A REGIONAL APPROACH TO SECURITY IN SOUTH ASIA

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Introduction

The security situation of almost all countries of the world has been dramatically altered as a result of the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. A radical reconfiguration of the world security structure is in the offing. Warsaw Pact has been dissolved and NATO, deprived of its enemy, is in the process of reorienting its strategy and adjusting its military structure to meet the requirements of its new focus. The goal of complete nuclear disarmament has been accepted and momentous steps aimed at the reduction of nuclear arsenals of super powers have been taken. New concepts of security that limit and restrict conventional forces have emerged. Concrete steps in this direction have already been taken enabling diversion of funds from the military to the socio-economic sector. Regrettably for us, the main beneficiaries of the new era of peace and cooperation is the developed world.

In sharp contrast, the security situation in the Third World presents a picture bleaker than ever before. The relationship of rivalry between super powers that exacerbated regional tensions also produced a balancing moment that had stabilizing effect on the relationship of regional states. Its removal from the regional equation of power has baffled many Third World countries who had learned to live and even take advantage of the ideological rivalry. Many of these countries find themselves under pressure and exposed to threats not only from a unipolar hegemonic order but also from powerful regional states who have acquired far greater room for manoeuvre than what they enjoyed in the Cold War era. Regional disputes persist and there are no serious efforts to
resolve them. Nor is there any pressing urge on the part of Third World countries to take advantage of new security trends and models from which the Europe has benefited or to learn lessons from the experience of the super powers which forced them to reverse the armament race. Regional military imbalances persist and arms race continues drawing in huge resources that could be better utilised for the economic amelioration of the peoples of the Third World. Mounting debts continue to burden their already ailing economies. The question before us is are we going to continue on this path that leads to turmoil, instability and strife while the Europeans bask in the sunshine of a new era of peace and cooperation?

There are virtually two security systems in place, one for the developed world and the other for the Third World. While a balance of power regime that ensures stability exists in Europe, hegemonic orders persist in most Third World regions which are themselves under pressure from a unipolar hegemonic world order. As a consequence most Third World states have been thrown of balance and are in search of security in an unfamiliar world.

While the previous division of the world into super powers, aligned states and non-aligned states is disappearing, new divisions and alignments are emerging. Four groups appear to be evolving. Firstly, a group of developed states that form the nucleus of a unipolar hegemonic world order. In the second category are powerful regional states with whose cooperation the first group wishes to perpetuate its dominance. Thirdly, small regional states which threatened by powerful regional states are forced into alignment with the first group. In the fourth category are countries which do not fit into the new scheme of hegemony and find themselves pressurised and threatened by the world hegemonic order and the powerful regional states as well as their combined might. If this pattern of divisions is allowed to crystallise and if powerful regional states permit themselves to become the tools of the new hegemonic order their fate will be determined by its changing interests and expediencies. Regional rivalries will provide a fertile ground for interference, intervention and exploitation unless the regional states resolve their
differences and put up a more cohesive front.

**Regional Security Framework**

The question is how can unity between such a large and diverse group of countries be achieved? The answer is simple, yet difficult. The divisions in the Third World alluded to earlier have been created by the threat posed by the powerful regional states to the smaller neighboring countries. If this threat is removed the divisions created by this threat will also disappear. A heavy responsibility, therefore, rests on the shoulders of powerful regional states. It is these states which will by and large determine the shape that the new world order takes. The onus is on them to provide the leadership against the hegemonic trends of the new world order and to promote regional understanding and cooperation. The non-aligned and the Group of 77 forums can be utilised for this purpose if their scope is enlarged to include security matters and political issues that have hitherto been considered taboo. Another approach would be to begin with security cooperation in a region and expand the base through cooperation with adjacent regions. In this manner a linkage between all the Third World regions can be established. In fact, all these approaches are not mutually exclusive and can be initiated simultaneously.

