

CBMS Among SAARC Nations

Abstract

Politically, the entire SARRC region, with the exception of India, has witnessed convulsive politics in the last 50 years. While India has managed to keep its democracy alive, the other nations of SAARC have experimented off and on with democratic processes, but in the absence of stable political institutions, military dictatorships or authoritarian forms of governance displaced democracy, democracy was displaced by in the absence of democratic forms of governance in SAARC Nations the politics of dialogue and discussion of problems and issues gets over - taken by the politics of confrontation. Politics in South Asia, therefore, seems to get dictated by mutual suspicion and mistrust and a lack of confidence in each others motives and intentions.

Keywords: CBMs "Confidence Building Measures, SAARC, Globalization, worst sufferers, food security, psychological warfare, displaced democracy, WMD, conflict resolution.

Introduction

The non-existence of peace and cooperation constituency in the region as a whole has been one of the most glaring aspects of contemporary SAARC Nations. This is largely related to the very concept of security and conflict we have been discussing in South Asia. Somehow the traditional constructions of security based on pure geo-political conception of threat have dominated the peace and security debate in the region. This continues to be so despite the end of cold war, fragmentation of Soviet Union, reorientation of Non-aligned movement, globalization led economic reforms, communication leap fogging and newer rapprochements and changing alignments.

Aim of the Study

Conflicts in SAARC nations have undergone large scale transformation over the years. These conflicts have become fiercer and more recurrent and have killed many times more South Asians than the conflicts created by the geo-political rivalry. These conflicts have a huge variety. It varies from migration to ethnicity, environment to imbalanced development, narcotics and small arms to terrorism, governance to globalization. Yet we hesitate to recognize these conflicts in our schematic and attempts to build peace and cooperation.

With the globalization a new factor of economic security and commercial interests has become a new challenge for conflict. The developing countries are the worst sufferers of this issue and the global balance of powers gradually shifting from North America and Europe to Asia - Pacific region with is poised to become new strategic center of gravity in international politics. Further growing population mass migrations threaten not only the food security but badly effect the economy of the state. The concept of psychological warfare and development of information technology is another emerging threat. The disgruntled elements within the state play havoc with nation's telecommunication stock exchanges power grids railways and other transport controls. Despite all the above WMD have to remain as a predominant currency of military power. Threats to maritime security are also growing with the policy of various states for exploration of ocean resources for food, energy and raw materials, which may add to security challenges.

Today, SARRC nations have become the cynosure of global attention after the nuclear weaponization of its two major constituents - India and Pakistan. In the perception of external observers this development combined with the existing patterns of conflictual relationships, large conventional military machines and military dictatorships and authoritarian regimes intensifies the potential for conflict in SARRC. Unfortunately, SARRC regionally presents a picture of marked contrasts in all fields – politically, militarily and economically.

Summary

Politically, the entire SARRC region, with the exception of India, has witnessed convulsive politics in the last 50 years. While India has



Surendra Kumar

Guest Faculty,
Deptt.of Defence & Strategic
Studies,
S.P.M. G.D.College,
University of Allahabad,
Allahabad

managed to keep its democracy alive, the other nations of SAARC have experimented off and on with democratic processes, but in the absence of stable political institutions, military dictatorships or authoritarian forms of governance displaced democracy, democracy was displaced by in the absence of democratic forms of governance in SAARC Nations the politics of dialogue and discussion of problems and issues gets over - taken by the politics of confrontation. Politics in South Asia, therefore, seems to get dictated by mutual suspicion and mistrust and a lack of confidence in each others motives and intentions.

Militarily, SAARC Nations presents a continuum of more than 50 years of wars and conflicts and more so between the two larger entities - India and Pakistan. This conflictual environment has spawned the maintenance of large conventional military machines eating into financial resources, which could have gone for economic and social development. New military dangers stand added in 1998 with the nuclear weaponisation of SAARC-introduction of nuclear weapons by India and Pakistan. With threat perceptions, now at an all time high the thresholds for outbreak of armed conflict with nuclear overtones is worrisome. The existing military environment has affected the process of the evolution of regional cooperation and development in the South Asia.

SAARC nations in terms of economic development and regional economic cooperation offers very attractive prospects due to the richness of natural and energy resources within the region and the potential for cheap hydro - electric power. Unfortunately, while the rest of the world has worked out economically inter - dependant structures to promote regional prosperity, SAARC efforts in this direction stand stymied due to lack of conflict resolutions amongst its states.

Socially and culturally it is expected that the people of SAARC nations have shared a centuries old common heritage, should have contributed towards renewal of these bonds, despite their emergence as new nation states. However, the pitch was queered by the fact that the emergence of the two most popular states i.e. India and Pakistan was attended by strife. Internally, too, most of the nations face religious, ethnic and sectarian strife. Democratic political institutions, if they had been allowed to mature could have contributed to building up of regional trust and confidence. Unfortunately, democracy has been an exception amongst SAARC states rather than the rule. The biggest causality of the absence of democracy in large parts of SAARC nations has been a callous attitude towards the subject of Human Rights.

