

---

## Regional Conflicts in South Asia and their Impact on Regional Integration

PADMALOCHAN DASH

Ph. D student

Centre for Security Studies

School of International Studies

Central University of Gujarat, Gandhinagar

India

### Abstract:

*South Asian Region remains exposed to the intensely fluid and changing global security environment. The weak state capacity prevailing in almost all countries of South Asia has made them vulnerable to the growing security threats. Lack of regional integration and the ongoing conflicts of interstate and intrastate nature have made the security scenario complex and unmanageable. Most seriously, many of the conflicts devised on the identity and ethnic politics are gradually taking the shape of terrorism, and the non-state actors including the sectional-political interest groups are fishing in this troubled water, keeping behind the region to suffer. It is due to the lack of political will, the much desired political mechanics to foster regional integration has so far not been completely possible.*

**Key words:** South Asia, SAARC, Conflict, Terrorism, Regional Integration, Regional Peace, Regional Security

### 1. Introduction

South Asia which consists of a number of eight independent states and one quarter-of humanity-has not yet created a secure

space in the interstate, intrastate and human dimensions. The core causes of contributing factors for the persistence of high level of insecurity in the region are many but, looking from the intrinsic perspective, the two key drivers of insecurity can be weak states and weak cooperative norms (Paul, T. V. and Theodore McLauchlin, 2010, p.293) found to be persistent in the region since its independence from colonialism. Similarly, the factors contributing to the instability in the region are many, however, the most persistent are the demographic and geographical factor (the geographical spread of the national groups in the region), the continuing historical trends (the historical trend of the diminishing pattern of some ethno-national groups over their territory) and the continuing clatter between these two opposing factors and its outcome.

Analytically, the growth of conflicts region of South Asia can therefore, directly traced to the condition of *the presence of multi-ethnic national states with concentrated ethno-national majorities or alternatively the presence of single ethnic group* (in minority and scattered) *in the different countries of south Asia*(Miller, Benjamin 2010 pp 73-97)., at one end, and the continuing concerns of identity and interest protection among these ethnic groups at the other is one of the major causes leading to various conflicts in the region. Similarly, the “geographic and demographic” factor which noted to be other crucial factor being *one of the key features of modern states* (Lange, Mathew 2010 pp. 51-68) (Geographic and demographic factors are crucial factors of modern state because the fixed territoriality including the geological and environmental characteristics of the territories that states control undoubtedly affect whether states are able to contain violence (ibid)).

## **2. Background of existing inter-state and intrastate conflict in the region**

The interstate conflict South Asia is highly visible (Paul, T. V. 2010), due to mainly the factors like inherited colonial state structure and deep ethno-nationalist divisions which is now a common legacy of colonialism in the entire region of South Asia (Mathew Lange, pp. 51-68). This has already been discussed above. However, such conflicts have been either transformed or extended or been the cause of genesis of numbers of protracted conflicts in the region. There also numbers of cases of conflicts which spill over from one state or area to the other. There are several examples of conflict continue to exist in South Asia which show that there are numbers of conflicts existing prior very locally in remote-parts of the region have been gradually turned into severe regional conflicts and contributing to the growth of war proneness in the region (Benjamin Miller, pp 73-97). This generally happens when the states fail to contain those knowingly allow to the conflicts to spill over to the other country. For example: Bangladesh and Nepal often due to their instabilities, allow their conflicts to spill over to India (Paul, T. V. 2010); similarly, Afghanistan's weakness to contain its problem of insecurity (in the form of refugees and trans-border crime such as drug trafficking) allow it to spill over into Pakistan. Therefore, many of the regional conflicts in the region are found to be the extension of intrastate conflicts only. However, it is due to the absence of regional or inter-state mechanism to deal with these conflicts, such a scenario has led to serious regional disorder and has produced an environment of chronic insecurity further lingering into mutual antagonisms (ibid).

### **2.1 Intrastate/internal conflicts in South Asia**

An analysis of the interstate conflicts in the South Asian region shows alarming picture of the growth of insecurity in the

region. Examining the scenario of intrastate or internal conflicts in South Asia, the region is found to be suffering from various types of conflicts of serious insecurity nature. For instance, most of the countries in the region are found to be affected of different types of ethnic conflicts, terrorist attacks, separatist rebellions, interclass conflict, lawlessness, also including civil violence and civil wars. Most of these conflicts, the states in the region have often failed to contain and manage (Mathew Lange).

