SOUTH ASIA SCAN

INDIA AS A REGIONAL SECURITY PROVIDER IN SOUTH ASIA

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India as a
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Issue No. 8
June 2020

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The Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS) is dedicated to research on contemporary South Asia.

It was established in July 2004 as an autonomous research institute at the National University of Singapore. The establishment of ISAS reflects the increasing economic and political importance of South Asia, and the strong historical links between South Asia and Southeast Asia.

The Institute seeks to promote understanding of this vital region of the world, and to communicate knowledge and insights about it to policymakers, the business community, academia and civil society, in Singapore and beyond.

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Executive Summary

Since 2009, Indian governments have claimed a new role for the country as a security provider in its extended neighbourhood. Within South Asia, India has a long but ambivalent and controversial tradition as a security provider. Its claim was undermined by several factors. First, the bilateral problems between India and its neighbours often disrupted political and economic relations, and restricted closer security cooperation. Second, China and its presence in South Asia have always been a major security concern for India. However, the 'China factor' did not transform into a common threat perception because the smaller countries often played the 'China card' in order to balance India.

However, since the 2000s, a new consensus has slowly emerged between India and most of its South Asian neighbours on the fight against terrorism and cross-border militancy. This has led to a quantitative and qualitative expansion of India's security cooperation with the rest of South Asia. India has increased its training capacities as well as the number of military exchanges and exercises. It has developed new instruments to supply military equipment and initiated new security dialogue formats with its South Asian neighbours. Besides the quantitative increase, there is also a qualitative change because India has been able to anchor security on a broader basis both on the bilateral and regional levels. This joint commitment towards security is highlighted in nearly all official bilateral and regional declarations. These developments suggest that India is slowly establishing its own regional security architecture. This consists of a network of different bilateral and regional agreements that will strengthen India's ambitions as a security provider in South Asia.

Introduction

In 2013, India's Prime Minister Manmohan Singh articulated India's claim of being a "net security provider" in the Indian Ocean region.[1] With this remark, he picked up a debate that was initiated by American Defence Secretary Robert Gates in 2009. He aimed at a closer cooperation between the United States (US) and India in the Indian Ocean in order to counter China's growing presence in this region. The concept was taken forward by India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2015 when he announced the idea of SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region). The Indian navy also formulated its claim as a net security provider in its maritime strategy in 2015. Overall, India has increased its security cooperation at different levels with many island states in the Indian Ocean in recent years.

This new focus on India as a security provider is closely linked to China's rise. With the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), China has strengthened its foothold both in (South) Asia and the Indian Ocean. However, India's security concerns vis-à-vis China and its efforts to cooperate with other countries are not new. These concerns have a long history going back to the 1950s when India initiated its military cooperation with Nepal and Bhutan in order to secure its security interests in the Himalayas vis-à-vis China.

Discussions on India's role as a security provider focuses mostly on the rivalry with China and often overlook the fact that India has intensified its security cooperation with many neighbours in order to fight terrorism and cross border militancy. By this, India is slowly establishing a regional security architecture, which will also strengthen its role as a security provider in South Asia.

Providing Security: Definitions and Concepts

The role of a security provider can be viewed through the prism of different theoretical debates.

First, in traditional foreign policy analysis, it can be seen in the context of defensive or offensive realism, by which states try to strengthen their influence by providing security to other states in order to enhance their strategic environment or to balance the influence of other powers. Many states have used this strategy to pursue their foreign policy goals. On its part, India has a

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1. Vinay Kumar, 'India Well Positioned to Become a Net Provider of Security: Manmohan Singh', *The Hindu*, 23 May 2013, http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-wellpositioned-to-become-a-net-provider-of-security-manmohansingh/article4742337.ece. Accessed on 7 October 2019; and David Brewster, 'India: Regional net security provider', Gateway House, 5 November 2013, https://www.gatewayhouse.in/india-regional-net-security-provider/. Accessed on 20 September 2019.

long tradition of employing different forms and instruments to pursue such "peacetime military diplomacy".[2]

Second, in the liberal institutional framework, the concept of a security provider is connected to debates on security architecture. In their seminal work, Tow and Taylor have defined it as "an overarching, coherent and comprehensive security structure for a geographically-defined area, which facilitates the resolution of that region's policy concerns and achieves its security objectives."[3] Well-known examples from the Cold War period include military alliances like the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation or the Warsaw Pact. Through these, superpowers have acted as security providers to their allies in order to establish a security architecture. On the civilian side, the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) that was established with the Helsinki Accords in 1975 is one of the most successful examples of a security architecture. It consisted of more than 30 countries from the Western and Eastern blocs, which agreed on permanent consultations and confidence-building measures (CBMs) in the fields of military and security issues, human rights, and economic, scientific and technological cooperation. The CSCE established a network of conferences, workshops and expert meetings that facilitated collaboration between the two antagonistic blocs.

In recent years, the academic debate on regional security architecture has concentrated on East and Southeast Asia.[4] In South Asia, the discussions on security architecture focus on India-Pakistan relations or the prospects for collaboration on non-traditional security challenges.[5] Moreover, various possibilities have been proposed for a "cooperative security framework", "strategic architecture" or "regional security architecture" that should deal with the different security challenges in South Asia in a comprehensive way.[6]

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2.   B S Sachar, 'Cooperation in Military Training as a Tool of Peacetime Military Diplomacy', *Strategic Analysis*, Vol. 27, no. 3 (July–September 2003), p. 404.

3.   William T Tow and Brendan Taylor, 'What is Asian security architecture?', *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 36, no. 1 (2010), p. 96.

4.   Muthiah Alagappa (ed.), *Asian Security Order: Instrumental and Normative Features* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003); and Amitav Acharya, Evelyn Goh (eds), *Reassessing Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2007).

5.   Alyson J K Bailes, 'Regional Security Cooperation: A Challenge for South (and North-East) Asia', *Strategic Analysis*, Vol. 31, no. 4 (2007), pp. 665-674; Xiaoping Yang, *The Security Architecture of South Asia: Problems and Prospects* (New York: The New School, India China Institute, 2012), https://www.indiachinainstitute.org/resources/publications/workingpapers/. Accessed on 4 October 2019; and Mahin Karim, *The Future of South Asian Security. Prospects for a Nontraditional Regional Security Architecture* (Washington: National Bureau of Asian Research, 2013).

6.   S D Muni, 'Strategic Architecture in South Asia: Some Conceptual Parameters', in Nihar Nayak (ed.), *Cooperative Security Framework for South Asia* (New Delhi: Pentagon Press, 2013), pp. 3-11; and Smruti S Pattanaik and Nihar Nayak, 'Does South Asia Need a Regional Security Architecture?' in Nihar Nayak (ed.), *Cooperative Security Framework for South Asia* (New Delhi: Pentagon Press, 2013), pp. 52-68.

However, recent developments, especially the deterioration of the India-Pakistan relationship after 2016 seem to have put paid to such scenarios.

In analysing India's role as a security provider in South Asia, one should keep in mind the foreign policy and institutional perspectives. South Asia, which includes the eight member states of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), is often seen as "India's natural sphere of influence". This reflects India's demographic and geographic size and its dominance in nearly all economic and military categories relative to its neighbours. It is also worth noting here that South Asia is known politically as a region of "chronic instability" and is economically the least integrated region. Therefore, it is not surprising that India's track record on security cooperation with its neighbours is one of ambivalence. The 'Indira Doctrine', a set of policy directives, which summarised the main principles of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's South Asia policy in the 1970s, highlighted India's claim as a regional hegemon and a security provider.[7] It formed the basis for ambitious interventions such as assisting the uprising in East Pakistan (which led to the establishment of Bangladesh) and working with the Sri Lankan government to deal with the civil war in the country as well as smaller military operations like those in the Maldives until the end of the 1980s.

A critical aspect of India's foreign policy imperative is its relationship with Pakistan. Both countries have fought four wars since 1947 – three of which were over Kashmir – and engaged in numerous bilateral incidents and tensions. On the positive side, relations with Afghanistan, Bhutan and the Maldives have generally been much smoother. Somewhere in between lie India's relations with Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka – these have been marked by periods of both cordiality and deep aversion.

