

### Security cooperation in South Asia: overview, reasons, prospects

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# SWP Research Paper

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## Security Cooperation in South Asia

Overview, Reasons, Prospects

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## **Security Cooperation in South Asia Overview, Reasons, Prospects**

South Asia continues to be one of the most important crisis regions in the 21st century. It is characterized by an interlocking web of old and new security risks. There are unresolved territorial disputes such as Kashmir and the recognition of the Durand Line; the proliferation of nuclear technology; a broad range of ethnic, religious, and left-wing rebellions that have links to regional and global terrorist groups connected with organized crime; and the unpredictable repercussions of climate change, which could turn one of the poorest regions in the world into a tinderbox.

In contrast to Southeast and Central Asia, there are no regional organizations for security cooperation so far. But a closer look reveals a variety of forms of security collaboration between India and its neighbors, but they have yet to be included in academic and political discussions. The present study offers an initial overview of existing forms of security cooperation in the region. Moreover, it elaborates various reasons for the collaboration and future prospects. The main starting point is that regional security has to first be provided by affected states in the region rather than by extra-regional powers. The main findings are:

1. There is more security cooperation among member countries of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) than is visible in the political and academic debates. The collaboration is mostly bilateral and depends on the overall relationship between India and its neighbors.

2. The most important reason for the expansion of security cooperation is probably the change in India's South Asia policy since the 1990s. India has been willing to make unilateral concessions in bilateral conflicts and in economic cooperation. Today, India pursues its security interests through cooperation with its neighbors and no longer by interfering in their domestic affairs. A related factor is that most governments in South Asia see the biggest threats coming from domestic challenges, such as various ethnic, religious, and communist rebellions, rather than from external forces, for instance from India, as was the case in the 1980s and 1990s. Hence, national security perceptions have converged, thereby opening the door for more security cooperation.

3. Because of the different types of conflicts in South Asia, an institutionalization of security cooperation on the regional level, such as that exhibited by the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), is not very likely to develop in this region. Regional security architecture will be characterized by a network of different forms of collaboration.

4. Extra-regional powers such as China and the United States have intensified their economic and security relations with South Asian countries. But they have only limited interest in becoming involved in the various domestic conflicts. Therefore, military cooperation with extra-regional powers is not an obstacle for security collaboration among South Asia countries.

5. Given the complex security situation in the region, Germany and the European Union (EU) also have a high interest in fostering the process of security cooperation. Although a multilateral security framework is missing, existing bilateral cooperation offers a variety of entry points to support security collaboration in this part of Asia. The improvement of the national security architecture and its democratic control is one of the most important areas. Most security agencies in the region have been confronted with allegations of human rights violations. Moreover, the enforcement of the rule of law is impeded by deficits in the infrastructure of the courts and law enforcement agencies. In the context of bilateral cooperation, Germany and the EU can improve the national security architecture in South Asia, which at the same time may also contribute indirectly to better regional collaboration in this field.

# In Search of Security Cooperation in South Asia

Debates about the regionalization of security policies in Asia increased enormously after the end of the East-West conflict.<sup>1</sup> In Southeast Asia, the ARF, which was established in 1994, has been the most ambitious attempt to deal with regional security issues in a multilateral framework. In Central Asia, the member states of the SCO have put a strong emphasis on security issues since its creation in 2001. In East Asia, China's rise and the possible implications on the territorial conflicts in the East and South China Sea – in addition to the rebalancing of US-Asia relations through the US “pivot” to Asia – have intensified the debate about regional security structures.<sup>2</sup>

There have been no similar developments in South Asia. For many years, this part of Asia has been perceived as a region of chronic instability and economic disintegration.<sup>3</sup> On the one hand, the security situation is characterized by conventional boundary and territorial conflicts, for instance between India and Pakistan over Kashmir, and between Pakistan and Afghanistan on the recognition of the Durand Line. The Kashmir dispute led to three of the four wars between India and Pakistan and has triggered a conventional and nuclear arms race, usurping resources that could have been used instead to tackle the economic and social problems in both countries.

On the other hand, the region is also plagued by a variety of non-conventional security threats. The proliferation of nuclear technology by A. Q. Khan, the father of Pakistan's nuclear bomb, and the regional and global networks of militant Islamic groups such as Lashkar-e-Toiba, which have links to Al Qaeda and

are responsible for attacks in India and Afghanistan, are matters of serious international concern. Moreover, the region has a wide spectrum of ethnic and separatist movements from Baluchistan in Pakistan to India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, up to the Chittagong Hill Tracts in Bangladesh. For decades, civil strife and natural disasters have triggered internal migration and refugees in the region. Additionally, there are frequent violent clashes between religious communities, for instance between Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, and Christians in India, and sectarian violence between Sunni and Shia groups in Pakistan. Left-wing extremism in India and Nepal adds another dimension to the already complex spectrum of conflict that has lost relevance in many other parts of the world.

In the face of these multidimensional conflict scenarios in South Asia, closer security cooperation seems necessary but is regarded to be nearly impossible by many observers.<sup>4</sup> There are currently no attempts to develop organizations such as the ARF or SCO to tackle common security challenges in the region. The limited academic discourse on regional security in South Asia focuses on Western or European experiences from the Cold War, for example the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, which was established in Helsinki in 1975.<sup>5</sup> Because of the different starting positions concerning the conflicts and their causes, such a mechanism for South Asia does not seem to be too promising. First, there is no comparable confrontation between divergent ideological blocs, as with the Cold War. Second, territorial and minority disputes,

1 See *Asian Security Order: Instrumental and Normative Features*, ed. Muthiah Alagappa (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003); Amitav Acharya, “The Emerging Regional Architecture of World Politics,” *World Politics* 59, no. 4 (July 2007): 629–52.

2 See Mely Caballero-Anthony, *Regional Security in Southeast Asia: Beyond the ASEAN Way* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies [ISEAS], 2005); Hillary Clinton, “America's Pacific Century,” *Foreign Policy* (November 2011): 189, also accessible online at U.S. Department of State, <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2011/10/175215.htm> (accessed January 10, 2014).

3 The region South Asia includes the eight member states of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC): Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.

4 See, among others, *Regional Security in South Asia*, ed. Sridhar K. Khatri (Kathmandu, 1987); *Crisis Prevention, Confidence Building, and Reconciliation in South Asia*, ed. Michael Krepon and Amit Sevak (New Delhi, 1996); *Conflict and Violence in South Asia*, ed. K. M. de Silva (Kandy, 2000); *CBMs in South Asia: Potential and Possibilities*, ed. Dipankar Banerjee (Colombo, 2000); *Confidence Building Measures and Security Cooperation in South Asia. Challenges in the New Century*, ed. Mohammad Humayun Kabir (Dhaka, 2002); *Politics and Security in South Asia. Salience of Religion and Culture*, ed. A. K. M. Abdus Sabur (Dhaka, 2004).

5 See Moonis Ahmar, “The Applicability of the Helsinki Model for the Task of Confidence-building and Conflict Resolution in the Indo-Pakistan Sub-continent,” *Contemporary South Asia* 3, no. 3 (1994): 237–56. In 1994 the CSCE was transformed into the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).



which are central for South Asia, were not handled by institutions such as the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe.

But closer scrutiny reveals various forms of security cooperation between India and its neighbors that have developed in the past but have so far not found resonance in academic discourse and political debates. This form of bilateral cooperation can be regarded as a starting point for regional security architecture.

The main research questions are: 1) Which forms of security cooperation can be found in South Asia? 2) What are the main reasons for this development? The starting point is that, independent from the debate whether the future international order is multipolar, non-polar, or multicomplex,<sup>6</sup> the security challenges have to be tackled through closer cooperation between the affected countries rather than by international organizations or extra-regional powers.<sup>7</sup>

The first part of the paper offers an overview of the different forms of security cooperation on the bi- and multilateral levels in the context of foreign relations and threat perceptions. Because of India's geographical location, the focus is on its relations with its neighbors.<sup>8</sup> Pakistan is the only country with noteworthy

forms of military cooperation with other South Asian countries. Since the 1960s, Pakistan has been working with Sri Lanka in military affairs and has also supplied arms to the government in Colombo in its fight against militant Tamil groups.<sup>9</sup> Pakistan has also offered military training for Afghan officers, but there has been hardly any interest from the government in Kabul to take up this offer due to the difficult bilateral relationship between both countries.<sup>10</sup> Compared to India, there are fewer accessible public sources on Pakistan's security cooperation with South Asia, so these efforts will not be examined.

