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REGIONALISM AND SECURITY CONCERNS POST 9/11: A SOUTH ASIAN PERSPECTIVE

Abstract

The September 11, 2001 attacks on New York and Washington triggered a series of immediate, enduring and varied responses from nations to secure their sovereign territories from terrorist attacks or terrorism. At the same time, different regional organisations are also taking additional regional security measures. Since then the EU and the NAFTA have taken Counter-Terrorism Action Plan and security strategies to face new security threats. Therefore, the 9/11 event forced a reassessment of vulnerabilities and the realisation of the benefits of cooperation rather than unilateralism. The event of 9/11 is also significant for South Asia. In the post-9/11 reality, the region became the epicentre of the fight against international terrorism, and the region is experiencing sharp rise in terrorist activities including bomb blasts. Hence, SAARC is concluding different agreements or adopting safeguard measures to stop terrorism. In such context, this paper analyses South Asian security concerns in the post-9/11 period and the SAARC initiatives in response to new security environment. It also focuses on the implementation process of different regional security measures and problems in quest for a new approach to security.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The September 11, 2001 attacks on New York and Washington triggered a series of immediate, enduring and varied responses from nations to secure their sovereign territory from terrorist attacks or terrorism. Visibly, the US has taken the lead in defining terrorism as the utmost threat and shaping security measures in response to the attacks. However, their lead has been followed in different degrees elsewhere. As Alan Dupont, Director of the Asia-Pacific Security Programme in Australia says, 'Where the US goes, others will follow'.[1] Among the responses, one of the most prominent ongoing reactions is to enhance surveillance operations through better means of identifying, classifying, profiling, assessing and tracking the population. David Lyon considers that 9/11 shaped a 'new era' of political control that superseded previous legal restrictions on monitoring citizens. Therefore, he states, 'At times, the need for greater vigilance becomes apparent and, in that sense, the events of 11 September acted as a wake-up call'.[2] These are not only individual actions by single states; rather, initiatives have been taken regionally through agreements such as the Smart Border Accord on the US-Mexico and the US-Canada borders. Similarly, EU approved Counter-Terrorism Action Plan and security strategies to face new security threats after 9/11.

The event of 9/11 is also significant for South Asia for two particular reasons. Firstly, it made South Asia the initial theatre of the "war on terrorism" declared by President George W. Bush and reordered US relations with the region.[3] The most substantial and immediate result was the entrance of American security forces in Afghanistan and Pakistan for the first time. Secondly, sharp rise of terrorism and bomb blasts in South Asian region especially in Pakistan. The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation

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[1] David Lyon, *Surveillance after 9/11*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2003, p. 06.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 16

[3] P Nayak, "US Security Policy in South Asia since 9/11- Challenges and Implications for the Future", *Occasional Paper Series*, Asia-Pacific Centre for Security Studies, 2005, pp. 1-15, available at: http://www.apcss.org/Publications/Ocasional%20Papers/USSecurity3.pdf , accessed on October 25, 2007.

(SAARC) has taken a range of security measures since its inception to stop terrorism. However, all the South Asian states are declaring terrorism as their utmost adversary in all regional forums since the terrorist attacks of 9/11; hence they are approving a range of different agreements or safeguard measures.

In this context, this paper analyses South Asian security concerns in the post-9/11 period and SAARC initiatives in response to new security environment. It also focuses on the implementation process of different regional security measures and problems in searching for a new approach to security. Hence, this paper starts with discussing the global trends in regional security strategy after 9/11, focusing on NAFTA and EU. Section two will analyse how the post-9/11 reality and accommodation with the US war on terror has shaped regional security concerns within South Asian countries. Section three will highlight the SAARC initiatives to secure South Asia in this period and their implementation process. Finally, the conclusion will highlight the problems in achieving an effective regional security strategy.

This paper does not include Afghanistan mainly because of two reasons. The first is that the regional security measures were undertaken before Afghanistan's inclusion in SAARC in 2007, although no new security initiatives have been undertaken since. And, the other reason is that, due to its international dimension, terrorism in Afghanistan is quite different from that in some other member countries of SAARC.