### **2.1.1 Interstate Conflicts**

Now briefly accounting the conflict profiles of individual South Asian countries and starting from the case of Afghanistan, the country is an extreme case of long-standing internal violence. This is particularly due to the rise of Taliban at one extreme point and the external penetration at the other. The growth of conflict in Afghanistan shows the case of “the absence or the non-establishment of a strong state” (Paul, T. V. 2010). 28 Similarly, the State’s absence of effective control over different part of the country, the country of Pakistan has remained a strong case of considerable security problems (ibid).<sup>32</sup> these problems must note to be: several internal conflicts on religious and ethnic nature<sup>1</sup>, secessionist conflict in different parts<sup>2</sup>, and now the conflicts between various Islamist groups and the military-led or civilian regimes (Paul, T. V. 2010).

Similarly, the country of Sri Lanka found to be suffered from the most violent internal conflicts in the region<sup>3</sup>. This conflict has lasted for nearly three decades is found to be of serious ethno-political origin. Nepal has also seen a long standing political violence esp. in the form of Maoist insurgency

---

<sup>1</sup>Pakistan has been facing several internal conflicts on religious and ethnic conflicts, the most prominent among them are Sunni-Shia divide

<sup>2</sup> In Baluchistan, Pashtun areas of the Northwest Frontier states, and the Sindh

<sup>3</sup>The violent phase of the conflicts began in the early 1980s, the emergence of LTTE, and the following internal wars

(1996-2006) Bangladesh is also ridden with end numbers of internal conflicts. The country of Bangladesh has remained victim to state-generated political violence where the army and political parties in the country often found to be waging frequent battles for control of the state. Because of the high level of poverty in Bangladesh<sup>4</sup>, the people in large numbers often immigrate into India for livelihood (ibid).

India as a state though very strong state is considered to be a soft state so far its response to various issues of security is concerned. Because of this, there have been numbers of internal conflicts continuing in the country and getting inter-state ramifications. Due this, India continues to face numbers of major internal security challenges of various natures. This mostly include, the insurgency movements in the northeast<sup>5</sup> as well as in J & K, the Left-wing/Maoist movement in a larger portion of Indian tribal dominated territories, and the growing challenges of terrorism of various types, for which often the government of India has depended on the India's security forces (over a long period of time) for their containment<sup>39</sup>. While, Indian security forces are largely unable to assert their control over these conflicts, however, this has led to the growth of these conflicts and further leading to its spill over cycles<sup>6</sup>. The internal conflicts in many of the South Asian countries also pose considerable problems at the human security level<sup>7</sup>.

---

<sup>4</sup>Bangladesh as partly a low lying country Bangladesh is regularly affected by flood and cyclones, and being an immensely poor country, the people in large numbers often immigrate into India for livelihood.

<sup>5</sup>This occurs in the northeast of the country, the insurgents movement in Nagaland, Mizoram, Manipur, Tripura, and Assam

<sup>6</sup>The red corridor in India's tribal belt from North to South by the ultra-Maoists where Indian security forces are largely unable to assert their control because the later use guerrilla tactics and have wide support among the tribal masses (Paul, T. V. 2010).

<sup>7</sup>A glaring manifestation of the human security problem is exhibited by the high numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons that the region copes with (majority of the people are living in abject poverty, illiteracy, poor health conditions, akin to sub-Saharan Africa (Paul, T. V. 2010)

### **2.1.2 Inter-state conflicts in South Asia**

Inter-state conflict(s) in the region of South Asia can be found to be present in the form of divergent issues. These conflicts may be in the form of territorial conflicts (between India-Pakistan and Afghanistan- Pakistan); cross- border terrorism (between India- Pakistan); conflict over natural resources (between India- Pakistan and India- Bangladesh); conflict(s)-related to immigrants and refugees (between India-Bangladesh, Afghanistan- Pakistan and Nepal- Bhutan) (Ahemed Stuti Bhatnagar pg- 8). Over the years, both India and Pakistan have engaged in internal interventions, with India helping the division of Pakistan in 1971 and Pakistan abetting insurgencies in Punjab and Kashmir. The Pakistani strategy involves active intervention in the affairs of India and Afghanistan in asymmetric means. Many of the terrorist incidents occur in India with the connivance of Pakistan (esp. the army and intelligence officials) esp. since the Kashmir insurgency began (1989). Most seriously, Pakistan's active supports to Kashmir insurgents have been main contention of the Indo-Pak conflicts. Similarly, India and Bangladesh have a conflict over unsettled borders, although its intensity is not too strong. These interstate conflicts generate internal security challenges and in turn human security problems for a large number of people, especially ethnic minorities living on both side of the border (Ahemed Stuti Bhatnagar pg- 8). The Pakistan-Afghanistan conflict is yet another interstate conflict with strong internal dimensions in the South Asian region mired with serious amount of insecurity in the Af-Pak border regions and spilling over into the extended territories (Paul, T. V. 2010).

