

# CBMs & Peace in South Asia

**Columnist SYED HUSSAIN SHAHEED SOHERWORDI**  
**discusses the nuclear equation in South Asia.**

**E**veryday, newspapers and television reports that human activity revolves around the use of force to settle disputes. Since 1945 not a single day has gone by without war (Sivard, 1991). That's why people equate the world politics with violence. Now, with the introduction of nuclear technology, the war has become grimmer. To know the intensity of the horrors of a nuclear war, let's study a physician's views:

**"A 20-megaton nuclear bomb...would create a fireball 11/2 miles in diameter, with temperatures of 20 million to 30 million degrees Fahrenheit...All living things would be vaporized within a radius of "ground zero". Six miles from this point, all persons would be instantly killed by a huge silent heat flash travelling at the speed of light...Within a 10-mile radius, the blast wave would slow to 180 mph. In that area, winds and fires would probably kill 50% of the population, and injure another 40%...Within 20 miles of the centre, 50% of the inhabitants would be killed or injured by the thermal radiation and blast pressures, and tens of thousands would suffer severe burn injuries...Medical "disaster planning" for a nuclear war is meaningless."** (The medical consequences of Nuclear War, reported by the Associated Press, 1980).

The world, armed with such lethal weapons, is at the brink of destruction. Almost all arch rivals have acquired this technology to secure themselves. **They are ignorant of the fact that the nuclear weapons are not loyal to any nation. It can't differentiate between the owner and the enemy.** What it knows is only destruction of mankind, as the above-mentioned report predicts. Hence, in South Asia, a tense and feared-peace is prevailing, that can turn its Olive branches any time, to war.

This paper will examine the sensitivity of the situation, potential military and economic confidence building measures, signed in the past as well as suggestions for the future in the South Asian context. It will also identify the factors that constrain the development and implementation of CBMs, and peace in the region.

In the wake of their nuclear tests in May 1998 & the abandonment of nuclear ambiguity for an overt nuclear weapon status, tension between India and Pakistan has reached to new heights. Almost after a year of their tests, both states clashed in Kargil — an off shoot of Kashmir, which had nearly culminated into an all-out conventional war that could have assumed a nuclear dimension. Thus under the threat of war between India and Pakistan, there is a pressing need for institutionalized mechanism to de-escalate tension and to promote regional peace.<sup>1</sup>

The series of nuclear tests held by India and Pakistan in May 1998 have brought to an abrupt end their long-standing policy of nuclear ambiguity of neither denying nor acquiring nuclear weapons capability. Nuclearization of South Asia is bearing serious implications for regional security and global stability. It has also posed a grave challenge to non-proliferation regime, human development and economies of both the countries. Parallel missile race has ignited another grim game in the most volatile region of the world.<sup>2</sup>

**Relations between India and Pakistan had deteriorated considerably, especially after the intensification of the post-1989 insurgency in Indian-held Kashmir, nuclear proliferation continued to grow apace.** At the same time, India and Pakistani policies of nuclear ambiguity eroded considerably as their policymakers publicly acknowledged that they had acquired the capability to assemble nuclear weapons. **On two instances, in 1987 and 1990, when the two countries were on the verge of armed conflict, Pakistani governments implied that the presence of a nuclear deterrent had prevented the outbreak of a fourth India-Pakistan war.**<sup>3</sup>

In such critical, complex, and crucial circumstances, there is an imperative need for the reduction of tension in the region. CBMs are such actions and agreements, which would be helpful in détente. 'Confidence Building Measure' means any action, understanding, or any treaty that generates trust between adversaries. It covers from any sign of peace initiative to a treaty. However, to be more specific it can be defined as a bilateral or multilateral measure that builds confidence or trust, arrests the undesirable drifts towards open hostilities, reduces tensions and encourages the adversaries to make contact for negotiations without taxing too much the operative policy pursuits.<sup>4</sup>

It is a fact that both countries are armed with nuclear weapons and therefore, the threat of intentional, accidental or inadvertent use of nuclear weapons has increased. Conflict prevention and promoting CBMs is the need of the time. Successful CBMs need consistent negotiations, which may evolve a proper mechanism of defusing tension. Secondly, after defining, CBMs should be implemented in true faith. Thirdly, transparency is very necessary. It helps in reducing the misunderstandings of the adversary.

As for as India and Pakistan are concerned, both have failed to implement CBMs. Their relations are the product of cold peace and cold war and even hot war. Misperceptions, misunderstandings and incompatibilities have plagued their relations.