It is argued here that there has been a qualitative and quantitative change in India's regional security cooperation since the 2000s. On the whole, India has developed a more cooperative approach towards its neighbours after the liberalisation of the economy in 1991. This was reflected in the 'Gujral Doctrine' of 1996 that emphasised the principle of non-reciprocity, the 'Manmohan Doctrine'[8] that focused on greater regional connectivity in the 2000s and Modi's 'Neighbourhood First' policy after 2014. In addition, since the 2000s, the fight against terrorism and cross-border militancy has emerged as a shared security concern for India and most of its neighbours. This has

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7.   Devin T Hagerty, 'India's Regional Security Doctrine', *Asian Survey*, Vol. 31, no. 4 (April 1991), pp. 351-363.

8.   C Raja Mohan, 'The Manmohan Doctrine', *The Daily Times*, 28 February 2005, http://www. dailytimes. com.pk/default.asp?page=story_28-2-2005_pp. 3_5. Accessed on 10 October 2019.

triggered new forms of cooperation that go beyond the field of security. Furthermore, India has formulated new legal instruments like extradition treaties with its neighbours. Modi's government has also strengthened security cooperation through regional organisations like the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) and the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA).

In order to elaborate the argument, this publication is divided into three chapters. The first chapter, which briefly reviews India's relations with individual countries, will concentrate on some of the instruments of India's peacetime military diplomacy. These range from capacity building to joint exercises, defence talks and agreements, and a variety of joint workshops and seminars.[9] The emergence of new agreements like extradition treaties, which cover legal aspects of security collaboration, will also be highlighted. The second chapter focuses on the regional level, particularly political declarations and agreements. It is worth noting from the onset that regional military exercises are still the exception. The final chapter discusses the prospects and challenges of India's role as a regional security provider in South Asia.

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9.   B S Sachar, op. cit., p. 410-415.

The Bilateral Level

India has a long and ambivalent relationship with its neighbours. Cooperation in a sensitive field like security is always embedded in this context and has followed the political ups and downs of its bilateral relationships. Hence, the analytical focus in the following sections will be on highlighting the different forms of security cooperation and the quantitative and qualitative changes that can be observed in recent years.

Afghanistan

India and Afghanistan have traditionally had good bilateral relations, which are a result of their common rivalry with Pakistan. During the process of partition, Afghanistan raised territorial claims on the Pashtun areas of Pakistan. Afghanistan was also the only country that voted against Pakistan's entry to the United Nations (UN) and has until today not recognised the Durand Line as an international border between the two countries.

A noticeable development in the bilateral relations between India and Afghanistan occurred due to certain events in the 1990s. After the withdrawal of the Soviet Union from Afghanistan in 1988-89, Pakistan began to link the Kashmir dispute with India to developments in Afghanistan. Pakistan supported the Taliban in the Afghan civil war in the 1990s in order to achieve "strategic depth" against India. Indeed, Pakistan was one of only three countries that recognised the Taliban regime from 1996 to 2001.

After the attacks of 9/11 and the international intervention in Afghanistan, India stepped up its support for the government in Kabul. It is currently the biggest non-Western donor to Afghanistan and has invested more than US$2 billion (S$2.8 billion) in the country. In addition, India has been training members of the Afghan Police Force since 2009.[10]

The Strategic Partnership agreement of 2011 laid the basis for military cooperation between the Indian army and the Afghan Security Forces (ASF). Over the years, India has increased its logistics support and training for the ASF.[11] In the debate about a partial withdrawal of the international forces, India conceded to American requests to increase the training capacity for

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10.   Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs, *Annual Report 2009-2010* (New Delhi, 2010), p. 115.

11.   Nitin Gokhale, 'India All Set to Train Afghan Army', *New Delhi Television*, 17 November 2011, http://www. ndtv.com/article/india/india-all-set-to-train-afghan-army-150491. Accessed on 8 November 2019.

Afghan officers.[12] In 2013, it hosted a 60-member Special Forces group and supplied equipment such as combat vehicles and field medical support facilities.[13]

With the withdrawal of the US and its international allies, the Afghan government wants stronger strategic engagement with India. Overall, due to its experience with the Indian Peace Keeping Forces (IPKF) in Sri Lanka, which is discussed later in this chapter, India had been reluctant to pursue a policy of 'boots on the ground' in its neighbourhood. In the case of Afghanistan, this would have implied a further escalation in India's relations with Pakistan. In light of these two concerns, in July 2013, India turned down a request by the Afghan government to supply lethal weaponry. However, it continues to provide support for training, transport and logistics.[14]

Since taking office in 2014, the Modi government has pursued a more assertive approach. It declared in Parliament that it is "committed to provide 'financial, military and other aid to Afghanistan'."[15] When Afghan President Ashraf Ghani visited India in April 2015, New Delhi agreed to supply three Cheetal helicopters to Afghanistan.[16] In 2016, India gave four MI-25 attack helicopters to Afghanistan and supported the maintenance of the Afghan Air Force in collaboration with Russia.[17] India also expanded its training for the Afghanistan Air Force and trained 193 pilots.[18] In addition to such increased security cooperation, both countries also signed a Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty in 2015 to strengthen intelligence cooperation and improve

12.   Chidanand Rajghatta, 'America Persuades India to Expand Afghan Footprint', *Times of India*, 14 June 2012, http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-06-14/us/32234576_1_ afghanistan-and-pakistan-afghan-national-armyafghan-military-personnel. Accessed on 8 November 2019.

13.   'India begins training Afghan commandos as ties deepen', *The Daily Times*, 21 December 2013, http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/region/21-Dec-2013/india-begins-training-afghan-commandos-as-ties-deepen. Accessed on 21 October 2019; 'India begins training Afghan Commandos as ties deepen ahead of 2014', *New Delhi Television*, 20 December 2013, http://www.ndtv.com/ india-news/india-begins-training-afghan-commandos-as-ties-deepen-ahead-of-2014-545156. Accessed on 3 October 2019; and Government of India, Ministry of Defence, *Annual Report, 2014-15* (New Delhi: Dolphin Printo-Graphics, 2015), p. 24.

14.   'India Turns Down Afghanistan's Arms Plea', *The Hindu*, 5 July 2013, http://www.thehindu. com/news/ international/south-asia/india-turns-down-afghanistans-armsplea/article4884695. ece. Accessed on 6 November 2019

15.   Tanvi Pate, 'Soft power, strategic narratives, and state identity: Re-assessing India-Afghanistan relations post-2011', *India Review*, Vol. 17, no. 3 (2018), p. 335.

16.   Ministry of External Affairs, 'Joint Statement during the State Visit of President of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to India', (28 April 2015), http://mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents. htm?dtl/25137/ Joint_Statement_during_the_State_Visit_of_President_of_Islamic_Republic_ of_Afghanistan_to_India_April_28_2015. Accessed on 30 October 2019.

17.   Dinakar Peri, 'India to restore grounded aircraft in Afghanistan', *The Hindu*, 27 November 2016, http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/India-to-restore-grounded-aircraft-in-Afghanistan/ article 16711883.ece. Accessed on 29 October 2019.

18.   Government of India, Ministry of Defence, *Annual Report*, 2015-16 (New Delhi, 2016), p. 136.

collaboration in criminal matters.[19] India has also heavily invested in the Chabahar port in Iran and the International North South Transport Corridor by which it seeks to improve its access to Central Asia and Afghanistan.

Overall, the lack of a common border, the difficult relations with Pakistan and the massive support of the international community have limited India's opportunities to increase its security cooperation with Afghanistan. Hence, despite being one of the largest donors in Afghanistan, India remains only a marginal player compared to Western countries with regard to the training of the Afghan National Army.[20] In 2017-18, nearly 450 personnel from Afghanistan were trained in Indian military institutions.[21] Moreover, India has hardly played any political role in the various rounds of negotiations with the Taliban. Despite these constraints, the Modi government has expanded India's options with Afghanistan in the field of security.