2. GLOBAL TREND IN REGIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY AFTER 9/11

A security strategy is a policy-making tool which, on the basis of given values and interests, outlines long-term overall objectives to be achieved and the basic categories of instruments to be applied to that end.[4] It serves as a reference framework for everyday policy-making in a rapidly developing and increasingly complex international

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4   Sven Biscop & Rik Coosaet, "The World is the Stage- A Global Security Strategy for the EU", *Policy Paper,* No. 08, Notre Europe, December 2003, available at: http://www.irri-kiib.be/papers/notre-eur.Policypaper8.pdf, accessed on July 05, 2008.

environment. The US is the dominant global player defining security strategy, and the other states and organizations follow the US framework of thoughts and promote their own policy priorities in terms of both objectives and instruments. Therefore, this paper emphasizes more on North American anti-terrorism measures after 9/11. The immediate US response to the terrorist attacks included a dramatic heightening of border inspections and toughening of the policy discourse about borders and cross-border flows. Politicians from across the political spectrum have been rushing to demonstrate their commitment to securing border. [5] Accordingly, complex advances in security technologies and the "Smart Border" accords signed by the three countries have emerged as a preferred solution to the problem of screening for terrorists and weapons of mass destruction. However, it disrupted the smooth flow of individuals and goods which come across North America's frontiers.

The Smart Border Declaration between the US and Canada includes a 30-point plan. It focuses particularly on greater cooperation in areas of immigration, customs and security. It accepted the expansion of an alternative inspection programme called NEXUS. In NEXUS, applicants apply once, are checked by both governments, and receive one card that allows them to cross into either country. [6] Other initiatives include Joint Passenger Analysis Units (JPAUs), compatible immigration databases, officer deployment overseas, and coordination of visa requirements. In addition, the US and Canada currently have common visa policies for 144 countries, leaving only a handful of countries for which differences are of any significance, and they have agreed to consult each other when considering a third country for visa imposition or visa exemption.[7] Both the states have a working process in order to coordinate the freezing of designated terrorists or terrorist organization's assets. Recently, they established joint teams to

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5 Peter Andreas, " A Tale of Two Borders: the US-Mexico and US-Canada Lines after 9/11", *Working Paper 77*, May 2003, The Centre for Comparative Immigration Studies, University of California, pp. 01-14.

6 Deborah Waller Meyers, "Does Smarter Lead to Safer? An Assessment of the US Border Accords with Canada and Mexico", *International Migration*, Vol. 41, No. 4, 2003, pp. 05-44.

7 *Ibid*.

analyse and disseminate information and intelligence, and produce threat and intelligence assessments.[8] This joint initiative combines the intelligence and law enforcement capabilities of five agencies to identify and stop the movement of high risk people and goods between these two countries. Therefore, they are trying ensuring comprehensive and permanent coordination of law enforcement, anti-terrorism efforts and information sharing through the Smart Border Agreement.

For Mexico, there are heightened pressures and expectations to contribute to the US anti-terrorism goals. Accordingly, the Mexican government detained and questioned hundreds of people of Middle Eastern origin, restricted the entry of citizens from a number of Central Asian and Middle Eastern origin and provided the US authority with intelligence information on possible suspects based in Mexico.[9] Similar to the US-Canada security measures, the US-Mexico border agreement established a joint Advance Passenger Information System (APIS) to provide better data regarding entries into its own country and prevention as a point of terrorist transit.[10] They are also working on exchanging core data electronically, testing technology, and expanding private sector partnerships as well. The US is not only moving to have border accord with Mexico but also support financially to accomplish her desired security measures. For example, as Mexico lacked the budget and resources for implementation of initiatives, the US Congress approved US $ 25 million to help Mexico implement the agreement.[11] Other items in the agreement include: joint financing of development and infrastructure at the border and a low risk NAFTA traveler programme at airports.

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[8]   James Jay Carafano, "Northern Exposure: The Right Way to Address US-Canadian Counterterrorism", *Backgrounder*, no. 2104, the Heritage Foundation, February 01, 2008, pp. 01-08.

[9]   A Tale of Two Borders: the US-Mexico and US-Canada Lines after 9/11, *op.cit.* , pp. 01-14; Peter Andreas, "The Mexacanization of the US-Canada Border", *International Journal*, Spring 2005, pp. 449-462.

[10] *Ibid*.

[11] Does Smarter Lead to Safer? An Assessment of the US Border Accords with Canada and Mexico, *op.cit*., pp. 05-44.