The second part of the paper offers explanations as to why this form of security cooperation was established. The first factor is India's changed relationship with its neighbors. Second, there is growing congruence about threat perceptions regarding security and stability between India and its neighbors. Finally, the question will be raised as to whether this bilateral security cooperation can be a starting point for regional security architecture.

The focus of this study is the field of conventional intergovernmental cooperation. This includes mostly military cooperation, and in some cases also police collaboration. On the bilateral level, this includes a broad spectrum of activities: from military supplies, support for training, joint maneuvers, and military exercises to confidence-building measures. On the multilateral level, this form of cooperation can include joint declarations about common threats as well as meetings or consultations on security-relevant issues. These forms of cooperation can be regarded as first steps for a future regional security architecture, which will consist of networks of different forms of collaboration. Geographically, the composition of the South Asia region is reflected in the membership of SAARC, which was established in 1985.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, India's security cooperation with China and Myanmar will not be taken into account. The role of extra-regional powers such as China are elaborated upon briefly in the last part.

6 See Richard N. Haass, "The Age of Nonpolarity: What Will Follow U.S. Dominance," *Foreign Affairs* 87, no. 3 (May/June 2008): 44–56; see Ken Henry, Hu Shuli, Evan A. Feigenbaum, and Amitav Acharya, "'Multiplex World': Steps towards a New Global Order," *East Asia Forum*, August 14, 2013, <http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2013/08/14/multiplex-world-steps-towards-a-new-global-order/> (accessed January 10, 2014).

7 South Asia will not be regarded as a regional security complex in the sense of Buzan; see Barry Buzan, "The South Asian Security Complex in a Decentring World Order: Reconsidering Regions and Powers Ten Years On," *International Studies Quarterly* 48, no. 1 (2011): 1–19. In contrast to a structural perspective, the study will use an actor-centric approach.

8 The research literature and the availability of data are insufficient. The few sources are the annual reports of the Indian Ministry of External Relations and the Ministry of Defense and newspaper reports. Official documents from ministries and other institutions in the neighboring countries contain hardly any remarks on security cooperation with India. There are many contributions that deal with security challenges and problems in South Asia but hardly anything on security cooperation in the region. On the general debate, see Alyson J. K. Bailes, "Regionalism and Security Building," in Bailes et al., *Regionalism in South Asian Diplomacy*, SIPRI Policy Paper No. 15 (Solna: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, February 2007), 1–11; see Sumit Ganguly, *Counterterrorism Cooperation in South Asia: History and Prospects*, NBR Reports 21 (Seattle: National Bureau of Asian Research, December 2009); Mahin Karim, *The Future of South Asian Security: Prospects for a Nontraditional Regional Security Architecture* (Seattle: National Bureau of Asian Research, April

2013); Bibhu Prasad Routray, "Crossing Borders. South Asia Revives Counter-terrorism Co-operation," *Jane's Intelligence Review* (January 2014): 28–33.

9 See R. S. N. Singh, *Asian Strategic and Military Perspective* (New Delhi, 2005): 307.

10 See "Experts Seek Stronger Ties between Pak-Afghan Militaries," *The News*, March 30, 2013, <http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-2-168362-Experts-look-stronger-ties-between-Pak-Afghan-militaries> (accessed January 10, 2014).

11 The founding members of SAARC were Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. Afghanistan became the eighth member in 2007.

# Security Cooperation in South Asia: An Attempt of an Overview

## The Bilateral Level: India and Its Neighbors

### Pakistan

The literature on the unending conflict between India and Pakistan exceeds by far the contributions on the possibility of cooperation between the two states.<sup>12</sup> But despite the four wars and the various bilateral crises, both sides have also developed various forms of confidence-building measures in the nuclear, conventional, and non-conventional fields.<sup>13</sup> The most important civilian example is the Indus Water Treaty, which was signed after mediation by the World Bank in 1960. Because of the treaty and its regulations, water has not been used as a weapon in the wars between both states since that time.

During their rapprochement in the late 1980s, Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto agreed to exchange lists in 1988 of nuclear installations in both countries that should not be attacked in the case of war. Since 1992 these lists have been exchanged every year on January 1. In 2006 both countries agreed to pre-notification of test flights of ballistic missiles.<sup>14</sup> In 2007 they signed an agreement to reduce the risk of accidents with nuclear weapons.<sup>15</sup>

There are also various confidence-building mechanisms in the conventional military field. A first hotline between the Directors General of Military Oper-

ations (DGMOs) was established over the Line of Control (LoC) in Kashmir after the war in 1971. Since 1990, DGMOs are meant to have weekly exchanges. Although smaller skirmishes have been successfully settled, the hotline was not used – or was not able to defuse – tensions during major crises, for instance in 1987, 1990, and before the Kargil War in 1999.<sup>16</sup> The ceasefire at the LoC since the end of 2003 is another example of military agreements or understandings in this field.<sup>17</sup> Since April 1991 both sides have followed an agreement to announce military maneuvers and large troop deployments.<sup>18</sup> This was triggered by the threatening escalation in winter 1986/87, when the Indian Brasstacks exercise was interpreted as preparation for an upcoming military attack by Pakistan.<sup>19</sup>

In addition to the conventional armed forces, the paramilitary border troops on both sides – for example the Pakistan Rangers (Punjab) and the Indian Border Security Force – are also conducting regular meetings at the border.<sup>20</sup> Expert meetings in May 2005 led to an agreement in October of the same year to establish a hotline between the Indian Coast Guard and the Pakistan Maritime Security Agency. Moreover, both institutions agreed on a memorandum of understanding to avoid incidents at sea.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>12</sup> See Sumit Ganguly, *Conflict Unending. India-Pakistan Tensions since 1947* (Oxford and New Delhi, 2002).

<sup>13</sup> For an overview on civilian and military confidence-building measures, see Stimson Center, *South Asia Confidence Building Measures (CBM) Timeline*, <http://www.stimson.org/essays/nuclear-crisis-escalation-control-and-deterrence-in-south-asia/> (accessed January 10, 2014).

<sup>14</sup> See “Agreement between India and Pakistan on Pre-Notification of Flight Testing of Ballistic Missiles,” <http://www.stimson.org/research-pages/agreement-between-india-and-pakistan-on-pre-notification-of-flight-testing-of-ballistic-missiles/> (accessed January 10, 2014).

<sup>15</sup> See “Agreement on Reducing the Risk from Accidents Relating to Nuclear Weapons,” <http://www.stimson.org/research-pages/agreement-on-reducing-the-risk-from-accidents-relating-to-nuclear-weapons/> (accessed January 10, 2014).

<sup>16</sup> See Muhammad Irshad, “Indo-Pak Confidence-Building Measures,” *Defence Journal* (August 2002), <http://www.defencejournal.com/2002/august/confidence.htm> (accessed January 10, 2014).

<sup>17</sup> For the incident in January of 2013, see “A Grandmother, a New Bunker Lead to India-Pakistan Clashes,” *Dawn*, January 11, 2013, <http://dawn.com/2013/01/11/a-grandmother-a-new-bunker-lead-to-india-pakistan-clashes/> (accessed January 10, 2014).

<sup>18</sup> See “Confidence-Building and Nuclear Risk-Reduction Measures in South Asia,” <http://www.stimson.org/research-pages/confidence-building-measures-in-south-asia/> (accessed January 10, 2014).

<sup>19</sup> See Syed Rifaat Hussain, “The India Factor,” in *Pakistan. Beyond the “Crisis State”*, ed. Maleeha Lodhi (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2011), 321.

<sup>20</sup> See “Types of Meeting with Indian Border Security Force (BSF),” *Pakistan Rangers* (Punjab), <http://www.pakistanrangerspunjab.com/meetings.html> (accessed January 10, 2014).

<sup>21</sup> See Sandeep Dikshit, “Partial Solution or a Step Forward?,” *The Hindu*, October 5, 2005, <http://www.hindu.com/2005/10/>

The biggest problem in the bilateral relationship in recent years has been attacks by militant Islamic groups operating from Pakistan. The Pakistani Army and the Inter-Services Intelligence supported these groups for many years in Kashmir and labeled them as “freedom fighters,” whereas India regarded them as “terrorists.” At the start of the composite dialogue in January 2004, President Pervez Musharraf declared that Pakistani territory should no longer be used for terrorist attacks against India. During the talks, both sides agreed on a Joint Anti-Terror Mechanism, the first meeting for which took place in March 2007. The Mechanism made it possible for both sides to share information on terrorist attacks, for instance on the Samjhauta-Express, in which several Pakistani citizens were killed in February 2007, or the attack on the Indian embassy in Kabul in summer 2008.<sup>22</sup>

The Mumbai attack in November 2008 brought an end to the composite dialogue but did not lead to a similar crisis as in summer 2002. At that time, the bilateral tensions that followed the failed attack on the Indian parliament in December 2001 could only be solved through the diplomatic intervention of the United States and the United Kingdom. After the Mumbai attack, it seemed possible that India and Pakistan could intensify their anti-terror cooperation efforts. In reaction to the attack, the Pakistani government announced they would send the chief of the Inter-Services Intelligence to India in order to support the Indian authorities in examining the incident.<sup>23</sup> But the visit did not materialize because of political resistance in Pakistan.

