

Mapping Security and Search of Alternative Regionalism in South Asia: From Macro to Micro-Security

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I. Introduction

The debate on traditional and non-traditional security paradigm made coherent inroads into South Asian security calculus from 1990s. The non-traditional security realm in the silhouette of human, social, environmental, political and economic issues became important in the academic circles. The discursive shift in the field of security has raised new demands on the state. Under the new paradigm, the state loses its preponderance but gains responsibilities. The modern state is being reshaped by incongruent and manifold security forces acting concurrently. From above, the state is actively constrained by prevailing security concerns and concords promoted by regional and international system. From within, the state is being reshaped by increasing trends toward marketization. From below, the state's role is being moderated by the intensification and mounting influence of civil society organizations.

Research Questions

State-centric views on security have increasingly been contested by notion expressed by non-state actors enthused by non-traditional concepts of security – comprehensive, cooperative and human security. Some of these non-state actors have set in motion national and regional processes to promote security from below, leading some quarters to question their “representativeness” and “legitimacy” to engage in matters traditionally claimed by states. This study has made an attempt to address the following research questions:

- How do different actors and comprehend security in general and regional security in particular?
- South Asia has long suffered from traditional and non traditional security challenges. Are the national governments and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) being sufficiently resilient to address such security challenges?
- What potential roles do national governments and civil society organizations play in the management of security in South Asia?
- How does institutionalized civil society interrelate with formal regional institutions?
- The management of security in South Asia is characterized by bilateral arrangements and ad-hoc mechanisms. How can this be augmented with multilateral and institutional approaches to security? Has multilateralism in South Asia been augmented?
- Do non-institutionalized movements and processes impact regional security? If so, in what way? How is alternative regionalism working in South Asia.?

- Should regional identity formation be more consciously pursued to facilitate a sense of freedom and cohesion within the region? How can sub-national, national, transnational and other identities be managed in the region?

Research Methodology

The research is based on grounded theory and social science strategy of qualitative inquiry. In order to accomplish the stated goal and answer the research questions, this study has reviewed the literature on security, regional organizations and civil society. The study uses data gathered through the key informants consisting of representatives from academics, corporate, government, political leadership, donor organizations, etc. I have also found it useful to draw on the growing number of more policy oriented reports and papers commissioned by bilateral and multilateral donors, in particular for the purpose of providing policy recommendations as “any practical pursuit is only as good as the theory on which it is based.” The study makes use of a combination of primary and secondary data as well as the author’s personal experiences of security related concerns of South Asia. To limited extent, time was allocated for number of non-structured telephonic interviews and informal discussions with resource persons of different background to supplement the desk review. Thus, the findings in this paper is based on a variety of documents ranging from regional case studies, comparative case studies, synthesis studies, large qualitative and quantitative studies and some selected studies commissioned by academic institutions, think tanks, governments, multilateral and bilateral donors. This study has made an modest attempt to bring together some trends of the security narratives but it must be acknowledged that story of security in South Asia has still not been fully told. There is much more to learn from and share with each other, both the successes and failures. Until then there is a chance that it will continue to reinvent the wheel every time a security is studied. Thus, far from being in a position to develop exact quantifiable scenarios, this study has only argued on the basis of causal probabilities derived from both practical experience and theoretical knowledge.

This paper proceeds in three phases, starting with how security has been conceptualized in the region. I have examined the security discourses and explore the counter discourses found in the region. The second section has analyzed the role of state and civil society organizations in South Asian security and regional cooperation. I have concluded with some tentative intuition of the prospects for these social movements in their efforts to promote security by promoting alternative regionalism. The conclusion offers an appraisal of the general findings of the paper and reflects on a new understanding beyond the traditional concept of security and statehood as well as on a sweeping reorganization of national and regional politics and political order.

A brief summary of the structure of the paper is as follows: For practical and methodological reasons, this study has started by giving an introductory overview of theoretical side of security so as to provide conceptual framework for analyzing the security. In the following section, in-depth analysis of security focusing on security actors, traditional and non-traditional security challenges, role of civil society organizations and governments in managing these challenges and regionalism is

discussed. The primary focus is on identifiable traditional and non-traditional security challenges and recapitulates several challenges of security and discursive shift of security from macro to micro level. The next section of the paper has given a bird eye synopsis of the how alternative regionalism is making in South Asia. Finally, the study has made an endeavor to present an approach for way forward in South Asia. The remaining section has provided the selected references.

Conceptual Framework: The Contested Concept of Security

The term security has remained an ambiguous symbol and essentially contested concepts. Understanding security is complex because of its resilient nature. In the traditional sense, the concept of security is based on safeguarding the national identity, territorial integrity and independence. With the lapse of time, the definition of security has become vociferous, broadening beyond its traditional usage. Scope wise, it has expanded from national to international and from regional to global levels. With respect to context, it has protracted from traditional to non-traditional level. Notion of extended security in the 1990s has distended in four different dimensions: from nations to individuals; from nations to the international system; extended horizontally from military to political, economic, social, environmental or human security and lastly responsibility is diffused in all directions to NGO's, the market and regional governments.

There are many approaches vis-à-vis the security.¹ These different kinds of approach relate and overlap in different ways at different levels. Writer like Seyom² presented a two dimensional framework to approach security, that is actors and power. He further divides actors into state and non-state actors and further power into military and non-military. There are various dimensions of security namely political, economic, societal, ecological and the military.³ The traditional concept of security, which revolves around the protection of states from military threats, is being redefined. A nation security is no longer the military security but has economic, environmental and human dimensions. As a matter of fact, a process of 'securitisation' of a wide range of issues is in the offing. The concept has also developed greater tendency for regional cooperation to further both national and regional interests.

Several scholars have offered assorted ways of defining security beyond conventional notions of military threat to state. Several schools of thought have attempted to reconceptualize security. For the purpose of this study, I shall limit my inquiry to three schools and grouped them into three main constituents. The first school refers to studies that seek to widen the scope of security beyond military to include among other, political,

¹ National security, regional security, global security, geo-strategic security and human security are the major approaches.

² Refer to Brown. Seyom. 2009. Higher Realism: A New Foreign Policy for the United States. Boulder: Paradigm. pp 3-45.

³ In the changed context, while the state-centric security concerns did not disappear, the new security agenda came to include issues as diverse as intra-state conflict, ethno-religious violence, landmine, terrorism, democracy, human rights, gender, crime, consequences of underdevelopment, poverty, hunger, deprivation, inequality, diseases and health hazards, human development, economic security, market, water, energy, migration, environmental degradation and so on.

economic and ecological security concerns. The main thrust of first school is to challenge the dominant thought within the field of neo-realism that highlights the anarchic international system in which state competes for survival to assure their security. The second school argues against widening of security concept and maintaining the status quo, i.e., bring security back within the realist/ neo-realist School on the ground that widening the concept run the risks of expanding security studies excessively and would annihilate its intellectual coherence. The third school of thought belong to those analysts, who not only widen the scope of the security beyond the state and military threats but also seek in the process to achieve goal of human emancipation.⁴ Many theoreticians have conceptualized these issues but here reference is made of Stephanie G. Neuman⁵ who defines 'national security' incorporating military, political, social, economic and administrative issues. The works of Barry Buzan in the traditional sphere and Mohammad Ayoob's in the non-traditional sphere form the basis of this academic debate in the South Asian context.⁶

Security today lays emphasis on the security of individuals rather than nations per se stating the concept of security must change from an exclusive stress on national security to a much greater stress on people's security, from security through armaments to security through human development, from territorial security to food, employment and environmental security. It means creating political, social, environmental, economic, military and cultural systems that together give people the building blocks of survival, livelihood and dignity. The security of people and the security of states are mutually reinforcing.

II. Revisiting Security Actors in South Asia

A well-functioning security sector consists of organizations authorized to use force, civil management and oversight bodies, justice and law-enforcement institutions, non-state security actors and non- statutory civil society groups.⁷ The security actors in South Asia comprises all those responsible for protecting the state and communities within it.

Core Security Actors: These include organizations authorized to use force such as armed forces, police, paramilitary forces, gendarmeries, intelligence services, secret services, coast guards, border guards, customs authorities, reserve and local security units.

Security Management and Oversight Bodies: These comprise civil management and oversight bodies and include president and prime minister, national security advisory

⁴ Human emancipation refers to freeing the people as individuals and groups from physical and human constraints, which stop them from performing what they would freely choose to do so.

