

Role of CBM's in South Asia

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The struggle between India and Pakistan over Kashmir is cited by security observers as the main security concern of South Asia. However, Kashmir is only a symptom and not the disease, which plagues this region. Sources of conflict between these two nation states are rooted in their history, geo-politics, economics and ecology. The bilateral relationship between India and Pakistan has been marked by continuous tension and their relationship lacks stability. Probably this is why long-term peace eludes this region. Both the countries came close to war many times and in fact fought three full-fledged wars after their independence besides the recent encounter in Kargil. After the Kargil intrusion, the threat of war has become more prominent in the region. [1] CIA director George J. Tenet, in a testimony before the Senate's Select Committee on Intelligence asserted that the risk of War between India and Pakistan remains "unacceptably high". He also talked about the prospect of another round of nuclear tests.[2]

Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee's bus ride to Lahore in February 1999 (Known as Lahore summit), gave hope to many that finally ice has been broken, and the two hostile neighbours might come closer, overcoming their past rivalries. But unfortunately, it was followed by infiltrations in Kargil. It gave a major setback to the peace initiative. But despite failure, the reactions to the process in India and Pakistan underlined the fact that a genuine political will exists in these countries for good neighbourly relations. There is a growing realization among the population of these countries that productive peace will be beneficial for both, whereas internecine war can only deplete the meager resources of the region and bring misery. The relevance of Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) is immensely significant in this context.

Emergence of CBMs as a concept

CBMs as a concept emerged in the mid 1970s in the context of East West conflict. Later on, relevance of CBMs was studied in other regions of tension and it became an important aspect of all strategic, disarmament, and conflict resolution studies. CBMs have been viewed in different ways by scholars of international relations.

According to Michael Krepon "confidence –building measures (CBMs) have played an essential role in improving East-West relations. Nevertheless, these unilateral, tacit or negotiated steps to improve cooperation or decrease tension were the forgotten stepchild(ren) of the Cold War, always taking a back-seat to formal arms control negotiations. Now with the end of United States–Soviet (Union) rivalry, CBMs are emerging from the shadows of strategic arms reduction to become the pre-eminent means of preventing accidental wars and unintended escalation in strife-ridden regions." [3] A UN study says " confidence building is by nature, a process in which each previous measure forms a basis for further measures that progressively and cumulatively consolidate and

strengthen the building of confidence. [4] CBMs have positive overtones. They try to solve a crisis by opening channels of communication and encouraging cooperation among the adversaries. They play their role in crisis management by establishing set procedures and monitoring. CBMs create ambience for arms control and are generally a precursor to it.

Four stage evolution of CBMs in European context

Normally origin of CBMs is traced to the signing of Helsinki Final Act (1975), which contained provisions for a set of voluntary CBMs. This modest beginning paved the way for interaction between East and West. The member-states signatory to this act agreed to notify military manoeuvres involving more than 25,000 troops 21 days or more in advance. These first generations of CBMs were criticized as merely 'transparency measures'. These CBMs were given more teeth by the Stockholm Accord (1986). This accord included whole of Europe in an arms control agreement. For the first time, on-site inspections without a right to refusal were incorporated. Signing of Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty in November 1990 strengthened these CBMs further. It contained measures for force reduction, exchange of information, stabilization and verification. Final shape to CBMs was given by the Vienna Agreement (1994). It required demonstration of new types of military equipment. The main aim, at every stage, was to reduce further the risk of military confrontation in Europe.

CBMs have worked successfully in Europe at the height of the Cold War. The initial two stages in the development of European CBMs took place before the decline of USSR. CBMs in Europe were successfully in reducing the threat of military confrontation between the two rival blocs and served their purpose. But their utility in South Asian context has been questioned by many.

CBMs in South Asia

The use of CBMs as a concept in South Asian context started since mid-80s. This was the time when tense relations between India and Pakistan reached crisis level and a tacit undeclared nuclear deterrence was well in operation. After that it has been part of the lexicon of scholars striving for diffusing tension and conflict resolution in the subcontinent. Armed forces of India and Pakistan have taken some steps mostly to avoid conflict. But there has not been much progress in non-military CBMs.

The concept of CBM is not totally new to South Asia. Early CBMs between India and Pakistan were of informal nature. Many proposals to reduce tension and boost confidence in each other were proposed from both sides since independence. They were in the form of No-War Pacts, restoration of territories after wars, exchange of war prisoners (POWs)etc. India did not impose forced peace on Pakistan despite decisive victory in 1971 war. Even during wars both countries have exercised restraint and did not attack civilian targets. They have shown commendable self-restraints.