The new political and economic rapprochement after 2010 was marred by various attacks and incidents. India registered an increase of violations against the ceasefire at the LoC in Kashmir. There were 28 incidents in 2009, 60 in 2011, and 117 in 2012.<sup>24</sup> The

killing of Indian and Pakistani soldiers in skirmishes at the LoC in January and August 2013 put stress upon the bilateral relationship once again. In their meeting in New York in September 2013, Prime Ministers Manmohan Singh and Nawaz Sharif promised to continue the rapprochement and to expand the confidence-building measures. In December 2013, in their first personal meeting in 14 years, the DGMOs agreed to use the hotline in Kashmir more effectively in the future in order to prevent further incidents. With regard to the international border, they agreed on more concerted action against smuggling.<sup>25</sup>

The numerous examples show that India and Pakistan have agreed on various confidence-building measures and have created new channels of communication in the field of security. However, this has not led to an improvement in their bilateral relationship. The political, economic, and military rapprochement will remain a rocky process accompanied by violent incidents and backlash.

## Afghanistan

India and Afghanistan have traditionally had good relations, which are a result of their historic and common rivalry against Pakistan. Afghanistan was the only country to vote against Pakistan's accession to the United Nations and has still not recognized the Durand Line as an international border. Pakistan has used the conflict with India to legitimize its intervention in Afghanistan and its support for the Taliban in the 1990s. The Pakistani military wanted to achieve “strategic depth” and aimed to prevent “encirclement” by India.<sup>26</sup> Therefore, the Afghan civil war in the 1990s was also a proxy war between India and Pakistan, in

05/stories/2005100508631400.htm (accessed January 10, 2014); Government of India, Ministry of Defense, *Annual Report 2005–2006* (New Delhi, 2006), 198.

<sup>22</sup> See Shabana Fayyaz, *Indo-Pak Joint Anti-Terrorism Mechanism. Perspectives from Pakistan*, IPCS Issue Brief 126 (New Delhi: Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, September 2009), [http://www.ipcs.org/pdf\\_file/issue/IB126-Ploughshares-Shabhana.pdf](http://www.ipcs.org/pdf_file/issue/IB126-Ploughshares-Shabhana.pdf) (accessed January 10, 2014).

<sup>23</sup> See “Zardari, If Evidence Points to Any Group in My Country, I Shall Take the Strictest Action,” *The Hindu*, November 30, 2008, <http://www.hindu.com/2008/11/30/stories/2008113059220900.htm> (accessed January 10, 2014).

<sup>24</sup> See Praveen Swami, “Green Books, Red Herring and the LoC War,” *The Hindu*, January 16, 2013, <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/green-books-red-herring-and-the-loc-war/article4310197.ece> (accessed January 10, 2014).

<sup>25</sup> See Gaurav Vivek Bhatnagar and Meena Menon, “DGMOs to Make Hotline ‘More Effective,’” *The Hindu*, December 25, 2013, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/dgmos-to-make-hotline-more-effective/article5498416.ece>; “BSF, Pak Rangers Discuss Ways to Counter Smuggling,” *The Hindu*, December 25, 2013, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/bsf-pak-rangers-discuss-ways-to-counter-smuggling/article5501008.ece> (accessed January 20, 2014).

<sup>26</sup> See “India’s Role in Afghanistan Is Encirclement of Pakistan,” Interview of Kaustav Dhar Chakrabarti with Maj. Gen. Athar Abbas, Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR, Islamabad), *Observer Research Foundation*, October 8, 2009, <http://www.orfonline.org/cms/sites/orfonline/html/interview/interview.html> (accessed January 10, 2014).

which India and other powers supported the Northern Alliance against the Taliban. After the international community intervened in 2001, India became the biggest non-Western donor in Afghanistan and has invested more than US\$1 billion since then. Pakistan is regarded as being responsible for nearly all the problems in Afghanistan, whereas India enjoys a very good reputation among the Afghan population.<sup>27</sup>

In October 2011 India and Afghanistan signed a strategic partnership agreement, which is the basis for the military cooperation between the Indian Army and the Afghan Security Forces (ASF). The number of Afghan officers that will be trained in Indian military institutions should be expanded to at least 100. Moreover, India promised logistical support for the ASF with vehicles and technology.<sup>28</sup> The military training takes place in India because the Indian government refuses to send instructors to Afghanistan due to security concerns. With the partial withdrawal of the international forces, India gave in to American requests to increase its training capacities for Afghan officers.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, India will also train members of the Afghan police forces.<sup>30</sup> For the 2013–2014 period, India plans to train more than 1,000 members of the ASF.<sup>31</sup> In July 2013, the Indian foreign minister, Salman Khurshid, refused the request by the Afghan government to supply “lethal” weaponry to Afghanistan. But he promised to continue support for training, transport, and logistics.<sup>32</sup>

27 This was the result of a survey by ABC News, BBC, and ARD in 2009. India received the highest positive assessment with 29 percent, whereas Pakistan only received 2 percent, which was the lowest rate, even below the Taliban (3 percent) and on the same level as Osama bin Laden, see [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/11\\_01\\_10\\_afghanpoll.pdf](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/11_01_10_afghanpoll.pdf) (accessed January 10, 2014), 22–23.

28 See Nitin Gokhale, “India All Set to Train Afghan Army,” *New Delhi Television*, November 17, 2011, <http://www.ndtv.com/article/india/india-all-set-to-train-afghan-army-150491> (accessed January 10, 2014).

29 See Chidanand Rajghatta, “America Persuades India to Expand Afghan Footprint,” *Times of India*, June 14, 2012, [http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-06-14/us/32234576\\_1\\_afghanistan-and-pakistan-afghan-national-army-afghan-military-personnel](http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-06-14/us/32234576_1_afghanistan-and-pakistan-afghan-national-army-afghan-military-personnel) (accessed January 10, 2014).

30 See Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs, *Annual Report 2009–2010* (New Delhi, 2010), 115.

31 See Routray, “Crossing Borders” (see note 8), 30.

32 See “India Turns Down Afghanistan’s Arms Plea,” *The Hindu*, July 5, 2013, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/south-asia/india-turns-down-afghanistans-arms-plea/article4884695.ece> (accessed January 10, 2014).

## Nepal

India’s most enduring military relations in South Asia are probably those with Nepal. The Peace and Friendship Treaty of 1950 regulated the bilateral relationship with the Himalayan kingdom. The treaty also included secret letters that restricted the monarchy’s international room for maneuver in favor of India. Arms supplies to Nepal remained dependent upon India’s consent. India received privileges for development projects and a veto on the employment of foreigners, which were regarded detrimental to India’s interests.<sup>33</sup> India was also allowed to use military posts on the borders with China and Tibet.

Military collaboration began in 1952, when King Tribhuvan called an Indian military support team for help with the reorganization of the Royal Nepalese Army.<sup>34</sup> Nepal was also important militarily because India recruited its Gurkha regiments from there. Today, there are more than 12,000 former Gurkha soldiers in Nepal that have served in the Indian armed forces.<sup>35</sup>

There were also tensions in the close bilateral relationship, which forced Nepalese kings and governments to attempt to establish closer relations with China in order to circumvent India’s influence. The Maoist rebellion against the monarchy and the democratically elected government between 1996 and 2006 was also a special security challenge for India. The Maoists had close links to like-minded militant groups in India, which were regarded as the biggest domestic threat by the Indian government. Prachandra, the leader of the Maoist movement in Nepal, had studied at Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi and had links to several political parties in India. When the Nepalese king suspended the parliament in spring 2005, India imposed various sanctions against the country, for instance an arms embargo, but not an embargo of non-lethal military supplies.

Because of the escalating civil war, the Indian government decided to mediate a political compromise

33 For the agreement and the letters, see S. D. Muni, *Foreign Policy of Nepal* (Delhi, 1973), 283–87.

34 For the domestic development in Nepal, see Karl-Heinz Krämer, *Ethnizität und nationale Integration in Nepal. Eine Untersuchung zur Politisierung der ethnischen Gruppen im modernen Nepal* (Stuttgart, 1996), 78–116.