### **3. Conflicts of Terrorism Nature, and the growth of Terrorism in the South Asian Region**

In South Asia, the most serious interstate and intraregional conflicts affecting the entire region are found to be gradually gathering the nature of terrorism (ibid). The terrorist threat in South Asia is complex and multifaceted and has developed a transnational character that does not respect political boundaries. Terrorist groups have exploited porous frontiers and the lack of official cooperation between states in the region to their considerable advantage<sup>8</sup>. Terrorist incidents in the region have become more frequent, while the states and governments in the region appear to be incapable to fight and defeat them. The active presence of terrorism infrastructure and the states' incapacity to crush them has resulted into the growth of terrorism and getting a full regional length and impact<sup>9</sup>.

#### **3.1 Terrorism in South Asia: the most serious impediment to Regional security and formal Peace:**

The conflict dynamics in the region now found to be growingly tending towards and gathering into the form of terrorism. And multiplicity of terrorism has often been the principal destabilised factor in the goal of peace, stability and development in the region. In most of the cases, terrorism found to be the last instrument of success for the failed groups involved in such conflicts. In the politically diverse South Asia, many forms of terrorism in the region do have a political aim and connotation. Because, many of the sectional groups picking up terrorism as the best sophisticated and suitable

---

<sup>8</sup>[http://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/ecide2013misc1\\_bp5.pdf](http://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/ecide2013misc1_bp5.pdf)

<sup>9</sup>For instance: Pakistan's past support for the Taliban and continued support for the Kashmir insurgency; and the active presence of terrorists cells in Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh all denote a melange of groups engaging in violent terrorist activity in the region for more than two decades.

instruments, and this gives a *spilling-over-and-unending-impact* to conflicts continuing in the region. Therefore, terrorism is highlighted as one important kind of crossover between the intrastate and interstate security challenges. According to estimates, South-Central Asia register one the highest rates of terrorist attacks in 2007 and several in the previous years (Paul, T. V. 2010, pp 9-24). 26. For example, India the largest country in the region (2007) has recorded the largest numbers of terrorist related deaths even higher than Afghanistan and Iraq (ibid) 38. Similarly, Pakistan and Afghanistan have also been the major victims of terrorism in the region. Some of the terrorist activity is generated by foreign-trained individuals who in concert with local sympathizers, engage in violent activities, India's security forces have serious difficulties in coping with the scourge (Paul, T V. 2010, pp 9-24).

#### **4. Defining the South Asian Region: Regional Integration Perspective**

##### **4.1 Defining Region**

*A region is a geographical cluster of states that are proximate to each other and thus are interconnected; and this interconnectedness often manifests itself in strong security sense* (Paul, T V. 2010, pp 9-24). David Lake defines “a regional system as a set of states affected by at least one trans-border but local externality poses an actual or potential threat to the physical safety of individuals or governments in other states; it produces a regional security system or complex” (ibid). William R. Thompson defines a region as “a set of countries that are or perceive themselves to be politically interdependent” or “as pattern of relations or interactions within a geographic area that exhibits a particular degree of regularity or intensity to the extent that a change at one point in the system affect another point” (ibid).



## **4.2 Regional integration**

Regional integration is a process in which states enter into a regional agreement in order to enhance regional cooperation through regional institutions and rules. The objectives of the agreement could range from economic-to-political-to-environmental. The focus is generally to achieve broader socio-political and security objectives<sup>10/11</sup>. Regional integration can be termed to the association of states generally based upon geographic proximity with the desire of safeguarding common interests. Therefore, this is generally defined to be as *a worldwide phenomenon of territorial systems that increases the interactions between their components and creates new forms of organisation* (De Lombaerde, P. and Van Langenhove, L, 2007, pp. 377-383). This helps to increase the level of interactions on various issues of common interests including the socio-political and security issues (Van Ginkel, H. and Van Langenhove, L, 2003, pp. 1-9). Regional integration is generally structured or organized either via supranational institutional structures or through intergovernmental decision-making, or a combination of both. Including many of the desires to be achieved<sup>12</sup>, regional integration is aimed at reducing the possibility of various conflicts esp. regional armed conflict through propagating various measures<sup>13/14</sup>. However, the degree of integration in a particular region depends upon the *willingness and commitment of independent sovereign states to share their sovereignty* and security interests for the larger cause of

---

<sup>10</sup>For example, through Confidence and Security-Building Measures and adopting cohesive regional stances on policy issues (such as the environment, climate change and migration).

<sup>11</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Regional\\_integration](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Regional_integration)

<sup>12</sup> Which includes: removing barriers to free trade in the region, increasing the free movement of people, labour, goods, and capital across national borders,

<sup>13</sup>For example, through Confidence and Security-Building Measures and adopting cohesive regional stances on policy issues, such as the environment, climate change and migration, ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Regional\\_integration](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Regional_integration)).

