COMBATING TERRORISM : REGIONAL TASK FORCE IN SOUTH ASIA

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INTRODUCTION

Terrorism is not a new phenomenon. Its origin can be traced long back in the history. However, its expression has been gradually increasing in intensity, complexity and dimensions in many folds with the passage of time. In the contemporary world, more than hundred states have either experienced or dealt with some form of low intensity conflicts (LIC) like insurgency, terrorism or militancy. On the other hand, terrorists are non-state actors that are elusive with a global reach, estimated to be in 60 countries. [1] South Asia is no exception to terrorism or militancy threat. The spectre of transnational terrorism has risen from peripheral issue of 1980's to one of the foremost security challenges facing the SAARC region collectively. [2]

Terrorism and militancy of the region have their origin in socio-economic, politico-cultural, ethno-racial and religious discriminations and deprivations. These countries are putting huge efforts and resources in combating terrorism in their own ways mostly as an individual entity and occasionally with bilateral approach like Myanmar-India joint operations [3] and Bangladesh-India joint patrolling, etc. But all these attempts could give hardly any dividends; rather intensity of terrorism is on the rise in the region. Thus, in all probability, terrorism and counter terrorism (CT) in South Asia is going to be a long-drawn and costly affair. Here comes the requirement of a collective approach. All the SAARC countries have recognized this and they have signed a number of protocols to that effect. [4] All the governments of Bangladesh have been pursuing this agenda. But the idea got momentum in the beginning of 2009 as Bangladesh put forward a suggestion to create a Counter Terrorism Task Force (CTTF) manned by security personnel from all South Asian countries.[5]

1. Barrister Harun Ur Rashid, "South Asian Task Force Against Terrorism", *Dhaka Courier*, February 27, 2009.
2. Brig Gen (Retd) Arun Sahgal, "Combating Terrorism in South Asia - State Response to Terrorism", *The Daily Star*, November 12, 2005.
3. Indo-Asian News service, "India-Myanmar to Jointly Fight Northeast Rebels", *The Daily Star,* March 1, 2010.
4. Air Cdre (Retd) Ishfaq Ilahi Choudhury, "National Security: Bangladesh Perspective", *The Daily Star*, March 6, 2010.
5. Staff Correspondent, "Unity Among South Asian Nations Vital to Fight Militancy", *The Daily Star,* February 21, 2010.

There is no denying the fact that the countries suffer from serious mistrust and fear of suppression by the greater and powerful neighbours, which has to be removed from their minds as an essential precondition for having an effective CTTF. To achieve that goal, research and engagement at all levels are also essential. This study intends to examine the concept of a CTTF in South Asia.

Terrorism and CT Efforts in South Asia

There exist a wide gap in understanding of terrorism between the countries and people. Western world led by the United States, tries to include all forms of destructive activities including armed struggle against aggressor as terrorist activities. Actually, the collapse of the Soviet Union has undermined the Marxist, Leninist concept of armed struggle, which overthrew numerous old regimes[6]. On the other hand, the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) of 56 Muslim states, has recognized the right to armed struggle. The OIC convention on combating International Terrorism (1998) stated in unambiguous terms that struggle of people including armed struggle against foreign occupation, aggression, colonialism and hegemony aimed at liberation and self determination in accordance with the principles of international law would not be considered as a terrorist crime[7]. Despite these developments, international law has not yet depilated the right to armed struggle. In 1974, the UN General Assembly passed historic Resolution 3314, adopting the definition of Aggression that included the right to armed struggle and treaty acts of aggression as crimes against peace[8]. Besides the UN, various international organizations and institutions have often been reaffirming the right of self-determination against colonial and racist regimes and other forms of alien domination.

One should be able to identify the crucial difference between two kinds of violence, e.g. by patriots at war and by murderers. Resorting to violence against innocent unarmed citizens by terrorist groups for achieving political ends in a democracy where free and fair elections prevail is an illegitimate and unjustifiable use of violence[9]. There exists differences of opinion on the definition and understanding of terrorism among the SAARC countries. On paper, India is closer to Anglo-American definitions of terrorism than Pakistan.[10] However, for a common understanding of the terms, all activities of violence against innocent and unarmed humanity may be termed as terrorist activities. Bangladesh unequivocally condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.

6. Dr. Laquat Ali Khan, "The Changing Law of Armed Struggle", *The Daily Star*, September 02, 2005.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Lt Gen E A Vas, pvsm, *The Search for Security: Controlling Conflict and Terrorism,* Natraj Publishers, Dehardun, p.121.
10. M.J. Akbar, "Little Pakistan's Big India Problem", *The Daily Star,* March 24, 2010.

