Role of Cohesive Non- State Actors in India-Pakistan Relations: A Case Study of SAARC as a Regional Organization

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Abstract

Pakistan and India have wanted 69 years in a state of hostility. They have fought four wars with each other. Both countries could not resolve their conflicts, especially Kashmir and other issues. There are various factors working to normalize their relations and some are responsible to aggravate the situations. Among them are non-state actors who are cohesive and coercive in their working. Cohesive non state actors may include international and regional and non-governmental organizations. South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) as a regional organization in South Asia could not achieve its objectives to integrate the region. South Asia remains the only place where despite the existence of a regional organization SAARC since 1985, regional integration still seems a distant dream. It has been cited as the most dangerous place with the ever-present threat of terrorism, escalation of a nuclear war, civil wars, intractable boundary disputes, unending bloodshed and ethnic and sectarian violence. This article aims at to examin the role of non-state actors with particular focus on SAARC and its role as a regional organization in Pakistan-India relations. The descriptive analysis reveals that this organization proves to be failed in improving the relationship between both the

countries. The analysis is confined to two states of South Asia i.e. India and Pakistan.

Introduction

Towards the end of the 20th century, the world witnessed an unprecedented increase in the number of states and as well as non-state actors. Though mushrooming of states was largely due to the wave of self-determination and also through the process of decolonization but emergence of non-state actors and their strengthened global standing presented a peculiar situation. Due to their nascent form, non-state actors offer little understanding of their potential, nature and future proclivities. Globalization has precipitated and stirred up non-traditional threats have made non-state actors relevant as states lack the skills, means and opportunity to address 21st century problems. International relations can be synonymously taken as a stage where actors are huddled together to put a show for its audience. It is pertinent to draw a distinctive line between a state and a non-state actor.

State: A state as a politically organized unit has existed since times immemorial. The ancient Greeks categorized such organized communities as "polls" while the Romans called it "civitas" however the Latin term 'status' transformed into State. According to one definition: "A state is an organized political community living under a single system of government. Furthermore a state can be understood as a "community of people, occupying a different territory, organized under a government that is supreme over all persons and associations within its territory and independent of all foreign control or power" (Haq, 2009) Hence it is imperative that for an entity to be classified as a state.

Non-State Actors: Before going into detailed analysis of Pakistan-India relations in the context of Non-State Actors, it is pertinent to explain non state actors. Non state actors are defined as entities composed of individuals or groups that exert significant political, economic and social power and they not only influence national policy making but can also alter international policy

making trends. They do not belong to any single country but they are set on a pattern that can affect state interests. According to Pearlman and Cunningham, non-state actors are defined as "an organized political actor not directly connected to the state but pursual aims that affect vital state interests" (Pearlman &Cunningham, 2011). Since the end of cold war non- state actors have persistently emerged and evolved into an organized political actor which has shaken the centuries old Westphalia system where state was the only supreme actor. Where once state was the sole decision maker to challenge, threat or coerce in the international realm non state actors have surprisingly dethroned the state. International relations have reached a point of no return where sovereign states may never be able to regain their former crowning glory status as non-state actors have taken over the world by a storm. The present situation can be mirrored by a famous Latin phrase *Alea iacta est* ("The die is cast") uttered by Suetonius to Julius Caesar in 49 BC as he led his army across the River Rubicon in Northern Italy. In a similar vein, the die has been cast where state sovereignty is gravely challenged and non-state actors are here to stay. Generally non state actors are classified as coercive and benign actors depending on their inclinations but the following kinds of coercive and cohesive non-state actors have emerged on the national and international stage:

- International Organizations (IGOs)

- Multinational Corporations (MNC)

- Non- Governmental Organizations (NGO)

- International Media

- Religious Groups

- Transnational Diaspora Communities

- Terrorist and Criminal Networks

- Drug Cartels

Literature Review

Delinić in his article "SAARC – 25 Years of Regional Integration in South Asia" has dismissed SAARC to be cited as a model for regional integration or for a source of peace building as the region is still fraught with intractable internal and external disputes. Furthermore he has declared Afghanistan as a headache of the region and is of the opinion that India's dominant position also hampers any progress towards regionalization. But he has also raised a valid point that SAARC should not be compared to other regional organizations may it be ASEAN, MERCOSER, NAFTA or European Union because South Asian countries came together to form SAARC amid an environment of uncertainty and at a very ominous time. Although SAARC tells a dismal tale of failures and few successes. The author concludes his article with an optimistic note that SAARC has a potential if and only developments are made towards building confidence among its members and if India being the region's heavy weight plays its role in subsiding the fear factor.