### MILITARY CBMs

Military CBMs can be defined as a "type of arms control employing purposely designed, distinctly cooperative measures intended to help clarify participating states' military intentions, reduce uncertainties about their potentially threatening military activities and constrain their opportunities for surprise attacks or the coercive use of force," i.e. as mechanisms aimed at constraining conflict. Using a broader definition, military CBMs can be defined as instruments for de-escalating tension and resolving conflict in a cooperative manner. CBMs are, therefore, a process that transforms "senior decision makers' belief about the nature of threat posed by other states, primarily entailing a shift from a basic assumption of hostile intentions to one of non-hostile intentions."<sup>5</sup>

India and Pakistan have signed a number of agreements to establish ground rules for military exercises with the objective of avoiding the outbreak of an accidental conflict. An agreement was ratified in August 1992 on Advance Notice of Military Exercises, Manoeuvres and Troops Movements. The agreement does not permit military manoeuvres of the Pakistani and Indian land, naval, and air forces in close proximity to or in the direction of their international border. No military activity is permitted within 5 km of the international border. The agreement also provides for prior notification of major military exercises within a specified timeframe.<sup>6</sup> But both countries have violated the spirit of this agreement. I believe, it was this non-compliance of the agreements that had resulted in Kargil crisis.

A similar agreement was signed in 1991, also ratified in 1992 for the Prevention of Airspace Violations by Military Aircraft, establishing a no-fly zone along their international border. According to the agreement, combat aircraft are prohibited within 10 kilometres of the international border and unarmed transport and logistics aircraft are permitted up to 1000 meters from each other's airspace.<sup>7</sup> This agreement has not been honoured, and it has failed to de-escalate tension, especially during the time of military crisis. Pakistan's downing of two Indian aircraft and India's downing of a Pakistani plane near the international border, during the Kargil crisis, are the most suitable quotable examples here.

Realizing the nuclear status of each other, both countries have entered into a nuclear specific CBM- Prohibition of Attack on Nuclear Installations and Facilities. According to this agreement, on 1st of January of every year, both countries were to inform each other about the volume and any change in nuclear installation.<sup>8</sup> Here the accuracy of nuclear facilities lists is also not beyond doubt. Hence it has undermined the effectiveness of this CBM.

The existing CBMs can be studied in the following ways:

1. A direct communication link (DCL) known as "Hotline" between DGMOs (Director Generals of Military Operations) was established in 1971. In 1990, due to the mounting tension on borders, it was decided to use this line on weekly basis.

2. Establishment of a hotline between Pakistan Air Force and Indian Air Force (1993).
3. Communication between the Naval vessels and aircraft of the two navies when in each other's vicinity (May 1993).
4. Establishment of a hotline between Prime Ministers in 1997 after Male summit.
5. Track-2 diplomacy, people to people contact.
6. Participation of senior military and civilian officials in various seminars in each other's country.
7. Invitation of the Guest Speakers at each other's national defence colleges.

Despite of such a list of CBMs, both have failed to achieve peace in the region. They, probably, use them more as instruments to influence the West than to defuse tension in true sense. Lack of political will has also marred the mechanism of conflict resolution. Military CBMs have become even more essential due to the absence of political reconciliation between the two geographically contiguous, nuclear-capable states.

The following suggested CBMs could improve the deteriorating atmosphere of peace in South Asia.

1. Posting UN observers along the Line of Control.
2. Exchange of military instructors at various levels.
3. No War Proposal in some acceptable form.
4. Withdrawal of troops from border areas and creating a 20 miles (on both sides) a troops free Security Zone.

## ECONOMIC CBMs

As present century is the century of economics, it has provided us an opportunity to assess the ECBMs (economic confidence building measures) in South Asia. It is globalization of the world economy and closer co-operation of individual economies in the world that has engaged the global entities in economic diplomacy for peace building.

Economic CBMs involve mainly the elimination of tariffs, custom duties, taxes, and non-tariff barriers etc. As far as South Asia is concerned, intra-SAARC trade has remained at 4.2%, which shows the lack of confidence of South Asians over each other. According to an estimate, India and Pakistan trade volume is \$120 million since 1994, whereas their combined total global trade is \$ 72 billion and has shown practically no substantial increase over the years.<sup>10</sup>

There are so many agreements, which have been chalked out for co-operation in economic field, but it is an irony of fate that all such ventures are lying on the paper and no concrete steps have so far been taken. The most important of all these is the intra-regional trade co-operation under the 1995 South Asian Preferential Agreement-SAPTA — which has been a strategic instrument in bringing about economic development in the region. In the first round of negotiations in 1995, 226 items were resulted to offer tariff concessions by the member states. In the next round, 2,000 products were covered by the regional agreement.<sup>11</sup> If it is fruitless, it is because of the non-serious attitude of the regional members. In a world, where Regionalism is the slogan of development, South Asian's individual approach is understandable. Following measures should be adopted to boost ECBMs here:

1. Encouraging Chambers of Trade & Commerce contacts.
2. Promoting SAPTA and SAFTA-South Asian Free Trade Area.
3. Joint Ventures in different trading items - initially in both countries and then in the 3rd country.