Initial terrorist organizations of modern Indian subcontinent were centered in and around Bengal. The Ghader (rebellion) Party (1912-25) was the Panjabi complement to Bengali terrorist. The year 1967 saw an uprising of peasants in the small North Bengal village on Naxalbari near Siliguri, but spread to the tribal areas and cities elsewhere to carryout terrorism and urban violence. As insurgency movements started cooking up in different parts of the region in late 50s and early 60s, expression of terrorist activities were also noticed in the society.

A close look into the South Asian insurgencies reveals that many of these movements initially appeared with the demand for more right and autonomy and hardly had any claim for secession. However, in the process of fighting for limited socio-political rights, they gained momentum and ultimately turned into insurgency movements involving wide scale terrorism and violence.

Terrorism in Newer Form

Like other parts of the world, the South Asian terrorists are also trying to acquire chemical, biological and radiological or nuclear weapons or even high yield explosive. After having experienced a couple of terrorist attacks with Chemical and biological weapons in Japan in the 1990s, nuclear terrorism are now seen as the only taboo left. Presence of insecure nuclear facilities containing tons of fissile materials in USSR, or states like North Korea and Pakistan or individuals inside these countries make this possibility stronger.[11] Their violence may be seen in a greater scale in the sea and air along with land operations. Expansion of cyber terrorism cannot be ignored. New style of terrorism is likely to be more dangerous and more deadly.[12] They are likely to increase their destructive activities on every field of economic and development agenda like the flow of goods, services and people; trade, business and financial activities including securing their own illegal money movements/ laundering, etc.

CT Efforts

All the countries of South Asia are expending huge resources and efforts to overcome the problems of terrorism and militancy. Still many say,'' Quite dismayingly, the governments of South Asia have taken very little initiatives to combat terrorism in their respective countries either individually or

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11   Ton Sauer, "A Second Revolution: From Nuclear Primacy to Post-Existential Deterrence", *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol-32, No-5, October 2009, p. 755.

12   ''New Style Terrorism can be more Dangerous", *The Daily Independent*, May 04, 1999.

collectively".[13] As terrorism in South Asia could not be tackled by the respective countries, a common and collective strategy is needed.

Cooperation Within and Outside

Almost all South Asian countries are part of certain regional and international mechanisms to fight terrorism. India, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan have established notable cooperation with USA and her partners for fighting against terrorism. Even Nepal, Bhutan and Maldives have also established relations on this issue with those countries. The USA is imparting training, providing technological and other forms of assistance on CT. The regional countries have also established bi-lateral cooperation among themselves on terrorism. Another international dimension of CT strategy in South Asia has revealed recently as the Indian Prime Minister expressed Indian interest to play a role in containing terrorism in Pakistan, Afghanistan and other neighbouring countries and the USA was interested to provide technical and technological support to India in this regard.[14] India had sent armed forces to Sri Lanka and Maldives for fighting terrorist elements in 1986 and 1987 respectively. Possibility of cooperation on CT in South Asia is bright, if handled properly by the parties concerned.

Efforts Under SAARC

South Asian leaders kept terrorism in the agenda of first SAARC summit and set up a study group to examine the problem and came up with some recommendations. After nearly two years of deliberations, a SAARC convention on prevention and suppression of terrorism was signed in 1987. They also felt and decided to update the convention on account of the obligations on member states in terms of UN Security Council Resolution 1373 (September 28, 2001) and the international convention for the suppression of financing of terrorism. As such, an additional protocol was signed in the Twelfth Summit. Some other major steps taken under SAARC are: [15]

- The first SAARC Conference of Home Ministers convened in Dhaka on May 11, 2006 and adopted a nine point resolution to fight terrorism and drug trafficking.
- The SAARC Terrorist Offences Monitoring Desk (STOMD) has been established in Colombo to collect, collate, analyze and disseminate information about the terrorist incidents, tactics, strategies and methods.
- Cooperation among Liaison Officers (Anti Terrorist Law Enforcement Offices) has been developed through holding international meeting at regular intervals to monitor, evaluate and improve counter terrorism strategies.

13. Md Shamsul Islam, "Combating Terrorism is South Asia: Problems and Prospects", *The Daily Star,* November 12, 2005.
14. *The Daily Prothom Alo*, November 24, 2009.
15. Md Shamsul Islam, *op. cit.*

- The document adopted in the Colombo Summit in 2008 was titled, "Partners for Growth of Our People" and much of the document focused on counter terrorism through sharing sensitive information and meeting of intelligence chiefs twice a year instead of annually. [16]

- The leaders have given their commitment to make SAARC effective and vibrant regional body in the Silver Jubilee years of SAARC Summit in Thimpu, Bhutan in April 2010. They have adopted 36 Points Thimpu declarations and emphasized the need to develop a "Vision Statement". They have agreed to form a "South Asia Forum" with eminent personalities from diverse background and provide inputs based on a holistic understanding for chartering out the future course of SAARC in the medium and long terms and recommend requisite improvement in the existing mechanism. They emphasized that the linkage between terrorism, illegal trafficking in drugs, psychotropic substances, arms and explosives, etc should be addressed in a comprehensive manner. [17]

- By this time, SAARC could conclude cooperation agreements with various agencies of the UN and other organizations.