35 See Embassy of India, Kathmandu, Nepal, *About Defence*, [http://www.indianembassy.org.np/index1.php?option=e6r5wIVM8od\\_u8Y0CdwsDiTfg0cohLLpEcNS8hphu-0&id=3CWw9BCDofdrmuend-0Mb77tSsVdGG\\_AXp9hgua2T4](http://www.indianembassy.org.np/index1.php?option=e6r5wIVM8od_u8Y0CdwsDiTfg0cohLLpEcNS8hphu-0&id=3CWw9BCDofdrmuend-0Mb77tSsVdGG_AXp9hgua2T4) (accessed April 5, 2013).

between the monarchy, the democratic parties, and the Maoists. In November 2005, the parties and the Maoists agreed to join hands in their protests against the monarchy and received political concessions in spring 2006. In November of the same year, the government and the political parties signed a peace agreement. In April 2008 elections for the first constitutional assembly were held, in which the Maoists became the strongest political party.<sup>36</sup>

Despite India's successful mediation in the civil war, the relationship with the big neighbor to the south created controversial debates among the Nepalese parties.<sup>37</sup> On the one hand, Nepal has close political, economic, and cultural relations with India because of its open border and high levels of labor migration. During the authoritarian phases, many Nepalese politicians found refuge in India and have established links with different political parties in India. On the other hand, India's large-scale engagement is perceived very critically in Nepal because many fear dependence and a selling out of national interests in favor of the southern neighbor.

Military relations are still good between the two states. Every year a sizable number of Nepalese soldiers are trained in India.<sup>38</sup> Both sides agreed on closer collaboration in the fight against terrorism and have established a series of new institutions. Among others, there is the Nepal-India Bilateral Consultative Group on Security Issues, the Joint Working Group on Border Management, and the Border District Coordination Committee.<sup>39</sup>

The Indian government wants to fight the activities of Maoist groups and wishes to prevent Nepal's open border with India from becoming the main entry point for militant Islamic fighters. The hijacking of the

Indian Airline flight in December 1999, during which India had to release three high-ranking terrorists, started in Kathmandu. In summer 2013, two leading terrorists – Abdul Karim Tunda, who is regarded to be one of the chief ideologues of Lashkar-e-Toiba, which operates from Pakistan, and Yasin Bhatkal, who is perceived to be a cofounder of the Indian Mujahideen – were arrested at the Nepal border.<sup>40</sup>

For many years, India has supported the training and equipping of the Nepali police. The formal and informal networks have supported cross-border cooperation among the security agencies on both sides and have improved the fight against terrorism and counterfeit currencies.<sup>41</sup> In July 2013, the Indian arms embargo was lifted and India will soon start their joint military exercises with the Nepali Army again.<sup>42</sup>

## Bhutan

India has also developed an extensive military collaboration with Bhutan that is not as controversial as the one with the Himalayan kingdom of Nepal. The Friendship treaty of August 1949 gave India substantial influence in handling the foreign policy and international affairs of Bhutan. With the treaty, India also intended to protect its security interest vis-à-vis China in the Himalaya region.

Since 1961, the Indian Border Roads Organisation, a unit of the Engineer Corps of the Indian Army, has been doing infrastructural work in Bhutan, for instance, building the airport in Paro.<sup>43</sup> India has also supported Bhutan economically with substantial means. For many years, the kingdom has been the biggest recipient of India's development cooperation.

<sup>36</sup> See Sandra Destradi, *Indian Foreign and Security Policy in South Asia. Regional Power Strategies* (London and New York, 2012), 106–128.

<sup>37</sup> See Prashant Jha, "Nepal's Maoist Leader Fires a Salvo at His Own Party Government," *The Hindu*, March 27, 2012, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/nepals-maoist-leader-fires-a-salvo-at-his-own-party-government/article3248385.ece> (accessed January 10, 2014).

<sup>38</sup> "A Substantial Number of Nepal Army (NA) Personnel Undergo Training in Indian Military Institutions Every Year," in: Government of India, Ministry of Defense, *Annual Report 2010–2011* (New Delhi, 2011), 167.

<sup>39</sup> See Akanshya Shah, "Nepal: Terrorist Arrests and Cooperation with India," *South Asia Weekly Report* (Observer Research Foundation) 6 (September 6, 2013): 36, <http://orfonline.org/cms/sites/orfonline/modules/weeklyassessment/WeeklyAssessmentDetail.html?cmaid=56872&mmacmaid=56873&volumeno=VI&issueno=36> (accessed January 10, 2014).

<sup>40</sup> See Devesh K. Pandey, "'LeT Ideologue' Tunda in Police Custody," *The Hindu*, August 17, 2013, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/let-ideologue-tunda-in-police-custody/article5031691.ece>; Rahi Gaikwad, "Indian Mujahideen Cofounder Yasin Bhatkal Arrested," *The Hindu*, August 29, 2013, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/indian-mujahideen-cofounder-yasin-bhatkal-arrested/article5070960.ece> (both accessed January 10, 2014).

<sup>41</sup> See B. Raman, "Rise of Maoists in Nepal. Implications for India," *Indian Defence Review* 23, no. 3 (July–September 2008): 128.

<sup>42</sup> See "India to Resume Arms Supply to NA after 8-year Gap," *The Kathmandu Post*, July 11, 2013.

<sup>43</sup> See "Bhutan's Army Launched First Attack in Its History to Help India," *Pakistan Defence*, June 9, 2010, <http://www.defence.pk/forums/military-history-strategy/71854-bhutans-army-launched-first-attack-its-history-help-india.html#ixzz2PxI9yMQ5> (accessed April 9, 2013).

In 2012/13 more than 36 percent of funds from the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation Program went to Bhutan.<sup>44</sup> The Indian government has also been financing the construction of dams for hydro-electric power produced by Indian companies for many years. Bhutan is producing enough electricity for it to be exported to northern India. Already in 1963, the Indian Military Training Team was set up for Bhutan in order to support the training of the Bhutanese forces.<sup>45</sup> In 2007, the total strength of the Bhutanese forces was 9,021 soldiers.<sup>46</sup> Both countries have established the India-Bhutan Joint Group on Border Management and Security.<sup>47</sup>

In 2003, the military cooperation between both countries reached a new level of importance. Since the 1990s, a variety of militant groups that are operating in India's northeast had set up camps in the southern part of Bhutan. Pushed by the Indian government, the Bhutanese forces started a large-scale military operation in December 2003 and were able to destroy all 30 camps of the militant groups by January 2004.<sup>48</sup> The Indian Army did not take part in the fighting but supported the Bhutanese forces logistically and with medical services.<sup>49</sup>

Bhutan's close political and economic relations with India were also an important issue during the second democratic election in 2008. But the government of Prime Minister Jigme Thinley tried to distance itself from India through a rapprochement with China and other countries. The attempt by Bhutan to reorient its foreign policy was not welcomed in New Delhi. The Indian government delayed supplies and did not prolong a treaty on subsidies for gas and energy,

leading to an increase in prices before the elections. Moreover, the Bhutanese currency, which is linked to the Indian rupee, lost also value because of the latter's depreciation. These developments favored the opposition of the People's Democratic Party, which won the election in July 2013.<sup>50</sup> The new government of Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay announced the continuation of close cooperation with India, including on security issues.<sup>51</sup>

## Bangladesh

The security collaboration between New Delhi and Dhaka has always been dependent on the political constellations in Bangladesh. With the military intervention into the civil war in East Pakistan, India made the independence of Bangladesh possible in 1971. The new Bangladeshi government, under the leadership of the Awami League, was closely oriented toward India until the military coup in 1975. The subsequent military dictators followed more independent economic and foreign policies and distanced the country from India until 1990. After democratization in 1990/91, the Awami League began closer collaboration with India once again, whereas the Bangladesh Nationalist Party was always much more critical of their neighbor.

Water-sharing of the Ganges had stressed the bilateral relationship for decades and could only be settled with a treaty in 1996. In autumn 2011, another treaty concerning the sharing of the Teesta River could not be signed because of political intervention by the state government in West Bengal and its chief minister, Mamata Banerjee.<sup>52</sup>

In the realm of security cooperation, the main focus points were border disputes, illegal migration, and the controversy over camps of militant groups on Bangladeshi territory. After long negotiations, the conflict

<sup>44</sup> See Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs, *Annual Report 2012–2013* (New Delhi, 2013), 210.

<sup>45</sup> See Government of India, Ministry of Defense, *Annual Report 2011–2012* (New Delhi, 2012), 190.

