

## **CONCEPT OF COLLECTIVE SECURITY FOR SOUTH ASIA: ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

With one-fifth of the world population living in South Asia, and a land area covering more than five million square kilometres, the region is vast and complex. Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka are the nation states in the South Asia. Later Afghanistan was accepted as a South Asian state. Myanmar does not fall in South Asia; however, her geographical borders with Bangladesh and India bring her into the scene of South Asian regional affairs. India and Pakistan are the major actors in the region. While few of the seven South Asian states have common borders with each other, they all border with, or are adjacent to India. Other countries of South Asia i.e. Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and Maldives are quite unequal in size, in terms manpower resources, military power and economic strength. The rivalry between India and Pakistan and growing risk of a nuclear confrontation between the two has made the region a volatile spot in the world.

What primarily threatens a state now is indeed a whole range of new issues that are no longer narrow state centric or a strictly sovereign issue for a single nation. Some of the more prominent new security issues are; terrorism, cyber-crime, trans-border population flows, restrictions on trade and commerce, trafficking in drugs and narcotics, exploitation of natural resources under the sea and a whole range of environmental questions. This realization has led to new approaches to security both in a regional and international context. One of such approaches is ‘collective security’ – a phrase that increasingly gained popularity after World War II. Time has now come for new thinking in South Asia especially on issues of security and development. So what does this ‘collective security’ means? Goodby (1993, p 237) defines ‘collective security’ as, “a policy that commits governments to develop and enforce broadly accepted international rules and seek to do so through collective action legitimized by representative international organizations.” Collective security is much more effective approach to security where neighbours are unequal with respect to size, might and economy. Ambassador Farooq Sobhan in a speech at National Defence College (NDC) Bangladesh on 22 July 2013 defined collective security as, “The normative starting point of the concept of collective security is that each participating state has an equal right to security. This corresponds to the understanding that security is indivisible and that the security of each state is inseparably linked to the security of all others’. Such security arrangements enhance inter-state cooperation. Collective security has both strengths and weaknesses. The collective security provides constructive measures by bringing all state actors in a common platform for the best possible way to deal with present or likely conflicts.

Collective response to an external threat allows states to allocate more resources to their internal affairs and reduce defence expenditure. The main weakness is that individual state's national interest takes precedence over the common issue that the group of nations stands for; hence nation or nations will refuse to participate although they are pledged to defend each other.

The security for South Asia is a vast subject encompassing all spheres of political, socio-cultural, economic and religious. Traditional and non-traditional threat concerns are also very important for the nation states for their survival and sustainable development. Dealing with such vast arena will be improbable proposition. Hence this study will be restricted to military cooperation and participation of collective security. This will focus on the non-traditional threats to the nation states in the region while analyzing possibilities such cooperation or participation and the effort has been narrowly focused on essentials only e.g. conflicting interests among the nation states have been analysed living aside the complimentary interest(s).

## **REGIONAL CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS – AN OVERVIEW WITH INDIA AS THE FOCUS**

### **General**

The natures of conflicts among the states in the last decades have changed. The possibilities of interstate war between the neighbours are remote now. The governments of the South Asian countries generally neglected integration of the minorities into the mainstream rather efforts were made to forcibly assimilate these minorities. In doing so they were deprived of their cultural and religious rights, and often coercively relocated that almost naturally led to separatist resistance (Haack 2004, p 4). There have been violent outbreaks of communal riots in this region. These violence riots have spill over effects and can go cross-border. The border line between religious and/or ethnic militancy and organized crime is blurred. Hence, organized crime and its outfits become a security threat, as they serve as logistics of insurgency and terrorism. Water is a major issue in bilateral relations in South Asia. It also remains a means of coercive diplomacy by the big neighbour (Manchanda 1999, p 63).

There were and are numerous conflicts in South Asia; ongoing fighting in fragmented Afghanistan, violent rivalry in Kashmir, Maoist uproar in Nepal, secession of war in Sri Lanka, insurgency in Northeastern states of India. For most of them, solutions are conceivable, but a few look quite insoluble. Some conflicts seem to be domestic affairs, but a closer view shows that really all of them have a regional dimension.