Theoretical Reflection on Concept of CTTF

Means to Fight Terrorism

Terrorism is not only a security issue but also a social one and therefore, fighting against it demands involvement of all available means. Brigadier General Arun Sahgal of Indian Army has mentioned about following five means in this regards: [18]

- Military Response
- Political Response
- Accommodation/ Accord
- Third Party Mediation
- Civil Society Intervention

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16   Abdur Rob Khan, "Counter Terrorism Strategy of Bangladesh: National and International Dimensions" *Discussion Papers*. NSI, 2009.

17   *The Thimpu Declaration of SAARC*, April 29, 2010.

18   Brigadier General (Retired) Arun Sahgal, *op. cit*.

Along with above mentioned five means, others measures like media campaign, people's participation, intelligence warfare, diplomatic efforts, etc also play vital role in combating terrorist.

CT Strategy

CT strategy should have at least two elements e.g. anti-terrorist measures and CT measures. The first one relates to defensive measures to reduce vulnerability of individuals and properties from terrorist and the second deals with offensive measures taken to prevent, pursue and respond to terrorism. However, the general strategy of CT is to prevent, protect, pursue and respond to terrorist activities. It may consist of three elements: short term, mid term and long term measures. It includes prevention of new recruits, protect potential targets, pursue and investigate the existing network and finally improve the capacity to respond to terrorist acts. CT strategy has to be developed and applied in people-friendly setting with democratic institutions, a well-functioning justice system, responsible courts, open and accountable law enforcement agencies and sensible legislation. Otherwise, the fact of abuses may turn out to be a self-fulfilling prophesy. [19]

Characteristic of RTF

An effective TF should have following characteristics: [20]

- Have all required elements like military, police and security personnel, NGO, humanitarian, human rights, gender, political, legal and others.
- Sufficiently flexible to meet a wide variety of contingencies, ranging from humanitarian assistance to peace enforcement or intervention missions.
- Quick to organize, deploy and be mobile.
- Self sustainable for the initial stages and considerable logistic and maintenance capabilities to sustain on a multinational basis.
- Rapid reaction capability which demands elements such as early warning, effective decision making process, strong C3 structures, ability to transport equipment and personnel, adequate logistic support and finances and well trained personnel.
- Interoperability, including interoperable communication to achieve unity of effort.
- Intelligence capabilities to be operative effectively.
- Capacity to meet future threat of all forms and styles.

19. *The Daily Star*, April 13, 2009.
20. Vanessa Kent and Mark Malan. "*The African Standby Force: Progress and Prospects,*" p.73, available at *http://www.shirbrig.org/kentmalan_essay.pdf*, accessed on August 05, 2010.

History of Collective Approach

The idea of rapidly deployable collective force is nothing new. Even the Mughal Emperor Akbar introduced such concept through the Mansabdari system.[21] In the modern time in April 1947, the UN's Military Staff Committee published a report on the question of contributions of armed forces to the Security Council in light of Chapter VII of the Charter. However, owing to significant disagreements among the permanent five members about the size and composition of national contribution, the whole endeavour was abandoned.[22] Again, in 1972, the then UN Secretary General Bouttros Ghali called for a system, by which governments commit themselves to keep a force standby at an agreed period of notice, especially trained units for peacekeeping services. The UN Standby Arrangements System (UNSAS) launched in the mid 90s is basically a database of military, civil police and civil assets and other expertise indicated by Government to be available for rapid deployment to PKO.

In 2000, the Brahimi report[23] linked the issue of standby arrangements to regional cooperation and also suggested that if a brigade (approximately of 5000 troops) is required to effectively deter or deal with spoilers of a peace process, the military component of that operation ought to deploy as a brigade formation; but not as a collection of battalions that are unfamiliar with one another's doctrine, leadership and operational practices. If the brigade would have to come from a group of countries, they have to be working together to develop common training and equipment standards, common doctrine and common arrangements for the operational control of the force.[24] There is also an existing model of a rapid deployment structure e.g. The Standby High Readiness Brigade (SHIRBRIG) established in 1996 to provide the UN with a non-standing multinational brigade at high readiness based on the UNSAS. SHIRBRIG has a permanent planning element (PLANELM) based in Denmark.[25] Proposed CTTF of South Asia can develop its rapid deployment structure on this model.