<sup>46</sup> See "Bhutan to Reduce Army Strength, Raise Militia Force," *The Times of India*, June 24, 2007, [http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2007-06-24/rest-of-world/27977330\\_1\\_royal-bhutan-army-militia-rba](http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2007-06-24/rest-of-world/27977330_1_royal-bhutan-army-militia-rba) (accessed January 10, 2014).

<sup>47</sup> See Government of India, Ministry of Defense, *Annual Report 2005–2006* (New Delhi, 2006), 198.

<sup>48</sup> See "Bhutan's Army Launched First Attack in Its History to Help India," *Pakistan Defence* (September 6, 2010), <http://www.defence.pk/forums/military-history-strategy/71854-bhutans-army-launched-first-attack-its-history-help-india.html#ixzz2PxI9yMQ5> (accessed April 9, 2013).

<sup>49</sup> See Dipankar Banerjee and Bidhan S. Laishram, *Bhutan's 'Operation All Clear': Implications for Insurgency and Security Cooperation*, IPCS Issue Brief 18 (New Delhi: Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, January 2004), 1.

<sup>50</sup> See Aby Tharakan, "Too Much Dragon, Too Little Kingdom," *The Hindu*, July 16, 2013, <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/too-much-dragon-too-little-kingdom/article4918267.ece> (accessed January 10, 2014).

<sup>51</sup> See Chander Suta Dogra, "I Will Build on Five Decades of Friendship with India" (interview), *The Hindu*, July 19, 2013, <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/interview/i-will-build-on-five-decades-of-friendship-with-india/article4928684.ece> (accessed January 10, 2014).

<sup>52</sup> See Priya Sahgal and Partha Dasgupta, "CM Pours Cold Water over PM," *India Today*, September 10, 2011, <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/teesta-water-sharing-talks-put-off-mamata-banerjee-manmohan/1/150681.html> (accessed January 10, 2014).

over the territorial enclaves was settled in September 2011.<sup>53</sup> Of even greater domestic importance is the illegal migration of Bangladeshis into India. Census reports from the border state of West Bengal indicate an above-average increase of Muslims. This cannot be explained only by higher birth rates but also by the large influx of Bangladeshis. As Bengali is the common language on both sides of the border, the migrants can integrate rather easily into the local population. In the past, illegal migration led to riots against Bangladeshis in the state of Assam. Territorial disputes, illegal migration, and trafficking have been the source of many incidents in recent years. According to Human Rights Watch, 900 Bangladeshis and 164 Indian were killed by the Indian Border Security Force between 2000 and 2010.<sup>54</sup> In recent years, border troops have improved their communication channels, leading to a decrease in the number of incidents.

The most contentious issues have been over the camps of different separatist groups in Bangladesh that operate in the northeast of India and the infiltration of Islamic terrorists into India. In 2002 India handed over a list of 99 camps of different militant groups in Bangladesh and asked the government in Dhaka to close them down.<sup>55</sup> But the Bangladesh Nationalist Party government of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, who collaborated with religious parties that presumably had links to militant groups, was not inclined to follow the Indian proposal.

In recent years both states have extended their security cooperation. Since 2007 there have been joint border patrols. After the victory of the Awami League, which is traditionally close to India, joint military exercises were held, followed by naval exercises in

2010.<sup>56</sup> In the same year, India and Bangladesh signed various agreements, one of which concerned the fight against international terrorism, organized crime, and drug trafficking.<sup>57</sup> In January 2013 both countries agreed on an extradition treaty in order to improve the fight against terrorism and cross-border crime.<sup>58</sup>

## Sri Lanka

With the exception of Pakistan, security cooperation with Sri Lanka was the most difficult. The conflict between the Sinhalese majority and the Tamil minority has shaped the domestic development of the island since its independence in 1948. This controversy has spilled over to India's domestic politics via Tamil parties in the state of Tamil Nadu and has repeatedly burdened the bilateral relationship between both countries.

The first noteworthy security collaboration took place in 1971, when India supported the Sri Lankan government in suppressing an armed leftist rebellion. India sent helicopters and the Navy patrolled the southern coast of the island, which was a stronghold of the rebels, in order to prevent supplies of arms from reaching them.<sup>59</sup>

In the conflict between the Sinhalese and the Sri Lanka Tamils, India supported various militant Tamil groups in the beginning that were trained in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu. When the civil war escalated, India began to mediate between the two sides. In 1987, India and Sri Lanka signed an

<sup>53</sup> See "Across Table, India & Bangla Cross Borders," *The Economic Times*, September 18, 2004, [http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2004-09-18/news/27389940\\_1\\_cross-border-terrorism-joint-boundary-check-cross-border-movement](http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2004-09-18/news/27389940_1_cross-border-terrorism-joint-boundary-check-cross-border-movement) (accessed January 10, 2014); Shakhawat Liton and Dilip Roy, "Two Enclaves Float in Joy: PM Uses Tin Bigha Corridor, Stresses Better Ties with India," *The Daily Star*, October 20, 2011.

<sup>54</sup> See Haroon Habib, "Putting Down the Burden of Borders," *The Hindu*, February 10, 2012, <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/putting-down-the-burden-of-borders/article2876322.ece> (accessed January 10, 2014).

<sup>55</sup> See Kanchan Lakshman and Sanjay K. Jha, "India-Bangladesh: Restoring Sovereignty on Neglected Borders," in: *Faultlines*, ed. K. P. S. Gill, Vol. XIV, 2003, *South Asia Terrorism Portal*, <http://www.satp.org/satporgtppublication/faultlines/volume14/Article7.htm> (accessed January 10, 2014).

<sup>56</sup> See "Indo-Bangla Military Cooperation Increasing," *The Times of India*, November 22, 2011, [http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2011-11-22/pune/30428193\\_1\\_military-exercise-bangladesh-army-bangladesh-military-academy](http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2011-11-22/pune/30428193_1_military-exercise-bangladesh-army-bangladesh-military-academy) (accessed January 10, 2014); "India-Bangladesh Border Guards Joint Border Patrol," *NorthEast Today*, August 8, 2012, <http://www.northeasttoday.in/our-states/meghalaya/india-bangladesh-border-guards-joint-border-patrol/> (accessed April 9, 2013).

<sup>57</sup> See "India, Bangladesh Vow to Fight Terror in All Forms," *Zee News*, September 7, 2011, [http://zeenews.india.com/news/nation/india-bangladesh-vow-to-fight-terror-in-all-forms\\_730403.html](http://zeenews.india.com/news/nation/india-bangladesh-vow-to-fight-terror-in-all-forms_730403.html) (accessed January 10, 2014).

<sup>58</sup> See 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 January 10, 2014).

<sup>59</sup> See Vijay Sakhuja, "India and Sri Lanka. Towards a New Relationship," *Indian Defence Review* 19, no. 4 (October–December 2004): 158.

accord that deployed the Indian Peace Keeping Forces to the northern and eastern parts of Sri Lanka. This was the first and only deployment of Indian troops on the basis of a bilateral treaty and without a mandate from the United Nations.<sup>60</sup>

The deployment was a military and political fiasco because the conflicting parties – the Sri Lankan government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) – turned against India and began partial co-operation. In spring 1990, the Indian Peace Keeping Forces left Sri Lanka without having ended the civil war. With the assassination of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi during the election campaign in Tamil Nadu in 1991, the LTTE lost all of its credibility among political parties in India.

During the 1990s, India refrained from any further interventions into the civil war. The Indian government did not have an official part in the negotiation process, which was mediated by Norway and which led to the ceasefire in 2002 and the creation of the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission. Moreover, India did not belong to the group of co-chairs that accompanied the process of economic reconstruction during the peace process.<sup>61</sup>

In October 2004, India and Sri Lanka agreed to expand their military cooperation in the fight against the LTTE. In December of the same year, the naval forces conducted their first military exercises in order to interrupt the maritime supply lines of the LTTE.<sup>62</sup> India supported the training of the Sri Lankan police and the armed forces and provided military equipment. Because of the political opposition in Tamil Nadu, India was reluctant to export lethal weapons.<sup>63</sup>

Although the Sri Lankan government had signaled its interest in a defense agreement with India, New Delhi refused such an official agreement because it feared opposition from Tamil parties that were in the ruling coalition.<sup>64</sup> But India and Sri Lanka continued

their cooperation in order to block the support networks of the LTTE in Tamil Nadu and their maritime supply lines.<sup>65</sup>

Until the end of the civil war in May 2009, the intelligence agencies of both countries shared knowledge, and both sides conducted joint military operations, which weakened the supplies of the LTTE and its readiness for combat in the final phase of the war.<sup>66</sup> Officially, India only provided two surveillance radars but there were also reports that India sent one patrol boat and five helicopters to Sri Lanka.<sup>67</sup>

In May 2009, the LTTE suffered a devastating defeat when most of the units and the inner circle of the leadership were killed. Because of its experiences with the LTTE and the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi, India was interested in the elimination of the military arm of the LTTE. But the Indian government also criticized the high number of civilian casualties among the Tamil population in the final phase of the war, casualties that were attributed both to the LTTE and the Sri Lankan security forces, according to a report by the United Nations (UN) Secretary-General.<sup>68</sup>

Even after the end of the civil war, the Tamil question continued to shape the bilateral relationship between the two countries. The Sri Lankan government was not willing to pursue a final political solution after the military defeat of the LTTE. India demanded such a political settlement several times and pointed to the accord of 1987, which is the blueprint for a peaceful solution and was responsible for the administrative reorganization of Sri Lanka that is still in effect today. At the same time, the Indian government became engaged in the reconstruction of the Tamil regions in the north and east, which were heavily damaged.