Security of the South Asian Region, conceived in the context of an expanding regional security framework, implies the development of understanding on security matters within the region while seeking cooperation from contiguous regions. For this purpose the SAARC forum can be used if its scope is suitably enlarged or another institutionalised framework can be set up. Whichever forum is adopted it should have institutionalised links with the South West Asian region, the Northern region comprising China and Central Asia and the South East Asian region. The inter-regional and intra-regional cooperation should be based on the well established principles of peaceful coexistence, respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries, noninterference in the affairs of other states, right to self determination of all peoples and respect for human rights. All these principles are enshrined in the UN Charter and have universal acceptance. Unfortunately these have been persistently abused by their
discriminatory application on the basis of political expediencies. What is, therefore, required is to translate these principles into concrete concepts in order to reduce the discretionary element if not remove it all together.

**Peaceful Coexistence**

The principle of peaceful coexistence was evolved during the Cold War era in a world divided by rival communist and capitalist ideologies. It implied that nations having different social, economic and political systems could coexist and cooperate in many fields and were expected to refrain from imposing their systems on others. In practice, however, peaceful co-existence came to mean that covert and not overt means were to be employed for toppling rival ideological systems. The field chosen by the super powers by a tacit understanding between them for the practice of this doctrine were Third World regions which became the focus of subversive activities in a variety of forms. Regional states complicated and exacerbated the problem by engaging in subversive activities to fuel militant and separatist movements with the object of destabilising, pressurising and weakening each other. This two-pronged thrust turned Third World regions into fertile grounds for subversion, sabotage and terrorism and doomed them to perpetual turmoil, strife, instability, conflicts and wars in the Cold War era. One of the prongs has been removed by the end of the Cold War but the regional thrust continues unabated. If allowed to persist and gain momentum, as it has in certain areas, the fate of the Third World will be no different from what it was in the Cold War era.

Barring the core issues themselves, state-sponsored subversion is the key destabilising factor and the crucial step that generates the dynamics of war on the ladder of escalation from peace to war. Real or perceived notions of clandestine intervention result in accusation and counter accusations raising tensions to mounting heights. Mutual recriminations are followed by military build up and increase in the intensity and scope of clandestine operations. The next step is usually border skirmishes responsibility for whose initiation is placed by rival states on each other. An all out war then ensues. This has been the profile of practically all regional wars,
Clandestine means some times resorted to by weaker entities and states in frustration are caused by the reluctance of a stronger power to redress their grievances and resolve contentious issues. The question of resolution of the main issue, in such cases, cannot be disassociated from that of clandestine support and intervention. Reassurance by the stronger power and commitment on its part to resolve the issue would in such cases remove the incentive for subversive activities. A viable solution can only be found in the context of a peace formula that does not circumvent the main issue.

Subversive activities resorted to generally by a stronger power against a weaker state aimed at weakening and destabilising it have no moral or legal justification whatsoever. Nor can subversive activities be justified as a reprisal for similar actions by a rival state. Further more it should be made clear that state-sponsored subversive activities, real or perceived do not justify a response invoking the right of self-defence under Article 51 of the UN charter. State-sponsored subversive activities of all kinds, irrespective of their motivation or cause must, however, be discouraged and stopped though the methods adopted for their elimination may differ. The principle of peaceful coexistence will remain an empty slogan, as it has been in the past, unless there is a consensus on the elimination of state-sponsored subversive activities as a means of achieving political objectives.

The establishment of a verification mechanism would be the best guarantee against subversive activities and clandestine support and operations of all kinds. This can be done by the setting up of a regional commission, which comprises of mutually agreed members from regional states and countries of the adjacent regions. The UN should also preferably be represented on the commission. The rival states should undertake to provide complete facilities to representatives of the verification commission to carry out their tasks. The commission should publish a periodic report on which rival states should be obliged to act. This would be a sufficient deterrent against state-sponsored subversive activities. A state which does not desist from pursuing such a policy should be penalised by imposition of economic sanctions by
the regional states as well as the states of adjacent regions on
the recommendations of the verification commission.