In EU, 9/11 triggered a new era of security that was further enhanced after 2004. The European Union (EU) adopted in 2002 a framework decision to fight more efficiently against terrorism. It contains a definition of terrorist offences, defines infringements linked to terrorist acts, and covers behaviours which may contribute to such acts, approximates the level of sanctions between Member States and explicitly guarantees the respect for fundamental rights. The four-pillars of the EU's Counter-Terrorism Strategy - prevent, protect, pursue, and respond - constitute a comprehensive and proportionate response to the international terrorist threat. Article 29 of the Treaty on European Union specifically refers to terrorism as one of the serious forms of crime to be prevented and combated by developing common action in three different ways: closer cooperation between police forces, customs authorities and other competent authorities, including Europol; closer cooperation between judicial and other competent authorities of the Member States; and approximation, where necessary, of rules on criminal matters. The Strategy sets out their objectives to prevent new recruits to terrorism; better protect potential targets; pursue and investigate members of existing networks and improve our capability to respond to and manage the consequences of terrorist attacks. [12] But the Council also called for a focus upon 'priority third countries where counter-terrorist capacity or commitment to combating terrorism needs to be enhanced'.[13] The EU also enhanced protection of their external borders to make it harder for known or suspected terrorists to enter or operate within the EU through the biometric information in identity and travel documents.

For all the cases, improved border control and sharing of intelligence and high technology play an important role in combating terrorism. Almost all the measures are related to visas, refugees, terrorist watch list and terrorism financing. Additionally, their main concern is their land border and they are trying to best secure their borders through biometrics. Thus, both the regions are trying to

[12] For detail see, the European Union Counter Terrorism Strategy, 2005.

[13] European Council, "Declaration on Combating Terorism', brussels, March 25, 2004, available at: http://www.cu2004.ie/templates/document_file.asp?id=10762, accessed on July 03, 2008.

achieve an effective security strategy to prevent external threats. Accordingly, the member states are preparing themselves to support each other. For North America, there is no trilateral security strategy rather all the measures are bilateral. However, both Canada and Mexico are working to increase their own security and that of the US population as well. Consecutively, the main Central American neighbours, in turn, complain that a hardening of Mexico's southern border means Mexico is doing Washington's police work. [14] Nevertheless, the 9/11 event forced a reassessment of vulnerabilities and the realisation of the benefits of cooperation rather than unilateralism.

3. SOUTH ASIAN SECURITY AND REGIONAL POLITICS IN THE POST-9/11 PERIOD

Before the 9/11 event, US security ties to South Asian nations ranged from the minuscule to the non-existent.[15] Conversely, in the post-9/11 reality, the region became the epicentre of the fight against international terrorism, and the US reordered relations with the region.[16] Different factors contributed to such a shift in US-South Asia relations. Firstly, the Post-9/11 policies and practices, especially the war on terror led by the US, provide a sharp focus on the religious extremist's terrorism controlled by Bin Laden and his network. The propinquity with a Taliban-ruled Afghanistan brought the war on terror to the doorstep of South Asia. Secondly, in the current changed atmosphere, states are held responsible for the acts of terrorism carried out by their own non-state actors on their soil or in other countries, which is especially significant for Muslim countries. For instance, the Muslim world, in the eyes of many, appeared to be the breeding ground for all contemporary terrorist activities, and all the South Asian nations are either Muslim or contain a significant Muslim population. Lastly, and most

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[14]   *Ibid*.

[15]   US Security Policy in South Asia since 9/11- Challenges and Implications for the Future, *op.cit.* , pp. 01-15.

[16]   *Ibid*, p.12; Walter k. Anderson, "A Selective War on Terrorism?", *Strategic Asia*, 2004-05, pp. 227-260, available at:http://www.nbar.org/publications/strategic_asia/pdf/sa04_8s-asia.pdf, accessed on December 20, 2007.

significantly, President Bush made a tough choice saying '… every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists'. [17]