## **India's Relations with Her Neighbours**

India's relations with her neighbours are guided by two doctrines that it follows in exercising her foreign policy. These are 'Nehru Doctrine' and 'Gujral Doctrine'. Critics say that because of 'Nehru Doctrine' defensive power of the country was decreased and its pacifistic ideals brought serious damage to national security. It also caused isolation of world affairs and economic stagnation (<http://www.sdi.sagepub.com/content/21/1/77.full.pdf> accessed on 29 May 2013). The essence of 'Gujral Doctrine' has been that being the largest country in South Asia, India can extend unilateral concessions to neighbours in the sub-continent. Although India did discourage any multilateral engagement, in the last two years there has been sign of positive change in India's stance. For example, India, in July 2011 has agreed to Bangladesh's proposal for basin wide management of water. This is a shift from bilateralism (<http://www.idsa-india.org/an-jul9-8.html> accessed on 29 May 2013).

**India's Relation with Nepal, Bhutan and Sri Lanka.** It is believed that India's foreign policy is greatly influenced by 'Arthashashtra' of Great Indian Philosopher Chanakya. India's small neighbours felt threatened by its size, might and 'chanakya' diplomacy. For these nation states their identity rests on asserting their difference from India. Very often they sought to play off China against India. In response India exert diplomatic and trade regimes to keep situation in her favour. India's relation with Nepal is built on the Indo-Nepal Treaty of 1950. However, there have been pressures to put this treaty under review. India provided humanitarian relief to Tamil refugees. It has also armed and trained Tamil militant groups. Sri Lanka's intimacy with USA, United Kingdom (UK) and Israel were seen as complicating India's security interests. This time India played the role of regional police and sent its force Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) to Sri Lanka. Three years later it withdrew its force humiliated.

## **India-Myanmar Relations**

India-Myanmar ties are rooted in each country's broader foreign policy perspective and specially its assessment of the other's motivations and inclinations. Myanmar 'sandwiched' between two Asian giants – China and India and it seeks cooperative relations with both. It is keen to leverage its strategic location to derive maximum benefits. From India's perspective, Myanmar is of paramount importance to India for stability, development and internal security needs in the Northeastern Region, and expansion of its influence in the Bay of Bengal area and access to Southeast Asia. However, three elements are the most important determinants in Indo-Myanmar relations i.e. China factor, connectivity to the east and security.

The western nations imposed ban on arms sale to Myanmar in 1989. Since then there have been increasing influence of China over Myanmar. This was a threat to India in its Northeast. Myanmar's northern borders abutting China also constituted a tri-junction of India's eastern border. It forms a strategic bridge between South Asia and Southeast Asia making it a vital area of influence for India's security. Hence, it is natural that defence cooperation should be an important component of bilateral relations.

On his visit to Myanmar on 27 May 2012 Indian Prime Minister Singh described Myanmar as a critical partner in India's Look East Policy and 'an economic bridge between India and China and between South and Southeast Asia.' Projects executed by Indian companies in recent years cover a variety of sectors such as communication, telecommunication and energy.

For about last three decades much of India-Myanmar border region has been volatile with negative activities like insurgency, transnational terrorism, smuggling and drugs/currency/arms trafficking. Certain Indian Insurgent Groups using Myanmar as a base carried out operations against Indian authorities. This was a serious concern for India. India fears that China had secured a naval base in the Bay of Bengal on the Myanmar island of Hainggyi, which threatened India's security.

**Analysis.** In third world countries no process is irreversible. Yet it is assumed that, if there are no other military adventures then the country will undertake further reforms, strengthening its democracy, opening its economy and re-balancing its external relations. The changing situation creates new opportunities for Myanmar and India to deepen their dialogue and strengthen their cooperation. Together with Australia and South Africa, India launched a new grouping of the Indian Ocean Rim Countries. It is another way of drawing Myanmar into closer association with its Indian Ocean neighbours and away from China.

## **REGIONAL CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS – AN OVERVIEW WITH PAKISTAN AS THE FOCUS**

### **India-Pakistan Relations**

From the very independence of Pakistan geographical separation, socio economic disparities, cultural and language differences etc challenged the survival of the state. Religion was an inadequate basis for the survival and sustenance of a conjoined nation state (Matto 1999, p 84). Pakistan's inevitable dismemberment happened in 1971 with the birth of Bangladesh through a nine month long war of liberation. Key issues in India-Pakistan relations are: Kashmir conflict, supporting terrorism across the border and nuclear race.