<sup>14</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Regional\\_integration](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Regional_integration)

regional integration (Claar, Simone and Noelke Andreas 2010, pp. 114-117).

## **5. Impediments to Regional integration**

There are many historical factors appear to have hindered integration in the region during colonial times. First, the British made no effort to construct a common and uniform governance system, second, the rule created over divided political structure by dividing the population by promoting distinct but oppositional identities. This is on the basis of which the region was later divided into fractured sovereign political units (Lange, Mathew 2010, pp. 51-68). Such a policy has fuelled the politics in the region get based on politics of ethnic and identity conflicts which in ultimate continues to be the cause of the continuation of intrastate as similar as interstate mistrusts, conflicts, and periodic wars in and among different South Asian countries (Nayar, Baldev Raj pp98-121). Most seriously, the colonial impact on state organisational capacity has been seriously still impacting the region.

### **5.1 The Prevailing Post-Colonial Apathy**

The post-colonial histories of state and nation building appear to have had powerful long-term effects on domestic security (op cit.) of the region, because, the states in the region were borne weak out of their colonial inheritance having imbalanced institutional developments with strong bureaucratic structures and feeble political infrastructure. The post-independence history of South Asian politics has been mired with ethnic competitions leading to political fall-off ultimately leading to the rise of separatist movements, institutional deterioration, and consequent state weakness (Nayar, Baldev Raj pp98-121). The political weakness has also been resulted into repeated intervention of the bureaucracy and security forces, give a way to strengthen and legitimise their power and authority. This

has often led to a scenario of overthrow elected regimes, several episodes of military takeover, and suppression of the different ethnic groups and rights (ibid).

## **5.2 Weak State Capacity in the Region**

A combination of geopolitics, colonial inheritance, ethnic heterogeneity and slow economic growth had made for weak state capacity, to a greater or lesser extent, among the states of South Asia (ibid). It has been found that South Asian states are deficient in state capacity to varying degrees, and suffering from the severe problems of crises and breakdowns. This is in respect of all institutional structure, political order, national integration, and economic growth and welfare (ibid) seriously impacting the development and integration of the region. Historically, it is found that Colonialism in South Asia generally constructed states with low organisational capacities (Lange, Mathew 2010, pp. 51-68). However, despite the end of colonialism, this continues to persist and the region so far has not been able to overcome this, perhaps partly due to the region's obsession with the colonial governance structure and partly due to the absence of intrinsic political mechanics in hand. As a consequence, the South Asian states have frequently become incompetent in the containment of different sorts of conflict erupted out of ethno-nationalist competitions. Because of the weak organisational capacities combined with fractured State integration all efforts to contain ethno-separatist and insurgency movements, the states have frequently resorted to the employment of military forces inviting the severe risk of public resentment and violent reactions (ibid). So far the issues of security is concerned, South Asian states generally exhibit weakness in terms of their political/state ability to deal with security of different dimensions including the economic and human aspects of security also (Paul, T. V. 2010) 23 frequently leading to bureaucratic and military manoeuvre.

### **5.3 Influence and intervention of external actors**

The major powers play an important role in South Asia, despite India's dominant power position in the region, the region's pivotal geostrategic location is part of the reason for this phenomenon, but the presence of weak states in conflict contributes to this activism by outside powers, as in the cases of the Afghanistan and Pakistan (Paul, T. V. 2010 pp 9-24). It is not other the fact that major external powers do have intervention in the region in different ways (through competition, cooperation, engagement, disengagement, hegemony, or a mixture of these ideal types). As Benjamin Miller contends, major powers can influence a region's conflict peace and vice versa. Major Powers cannot resolve the problem of nation-to-state incongruence, but they can, through their support or the absence of support, generate conditions for conflict to persist or dissipate over time (Paul, T. V. 2010 pp 9-24) 45.

### **5.4 Geopolitical Rivalry**

The region's geopolitics does have an enormous impact on the institutional profile of some the South Asian states (Nayar, Baldev Raj pp98-121). The fundamental geopolitical fault-line in the subcontinent, where the state policy of individual countries greatly varies, contrary to India's stand, the other states in the region have always dragged into the external intervention for the tactical containment of India. All states in the region remain sensitive to geopolitical consideration, and geopolitics takes over the other issues when the national security of individual states in the region comes to question. The prevailing geopolitical rivalry and the lack of economic integrations in the region, lack of the working on the confidence building measures, and the failure to curb the non-state elements (like terrorists) have been the major causes of the deterioration of regional integration (ibid).