   Against this backdrop, the key South Asian players, India and Pakistan, stimulated by the hope of strategic gains, offered their all-out support to the US in every possible way.[18] Pakistan President Musharraf's cooperation with Washington has brought some important gains to his country including the desperately needed international aid from the United States, Japan, Europe and international financial institutions. US humanitarian aid before 9/11 had been viewed partly as a means to keep Pakistan from becoming a 'nuclear basket case'. The theme after 9/11 was terrorism prevention, including the provision of alternatives to the anti-Western madrassah-based education that has been widely blamed for fueling *jihadism*.[19] On the other hand, with the expansion of US-Indian relations in this period being largely dependent on the respective private sectors' investments, the big growth area in the official relationship has been a military-to-military tie including high level contacts, joint training, joint patrols, and a variety of exercises. Nevertheless, the other South Asian countries have also provided their full cooperation to the US. Therefore, the South Asian countries decided to join the US-led war against terrorism to seek and secure their political and economic interests.[20] On the other hand, they did not want to be a US target, although the governments' positions dissatisfied the mass of the people in the region. Therefore, instead of taking practical steps to eradicate causes which promote terrorism,

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[17]   President Bush's address to a joint session of the Congress and the American People, September 20, 2001.

[18]   Razia Musarrat, " US War on Terrorism and Its Impact on South Asia", *Journal of Political Studies*, Department of Political Science, Punjab University, 2007, pp. 01-19, available at:
      http://www.pu.edu.pk/polsc/jops/previousissue.htm, accessed on July 02, 2008.

[19]   US Security Policy in South Asia since 9/11- Challenges and Implications for the Future, *op.cit.* , pp. 01- 15.

[20]   A Selective War on Terrorism, op. cit., p. 231; Stephen P. Cohen, *India: Emerging Power*, The Brooking Institution Press, Washington DC, 2002.

in most cases the South Asian regimes wanted to oblige the United States in it's highly controversial war on terror.

Over the last several decades, almost all of the South Asian states have faced the menace of terrorism, either in the form of ethnic turmoil, political or religious schism. Terrorism in this region is an outcome of large-scale poverty, under-development, and marginalisation of minorities. The rise in religious intolerance and ethnic conflicts in Sri Lanka, Pakistan, India, Nepal and Bangladesh led to acts of violence and terrorism causing instability and insecurity in these countries. In South Asia, terrorism is not a post-September 11 phenomenon, though, while addressing violence, it has been given a new perspective and dimension by the state and non-state actors of the region. The state actors linked the South Asian terrorism with the US-led war on terror and re-labelled the rebel groups as terrorists. Therefore, a major implication of the war on terror in South Asia has been severe curbs on various ethnic and religious movements who were suspected of having links with foreign or transnational terrorist organisations. For example, Nepal was put on the world terrorist map, as the Maoists there were assumed to have links with the Al-Qaeda.[21] Similarly, the Tamil Tigers and splinter Tamil groups in Sri Lanka, the Kashmiri freedom movements in the Indian controlled parts of Jammu and Kashmir, and various extremist religious parties and groups in Bangladesh and in Pakistan were perceived to have links with a network of international terrorism, and in some cases were dubbed as terrorists by their governments.[22]

Terrorism and Islamist factional violence in Pakistan of course predated 9/11, but the war on terror has spurred new cooperation between Islamist groups and terrorists in other South Asian countries as well. In contrast, terrorist attacks and the capture of Al-Qaeda

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[21]   Abdur Rob Khan, "Impact of September 11 on south Asia with special reference to Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka", in F. Sobhan (ed.), *Strengthening Cooperation and Security in South Asia Post 9/11*, The University Press Limited, 2004, pp.221-233.

[22]   M Ahmar, "South Asian response to war on terrorism", *Journal of Political Studies*, Department of Political Science, Punjab University, available at: http://www.pu.edu.pk/polsc/jops/previousissue.htm, accessed on October 11, 2007.

activists in different parts of Pakistan demonstrate that the *Al-Qaedaism* is spreading. Again, they are relocating themselves to other countries, especially in Pakistan, because of the massive anti-Taliban drive in Afghanistan. It can also be a painstaking consideration that Al-Qaeda's methods of networking, terror strikes and ideology are attractive and spreading among hard-line religious extremist groups in South Asia. For instance, we can consider the rise of religious extremists in Bangladesh like the JMB (*Jamaatul Mujahideen Bangladesh*), who never themselves claimed to be part of Al-Qaeda, followed the same line of terror strikes to accomplish their objectives. Again, the Al-Qaeda's network is not very noticeable in South Asia (except Pakistan), yet it needs to be borne in mind that it grows quietly and is only visible through dynamic and highly innovative attacks. After early July 2007, the Red Mosque incident, killing of Benazir Bhutto (Pakistan's first and only female Prime Minister) and suicidal attacks all over Pakistan substantiate such cohesive networking. It is also impossible to forecast its future course of movement. On the other hand, the general composition of attacks has changed after 9/11; the terrorists are largely relying on deadly bombings more than ever before in South Asia.