Informal CBMs were followed by formalised CBMs. These CBMs between India and Pakistan became effective as a result of formal agreements. After the Indo-Pak war in December 1971 a 'Hot-line' contact was established between the Directors General of Military Operations (DGMO's) of India and Pakistan. In April 1991 both the countries agreed for the prior notification

of military exercises. No military manoeuvres, exercises and troop movements were to be held along Indo-Pak border. An agreement was signed in December 1988, and ratified in 1991 regarding nuclear installations of both the countries which prohibited launch of surprise and pre-emptive attacks on each other's nuclear sites. To prevent air space violations an agreement was signed in April 1991 and ratified in August 1992. It allowed civil aircrafts to fly through specified corridors. In 1982 an Indo-Pak Joint Commission was established, to discuss wide range of issues at ministerial and lower levels. It remained active from 1982-89. In August 1992 both the countries agreed not to develop, produce, acquire or use chemical weapons. Since 1990 Foreign Secretary level talks have been held in Islamabad and New Delhi, which have produced pre-notification agreement, the airspace agreement, and the bilateral declaration on chemical weapons.[5]

The most significant CBM in recent past has been 'The Lahore Declaration', which contains major policy objectives. These include mutual consultation over confidence building measures (CBMs) regarding nuclear and conventional forces; advance notification before ballistic missile tests; reducing risks of accidental or unauthorised use of nuclear weapons; prior notification by either side in the event of any such incident and adoption of measures to reduce the risk of such actions. Both sides agreed on a moratorium on further nuclear tests unless extraordinary situations jeopardise their security interests.[6]

Differences between European and South Asian Situations

Territorial Dispute over Kashmir

Main dispute in East-West Conflict was ideological. It was a struggle between two systems capitalism and communism. Otherwise states had similar religion and culture. There was no outstanding territorial dispute in Europe during the Cold War. But situation is starkly different in South Asia. Kashmir problem is not only a territorial dispute it also has historical and cultural dimensions. Army takeover in Pakistan has made the matters worse. A military state to justify its rule may like to keep the problem festering.

Unequal Conventional Military Power

During the Cold War both the blocs had awesome military power and some kind of balance was maintained. In South Asia Pakistan's conventional military power is much weaker. This has been exposed to world in the last three wars, fought between the two countries and recently during the Kargil intrusion. In a recent report CIA acknowledged that with regard to military balance in the sub-continent, India continued to enjoy advantages over Pakistan in most areas of conventional defence preparedness. "This includes a decisive advantage in fighter aircraft, almost twice as many men under arms, and a much larger economy to support defence expenditures. As a result, Pakistan relies heavily on its nuclear weapons for deterrence." [7] Pakistan tried to get the help of US and China but failed to get decisive support from either of them. Economically and militarily weaker Pakistan is also politically unstable. After the end of Cold War there has been a decisive change in the World Power politics. Post Cold War era has seen a decisive shift in US policy away from Pakistan.[8] Sensing this shift Pakistan has dangerously upped its ante in Kashmir.

Lack of proper machinery

During the Cold War a large number of people in Europe were trained in arms control and peace negotiations. Nothing of the sort has happened in South Asia. Europe also witnessed peace movements. It created a feeling among the masses against war. People were in no mood to swap their economic prosperity for destructive wars. On the other hand traditional ruling elite of South Asia looks down upon reconciliatory measures. Instead of deriving benefits from productive peace political parties have tried to thrive on Indo-Pak rivalry. Its results have been disastrous for bilateral relationship.

Assessment of the working of CBMs in South Asia

Confidence Building Measures have not been successful to the desired extent between India and Pakistan. They have a dismal track record in South Asia. There are many reasons for it.

Obsession of Pakistan with Kashmir

Pakistan wants Kashmir issue to be solved first before anything else. It is like putting the cart before the horse. It is like saying solve outstanding complex issues before going for CBMs. This approach negates the *raison detre* of CBMs. Pakistan's attempt all along has been to internationalise Kashmir dispute and involve outside powers. Proxy war from Pakistan side in the form of militancy in Jammu and Kashmir has worsened the situation. Pakistan sponsored terrorists have been killing innocent people which only causes bad blood between the two neighbours and does no good to CBMs.