⁵ Refer to [Stephanie G. Neuman](#), (ed.). 1998. *International Relations Theory and the Third World* London: Palgrave Macmillan.

⁶ For details, refer to Barry Buzan, (ed.). 1991. *People, State and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era*. Boulder, Colorado: Lynne and Rienner. Also Refer Mohammad Ayoob. 'Defining Security: A Subaltern Perspective' in Keith Krause and Michael C. Williams, (ed.) 1985. *Critical Security Studies: Concept and Cases*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

⁷ For detail, refer to Ball, Nicole. 2002. *Democratic Governance in the Security Sector*. UNDP Workshop on Learning from Experience for Afghanistan. February. p. 59

bodies, legislature and legislative select committees, ministries of defense, internal affairs and foreign affairs, customary and traditional authorities, financial management bodies and civil society organizations.

Justice and Law Enforcement Institutions: These embrace judiciary, justice ministries, prisons, criminal investigation and prosecution services, human rights commissions and ombudspersons, correctional services, customary and traditional justice systems.

Non-Statutory Security Forces: These incorporate liberation armies, guerrilla armies, private bodyguard units, private security companies and political party militias.

Non- Statutory Civil Society Groups: These consist of professional groups, the media, research organizations, advocacy organizations, religious organizations, non-governmental organizations and community groups.

The level of involvement by the actors cited in these five categories differs widely from country to country depending on the political system. On a general level, one could assume that the greater the involvement of non-statutory security forces and lesser that of non-statutory civil society actors, the poorer the governance of the traditional and non-traditional security.

III. Re-Thinking the South Asian Security: Traditional and Non-Traditional Challenges

South Asia is composed of eight states of different sizes and capabilities, characterized by high levels of interstate, intrastate and human security problems.⁸ It is the cradle of the oldest civilizations with enormous diversity, deep-rooted cleavages and stratification on the basis of gender, caste, class, race, ethnicity and religion. In over five thousand years of its history, it has been the scene of innumerable armed conflicts, social turmoil and widespread violence against its people. In modern times, the forces of globalization have contributed significantly to social, political, economic and cultural tumult. The underlying thrust of this unit is to analyze the dynamics of security, which inter-alia shall engross discussion on various facets of traditional and non-traditional security in South Asia.

Traditional Security Perspective and Challenges

The traditional security can be scrutinized at three levels: domestic, regional and extra-regional level.

Domestic security situation is shoddier in almost all the regional states because of ethnic and religious diversity. Separatist and identity movements are customary in every state. ***Sri Lanka***, because of ethno-religious diversity is in a state of civil war. The violent

⁸ South Asia has been taken to cover India, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan and the Maldives. South Asia covers only about 10 per cent of the total land area of the Asian continent but about 40 per cent of Asia's total population

phase of the conflict began in the early 1980s, when the Tamil minority began to make stronger power-sharing demands in response to attempts by the Sinhalese political elite to marginalize them and deny equal citizenship rights. The fundamental cause of this conflict lies in the inability of both sides to fulfill national aspirations and the unwillingness of the Sri Lankan state to allow political and civil rights of disgruntled minority group.⁹ Sri Lanka has yet to resolve a role and status for its minorities even though violent conflict is subjugated militarily in 2009. **Bangladesh** exhibits several internal conflicts with the army and political parties waging frequent battles for control of the state. After its emergence in 1971, Bangladesh has struggled to develop a democracy while restraining its military. In Bangladesh, domestic security situation reflects instability and seems to be on the brink of civil war because of violent domestic political extremism. As Bangladesh moves towards elections, the trust and credibility of its institutions and democratic processes are being challenged. Agitations kindle the day after an election, causing military rule or anarchic order to reemerge. In Bangladesh, the Buddhist Chakma and minority Hindus discord is a reflection of Bengali and Islamic assertion. There is political instability in **Pakistan** because of its corrupt and incompetent political system and constant military domination over political arena. In Pakistan, the military continues to overshadow politics giving little room for autonomous political development.¹⁰ The country has experienced decades of corruption, drugs, military rule and rising Islamist extremism. It is also confronted with sectarian and ethnic strife; spillover effects of Afghan civil war and terrorism. The situations in Sindh, Balochistan and Frontier provinces are violent. Pakistan's long-standing involvement in neighboring countries-Indian Kashmir and Afghanistan and the elites' willingness to use multiple instruments, including terrorism for obtaining tactical goals have made the country a breeding ground of long-standing insecurity for itself. The biggest challenge is the increasingly radicalised sections of society. The absence of a liberal educational system and opportunities has generated conditions for many Pakistani youths to join radical religious movements that have emerged as a major challenge to Pakistan's internal stability.¹¹ Pakistan has been facing several internal conflicts on religious and ethnic lines- Sunni-Shia divide, the conflicts in Baluchistan, the Pashtun areas and the Sind, and conflicts between various Islamist groups and the military-led and its successor civilian regimes. The upsurge in conflict in the Northwest areas, especially in Waziristan and absence of effective state control over this region pose considerable security problems for

⁹ Refer to Jayadeva Uyangoda. 2007. "Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka: Changing Dynamics." *Policy Studies* No. 32. Washington, DC: East-West Center. See also, Sankaran Krishna. 1999. *Post-Colonial Insecurities: India, Sri Lanka and the Question of Nationhood*. Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press.

¹⁰ See Christophe, Jaffrelot. (ed.). 2002. *Pakistan: Nationalism without a Nation*. London: Zed Books and Ayesha Siddiqa. 2007. *Military Inc.: Inside Pakistan's Military Economy*. London: Pluto Press. According to Lasswell, a "garrison state" is one that has a "preoccupation...with danger," where "the specialists on violence are the most powerful group in society," a principal preoccupation of ruling elite would be "skillfully guiding the minds of men...[through] symbolic manipulation," and "prevent[ing] full utilization of modern productive capacity for non-military consumption purposes." Harold, Lasswell. "The Garrison State and Specialists on Violence," in Lasswell. (ed.). 1948. *The Analysis of Political Behavior*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, pp. 146, 149, 153, 154.

¹¹ On the educational system, see C. Christine Fair. 2008. *The Madrassah Challenge: Militancy and Religious Education in Pakistan*. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press.

neighboring Afghanistan and Western coalition forces battling the Taliban.¹² The sense of deprivation in North Western Frontier Province, Balochistan and Sindh as well as the rise of the Shia and Sunni sectarian conflict are the result of alienation caused by over centralization and sectarianism. **Indian** society is made up of diverse ethnic groups, cultures, languages and religious denominations. Ethnic, religious and domestic political violence are the main problems. Many separatist movements are making progress in India northeast states and Kashmir. The insurgency movements in Nagaland, Mizoram, Manipur, Tripura and Assam have tied down India's security forces over a long period of time.¹³ The radicalisation of the domestic environment in Bangladesh led to the continuous inflow of illegal immigrants to North East India. The traditional ties with all neighbouring countries are afflicted by internal security problems, which owing to trans-border ethnic affinities have the potential to spill over.¹⁴ The Kashmir imbroglio has also created a fertile ground for increasing terrorist activity within India. Recent statistics exemplifies largest number of terrorist-related deaths.¹⁵ Some of the terrorist activities are engendered by foreign-trained individuals who, in concert with local sympathizers engage in violent activities. India's security forces have serious difficulties in coping with this scourge. In the larger internal security construct, Naxal violence poses a major challenge. In recent years, a red corridor has formed in India's tribal belts from the north to the south, under the influence of Naxalites-ultra-radical Marxists, who use guerilla tactics and have wide support among the deprived masses.¹⁶ India also has difficulty with the full integration of minority groups, although it has a better record on the issue of minority rights compared to its South Asian neighbors.¹⁷ The large Muslim minority constitutes a huge underclass in terms of economic development and social opportunities, some of which offers fertile ground for Islamic radicalism.¹⁸ **Afghanistan**, situated in the periphery of the region is an extreme case of long-standing external penetration and internal violence, largely bred by the absence or the non-establishment of a strong state.¹⁹ In a state of effective war for most of the last quarter-century, Afghanistan was a cold

¹² Pakistan's weaknesses are neatly summarized by Stephen Cohen: 1. a "failure to live up to past expectations" despite early promises; 2. a "failure of vision," 3. "economic failure," 4. "failure of leadership" (both civilian and military); and 5. "potential catastrophic failure," given the deadly mixture of nuclear weapons and Islamic radicalism. Stephen Philip Cohen. 2004. *The Idea of Pakistan*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, pp 3-4. See also Husain Haqqani. 2005. *Pakistan: Between the Mosque and Military*. Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

¹³ It is estimated that over 109 movements operates in the region, some pushing for outright independence, others for more indigenous rights or autonomy. On the reasons for the prevalence of conflict in the sub-region, see Sanjib Baruah. 2007. "Post Frontier Blues: Toward a New Policy Framework for Northeast India." *Policy Studies* No. 33. Washington DC: East-West Center.