Bangladesh

India and Bangladesh have had an ambivalent relationship with regard to security. In 1971, India supported the 'Mukhti Bahini' (Liberation Army) in the civil war in East Pakistan and its military intervention in December finally led to the independence of Bangladesh. In the beginning, the leadership of the new government under the Awami League (AL) was sharply oriented towards India. The constitution of the new state was strongly influenced by the Indian model and New Delhi supported the construction of the new state in various ways. However, in contrast to the AL government, the Bangladesh armed forces remained sceptical about India. Hence, the Peace and Friendship Treaty of 1972, which included a clause on security, was never fully implemented.[22]

The military coup in 1975 and the assassination of Prime Minister Sheikh Mujibur Rahman fundamentally changed Bangladesh's relationship with India. The new military regimes tried to distance the country politically and economically from India. The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), which was established in 1978 by the former Chief of Army Staff, Ziaur Rahman, even

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19. Rahul Tripathi, 'India set to sign treaty with Afghanistan to share intelligence, co-operation in dealing crimes', *The Economic Times*, 27 April 2015, http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes. com/2015-04-27/news/61578046_1_legal-assistance-treaty-extradition-treaty-proceeds-and-instruments. Accessed on 28 October 2019.

20. Vishal Chandra, 'Afghanistan's National Army: Expectations and Scepticism', in Vishal Chandra (ed.), *India's Neighbourhood: The Armies of South Asia* (New Delhi: Pentagon Press, 2013), pp. 8-10.

21. Government of India, Ministry of Defence, *Annual Report*, 2017-18 (New Delhi, 2019), pp. 164-65.

22. Smruti S Pattanaik, 'Bangladesh Army: Evolution, Structure, Threat Perception, and its Role', in Vishal Chandra (ed.), *India's Neighbourhood: The Armies of South Asia* (New Delhi: Pentagon Press, 2013), p. 38.

promoted the concept of Bangladeshi nationalism in order to differentiate the country from India.

After the democratisation of Bangladesh in 1990-91, ties with India varied depending on the ruling party. When the BNP was in power, relations were much more difficult compared to when the AL was in power. This had an impact on the handling of security issues between the two countries, which included the demarcation of the border, illegal migration and the controversy over militant camps on Bangladeshi territory.

In the 1970s, both sides established meetings between the directors general of India's Border Security Force and the Border Guards Bangladesh (BGB) to monitor the more than 4,000-kilometre long and porous border. This initiative did not, however, prevent the occurrence of violent incidents and clashes. Between 2000 and 2010, 900 Bangladeshis and 164 Indians were killed in border clashes.[23] In 2007, both sides improved their communication channels and launched joint border patrols, which led to a decrease of such incidents. Building upon this, in 2016, both sides agreed on a Coordinated Border Management Plan with joint patrols and better information sharing.[24]

The main bone of contention was the issue of militant camps in Bangladesh and the infiltration of Islamic terrorists into India. In 2002, India handed over a list of 99 camps of different militant groups in Bangladesh.[25] However, the BNP government of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, who collaborated with religious parties that were alleged to have links with the militant groups, was unwilling to act against these camps.

The Bangladeshi military's relations with India began to improve under the military caretaker regime in Dhaka (2006-08). The visit of Army Chief Moeen Ahmad to India in 2008 paved the way for closer military cooperation. The subsequent victory of the AL in the 2008 elections brought a noticeable improvement in its relationship with India and the launch of new initiatives in the field of security. Notably, both countries held their first anti-terror exercise

23. Haroon Habib, 'Putting Down the Burden of Borders', *The Hindu*, 10 February 2012, http://www.thehindu. com/opinion/lead/putting-down-the-burden-of-borders/article2876322.ece. Accessed on 10 October 2019.

24. Joyeeta Bhattacharjee, 'Enhancing Border Management Cooperation for BBIN', 12 July 2016, https://www.orfonline.org/research/enhancing-border-management-cooperation-for-bbin. Accessed on 16 October 2019.

25. Kanchan Lakshman, Sanjay K Jha, 'India-Bangladesh: Restoring Sovereignty on Neglected Borders', in K P S Gill (ed.), *Faultlines*, Vol. XIV (2003), South Asia Terrorism Portal, http://www. satp. org/satporgtp/ publication/faultlines/volume14/Article7.htm. Accessed on 10 October 2019.

in February 2009.[26] Similar exercises were held in Assam in India and Sylhet in Bangladesh in 2010-11. These were followed by naval exercises.[27]

In 2010, agreements on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters; Transfer of Sentenced Persons; and Combating International Terrorism, Organised Crime and Illicit Drug Trafficking were signed. These improved the legal collaboration between the two countries. Moreover, in 2011, a framework agreement for cooperation and development was signed that included a clause for closer security cooperation.[28] In January 2013, both countries agreed on an extradition treaty to improve the fight against terrorism and cross-border crime.[29]

The navies of both countries have also expanded their collaboration. The two sides "are exploring the possibilities of coordinated patrolling along [the] International Maritime Boundary Line"[30] and are looking for joint efforts to increase maritime security in the Bay of Bengal. In 2016, the Bangladesh navy took part in the Indian fleet review in Visakhapatnam and in the MILAN exercises.[31] The latter are multilateral naval exercises which were initiated in 1995 and are hosted by the Indian navy. The first visit of an Indian Defence Minister to Bangladesh took place at the end of 2016. This was followed by the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on a Defence Cooperation Framework in 2017; a new Defence Secretary-Level Annual Defence Dialogue in 2018; and staff talks between the three services.[32]

During the visit of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to India in April 2017, an MoU on defence cooperation was signed to further expand security cooperation. Moreover, India gave a line of credit (LoC) of US$500 million (S$706.5 million)

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26. Smruti S Pattanaik, 'Bangladesh Army: Evolution, Structure, Threat Perception, and its Role', op. cit.

27. 'Indo-Bangla Military Cooperation Increasing', *The Times of India*, 22 November 2011, http://articles. timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2011-11-22/pune/30428193_1_military-exercise-bangladesh-army-bangladesh-military-academy. Accessed on 10 October 2019; and 'India-Bangladesh Border Guards Joint Border Patrol', *North East Today*, 8 August 2012, http://www.northeasttoday.in/our-states/meghalaya/india-bangladesh-border-guards-joint-border-patrol/. Accessed on 11 October 2019.

28. Smruti S Pattanaik, 'Bangladesh Army: Evolution, Structure, Threat Perception and its Role', op. cit.' p. 39.

29. Binodkumar S Singh, 'India–Bangladesh: Continuous Consolidation,' *South Asian Outlook*, March 2013, http://www.southasianoutlook.net/index.php/issue/2013/41-march/498-india-bangladesh-continuous-consolidation. Accessed on 11 October 2019.

30. Smruti S Pattanaik, 'Indian Ocean in the emerging geo-strategic context: examining India's relations with its maritime South Asian Neighbors', *Journal of the Indian Ocean Region*, Vol. 12, no. 2 (2016), pp. 137-138.

31. Ibid, p. 138.

32. Government of India, Ministry of Defence, *Annual Report, 2017-18* (New Delhi, 2019), pp. 165-66.

to Bangladesh for defence purchases. Till date, this has been the largest LoC given by India to any country for defence purposes.[33]

In Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's October 2019 visit to India, both governments signed another MoU that would allow India to set up a coastal surveillance system radar in Bangladesh to improve maritime security in the Bay of Bengal.[34] This will further enhance Bangladesh's position in India's regional security cooperation.

Amongst all of its South Asian neighbours, India's security cooperation with Bangladesh has shown the greatest progress since 2009. This is reflected by the fact that, after protracted negotiations, the conflict over the territorial enclaves in both countries was settled in September 2015. Illegal migration and trafficking had earlier created many incidents on the border. The number of military interactions has also increased at all levels and the institutional framework with a variety of new treaties has improved the bilateral relationship.[35]

Bhutan

India has a longstanding extensive political, economic and military collaboration with Bhutan. The Friendship Treaty of August 1949 gave India substantial influence over the Himalayan kingdom's international relations. The treaty also allowed India to protect its security interest in the Himalaya region vis-à-vis China. In response to the Chinese takeover of Tibet, India helped to set up a national militia in Bhutan in 1958, which developed into a standing army in 1963.[36] In the same year, the Indian Military Training Team was set up for Bhutan in order to train Bhutanese forces.[37] India has also been instrumental in establishing and training the Royal Bhutan Police.[38]

33. Suhasini Haidar, 'Teesta hangs fire as Sheikh Hasina arrives', *The Hindu*, 6 April 2017, http://www.thehindu. com/news/national/teesta-hangs-fire-as-bangladesh-pm-sheikh-hasina-arrives/article17855609.ece. Accessed on 6 November 2019; and 'Sheikh Hasina India visit: Transformative visit', *The Hindu*, 11 April 2017, http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/transformative-visit/article17913764.ece. Accessed on 11 October 2019.