**Sovereignty, Self-Determination and Human Rights**

The principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity
have been under ever increasing pressure from the concepts of
self-determination and human rights. All these principles are
enshrined in the UN Charter and universally accepted but
which one is applicable when and to whom is far from clear.
Much of the confusion in this regard has been created by the
discriminatory application of these principles to situations
which merited a similar treatment. It was generally recog­
nised that the principle of self determination was applicable
to issues and struggles between the nineteenth century
colonial powers and their colonies. This definition however
has little relevance at this juncture when the removal of the
last vestiges of the classical colonial era is in sight. But the
contradictions in these principles had surfaced long before
this happened eroding the aforementioned definition of self­
determination. The principles of sovereignty and territorial
integrity received a set-back by acquiescences to Israel’s
occupation and expansion. The consequences of 1971 war and
the separation of Singapore from Malaysia demonstrated that
post-colonial divisions were not sacrosanct and that principle
of self-determination could be applicable to cases other than
those on the classical colonial pattern. The disintegration of
the Soviet Union, the emergence of Baltic states as indepen­
dent countries and the sympathetic attitude towards
struggles in Yugoslavia and elsewhere have necessitated a
redefination of the principle of the self determination and its
correlation with the principles of sovereignty and territorial
integrity. But this is not likely to come about as the ambiguity
in UN Charter in this respect suits most nations who prefer to
take their position on such issues on the basis of political
expediences rather than the merits of the case. In the
absence of any criteria, the least that can be done is to accept
unconditionally the verdict of the world community, at least,
on issues on which it has been expressed through UN
resolutions.
Failure to evolve a clear cut criteria for “self determination”, however, complicates the problem of making a distinction between liberation struggles and separatist movements. This is important because under the UN Charter nations are expected to encourage and promote liberation struggles and discourage separatist movements. Moreover, it appears that separatist movements can change their colour at a certain stage and turn into liberation struggles. Related to all this is the crucial question of state-sponsored subversive activities an end to which has been proposed in our discussion of the principle of peaceful co-existence earlier.

The concept of sovereignty has been modified by ever increasing international stress on the question of human rights. Once in the exclusive domain of sovereign states it can no longer be so regarded. Promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms has become an international obligation under the UN Charter and subsequent practice has reinforced this status. Suppression by force of militant movements, whatever their nature and cause, invariably results in violation of human rights on a large scale which is no longer acceptable in the world of today. Going by the current international trends, it appears that states which fail to satisfy the aspirations of their ethnic or religious entities through political reconciliation will have to pay a heavy price and that it is no longer feasible to keep people under subjugation through the use of force. Control of separatist movements is regarded as an internal affair of states concerned but violations of human rights that occur in the process are no longer so regarded. States will, therefore, have to exercise considerable restraints in dealing with such problems. They will be in a much better position to tackle such sensitive issues if the element of clandestine intervention is removed from inter-state relations as proposed earlier.

It is evident that without reconciling the anomalies and contradictions arising from the discriminatory application of the various principles of UN Charter a regional security framework cannot be effective even if it is established. In the absence of any prospects of guidelines from the UN it can only be suggested that a regional consensus be evolved on these complex questions.
Comprehensive Peace Process for South Asia

A genuine commitment to the principles of UN Charter can provide the basis for the initiation of a comprehensive peace process in the South Asian region. The comprehensive peace process envisaged incorporates three distinct but correlated sub-process; a political process aimed at peaceful settlement of disputes, Disarmament process, and Confidence and Security-Building measures. These will be discussed in this paper in the context of India-Pakistan relations.

It is important to understand the correlation between these sub-processes. They are complementary processes which must be initiated simultaneously through an institutionalised forum. Each sub-process makes its own contribution in reducing frictions and lowering tensions and thereby acts as stimulant for the others. Their combined effect generates a downward spiraling cyclic momentum which leads to stability, peace and cooperation. It is therefore, essential that progress in all spheres be made simultaneously as deadlock or lack of progress in one is bound to affect the others and impede the downward momentum. It would be recalled that in Europe, Disarmament and Confidence and Security-Building Measures (CSBMs) processes complemented and stimulated each other and major breakthroughs in both occurred only when the core issue of ideological rivalry was resolved by dramatic changes in Soviet policy. The situation in south Asian region is that whereas certain CBM’s have been agreed upon between India and Pakistan, disarmament has received no serious attention and the core issue of Kashmir remains deadlocked. The value of CSBMs in such circumstances will at best be marginal and liable to criticism on the account that process is being misused to circumvent more important issues.