Study of Regional / Collective Approach

There are examples of deeper security system including terrorism like EU, AU, ASEAN, etc. and also functional agencies on CT and related issues like APEC-CTTF, ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), Organization for Security and

21. K Ali "History of Indian Sub Continent", Dhaka, *Ali Publication*, 1990, p. 353
22. Vanessa Kent and Mark Malan, *op.cit*
23. Available at *http://www.globalsolutions.org/issues/surrany-brahimi-report*, accessed on August 05, 2010.
24. Ibid, p. 76
25. Ibid, p. 76

Cooperation in Europe(OSCE), Organization of American States (OAS), UN Action on CT, UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), G8's CT Assistance Group (CTAG), Financial Action Task Force (FATF) on Money-Laundering, International Maritime Organization (IMO), World Customs Organization (WCO) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), etc. For this study, regional security cooperation like EU, AU and CT related initiatives like APEC-CTTF, ASC, ARF, OAS, CECI, commonwealth of independent states etc will be relevant.

The European Union and Collective Security System

European Union has developed a viable common security and defence policy along with a military force. European Union forces have been deployed on Peace Keeping Operation from Africa to the former Yugoslavia and the Middle East. [26] Predecessors of European Union used to consider NATO (21 members from EU) as appropriate and sufficient for defence purposes. But following the Kosovo War in 1999, the European Council agreed that "the Union must have the capacity for autonomous action backed by credible military forces in order to respond international crises without prejudice to action by NATO". To that end, a number of efforts were made to increase the EU's military capability, notably the Helsinki Headline Goal process. After much discussion, the most concrete result was the EU Battle Groups Initiative, each of which was planned to be able to deploy quickly about 1500 personnel.[27] EU Military Operations (EUMO) is supported by a number of bodies including the European Defence Agency (EDA), satellite centre (EUSC) and the military staff. Earlier, the Western European Union (WEU) was a security organization related to the EU. In 1992, the WEU's relationship with EU was defined, when EU undertook "Petersburg tasks". These tasks were later transferred from the WEU to the EU by Amsterdam Treaty and now partly formed by the common Foreign and Security Policy and common Security and Defence Policy.

The ASEAN and Security Community (ASC)

In the Ninth Summit in Bali, the ASEAN leaders decided to establish ASC along with its economic and socio-cultural communities with the aim of promoting an ASEAN wide political and security cooperation in consonance with ASEAN Vision 2020. The aim of the community is to ensure that countries in the region live at peace with one another and also with the world in a just, democratic and

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26. Council of the European Union, "European Union Security and Defence Operations", *Available at Europa web Portal,* Retrieved June 26, 2007, accessed on July 10, 2010.
27. Council of the European Union, "Military Capabilities", Available at *Europa Web Portal,* Retrieved October 9, 2007, accessed on July 30, 2010.

harmonious environment. It works on shared norms and rules of good conduct in inter state relation, effective conflict prevention and resolution mechanisms and post conflict peace building activities.

ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF)

ASEAN countries have gone beyond ASEAN region and formed ARF for promoting peace and security through dialogue and cooperation in the Asia Pacific. Its objectives are:

- To foster constructive dialogue and consultation on political and security issues of common interest and concern;
- To make significant contributions to the effort towards confidence building and preventive diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific region.

ARF has members from North-East and South-East Asia as well as Oceania which include besides ASEAN members, Australia, Bangladesh, Brunei, Darussalam, Cambodia, Canada, China, EU, India, Indonesia, Japan, New Zealand, Pakistan, Russian Federation, Sri Lanka, USA and others. Despite the great diversity of its membership, the forum has attained a record of achievements that have contributed to the maintenance of peace, security and cooperation in the region. The chairman of the ASEAN Standing Committee chaired the ARF. Four SAARC members as well as Myanmar are working with ARF.

The AU and African Standby Force (ASF)

Besides the UN and other initiatives, African countries were trying to sort out their problems since long. Having failed to reach agreement on the structure of an Inter African Force, the OAU occasionally undertook monitoring tasks such as the Bamako Ceasefire Commission in 1963, the Pan-African Peacekeeping Force in Shaba Province of Congo (Kinshasa) in 1978-79, the Chadian Operation in 1979-82. [28] But efforts to find out a viable option were on. As follow up of 1990 Summit, the African Heads of States could adopt the Cairo Declaration of 1993 establishing the OAU's Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution. It could establish the Central Organ, the Secretary General and the Conflict Management Centre (CMC) and could intervene in a number of conflicts e.g. Angola, Burundi, Central African Republic, Comoros, DRC, Rwanda, Somalia and also in Ethiopia - Eritrea. It could send five PKO namely Rwanda (NMOG I and II), Burundi (OMIB), the Comoros (OMIC I, II and III), DRC (JMC) and Ethiopia - Eritrea (OLMEE) with budgets ranged from $

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28. Takkie Cilliers and Mark Malan, "Progress with the African Standby Force", *Occasional Paper 98*, May 2005 of the Institute of Security Studies (ISS), Pretoria, South Africa available at *http://www.isn.ethz. ch/isn/current-affairs/policy-brief/....* accessed on August 05, 2010.