¹⁴ On this, see Devesh Kapur and Pratap Bhanu Mehta. (eds.). 2007. *Public Institutions in India: Performance and Design*. New York: Oxford University Press.

¹⁵ Refer US Department of State, *Country Reports on Terrorism 2007, 2008 and 2009*.

¹⁶ On the Naxalite problem, see Pratul Ahuja and Rajat Ganguly. 2007. "The Fire Within: Naxalite Insurgency Violence in India." *Small Wars and Insurgencies*. (18)2 , pp. 249-74.

¹⁷ On ethnic conflicts in India see Maya Chaddha. 1997. *Ethnicity, Security and Separatism in India*. New York: Columbia University Press. Also refer Ashutosh Varshney. 2002. *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life: Hindus and Muslims in India*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

¹⁸ Soutik Biswas, "Why Do Indian Muslims Lag Behind?" *BBC News Online*, August 9, 2007, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/6938090.stm.

¹⁹ On Afghanistan, see Rasul Rais. 2008. *Recovering the Frontier State: War, Ethnicity and the State in Afghanistan*. Lexington KY: Lexington Books.

war battleground before a fratricidal civil war was allowed to fester for much of the 1990s. The south and eastern regions see an ongoing insurgency while a policy of cooption has seen warlords and the powerbrokers of past epoch entrenched. The situation remains critical as the Taliban continue to strengthen its ranks and intensify its attempts to disrupt the reconstruction and democratization process. It has had the misfortune of falling in a geo-strategic location that attracted the intense interests of great powers – Britain and Russia first and then the Soviet Union and the United States – while neighboring Pakistan’s policies contributed to its perennial insecurity. Major events in the past thirty years and the continuing war since 2002 between the allies and the resurgent Taliban have all made this very fragile state the epicenter of security challenges. In **Nepal**, the mass movement reclaimed the people’s democracy and facilitated its shift into a Republic by ending the rule of the 240 year-old monarchy. Presently, Nepal is undergoing violent ethnic and regional based internal conflict, threatening the territorial integrity and unity. It is accentuated by the inability of the politically dominant group to offer political and economic opportunities to lower-caste groups that include Dalits and people from the Terai region.²⁰ The Maoists are exploiting the deprived groups’ grievances in gaining support for their ongoing political struggle. The process of developing a new constitution is likely to be drawn out with no guarantees of an amicable democratic political system emerging for all groups. **Maldives** has transited to Henry Ford style of democracy. However, recent incidents denote a potential for instability. **Bhutan** is transiting from absolute hereditary monarchy to semi-feudal democratic governance. However, the unresolved refugee problem and communist movement could destabilise the country. It also sees a rising political extremism and insurgency due to apathetic attitude of ruling elites towards minorities.

Regionally, South Asia is one of the precarious regions with convoluted security in the world, primarily due to the fact that most of the South Asian states are overwhelmed with anecdotal degree of conflicts and disputes. The nations of the region continued to struggle from a number of interstate and intrastate conflicts. Bilateral relations are defined by animosity and mistrust. Asymmetric warfare in the form of terrorism is a harsh reality in the region. Pakistan and Afghanistan along with emerging terror trails in India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bhutan are hot beds of trans-national terrorism. The Afghan-Pakistan border is becoming the modern epicentre of the “Jihadi Movement”. Today, South Asia represents classical arms race and represent a highly unpredictable nuclearized region. There are four key patterns of conflict in the region revolving around India. First, there exist tension between India and Nepal over the issues of borders, trade and transit agreement, Maoists’ links with fellow insurgents in several Indian states, migrants and water. Second, there is a tension between India and Bangladesh over issues of water allocation, illegal migration, terrorism and insurgency. Third, there is tension between Sri Lanka and India over the Tamil problem. Fourth is the long standing violent conflict between Pakistan and India over manifold incongruent issues. Relations between India and Pakistan were in jeopardy following the 26 November, 2008 attacks on Mumbai by militants with alleged links to Pakistan. States in the region often accuse each other of covertly or overtly lending support to separatist and dissident movements.

²⁰ Refer to Susan Hangen. 2007. “Creating a New Nepal: The Ethnic Dimension,” *Policy Studies* No. 34. Washington, DC: East-West Center.

Globally, South Asia occupies a central position that is why there are multiple factors and actors that affect its security. The growing US-Israel-India triangle has adverse regional effects especially to Pakistan. Another extra-regional player, China is now worried about handing over regional responsibilities of peace to India. The Indian Ocean Region (IOR) has assumed greater importance in view of the increased maritime activity. 70 percent of the world's oil, 33 percent of global trade and 50 percent of the world's container traffic pass through the IOR. The region therefore has importance not only for India but also for the other major economies of the world. In this regard, security assumes importance, because of geo-strategic location. The region's political weaknesses have resulted in energetic involvement of major powers, especially the United States and China. Much to the consternation of India, external powers have often manipulated the region's strategic dissonance to promote their specific interests in the region and around. The extroverted American war on terrorism has brought the United States, with Britain in tow and the European Union into military and political efforts to deal with security challenges of South Asia. China's activism in neighboring states of the region such as Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Nepal, and India's efforts to counter such efforts have generated competitive dynamics in the sub-system's security predicament. Being in close neighborhood, the Afghan-Pakistan-Iran situations are profoundly affecting all countries in South Asia. Major power could intervene in a region through competition, cooperation, engagement, disengagement and hegemony or a mixture of these ideal types. The region's pivotal geo-strategic location is part of the reason for this phenomenon, but the presence of weak states that are in conflict also contributes to this activism by outside powers, as in the cases of Afghanistan and Pakistan. Major power activism in the region is likely to amplify, if the Sino-Indian relationship upsurge into a rivalry and the United States gets involved in the form of new balance-of-power coalitions.

Non-Traditional Security Perspective and Challenges

In the past decade, several scholars and security analysts have alluded that for most people in the region, the greatest threats to security come from their own state rather than from an external adversary. They urge for the deepening of the conception of security to include not only threats to the state but also threats to human security. These scholars implored for broadening of the notion of security to include not only external or military threats but also non-military threats emanating from political, economic, social and environmental sources, which are rooted in social, economic, ecological and political choices made by each country of South Asia.

Political challenges are major trepidation, which originates from the imbalance between economic development and political development. It includes the governments' and enterprises' violation of civil human rights for the sake of economic development, political riots from corruption and despotism, racial and religious conflict in the course of nation states' foundation and economic development, rampant rise of separatism and terrorism. There exist politico-ideological threats to the security such as threat of naxalism, terrorism and other cross-region issues such as human, drug and arms trafficking. The internal conflicts in all countries pose considerable problems at the

human security level for the inhabitants, the majority of whom are living in abject poverty, illiteracy, poor health conditions, low calorie intake and inadequate sanitary conditions, akin to sub-Saharan Africa.²¹ The political leadership has failed to provide the right direction to political processes. They tend to promote existing socio-cultural faultlines for narrow political gains and have reduced democracy to electocracy. South Asia is regarded as an ethnic boiling pot. Due to lack of transparency and accountability in governance, many groups have felt alienated from the political system and sought to adopt non-democratic means to achieve their goals. In recent years, terrorism, naxalism and insurgencies have assumed critical proportions due to proliferation of small arms and cross-border networks amongst militant groups.