As regards the political process, all that can be said is that since each issue has its own peculiarities and complexities it must be discussed separately and that none should be ignored altogether. The process should be institutionalised and periodic discussions on all issues must be held at political and official levels. Assistance of regional or international forums must be sought for resolution of issues over which there is a deadlock in bilateral negotiations over a
considerable period of time.

A threat and tension free atmosphere is necessary for smooth progress in the political process. This can best be achieved by the establishment of a stable military regime through the institution of a set of Disarmament and Confidence and Security-Building Measures. These processes will be discussed separately but their complementary nature must be understood. The close association and interdependence of Disarmament and CSBMs can best be adduced from the peace process in Europe which centered round a variety of arms limitation and reduction talks. Negotiations between the super powers in the decades of 50s, 60s and 70s served as a forum for the evolution of the concept of CSBMs. In Europe the concept of CSBMs was formalised and evolved through the framework of Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) which also provided the mandate for the second stage for their development. At this stage CSBMs were directly linked with disarmament in the Stockholm process. It was only at the third stage that CSBMs became the subject of independent negotiations. But even then they were accompanied by parallel but related negotiations on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE).

The relationship of inter-dependence between disarmament and CSBMs results from the fact that an important objective of CSBMs is disarmament itself in the sense that they are expected to create a political and psychological climate which discourages military buildup and competitive arms race. The disarmament process on the other hand complements CSBMs by providing an opening for their formulation. But CSBMs are not a substitute for disarmament measures. CSBMs and disarmament are, therefore, distinct yet closely related processes stimulating each other. The final objective of both, however, is to create a regime of stability, peace and cooperation. By taking up one and ignoring the other, therefore, not much headway can be made towards the final objective. Yet such a lopsided approach has been adopted in this region. A number of Confidence-Building Measures such as hot lines, crisis control centers and local military commanders meetings have been agreed upon by India and Pakistan but no serious attention has been given to
disarmament or arms control. One would not like to degrade the value of these first generation CSBMs which have at least introduced new concepts in this region but the need for an accompanying disarmament process cannot be over-emphasised

If we in this region fail to take advantage of disarmament trends prevailing in the world today a great opportunity would be lost. As a first step in this direction India and Pakistan should make a categorical and unequivocal declaration indicating their commitment to the goal of disarmament both in the conventional and nuclear fields and give credence to it by the setting up of an institutionalised framework for this purpose.

**Disarmament**

In the conventional sphere a beginning can be made by freezing forces and military arsenals at current levels. This would put an end at least to the quantitative arms race which is drawing in huge resources from the socio-economic sector. The next obvious step is arms reductions which presents serious problems because of the vast disparity in the power potential and military strength of the states of the region.

One way of dealing with the problem would be to make gradual reductions in selected arms and reduce their strength to mutually agreed levels maintaining existing ratios throughout the process. The objective in this case would be to retain the current military balance but at a lower level of forces. The lower level selected in this case, perhaps, would be one that permit both countries to pursue their current military strategies. This would result in only marginal reductions in selected arms, perpetuate the existing imbalances and will not produce a stable order. This approach is suggested more for its acceptability than its merits. But due to its simplicity it can serve a useful purpose for the initiation and introduction of the disarmament process in this region.

A better approach, and one that must eventually be adopted, would be to emulate the European model with suitable modifications. The goal of arms reductions in this case would be the establishment of a stable military order.
Such an approach, however, requires a radical change in the political outlook and security concepts and revision of military strategies, more so on the part of India, than other countries of the region.