Hashmi in her article "SAARC: Towards Meaningful Cooperation" has argued about the reasons of low levels of integration in South Asia despite the existence of an organization since 1985. In order to examine the pattern of regionalism she has scrutinized the problem through a theory called 'regional security community theory'. The theory illustrates that war and violence becomes an unlikely feature in a security community. Hashmi has cited Karl Deutsch's definition of a security community which refers to a group of people driven by common interests. Unlike other articles Hashmi had devoted a separate part of her article to define a region. Going by the theory of security community geographical proximities are prone to security dilemmas where threat perceptions are connected that give rise to security complex structures. On a similar note, Hashmi has asserted that South Asia as a security community has to suffer from innumerable security dilemmas which are worsened due to porous borders, governance issues and owing to political and economic discontent.

Jabeen, Mazhar and Goraya in their collective research "SAARC and Indo-Pak Relationship" have outlined that how SAARC has motivated states to strengthen their mutual relations and about the role of SAARC in constructing means and measures of collaboration between the immortal enemies India and Pakistan. The article contains a detailed account of the performance of SAARC in forging friendly relations through conducting several Summit meetings which give an opportunity of corridor talks and establishment of back door diplomacy for the arch rivals. The authors reckon that SAARC is the first step of a long journey towards regional integration among the aloof states of South Asia.

In his brief but comprehensive article "Sovereignty vs Security: SAARC and its role in the regional security architecture in South Asia" Arndt Michael has traced the history of the formation of SAARC and its evolution as a regional organization. The author has bluntly stated that the organization had the potential to fulfill its objectives but it was thwarted by the institutional makeup of SAARC which is highly overshadowed by Indian supremacy. Hence in order to ensure an effective role of SAARC in the regional as well as in international politics it is of utmost importance that undue influence of one state which is India should be reduced and proper framework should be introduced for mutual consensus among member states.

Theoretical Framework

In order to validate the arguments, put forward in the article by several authors who are adamant that in a highly inter-connected and inter-dependent world, it has become pertinent that states should cooperate with each other for common welfare. And in this regard international organizations provide a laudable platform to enhance cooperation by minimizing differences and instigating means to greater unity and solidarity. Also in the face of growing challenges it has become increasingly difficult to remain isolated whilst the issues are far dangerous for a state to deal alone.

David Mitrany was a Romanian born political scientist who strived throughout his life to develop an approach that could help bring social peace and prosperity in the war torn world. Hence, during the inter- war period (1920-1939) he came up with a theory of 'Functionalism' which posited that state has almost become obsolete and owing to the erosion of sovereignty a surge of integration has taken over. By which the phenomenon of collective governance and interdependence between states will take place in a matter where states coordinate in limited or functional areas. This will further lead up to a coordination mechanism where states expand their areas of cooperation.

In a similar vein applying this theory to the South Asian region which has been brimming with wars, violence and unending disputes can usher an era of hope where SAARC provides an ample opportunity for functional cooperation. Once the states have disentangled themselves from decade long differences it would clear a path towards high level of cooperation in other fields and in a cyclic manner it will continue till these South Asian states will be able to identify themselves with a common identity and future.

Role of Non State Actors

The Westphalian state dominated system has been fractured and now lies in shambles. International relations have undergone a traumatic and tumultuous transformation due to the unprecedented growth of non-state actors resulting from globalization. World politics is now largely scrutinized through the lens of global governance as a more inter-connected world demands collective actions to address common and global issues. In today's globalized world the state has become irrelevant as the borders have become permeable and state authority and supremacy is challenged. The reason behind this bold assertion regarding the irrelevance of state is based on the relative decline and irrelevance of sovereignty as the age of complex interdependence has made territorial borders inapt and extraneous.

Similarly, in the words of former UN secretary Kofi Anan the world is in danger and faces a daunting array of issues that he dubbed as "problems without passports". Amid such an uncertain and hazardous time a state becomes impotent and feeble and this inability to act or decide further strengthens the conviction that the state centric model has become outdated and is in dire need of revision. This void is filled by non-state actors who have assumed a central position in policy making and policy execution in order to address global issues which are beyond a single states capability to handle (McGann & Johnstone, 2005).

According to Brown and Millers classification non-state actors can be broadly divided into two types:

- International intergovernmental organizations (IGOs)

- Transnational or Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

IGOs are non-state actors that are created by nation states and are officially registered by governments (Brown, 1995; Miller, 1994). They are created through treaties, agreements and negotiations reflecting state interests, inclinations and preferences. In order to maximize benefits states voluntarily come together to form associations that can help in realizing individual state interests through collective action. IGOs are further classified by:

- Scope (global level and regional level)

- Function (political, economic, human rights activism, environmental)

Although it is believed that IGOs are the product of the post-Westphalian system where state is no longer the supreme actor as their power has been dissolved and their role diminished but in

reality the powerful states are capable enough to dictate the proceedings and overrule the weaker states. Hence it can be asserted that IGOs in most cases can also act as instruments of powerful states (Miller, 1994). Despite the criticism of being the puppet of powerful states IGOs have provided states a platform that enhances means of cooperation and communication gaps. While the latter category of non-state actors are materialized through the efforts of individuals and other civil society forces and are not representative of any single nation state rather they are self-righteous organizations established with the aim of nipping all the evils in the bud. Most often their highlighted aims and objectives are idealistic in nature. As they are not associated with any state they are declared as truly transnational.