Economic and social challenges like unemployment, unsecure jobs, income inequalities, poverty, homelessness, internally displaced people and refugees, discrimination, exploitation, crimes, infections and diseases are still very serious. South Asian countries have failed to provide economic security to people. Energy constitutes a major problem for all the regional states. The issues of migration, social and ethnic cleansing and competition among social groups are the major sources of conflicts and social insecurities. South Asian cities are filled with shanty towns and slums populated by rural migrants seeking better opportunities. The demographic realities of South Asia is associated with an increasingly young population in old societies controlled by an ageing leadership; large scale population shifts from rural to urban area and the declining importance of land-based occupations. Thus, burgeoning non-traditional security concerns that confront the region range from issues of hunger; population growth, environmental degradation, including deforestation and melting of glaciers of the Himalayas, rise in the sea level owing to climate change and global warming, floods, cyclones, droughts, problem of gender discriminations to predicament of border demarcation and delimitation of maritime boundary; trade disputes; and repatriation of the stranded refugees, among others. There emerges a new challenge of transnational security issue that needs to be handled not just by the individual state but by transnational cooperation. In the process of economic globalization and regionalization, transnational crimes such as illegal migration, drug and weapon smuggling, internet crimes, infectious diseases, export of extremist ideology, trans-border terrorism, spread of light weapons and growing menace of drug trafficking are escalating. These threats not only cause regional conflicts but also provide opportunities to extra-regional forces to intervene in the region.

We find both military and non-military threats to security in South Asia with skewed focus on 'state-centric' than 'societal-centric' policies. The above discussions exhibit that security problems in the region have three key dimensions: interstate, intrastate and human security. These three types of conflicts are interrelated and are influenced by the interaction patterns among the people of these states. Maintaining state security is as important as promoting human security. The former is an essential prerequisite of the latter, which in turn provides the foundation for national and regional stability. Human security needs regional security in the sense that the former can only be promoted in an environment of inter-state peace and stability. At the same time, regional security can

²¹ On this, see Amartya Sen. 2000. *Development as Freedom*. New York: Anchor Books, pp 99-103.

only be sustained, if the constituent states experience domestic peace fostered on secure communities. The interconnections between the factors of human and regional security call for a new consensus toward a more unprejudiced regional agenda. National and regional security shall remain legitimate concerns of states.

Therefore, it may be useful to consider a new security framework that combines both elements to reflect a more comprehensive notion of twenty-first-century security threats. The response to these challenges must be multi-disciplinary and engage the four main groups of actors: local, national, regional and international. Porous borders, difficult terrain and increasing migration and the movement of people, arms and ideas require a more cohesive regional approach in South Asia that will require innovative cooperative measures to protect national interests. To that end, it is important for a regional organization like SAARC to strengthen and further develop their internal relationships as well as maintain active channels of communication and institutionalize cooperative mechanisms.

IV. Government and Security in South Asia

Democratic development of South Asia depends upon political society.²² The overwhelming majority of subjects continue to maintain only the most fragile association to formal citizenship and interact with a state. It is via this nebulous and tumultuous political dynamics that much of the daily negotiation and organization of state power actually takes place. The contested terrain of political society is where formal and informal institutions and citizens negotiate with the state for security, entitlements and services. Governments of the region are playing the leading role in addressing and combating security challenges. First, economic growth is mainly attributed to the government's dominance in South Asia. Economic growth effectively strengthens governments' and citizens' capabilities in dealing with the non-traditional security challenges such as poverty reduction, increase of income, improvement of educational and health standards, etc. Second, governments are the main providers of national security, which is closely connected with social security. The security of the individuals depends amongst other things on the security of the state. If the state fails to maintain a minimum security, the security of all individuals within its boundaries is also threatened. Third, the government is protecting the life, liberty and property of individuals and groups through the creation of political and socio-economic order to develop an effective base for the social, economic and political order. Fourth, in South Asia, governments have encouraged the development of civil security network and began to pay more attention to coordinate the economy and social development. Many countries have gradually established and improved social security system and effectively upgraded the society's capability to cope with the non-traditional security challenges. Fifth, government is playing an irreplaceable role in settlement of racial, ethnic and religious conflicts and prevention of religious extremism and separatism. Finally, government is protecting the rights of citizens from the harmful actions of other states and non-state

²² Political society is an arena of governmentality, where the disadvantaged can pressurize the state to negotiate their entitlements. The regulatory capabilities of governments preceded the inclusion of these populations into the legal framework of citizenship in South Asia.

entities. Through bilateral and multilateral cooperation, South Asian governments have made great progress in the fight against diseases, drug and weapon smuggling, illegal migration and international terrorism. However, the discourse of national security in South Asia is statist, militarist, majoritarian and masculinist due to limitation and deficiency of governments. The indigenous deficiency of South Asian governments in dealing with the issues of security challenges comes from financial limitation, bureaucratic deadlock, weak governance and political crisis.

V. Civil Society and Security: Adversary or Partner to the State

The concept of civil society is used in a variety of ways for a variety of purposes, functioning mostly as a pragmatic rather than theoretical concept. In particular, confusion for practitioners and researchers alike is generated by the problem that the concept of civil society is used both as a normative and an analytical concept. Civil society has been understood mix of political, economic, social and civic realms. The received wisdom in academia is that civil society generally lies between the state and the economy and the boundaries are often blurred with overlapping organizational spheres.

The last two decades have seen dramatic changes in South Asia in the social, political and economic contexts, which frame citizen-state-market relations. Both civil society and the state are learning to adapt to these changes and opportunities for progressive partnerships are evolving. However, these changes are contested and political, because they concern the division of power. Civil society organizations can complement, inform, influence or challenge the state – a role often referred to as the demand side of governance. The list of approaches is extensive, reflecting the great diversity of both civil society organizations (CSOs) as well as state institutions. In order to analyse how “security actors from below” could help humanize security provision in South Asia, it begins by exploring the implications of the discursive shift from state-centred to citizen and human-centred security. By drawing attention to real and diverse contexts of security provision, ‘security from below’ seeks to focus on the relevance and effectiveness of prevailing forms of public and non public security provision. Civil society as an adversary or a partner of the state in managing security issues can be examined from two perspectives.

Civil Society and Traditional Security Issues in South Asia

Civil Society Organizations seek to influence or shape the policy process or public debate on issues relating to security. It is necessary to see the interface between government decision-makers in the security field and civil society actors. An issue of ongoing debate within the literature on civil society is whether civil society organizations are adversaries or partners to the state. It is now widely recognized and accepted by academics and policy-makers alike that a strong and active civil society greatly enhances the security of the state, functioning as a transmission belt easing the interaction between the state and the individual. The most obvious role that civil society can play in security matters of South Asia is as a public watchdog, checking if the security sector actors are performing their tasks both within the remits assigned to them and within the general direction in which society is developing.²³ Civil society is playing an important, albeit often indirect,

²³ Refer to Carothers, Thomas. Think Again: Civil Society’. *Foreign Policy*. Winter 1999- 2000.

role in the processes of regulation, oversight and control of state security structures in South Asia. It also provide alternate voices and independent perspectives and assessments of security policy, challenge government decisions and check the power of the state in specific and specialized areas. In defense and security affairs, most CSOs play dual role. They are usually composed of members of the intellectual elite, who stand between the government and the general public. On the one hand, members of such CSOs are assisting the government in finding the right answers to public policy issues and criticizing government responsibly. On the other hand, defense and security CSOs are helping to spread knowledge and create a climate of opinion that encourages wise policy. There is a possibility that civil society and social movements may in some instances overwhelm the capacity of weak governmental structures to respond. The role of civil society organizations in core security area is delineated below.

Civil Society and oversight of the Armed Forces

The role of civil society organizations predisposed towards advocacy in the form of limited pressure groups or policy support groups with regard to the armed forces and defense policy in South Asia. Pressure groups are focused on anti-nuclear, general disarmament and peace as well as specific policy issues such as on the procurement of weapons systems and their deployment. Policy support is provided by CSOs that have established some degree of expertise in defense and security policy matters such as think tanks, research institutes and university departments. They are also working closely with government policy-makers on specific issues or projects and their membership include individuals, who move between government, public administration, academia and the non-governmental sector. Policy support CSOs are often lauded for the role they play in fostering the development of civilian expertise in defense and national security affairs and providing independent assessments and views of security policy in South Asia. This alternative source and home of expertise, outside of the defense ministry and military itself is widely acknowledged as contributing to the effective democratic control of armed forces. CSOs serve as a resource for parliamentary committees, take part in informed debate on policy issues and help educate the public through outreach, lectures and seminars. Types of CSOs that have the potential to influence policy on defense and national security issues in South Asia are primarily drawn from those fulfilling the technical expertise function like think tanks, public policy research institutes, university-affiliated CSOs, an umbrella group of concerned individuals engaged in pressuring the governments for a comprehensive defense and security policy review, advocacy and pressure groups and human rights groups.