105,000 to around $3 million. [29] But this arrangement also seemed to be adhoc and inadequate and called for a reassessment in subsequent years. On the other hand, after failing in Somalia (1963) and Rwanda (1994), for some time the UN showed less interest to resolve conflicts in Africa. In this situation, regional organization in West and South-West Africa, led by Nigeria, South Africa and Zimbabwe showed greater willingness to launch peace operations. However, with the transformation of OAU into the African Union (AU) in Durban in 2002, a drastic development took place. Pursuant to Article 5 (2) of the Constitutive Act, the Protocol on the Peace and Security Council (PSC) was established.

To follow up the process and coordinate further details, the African Chief of Defence Staff (ACDS) met twice in Addis Ababa in May 2003 and January 2004 and then African Ministers of Defence met on January 20, 2004. Finally in July 2004, in Addis Ababa, the African Head of States approved the policy framework of the ASF and the military Staff Committee. They also approved to establish a Specialized Technical Committee comprising Ministers responsible for Defence and Security of the AU to work with the PSC to follow up on the establishment of the ASF and give authority to the Chairperson to finalize Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) between the AU and the region to guide relations between various bodies. They asked for financial support from G-8 countries and could receive their commitment in Evian in June 2003. The plan involves the establishment of regionally based standby brigades (3500-5000 troops), where each participating country is required to pledge soldiers and logistical support. It also calls for a multi-disciplinary capacity encompassing NGOs, humanitarian, human rights, gender, political and legal dimensions of peace operations, as well as the civilian police and security sector component. [30] Full implementation would entail the five sub-regions developing Rapid Deployment Capabilities of approximately 1500 troops each (total 7500) that could deploy within 14 days.[31]

Out of five regional brigades e.g. East, West, North, South and Central African brigade; the West African e.g. ECOWAS Brigade (ECOBRIG), the SADC Brigade (SADCBRIG) and the East African Brigade (EASBRIG) have made good progress. On the other hand, Central Africa (ECCAS) has formed the Multinational Forces of Central Africa (FOMAC) with French assistance and north has formed the North African Regional Capability (NARC) which basically functions as the sub-regional standby brigades. That means, ASF has still a long way to go, probably it will take longer time (even up to 2020). [32]

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29. Ibid.
30. Vanessa Kent and Mark Malan, *op.cit.*
31. Stephen Burgess, "The African Standby Force-Sub regional Commands and African Militaries", available at *http://www.au.af.mil/awc/africom/ documents/ burgesssubregional/ commands. pdf*, accessed on August 05, 2010.
32. Vanessa Kent and Mark Malan*, op. cit.*

APEC - CTTF

APEC leaders have pledged to help secure the region's people and its economy, save financial systems from terrorist attack on abuse, trade based money laundering etc and established CTTF in May 2003. CT Action Plan was developed in 2003 as a tool for tracking the progress of economies in implementing leader's direction on security and counter terrorism related programmes. One of the key CT priorities of APEC is the "Secure Trade in the APEC Region (STAR)" initiative which aims to secure and enhance the flow of goods and people through measures that promote cargo, ship, international aviation and people in transit. Since 2003, every year Annual APEC STAR Conference is organized with executives and government officials to identify impediments and solutions.. It has also endorsed the best practised document on the protection of the critical energy infrastructure. All these programs have given the participants the skills, knowledge and tools to work and valuable learning experience on specific field on CT and also helped in building confidence in each others' systems. [33]

OAS, CIS and Southeastern European Cooperative Initiative (SECI)

The OAS has formed an inter-American Committee against-terrorism (CICTE), which is charged with facilitating information exchange, creating proposals for strengthening anti-terrorism legislation, assisting members in ascension to, and compliance with all relevant international conventions and treaties, and facilitating capacity building and training exercises for the members.

The CIS has taken a more direct approach to combat terrorism. Its anti-terrorism centre (ATC) houses a database of terrorists, terrorist organizations, and financing structures and also coordinates anti-terrorist operations.

Member states of SECI have created a working group Anti-Terrorism Task Force (ATTF) through the Bucharest Declaration. It has three sub-groups focusing on trans-national issues of anti-terrorism, small arms and light weapons, and weapon of mass destruction.

Suggested Model for South Asia

From this study of available materials and models, following observations/ line of actions may be drawn:

- Terrorism is a regional and global security issue. Each of the governments should contribute its stake in the regional efforts.