34. Dipanjan Roy Chaudhury, 'India, Bangladesh sign MoU for setting up a coastal surveillance system radar in Bangladesh', *The Economic Times*, 5 October 2019, https://economictimes. indiatimes.com/news/defence/ india-bangladesh-sign-mou-to-set-up-a-coastal-surveillance-system-radar-in-bangladesh/articleshow/ 71457316.cms. Accessed on 7 October 2019.

35. Joyeeta Bhattacharjee, 'Bangladesh: Strengthening defence cooperation with India', http://orfonline. org/cms/sites/orfonline/modules/weeklyassessment/WeeklyAssessmentDetail. html?cmaid=91876&mmacmaid=91877&volumeno=VIII&issueno=49. Accessed on 22 October 2019.

36. Anand Kumar, 'The Royal Bhutan Army', in Vishal Chandra (ed.), *India's Neighbourhood: The Armies of South Asia* (New Delhi: Pentagon Press, 2013), p. 72.

37. Government of India, Ministry of Defence, *Annual Report, 2011–2012* (New Delhi, 2012), p. 190.

38. Anand Kumar, op. cit., pp. 74-75.

Furthermore, since 1961, the Indian Border Roads Organisation has been engaged in infrastructure projects in Bhutan.

In 2003, military cooperation between the two countries entered a new phase. Since the 1990s, militant groups from India's Northeast had been setting up camps in the southern part of Bhutan. Despite close military links, the Bhutanese government was reluctant to allow Indian security forces to enter its territory in pursuit of these groups. After 1998, there had been various unsuccessful attempts by the Bhutanese governments to reach an agreement with the militant groups on their withdrawal. In 2003, the Bhutanese government saw these groups as a threat to its national security. After a final ultimatum in summer, the government decided to carry out a military operation. In line with this, in December 2003, the Bhutanese army launched a military operation code-named 'All Clear' against all militant groups residing in its territory. Within five days, the Bhutanese army was able to clear 30 camps belonging to three different militant groups. The Indian army did not directly take part in this operation but was in constant communication with the Bhutanese army. India also provided medical facilities to the Bhutanese army throughout the operation and sealed its border to prevent militants from sneaking into India.[39]

Both countries have established the India-Bhutan Joint Group on Border Management and Security.[40] In this context, they have also established a Border District Coordination Meeting mechanism between the Indian states of Assam and West Bengal and Bhutan.[41]

In 2013, the total strength of the Royal Bhutan Army (RBA) was 10,000.[42] Two years later, in 2015-16, India assigned 575 vacancies for the RBA and Royal Bhutan Guards personnel in its training institutions, which is more than five per cent of the total number of the RBA.[43]

The strategic importance of Bhutan became evident during the Doklam crisis of 2017, which started as a dispute between China and the Himalayan kingdom. Chinese incursions into Bhutanese territory were countered by India,

39. For the background of the military operation, see Praveen Kumar, 'External linkages and internal security: Assessing Bhutan's operation all clear', *Strategic Analysis*, Vol. 28, no. 3 (2004), pp. 390-410; Dipankar Banerjee and Bidhan S Laishram, *Bhutan's "Operation All Clear": Implications for Insurgency and Security Cooperation* (New Delhi: Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, 2004; and IPCS Issue Brief 18); and Arijit Mazumdar, 'Bhutan's Military Action against Indian Insurgents', *Asian Survey*, Vol. 45, no. 4 (July-August 2005), pp. 566-580.

40. Government of India, Ministry of Defence, *Annual Report, 2005-2006* (New Delhi, 2006), p. 198.

41. Ministry of External Affairs, 'India Bhutan Relations', p. 8, https://mea.gov.in/Portal/ ForeignRelation/ Country_brief_Bhutan_December_2018.pdf. Accessed on 7 October 2019.

42. Anand Kumar, op. cit.

43. Government of India, Ministry of Defence, *Annual Report, 2015-16* (New Delhi, 2015), p. 19.

which led to a 72-day standoff between Indian and Chinese troops.[44] India's intervention has also highlighted its importance to Bhutan's external security.

The Maldives

India's security collaboration with the Maldives began in 1988 when the former helped President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom put down a coup by dissidents who were supported by Tamil militants from Sri Lanka.[45] At that time, the small island state did not have a regular army or navy. It only had a national security service of about 1,400 men.[46] In 1991, India and the Maldives started the bi-annual *'Dosti'* (Friendship) exercises between their coast guards.[47]

In 2005, the Maldives sent a military attaché to its embassy in Delhi with a view towards strengthening military relations. In 2006, India donated a patrol boat to the Maldivian navy to patrol and monitor its Exclusive Economic Zone, which is an area of approximately 900,000 square miles where the Maldives enjoys special fishing rights under international law.[48] In 2009, both countries agreed to India basing two surveillance helicopters on the island. Furthermore, India supported the Maldives in expanding its coastal radars from two to all 26 of its atolls. In fact, these Maldivian coastal radars were linked to the Indian Coastal Command.[49] The Indian air force also undertook surveillance flights over the island state and the Indian army held joint military exercises with the Maldivian Defence Forces on counter-terrorism.[50]

44. Suhasini Haidar, 'The crossroads at the Doklam plateau', *The Hindu*, 26 July 2017, http://www.thehindu. com/opinion/lead/the-crossroads-at-the-doklam-plateau/article19359848. ece. Accessed on 25 October 2019; and Tenzing Lamsang, 'Giving Bhutan its due', *The Indian Express*, 31 August 2017, http://indian express.com/article/opinion/columns/giving-bhutan-its-due-doklam-standoff-india-china-relation-4821334/. Accessed on 1 November 2019.

45. Ravinatha Aryasinha, 'Maldives, Sri Lanka and the "India Factor"', *Himāl Southasian*, March 1997, http://old.himalmag.com/component/content/article/2650-maldives-sri-lanka-and-the. html. Accessed on 4 November 2019.

46. Alok Bansal, 'Maldives' Security Dilemma and its National Defence Force', in Vishal Chandra (ed.), *India's Neighbourhood: The Armies of South Asia* (New Delhi: Pentagon Press, 2013), p. 93.

47. P K Ghosh, 'Maritime Security Trilateralism: India, Sri Lanka and the Maldives', *Strategic Analysis*, Vol. 38, no. 3 (2014) p. 284.

48. Smruti S Pattanaik, 'Indian Ocean in the emerging geo-strategic context: examining India's relations with its maritime South Asian neighbors', op. cit., p. 136.

49. P K Ghosh, op. cit.

50. Manu Pubby, 'India Bringing Maldives into Its Security Net', *The Indian Express*, 13 August 2009, http://www.indianexpress.com/news/India-bringing-Maldives-into-its-security-net/501583. Accessed on 25 October 2019; Rajat Pandit, 'India to Further Bolster Defence Cooperation with Maldives', *The Times of India*, 15 April 2013, http://articles.timesofindia. indiatimes.com/2013-04-15/india/38555022_1_indian-ocean-region-india-and-maldives-maritime-patrol-and-surveillance. Accessed on 16 October 2019; and Vinay Kumar, 'India, Maldives Holding Joint Military Training Exercises', *The Hindu* (12 November 2012), http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-maldives-holding-joint-military-training-exercises/article4091069.ece. Accessed on 10 October 2019.

In 2016, India and the Maldives agreed on a comprehensive Defence Action Plan, in which India "committed to the building of the Maldives Ministry of Defence; the Institute for Security and Law Enforcement Studies; and a Coastal Radar Surveillance System."[51] During the same year, both sides started a Defence Cooperation Dialogue and joint exercises between the Indian and Maldivian armed forces. In 2017-18, more than 120 personnel from the Maldivian military were trained in Indian military institutions.[52] India further broadened the security cooperation with the Maldives in 2019 when it leased a Dornier aircraft to the Maldives and integrated the country into its coastal radar chain network. This was established after the Mumbai attacks of 2008 with the aim of monitoring the high seas. Besides the Maldives, Sri Lanka, the Seychelles and Mauritius are also part of this network.[53]

Nepal

India's most enduring military relationship in South Asia has been with Nepal. It is worth noting that, even after independence, the Indian military continued to recruit Gurkhas from Nepal.[54] The Peace and Friendship Treaty of 1950 regulated the bilateral relationship with the Himalayan kingdom. This treaty notwithstanding, both sides also agreed upon secret arrangements that were favourable to India, which effectively restricted the monarchy's room for manoeuvres against it in international affairs. For instance, the arms supply to Nepal remained dependent on India's consent. India also received preferential treatment for development projects.[55]

Military collaboration between the two states began in 1951 when Nepal and India established check-posts on the Tibetan border.[56] In 1952, King Tribhuvan Bir Bikram Shah sought the help of India for the reorganisation of the Royal Nepalese Army, which led to the creation of the Indian Military Mission (IMM). Over time, however, strains in the bilateral relations with India led Nepalese kings and governments to establish closer links with China. In this context,

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51. Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs, *Annual Report, 2016-17* (New Delhi, 2017), pp. 22-23.