Civil Society and oversight of the Police

The role of civil society in the policing domain is perhaps more easily discernible than in the military domain in South Asia. Civil society groups in South Asian states are frequently involved in efforts to hold the police into account, influence policing policy and practices and lobby public authorities about the police. Types of civil society organizations that are playing a role in oversight and accountability of police are drawn from the representation and technical expertise groups and service delivery CSOs.

Representation CSOs include business associations. Technical expertise CSOs involved with overseeing policing includes human rights groups and networks, the police, legal and criminal justice research institutes and bar associations. Relevant service delivery CSOs includes community watch groups and public legal aid groups and associations.

Civil Society and the oversight of Intelligence Services

The intelligence sector is arguably the most difficult in which civil society organizations can aspire to influence policy and government practices in South Asia. Ironically, it is also the sector, which holds the greatest potential to impinge on the civil liberties, rights and freedoms of citizens in South Asia. There is no real tradition of public consultation in intelligence policy-making. South Asian States have minimal or no external oversight and public accountability of their intelligence services. The requirement of secrecy in intelligence, wide scope of discretionary authority to intelligence professionals and the application of informal doctrine of plausible denial of information act as structural constraints on the ability of civil society organizations to function as an oversight mechanism over intelligence in South Asia. As a consequence, there are very few civil society organizations, which possess the technical expertise. The few expert groups include intelligence studies groups, human rights groups and civil liberties groups. The media in South Asia is playing an important, albeit informal role as a mechanism of control in this area.

The role of civil society organizations in scrutiny of traditional security institutions and holding governments to account for their decisions in security varies across the sectors. Although this paper could only provide a preliminary comparative sketch, it appears that technical expertise CSOs have played a greater role in the defense and possibly intelligence spheres, while representation and service delivery CSOs are more predominant in the policing domain in South Asia.

Civil Society and Non-Traditional Security Issues in South Asia

South Asian governments were at a dominant status to manage every aspect of society and citizens just played the role of unprofitable organization. However, this situation has changed in the past few years thanks to the prolific emergence of civil society organizations. This situation has allowed agencies outside the government to play crucial roles in combating against non-traditional security threats. Civil society is playing an important role in defending against non-traditional security threats by restraining government's extreme policy, establishing new channels outside government and filling the function vacancy of government to combat security threats. In South Asia, civil society continues to be a central force in the struggle for and consolidation of democratic space in various political regimes. Civil society is contributing to an effective state, which can protect people's human rights, support economic growth, tackle corruption and provide security and basic services like education and health care.

Civil society are connecting government with citizens, playing a positive role in settling government-citizen contradiction and laying useful foundation to safeguard social and

political security. Civil society's canvasses and struggle are remitting caveat and deterrence to government and prevent it from abusing power as well as reversing to despotism. The improvement of the economy, enlargement of political participation and democratization became the pre-conditions for socio-economic coordinate development and the augmentation of the economy. In this process, the existence of civil society and their difference with the government in political affairs have cultivated citizens' democratic consciousness of freedom and equality. In South Asia, the progress of democracy, the enhancement of citizens' consciousness of independence, self-determination, freedom, equality, the increase of social flexibility and creativity are attributed to the rapid development of civil society. Civil society is playing an important role in helping a smooth political transition and enhancing political security. Civil society is helping to increase people's basic and political consciousness, encourage people to unite to vindicate their legal and rational rights, and promote the formation of social base for democracy by enlightening, educating and inducting people. Civil society in South Asia is active in the fields of human rights. Their activities prevent the government from wantonly violating human rights and play a positive role in the alleviation of social conflicts. Civil society is playing an important role as the political supervisor and restrictor. Civil society is supervising the national election and disclosing election embezzlement.

Civil society is promoting the economy-social coordinate development and enhancing the social security modulus. Many non-traditional security issues such as development assistance, family planning, humanitarian relief, which the government does not like or is unable to involve, provide huge space for the development of civil society. Civil society is collaborating with World Bank, The UN agencies, INGOs and donor countries by assuming the work of planning, consulting, organizing, supervising and effectively promoting social-economic development of underdeveloped regions in South Asia. In the past few years, civil society is focusing on exchange and mutual understanding of cultures. Civil society is playing a vital role in national use of resources, protection of environment and sustainable development. Civil society groups are engrossed in more specialized areas such as environmental education.

The above analysis portrays how civil society organizations are urging for a paradigm shift in regional relations from national and state security to human security, people-centered developments over neo-liberal economic reforms and globalizations, dialogic mode of negotiation for conflict resolution over state sponsored terror and confidence building over spread of fear. The various segments and actors of civil society build up, mobilize and are clustered around issues of justice and peace in the context of all pervasive insecurity and violence in South Asian societies. In this context, it is widely appreciated that civil society groups are playing a noteworthy role in building trust and strengthening networks in a way that this "social capital" can become a bulwark of peace and development of the society. Civil society has made important gains in its capacity to act as a watchdog; foster change; help to develop norms of democratic behaviour in the security sector and provide technical input to policy making and implementation. Civil society's greatest challenge is to transform the state into an accountable, transparent and activist promoter of sustainable social and political development. Civil society is making

a significant difference in improving governance as innovators in service provision, developers of pro-poor policy, investigators of state abuses, monitors and overseers of state institutions and advocates with and for poor people.

The engagement of civil society organizations with security policy and practice is valued because it is viewed as enabling government to be more responsive to the needs of people through coordination and articulation of public demands and as an additional means of public oversight. The engagement of civil society is imperative, if security is to become a policy area not only in which government is expected to deliver in an impartial, efficient and professional manner but one where public expectations, commentary and criticism can be voiced and integrated into policy.

VI. Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and Security in South Asia

The idea of regional cooperation in South Asia had come under discussion in the 1940s and 50s.²⁴ However, the idea did not take root with the leadership of the region until President Zia-ur-Rehman of Bangladesh shared his “Working Paper on Regional Cooperation in South Asia” with the heads of states of South Asia in November 1980 and first proposed the institutionalisation of regional cooperation in South Asia.²⁵ Political, security and mutual economic benefits through regionalism seemed to have influenced President Ziaur Rahman’s thinking about establishing a regional organization in South Asia²⁶. SAARC was finally established in 1985 and held its first Summit in December of the same year in Dhaka, where the Charter of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation was signed.²⁷

SAARC, Shifting Paradigm of Security and Embryonic Framework of Multilateralism: Some Preliminary Analysis

Cooperation between countries is an aspiration that resonates strongly in the minds of policymakers of the region. The ruling elites continue to believe in the fruits of cooperation. Their belief has been strengthened by the post-Cold War academic discovery of a new form of regionalism — a multidimensional form of integration that includes economic, political, social and cultural aspects, thus going beyond the goal of creating region-based free trade regimes or security alliances.

²⁴ The idea of regional cooperation in South Asia was discussed at the Asian Relations Conference in New Delhi in April 1947, the Baguio Conference in the Philippines in May 1950 and the Colombo Powers Conference in April 1954. For details refer IISD. 2007. Regional Integration, Trade and Conflict in South Asia. Canada: International Institute for Sustainable Development. Accessed on 15 November, 2009 at http://www.iisd.org/pdf/2007/tas_rta_south_asia.pdf.

²⁵ Refer to Kishore C Dash.1996. The Political Economy of Regional Cooperation in South Asia. *Pacific Affairs*. 69(2), p.186.

²⁶ Refer to S. D Muni and Anuradha Muni. 1984. *Regional Cooperation in South Asia*. New Delhi: National Publishing House. pp. 29-31.

²⁷ Refer to the First Declarations of the South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation, 7-8 December 1985, Dhaka, Bangladesh.

