

NALSAR University

M. A. (Security and Defence Laws)

Regional Security Cooperation in South Asia

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Evolution of Regional Security Concept

- **The idea of Regional Security (RS) can be traced to European history. Imperial powers of Europe frequently formed alliances and counter alliances consisting of European nation states. *Holy Alliance, Concert of Europe* are examples of security groups based on a region. However, such groups were mainly military and defence purposes. The guiding force of these**

security groups was Balance of power politics.

- **Subsequently following the end of the two world wars and emergence of Cold War between the two super powers – US and Soviet Union – RS concept gathered greater momentum. It was the most preferred strategy between the two competitive super powers. For every region in the world, an exclusive regional security group was created. NATO for Europe, Warsaw Pact for communist East Europe, ASEAN for Southeast Asia and ANZUS for South Pacific region were set up.**
- **It should be understood that RS had a narrower meaning in the beginning. During the cold war era, the scope of RS was**

limited to security against group a common enemy, arms build against rival group and defence mechanisms.

Membership of a RS was permitted only to those countries belonging to a particular super power and also its ideology (Free World or Communism). All the RS bloc RS groups therefore politico-military blocs.

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Regional Security: Changing Scope

- With the end of the cold war era international politics underwent radical change. Bloc politics and regional groups based on competition and bloc politics came to end. The content, membership, objectives and scope of RS too underwent change. Whereas**

‘competition’ was the essence of cold war RS groups. But, post cold war regional groups are not giving much importance to security. But instead preferring cooperation. In otherwords, countries belonging to a particular regional group in the contemporary world want to promote cooperation between themselves in various field like trade, investment, energy , infrastructure, connectivity and communication. In a nutshell, political and economic cooperation are hallmarks of today’s regional groups.

- Modern nations are pursuing ‘multilateralism’ in their foreign policies. Multilateralism denotes that countries prefer to develop peaceful and cooperative political and economic relations with several states within and**

outside their immediate regions. Collective cooperation for common good is the guiding philosophy of current approach to regional security.

- There are strong push factors which are motivating states to develop security and non-security relations outside their particular regions. Such push factors are: globalization; trans-regional security threats like piracy and terrorism; cyber threats; digital communication; safety of shipping lines and ensuring freedom of navigation; energy security; trans-oceanic cargo shipping; international trade and investment linkages. Therefore confining rigidly to a single region in current world does not guarantee economic development and security of a state.**

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Human Security Approach

- **In view of the above considerations, trans-regional security groups are the most preferred choices today. ASEAN, European Union, EAS (East Asia Summit), APEC and IORA are best examples of trans-regional groups. These groups interpret ‘security’ in non-military sense. For them ‘human security’ is more important than traditional security i.e. military security.**
- **‘Human security’ is concerned about the welfare of individuals. Individual security is the primary focus of the Human security philosophy. Raising citizen’s per capita income, securing good health, raising the educational and professional skills, maternity and child care, ensuring**

environmental security, disaster relief are among the key elements of Human security. Modern state, a welfare state, therefore wants to provide their individuals these basic human welfare measures.

- War and inter-state conflict are as far as possible avoided by modern states. It is true conflicts can not be totally eliminated between states at any time. Rather like human conflicts, inter-state conflicts are endemic. So, to avoid a conflict on border or water sharing or maritime jurisdictions regional states are actively pursuing conflict resolution (also called dispute settlement) methods.**

South Asian Security

- **South Asia as a region has evolved out of the common geographical, civilizational, historical, economic and ethnographic attributes of people and states belonging to this part of the Asian continent. South Asia was known as an 'Indic' region or Indo-centric region in which Indian religions, history, size, commerce and communications played dominant role in forging close relations between the neighbouring countries and their population. All the countries in the region share the Indian ancestry and the elements mentioned above.**
- **Partition of the Indian sub-continent into two nations on the basis of religion**

disturbed the unity and fabric of the Indic region. Imperial rule of the past consolidated the historicity and territorial integrity of South Asia. All the other independent states in the region, Afghanistan, Bhutan, Burma, Ceylon, Nepal, Sikkim and Tibet were treated by the British ruled India as part of a single political and security entity. Curzon Doctrine provided a single geo-political and security foundation for South Asia.

- However, after partition, Pakistan seriously challenged the unity and spirit of South Asia. Pakistan built its nationalism and political fabric on the ideology of anti-Indianism. India was pointed out as the chief source of insecurity and threat to the freedom, even survival of this Islamic republic. Other countries of the region too**

in different degrees perceived India as the chief source of threat to their unity and territorial integrity.

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South Asian Regional Predicament

- **For the above reasons South Asia could not develop as a single regional security zone. Anti-India prejudices did not allow the growth of a common sense of security within the region. US cold war politics which led the US to enroll Pakistan as a member of its CENTO military group divided the unity of the region further. Some smaller countries of the region too began encouraging extra-regional powers into regional affairs. Today China is much preferred country which is fast promoting**

its influence and interference in the South Asian region.

- **SAARC does not include regional security in its agenda. Because of the intra-regional, chiefly Indo-Pak differences over the security matters. Bilateral agreements like the Simla Pact of 1972, tried to ensure mutual security consensus. But Pakistan's systematic violation of the spirit and language of such agreements failed to promote security in the region. Pak's obsession with anti-Indinism and its cross-border encouragement of terrorism against India is the chief cause of insecurity in the region.**
- **However, SAARC contributed to the promotion of human security in South Asia. It established a regional food bank, a**

University (in Delhi), youth exchange programmes, a free trade area , disaster management centre, SAARC Satellite for regional communication, weather forecasting, E-education etc.

- **Like other countries in the world South Asian countries too forging links and joining trans-regional groups outside the region. India and Pakistan recently joined SCO. India is in IORA, , EAS. Therefore multilateral membership is the norm of regional security in current world. South Asia too following suit.**