**The Kashmir Conflict.** The Kashmir conflict came into being on 26 October 1947 when Hindu ruler from this majority Muslim state controversially acceded to India. UN resolution of 1948 envisaged a plebiscite to decide on the fate of Kashmir. The plebiscite did never take place and will probably not take place in foreseeable future. A poll indicated that 72% of the Kashmiris opined for independence much to the dismay of Pakistan (Hafiz 2005, p 124). The Kashmir conflict is simmering with different intensity. However, an Indo-Pakistan peace process must become sustainable enough that both sides can refrain from misusing Kashmir as political lever.

**Supporting Terrorism across the Border.** India authority continued to attribute violence and deaths in Jammu and Kashmir and elsewhere to transnational terrorist groups it alleges are backed by Pakistan. On the other hand, Pakistan's finger of suspicion points to India for bomb blasts or communal clashes in Karachi, Sindh or Lahore.

**Nuclear Proliferation.** In South Asia India and Pakistan are nuclear powers. Although these countries remained ambiguous, they preferred non-weaponised deterrence (Poulose 1998, p 77). However, both declared policy to keep the nuclear option open and exercise if the situation warrants. India repeatedly justified India's new nuclear weapons policy as a response to the nuclear threat from China.

**Analysis.** Impediments to normalising relations are continued allegations of violations of the 'Line of Control' between India and Pakistan and Indian concerns about Pakistani-based terrorist groups. India and Pakistan attempted to decrease tensions in their bilateral relationship by increasing official dialogue between their two governments, liberalising trade regimes, and relaxing some visa requirements in 2012. There is also room for India and Pakistan to increase security cooperation efforts, particularly on confidence building measures, the illicit drug trades and counter-terrorism.

### **India-Pakistan-Afghanistan Relations**

**General.** Both India and Pakistan, since their emergence from the break-up of the British colonial empire in South Asia in 1947, have had ties with a range of Afghan governments. Due to differences over the Durand Line, Pakistan and Afghanistan have not always enjoyed the most cordial relations. The ethnically Pashtun and Baluch belts straddling the Durand Line made that demarcation illegitimate in the eyes of many in the tribal areas. India exploited this rivalry following partition.

**During Soviet Controlled Afghanistan.** During the period under Soviet control India worked with successive Soviet puppet regimes in Afghanistan and later with Ahmed Shah Massoud's Northern Alliance because it did not want to cede its military superiority over Pakistan and relied on the Soviets to provide advanced weaponry at bargain-basement prices. Taliban victory in 1996 gave Pakistan's politico-military establishment a long-sought goal: namely, what they believed to be a pliant regime in Afghanistan, one that would grant it strategic depth against India (Hameed 2012, p 17).

**During Taliban Regime.** India in one hand continued to support the Northern Alliance and on the other hand quietly supported the American-led effort to dismantle the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. Since the end of 2001, India has developed economic, diplomatic and military tools in its pursuit of a more coordinated strategy in the region. It is believed that Afghanistan is suspicious of Pakistani aid due to past indiscretions and meddling with its affairs, and past support for the Taliban.

**Engagement in the Post Taliban Period and Its Significance.** The rise of China and of Islamist militancy in the region led India to aggressively pursue its economic and strategic interests in the area. With continuous engagement and role in Afghanistan, India would like to prevent a restoration of any form of a resurgent Taliban regime or other regime hostile towards India and limit Pakistan's influence over any emergent regime in Afghanistan. Rise of militancy in Kashmir is directly related with the rise of militancy on both sides of the Durand Line. India is also seeking to develop long-term diplomatic ties and economic arrangements with a stable and Pro-Indian regime in Afghanistan, which then provides India an outlet to resource-rich states of Central Asia.

**India vis-à-vis Pakistan's Interest.** India's interests are quite clear. Firstly, it is related to the issue of rising regional and global power; secondly, it provides access to resources in the Central Asia. Afghanistan had been a proxy battleground for Pakistan and India during the war between the Pakistani-backed Taliban regime and the India-supported Northern Alliance. Any increased military cooperation with India would likely only contribute to tensions. Pakistan view India's growing presence and influence in Afghanistan as a blow to its quest for "strategic depth" against India (Hanauer 2012, p 5).