The first and foremost requirement for the adoption of this approach is an unequivocal declaration by the states of the region renouncing the use or the threat of use of force as an instrument of policy. Such a commitment, it must be understood, does not necessarily preclude the pursuit of ambitious and outwards policies by states which wish to do so. It merely obligates them not to use force for this purpose. By doing so it does restrict dominating trends and modifies the hegemonic model in vogue in the region which, in any case, is outdated. Japan and Germany, for instance, are respected and wield considerable influence in international and regional politics but their status is not dependent on military force. They do not possess nuclear weapons and their conventional forces are merely adequate for defence. Just as the Second World War spelled the doom of classical colonial system, the end of the post-War hegemonic model has been pronounced by the dramatic turn of events in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Signs of the demise of the old order are everywhere and the writing is on the wall. The sooner the significance of these events and changes is realised in this region the better it will be for all of us. Historic forces that have been released cannot be curbed and if we don’t take note we may have to learn our lessons the hard way. Soviet Union’s huge nuclear and conventional arsenals have been of no help in preventing its collapse. By renouncing the use of force, therefore, we will be merely putting ourselves in step with historical forces that have been unleashed and already over-taken a greater part of the world. With a genuine commitment to the principle of non-use of force, disarmament poses no serious problems, for all that is then required is to evolve a force structure which reflects the commitment that has been made.

Inherent in the commitment to the principle of the non-use of force is the acceptance of the concept of mutual security which formed the basis of East-West disarmament negotiations. The notion of mutual security draws inspiration from
the Soviet concept of Universal Security which stresses on concern by states for the security of other states. It stipulates that security cannot be achieved by a nation at the expence of the security of others. The notion of concern for the security of a state by its rival is a radical departure from the traditional concept of self-security which has governed the military policies of states and entities since times immemorial and continues to reign supreme in this and many other regions.

The concept of mutual security is the product of the nuclear age and its evolution was motivated by powerful incentives such as the prospects of mutual assured destruction and the realisation of the futility of an arms race which, despite huge expenditures at the cost of socio-economic sector, brought no increments to the security of either power bloc. But in spite of such powerful incentives the transition from self-security to mutual security was not easy to make in Europe, and will be even more difficult in this region where power doctrines of the nineteenth century continue to be held in esteem. But it is inevitable considering the armament trends in the region which, if continued, will give rise to similar incentives which drove the super and European powers into the fold of mutual security. The only question is whether we will learn from their experience or become wiser only through a repeat performance even though on a much lower scale. At what stage of the arms race the realisation of its futility will dawn is difficult to tell but the initiation of a disarmament process, no matter how feeble, could hasten such a development.

Out of the logic of mutual security have emerged several new security concepts such as reasonable sufficiency, defensive defence, non-offensive defence and non-provocative defence. The concept of reasonable sufficiency postulates that if a military balance is necessary why not secure it at the lowest ladder rather than indulging in a continuous drive upward for the highest rung which moves further away as you get closer. All the doctrines of non-offensive defence aim at the removal of threat by reducing the offensive components of the armed forces of rival states. These doctrines provide the criteria for a disarmament process that leads to a stable military regime, if that be the objective of states, as it ought
to be of all those committed to the principle of non-use of force.

In the context of disarmament in this region on the basis of new security concepts, the ratio of strength of the offensive arms of the forces of India and Pakistan will have to be altered to conform to the requirements of a stable military regime and the their strength reduced to a level to be determined on the basis of the principles of reasonable sufficiency. The object would be to eliminate the capability of either side for conducting a large scale sustained offensive. The principle of parity was accepted in CFE negotiations and there appears no reasons why it can not also serve as a criterion for arms reductions in this region. Nevertheless, the ratios and levels for each selected component must be worked out by military experts taking into account threat perceptions and all those geographical factors that bear upon military situation. The disarmament process will involve gradual asymmetrical reduction of forces to mutually agreed levels on the basis of aforementioned criteria. Main battle tanks, armoured combat vehicles, naval power projection capabilities and combat aircraft should initially be the focus of negotiation.