52. Government of India, Ministry of Defence, *Annual Report, 2017-18* (New Delhi, 2019), p. 168.

53. Dinakar Peri, 'India, Maldives to take forward defence ties', *The Hindu*, 21 October 2019, https://www.the hindu.com/news/national/india-maldives-to-take-forward-defence-ties/article29751956.ece. Accessed on 21 October 2019.

54. Embassy of India, Kathmandu, Nepal, *About Defence*, http://www.indianembassy.org.np/index1.php? option=e6r5wlVM8od_u8Y0CdwsDiTfg0cohLLpEcNS8hphu-0&id=3CWw9BCDofdrmruend-0Mb77tSsVdGG_AXp9hgua2T4. Accessed on 5 November 2019.

55. S D Muni, 'Strategic Architecture in South Asia: Some Conceptual Parameters', op. cit., pp. 283-287.

56. Padmaja Murthy, 'India and Nepal: Security and economic dimensions', *Strategic Analysis*, Vol. 23, no. 9 (1999), p. 1534.

the IMM was 'downgraded' and regrouped as the Indian Military Training and Advisory Group (IMTAG) in 1958.[57]

Nepal was also one of the few countries with which India cemented a secret arms agreement. In 1965, India acquired a monopoly to provide arms and equipment to Nepal and a veto over Nepal's arms purchases from third countries. In 1969, the Nepal government cancelled the arms agreement with India and asked the government in New Delhi to withdraw the IMTAG and its military personnel from the Tibetan border.[58]

In 1988, Nepal purchased arms from China, which led to a further deterioration of the bilateral relations with India. During this period, problems over the renewal of the trade and transit treaty further stressed these relations, which culminated in India imposing a virtual economic blockade on Nepal in 1989.

Domestic tensions within Nepal finally led to the people's movement and democratic transition in the Himalayan kingdom in 1990. However, the relationship with its big neighbour in the South remained a controversial issue among Nepalese parties even after the democratic transition.[59] On the one hand, Nepal has close political, economic and cultural relations with India because of the open border and high levels of labour migration. On the other hand, many Nepalese fear the dependency on India and the potential compromise of their national interests as a result of this.

On its part, India is not only concerned by the growing Chinese influence in Nepal but also by the fact that the Himalayan state has been an entry point for anti-Indian actors and activities from Pakistan. Because of its geographical location, there have been reports that the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) has also been using Nepal as a springboard to support militant groups in India's Northeast.[60] Such concerns were highlighted when an Indian Airlines flight was hijacked in December 1999 while en route from Kathmandu to New Delhi. To secure the release of the hostages, India had to release three high-ranking militant leaders. This issue came into the public domain again when, in 2013, two leading terrorists – Abdul Karim Tunda, who was regarded as one of the chief ideologues of Lashkar-e-Taiba in Pakistan, and Yasin Bhatkal, who was

57.   Ibid, p. 1535.

58.   Ibid, p. 1536.

59.   Prashant Jha, 'Nepal's Maoist Leader Fires a Salvo at His Own Party Government', *The Hindu*, 27 March 2012, http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/nepals-maoist-leader-fires-a-salvo-at-his-own-party-government/article3248385.ece. Accessed on 10 October 2019.

60.   Padmaja Murthy, 'India and Nepal: Security and economic dimensions', *Strategic Analysis*, Vol. 23, no. 9 (1999), p. 1540.

believed to be a co-founder of the Indian Mujahideen – were arrested at the Nepal border.[61]

The Maoist rebellion against the monarchy and the subsequent democratically-elected government between 1996 and 2006 posed a special security challenge for India. Since the late 1960s, India has been confronted with a militant Maoist movement (Naxalites) of its own. This movement witnessed a revival in the late 1990s. As a result of the close links between the Maoists in Nepal and India, the government in New Delhi mediated between the monarchy, the democratic parties and the Maoists in Nepal. The three sides reached a peace agreement in 2006. When King Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev sought to reassert his authority vis-à-vis the other parties by suspending the Parliament in spring 2005, India imposed an arms embargo in an attempt to bring him back to the negotiating table. For India, the peace agreement was an important means of seeing if a negotiated settlement with Maoist groups within its own territories would be possible.

Despite the complex bilateral relationship, security relations have continuously improved. India trains a "substantial number" of Nepalese soldiers in its military institutions every year.[62] Both sides have agreed to closer collaboration in the fight against terrorism and have established a series of new institutions. These include the Nepal-India Bilateral Consultative Group on Security Issues; the Joint Working Group on Border Management; and the Border District Coordination Committee.[63] India has also supported the training and equipping of the Nepali Police. It has also deployed the Sashastra Seema Bal, which belongs to the Central Armed Police Forces under the Home Ministry, along the Nepal border. Various institutions have helped to establish formal and informal networks among the security agencies on both sides and have bolstered the fight against terrorism and counterfeit currencies.[64] In July 2013, India lifted its arms embargo and restarted the joint military exercises with

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61. Devesh K Pandey, '"LeT Ideologue" Tunda in Police Custody', *The Hindu*, 17 August 2013, http://www.the hindu.com/news/national/let-ideologue-tunda-in-police-custody/article5031691.ece. Accessed on 17 October 2019; and Rahi Gaikwad, 'Indian Mujahideen Co-founder Yasin Bhatkal Arrested', *The Hindu*, 29 August 2013, http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/indian-mujahideen-cofounder-yasin-bhatkal-arrested/article5070960.ece. Accessed on 29 October 2019.

62. Government of India, Ministry of Defence, *Annual Report, 2010-11* (New Delhi, 2011), p. 167.

63. Akanshya Shah, 'Nepal: Terrorist Arrests and Cooperation with India', *South Asia Weekly Report 6*, Observer Research Foundation, 6 September 2013, http://www.orfonline.org/research/nepal-terrorist-arrests-and-cooperation-with-india/. Accessed on 4 November 2019.

64. B Raman, 'Rise of Maoists in Nepal. Implications for India', *Indian Defence Review*, Vol. 23, no. 3 (July–September 2008), p. 128.

the Nepali army.[65] In 2017-18 itself, more than 250 personnel from the Nepali army received military training in India.[66]

Pakistan

Given the difficult bilateral relationship with India since 1947, it seems strange that Pakistan would also appear in this enumeration. The literature on the unending conflict between India and Pakistan far exceeds the contributions relating to the possibility of cooperation between the two states.[67]

However, despite four wars and various bilateral crises, both sides have also developed some confidence-building measures in the nuclear, conventional and non-conventional fields.[68] The development of security cooperation at different levels reflected the status of this bilateral relationship. After the third war in 1971, both sides agreed to set up a hotline between the Directors General of Military Operations (DGMOs) on the newly established Line of Control (LoC). At the 1988 SAARC Summit in Islamabad, Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto signed an agreement on exchanging a list of the nuclear installations that should not be attacked in the case of war. This became operational in 1992. Following the Brasstacks crisis of the late 1980s, both sides agreed in 1991 to announce military manoeuvres and large troop deployments.[69]

After Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's offer of new talks with Pakistan, both sides agreed on a ceasefire along the LoC in November 2003. This paved the way for a period of composite dialogue that began in February 2004 and came to an abrupt halt with the Mumbai attacks in November 2008. In their negotiations, India and Pakistan reached various agreements through which their bilateral relations improved. Both sides also introduced new agreements in the area of security. For instance, in May 2005, the Indian Coast Guard and the Pakistan Maritime Security Agency set up a hotline and agreed on an MoU to avoid incidents at sea.[70] In 2006, both countries agreed to give pre-

65. 'India to Resume Arms Supply to NA after 8-year Gap', *The Kathmandu Post*, 11 July 2013.