2004/01/12/stories/2004011203121200.htm (accessed January 10, 2014).

<sup>65</sup> See V. Suryanarayan, "Sea Tigers – Threat to Indian Security," *The Hindu*, July 28, 2004, <http://www.hindu.com/2004/07/28/stories/2004072802311000.htm> (accessed January 10, 2014).

<sup>66</sup> See "India's Naval Surveillance Big Help – FM," Ministry of Defense and Urban Development, Sri Lanka, December 30, 2010, [http://www.defence.lk/new.asp?fname=20080605\\_01](http://www.defence.lk/new.asp?fname=20080605_01) (accessed January 10, 2014).

<sup>67</sup> See Sandra Destradi, *India and the Civil War in Sri Lanka: On the Failures of Regional Conflict Management in South Asia*, GIGA Working Paper No. 154 (Hamburg: German Institute of Global and Area Studies, December 2010), 13–14.

<sup>68</sup> *Report of the Secretary-General's Internal Review Panel on United Nations Action in Sri Lanka* (n.p., November 2012), [http://www.un.org/News/dh/infocus/Sri\\_Lanka/The\\_Internal\\_Review\\_Panel\\_report\\_on\\_Sri\\_Lanka.pdf](http://www.un.org/News/dh/infocus/Sri_Lanka/The_Internal_Review_Panel_report_on_Sri_Lanka.pdf) (accessed January 10, 2014).

<sup>60</sup> See S. D. Muni, *Pangs of Proximity. India and Sri Lanka's Ethnic Crisis* (New Delhi, 1993).

<sup>61</sup> The four co-chairs were Norway, Japan, the United States, and the European Union.

<sup>62</sup> See Sakhuja, "India and Sri Lanka" (see note 59), 158.

<sup>63</sup> See V. S. Sambandan, "Sri Lankan Police to Be Trained in India," *The Hindu*, September 29, 2005, <http://www.hindu.com/2005/09/29/stories/2005092901211300.htm>; "Do Not Extend Military Aid to Sri Lanka: Vaiko," *The Hindu*, July 20, 2006, <http://www.hindu.com/2006/07/20/stories/2006072006651000.htm> (both accessed January 10, 2014).

<sup>64</sup> See V. S. Sambandan, "Sri Lankan Defence Team to Visit India," *The Hindu*, January 12, 2004, <http://www.hindu.com/>



The domestic situation in Sri Lanka also became an issue in India and had national and international repercussions. Because of pressure from Tamil parties in the coalition government, the Indian government voted for a resolution against Sri Lanka in the United Nations Human Rights Council in spring 2012. It was the first time that India voted for a resolution that demanded intervention into the domestic affairs of another country.<sup>69</sup>

Despite their bilateral disagreements, both countries continued their security cooperation. In 2011, New Delhi and Colombo agreed on an annual defense dialogue and regular talks between the different military services of both countries. India offered 1,400 places in its training institutions for the Sri Lankan security forces, and the naval forces conducted joint military exercises in Sri Lankan waters for the first time.<sup>70</sup> In 2012, the training of Sri Lankan officers in Tamil Nadu led to protests, forcing the Indian defense ministry to send them back to Sri Lanka.<sup>71</sup> In spring 2013, India's voting behavior in the United Nations Human Rights Council even created a coalition crisis in New Delhi. The Indian government supported the draft resolution of the United States so that the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) left the ruling United Progressive Alliance. The DMK criticized that the resolution was too soft and called for the creation of an independent international inquiry into the war crimes in Sri Lanka.<sup>72</sup> In reaction to the domestic tur-

moil, the Indian government temporarily suspended the annual defense talks with Sri Lanka.<sup>73</sup>

The Sri Lankan example illustrates the kinds of domestic problems that India faces when it pursues security cooperation with its neighbors. The Indian government has emphasized that it will continue its collaboration and signed an Anti-Terror Agreement with Sri Lanka in January 2013.<sup>74</sup> The training of Sri Lankan security personnel, which seems to be quite substantive in some parts, may be partially shifted to other states in order to circumvent the reservations of Tamil parties. A Sri Lankan admiral declared that nearly 80 percent of the national Army officers complete parts of their training in India.<sup>75</sup>

## Maldives

Security collaboration between India and the Maldives started in 1988. In November of the same year, Tamil rebels or mercenaries, who had been hired by Maldivian business men, planned a coup on the Maldives. At that time, the small island state had neither a regular Army nor a Navy but only a National Security Service with some 1,400 personnel. Hence, President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom turned toward India for military support. The Indian military was able to easily suppress the coup and arrested the militants.<sup>76</sup>

In 2005, the Maldives sent a military attaché to the embassy in Delhi in order to strengthen military relations. In 2006, India offered a patrol boat as a gift to the Maldivian Navy. Since 2009, the Indian and Mal-

<sup>69</sup> See "India Votes for Resolution against Sri Lanka," *The Hindu*, March 22, 2012, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/india-votes-for-resolution-against-sri-lanka/article3150059.ece> (accessed January 10, 2014).

<sup>70</sup> See R. K. Radhakrishnan, "India Offers Training Slots for Sri Lankan Military Personnel," *The Hindu*, December 28, 2010, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/india-offers-training-slots-for-sri-lankan-military-personnel/article1011469.ece> (accessed January 10, 2014).

<sup>71</sup> See "All Sri Lankan Trainees to Be Sent Off Today: Defence Ministry," *The Economic Times*, July 6, 2012, [http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2012-07-06/news/32566225\\_1\\_sri-lankan-air-defence-ministry-tamils](http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2012-07-06/news/32566225_1_sri-lankan-air-defence-ministry-tamils) (accessed January 10, 2014).

<sup>72</sup> See "India Votes against Sri Lanka at UNHRC, DMK Slams Govt for Diluting Resolution," *The Times of India*, March 21, 2013, [http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2013-03-21/india/37902646\\_1\\_llrc-unhrc-sri-lanka](http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2013-03-21/india/37902646_1_llrc-unhrc-sri-lanka); B. Kolappan, "DMK Quits UPA Ship, But Won't Sink It," *The Hindu*, March 19, 2013, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/dmk-quits-upa-ship-but-wont-sink-it/article4525097.ece> (both accessed January 10, 2014).

<sup>73</sup> See Vinay Kumar and Sandeep Dikshit, "Defence Dialogue with Sri Lanka Called Off," *The Hindu*, March 18, 2013, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/defence-dialogue-with-sri-lanka-called-off/article4522570.ece> (accessed January 10, 2014).

<sup>74</sup> See J. Balaji, "Sri Lankans Will Continue to Train in India, Says Centre," *The Hindu*, August 27, 2012, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/sri-lankans-will-continue-to-train-in-india-says-centre/article3827983.ece>; "India, Sri Lanka Sign Anti-terror, Tax Evasion Pacts," *The Hindu*, January 22, 2013, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-sri-lanka-sign-antiterror-tax-evasion-pacts/article4332894.ece> (both accessed January 10, 2014).

<sup>75</sup> See Meera Srinivasan, "Navy Cadets of India, Sri Lanka Speak the Same Language," *The Hindu*, April 20, 2013, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/south-asia/navy-cadets-of-india-sri-lanka-speak-the-same-language/article4636943.ece> (accessed January 10, 2014).