Strategically and politically, the implications of 9/11 for South Asia have made it difficult to cut down defence expenditure. Since 9/11, the US has lifted arms sanctions against Pakistan, India, Azerbaijan and Tajikistan, although the reasons for imposing the embargo have remained valid as before.[23] These US sanctions were lifted after 9/11 in order to support Pakistan in the counter-terrorism drive.[24] France is also resuming military ties with Pakistan. However, the assistance was not only provided for direct coalition building, but also for governments in support of their fight against rebel-led movements, most of which were re-labelled as counter-terrorism.[25]

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[23]   Sibylle Bauer, "Arms Exports Post 9/11-and the Flood Gates Open?", *European Security Review*, no. 11, March, 2003.

[24]   J Sherman, "U. S. to Pakistan: Focus on War on Terror", *Defense News* (online), October 25, 2004, available at: http://www.academicinfo.net/terrorismus.html, accessed on January 03, 2008.

[25]   Impact of September 11 on South Asia with Special Reference to Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka, *op.cit*., pp.221-233.

In this connection, the arming of South Asia has also manifested itself as a creeping militarisation beyond the official jurisdiction of the state: the arming of 'non-state actors' such as local warlords, regional resistance groups and worldwide terror networks. [26] According to the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA), the majority of small arms in the region do not originate in South Asia, but in the West and are transported across the golden crescent and golden triangle. Thus, the real threat of weapons proliferation in the region comes from more than 250 militant and insurgency movements spawned in South Asia during the last four decades, about 110 of which are currently active.[27] Accordingly, the global availability and acquisition of illegal small arms and light weapons empowered terrorism in the region since the end of the Cold War.

It is also imperative to analyse the inter-state political relations vis-à-vis foreign policy shifts in the post-9/11 period, which is quite significant for regional security. Yet, an understanding of the regional politics prior to the events of 9/11 is also required. India, because of its size, population and strategic location, has been functioning as a regional hegemon. Almost all of the endemic tensions, mutual distrust and frequent eruption of hostilities are the outcome of the contradictions of India's security perceptions vis-à-vis those of the smaller neighbours. However, 9/11 intensified mistrust among the states, who blame each other for sponsoring and harbouring the terrorists that affect their neighbours, and which is quite visible in relations between India and its neighbours, especially Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal. For instance, India suspects that Bangladesh is becoming a hideout for Al-Qaeda and establishing cross-border networks with Indian extremist groups, while Nepal is alleged to be responsible for a Maoist upsurge in India.

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[26] Emrys Chew, "Globalization and Military-Industrial Transformation in South Asia: An Historical Perspective", *Working Paper Series*, No. 110, Institute of Defense and Strategic Studies Singapore, 2006, available at: http://www.ntu.edu.sg/RSIS/publications/WorkingPapers/WP110.pdf   , accessed on October 20, 2007.

[27] R Hariharan, "Militancy and Small Arms Proliferation", *The Hindu*, April 20, 2007.

To overcome such frustrating relations, or after realising that joint efforts are very essential to resolve such issues, some bilateral measures have been taken. For example, the joint initiative between India and Bangladesh to curb terror activities in the Northeast India–Chittagong Hill Tracts border area. However, the long history of mistrust, which has been reinforced following 9/11, often undermines those collaborative efforts. In addition, India and Pakistan always consider each other as an adversary and have been making efforts to establish their strategic superiority by thwarting any gains made by each other. In this connection, India aspired and worked to categorise Pakistan as a 'harbouring state' in the light of its known support for groups practising terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir. Nevertheless, the intensification of India-Pakistan rivalry after 9/11 is an equally important security concern for the whole region as, ultimately, it is obstructing most of the regional initiatives under the aegis of SAARC.