### **5.5 The underlying strategic conflicts**

South Asia's states thus willingly or inadvertently challenge the norm of non-intervention (esp. in internal affairs) and respect for territorial borders, two of the cardinal principles of state sovereignty in the modern era. Part of the problem is that states are sometimes unable to control borders, but there is also a deliberate strategy on the part of elites to intervene in the affairs of others, generating considerable ill will toward each other as well as lingering mutual suspicion (Paul, T. V. 2010 pp 9-24, ref 17) The underlying strategic conflicts have been the cause of generating institutional decay and been the impediment to the desire economic integration and cooperation. This for the reason, South Asia remains so far as the *less integrated region in the world*, <sup>1</sup> (Nayar, Baldev Raj pp98-121) 13.

### **5.6 Poor Political Institutions**

The poor profile of South Asian Countries in respect of political institutions is reflected in their poor performance in different dimensions and one of important measure to assess the states' performance can be traced to *the failure to curb terrorism type incidents*. The revelation is quite alarming that this region is the most affected region in the world, and has failed to provide adequate physical security to protect their citizen from terrorist related incidents. The insurgents and terrorists have taken the advantage of weak state capacity and the failed law and order situation (ibid).

### **5.7 The Prevailing Antagonistic political set up, sectional interests**

Although the South Asian countries share common heritage, history, linguistic, cultural and social practices, but considered to be the *least integrated region* globally. South Asia politically is seen and calculated by the international community to be the region stuck of *complex security paradox* suffering from

multiple intra-region and inter-state disputes and challenges<sup>15</sup>. Most of the identified factors of internal conflicts in the region like: ethnically-motivated communal violence, secessionist movements, armed insurgencies and armed struggles including the challenges posed by religious radicalism and terrorism are found to be patterned on antagonistic political aims and interests. Correctly, the failure of sectional political objectives (of inter-country or intra-country dynamics) is found to be *the cause of origin* of all most all the discussed conflicts. The politics of identity and ethnicity has made many of the sectional interest groups including some of the elites who have been the part of the state establishment to use terrorism as the means to gain their sectional political interests (Paul, T. V. 2010 pp 9-24) (ref 17). The Prevailing Antagonistic political set up, sectional interests have been the major impediments to Regional integration of South Asia.

### **5.8 Prevailing Trust Deficit**

Conflicts particularly intra-state conflicts aggravates because of involvement of the transnational actors which fail to build local stakeholders in their development<sup>16</sup>, this often drags the outer involvement into picture, which become the cause in further growth of trust deficit among countries. The growth and development in asymmetric in the region<sup>17</sup> also has been the major cause of the prevailing high level of trust deficit and security imbalances becoming as serious impediment to integration<sup>18/19</sup>. Since long, building confidence and balancing the huge trust deficit in South Asia has remained the desire for

---

<sup>15</sup>On the basis of geographic boundaries or narrow objectives of religion, caste, language or ethnicity) and low-economic development.

<sup>16</sup> According to the argument put forwarded by Darini Rajasingham Senanayake

<sup>17</sup> The asymmetric growth of both the military and economic is now said to be the most critical factor of impediment in the regional integration.

<sup>18</sup> [http://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/ecidc2013misc1\\_bp5.pdf](http://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/ecidc2013misc1_bp5.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> When the less-powerful state prefer to integration only to the extent that it benefits their national interest

minimizing asymmetric growth. Though this has remained as the most critical element of the integration process in South Asia, however, ensuring comprehensive environment for such a desire has so far not been possible, because, this necessitated serious political commitment and concerted efforts.

## **6. Intrinsic regional political mechanics for Regional Integration**

### **6.1 Why a Political Mechanic?**

As per the above analysis in this paper, it is found that most of conflicts are of either origin out of political causes or aimed at political interests. Therefore, the solution of these conflicts needs primarily political solutions. Most of the conflicts are found to be remaining beyond their successful containment/solution of the effort of the part of the States, because of their either inter-state presence or spill-overs. This therefore, requires inter-state and most suitably multi-state coordination among the South Asian countries. In many of the instance the States are either partially capable or beyond their jurisdiction or sometimes even unwilling to confront certain conflicts. When something is beyond State's capacity, naturally it requires the cooperation of the other party involved having similar kind of interests. Most of the conflicts in region either can directly traced to or the found to be the cause-of-genesis of the inter-state conflicts between particular countries. However, this can be overcome when there is some regional vision or aspirations remain. This has already been discussed in elaboration that: many of the conflicts have been transforming into serious regional challenges or transforming into the form of terrorism, are due to the remaining weak state capacity. apart from this the prevailing antagonistic political set up, sectional interests, poor political institutions, geopolitical rivalry, influence and intervention of external actors, and the post-colonial apathy prevailing in the region have remained as the

principal impediments to regional integration and peace in south Asia, which need first hand political solutions.