<sup>76</sup> See Ravinatha Aryasinha, "Maldives, Sri Lanka and the 'India Factor,'" *Himal Southasian*, March 1997, <http://www.himalmag.com/component/content/article/2650-maldives-sri-lanka-and-the.html> (accessed January 10, 2014).

divian forces have held annual military exercises, and the navies undertake joint maneuvers and patrols. India has integrated the Maldives into the surveillance system of its own islands, for instance by setting up radar units on the Maldives and through surveillance flights of the Indian Air Force over the island state.<sup>77</sup> Moreover, India, the Maldives, and Sri Lanka have agreed on closer cooperation in order to fight piracy, terrorist networks, and trafficking in their territorial waters.<sup>78</sup> In July 2013, the three countries signed an agreement on this.<sup>79</sup>

## The Multilateral Level: Security in the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation

In global comparison, SAARC, which was established in 1985, is among the least successful regional organizations. The bilateral conflicts among the member states and the lack of economic complementarity are regarded as the greatest obstacles responsible for the slow process of cooperation. Officially, contentious issues have been excluded from the SAARC agenda. But the member states have time and again used the SAARC summit meetings to discuss bilateral conflicts, such as the tensions between India and Pakistan and the Tamil issue in Sri Lanka, at the highest political level.

In the context of SAARC, there are only a few instruments for security cooperation. The most impor-

tant document is the Regional Convention on Suppression of Terrorism, which was already signed in 1987. But because of their divergent positions toward Kashmir, neither India nor Pakistan could agree on a common definition of terrorism, so the document remained meaningless. Following UN declaration 1373 of September 28, 2001, SAARC passed the Additional Protocol to the SAARC Regional Convention on Terrorism. The common terrorist threat was addressed at several SAARC summits, but it took a long time to arrive at more concrete forms of cooperation.<sup>80</sup>

In 1992 the interior ministers established the SAARC Drug Offences Monitoring Desk in Colombo in order to bundle information about the regional networks for drug trafficking. In 1995, the SAARC Terrorist Offences Monitoring Desk was set up in Colombo in order to collect and exchange information on terrorist activities.<sup>81</sup> With the aim of fighting cross-border crime and discussing issues such as arms-, drugs-, and human-trafficking and money laundering, there were annual meetings between the heads of police of all SAARC members between 1996 and 2007; since 2007 the meetings have been biannual.<sup>82</sup> Since 2006, the member states have been discussing the creation of SAARCPOL, a common regional police institution that would work similarly to Interpol.<sup>83</sup>

Although the member states recognize and identify common problems in the fields of terrorism and organized crime, there have been hardly any noteworthy collaboration in the SAARC context. India and Pakistan still do not have an extradition treaty because of their difficult relationship.<sup>84</sup> In 2008, all states agreed on the SAARC Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters, which has various

<sup>77</sup> See Manu Pubby, "India Bringing Maldives into Its Security Net," *The Indian Express*, August 13, 2009, <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/India-bringing-Maldives-into-its-security-net/501583> (accessed April 25, 2013); Rajat Pandit, "India to Further Bolster Defence Cooperation with Maldives," *The Times of India*, April 15, 2013, [http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2013-04-15/india/38555022\\_1\\_indian-ocean-region-india-and-maldives-maritime-patrol-and-surveillance](http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2013-04-15/india/38555022_1_indian-ocean-region-india-and-maldives-maritime-patrol-and-surveillance); Vinay Kumar, "India, Maldives Holding Joint Military Training Exercises," *The Hindu*, November 12, 2012, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-maldives-holding-joint-military-training-exercises/article4091069.ece> (both accessed January 10, 2014). The Andamans and Nicobars in the Gulf of Bengal as well as the Lakshadweep Islands, which are north of the Maldives, belong to India.

<sup>78</sup> See Vijay Sakhuja, *Maritime Security and Piracy: Issues, Responses and Multilateral Cooperation in South Asia*, EU-Asia Dialogue, Research Paper (Berlin: Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, April 2013).

<sup>79</sup> See Meera Srinivasan, "Indian Ocean Security Pact Signed," *The Hindu*, July 9, 2013, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/south-asia/indian-ocean-security-pact-signed/article4898042.ece> (accessed January 10, 2014).

<sup>80</sup> See Arndt Michael, *India's Foreign Policy and Regional Multilateralism* (Basingstoke/New York, 2013), 104–105.

<sup>81</sup> See SAARC Secretariat, "SAARC Terrorist Offences Monitoring Desk (STOMD)," [http://saarc-sec.org/areaofcooperation/detail.php?activity\\_id=24](http://saarc-sec.org/areaofcooperation/detail.php?activity_id=24) (accessed January 10, 2014).

<sup>82</sup> See SAARC Secretariat, "SAARC Conference on Cooperation in Police Matters," [http://saarc-sec.org/areaofcooperation/detail.php?activity\\_id=20](http://saarc-sec.org/areaofcooperation/detail.php?activity_id=20); see "SAARC Home Ministers' Conference Concludes," *The Economic Times*, October 25, 2007, [http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2007-10-25/news/27667901\\_1\\_saarc-home-ministers-islamabad-assistance-in-criminal-matters](http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2007-10-25/news/27667901_1_saarc-home-ministers-islamabad-assistance-in-criminal-matters) (both accessed January 10, 2014).

<sup>83</sup> See "Rare Blend. Regional Police Force, SAARCPOL, May Become a Reality Soon," *Force* (September 2012), <http://www.forceindia.net/SepCoverstory14.aspx> (accessed January 10, 2014).

<sup>84</sup> See Sandy Gordon, "Regionalism and Cross-Border Cooperation against Crime and Terrorism in the Asia-Pacific," *Security Challenges* 5, no. 4 (summer 2009): 75–102 (85).

exemptions that limit cooperation. Moreover, the convention has not been ratified by all SAARC members. India has therefore signed various bilateral arrangements with its neighbors and is also working on one with Pakistan.<sup>85</sup> But the overall context of SAARC remains too weak to give a new impetus to security cooperation.<sup>86</sup>

## Potential and Limitations of Cooperation

With regard to the bilateral conflicts and the political resentments between India and its neighbors, a remarkable network of different forms of security cooperation has developed over the years. This process can be seen as a benchmark for domestic changes and the improvement of bilateral relations at the same time. Dependent on the status of bilateral relations, security collaboration ranges from confidence-building measures to joint training exercises and the exchange of forces for joint military operations. The training component is the most advanced area, for instance in India's relations with Bhutan, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. But because exact figures are missing, the overall impact of these measures in the context of bilateral relations is difficult to assess. Even more difficult to assess is the extent of police cooperation. It is not quite clear if – and what forms of – collaboration will emerge from the meetings of the police chiefs on the SAARC level. It is also not quite clear what kind of agreements the police forces in the border regions have for cooperating with the respective authorities in neighboring countries, for instance against the different forms of trafficking.

<sup>85</sup> See “Pakistan to Examine India's Request for an Extradition Treaty,” *The Economic Times*, May 28, 2012, [http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2012-05-28/news/31877077\\_1\\_extradition-treaty-mutual-legal-assistance-treaty-indian-request](http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2012-05-28/news/31877077_1_extradition-treaty-mutual-legal-assistance-treaty-indian-request) (accessed January 10, 2014).

<sup>86</sup> See Ganguly, *Counterterrorism Cooperation in South Asia* (see note 8), 8–9; Gordon, “Regionalism and Cross-Border Cooperation against Crime and Terrorism in the Asia-Pacific” (see note 84), 93–94; Michael, *India's Foreign Policy and Regional Multilateralism* (see note 80), 106.

# Reasons for Cooperation

There are several factors and developments that have probably contributed to the intensified process of security cooperation in recent years.

## **The National Level: Democracy and Internal Conflicts**

It is one of the paradoxes of South Asia that, on the one hand, the region has the largest number of absolute poor people globally but, on the other hand, also has formally elected democratic governments in nearly all countries. This contradicts the often quoted assumption of modernization theory, which argues for a minimum of economic development as a prerequisite for democratic regimes. But neither the dynamic of democratic peace nor the argument that democracies do not go to war with each other can account for security collaboration in South Asia. In comparison to established democracies, new democracies show a higher likelihood for conflict with regard to their foreign policy behavior.

The examples of Pakistan and Bangladesh show that there is a connection between democratic regimes, especially through the ruling coalition and the likelihood of security cooperation. The earliest attempts at security collaboration through confidence-building measures started during the first government of Benazir Bhutto after she was elected in 1988. But the case of Pakistan also shows the difficulties of democratic governments to pursue their interests vis-à-vis powerful veto actors such as the Army or parts of the security apparatus with regard to the improvement of relations with India. The Pakistani military under General Musharraf sabotaged the rapprochement with India that was initiated by the Lahore process in spring 1999 with the Kargil War in the summer of that year. The Mumbai attack in November 2008 ended the composite dialogue, which had started in 2004 and brought considerable improvement to India-Pakistan relations.

In the case of Bangladesh, the improvement of relations with India is strongly correlated with the governments of the Awami League. The democratic competition has always had a direct impact on secu-

rity cooperation, especially with regard to militant groups operating in Bangladesh.