66. Government of India, Ministry of Defence, *Annual Report, 2017-18* (New Delhi, 2019), p. 169.

67. Sumit Ganguly, *Conflict Unending: India-Pakistan Tensions since 1947* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); and Stephen P Cohen, *Shooting for a Century: The India-Pakistan Conundrum* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2013).

68. For an overview on the different confidence-building measures, see Stimson Center, 'South Asia Confidence Building Measures (CBM) Timeline', https://www.stimson.org/content/south-asia-confidence-building-measures-cbm-timeline-0. Accessed on 4 November 2019.

69. 'Confidence-Building and Nuclear Risk-Reduction Measures in South Asia', *Stimson Research Pages*, 14 June 2012, https://www.stimson.org/content/confidence-building-and-nuclear-risk-reduction-measures-south-asia. Accessed on 4 November 2019.

70. Government of India, Ministry of Defence, *Annual Report 2005–06* (New Delhi, 2006), p. 198.

notification of test flights of ballistic missiles.[71] Furthermore, in 2007, they signed an agreement to reduce the risk of accidents with nuclear weapons.[72] In the same year, the first meeting of the Joint Anti-Terror Mechanism took place. Both sides have also shared information on terrorist attacks. This was the case with the Samjhauta Express in February 2007 and the attack on the Indian embassy in Kabul in the summer of 2008.[73]

However, the Mumbai terror attacks in November 2008 put an abrupt end to the composite dialogue. For a brief moment, the attack seemed to open up a new possibility for strengthening security collaboration when the Pakistani government announced that it would send the chief of the ISI to India to support the Indian authorities in examining the incident.[74] However, the visit did not materialise due to resistance within the armed forces in Pakistan.

With the new governments of Nawaz Sharif in Pakistan in 2013 and Modi in India in 2014, there were hopes for an improved bilateral relationship similar to that of the Vajpayee era. Modi invited the heads of states of all SAARC countries to his inauguration and, in late December 2015, he undertook a surprise visit to Pakistan. Despite the terror attack in Pathankot in early January 2016, which was seen as another attempt to undermine the rapprochement, Pakistan was permitted to send a team to India to investigate the attack.[75] In March 2016, India was warned by Pakistan about another impending attack by militants.[76]

However, the final collapse of the bilateral relationship came after the Uri attack in September 2016. India reacted with surgical strikes against terror camps on the Pakistani side of the LoC. As a result of the terror attack, India boycotted the planned SAARC Summit in Islamabad in October 2016. The other

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71.   'Agreement between India and Pakistan on Pre-Notification of Flight Testing of Ballistic Missiles', *Stimson Research Pages*, 24 October 2012, https://www.stimson.org/agreement-between-india-and-pakistan-on-pre-notification-of-flightes. Accessed on 4 November 2019.

72.   'Agreement on Reducing the Risk from Accidents Relating to Nuclear Weapons', *Stimson Research Pages*, 21 February 2007, https://www.stimson.org/agreement-on-reducing-the-risk-from-accidents-relating-to-nuclear-weap. Accessed on 4 November 2019.

73.   Shabana Fayyaz, 'Indo-Pak Joint Anti-Terrorism Mechanism. Perspectives from Pakistan', IPCS Issue Brief 126 (New Delhi: Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, 2009), http://www.ipcs.org/pdf_file/issue/IB126-Ploughshares-Shabhana.pdf. Accessed on 10 October 2019.

74.   'Zardari: If Evidence Points to Any Group in My Country, I Shall Take the Strictest Action', *The Hindu*, 30 November 2008, http://www.hindu.com/2008/11/30/stories/2008113059220900.htm. Accessed on 10 October 2019.

75.   Abdul Manan, 'Pathankot attack: Pakistan to send special investigation team to India', *The Express Tribune*, 13 January 2016, http://tribune.com.pk/story/1026743/pathankot-attack-pakistan-to-send-special-investigation-team-to-india. Accessed on 14 October 2019.

76.   Praveen Swami, 'Pakistan NSA warned Ajit Doval of 26/11-type hit on Maha Shivratri', *The Indian Express*, 7 March 2016, http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/delhi-gujarat-on-high-alert-following-terror-threat-security-beefed-up. Accessed on 1 October 2019.

SAARC members supported India's stance. India also revived the BIMSTEC grouping in order to isolate Pakistan on the regional level. Since then, India seems to have pursued a policy of decoupling from Pakistan. This was further underlined by the events following the Pulwama attack and the Balakot airstrike in the spring of 2019. Having said this, some of the military CBMs like the exchange of the list of nuclear installations or contacts between the DGMOs are still in place, although they have not helped to bring down violence.[77]

Sri Lanka

If Nepal has the longest experience of security cooperation with India, Sri Lanka has probably witnessed India's most comprehensive political and military engagement. The first noteworthy security collaboration with Sri Lanka took place in 1971 when India supported the government in Colombo in suppressing an armed leftist rebellion. India sent helicopters and its navy patrolled the southern coast of the island in order to obstruct the supply of arms for the rebels.[78]

In the conflict between the Sinhalese and the Sri Lankan Tamils, India had initially supported various militant Tamil groups. Since the mid-1980s, the Indian government mediated talks between different groups and the Sri Lankan government. In 1987, India and Sri Lanka signed an accord that deployed the IPKF to the northern and eastern parts of Sri Lanka. Its main task was to disarm the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The IPKF was India's first attempt to deploy Indian troops only on the basis of a bilateral agreement and without a mandate from the UN.[79] The deployment turned into a military and political fiasco for India as hostilities broke out between the IPKF and the LTTE. Moreover, domestic changes both in India and Sri Lanka weakened their political understanding. This resulted in both the government in Colombo and the LTTE turning against New Delhi. In March 1990, the last regiments left Sri Lanka. In 1991, the LTTE assassinated Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi during the election campaign in Tamil Nadu because it feared another intervention by India.

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77. 'Pakistan shares with India list of nuclear installations', *The Hindu*, 1 January 2019, https://www.thehindu. com/news/international/pakistan-shares-with-india-list-of-nuclear-installations/article25878532.ece. Accessed on 1 October 2019; Dinakar Peri, Mubashir Zaidi, 'India, Pakistan DGMOs discuss situation along LoC', *The Hindu* (5 June 2017), http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-pakistan-dgmos-discuss-situation-along-loc/article18722580.ece. Accessed on 4 October 2019; and Happymon Jacob, *Line On Fire: Ceasefire Violations and India-Pakistan Escalation Dynamics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press India, 2019).

78. Vijay Sakhuja, 'India and Sri Lanka. Towards a New Relationship', *Indian Defence Review*, Vol. 19, no. 4, October-December 2004, p. 158.

79. S D Muni, *Pangs of Proximity: India and Sri Lanka's Ethnic Crisis* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1993).

In the late 1980s, India stopped providing military supplies to Sri Lanka. It was only in 2000 that it started to send non-lethal equipment. This was after the LTTE launched successful attacks on the Sri Lankan army. India also gave an offshore patrol vessel to the Sri Lankan navy, which increased its surveillance capacity against the LTTE's maritime supply routes.[80]

During the 1990s, India's South Asia policy underwent a major change with the formulation of the 'Gujral Doctrine' and a stronger focus on economic cooperation as opposed to security issues. Therefore, India did not have any official role in the attempts initiated by Norway to mediate in the civil war in Sri Lanka. This process resulted in the ceasefire agreement of February 2002. A Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission, equipped mostly by observers from the Scandinavian countries, was set up to oversee the agreement. Four co-chairs – the European Union, the US, Norway and Japan – supported the peace process.