SAARC has played a significant role in shaping and addressing traditional and non-traditional security issues. Lately, we have witnessed significant political developments in South Asia. Pakistan reverted to civilian rule; Bhutan and Maldives became a Henry Ford Style democracy; elections were held successfully in Nepal for the constituent Assembly after years of political turmoil and Bangladesh reverted to democratic rule. In view of such important political changes taking place in South Asia, it is useful to examine the influence of such shift towards popular governments on the prospects of security and regional cooperation. The establishment of the SAARC Development Fund, the Food Bank and the South Asian University are very positive efforts in combating non-traditional security problems. SAARC has from the beginning exchanged ideas on the various social issues of concern to the member countries. Issues concerning children, maternal and child nutrition, provision of safe drinking water, adequate shelter, subscribing to goals of universal immunisation and primary education, poverty reduction and removing threats of terrorism all have been part of the SAARC social agenda and spell out in developmental targets of the member countries. At various times, particular years were designated either to the girl child, disabled persons, year of shelter and so on. Another positive feature has been the close linkages developed between the CSOs of the member countries. Civil society has played an influential role in SAARC. Regional think tanks are in existence and there are exchanges between artists, filmmakers, writers, journalists and singers, which are bound to have some effect in creating a persuading vibes of regional cooperation. It has chalked up some successes, including a preferential trade agreement and settlement of some complicated bilateral disputes. On certain issues, these CSOs are setting the agenda pressurizing the political class to respond and come out with plans of action. This is visible with regard to issues concerning women and children as well as the constructive role played by the SAARC Chambers of Commerce and Industry in developing and strengthening linkages among the business class of the member countries, so that they could pressure their respective governments to move towards closer forms of regional economic integration. The group of eminent persons has recommended certain targets to be achieved in the social field, reflecting the permanency of non-traditional security agenda for SAARC. This permanency is further reinforced by the fact that, some of the problems like those dealing with the environment, drug and trafficking in women and children, and illegal movement of people are not national but regional problems entailing regional solutions. These problems give rise to an exclusive SAARC agenda to be addressed by eleven technical committees.²⁸ SAARC provides the forum where member countries have discussed cooperation on various economic issues ranging from tariff concessions, intra SAARC Investment and Joint Ventures, proposals for a Regional Investment Treaty and a SAARC Arbitration Council to Double Taxation Avoidance. All these are expected to accelerate the process of economic cooperation in the region. The permanent institutional structure of SAARC enables deliberations to take place on developing other forms of regional economic co-operation. The leaders have also repeatedly stressed the need to develop a common South Asian perspective on the issues to be discussed at the important international forums that affect regional interests.

²⁸ This include agriculture; communications; education, culture and sports; environment and meteorology; health and population activities; prevention of drug trafficking and drug abuse; rural development; science and technology; tourism; transport and women in development.

On state security, the SAARC undertakes confidence building measures such as regular dialogue and consultations at the ministerial and senior officials levels, publication of defense white papers, promotion of a regional arms registry, promotion of joint military exercises, disaster relief and search and rescue cooperation between civilian and military personnel, training for peacekeeping operations in support of the United Nations and cooperation among defense colleges on state security issues. While SAARCs' founders recognized the impracticality of institution-building, they professed similar aspirations and adopted fundamental norms, including non-interference, regional self-reliance and non-alignment. Like their Southeast Asian counterparts, South Asian actors show a preference for dialogue-oriented and ad-hoc approaches to cooperation rather than conventional legalistic institutions.

On multilateralism frontage, regional leaders agreed to establish dialogue partnership with other regional bodies and with states outside the region interested in SAARC activities.²⁹ Inclusion of Afghanistan as the eighth member in SAARC has not only ensured the integrity of South Asian strategic geography but also established a connection with the Middle East and Central Asia. The addition of China and Japan as observers of SAARC is enlarging its vision and opening itself to the outside world. The SAARC responded positively to the request of the United States and South Korea seeking observer status. The EU is following a pro-active policy of engagement with the region and consistently affirmed its interest in strengthening links with SAARC. China, Japan and South Korea by the logics of geo-economics of proximity are attracted towards the economic potential of this region. Economic cooperation strongly anchored within the South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) and WTO is expected to produce spillovers into other sectors and generate contextual confidence in harnessing mutual investment, economic union and ultimately the formation of a South Asian economic community. The expansion in membership and engagements of regional and global powerhouses in the region mean raising the profile of South Asian regionalism, expanding the scope for multilateralism, enlarging the areas of functional cooperation and building a foundation for security. Comprehensive security devoid of collective economic cooperation is simply unsustainable. This is the reason the South Asian countries are developing a flexible multilateral partnership and trying to secure their freedom of maneuver through mutual accommodation and multiple regime membership. China's recent observer status in SAARC and India and Pakistan's at the five-nation Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) illustrates this point. On the one hand, India is developing a strategic and cooperative partnership, instituting a political mechanism to resolve the boundary issue and expanding trade and on the other hand, it has signed a deal on civilian nuclear energy with the US.³⁰ Pakistan and Afghanistan are members of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO). Other smaller countries of the region are not far behind in seeking

²⁹ They have agreed it in the 12th SAARC summit.

³⁰ The region is geographically and demographically India-centric, given that nearly 70 percent of the land mass and population lie with India. The India-centric region cannot be called a hegemonic sub-system, although India can exert quite a bit of influence over the smaller states - Bhutan, Maldives and Nepal. The region is not economically interdependent and as a result a potential source of power that India can exert is missing. Except tiny Bhutan and Maldives, neither states have implicitly accepted hegemonic relationship with India nor do they have potential to do so in the near future. India has yet to become overwhelmingly preponderant in security and economic arenas.

leverage for national self-assertion and mutual accommodation with the neighbors and global powers. The multilateral approaches to security are being undertaken in an *ad hoc* and functionally-specific manner. The overwhelming pattern of defense relationships within South Asia has been bilateral, but some of these have had a multilateralist impact, offering a measure of reassurance against strategic uncertainty and serving as confidence building measures. SAARC has acted as a forum for confidence-building measure over and above the limited bilateral measures agreed between member nations and summits have helped to diffuse bilateral tensions on a number of occasions.³¹ The above analysis has robustly demonstrated that the security in the region has extended from the security of nations to the security of groups and individuals and downwards from nations to individuals. The concept of security has extended horizontally from military to political, economic, social, environmental and human security. The responsibility for ensuring security itself has extended and is diffused in all directions from national states including upwards to international institutions, downwards to regional or local government and sideways to non-governmental organizations, to public opinion and the press and to the abstract forces of nature or of the market.

The main contention, however is that South Asia is still in the process of evolving as a 'region' due to two basic factors. An adequate degree of complementarity of interests has not yet been achieved among the South Asian states and an almost perpetual preoccupation with intra-state conflict and crises leaves individual states with scarce time or resources to work toward regional solutions.³² The lack of 'region-ness' in South Asia is due to the persistence of a myriad of social, economic and political problems practically in each and every South Asian state. Since the formation of SAARC, the pace of integration among the South Asian nations has not been satisfactory. Political and religious tensions run all time high in the region³³ and all the SAARC members have varying degrees of conflict with their neighbouring states.³⁴ Chronic problems are not addressed at the regional level as SAARC does not want to deal with political and security issues. SAARC has not made inroads in terms of creating a sort of a security community. A number of points of tension have remained and this means that the region has a complex security predicament. The hard security issues are exacerbated by lingering historical sensitivities such as territorial disputes and conflicting views of the past. Thus, in terms of both military and non-traditional security challenges, South Asia is notable for relatively weak formalized regional institutions. Powerful countries like China, US and Japan are given observer status in SAARC with a view that the presence

³¹ India did not volunteer a policy of diffuse reciprocity in dealing with its smaller neighbours, although the Gujral Doctrine of the 1990s did indicate a brief but significant departure from this practice, briefly rekindling hope for a more robust South Asian regionalism. The Gujral Doctrine, however, was not applied to Pakistan.

³² Refer to Monica Bhanot. 1999. Challenges to Regional Cooperation in South Asia: A New Perspective' *Online Journal of Peace and Conflict* at <http://www.trinstitute.org/ojpcr/toc2.3.htm>; Issue 2/3, August.

³³ Religious tensions between Hindus and Muslims in India have sparked off infamous violence in the state of Gujarat, India in 2002 where approximately more than 2000 persons were killed.

³⁴ We find political, socio-cultural and environmental challenges including Kashmir issue, border problems, distribution of natural resources, the corrosive politics that divides Hindu, Muslim, Sikh and Buddhist, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, problem of Bhutanese refugees, Tamil problems, terrorism, poverty, mis-governance etc.

of observers will modify India's voice in the regional organization and prevent the exercise of monopoly over South Asian system. However, the expansion of SAARC with the entry of Afghanistan in April 2007 has added awkwardness to Pakistan. China's observer status has added mortification to India. With Iran as an observer, it added discomfiture to the US. These developments question the relevance of the regional organization and cooperative security in South Asia.