4. SAARC INITIATIVES TO CONTROL THREATS IN THE POST-9/11 PERIOD

As discussed in the previous section, the changed perception of terrorism and global movement concerning non-state actors and the US attitude towards South Asia have demanded various accommodative strategies for the countries in this region. Individually, all the states of the region immediately took initiatives in tackling terrorism and all kinds of illegal activities in their territories. Regionally, SAARC is the only organisation for all the states of this region that pays attention to curbing illegal activities in the region through various regional schemes. SAARC has categorised terrorism as the most terrible security threat since the founding of that organisation, while drug trafficking, arms trade and growing linkages between arms-drug-terrorist activities had been recognised since the 1990s. Because of the sluggish decision making process and frequent postponement of SAARC summits, the ratification and implementation of almost all initiatives and measures takes place, by and large, after a decade or even longer period of time. Therefore, many of the on-going SAARC initiatives are overlapping with post-9/11 concerns and measures.

As mentioned earlier, terrorism has been at the top of the list among the SAARC security agendas both in the pre- and post-9/11 period. The SAARC approved the Regional Convention on Suppression of Terrorism in 1987, which came into force in 1988. The key objective of this convention is to take effective measures to ensure that perpetrators of terrorist acts do not escape prosecution and punishment within the region. The convention has three important components that, in effect, can be very useful measures to tackle terrorism by mutual collaboration. Firstly, any contracting state may try an offender (citizen of any other contracting State) regardless of where the crime (in the case of offences enumerated in the Convention) was committed. For instance, if a person commits a crime in Nepal and is arrested in Bangladesh, then the Bangladesh government will have the power to try that person. Secondly, a contracting state in whose territory an alleged offender is found, shall, upon receiving a request for extradition from another contacting state, take appropriate measures, subject to its national laws, so as to ensure their presence for purposes of extradition or prosecution.[28] Therefore, the convention facilitates extradition or prosecution where necessary, so providing the least opportunity for offenders to escape. The third important section of the convention is the identification of certain serious offences as 'terroristic offences', and which, for the purposes of extradition, would not be treated as being of political nature.[29] This was essential to prevent offenders from taking recourse to the plea of political activity. It is fascinating that in 1987 SAARC took some strong and concrete measures to fight against regional terrorism, while terrorism did not receive such concern in other parts of the globe.

William Allen explains that, prior to 9/11, policing the international financial systems focused mainly on the criminal enterprise of corporate fraudsters, drug traffickers, stock swindlers, and all those seeking to segregate their criminal money from their

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[28] Article I and II, SAARC Regional Convention on Suppression of Terrorism 1987.
[29] Article I and II, SAARC Regional Convention on Suppression of Terrorism 1987.

crimes.[30] Immediately after the 9/11 attacks, the US launched a 'war on terror' financing, and Mona Atia mentions that more than 100 countries followed the US lead by introducing new legislation to combat terrorist financing.[31] Interestingly, international law was changed within two weeks of the attacks, and UN Resolution 1373 criminalised all activities falling within the ambit of terrorist financing. In compliance with UN Security Council Resolution 1373, SAARC adopted an Additional Protocol to suppress terrorist financing during the 11th SAARC Summit in January 2002. The Additional Protocol on Terrorism was adopted to combat terrorist acts by criminalising the provision, acquisition and collection of funds for such acts.

The measures to prevent terrorist financing cover the establishment and maintenance of a financial intelligence unit, for each member, to serve as a national centre for the collection, analysis and dissemination of pertinent money laundering and terrorist financing information. The financial intelligence unit would work for: (i.) the identification of suspicious customers, and unusually large or suspicious transactions in banks or other financial institutions; (ii.) detecting and monitoring movements of cash, bearer negotiable instruments, and other appropriate movements of value across national borders; and (iii.) establishing and monitoring channels of communication between agencies and services to facilitate and secure rapid exchange of information relating to terrorist financing. Previously, the 1987 convention lacked a mechanism for tackling terrorist financing, and the new convention is intended to put in place formulas similar to the 'follow the money' paradigm. Therefore, South Asian leaders are also trying to view terrorism and terror financing through the lens of the US-led 'war on terror'.

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[30] For detail, see William Allen, "The War Against Terrorism Financing', *Journal of Money Laundering Control*, Vol. 6, No. 4, 2003, pp. 306-310.

[31] Mona Atia, "In whose Interest? Financial Surveillance and the Circuits of Exception in the War on Terror', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, vol. 25, no. 3, 2007, pp. 447-475.