The perceptive notion that the state is handicapped to respond effectively to the eruption of political, economic and social challenges arising out of technological advancement, complex interdependence and political fault lines has further enhanced the legitimacy of non-state actors. Above all, the unfolding of transnational and non-traditional threats in the form of endemic diseases, climatic disasters and the spread of Weapons of Mass destruction (WMDs) call for a unified, collective and a coordinated action to address these global issues effecting and threatening big and small powers equally. Hence the proliferation of non-state actors has been largely fuelled by an amalgamation of the following inter-related forces:

1. Growth of state, non-state and sub-state actors

2. Revolution in communication technologies enhancing connectivity

3. Acceptance of democratic system as a universally viable governance system

4. Globalization of funding that is bridging the gap between North and South

5. Growing demand for reliable and quick information (McGann & Johnstone, 2005)

IGOs (regional as well as international) are primarily concerned with to fulfill the following functions:

- Information gathering and analysis

- Policy making and its execution

- Agenda setting

- Facilitator of state interactions

- Monitors rules, norms and principles of international institutes and regimes (Ataman, 2000)

- Acts as a mediator in conflict management and resolution

Case Study: SAARC as a Regional Organization

The southern region of the Asian continent is termed as South Asia and conjoins West Asia, Central Asia, East Asia and South East   Asia. Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka together make up South Asia. South Asia is home to about 25% of the world's population and accounts as the most populated regions of the world (Encyclopedia Britannica). In terms of population South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) is the largest regional organization. SAARC is the true representative organization of its region containing all the members of the region (Uphadyay, 2007). The idea of SAARC was a brain child of the former Bangladeshi President Zia ur Rehman and was established on December 8, 1985 by Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka (Uphadyay, 2007). Afghanistan is the newest member that joined in 2007. SAARC being the only regional organization of South Asia has an ambitious set of objectives to fulfill:

- It aims to promote the general well being of the people of South Asia.

- It aims to improve the living standard of the south Asian people.

- It is desirous of speeding up economic prosperity, social progress and cultural development

- It aims to forge better communication links among its member states

- It aims to promote mutual collaboration in the fields of economy, culture and science (Uphadyay, 2007).

Inspired from the regional wave that swept the once distraught countries of Europe into a single entity European Union, SAARC in comparison is an organization that has a yawning difference between its promises and performance. Despite common historical backgrounds, cultural affinities and geographical proximity member states of SAARC are least integrated as a region. Declared as the most dangerous place on earth with the ever present threat of a nuclear war, escalating terrorism, burning ethnic issues bringing peace and stability to the south Asian region is without a doubt a Herculean task.

The main obstacle behind forging an effective regional bloc has been estranged Indo-Pak relations. This enmity between the two major regional powers is like a hanging sword of Damocles that hinders peace and stability to take root in the region (Delinić, 2011). Although the charter of SAARC has clearly ruled out addressing politically contentious issues through bilateral means but it offers ample opportunities for informal 'corridor talks' through the summits and official ministerial meetings (Uphadyay, 2007). Following section deals with the role of SAARC in facilitating the 'corridor talks' between India and Pakistan through successive decades:

Decade of 1980s

The creation of SAARC in 1985 heralded a new age of goodwill and understanding among the member states to cooperate for regional prosperity and development. Although India and Pakistan were apprehensive of this joint venture as both were embroiled in running battles. Indo-Pak relations reached a new low in the 80s in the backdrop of the nuclear test of India in 1974, Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the ensuing Siachin dispute (Aljazeera, 2014). Hence, amid this political chaos SAARC provided the opportunity for the bitter enemies to have an informal and behind the scenes summit talks at the 1st SAARC summit held in 1985 in Dhaka (Harvard Asia Quarterly, 2003). The head of states of India and Pakistan PM Rajiv Gandhi and President Zia ul Haq despite the thorny issues discussed bilateral problems and thereafter publicly agreed to refrain from striking each other's nuclear facilities and arsenals. Similarly, 2nd SAARC summit held in 1986 in Bangalore provided a chance to the Premiers of both nations Rajiv Gandhi and Muhammad Khan Junejo to exchange their views on the cataclysmic effects of exercise Brasstacks conducted on the Indo-Pak border (Aljazeera, 2014). This show of strength from both sides could have resulted into a hot war but timely negotiations subverted the chances of war. After the withdrawal of the border forces, bilateral relations between the two countries markedly improved and they signed a pact "Agreement on the Prohibition of Attack against Nuclear Installations and Facilities" as a confidence building measure (Harvard Asia Quarterly, 2003). Along with this pact both states agreed to provide prior notification before conducting any military exercises or troop movements (Aljazeera, 2014).