Political Instability in Pakistan

There is no stable political authority in Pakistan with which Indian state can enter into negotiations. India is a democratic, pluralistic society, striving to become a modern progressive nation. On the other hand Pakistan is plagued by political instability and frequent military coups. Many religious fundamentalist organizations there are involved in worst form of international terrorism. They aspire for a theocratic, Islamic state and fight for Jihad.[9] The people in power in Pakistan have encouraged such organisations by their passive silence. The chronic political instability in Pakistan has lent such organisations further strength. These organisations have been averse to any idea of compromise on the Kashmir issue and this has also influenced official policies. These fundamentalist organisations pursue pan-Islamic agenda. Rules of Pakistan, whether democratic or military, have been more than eager to maintain their Islamic credentials, because they consider it essential for their long-term survival. They are virtually puppets in the hands of Islamists. The Talibanisation of Pakistan and its espousal of policies of Pan Islamism have created problems for secular and plural polity of India.

ISI of Pakistan also works autonomous of the government of the day. It has emerged as an important power center in Pakistan. Its top brass is dead against good neighbourly relations between the two countries. They think that easing of tension might undermine their hold over

power in Pakistan. Hence they try everything to scuttle peace initiatives. This was the reason behind Kargil infiltrations.

A US official recently said that if international terrorism has a home then it is Afghanistan. Actually it is both Afghanistan and Pakistan. Pakistan is the training ground for many religious, fundamentalist, terrorist organizations like Laskkar – I – Tayyiba, and others.[10] There is a nexus between terrorists and drug-peddlers in Pakistan. Actually the money generated from the drug trade sponsors the terrorist activities to a great extent.

Even on the face of such challenges, the Indian government declared a ceasefire during the holy month of Ramzan this year. This has been extended twice over since and is operative now. The acceptance of ceasefire by Kashmiri groups like APHC but their rejection by Pakistan based terrorist organisations has created further trouble. Laskar-I-Tayyaba and other pro-Pakistan militant groups have carried out suicide attacks on security forces after the declaration of this unilateral ceasefire. On the contrary, massive participation of local Kashmiri people in recent Panchayat elections shows their growing desire for peace. Their disillusionment with militants is obvious. A senior leader of APHC recently said that militants used Kashmir as a pretext to score victory over Indian government.

Wider Security Concerns of India

India has wider security concerns. Pakistan fails to realize that India shares large borders with China. Any security strategy of India would be incomplete without taking China into account. China has been a recognized nuclear power for decades. Moreover, India has faced aggression from China and there are many border disputes unresolved still. Apart from this, the Chinese involvement in Pakistan's nuclear and missile development programme is only too well known. [11]

Nuclear weapons, were supposed to be 'equalisers' because of the 'no win' situation they would create. But they have not stopped conventional armed ventures like the Kargil infiltration. Under the cover of nuclear threat, Pakistani military may orchestrate such low scale conventional wars, to bid for power in Islamabad. Lack of any perceptible change in Indo-Pak relationship in the post-nuclear phase refutes the theory that Pakistan feels threatened and vulnerable by larger and militarily more powerful India. The Pakistani ruling elite has to change its mindset and give peace a chance by endorsing CBMs that can reduce the threat of war and pave the way for peace.

India has been accused of vitiating the atmosphere by nuclear explosions in May 1998. However, what goes under-discussed is the fact that Pokharan II only revealed to the world, the clandestine nature of Pakistan's nuclear programme. The West has expressed its concern over the clandestine nuclear and missile cooperation between China and Pakistan.

Pakistan's Desire for Parity with India

Pakistan's security concerns are India-centric, while Indian security concerns go well beyond South Asia and Pakistan. As a result Pakistan has not accepted India's call for a no-first-use (NFU) pact. Pakistani defence analyst Shirin Mazari says that Pakistan with its inferior conventional

forces and geography cannot accept such an arrangement. "There is a time-space problem for Pakistan," she says, "who is to decide who fired first in an Indo-Pak scenario?" Rifaat Hussain, professor of international relations at the Quaid-e-Azam University in Islamabad, maintains that India's advocacy of NFU is designed to deny Pakistan the deterrent value of its nuclear weapons.[12]