Currently, the concept of cooperative security mechanisms is becoming widespread, as observed in NAFTA, EU or ASEAN. Cooperative security is not the consequence of 9/11, rather that event strengthened or provided more concern for the establishment of such mechanisms. SAARC is also trying to pursue this track; for example, its member states are committed to exchanging information and intelligence and forging cooperation among Liaison Officers (Anti Terrorist Law Enforcement Officers). Cooperative security recommends a mechanism for resolution of conflicts through dialogue and negotiations, together with a heavy and long-term reliance on confidence building measures. [32] On the other hand, police chiefs of the member countries are meeting from time to time and have agreed to share information related to trans-border crimes among police organisations. Further, SAARC is taking initiatives to establish SAARC Police. In addition, the SAARC Terrorist Offences Monitoring Desk (STOMD) has been established in Colombo to collect, analyse and disseminate information about terrorist incidents, tactics, strategies and methods. Such initiatives are derived from the concept that many problems lie beyond the capacity of any one country to resolve. All such measures embody and give a regional focus to many of the well-established principles of international law in combating terrorism. [33]

As part of the 'war on terror', measures to combat terrorism financing have blocked significant amounts of money as suspect terrorist 'sources of money'. Furthermore, a 'war on drugs' and 'war on crime' have been launched as supporting actions of financial surveillance to constrict terrorist groups' quest for alternative funds. As Thomas M. Sanderson reveals, while charities and other forms of funding sources have increasingly been shut down, terrorist groups are relying on trafficking and other forms of crime as obvious and

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[32] S Bhardwaj, "India and Bangladesh: border issue and security perceptions", in Farooq Sobhan (ed.), *Bangladesh-India dialogue: vision of young leaders*, The University Press Limited, Dhaka, 2004.

[33] M. Islam, "Trade between Bangladesh and the Bordering Indian States: A Choice between Legal Trade and Smuggling", paper presented in the Second Dialogue on Interaction with the Indian bordering States at Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies, Dhaka, August 16-17, 2000.

easy alternatives.[34] With this in view, the US also pressures countries of different regions of the world to take actions against organised crime. Therefore, strict US vigilance is visible in South Asia in terms of the above mentioned nexus. SAARC is also taking several initiatives to stop human trafficking and combat the nexus between drug and arms trading within the region. For example, the SAARC Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children was signed in 2002 that entered into force in 2005.

The scope of the Convention is to promote cooperation amongst member states in order to effectively deal with various aspects of the prevention, interdiction and suppression of trafficking in women and children, the repatriation and rehabilitation of victims of trafficking, and preventing the use of women and children in international prostitution networks, particularly where the SAARC member countries are the countries of origin, transit and destination.[35] The vision of the Convention indicates that it is not formulated as a strategy to stop terrorism financing, rather it frames trafficking as serious violation of basic human rights. Rather, it can be considered as an 'indirect' impact of the US war on terrorism finance. For example, since 2001 the US government has produced annual reports on trafficking by countries that receive US foreign assistance. In the annual report, countries are ranked in tiers, based on government efforts to combat trafficking. Countries in tier 3 are potentially subject to non-humanitarian and non-trade sanctions.[36] Needless to say, all the SAARC members receive foreign assistance, and are thereby directly subject to US pressure to control trafficking.

According to the 2002 Convention, a Regional Task Force has been constituted by the SAARC member states to implement the Convention. The first meeting of this Task Force was held in New

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[34] Thomas M Sanderson, 'Transnational Terror and Organized Crime: Blurring the Line', *SAIS Review*, Vol. 24, No.1, 2004, pp. 49-61.

[35] For detail, see 11th SAARC Summit Declaration, 2002.

[36] Sandra l. Keefer, "Human trafficking and the impact on national security for the United States", *USAWC Strategy Research Project*, Strategic studies Institute of the U. S. Army War College, March, 2006, available at:
http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdffiles/ksil389.pdf, accessed on December 30, 2007.