Decade of 1990s

Despite the blame game of proxy wars and allegations of Pakistan's support towards the Kashmiri insurgents the Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and his Indian counterpart Chandra Shekhar joined hands at the 5th SAARC summit held in 1990 in Male and pledged to solve all disputes through bilateral means.

During the same meeting they agreed to hold regular meetings of foreign secretaries and high officials to discuss contentious issues affecting both states (Harvard Asia Quarterly, 2003). As soon as Inder Kumar Gujral assumed power as the Foreign Minister and later as the Prime Minister of India he persistently advocated the approach of bilateralism in South Asia to generate a climate of closer cooperation in the region. He also formulated a doctrine of five principles dubbed as the 'Gujral Doctrine' which emphasized on the principle of non-reciprocity. But sadly due to apprehensions the doctrine could not serve its purpose (Jabeen, Mazhar & Goraya, 2009). But it has been asserted by a South Asian historian Dietmar Rothermund that the the 9th summit held in Male in 1997 was a crucial meeting as it helped in starting a dialogue between the two states (Harvard Asia Quarterly, 2003).

Meanwhile the nuclear tests conducted by India and Pakistan on 11th and 28th May 1998 respectively proved to be a watershed in the aspirations for regional collaboration and cooperation. And the following 10th SAARC summit held in July 1998 in Colombo was overshadowed with doubts about the working mechanisms of SAARC as the newly nuclear armed states of India and Pakistan had greatly disturbed the regional balance of power. Amid the chaotic and uncertain environment Lahore Declaration was more like a breath of fresh air. Signed by Premier Nawaz Sharif and Atal Bihari Vajpayi on 21st February 1999 it was a governance treaty between India and Pakistan to avoid intentional or accidental nuclear wars. But this euphoria soon ended with the Kargil Debacle of 1998 which was a disastrous armed conflict and eroded d most of the diplomatic gains.

Decade of 2000

With the beginning of the new millennium the countries of SAARC were tangled in the tentacles of terrorism and intractable disputes. Due to India's intervention the 10th SAARC summit got delayed and was rescheduled to be held in Kathmandu, Nepal (Jan, 2002). Member states pledged to strengthen the organization by working together to make it more cohesive,

productive and forward looking through effective execution and implementation of strategies and goals (Uphadyay, 2007).

Deeply conscious of the growing interdependence in other regions, South Asian countries came together in Islamabad for the 12th SAARC summit and signed the SAFTA (South Asian Free Trade Agreement) agreement and that would facilitate cross border movement of goods (Delinić, 2011). Further this summit meeting was also crucial with respect to improvement in Indo-Pak relations. President Musharraf also formulated a four-fold strategy as a diplomatic tool to negotiate with India. The strategy concerned the following areas:

- Kashmir Denuclearization of South Asia

- Peace and Security

- Economic Cooperation

- Denuclearization of South Asia

Subsequent summits were held in Dhaka (2005), New Delhi (2007), Colombo (2008), Thimpu (2010), Addu City of Maldives (2011) and Kathmandu (2014).They facilitated back channel diplomacy between India and Pakistan to ease tensions. Up till now only 18 SAARC summits have taken place and a general overview of these occasional meetings illustrates that SAARC has not been able to live up to the expectations of a true regional organization. Only few achievements could be attributed to SAARC otherwise its performance is highlighted with disappointments and failed attempts of forging cordial relations among the member countries.

Conclusion

Although states still retain a central position in international relations but the power has been diffused and non-state actors are increasingly exerting their influence in world politics and its

conduct. In a similar vein, a wave of regionalism came to the fore owing to complex interdependence and globalization which facilitated the formation of numerous regional groupings across the world. One such regional group was SAARC established in 1985 in the backdrop of mistrust and apprehension. Despite its failed approach to bring peace between the warring countries: India and Pakistan, SAARC has provided both the countries ample opportunities to reconcile their differences and to act towards regional cooperation. Hence, SAARC's greatest achievement is the summit meetings in which India and Pakistan despite ongoing tensions could initiate back channel diplomacy. On a pessimistic note SAARC could become obsolete if its organizational structure is not strengthened to an extent to which it can address grave issues facing South Asia.

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