Pakistan has a strong desire to seek parity with India. Pakistan was used as pawn against Soviet Union by the Western Alliance during the Cold War era. Decades of western prompting and aid gave Pakistan this misplaced feeling that it is equal to India despite being much smaller in size. Pakistani officials and commentators constantly emphasize the need for Pakistan to maintain "parity" with India. This came through in the Pakistani suggestions for a "Strategic Restraint Regime" in South Asia. The basic theme was on how India, a country that is roughly four times Pakistan's size in terms of geography, economy and population, could be made to maintain "parity" with Pakistan in terms of its defence establishment. Ingenuous suggestions ranged from a "mutual and balanced force reduction" agreement to a freeze in missile development programmes.[13] In fact Pakistani participation in UN peacekeeping in a big way is also motivated to a great extent by this desire rather than any genuine desire to keep peace.

Military CBMs not supplemented by Non-Military CBMs

Most of the Military CBMs in place between India and Pakistan are designed to avoid conflict. They can check eruption or escalation in hostilities between the two states. But for further resolution of conflicts it is necessary to have CBMs in other areas, which create right environment for problem-solving. Restraint and prudence shown by the two defence forces have avoided frequent eruption of wars between India and Pakistan. But given their tense relations full-fledged war can be caused by miscalculation, accident or reckless adventure. Kargil is a case in point. "The West made concerted effort not only to negotiate CBMs in the military –security area, but also to develop other 'baskets' of measures to economic and cultural exchanges as well as respect for human rights." [14]

In the case of ASEAN there is a general desire among all the member nations to make economic progress. Economics is given priority over politics. This spirit is not present in South Asia. Here political leaders to prolong their stay in power indulge in rhetorics, detrimental for bilateral relations. India offered MFN status to Pakistan. Pakistan has not reciprocated. SAARC is not taking off because of recalcitrance of Pakistan.

Suggestions

For lasting peace and development between the two states, a concerted effort has to be made. The ritualistic Foreign Secretary level talks cannot do much to break the deadlock. To set the ball rolling communication need to be strengthened. Specific measures have to be taken to give momentum to the political opening provided by the Lahore Process in the following areas.

Political Measures

Normalisation process should be supervised at the highest level in both the countries. Hotline should be institutionalized among the political leaderships of the two countries. Ground rules should be established to make LOC free of tensions. Effort should be made to reach on an agreement for disengaging troops in the Siachen, world's highest battlefield. Other problematic areas like the Sir Creek dispute, Wullar / Tulbul navigation / Barrage issue should be dealt with similarly.

Strategic and Military measures

Armies of India and Pakistan enjoy unequal status in their respective countries. In Pakistan army is so strong that it not only sets military but also political agenda. Now army has taken over the country. They are the ones who make decisions. ISI of Pakistan operates virtually independent of the government of the day. Pakistani Military went for infiltrations, while the then Prime Minister Mr. Nawaz Sharif was receiving Mr. Vajpayee in Lahore.

In this context, contacts between the military establishments are necessary to find out the areas of co-operation. After the nuclearisation of the subcontinent, it is very important that the militaries directly discuss the issues related to nuclear safety and unauthorized use of nuclear weapons. Exchange of visits by teams from the respective National Defense Colleges could be a good starting point. It will help in sharing of perceptions and ascertain precisely what "minimum credible deterrence" means vis-à-vis threat perceptions in the India-Pakistan context. It is necessary because both the countries are likely to keep their nuclear weapons in near future. It would be useful to have a mutually agreeable concept of nuclear deterrence.

Interaction between the militaries is also necessary for the development of standard procedures for non-escalation and the settlement of border / Line of control issues. The existing mechanisms are not sufficient. At various levels army should also discuss force levels, nuclear and missile deployment, avoidance of the arms race, nuclear doctrine and command and control measures. Meeting should also be organised to discuss safety and security of the civilian nuclear sector. There should be no disproportionate increase in forces. Moreover they should be deployed in a way, which shows peaceful motives. Transparency should be maintained in military spending.

Economic Measures

Economic inter-dependence has the capacity to blunt the edge of hostility and turn arch-rivals to friends. This approach can also be given a try in the region. Present restrictions on the trade between the two countries should be removed and Business Councils should be set up both in Bombay and Karachi. Country specific trade fairs should be organized in the important cities of both the countries. Collaboration in other areas can also be explored.