## **REGIONAL CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS –AN OVERVIEW WITH BANGLADESH AS THE FOCUS**

### **India-Bangladesh Relations**

India played a vital role in the liberation of Bangladesh. The historic Liberation War of 1971 provided India with unique opportunity to emerge as the unchallenged regional power in South Asia and since then hard power has been an inseparable component of her foreign policy (Jegannathan 2012, p 2). Bangladesh as well as other South Asian neighbours of India are aware of and do recognize India's pre-eminence in the region. What they resist is India's attempt to translate pre-eminence into an imposed pre-dominance. The matrix of Indo-Bangladesh relations is complex and complicated. It is outlined by the existence of a number of contentious issues. Such issues are: the sharing of the water resources of common rivers, implementation of the 1974 Land Border Agreement (LBA) and accord on the leasing of Tin Bigha Corridor to Bangladesh, demarcation of maritime boundaries and the ownership of South Talpatty Island (India calls it 'New Moore Island'), transit and transshipment to Northeastern states of India through Bangladesh and the Asian Highway etc.



In 2010 at New Delhi, the Prime Minister of Bangladesh signed three agreements with India relating to curbing of trans-border terrorist and criminal activity. Similar initiatives have been taken to institutionalise resolution of boundary disputes and the long standing maritime boundary issue between the two countries. A few other initiatives regarding trade imbalance, connectivity, communication, transit of Indian goods through inland river waters of Bangladesh and development of Mongla and Chittagong ports have been taken up.

**Analysis.** Over a period of time, India has developed thus a policy that could be summarized as follows: I) Procrastination of the settlement of the disputes with the assumption that time would work in her favour. II) Creating occasional pressure on Bangladesh. III) When pressure fails, displaying benign negligence to the issue of Bangladesh. IV) India is emphasizing more on sub-regional cooperation. For Bangladesh, the settlement of some of the issues involved in her relations with India is of crucial importance.

### **Bangladesh-Myanmar Relations**

Bangladesh's small border with Myanmar had been eventful in the past two decades. There had been two waves of ethnic Muslim minority Rohingya refugees forced into Bangladesh in 1978 and 1992. The dispute between Myanmar and Bangladesh on the delimitation of the maritime boundary has been resolved on 14 March 2012 through the judgment delivered by the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea. This has been a great achievement for both the countries. The Rohingya issue is the most burning issue in the relationship between Bangladesh and Myanmar. The other issues are; drug trafficking, arms smuggling, border management etc. By official estimate over 29,000 refugees remained to be repatriated (<http://www.prothom-alo.com/detail/date/2013-06-11/news/359492> accessed on 11 June 2013); unofficially there are more than 100,000 Rohingyas who have merged with locals. The slow tempo of the return of the Rohingyas created severe economic and social problems for Bangladesh.

**Analysis.** The west has been investing heavily in Myanmar in the oil and gas fields and in the tourism sector. Myanmar has taken this opportunity to solidify its position in the regional and world political sphere. It is gaining both politically and economically. United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) was recommending measures to absorb 20,000 Rohingyas much to the dismay of Bangladesh. Such a step would probably invite further influx of refugees in future. China and Myanmar have developed economic and military relations over the decades. The US and its Western Allies including Japan aimed to curve out Myanmar from the influence of China; on the other hand they aim at the abundant resources it offers. Hence, Bangladesh should improve relations with Myanmar through continuous engagement at all levels i.e. diplomatic, business, cultural, etc and at the same time strive to strengthen its position over the issue of Rohingya refugees.

## **INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL FORUMS**

### **United Nations (UN)**

The UN Security Council (UNSC) is the main organ of the UN entrusted with the responsibility for the maintenance or restoration of peace. The UNSC derives its authority from UN Charter Article 2(6) of Chapter I; Articles 39, 40, 41, 42 and 43 of Chapter VII. There is no doubt that collective security can be used pre-emptively. Indeed, the reference in Article 39 of the UN charter 'threat to the peace' as one of the three grounds on which council could exercise its Chapter 7 powers, demonstrates that pre-emptive action was always intended to be a major feature of the concept of collective security.

**Analysis.** Have these Articles been exercised by the UN in South Asia? Answer is: Partly yes, and partly no. Two cases can be studied to understand and analyse the responses of the UN to conflicts in South Asia. In the first case, the first group of UN Military Observers (UNMO) arrived in the mission area on 24 January 1949 following a conflict between India and Pakistan over the control of Jammu and Kashmir. The UNMOs are to supervise the ceasefire under UNSC resolutions 39 (1948). Later following resolutions were adopted by UNSC as the situation warranted: 47 (1948), 91 (1951), 209 (1965) and 307 (1971). The UN does neither enforce peace applying Chapter VII nor make efforts to arrange plebiscite to ensure right of self-determination by the people of Jammu and Kashmir. UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) was established in March 2002 by UNSC Resolution 1401. It has been 11 years that UNAMA is operating in Afghanistan. Has Afghanistan become a peaceful and stable country? Are its people safe enough to conduct normal livelihood? As the US continues to drawdown troops are the Afghan security and law enforcing agencies strengthened enough to undertake control of the situation in 2014? From the present time view point, security is yet illusive in Afghanistan. In both the cases, the UN had failed to include the regional forum SAARC in the process. This is partly due to SAARC's charter, and mostly it was just ignored in the process.