Early initiation of the disarmament process is disarmament practicable, but the process itself is expected to be a lengthy one. Nor should there be a display of undue haste in pressing it to a conclusion since such an approach can backfire and be counter-productive. It will be necessary to progress through several intermediate steps towards the final objective. The setting up of an institutionalised framework for the purpose and initiation of discussions on the principles of disarmament should suffice for the present. Genuine progress on disarmament cannot be expected unless considerable headway has been made in other "baskets" of the peace process particularly the one concerning the peaceful settlement of disputes. The question is: can any steps be taken that contribute towards improving the stability of the military situation in the intervening period between the initiation of the disarmament process and its culmination. A comparatively more stable military situation than the one that exists is desirable for progress in the disarmament
A realistic and pragmatic intermediate objective would be to create a military regime that reduces, if not eliminates the possibility of a surprise attack while the capability of a major sustained offensive still exists. The establishment of such a regime in fact must be regarded as the central prong of the peace process as no other factor can contribute more towards overall progress in all "baskets" than the degradation of the immediacy of the threat.

**Scheme of Limiting Zones**

For this purpose a military regime based on a system of limiting zones is proposed. The object of this system of zones would be to prevent a threatening of intimidating concentration of force. Both the European and the Contadora models can provide guidelines for the creation of such a system. The idea is to create a network of a variety of zones in which restrictions are placed on military activity, and the quantum and type of troops, equipment and armaments that can be inducted into the zones. Both sides will be required to give a notice for relaxation of agreed restriction. The system will have to be duly biased to compensate for the lack of strategic depth and the smaller size of the offensive force of the country concerned. This will necessitate an asymmetrical configuration of the arrangement in favour of the disadvantaged state with respect to the distance of zones from the borders of the respective states. It must be noted in the context of India-Pakistan military relationship that India is a huge country and has the capability to launch a major sustained offensive. Pakistan, on the other hand, lacks depth and has the capability only of a limited preemptive strike. Since the preemptive strike is launched only in anticipation of an offensive, the incentive for the former can be eliminated by an arrangement which precludes the latter without violating the agreed regime. The details of such a scheme can be worked out by military experts provided the criteria of stability is accepted by both parties.

The disarmament process will generate discussions on a variety of security matters necessitating exchange of military data thereby introducing the element of transparency which is regarded as the essence of CSBMs. In fact, the disarma-
ment process will provide the inputs and agenda for CSMBs process much in the same manner as in the Helsinki process.

CBMs

CBMs so far agreed upon by India and Pakistan lack two essential ingredients; transparency and verification. In the absence of these they do not even adequately fulfil the limited purpose of preventing an accidental war for which they have been designed. Without these elements confidence building will, at best, remain a half-hearted effort. Moreover, the objective of CBMs needs to be broadened to include the goals of prevention of a surprise attack and the creation of a stable military regime. A good beginning for the two countries would be to agree to freeze their forces in their existing locations and exchange information on the strength and position of forces. A mutually agreed verification arrangement should then be instituted. Thereafter, the two countries should be obliged to notify all major military movements. Relevant details can be worked out by military experts. The existing military situation should then be analysed against the criteria of stability and adjusted as required to eliminate the incentive for a surprise attack or preemptive strike. Such an arrangement will be instrumental in the smooth transition that must be made from the realm of the CSBM to the sphere of disarmament through the scheme of limiting zones which fringes on the line between the two.

The question of arms transfer which has lately been receiving considerable attention is closely linked with regional military stability. Arms transfers have been and continue to be highly politicised affairs and will remain so until an objective criteria is evolved for their management. Mutually agreed stable regional military arrangements such as those proposed above can provide an objective criteria for suppliers for transfer of arms to various regions. Such arrangements would, therefore, be in the interest of suppliers as well as recipient states. In the absence of regional arrangements suppliers should in any case be guided by the principle of military stability as any other criteria would not be acceptable and no progress can be expected in this field. Nor would any purpose be served by the proposed arms register unless the data accumulated in it can be analysed on
the basis of an objective criteria.

The question of qualitative arms race is related directly to arms transfers and can be addressed meaningfully only when a formula for a stable military regime has been accepted by regional states. Considerable savings can be made and stability enhanced if there is agreement on the generation of weapons that are to be in the forces of regional states. Such an agreement will reduce military expenditures by eliminating the tendency to go for the latest available expensive equipment to obtain a qualitative edge. It will also boost the indigenous defence production which suffers because of the preference of military commanders to seek quick solution through procurement. Dependence on extra-regional suppliers will be reduced and the question of arms transfer will become amenable to solution.