Delhi on July 26, 2007, which decided to: (i) exchange ideas of best practices by the respective governments, NGOs and members of civil society to combat trafficking, (ii) develop a standard operating procedure to implement the various provisions of the Convention, and (iii) and accept an offer of the Government of India to conduct relevant training programmes in capacity building for stakeholders of SAARC Member States. It is generally accepted that trafficking is a serious problem for the region and which cannot be eradicated by any single state, therefore the SAARC Convention is seen as a milestone on the path to coordinated interventions against trafficking at the regional level. However, as the definition of trafficking provided in the Convention does not address trafficking from a general perspective but only focuses on prostitution, the text of the Convention needs to be reviewed in order to broaden its scope. Furthermore, the main problem is that the issue has been discussed in all the SAARC Summits, but no joint step has been taken yet. A national action plan and a road map have been developed in all of the SAARC countries, but implementation has never been undertaken.[37]

5. CONCLUSION

The events of 9/11 presented a unique set of circumstances and challenges, due to the resulting new constellations of world and regional powers. In the post-9/11 period, South Asia is at a crossroads of the war on terror, religious militancy and a huge arms trade. The 9/11 attacks added new security concerns, and the US policies in the existing intra-state conflict dynamics also created pressure on the countries of the region to control all kinds of terrorism. Therefore, 9/11 brought some changes in South Asian security issues. Firstly, the 9/11 attack and subsequent US policies popularised the Al-Qaeda movement and religious extremism among Muslims in the region.

Secondly, a US branded 'risk perception' and 'focus on terrorism' have been transmitted to South Asia. Discourses that addressed the combating of terrorism pre-dating 9/11 did not narrow their scope onto Islamic terrorism; rather concerns were focused on Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), Maoist movement, North

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[37]   See, *The New Nation*, July 28, 2006.

East India insurgents, and so on. By contrast, post-9/11 discourses, in most cases, are pushed by different anti-terrorism measures linking existing terrorist concerns with the new threat from Al-Qaeda. Finally, the first US anti-terrorism effort following 9/11 was the attack on Taliban-led Afghan government that, eventually, intensified the US involvement in South Asia. Since then, the US State Department has been vigilant on a range of issues, like human trafficking, terrorism and so on, and has been publishing annual reports on them. Therefore, states are more concerned to satisfy the US and, accordingly, are shaping their counter-terror drives to accord with the US war on terror.

While terrorism is on the rise, the regional security measures are not effective in South Asia. Undeniably, all the conventions on terrorism and human trafficking have some very noteworthy procedures to check such activities within the spirit of regionalism. However, none of the conventions is a complete code by itself, and any specific request invoking provisions is to be implemented by the state parties. For that reason, all the contracting parties need to adopt some domestic legislation to implement all these conventions, which has not been done yet. The heads of state have reiterated their firm commitment to combating these activities in the region since 1985, but this has not yet been accomplished, and this certainly raises questions about their political will. For instance, security measures which were ratified in 1988 could not be implemented even two decades later because of the lack of domestic legislation in all member countries. The position is similar for the SAARC Terrorist Offences Monitoring Desk (STOMD) and the SAARC Drug Offences Monitoring Desk (SDOMD) in Colombo, because both have failed to maintain a regular flow of relevant information so as to function the desks effectively. These are interesting examples of how a security 'vision' is incomplete, contested and always subject to politics. It tells us that the member states fall short in achieving mutual trust to move towards a common security vision. Each state wants to get back its own terrorists while refusing to do the same for the others. Thus, the regional security recipe, which was drafted about one and half decades before 9/11 and was boosted in the aftermath of those attacks, has not been a very successful effort in terms of implementation.

Alternatively, the SAARC has been proceeding with some very pragmatic agreements or initiatives to check terrorism in both the pre- and post-9/11 periods, while at the same time they think terrorism in South Asia is trans-national in nature and eradication is quite impossible without joint actions. However, small states perceive India's invisible hand involved in the persistence of their problems, while India blames other members for working to destabilise India. Hence, a sense of 'insecurity' or mistrust on joint security measures prevails among the members. Thus, South Asian security policy lacks direction, determination and consistency.

Now, if we look back to EU and NAFTA, the post-9/11 policy initiatives should be viewed as trust and confidence building measures. The primary success has been the increased cooperation and coordination between the governments which is absent in South Asia. All of the NAFTA and EU agreements take specific steps to address the on ground day to day challenges through the use of new and innovative programme. On the other hand, both the organisations are united for terrorism which they consider as external threats. For South Asia, terrorism is intra-regional and cross-border in nature. Therefore, the decades old suspicion among the South Asian neighbours blocks any regional security initiatives. However, the growing instability and security risks call for immediate cooperation among the members. As the US failed to secure its territory by unilateralism, South Asian countries need to learn a lesson or two from such experience.