While, the political willingness of governments in the region to tackle the terrorism is not so far consistent, rather it is found that some of the governments have taken terrorist organizations into advantage so as to promote their own geopolitical or domestic agendas contrary to interest of the other country in the region. . However, it has to be now made very clear to the sectional political interest groups that there is nothing to gain rather and much to lose by using terrorism as means. Time has come that the member states of the region come forward so as to develop and illuminate approaches through which states in the region may transcend traditional geopolitical rivalries and ethnic divisions, and shift their collective focus toward their shared interest in defeating the common threat from terrorism by developing meaningful cooperative approaches to defeating the terrorist threat in the region?<sup>20</sup>.

## **6.2 Regional Political Mechanism**

According to some analysts, South Asian regional stability has been troubled by the absence of an institutionalized security mechanism and prevailing state of weak State Capacity. For example, the growth of terrorism found to be happening due to weak state capacity (police and intelligence capabilities (Paul, T. V. 2010 pp 9-24, ref 17), and institutionalised mechanism to redress this problem regionally). It has been time-and-again realise that the need of hour is to move to *a comprehensive security framework for achieving peace*. And this has to be based on *a regional-cooperation-centric approach* rather than the inter-state approach, and this has to done by taking the common challenges like terrorism in focus (Ahemad Zahid Shahab and Stuti Bhatnagar -pg- 10). Though the regional leaders have often envisioned and pledged to make the region *to*

---

<sup>20</sup> [http://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/ecide2013misc1\\_bp5.pdf](http://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/ecide2013misc1_bp5.pdf)



*be a peaceful and stable region where each nation is at peace with itself and its neighbours through peaceful means and dialogue*<sup>21</sup>, but in reality it seems to be quite opposite. In most of the instances, the individual countries have failed to solve their inter-state conflicts through peaceful means (ibid).

### **6.3 SAARC Perspective**

Examining the above argument by the taking the region of South Asia and SAARC as the case here, what we find that the region of South Asia: like the other economic/political regional arrangements came with the intention of South Asian regional integration can be traced to the establishment of SAARC (1985) days. Despite of high-prevailing political contradictions the leaders in the region came to a table for the SAARC came into being with the principal aim of regional integration<sup>22</sup>. One of the important premises of regionalism among South Asian Association for South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation is constituted in the fact that the various challenges faced by the regions of South Asia cannot be determined through individual nation's actions alone (Sharma, Sheel Kant 2011, pg-1). Because, it was realised that: in an increasingly interdependent world, the objectives of peace<sup>23</sup> can be best achieved by fostering meaningful cooperation among the member states in the south Asian region (ibid).

## **7. Terrorism-Centricity of Regional Political Mechanics**

Governments in this region lack effective initiatives in fulfilling their obligation to respect, protect and promote the regional

---

<sup>21</sup> Taking into account the Declaration of the SARRC summit, 2004 held at Islamabad, all the member states envisioned South Asia (Ahemad Zahid Shahab and Stuti Bhatnagar -pg- 10)

<sup>22</sup> The SAARC came into being with the principal aim of regional integration or very rightly the integration of socio-political-economic interest apart from the very important interests of culture and security.

<sup>23</sup> Apart from the other important goals like: freedom, Social justice and economic prosperity

security. The SAARC countries have already signed several conventions and agreed on several principles to fight serious security issues including terrorism. In the name of national security the governments in South Asia had been unwilling to focus their attention on and have refused to address them. Internal conflicts and state anti-terror measures have resulted in violations of human rights by the state and abuses by non-state actors. The governments in this region lack effective initiatives in fulfilling their obligation and have often found to be in a denial mode to address the regional political situation (Deuja, Surya).

However, the only impressive inventiveness from the perspective of integrating the regional interest in the security and particularly terrorism perspective can be seen to be the initiatives taken at the SAARC platform. Despite serious criticism and the apprehension of weakness of the infant regional organisation (SAARC), the controversial issue of terrorism of serious security and political nature was raised. This ultimately led to the setup of *study group* to examine in depth that how the *problem of terrorism as it affects the security and stability of SAARC countries and come up with recommendations*<sup>24</sup>. This in ultimate resulted in the adoption of the *Regional Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism* (1987)<sup>25</sup>. This might be creditable that SAARC was able to enact a convention on a very controversial subject within the first two years of its existence (Jayawardane, Amal, 2009). The argument in this regard might be the indication of the commitment towards terrorism of the part of regional leaders as some may opine. However, this can alternatively argued to

---

<sup>24</sup>At the first SAARC Summit itself, the late Sri Lankan President J.R. Jayewardene took a bold step in raising the issue of terrorism, which was clearly a political and security related issue. At this point some criticized Sri Lanka's initiative saying that the persistence on such political and controversial issues would weaken the association which was yet in its formative period.