Nuclear Issue

There is general consensus on the inter-dependent relationship between nuclear and conventional disarmament. A stable conventional military equation which is upset by nuclear disparity serves no purpose as one-sided nuclear threat upsets the overall balance. The stable conventional regimes discussed earlier will therefore, be only of value under an overall arrangement in which the use or the threat of use of nuclear weapons is eliminated. Pakistan has, therefore, persistently stressed on the creation of a nuclear free zone in South Asia. The Indian position has been that any arrangement in South Asia must take into account the Chinese factor as well as other nuclear powers which until some time back were involved in a nuclear arms race. The reversal of the arms race by the signing of the INF and START treaties and other momentous steps aimed at the elimination of land and sea launched tactical nuclear weapons from nuclear arsenals have created an international atmosphere in which a regional approach to security has become feasible. Keeping in view world disarmament trends Pakistan has proposed a five nation conference which should be able to come up with a satisfactory nuclear arrangement for South Asia.

The nuclear policies of so-called nuclear threshold states including India and Pakistan are governed by a strategy of
ambiguity which is getting increasingly out of step with world disarmament trends. Time has come to discard this strategy and adopt a more realistic and pragmatic approach. Without transparency a satisfactory solution of the nuclear issue does not appear to be feasible. India has already carried out a nuclear explosion and Pakistan has been dumped into the nuclear category by the application of Pressler Amendment against it. Both countries should be able to arrive at a bilateral arrangement on this basis. They should declare and freeze their nuclear and ballistic missile programmes and arsenals, if any, and thereafter work for the establishment of a nuclear free zone in South Asia which is guaranteed by all the relevant nuclear powers. Responsibility for verification of all aspects of the bilateral arrangement should be entrusted to the International Atomic Energy Agency.

The question of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles is at present the focus of World attention and it will not be possible for India and Pakistan to keep away from the non-proliferation regime indefinitely. The proposed bilateral arrangement should provide a basis for the signing of non-proliferation treaty by both countries. It would be ironic for countries of this region, and indeed other regions, to indulge in a nuclear arms race when the world is headed towards complete nuclear disarmament.

Interdependence of various sub-processes and verification of agreed measures are the two key elements of the comprehensive peace process and should be reflected in its institutional framework through coordination cells to monitor the progress of all political and military aspects of the peace process. Another coordination cell should look after all military matters i.e., disarmament, CSBMs and the nuclear issue. Two verification commissions are proposed, one for state-sponsored subversive activities and the other for disarmament and CSBMs. A mediation and verification Commission is proposed for Kashmir issue and all related matters including subversion and human rights, as this issue requires exclusive and comprehensive treatment. The Kashmir mediation and verification commission and the verification commission for state sponsored subversive activities should comprise of members from the South Asian region,
adjacent regions, and the United Nations.

The existing situation is that whereas some CBMs have been agreed upon by India and Pakistan, the disarmament process has not been initiated and the core issue of Kashmir is deadlocked. The question is how to get the peace process rolling when it is stuck in one “basket”, stalled in the other and the third doesn’t exist. Under the circumstances it would be best to stimulate it by initiating the disarmament process which could act as a catalyst for the other two which should then be progressed simultaneously. Discussions on disarmament matters would introduce transparency and invigorate the CSBMs process which should lead to the creation of a stable military regime through the zonal scheme on to arms reductions. Military stability could give impetus to the stalled political process and put the countries on the path to peace and cooperation.

For too long the regional states have permitted their security situation to be determined by the major powers through carefully managed arms transfers and formal and informal military alignments. Regional rivalries and instabilities have facilitated manipulation and exploitation of regional states in this manner. The end of Cold War has not brought an end to this exercise but merely turned into a one sided affair. Time has come for regional states to manage their security through regional arrangements which are not dependant upon the whims and fancies of outside powers. The proposed regional security framework provides a basis for such an arrangement in South Asia. And the comprehensive peace process proposed in the context of India-Pakistan relations, with due modifications, can serve as a model for other states in the region.