Peace and security in South Asia demands that SAARC is galvanized to transform the region into a community of achievers and regional cooperation becomes catalyst to change and a coordinated perspective make it as respectable and effective as ASEAN and EU. Based on this initial analysis, what kind of changes are necessary for South Asia to emerge as a peaceful region, which can address both state and non-state security? What can be done to transform the region from its "vicious circles" of conflict to "virtuous circles" of cooperative relationships? In order to achieve this, three solid pillars of the Kantian peace—institutions, democracies and economic interdependence—are needed. These three pillars are mutually reinforcing and supporting of each other."³⁵ In addition to this Kantian tripod, improving state and civil society capacity is of vital importance and is in fact interconnected with its three components. The process of cooperation can successfully be launched, if all the eight nations bring about changes in their attitudes and regional policies. The Westphalian norms of sovereignty protection, non-interference, inclusive membership and consensus decision making remains the pillars of new architecture in South Asia.

VII. Civil Society in Search of Alternative People-Centered Regionalism in South Asia

Consistent with the hopes of federalists and integrationists, functional activities of humanitarian, political, economic, social and ecological organizations are pulling sovereign states, markets and civil society groups into a solidaristic vision of post-state constellation and enlarging the notion of citizenship in all matters and all levels affecting the life, liberty, property and identity. Civil society has remained largely marginalized predominantly in traditional security that tends to be state-centric, top-down and technocratic. However, lately there have been some very positive initiatives supporting civil society in security issues. Based on human security as micro-security, the concept essentially entails a shift from a security discourse focused on macro-level concerns of state and economic development to one devoted to micro-level issues of individual development and empowerment. Anecdotal evidence shows the centrality of the concept in current discussions on regional security in South Asia. Interaction between civil society and state has so far been quite circumspect and the difficulties outlined above have kept the channels largely unexplored. The proponents of a closer integration of the regional civil society and security discourses have generally remained cautious in their efforts. Although such prudence is warranted, the risk is that bringing the networks and

³⁵Refer to Bruce Russett and John R. Oneal. 2001. *Triangulating Peace: Democracy, Interdependence, and International Organizations*. New York: W.W. Norton. It has been argued that there is strong evidence that mature democracies rarely fight each other. Similarly, military conflict is reduced among deeply interdependent economies. Countries bound by institutions and the norms they create help member states not to threaten or use force among themselves because these institutions serve as "agents of mediation and arbitration," helping to reduce "uncertainty," expand their "conception of interests at stake," and promote "norms and principles of appropriate behavior on a long-term basis.

language of civil society and security closer together might lead to added challenges. This shows the need to move circumspectly and in a way, which adds value than deduct from the work currently undertaken on these issues in civil society and security circles. There is also the need to formulate a model of development and security, which is acceptable to CSOs. This could undoubtedly revolve around some variation of the human security concept, which allows for the realignment of development priorities at the heart of the civil society agenda. However, it should not create two SAARCs emerging – one quite committed to civil society and the human security agenda and the other much less so. Proponents of closer integration between CSOs' activity and the regional security apparatus make sure that the existing notion of comprehensive and co-operative security and the new notion of human security are not presented as polar opposites but rather as complementary points of entry within the overall regional security problematique. The search among SAARC members for what could be termed a variable geometry between comprehensive, co-operative and human security would have the benefit of opening a space for security debates that is wide enough to welcome to the proponents of immediate pluralization and democratization in the region, yet less threatening to those who see fault in these objectives. Perhaps the South Asian Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA) whereby different states fulfill different expectations and meet different deadlines within an overarching process of regional integration that bears some lessons, which could be applied in the security arena. The human security concept and its relationship to the existing conceptual security apparatus has to be tailored to local conditions in the region, so that it has resonance and policy relevance for each of the individual countries. However, it must remain coherent and cohesive enough at the regional level so that it can provide a credible blueprint for furthering the dynamics of democratization and the opening up of social and political space in South Asia as required by the new security and civil society agenda. Civil society groups have to subsume the very concept of collective action at various levels of security analysis—individual, sub-national, state, regional and global – and orienting them towards achieving a modicum of order. Macro and micro levels of security impact each other and modify each other's behavior so closely that conditions of peace and security can be treated in an integrative manner. CSOs must be able to work with governments and SAARC as a body to fulfill a common vision for a region that is strengthened by diverse views and differing approaches. Some of the key elements in the founding document of SAARC, the SAARC is meant to accelerate economic growth, social progress and cultural development and the promotion of regional peace and stability in the South Asian region. Over the years, elements of the original founding document of SAARC were improved and expanded to respond to the challenges and opportunities that the association encountered today. Not all of these improvements were state-led initiatives and some were implemented as a result of constant push and lobbying from various elements of civil society. The argument that SAARC is an exclusive club for the policy-makers of its member countries is actually rather inaccurate. The SAARC has a practice of bringing public intellectuals, academics, government, business, media and other relevant sectors in their private capacity to discuss economic, political, security and other issues at domestic, regional and global levels. However, most individuals actively involved in this network are close with officials in SAARC and its member countries. Today, there is another platform, where the business community is capable of exerting much of their influence over SAARC policy-makers.

This, and other follow up efforts, facilitated the launching of the loose SAARC People's Assembly. Subsequently, it is becoming a melting pot of civil society organizations, nongovernmental organizations and civic organizations from the eight member states of SAARC. The forum aims to serve as a vessel for articulating and conveying the people's view and interests outside of the formal political channels. Indeed, it was convened on the rationale that the process of community building in the region must include all layers of society to make the association more relevant to the ordinary citizens in each member country. It is therefore one of the initial attempt pursued by the academic community to act as the bridge between SAARC policy makers (official actors) and the rest of civil society groups (unofficial actors). Civil society's search of alternative regionalism in SAARC has been growing. This type of civil society gathering is technically the officially recognized civil society forum by SAARC and its member governments. The interface between SAARC leaders and representatives of civil society groups marked the new turning point in SAARC-Civil Society relations as no such occasions had ever been pursued in the past. It is not clear, however, as to what the added value of this forum would give to the already extensive civil society groups' networks at SAARC. To start with, civil society groups are both excited and concerned about the deepening of SAARC cooperation. In the area of politics and security, civil society groups see the potential of influencing SAARC to expand its political and security cooperation to include the recognition of human rights, dignity and security, which goes beyond the traditional interpretation of political and security cooperation in the region. In economic-related matters, civil society groups are interested to have a bigger say in the decision making of SAARCs' external economic ventures with its dialogue partners. The scope of civil society interests are even more diverse in the area of socio-cultural aspect of SAARC cooperation, ranging from environment, women, youth, all the way to the question of the regional identity of SAARC.

'People-Oriented' vs. 'People-Centered' SAARC: Which Ways towards Alternative Regionalism in South Asia?

The question is: "is alternative regionalism in making in South Asia?" The above analysis clearly brings out that SAARC, the regional association, has multiple roles to play. Regional co-operation becomes all the more essential in a scenario, where challenges in the present and the future are trans-border in nature requiring regional approach and solutions. The success or failure of the regional association cannot be measured in a vacuum. It should be done so with regard to the expectations of the member countries—their national, bilateral and regional agendas. Secondly, it has to be done with regard to the ground situation prevailing in the region whereby SAARC since its inception has provided an alternative structure to conduct relations among the member states. SAARC leads two parallel lives, which however are not completely disconnected. First is one which is deeply linked to the individual aspirations of the member countries and how SAARC gives them identity and the means of expression. The second is that where there is a regional agenda and SAARC stands above all the countries put together. The above analysis has brought out the permanence of the first and the growing importance of the second. In its own context, alternative regionalism is certainly in the making in South Asia and civil society is playing a crucial role in promoting it. Various actors in South