<sup>25</sup>This was adopted at the Third Summit held in Kathmandu in November 1987

be the sign of the serious nature of terrorism, which could not stop the regional leaders to bring it into consensus at the regional forum in spite of having much wide difference among them on the issue itself.

### **7. 1 Overcoming the Impediment**

It is *due to the lack of political will and determination* on the part of political leaders in the region, though it is clear that SAARC was able to make a very good beginning at the initial stage but it failed to evolve itself as an effective regional mechanism to respond to the challenges of terrorism. Similarly, there have been several conventions related to the matters of security and terrorism in the region, which were adopted but could not be effectively implemented (ibid).

At the platform of regional deliberation, the measures for effective as a regional mechanism to counter terrorism were also discussed, and several proposals were brought forward. This seriously included the reform of SAARC within to bring more effectiveness, and most importantly the creation of a new specific mechanism for counter-terrorism in the region. As suggested, it was quite expected that the regional leaders would learn from different regional models and experiences, and develop their own formal security mechanism to deal with security issues in South Asia as per their own intrinsic necessity<sup>26</sup>, which would enhance the operational capability to deal effectively with terrorism.<sup>1</sup> Further, in its explanation, this would technically focus the counter-counter terrorism to stimulate practical cooperation at the functional level.”<sup>3</sup> This

---

<sup>26</sup> It is note that the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) provides a model for a comprehensive and common security for Europe. Other regions have also developed mechanisms such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). The regional leaders also can learn from the experience of other regions which have successfully established such counter-terrorism training centres such as the Jakarta Centre for Law Enforcement Cooperation (JCLEC) in South-East Asia and Intergovernmental Authority on Development Capacity Building Program against Terrorism (ICPAT) in Horn of Africa.

was felt to be having several advantages and its viability could have been fully explored. There can also be exchange of technical expertise and information; training for capacity building; sharing of best practices and experience taken from the region and countries outside (Jayawardane, Amal, 2009).

The empowering SAARC Secretariat with adequate resources and expertise, to launch a coherent and well-coordinated anti-terrorist strategy of the region, developing a common data base<sup>27</sup> for sharing intelligence and information (acceptable to governments in the region), forging links with academic institutions and Think Tanks in the region dealing with security issues, and most importantly, the establishment of *SAARC Terrorist Offences Monitoring Desk* (Jayawardane, Amal, 2009) (which could play a vital role in disseminating information on terrorist groups and their activities in the region) have not so far been brought into practicality. It appears that SAARC countries are so far remaining hesitant to exchange information due to mutual distrust and suspicions prevailing among them (ibid).

While the military dimension of addressing terrorism dominates in the policy matter, the need for treating the root causes of the problem and keeping the brutality nature of modern terrorism, it requires comprehensive policy attention and redressal mechanism. Therefore, there is an intense need of the engagement with counter-terrorism measures taking the agenda of human rights, good governance, and political reforms in South Asia into serious consideration (ibid). This first requires a serious level of formal political coordination in the region first. This for which there is need of intrinsic political mechanics taking all the above proposals into consideration.

---

<sup>27</sup> A decision was taken at the Fourteenth Session of SAARC Council of Ministers, held in Dhaka in July 1994, to establish a data bank and a dissemination centre in Sri Lanka with focal points in other member countries. Certain mechanisms established for this purpose are also not very effective. Two units (STOMD & SDOMD) were established in Colombo for the

Either totally *copying model of other region or outsourcing like arrangement of the solutions for regional peace* proved to fail because it does not fit to the regional requirement per se. Rather it will go contrary to the official effort for minimizing the trust deficit and increasing the mutual engagement for the harvesting of long-standing peace in the region.

When the global community has started realizing of the fact that the solution to the South Asian regional crisis remains inherent in the region itself, India being the eldest and therefore the most responsible player is expected to play the leading role be the *shown-the-way-first* charismatic towards finding out the inherent ways for the end of the internal conflicts in the way of striving for regional peace. The leadership in the region can also be brought to one point if the serious problems like terrorism the central agenda in focus which has been recognized as the factor of regional imbalance. The most challenging issue of terrorism has the potential of uniting South Asian countries, side-lining political differences to pursue regional integration. With increased political will and commitment towards integration, greater efforts will have to be made towards this desire. In this regard, India will have to take on disproportionately greater responsibility in the integration and peace building efforts in South Asia. Similarly, the political leadership in the region have to come forward to strengthen the regional political arrangement and institutions like SAARC and specific counter-terrorism regional infrastructure, which can play the vital role of deeper integration is in this crucial moment. It is also essential that the leadership of the region must come forward for the enhancement of the state capacity and softening geopolitical antagonism for better regional economic integration. This can only to very larger extent help in lowering the existing conflicts, tensions and rivalry and can help in very successfully

---

purpose of gathering collating, analyzing, and disseminating information about terrorist activities, their tactics, strategies, and methods.

addressing the basic and root of cause of terrorism in the region.