In October 2004, India and Sri Lanka agreed to expand their military cooperation in the fight against the LTTE's shipping fleet and its supply lines.[81] The close military and intelligence cooperation between Sri Lanka, India and other countries was important to sink the LTTE's supply vessels in 2006. In addition, India supported the training of the Sri Lankan police and its armed forces, besides providing military equipment.[82]

India welcomed the military defeat of the LTTE in May 2009. At the same time, because of its Tamil Nadu coalition partner, the government of the United Progressive Alliance in New Delhi also criticised the high number of civilian casualties in the final phase of the war that were attributed both to the LTTE and the Sri Lankan security forces, according to the UN Secretary-General's report.[83]

After the end of the civil war, the two countries further intensified their security cooperation. In 2011, New Delhi and Colombo agreed to hold an annual defence dialogue starting from 2012 and regular talks between their different military services. India also offered 1,400 places in its training institutions to Sri Lankan security forces and both naval forces conducted

80.   P K Ghosh, op. cit.

81.   Ministry of Defence and Urban Development, Sri Lanka, 'India's Naval Surveillance Big Help – FM', 30 December 2010, http://www.defence.lk/new.asp?fname=20080605_01. Accessed on 10 October 2019.

82.   V S Sambandan, 'Sri Lankan Police to Be Trained in India', *The Hindu*, 29 September 2005), http://www.hindu.com/2005/09/29/stories/2005092901211300.htm. Accessed on 29 October 2019.

83.   The United Nations, *Report of the Secretary-General's Internal Review Panel on United Nations Action in Sri Lanka* (New York, November 2012), http://www.un.org/News/dh/infocus/Sri_Lanka/The_Internal_Review_ Panel_report_on_Sri_Lanka.pdf. Accessed on 10 October 2019.

joint military exercises in Sri Lankan waters for the first time.[84] The training of Sri Lankan officers was, however, met with protests in Tamil Nadu and this forced the Indian defence ministry to send them back.[85] Furthermore, following protests from Tamil parties against India's voting behaviour in the UN Human Rights Council, the Indian government temporarily suspended the annual defence talks with Sri Lanka.[86] While India continued its policy of not supplying lethal weapons to Sri Lanka, it extended a US$100 million (S$145 million) credit line for non-lethal weapons.[87] Moreover, "[s]ince 2000, India has supplied 24 L-70 anti-aircraft guns, 11 Upgraded Super Fledermous Radar radars, 10 mine protected vehicles and 24 battlefield surveillance radars to Sri Lanka."[88] In January 2013, both sides signed an Anti-Terror Agreement which was followed by more information sharing.[89]

Since the defeat of the LTTE in 2009, India and Sri Lanka have improved and enhanced their security collaboration to an unprecedented level. Overall, India's support for the training of the Sri Lankan forces seems to be substantial. Nearly 80 per cent of Sri Lanka's officers complete part of their training in India.[90] In fact, in 2015-16, Sri Lankan air force personnel filled 367 of a total of 889 vacancies reserved by the Indian air force for friendly foreign countries.[91] Two advanced offshore patrol vessels were built for the Sri Lankan navy in 2016 in Goa.[92] Expanding on such co-operation, both sides agreed that security cooperation should include all three services at the Defence Dialogue in 2018. Data reveals that, in 2017-18, more than 1,750 personnel from the Sri Lankan security forces received military training in Indian institutions.[93]

84. R K Radhakrishnan, 'India Offers Training Slots for Sri Lankan Military Personnel', *The Hindu*, 28 December 2010, http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/india-offers-training-slots-for-sri-lankan-military-personnel/article1011469.ece. Accessed on 14 October 2019.

85. 'All Sri Lankan Trainees to Be Sent Off Today: Defence Ministry', *The Economic Times*, 6 July 2012), http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2012-07-06/news/32566225_1_sri-lankan-air-defence-ministry-tamils. Accessed on 14 October 2019.

86. Vinay Kumar and Sandeep Dikshit, 'Defence Dialogue with Sri Lanka Called Off', *The Hindu*, 18 March 2013, http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/defence-dialogue-with-sri-lanka-called-off/article4522570.ece. Accessed on 14 October 2019.

87. P K Ghosh, op. cit., p. 285

88. Ibid, p. 285.

89. 'India, Sri Lanka Sign Anti-terror, Tax Evasion Pacts', *The Hindu*, 22 January 2013, http://www.thehindu. com/news/national/india-sri-lanka-sign-antiterror-tax-evasion-pacts/article4332894.ece. Accessed on 16 October 2019.

90. Meera Srinivasan, 'Navy Cadets of India, Sri Lanka Speak the Same Language', *The Hindu*, 20 April 2013, http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/south-asia/navy-cadets-of-india-sri-lanka-speak-the-same-language/article4636943.ece. Accessed on 16 October 2019.

91. Government of India, Ministry of Defence, *Annual Report 2015-16* (New Delhi, 2016), p. 136.

92. Government of India, Ministry of Defence, *Annual Report, 2016-17* (New Delhi, 2017), p. 173.

93. Government of India, Ministry of Defence, *Annual Report, 2017-18* (New Delhi, 2019), p. 171.

The Regional Level

Security considerations had initially played an important role when Bangladesh floated the idea of a regional organisation in the late 1970s. The idea was that the smaller South Asian countries could use a regional institution as a bulwark against India. However, when the SAARC was established in 1985, contentious issues like security were excluded from its agenda. Nonetheless, there have been several instances when member states have used the SAARC summit meetings to informally discuss bilateral conflicts such as the tensions between India and Pakistan or the Tamil issue in Sri Lanka.

Although security is a common concern, the SAARC has developed few instruments for closer cooperation in this field. Although a Regional Convention on Suppression of Terrorism was passed in 1987, it remained a toothless document because India and Pakistan could not agree on a common definition of terrorism. Following the UN Declaration 1373 of 28 September 2001, which asked all states to intensify their cooperation against terrorism, the SAARC passed the Additional Protocol to the SAARC Regional Convention on Terrorism.

In order to fight transnational crime, the interior ministers of member states established the SAARC Drug Offences Monitoring Desk in Colombo in 1992 to collate, analyse and disseminate information about the regional drug trafficking networks. Following this, the SAARC Terrorist Offences Monitoring Desk was set up in Colombo in 1995 to collect and exchange information on terrorist activities.[94] In 1996, anti-crime cooperation was further strengthened when the heads of police of the SAARC member countries started annual meetings to discuss cross-border crime and illegal activities like arms, drugs, human-trafficking and money laundering. As these meetings were seen to be successful, they were formally organised on a biannual basis after 2007.[95] In fact, in 2006, member states even discussed the idea of establishing the SAARC Police, a common regional police institution that would work along the lines of the Interpol.[96]

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94. SAARC Secretariat, 'SAARC Terrorist Offences Monitoring Desk (STOMD)', http://saarc-sec.org/areaof cooperation/detail.php?activity_id=24. Accessed on 18 October 2019.

95. SAARC Secretariat, 'SAARC Conference on Cooperation in Police Matters', http://saarc-sec.org/areaof cooperation/detail.php?activity_id=20. Accessed on 18 October 2019; and 'SAARC Home Ministers' Conference Concludes', *The Economic Times*, 25 October 2007, http://articles. economictimes.indiatimes. com/2007-10-25/news/27667901_1_saarc-home-ministers-islamabad-assistance-in-criminal-matters. Accessed on 23 October 2019.

96. 'Rare Blend. Regional Police Force, SAARCPOL, May Become a Reality Soon', *Force*, September 2012, http://www.forceindia.net/SepCoverstory14.aspx. Accessed on 23 October 2019.

Although the member states recognise and identify common problems in the fields of terrorism and organised crime, noteworthy progress has been hampered by political considerations. For instance, all member states agreed on the SAARC Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters in 2008 but no member has ratified the Convention yet. The overall context of the SAARC remains too weak for security cooperation to get a fresh impetus.[97]

In light of the above, the BIMSTEC has emerged as the more attractive regional platform to promote security cooperation for India. In response to the Uri attack in September 2016, India boycotted the SAARC Summit in Islamabad. As the other South Asian countries supported the Indian boycott, the summit was postponed. The Indian government subsequently employed the BIMSTEC Summit in Goa in November 2016 to forge a regional consensus on terrorism. Firstly, it invited Afghanistan and the Maldives, which were not members of the BIMSTEC but of the SAARC. Secondly, the outcome document of the BIMSTEC Goa Summit underlined the joint commitment against terrorism and emphasised India's efforts to foster security cooperation in the region.[98]

In March 2017, the national security advisors of the BIMSTEC member states met for the first time to discuss common security challenges, including cross-border terrorism.[99] Developing upon this, the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses in New Delhi organised the first BIMSTEC Track 1.5 Security Dialogue Forum in September 2017.[100] It is important to note here that the Kathmandu Declaration of the 4th BIMSTEC summit in 2018 emphasised, among other issues, the need for closer cooperation in security and counter-terrorism. Moreover, it was decided that regular meetings of the BIMSTEC home ministers would be held with a view to encouraging further collaboration in the field of security. After the summit, India held a military exercise for the BIMSTEC member states on counterterrorism.[101] These initiatives underline

97. Sumit Ganguly, *Counterterrorism Cooperation in South Asia: History and Prospects* (Seattle: National Bureau of Asian Research, 2009, NBR Reports 21); and Sandy Gordon, 'Regionalism and Cross-Border Cooperation against Crime and Terrorism in the Asia-Pacific', *Security Challenges*, Vol. 5, no. 4 (Summer 2009), pp. 93-94.