4. **Joint Commission on Agriculture.** [www.megalecture.com](http://www.megalecture.com)
5. **Promoting Trade in the region.**

One may not find more proper time to discuss and eagerly request for CBMs in South Asia than now, as unfortunately, relations between India and Pakistan have reached to their lowest ebb since 1971.

In May 1998, both countries went nuclear and celebrations on both sides were watched with fearful eyes. It was followed by Kargil conflict that had caused intense war jingoism and had shaped South Asia a potential nuclear flashpoint. Then came political change in Pakistan on Oct 12, 1999. For the first time in Pakistan, a military regime declared itself as Futurist (looking towards future with pacific intentions and forgetting the past hostilities) and Chief Executive as 'a man of peace'. But Indian government's response was still endemic. The postponement of the SAARC summit, due to India's unwillingness to talk to the military rulers of Pakistan, was serious setback to the normalization. Hijacking of Indian plane was another event that deepened the thaw in the regional tension. 'During all this period, as relations between the two countries take a spiralling downward course, the press and particularly electronic media of India and Pakistan continue to pour venom against each other, further vitiating the atmosphere'<sup>12</sup>.

It is a fact that both governments are entangled by their domestic political problems. Indigenous turmoil-government and traders row, pressure from political parties to hold elections, future political set up, and deteriorating law and order situation in Pakistan at one hand and on the other hand, growing freedom struggle in Kashmir, insurgency in Assam, attacks on Christians and holy churches by the fundamentalist Hindus and lawlessness in many parts of India, have become hard nuts to crack. But both governments are busy to deflect attention of their people from these real issues to the enemy across the border. Instead of acting insanelly, one must follow long-term policies for eternal peace here.

**One of the very important determinants for peace making in South Asia is political will.** It is necessary now, because both countries as a matter of national policy are trying to harm each other to pursue their ends. 'Each country's press and electronic media should take the initiative as they can play a crucial role in lowering the war hysteria on both sides. Public statements coming out of the leaders of both countries are most harmful. They need to lower their rhetoric to create an environment of building at least a minimum level of confidence. Even the conciliatory statements being made by both sides are meant more to impress the international community rather than motivated by a desire to reduce tensions and restore stability in the region. **The unrelenting harassment of each other's diplomats has to come to stop as it further increases animosity and aggravates the crisis'**<sup>13</sup>.

Another very difficult problem, which both the countries are facing, is the **extremist posture adopted by the religious fundamentalist organizations.** Hindu, Muslim, and Christian minorities do exist on both sides of the border. Lack of tolerance amongst them has further contributed in plaguing the relations. It would be in the fitness of the things that a direct interaction between the fundamentalist organizations may be arranged, which will in turn help in easing tension.

Probably the situation is not that worse as has been portrayed by the respective intelligence agencies. It is their over-efficiency and suspicions that have made each other's face grimmer. They have formed mirror images of one another. Gap of communication amongst the agencies has flared up mutual antagonism. Under such circumstances, it is the need of the moment to initiate a dialogue between the intelligence agencies of both countries so that misunderstandings may be addressed.

## Conclusion

As a major achievement of international peace and conflict research, there is a broad consensus that **peace is more than just the absence of war. Will to peace and the capability for peace is more important than deterrence.** If South Asia is observed intently, the state of affairs since 1947 cannot be called Peace. Even when Pakistan and India did not clash militarily, their regional cold war was going on. So, discussing imperatives of peace in South Asia, the problem of the will to peace and the capability for peace is a major factor for answering the question whether peace is possible in this part of the world. CBMs are the need of the time. If we want peace in South Asia, a real peace, then at first we have to bring peace in our minds. We have to convince our people that for our survival and of the world at

large, there is no other choice but to live in peace with neighbours. We have to re-educate our media who is busy in providing Hot News early in the morning through creating war, ideological, enemy, and threat hysteria. We cannot secure our people by securing the boundaries. People can be secured by providing them food, shelter, and clothing, and this is possible only when both countries will bring peace, harmony, and economic well being in the region. National security cannot be ensured by arms race, rather it would destroy the shabby fabric of our economies as well. In the year 2000, Economic Prosperity means National Security indeed.

CBMs do not mean peace, rather these are the ways to long lasting harmony. Why shouldn't we be the trendsetters? After every war, the belligerents have signed the peace treaty. Why shouldn't we sign peace treaty before the war? War is a reality but not a necessity. Peace loving nations must realize it.

#### END NOTES

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#### About the Author

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