### **South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation (SAARC)**

**General.** South Asia is a region of paradoxes, in one hand it has harmony and amity; on the other hand it suffers from distrust and conflicts. The region bears colonial legacies of un-demarcated boundaries, and displaced ethnic and religious minorities. Hence, there remains a high level of inter-state political tension and strife. Some states saw each other as potential threat. Some sought and forged alliances with extra-regional rival military powers. Consequently, the region experienced numbers of military confrontations. However, it may be noted that South Asia did not face any common external threat.



**Formation of SAARC.** Since inception on 8 December 1985, SAARC has not seen its full potential mostly because of two reasons. Firstly, India phobia: other states had/have a suspicion that it is a ‘proxy initiative’ to reinforce India’s predominance. Secondly, India apprehends ganging up of smaller states against India. As a result member states were slow to respond to the concept of regional co-operation. It may also be mentioned that India has shown negligence to make SAARC effective. His Excellency Pankaj Sharan in his address at NDC on 13 August 2013 highlighted that there has been fundamental and philosophical change to move towards sub-regional cooperation, for example energy cooperation between Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal etc. It may be noted that Article X of the SAARC Charter says, “Bilateral and contentious issues shall be excluded from the deliberations” (<http://saarc-sec.org/SAARC-Charter/5/#> accessed on 15 July 2013). Cooperation on defence sector is also profoundly absent in the charter.

**Achievement.** Except conflict management between the member states (which have consciously been put out of SAARC charter) SAARC has laudable achievement in many sectors. Notable achievements are: I) SAARC has provided a forum for bilateral constructive and productive dialogue, and engagement. II) SAARC has facilitated reduction in trust deficit amongst the member states. III) SAARC is in its track to achieve greater trade liberalism and trade partnership amongst the member states through South Asian Preferential Trading Arrangement (SAPTA), South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) and other trade agreements. IV) SAARC has greatly increased connectivity and people-to-people relations. Addu Declaration renewed its firm commitment to alleviate poverty and reduce income inequalities. It has also agreed to promote the above (<http://tribune.com.pk/story/290660/addu-declaration-saarc-summit-concludes-with-20-point-agenda/> accessed on 15 July 2013). V) SAARC has also provided a platform for convergence of identities.

**Analysis.** On the above backdrop, is it possible for SAARC to facilitate collective security in the region? To achieving such goal certain preconditions must be met. Firstly, SAARC Charter should be result-oriented, objective driven and calibrated to the pressing and emerging realities of the region. Secondly, multilateralism should be introduced in the SAARC charter. Thirdly, confidence building measures (CBM) should be enhanced. Continued dialogue between the member states, more specifically between India and Pakistan is of paramount importance. CBM should be enhanced increasing both people-to-people and government-to-government contact. Fourthly, the member states should discuss and agree on a roadmap to implement collective security. Such roadmap may include steps like updating SAARC Charter, enhancing CBM, preventive diplomacy, active participation in that order.

## **WAYS FORWARD**

The conflicts in South Asia are both inter- and intra-state conflict. Countering the menace of terrorism based on religion or political ideology or ethnicity is a primary concern now of the member states. Drug trafficking, human trafficking, money laundering are also serious issues. Sharing of natural resources like water, energy are being discussed among the states in South Asia. Hence, 'regionalism' is receiving a renewed impetus as a means of sustaining peace and stability. On the backdrop, an approach to achieving collective security would be a comprehensive approach encompassing greater cooperation in all fields of economic activities, CBM and capacity building.