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33. http://www.apec-org/apec/apec-groups/CTTF-APEC

- Each of the existing regional approach has followed its own concept having very less commonalities. The EU has adopted a force level of battle group, whereas AU adopted brigade level on regional basis. On the other hand, the ASEAN has gone for security community concept. Others cooperate in various fields like intelligence sharing, capacity building, etc. Thus, RTF should be area specific.

- Existing bodies having force deal with peace and security. On the other hand, those deal with terrorism alone have adopted different level of co-operations. They serve as regional central clearing house of terrorist and anti-terrorist data. They have physical centre, staffed by real people and charged with a mission e.g. the creation of a comprehensive regional strategy. [34]

- It has taken a long time and hard-pressed discussions to shape them in present form.

- The proposed SACTTF should have its original touch. It may follow APEC-CTTF or other regional bodies. But for greater security concern and development, AU will be the better model, as both the regions were decolonized and countries were created there in a complex manner.

- Materialization of so far agreed actions like Regional Convention, Additional Protocol, STOMD, Liaison Officers, South Asia Forum, etc in a purposeful manner will further the process of forming the TF.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF SACTTF

Basing on the previous study, further details on concept, organizing principles, objectives and other aspects of the SACTTF can be articulated.

Concept

- Operate in accordance with Terms of Reference (TOR) prepared in consultation with the countries.

- Should be able to counter present and future terrorism in all forms.

- Should be able to effectively assist the country concerned to fight terrorism when needed.

- Should have multidisciplinary capacity encompassing NGOs, humanitarian and human rights workers, police and other experts.

- Should be sufficiently flexible in organizational setup and also in functioning to meet a wide variety of contingencies.

- Instead of adhering to a particular definition of terrorism, a list of terrorist activities may be drawn up.

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34. Michael Rifer, "SADC and Terrorism- Where is the Regional Strategy", *African Security Review*, 14(1), 2005, p. 108.

- Function within the framework of SAARC. Myanmar should be taken on board.
- Ultimately it must have a military force. But initially, it will start with intelligence sharing.
- Should have cooperation with other regional and international bodies working on terrorism.
- Formed in following three phases:
  - **Phase-1: Short Term/ Immediate Form.** Intelligence sharing and preparatory phase.
  - **Phase -2: Mid Term.** Formation of national TF putting regional and sub-regional planning staff for HQs.
  - **Phase -3: Long Term**. Formation of a RTF with security personnel. This may initially be formed on sub-regional basis. A suggested organogram is given at Annex A.
- Since all the countries have already taken various steps at national, regional and international levels, so those actions should be harmonized at national and regional level after agreeing upon the model.
- Security Council formed by all the heads of the states should be the highest body to decide the requirement of deployment of the task force in a particular situation.
- Panel of wise personnel should try and advise to curb the rise of terrorism and suggest for preventive measures.

Concerns

- Task force operations likely to impinge on the sovereignty of member countries;
- Insurgents may strike at civil and military targets of a member country launching or help launching any military campaign in another country as a matter of retaliation;
- Cross border operation conducted by neighbouring/ other country forces may not be acceptable to common citizen of all countries or a particular country.
- Countries or organizations from outside the region may come with their own programmes and motivation, which might be counterproductive to regional cause.

Challenges

Following are the major challenges:

- Removal of mistrust and confidence building among the countries.
- Funding and financial arrangement.
- Having common understanding on terrorism.

- Bilateral arrangement/ partnership between specific countries and regional organization such as EU, ASEAN and others.
- Keeping the region out of external influence, but at the same time receive their support and cooperation.

Organizing Principles

- To be formed on the basis of sovereign equality and non-interference in the internal affairs of member states.
- All measures against terrorism must respect the rule of law and be in compliance with international law, in particular, international humanitarian law, human rights law and refugee law.
- Universal adherences to UN CT conventions and protocols.

Objectives

Following objectives should be achieved:

- To combat all forms of existing and potential terrorist acts in the region with a plan of action;
- To be contributive to the process of greater cooperation and support among the regional countries;
- To assist, upon request, governments of the member countries in implementing the counter terrorism strategies/ conventions/agreements that they have signed;
- To have a common databank with the list of terrorists and criminals;
- To establish several programmes to combat the burgeoning threats of radicalization; homegrown as well as transnational terrorism;
- To analyze and predict future nature and incidents of terrorism and prepare strategy to counter the same.

SAARC or Alternative ?

