it does seek to define the broad framework of regional cooperation on the crucial issues that strengthen non-military dimension of national and regional security. Regional cooperation is not only possible but also strongly recommended on these points. According to Article 1b, SAARC aims at accelerating economic growth, social progress, and cultural development in the region and to provide all individuals the opportunity to live in dignity and to realize their full potentials. It also seeks to promote active collaboration and mutual assistance in the economic, social, cultural, technical and scientific fields (Article 1o).
Beside cooperation in intra-regional affairs, SAARC also provides a framework for regional cooperation in international environment. Article 19 says that one of the objectives of the SAARC is to strengthen cooperation among themselves in international fora on matters of common interest. Unfortunately, the centrifugal forces within the SAARC have seriously hampered the full development of that dimension of regional cooperation in South Asia.

SAARC is the youngest of the regional organizations in the South. Yet, it has successfully embarked upon several ventures of regional cooperation that range from sharing of meteorological data to efforts at curbing drug trafficking and terrorism. The fact that SAARC, unlike some other regional organizations, was not conceived in the context of conflictual environment, is largely responsible for this positive development, despite the present environment of regional asymmetry.

SAARC, as a regional organization, pays great importance to the non-military aspect of national and regional security. In that context, it is worth noting that the Member States have been avoiding policies that will have long-term adverse impact upon peace and security in the region. Like other regions, South Asia is also beset with diverse conflicts that have often escalated into crises. But, unlike the states of other regions, countries of South Asia, despite great provocations, have been able to contain their conflicts, including armed conflicts, not only within the region but mostly within the confines of bilateral relations. This attitude, often overlooked by scholars of the region, compares favourably with other regions like South-West Asia, South-East Asia, the Horn of Africa etc. where parties involved have inducted Great Powers in regional problems with the result that conflicts have prolonged for years with no end in sight.

In South Asia, the trend to seek solutions to the conflicts within the region and not to externalize it has become more pronounced since the middle of the eighties when the idea of South Asian regional cooperation caught the imagination of the people of the sub-continent. The deescalation of tension between India and Pakistan and the agreement seeking a solution to the complicated ethnic issue of Sri Lanka vividly illustrate these new developments. They point to a new and welcome trend in South Asia towards a determined effort to search for the non-conflictual approach to security. If SAARC can evolve along that line it will not only become a trend
setter for other regions, but will also help the NAM to evolve an appropriate security doctrine for the South.

**Conclusion**

Development in its totality has to be the primary objective of South as a whole. But development demands an environment of peace, because peace alone can lead to effective cooperation. Therefore, peace, cooperation and development are interlinked in the South. All the three variables are also conditioned by the environment of security. Just as foreign policy and domestic policy are closely interlinked, so also security in the state and the region are interlinked. If security and cooperation rest on stability, then first requirement of regional cooperation is stability of the state systems of the constituent units. The emphasis is not on identical systems but on stable systems so that the bases of regional cooperation are not the everchanging regimes, but more stable states. Thus, acceptable common denominators of state system in each of the constituent units become an important input in the whole process of regional cooperation for development.

When one talks of regional cooperation one needs to take cognizance of the inevitable asymmetry of the constituent units. Hence the environment for cooperation can be strengthened if these units define the common denominators for promoting regional cooperation; be they economic, social, scientific or political. Since there can be no cooperation in an environment of conflict and since one cannot wish away conflicts, common denominators for regional cooperation also need to highlight the non-conflictual approach to security. Hence the concept and the mechanism for effective preventive diplomacy becomes an essential input in the quest for effective regional cooperation.

The UN Charter has provided the concept and also the mechanism for preventive diplomacy, but the UN has been rendered helpless due to Great Power rivalry and the Cold War syndrome. The NAM could have provided guidelines and mechanism in that direction. But, while the NAM has been able to formulate some conceptual framework for conflict resolution, it has failed to evolve till date the mechanism for preventive diplomacy or crisis management. SAARC has all the asymmetry of the NAM and yet has the will to seek avenues for stable regional cooperation. The SAARC experiment in
that direction will, therefore, not only lay the foundation for regional cooperation in South Asia, but also act as a model for the NAM.

If stability is the precondition for development and cooperation then one must seek to define structures of stability not only at the state level but also in the region itself. Probably such an approach might appear to some to be status quo oriented, but it need not be so. A fossilised society can never be stable in a dynamic environment. Yet, it is essential that the elite seek to define the common denominators of stability not only of the state system, but also of intra-regional behaviour so that they become the basis of state as well as regional security. Dialogue and consensus are essential in reaching agreement on those denominators. Above all, role of preventive diplomacy as a confidence building measure in regional cooperation needs to be highlighted. Only in such an environment can the scarce and limited national and regional resources be deployed towards developmental channels not only of the state, but of the region as a whole.