1. Updating of SAARC Charter (paragraph 25) is essential to start with the process.
2. Strengthening democracy in the states of South Asia is of paramount importance. A strong regional voice through SAARC will enhance democratic practices and deter unwarranted military and authoritarian regimes.
3. The member states are yet to take advantage of the trade reforms and liberalisation. Integration of trade and investment in the region will boost overall growth in the region.
4. Increased connectivity i.e. physical connectivity, people to people contact, trade and investment among the states can play an important role in achieving goal of sustainable and inclusive growth, peace and security in the region. It would also build confidence among the states.
5. Collaboration and active participation in the military affairs needs huge boost and rethinking. Joint operational and tactical level multilateral field exercises may be conducted to identify shortcomings. Meetings at the levels of Chiefs of Armed Forces and Intelligence Chiefs may be arranged at regular intervals. Such steps would enable to find a suitable command, control, coordination and communication arrangement; to reach a common platform of understanding and trust among the military partners; and build cohesion. All these steps will be conducive to robust security cooperation.
6. Relaxing restrictive visa regime is another step of CBM.
7. Confluence of all the measures would be building a strong regional alliance. A security structure needs to be evolved through active dialogue between the states – a structure that is inclusive irrespective of shape and size of the states, addresses the common objective yet takes in to cognizance individual states interests, and ensures participation on the basis of mutual trust and equality.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Keeping 'regionalism' in the focus following are recommended:

- a. On the backdrop, an approach to achieving collective security would be a comprehensive approach encompassing greater cooperation in all fields of economic activities, CBM and capacity building.
- b. Updating of SAARC Charter to accommodate multilateralism.
- c. Strengthening democracy and democratic practices in the states of South Asia.
- d. Trade liberalisation should continue with a view to reaching ultimate goal of becoming an economic union.
- e. Increased connectivity among the states will be important for achieving goal of sustainable and inclusive growth, peace and security in the region.
- f. Increased collaboration and active participation in the military affairs will be conducive to robust security cooperation. It is recommended to introduce following among the states: i) Joint operational and tactical level multilateral field exercises, ii) Meetings at the levels of Chiefs of Armed Forces and Intelligence Chiefs may be arranged at regular intervals.
- g. A strong regional security alliance should be built through dialogue between the states.

## CONCLUSION

South Asian region has its myriad inter-state issues. Some of the more prominent security issues are; terrorism, cyber-crime, trans-border population flows, restrictions on trade and commerce, trafficking in drugs and narcotics, exploitation of natural resources under the sea and a whole range of environmental questions. Collective security is much more effective approach to security where neighbours are unequal with respect to size, might and economy. India's relations with her neighbours are guided by 'Nehru Doctrine' and 'Gujral Doctrine'. It caused serious drawback in her relation with neighbours. However, in the last couple of years a gradual shift towards multilateralism and cooperation is probably driven by her objective to become a reckonable actor in the global arena.

India is pivotal to Pakistan's national security strategy. In South Asia India and Pakistan are nuclear powers that remained ambiguous and preferred non-weaponised deterrence. The relation between Pakistan and Afghanistan has been bitter on account of territorial dispute and allegation of supporting each other's subversive elements. In her pursuit of strategic objective India has been more positive in her relationship with Afghanistan. Pakistan view India's growing presence and influence in Afghanistan as

a blow to its quest for “strategic depth” against India. The matrix of Indo-Bangladesh relations is outlined by the existence of a number of contentious issues. The major issues are: sharing of the water resources of common rivers, implementation of LBA, demarcation of maritime boundaries, transit and transshipment etc. Initiatives have been taken to institutionalise resolution of boundary disputes, the long standing maritime boundary issue between the two countries and to curbing of trans-border terrorist and criminal activity. The issues in the Bangladesh-Myanmar relations are: the Rohingya issue, drug trafficking, arms smuggling, border management etc. Myanmar is gradually opening up to the world. Bangladesh needs to improve relations with Myanmar through continuous engagement at all levels i.e. diplomatic, business, cultural, etc and at the same time strive to strengthen its position over the issue of Rohingya refugees.

The UN Security Council (UNSC) is the main organ of the UN entrusted with the responsibility for the maintenance or restoration of peace. The organization must take all measures which it may deem necessary, including preventive and enforcement action under Chapter VII. However, UN has not exercised measures under Chapter VII in South Asia. Since inception politically contentious issues are excluded from deliberations in SAARC. Multilateralism is also profoundly absent in the charter. ‘Regionalism’ is receiving a renewed impetus as a means of sustaining peace and stability. An approach to achieving collective security would be a comprehensive approach encompassing greater cooperation in all fields of economic activities, CBM and capacity building. Cooperation and collaboration in military affairs will be conducive to robust security cooperation. Confluence of all the measures would be to building a strong regional alliance.

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