Asian regionalization process have different ideas as to what alternative regionalism entails in the SAARC context. One common thread in the promotion of alternative regionalism amongst these non-state actors is the question of the participation of the people in SAARC policy-making process. Civil society in the region is increasingly calling for SAARC to be more down-to-earth and inclusive in its efforts to shape and determine the system of governance in the region. In recent years, civil society's search for an alternative regionalism in South Asia has been expanded with the establishment of new institutions, fora and networks to allow greater space for civil society's participation in SAARC related activities. At the same time, some SAARC member nations have responded positively to this call and encouraged its officials to become more involved in civil-society led activities.³⁶ The association has also launched its new principle of people-oriented SAARC. However, it is not clear as to whether these initiatives are sufficient to satisfy the demand of wider civil society groups for the association to adopt a more optimistic people-centred principle. This should form a key concern for SAARC policy-makers, particularly as the region is moving towards the establishment of SAARC Community. The assumption that peace can be achieved through SAARC without addressing the political problems of the region has neither been able to cultivate peace nor to invigorate the SAARC process successfully. Though since its very inception, it has been regularly able to hold Summit meetings but there are interruptions in between owing mainly to intrastate conflicts between the member countries. The focus of all the countries in South Asia should be more interaction at the civil society level through cultural, economic and social exchange. Even if these initiatives have yet to produce significant results, this augurs well for a region, where the traditional state centric notions of security have held sway. Moreover, some scholars have argued that the human security model can be applied to boost economic and technological cooperation among South Asian states, which in turn would stabilize the region. Attempts to address human security issues must be combined with traditional diplomatic and strategic approaches. The key question is how to reconcile the two paradigms so that both agendas complement each other. SAARC and civil society can play a vital role in this regard. Though the regional cooperation agenda of SAARC suffer from several institutional and political constraints, the organization has concerned itself with a human security agenda as a functional mechanism that could ultimately prove beneficial to political stability and regional order in South Asia. SAARC has provided an opportunity, which could be availed of not only to attain self reliance and improve the economic and social conditions of the region but also to safeguard against the extra regional forces, which may create pressure and problems to suit their interests. Thus, cooperative human security demands walking on both legs-expanding economic cooperation wherever possible and making sustained efforts to resolve political disputes. In responding to the challenges, CSOs have to reconcile with forces that can aid or complicate their strategies for political and economic reforms. At the heart of the challenge is how to reconcile the values associated

³⁶ SAARC officials of semi-democratic member nation like Bhutan have reservation about the people-centred concept. Having been a relatively closed, non-accountable and non-transparent to the people for centuries, it is certainly difficult for policy-makers to surrender their decision-making power to the people.

with civil society with the values that inform the market and state bureaucracy.³⁷ The idea of re-thinking security from below is not a suggestion for the replacement of the State. This is still the only actor that could guarantee that public goods and services are provided and not sold or administered according to the rational choice logic that guides markets. Security from below is a call to increase the capacity of people to think about their security and to define collectively the values and norms that should inform state provision. It is a call to find ways to increase accountability of the state and regional organization to common citizens. It is also an attempt to increase the capacity of communities and local level actors to articulate their demands for a better security provision under democratic principles in which security must be at the heart of all struggles for equitable development and social justice.

Thus, it is the need of the hour for regional civil society groups and networks to brainstorm the challenges and opportunities in the implementation of the SAARC Charter and the SAARC blueprints, including on the political-security, economic and socio-cultural aspects of SAARC cooperation towards the creation of an SAARC Community. The debate should target the core issue of SAARC as a people-centred as against people-oriented organisation. The people-oriented SAARC can be interpreted that the policies pursued by the associations' policy-makers shall be oriented towards the concerns and interests of the people. However, under this principle, the final decision-making still lies amongst the region's political elites. In contrast, SAARC as a people-centered organization calls for the grouping to place people at the heart of its decision-making process. A people-oriented SAARC does call for policy-makers to listen to the will of the people but it also allows them to make the final call whether or not the will of the people should be implemented. It, therefore, becomes problematic for civil society groups to let a handful of the region's policy-makers to make the final decisions on key issues that matter the most for the people of South Asia. In contrast, a people-centred SAARC allows more direct involvement and integration of the people in the decision-making process of SAARC. Under this principle, policy-makers matter because of their role in facilitating the inputs from relevant constituents as well as the formulation of the policy proposal. The final draft of policy proposal would then be consulted further with relevant non-state actors across the region. Openness and transparency on the side of state actors also make up the core component of a people-centred SAARC, where the people are essentially at the heart of the decision-making process.

Hence, civil society groups should pursue the highest call in their efforts to reform SAARC to make it people-centred. It is precisely because of this that the notion of people-centred, instead of people-oriented SAARC should be at the core of advocacy works and messages of civil society groups and networks. It has also become an imperative on the contention that the practice of the so-called democracy in South Asian countries is still open for debate, particularly since vote-buying and corruption is still prevalent in many of these democracies. There is a Henry Ford style democracy in member countries like Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bhutan and Maldives.

³⁷ The values associated with civil society include justice, compassion and economic freedom and the values that inform the market and state bureaucracy include rationality, efficiency and profit.

VIII. Way forward

The light of peace has come from South Asia. The land where Buddha preached and Mahatma Gandhi spoke of nonviolence, that entire region is at the crossroads today. South Asia provides a deplorable portrayal in telescoping social, economic and political facets of development and nerve-racking threat to security. The human and non-traditional security agenda is broad and complex in South Asia. It is often neglected by traditional security thinking, which has besmirched the quality of life of millions. South Asia presents an array of conventional inter-state security challenges from above and below. It has emerged as a regional entity in the international political system with the creation of SAARC but failed to strengthen regional cohesiveness. The emerging security order shows a multiplicity of fault lines of political, economic, social, environmental, cultural, scientific and technological nature; these faults overlap partially and often shift direction; they sometimes reinforce each other and at other times work at cross purposes. The overall picture they present is one of turbulence and uncertainty, in which a variety of contradictory processes open up a wide range of both opportunities and threats defying established security. Integration and exclusion coexist uneasily side by side in all domains and aspects of the security order. This is an order that is regional but not integrated, that puts all in contact with one another while simultaneously maintaining deep fissures between nations and between peoples within countries and that is benefiting a small percentage of humanity while segregating a large portion of the region's population. Despite the traditional and non-traditional security threats, changing gamut also provide an opportunity to foster a cohesive South Asia and it will be blemished to reckon from these bedlams that there cannot be any strategic premeditated concord in South Asia. The region is a natural strategic unit surrounded by the Himalayas in the north and the Indian Ocean in the south. The challenge is to develop the silhouette of security architecture in South Asia and afford political, economic and social energy to the processes of problem-solving and accelerate wide-ranging regional security cooperation. Regional cooperation has to be seen as a vehicle for liberating the people of South Asia from the shackles created by excessive concern with the security of the state. The official SAARC process should encourage parallel interaction among the people of South Asia. It should create political, social, environmental, economic, military and cultural systems that together bequeath people the building blocks of survival, livelihood and dignity. Both state security and human security should be the objectives of national policy and regional cooperation. In theory, national security creates favorable environment that is conducive to the pursuit of human security. National security enables nation states to pursue long-term national development agenda without fear of being interrupted by conflict. It allows nation-states to allocate resources to soft sectors rather than hard security sector. National development in turn creates opportunities that can enrich the lives and conditions of the people. Such condition provides a strong foundation for national stability. The challenge, therefore, is to forge a new regional consensus on balancing the pursuit of state and human security, while the universal concern for human security should not be used as a cover to undermine the political integrity of nation-states. Regional and national security should not be used as an argument to perpetuate gross violation and deprivation of human security. Maintaining state security is as important as

promoting human security. The former is an essential prerequisite of the latter, which in turn provides the foundation for national and regional stability. Human security needs regional security in the sense that the former can only be promoted in an environment of inter-state peace and stability. At the same time, regional security can only be sustained, if the constituent states experience domestic peace built on secured communities. National and regional institutions must work with civil society. In recent years, transnational social forces have been providing an alternative orientation to security, which they call “security from below”.³⁸ Civil society must strengthen security from below and balance it with the security from above and opposes adverse impacts of the latter. The SAARC must balance its current state-centric security agenda with people-centric security concerns. It is vitally linked to the resiliency of the member states, markets and civil society groups, all acting in a common spirit to optimize the prospect for shared cooperation, peace, progress and identity of South Asia. To conclude, sound democratic traditions, a liberal and secular ethos, a free media, a developed civil society and market and checks on insularity and nationalism are essential elements for any regional community building.

³⁸ Refer to Richard Falk "Pursuing the Quest for Human Security," in Majid Tehranian (ed.).1999. *Worlds Apart: Human Security and Global Governance*. New York: I.B. Tauris Publishers, pp 1-22.

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