At this stage, examination to find out the appropriate mother organization for the RTF is essential. Now-a-days, there is a greater appreciation of regional grouping than ever before. While bilateral relationship has a pride place in international relations, yet it is in the regional and multilateral sphere where in the future of diplomacy lies. As the world turns to become more global, countries in every part of the world are finding it convenient to come into regional groupings to promote their economy especially trade interests. Thus, it is time to take a very serious look at the SAARC by the leaders and realize that in spite of having all its faults, it is the best vehicle to forge ahead as a regional entity. [35] As such,

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35. Mahfuz Anam, *op. cit.*

the CTTF should be structured within the framework of SAARC. Myanmar has observer status. It should be taken on board.

Bangladesh or other regional countries can not remain idle for indefinite time for the SAARC to turn into an effective body to combat terrorism. Thus, taking lessons from ASF, as a starter, such task force may be established on sub-regional basis. There are many examples of successful sub-regional cooperation like GCC in Arab League and EUBENELUX in EU. [36] In this case, Bangladesh, Myanmar, India, Bhutan and Nepal may form a sub-regional task force. Such nature of perception was accepted in December 1996 in Delhi (India) by the foreign ministers of SAARC. In that meeting, one sub-region with Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and Seven Sisters of India and another sub-region with Sri Lanka, Maldives, Pakistan and South-West and Western Indian States were agreed upon. [37] But, it should be considered only as a starter and all efforts must be exhausted to form a greater RTF.

Why SACTTF is Needed ?

Successful establishment of SACTTF means not only effectively combating terrorism but also creation of a conducive environment in the regain for greater cooperation and development at large. Such an environment will certainly reduce tension and arms race among the countries, creating more opportunities of socio-economic development and more integration of the region and ultimately shaping up of a new security concept for the region. Successful establishment of SACTTF also means making the SAARC more effective and efficient. Thus, SACTTF will be the beginning of a much needed structure of South Asian peace and security system like EU, AU, ASEAN and other regions of the world and thereby help substantial multilateral cooperation like one currency, no visa, etc in the region, a long cherished dream of the people.

At this stage, it will be relevant to briefly introduce South Asian security issue. Many experts opine varying views about the effectiveness of a kind of security system in the traditionally trouble prone region, but agree that a sense of collective security could be achieved

for greater service to the on-going efforts of collective cooperation.[38] Nevertheless, a broad parameter for South Asian security system can be considered

36. Khandokar Hasnat Karim, "South Asia Cooperation and Sub-regional Jot", *The Daily Inquiaib*, April 16, 1997.
37. Prof Abdul Mannan Chaudhury, "Proposed Sub-regional Committee: For, Against and Neutral", *The Daily Janakantho,* February 27, 1997.
38. Zaglul Ahmed Chowdhury, "South Asian Security – A Complex but not Unpractical Concept", *The Daily Star*, October 31, 2009.

for overall improvement of the political climate in the area. A regional conference in Pakistan in 2007, threw enough light on this complex but critically important subject. In September 2009, in another conference participated mainly by the leading parliamentarians and also others including editors and senior journalists, experts and academicians urged for establishment of a SAARC Security Forum in line of ARF.

Is SACTTF Impossible?

Establishing SACTTF should be a priority agenda and should be considered with much seriousness by all concerned stakeholders. The subject may appear as somewhat premature to many for understandable reasons. This may even sound impractical for a variety of factors as the matter is all about fighting terrorism with task force or broadly on security arrangement in South Asia on a collective basis. But it is not anything impossible in South Asia, though it will be very complex and may take time for seeing the light of the day.

Regional cooperation and peaceful coexistence is undeniable in the new century. The west have learnt this lessons after forty years of costly arms' race and the Cold War, not to mention the thirty year war, the hundred year war, the Napoleonic Wars and the two World Wars. Even a fact of the modern history is that more number of Jews was butchered by Europeans in Europe than by all the suicide bombers and all the Arab-Israel War put together[39] . But still the European could come under EU for their better future. The Africans could also come together sorting out or managing their differences. Many other regional countries have also joined their hands for collective approach. Why the South Asian countries should not be able to do the same? Very realization that SACTTF will be effective in combating terrorism and will bring all round benefit to the people may make the same true one day. The SAARC was also initially considered impractical and a utopian idea, but at one stage it saw the light belying all skeptics. Though the progress of SAARC is still sluggish and has fallen short of expectation, but its existence is a reality. The SACTTF concept will certainly receive more consideration at one stage because of the complex regional and global terrorist scenario and emerging complexities. The current time is particularly appropriate for such thinking since the present positive trend of development and reconciliation among the belligerents and closer ties among the countries of other regions should encourage towards a better security system in general and counter terrorism strategy in particular in the region. There is another positive development in the region that all the SAARC countries have evolved their multi-party democracies and underlined the challenges they still

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39. Nadeem Rahman, "Reawakening", *The Daily Star*, March 1, 2010.

face in ensuring effective, efficient, transparent and accountable government for their people. They can take pro-people stand in the policy and action.