A study by SAARC on trade, manufacture and service has identified numerous areas and worked out the feasibility of such joint ventures which might act as a cementing factor to consolidate the bilateral relations. "With the passage of time, these linkages may help develop long-term stakes with each other's economies, which may become too costly to sever in future." [15] There is ample scope for trade and commerce between the two countries. The value of unofficial trade between the two countries is put at between Rs. 800 crores and 1,600 crores every year, 2-4 times of the

value of the legal trade. According to studies by apex chambers of commerce, the actual volume of unofficial trade between the two countries may exceed Rs. 2,000 crores per year if account is taken of the supply of Indian textile machinery, spares and equipment, and machine parts used in tanneries. According to some estimates, Pakistan can get machinery, iron ore, wheat and some other items 25-40 per cent cheaper from India than anywhere else. A power-surplus Pakistan can sell electricity to India facing severe shortage.[16]

Such economic relationship has worked in the case of US-China, US-India. It can also happen in the case of US-China, US-India. It can also happen in the case of India and Pakistan. Clinton Administration got the China Bill for MFN passed despite a strong Republican protest. Human right groups like Human Rights watch also opposed it.[17] But the economic stake was such that Clinton Administration had to grant MFN status to China ignoring other priorities of foreign policy. South Asia can also take a cue from this and go for closer economic relations. The former Prime Minister of Pakistan Ms. Benazir Bhutto once said, "The sub-continent is crying out for a solution that will give economic freedom to the masses who struck out for political freedom on the historical night on August 14, 1947. The leaders of both sides of the divide need to rise and meet this challenge or they will be waylaid by history and by time." [18]

Track II Diplomacy

Track II diplomacy and increasing people-to-people contacts are important means of conflict resolution. The Neemrana Group is a forum of retired civil, military persons and intellectuals of both countries to discuss Indo-Pak relations. Recently some other groups have also come into being. Recently Asma Jehangir, chairperson of Pakistan Human Rights Commission, who was leading a Pakistani women's delegation to India expressed the opinion that "Cultural exchanges and goodwill tours definitely help in dispelling misconceptions in the minds of people in both the countries about each other." She felt that since there is a political deadlock between the two governments on the Kashmir issue, peoples' groups in both countries can create public opinion and act as a pressure group.[19] Conflict resolution in South Asia is also on the agenda of some NGOs. Efforts of this kind should be encouraged. To boost interaction among the people visa issue procedures should be simplified and more visa offices should be opened. Travel between the two countries should also be made easier. Large number of academic / student exchange should be funded. Media plays an important role in opinion building. It is desirable to have more interaction between English and vernacular press of both the countries. But media should refrain from hate propaganda and disinformation. It should behave in a responsible manner and only competent people should report defence matters.

Sharing Technology for Mutual Benefit

Use of existing technologies for mutual benefit might help promote confidence between India and Pakistan. Technologies can be shared in the areas of weather forecasting, environmental management, seismology as both countries are earthquake prone, water management including flood control and river pollution. Modern technology can also be used to monitor the international border and to check the drug trafficking. It will have its impact on the narco-terrorism, which is a menace for the subcontinent. Electronic Monitoring of maritime borders will eliminate the straying of fisherman.

Conclusion

No dramatic results should be expected from CBMs in South Asia. Even in Europe only gradual progress took place. The peace process between India and Pakistan has been very fragile. Important pockets of opposition to normalization remain within the establishments of both countries. It includes the security sector, bureaucracies, extremists and some influential members of the press. Organizations like ISI know very well that they enjoy their enviable position because of the continuing hostilities. The political and military elite to divert the attention of the people from their woes often creates war hysteria. In a situation like this step-by-step approach is likely to be more successful. CBMs should be given proper time to work. Bitter feelings take time to die down.

CBMs by themselves do not solve complex problems. They only create suitable conditions by enhancing trust and goodwill between the parties concerned. CBMs help in opening channels of communication with an adversary. They will yield result if their scope is kept limited and they are shaped according to the need of the region. Their result may be slow, but definitely they CBMs should not be left exclusively to the Military. Military CBMs must be followed by non-military CBMs Other sections of society including prominent citizens and NGOs have to play their role. Economic CBMs are the best bet in South Asia keeping in view the complexity of the problem in subcontinent. It will create a section in both the countries whose interest would be served by peace and friendly relations. Hence they will work for it. CBMs should be followed by concrete arms control measures. This will take the peace process further. Both the parties should work for the productive peace instead of the uneasy calm, which prevails on their borders now.

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