South Asia, therefore, presents a picture of a troubled environment: militarily, politically, economically and socially. Such an explosive mix of factors make it imperative that one should explore meaningful conflict resolution initiatives and measures to divert SAARC from the path of destruction to peace and prosperity. In the absence of such initiatives, one may get confronted with small fires leading to conflagration. In this sense a conflict prone SAARC nations doe's become a global concern. The spill over

effects of any SAARC nations conflict could extend or involve other regions such as the Middle East and South East Asia nearer home and global strategic entities such as USA and the European Union further a field.

Thus, conflict resolution in SAARC nations is a pre-requisite for promotion of any meaningful regional cooperation and the ultimate emergence of SAARC nations. Economic Community akin to the European Economic Community SAARC however, continues to be a prisoner of the past in the political and military terms i.e. political divisiveness and military confrontation arising from the formative stages of nation building. In political and military fields, therefore, it may be difficult~ to achieve mutual confidence and trust. Simultaneously building fresh economic and social structures in South Asia reinforcing mutual cooperation could provide a holistic model for peace and development in South Asia.

The recent past has witnessed increased involvement of non-official groups in the resolution of deeply rooted interstate conflicts. In the case of South Asia non-official efforts between India and Pakistan have picked up momentum since 1990. This chapter attempts to identify the area of potentialities where Pakistan and India can launch programmes of cooperation. The basic objectives is to give the building or environment as an element of necessity through a "step-by'-step approach".

In a broader perspective Confidence Building Measure (CBM) is a means of conflict resolution, tends to reduce tensions by providing common platform for the rival parties to generate a stage of peaceful co-existence. Theoretically, CBMs provide a mechanism not only for war avoidance and conflict management, but also to promote socio-cultural economic and other types of cooperation between hostile states and groups.¹ An American expert Joseph Montville has defined CBM or Track Two diplomacy as "unofficial, informal interaction between members of adversary groups or nations which aims to develop strategies, influence public opinion, and organize human and material resources in ways that might help resolve their conflict."² Track two diplomacy is not a substitute for track one official diplomacy, but is a supplemental or parallel operation.³ It provide a second line of communication between conflicting states and seek to bridge the gap between official government positions by serving as "testing grounds" for new policy initiatives. It provides solutions which might satisfy the basic political, security and esteem needs of the antagonistic parties to a particular dispute. In general its primary goal is to "promote an environment, through the education of public opinion, that would make it safer for political leaders to take risks for peace".⁴ As a shadow diplomacy its assists leaders by "compensating for the psychological constraints imposed on them" and also by creating an atmosphere in which both the parties will be forced to improve relations.⁵ Consequently, this form of diplomacy can be useful in several ways. It may (1) help resolve ongoing disputes (2) prevent the emergence or new disputes, (3) ease tensions and build confidence between the parties involved, and (4) serve as a platform for exploring alternative approaches to rigid official positions and provide

governments the opportunity to pick up new ideas when the political will to improve relations is forth coming.⁶

Most non-official dialogues in SAARC nations are multi layered and mostly grow in tan dun. According to a study conducted by the Ford Foundation these dialogues can be divided into seven categories based on their objectives, proximity to government participants and finding sources.⁷

1. 'Track two' dialogues which provide a second line of communication between states and seek to bridge the gap between official government positions by serving as testing grounds for new policy initiatives.
2. 'Track three'; principally "people-to-people" initiatives which seek to build and enhance links between citizens.
3. Multilateral dialogues, usually on a South Asia - wide basis that are issue specific and designed to suggest approaches and policy options for regional institutions such as SAARC as well as for individual national governments.
4. Initiatives that seek to strengthen business links, both at the bilateral and multilateral levels.
5. Efforts to establish regular scholarly exchange and dialogue activities connecting research institutes in the region.
6. Dialogue initiatives born outside SAARC albeit with the objective of bringing SAARC closer together.
7. Interactions among SAARC nationals at meetings and for outside the region.

Conclusion

The Non-official Dialogues have been started in SAARC about a half a decade ago and has mostly operated in the quasi-official realm. In fact, dialogues rarely involve the participation of government official's proactive management by them. Unfortunately. There has been very little involvement of those who can

directly influence policies, those who can mobilize opinions of the masses or the young generation who hold the key to the futures⁸. Consequently, the impact of these dialogues in the region is almost negligible. But, now it has gradually begun to generate interest among the elites. The entire process of CBMs can be divided into three broad area (1) Military CBMs, (2) economic CBMs and (3) Political CBMs.

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