In the last SAARC summit in Thimpu, this idea has strongly being echoed by the South Asian leaders. All the SAARC countries are signatories of various agreements and conventions on security and terrorism issues adopted under the UN and other bodies. Now, they should form their own collective approach. During disaster, South Asian countries help one another in many ways including sending armed forces personnel, assets and services. Armed forces of these countries are working in various UN missions together under one command. Some of the countries including Bangladesh keep forces standby for UN employment. All these examples of military cooperation may be taken as the basis to build SACTTF. The political parties and all other social bodies of the countries should reach a broad consensus on the national and regional interest. Most of the South Asian countries like Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka talk on terrorism in ARF, then why they should not talk the same under SAARC? Changing of political culture and mindset in the countries and in the region is a vital pre-requisite for SACTTF. So it is difficult but not impossible to form SACTTF.

Organization and Function of SACTTF

Vision of the proposed task force should be as "South Asian countries to form a CTTF capable of combating all forms of terrorism in the region effectively and thereby ensure socio-political and economic emancipation of the people".

Its mission should be "to create an effective multilateral framework in South Asia to tract down terrorists and bring them under legal action".

The indicative list of functions may be the following:

- Carry out intelligence warfare against the terrorist groups and intelligence sharing among the agencies.
- Investigate types of terrorist groups.
- Capacity building of law enforcing and intelligence agencies.
- Coordination and meetings of agencies.
- Multi faceted motivational campaign within all the countries.
- Social and educational reforms to mitigate terrorism.
- Involvement of people for intelligence gathering and detection of terrorist cells.
- Curbing illegal smuggling of arms, light weapons, explosives and drug trafficking.

- Ensure container security at ports and strict vigilance of unloading of goods.
- Effective use of anti-money laundering law to identify/ stop the source of funds.
- Effective border management and immigration control by means of modern technological equipment.
- Outline role of media in combating terrorism.
- Ensure safe passage of people and goods by all means especially by sea and air.
- Conduct anti-terrorist operations.

Force Generation and Organogram

To enable the SAARC to respond to threat and breaches of peace and stability in any part of the region, multination South Asian forces will remain as a standby system ready to intercept in any situation of major terrorist attack including armed conflict or genocide. This force may be organized in line with the Brahimi Report of 2000 or the ASF. The military component of the proposed TF should consist of initially two battle and later two brigade groups, one for each sub-region with a headquarters at the top in the SAARC Secretariat. For greater acceptance and for other obvious reasons, personnel should come from all the member countries as decided and agreed upon by the committee formed for this purpose or by the individual states. However, to be effective, the headquarters should be functioning fulltime under an appropriate commander with sufficient planning and supporting staff including other elements and resources, while unit and sub-unit may remain in their respective countries. A suggested organogram of final phases is shown at Annex A.

Other Issues

For the establishment of the PLANELM by the SAARC, the sub-regions and countries should have realization of all the remaining priorities of organizational set up and functioning/ execution of the key steps of SACTTF. Issues like doctrine and training, deployment capacity building, legal matters, financial management, logistic mechanism and command, control, communication and information system (c31s), etc should also be worked out. The SAARC in collaboration with the sub-regions/countries should carry out periodic review of the implementation Road Map.

RECOMMENDATIONS

After carrying out a detailed study of the subject, are recommend following:

- The concept of South Asian Counter Terrorism Task Force manned by security personnel is a visionary one and all should sincerely pursue this idea.

- SACTTF is to be built gradually in phases over a period of time. Initially it could start with intelligence sharing, subsequently military component could be added at battle group level and finally into brigade groups.

- Personnel should be drawn from all the member countries as decided and agreed upon by the committee concerned or by each of them.

- An effective and fulltime headquarters should be functioning under an appropriate commander with sufficient planning and supporting staff including other elements and resources, while units and sub-units may remain in their respective countries. Existing STOMD may be converted as HQs.

- Battle or brigade group headquarters and SAARC Secretariat/Headquarters should be organized in line with Regional and Force Headquarters of an UNKPO.

- For faster implementation and operational convenience both bilateral and sub-regional arrangements may be allowed, but all such efforts should be directed for a greater regional orientation e.g. under SAARC.

- It should start with less sensitive issues. It should immediately establish a physical centre along with a research body of sensible people of South Asia to create awareness and favorable public opinion and carryout research to suggest ways and means for setting up the Task Force. "South Asia Forum" as decided in 2010 will be able to do this job.

- Actions like STOMD, SDOMD, South Asia Forum, various conventions, liaison Offices, preparation of Vision Statement, etc so far agreed upon under the SAARC forum should be implemented in letter and spirit.

- Myanmar should be taken as an active partner on counter terrorism and security strategy.

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