## REFERENCES

- Ahemed, Zahid Shahab and Stuti Bhatnagar. "Interstate Conflicts and Regionalism in South Asia: Prospects and Challenges." pg- 10, URL: <http://sam.gov.tr/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/Ahmed-Bhatnagar.pdf> Accessed on 23/01/2014.
- Claar, Simone and Andreas Nölke. 2013. "Deep Integration in north-south relations: compatibility issues between the EU and South Africa." *Review of African Political Economy* 40:136, 274-289.
- Claar, Simone and Noelke, Andreas. 2010. "Deep Integration." In: D+C, 2010/03, 114-117, In: Arshad Balwa (2013), "Strengthening regional economic growth among the ASEAN states in order to withstand the volatility of the global economy", In: Dhirubhai Ambani International School Model United Nations, 27th of January-1st of February 2013, Accessed on 03/02/2014, URL: [http://www.daimun.org/pdf/APQESEA3\\_arshadbalwa.pdf](http://www.daimun.org/pdf/APQESEA3_arshadbalwa.pdf)
- De Lombaerde, P. and Van Langenhove, L. 2007. "Regional Integration, Poverty and Social Policy." *Global Social Policy* 7 (3): 377-383.
- Declaration of the SARRC summit, 2004 held at Islamabad, SAARC. Official website <http://www.saarc-sec.org/>, Accessed on 03/02/2014.
- Deuja, Surya. "Establishing a Robust Regional Human Rights Mechanism in South Asia." URL: <http://forum-asia.org/documents/South%20Asia%20HRM%20-%20Surya's%20Article%20in%20AHRD.pdf>. Accessed on 23/01/2014

- Jayawardane, Amal. 2009. "SAARC as a Regional Mechanism to Counter Terrorism", Conference Remarks *"Building Stronger Partnership to Prevent Terrorism,"* Conference Organized by the Center on Global Counterterrorism Cooperation, Washington, DC, URL:[http://www.globalct.org/wpcontent/uploads/2009/10/8\\_October\\_2009\\_Jayawardane.pdf](http://www.globalct.org/wpcontent/uploads/2009/10/8_October_2009_Jayawardane.pdf). Accessed on 23/01/2014.
- Kher, Priyanka. 2012. "Political Economy Of Regional Integration in South Asia." *Background Paper*, UNCTAD, October 2012, URL: [http://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/ecidc2013misc1\\_bp5.pdf](http://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/ecidc2013misc1_bp5.pdf), Accessed: 02/02/2014.
- Lange, Mathew. 2010. "State Formation, Consolidation, and the Security Challenge, Exploring the causes of the State Incapacity in South Asia." In *South Asia's Weak States: Understanding the Regional Insecurity Predicament*, edited by T. V. Paul, 51-68. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Miller, Benjamin. 2010. "State, Nations, and the Regional Security Order of South Asia." In *South Asia's Weak States: Understanding the Regional Insecurity Predicament*, edited by T. V. Paul, 73-97. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Nayar, Baldev. 2010. "Raj Economic Globalisation and State Capacity in South Asia." In *South Asia's Weak States: Understanding the Regional Insecurity Predicament*, edited by T. V. Paul, 98-121. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Paul, T. V. 2010. "State Capacity and South Asia's Perennial Insecurity Problems." Introductory chapter. In *South Asia's Weak States: Understanding the Regional Insecurity Predicament*, edited by T. V. Paul, 9-24. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

- Paul, T. V. Eds. 2010. *South Asia's Weak States: Understanding the Regional Insecurity Predicament*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, pp 9-24.
- Paul, T. V. and Theodore McLauchlin. 2010. "Transforming South Asia: *Is a pluralistic Security Community Feasible.*" In *South Asia's Weak States: Understanding the Regional Insecurity Predicament*, edited by T. V. Paul, 9-24. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- "Regional Integration." In Wikipedia, URL: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Regional\\_integration](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Regional_integration), Accessed on 03/02/2014
- Sharma, Sheel Kant. 2011. "South Asian Regionalism: Prospects and Challenges." *Indian Foreign Affairs Journal* 6(3): 305-314, pg-1.
- Third Summit held in Kathmandu in November 1987, SAARC Official website, <http://www.saarc-sec.org/>, Accessed on 20/01/2014 URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03056244.2013.794726>, Accessed on 03/02/2014.
- Van Ginkel, H. and Van Langenhove, L. 2003. "Introduction and Context." In *Integrating Africa: Perspectives on Regional Integration and Development*, edited by Hans van Ginkel, Julius Court and Luk Van Langenhove 1-9. UNU Press.