98. 'BIMSTEC Leaders' Retreat 2016 Outcome Document', *Website of Narendra Modi* (17 October 2016), http://www.narendramodi.in/bimstec-leaders-retreat-2016-outcome-document-532768. Accessed on 25 October 2019.

99. Dipanjan Roy Chaudhury, 'BIMSTEC National Security Advisers strive to create common security space amid rising multiple threats', *The Economic Times*, 22 March 2017, http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/ news/defence/bimstec-national-security-advisers-strive-to-create-common-security-space-amid-rising-multiple-threats/articleshow/57766714.cms. Accessed on 25 October 2019.

100. Government of India, Ministry of Defence, *Annual Report, 2017-18* (New Delhi, 2019), p. 177.

101. Government of India, Ministry of Defence, *Annual Report, 2018-19* (New Delhi, 2019), pp. 2-3 and p. 23.

India's interest in giving regional security cooperation greater prominence in the BIMSTEC architecture as compared to the SAARC.

Besides traditional regional organisations like the SAARC and BIMSTEC, India has also established new minilateral initiatives with some of its neighbours. The most prominent is the trilateral agreement among India, the Maldives and Sri Lanka on closer cooperation in fighting piracy, terrorist networks and trafficking signed in 2013.[102] Since then, coast guards of these three countries have conducted regular joint military exercises.[103]

In the context of sub-regional cooperation within the SAARC, the Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal (BBIN) initiative has gained more importance in recent years.[104] A major achievement was reached in 2015 when the four countries signed a Motor Vehicles Agreement to increase road access and connectivity. Such closer sub-regional collaboration may further spur debates over the need for a more integrated border management that may, in turn, give a new impetus to security cooperation.[105]

The Indian Ocean will become another theatre in which India will promote closer security cooperation among like-minded South Asian countries. As part of Modi's SAGAR strategy, the Indian navy set up the Information Fusion Centre-Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR) in 2018 for better information exchange. India's National Security Advisor Ajit Doval also invited the other South Asian littoral states to join the IFC-IOR.[106] Although the main focus is the Indian Ocean, the IFC-IOR can become another building block to enhance security cooperation among the South Asian countries.

102. Vijay Sakhuja, *Maritime Security and Piracy: Issues, Responses and Multilateral Cooperation in South Asia* (Berlin: Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, 2013, EU-Asia Dialogue, Research Paper); Government of India, Ministry of Defence, *Annual Report 2014-15* (New Delhi, 2015), p. 49; and Meera Srinivasan, 'Indian Ocean Security Pact Signed', *The Hindu*, 9 July, 2013, http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/south-asia/indian-ocean-security-pact-signed/article4898042.ece. Accessed on 28 October 2019.

103. Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs, *Annual Reports, 2016-17* (New Delhi, 2017), p. 23; 'Trilateral joint exercise Dosti-14 to commence Nov. 26', *Maldives Times*, 26 November 2018, https://maldivestimes.com/trilateral-joint-exercise-dosti-14-to-commence-nov-26/. Accessed on 16 October 2019.

104. Tariq Karim, Madhumita Srivastava Balaji, *BBIN: Paradigm Change in South Asia* (New Delhi, 2016, VIF Issue Brief).

105. Joyeeta Bhattacharjee, 'Enhancing Border Management Cooperation for BBIN', 12 July 2016, https://www.orfonline.org/research/enhancing-border-management-cooperation-for-bbin/. Accessed on 16 October 2019.

106. Dinakar Peri, 'India starts sharing maritime data', *The Hindu*, 6 October 2019, https://www.thehindu.com/ news/national/india-starts-sharing-maritime-data/article29611936.ece. Accessed on 6 October 2019.

Prospects: India as a Regional Security Provider

The brief overview of India's security collaboration with its South Asian neighbours shows a clear quantitative and qualitative increase in recent years. Some long-term trends are also becoming visible. Firstly, China was, is and will most probably remain India's main security concern in the region. However, the 'Chinese threat' has not provided the basis for the formation of sustained security cooperation between India and its neighbours. Indeed, all its neighbours have played the 'China card' in order to balance India. In contrast, the fight against cross-border terrorism has developed into a second and more sustained pillar of India's regional security efforts.[107] Secondly, it is clear that India's main advantage is its training capacity for military personnel from the neighbouring countries. Since the 2000s, there seems to be a steady increase in the training of military personnel. There have also been more joint exercises, high-level military exchanges and defence talks between India and its neighbours. Thirdly, it is noteworthy that arms exports did not play a major role in India's regional security collaboration so far. To overcome this, the Modi government has developed innovative mechanisms like the sale of helicopters to Afghanistan and the leasing of a surveillance plane to the Maldives. Modi's 'Make in India' programme aims at a stronger domestic defence production with the long-term goal of increasing India's arms exports as well.[108]

More broadly, as security collaboration is always embedded in the context of the overall bilateral relationship India has with individual countries, changes in the domestic political environment can have negative repercussions in the field of security. This is why security cooperation has witnessed abrupt changes in the past. This is clearly exemplified in the case of India's relations with Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. It is also important to remember that security cooperation is an important balancing instrument for recipient countries. China's massive investments in South Asia with the BRI will increase its political, economic and military footprint in the region. In some cases, the smaller states may now be more inclined to increase their security cooperation with India in order to balance China.

The new focus on cross-border terrorism as a common ground for security cooperation indicates an important change. South Asia has a long history of active or silent support and approval of states to use militant groups as an instrument to pursue foreign policy goals. While Pakistan is the most

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107. Smruti S Pattanaik and Nihar Nayak, op. cit., p. 67.

108. Dinakar Peri, 'India did not use capabilities in defence after Independence: Modi', *The Hindu*, 5 February 2020, https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/our-target-is-5-billion-of-defence-export-in-next-five-years-modi/article30741843.ece. Accessed on 5 February 2020.

prominent example of this, India too has used this tool in the 1980s vis-à-vis Sri Lanka. Militant groups are, however, difficult to control and their activities have often backfired on their host countries. Hence, governments seem to have become much more committed towards looking for bilateral or regional mechanisms to cope with cross-border militancy.

Using the theoretical framework of Tow and Taylor discussed above, India's efforts can be seen as an attempt to establish a regional security architecture against terrorism. The fact that the issue of terrorism is highlighted in nearly all official documents and declarations demonstrates that the fight against terrorism has become the 'overarching' topic in India's relations with its neighbours. The 'coherence' is reflected in the topic being emphasised not only at the bilateral level but also at the regional context. The new emphasis on security in regional organisations like the BIMSTEC and IORA clearly point in this direction. The BBIN initiative could be the next. The 'comprehensive' dimension of the security architecture is evident because the fight against terrorism does not only include political proclamations but also concrete efforts to improve and expand security cooperation as well as establish new bilateral and regional legal frameworks in the fight against militancy.

Needless to say, this kind of architecture always remains a work in progress. Given the geographical structure of South Asia with India at the centre, security arrangements are mostly bilateral rather than trilateral or multilateral. Thus, despite common commitments, the security architecture remains dependent on the overall context of the respective bilateral relations. In addition, security cooperation may also be hampered by the lack of capacities in the police and judicial systems in many South Asian countries.

However, despite these challenges, the new forms of security cooperation discussed in this publication indicate that the threat perceptions of many South Asian governments are slowly converging. Today, security in South Asia is increasingly sought through inter-state cooperation rather than confrontation. This is a welcome development in a region that has long been characterised as a region of "chronic instability". While this may be a small step, it is nevertheless an important achievement. It signals a major departure from the past and may open up new avenues for a more stable and peaceful South Asian region.

About the Author

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