Moreover, one can observe that the gap in security perceptions has narrowed in recent years. The growing willingness of South Asian countries to cooperate militarily with India indicates that it is no longer their big neighbor but rather the various national conflicts that are regarded as the main security challenge. Many militant and separatist movements operate beyond the borders, which has also contributed to the rapprochement of threat perceptions between India and its neighboring countries. This has created a new basis for security collaboration, which was unthinkable before. Examples are India's cooperation with Bhutan and Bangladesh against militant groups in the north-east, the joint efforts with Sri Lanka against the LTTE, and the fight against Islamic extremists with Bangladesh. In 2012, even the Pakistani military conceded that the biggest security threats emanate from domestic challenges and no longer from the external threat of India.<sup>87</sup> This change in security perceptions within the Pakistani Army may have fostered the rapprochement with India and may lead to new forms of confidence-building measures in the future.

## **The International Level**

Internationally, there are three different developments that may have contributed to the increase in security collaborations in South Asia in recent years. These are first, India's new South Asia policy; second, the SAARC Charter of Democracy; and finally, the limited role of external actors.

<sup>87</sup> See "Pakistan Army Sees 'Internal Threats' as Greatest Security Risk," *Dawn*, January 2, 2013, <http://www.dawn.com/news/775781/pakistan-army-sees-internal-threats-as-greatest-security-risk> (accessed January 2, 2013).

### India's South Asia Policy: From Indira to Manmohan Doctrine

The rapprochement in the threat perceptions can be partly explained by the change of India's policy vis-à-vis its neighboring countries after 1991. Until then, India's foreign policy toward South Asia was guided by the Indira doctrine, named after Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. According to her, South Asia was regarded as part of India's national security conception. Internal conflicts in neighboring states should therefore only be managed by New Delhi without interference from extra-regional powers or international organizations.<sup>88</sup>

After economic liberalization in 1991, India's foreign policy underwent a fundamental change. Since then, foreign direct investment, export promotion, and integration into the global economy have been put to the forefront to foster national development. From this perspective, South Asia became less relevant for India's national security but more relevant for its economic development. The Gujral doctrine, named after Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral, indicated this change of perspective with the notion of "non-reciprocity," that is, that India would be willing to make unilateral concessions in conflicts with smaller neighbors, which was unthinkable before.<sup>89</sup> The treaties on water sharing with Nepal and Bangladesh from the 1990s have been shaped by the spirit of the Gujral doctrine. The following BJP governments of Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee have continued this policy. Despite the attacks by Islamic militants on the Indian parliament in December 2001 and the following crisis with Pakistan in summer 2002, Vajpayee decided in favor of another offer for negotiations with Pakistan in spring 2003. This was the starting point of the composite dialogue, which ended in 2008. The government of the United Progressive Alliance, under the leadership of the Congress Party under Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, also followed this strategy. The so-called Manmohan doctrine put economic relations in the center of India's foreign policy and aimed to intensify national development, to increase India's standing in the dialogue with great powers, and to improve relations

with neighboring countries.<sup>90</sup> In May 2013, Prime Minister Singh declared that India also wanted to increase its security engagement vis-à-vis the countries in South Asia and in the Indian Ocean.<sup>91</sup> The attempt to intensify technological and military cooperation could create more resentment among some SAARC members compared to the countries in Southeast Asia.

India's new foreign policy directives and the new unilateral political and economic concessions, for instance to increase intra-regional trade, have not yet delivered far-reaching results. Despite India's initiatives, the intra-regional trade in SAARC is still only around 5 percent of total trade. But India's changing South Asia policy may have had a signaling effect upon their neighbors. If there were governments in power that were friendly toward India, the traditional hostile images and confrontational stances toward India from the 1970s and 1980s could lose their relevance.

### The Multilateral Level: The SAARC Charter of Democracy

The performance of democratic regimes in South Asia is comparatively weak in the international context, as depicted by governance indicators from the World Bank. Moreover, the democratic competition has escalated repeatedly into crises and civil wars, for instance in Sri Lanka and Nepal. But despite all deficits and shortcomings, there are high levels of confidence in South Asian countries in democratic systems, as reflected in different surveys.<sup>92</sup> The demand for democracy is also reflected in the opposition to authoritarian regimes, for instance in Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Nepal, which led to the democratization between the late 1980s and early 1990s.

<sup>88</sup> See Devin T. Hagerty, "India's Regional Security Doctrine," *Asian Survey* 31, no. 4 (April 1991): 351–63; Bhabani Sen Gupta, "India: The Next Great Power," in: *Indian Foreign Policy. Agenda for the 21st Century*, Vol. 1, ed. Lalit Mansingh et al. (New Delhi, 1997), 129–40.

<sup>89</sup> See I. K. Gujral, *A Foreign Policy for India*, without place 1998.

<sup>90</sup> See Raja C. Mohan, "The Manmohan Doctrine", *Daily Times*, February 28, 2005, [http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=story\\_28-2-2005\\_pg3\\_5](http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=story_28-2-2005_pg3_5) (accessed July 13, 2012); Sanjaya Baru, *India and the World – Economics and Politics of the Manmohan Singh Doctrine in Foreign Policy*, Working Paper No. 53 (Singapore: Institute of South Asian Studies, National University of Singapore, November 2008).

<sup>91</sup> See Vinay Kumar, "India Well Positioned to Become a Net Provider of Security: Manmohan Singh," *The Hindu*, May 23, 2013, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-well-positioned-to-become-a-net-provider-of-security-manmohan-singh/article4742337.ece> (accessed January 10, 2014).

<sup>92</sup> *State of Democracy in South Asia*, ed. Harsh Sethi (New Delhi, 2008), 11.

**Table 1**  
**Arms Imports from China and India (in US\$ million)**

South Asian countries	Imports from China				Imports from India			
	1995	2000	2008	2012	1995	2000	2008	2012
Bangladesh	9	11	10	301	–	–	–	–
Nepal	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Pakistan	261	68	250	852	–	–	–	–
Sri Lanka	15	29	53	–	–	16	11	–

Source: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, *SIPRI Arms Transfers Database*, <http://www.sipri.org/databases/armstransfers> (accessed July 19, 2013)

Therefore, it is not astonishing that SAARC agreed on a common Charter of Democracy in 2009.<sup>93</sup> In case of a military coup in a SAARC country, the charter could offer institutional leverage for the other member states to enforce sanctions like India did in 2005 against the monarchy in Nepal. The common democratic value basis may not be a powerful instrument but it certainly has a high symbolic value. On the basis of closer cooperation among the democratic regimes, new channels of communication can be opened between parliaments, parties, and civil society, which may contribute to weakening perceptions about traditional enemies over the long term. Moreover, these processes may also promote adjustments in perceptions of domestic threats.

### The Role of External Actors: The China Factor

Another factor that is important for India's foreign policy is China's increased engagement in South Asia. The smaller neighbors have always played the China card in order to get support for their bilateral conflicts with India. It was most obvious in the case of Pakistan, but the other South Asian countries have also systematically intensified their economic, political, and military relations with Beijing in recent years.<sup>94</sup>

Many of the activities between India and its neighboring countries include confidence-building measures, training programs, intelligence cooperation, and military maneuvers and operations. One important aspect of security collaboration, that is, arms exports, is more

or less completely missing in the spectrum of activities. A comparison of arms exports from China and India to four South Asian countries reveals a striking picture: India is not regarded as an attractive partner for arms and military technology (see Table 1).

But China's engagement is not an obstacle for security cooperation in South Asia. First, China has intensified its relations with India on nearly all levels, despite the tensions at the border. Second, in contrast to previous times, China seems less inclined to interfere in the domestic and regional conflicts of South Asia. This is most obvious in the case of Pakistan, which is one of the few strategic partners of Beijing. But for many years, the Chinese government has not supported Pakistan's position on the Kashmir issue but rather assisted India's stance. Like other great powers, China is promoting bilateral talks between the two countries and does not promote the implementation of UN resolutions. The military cooperation of South Asian countries with China is therefore not automatically directed against India. If this was the case, then there would be less collaboration on security. But instead, there has been an increase in recent years. Finally, because of its own domestic problems in Tibet and Xinjiang, China shares concerns about domestic threat perception and is cooperating with Pakistan to close camps of militant Uighurs in the tribal areas at the Afghan border.

<sup>93</sup> See SAARC Secretariat, "SAARC Charter of Democracy," <http://www.saarc-sec.org/SAARC-Charter-of-Democracy/88/> (accessed July 23, 2013).

<sup>94</sup> See Christian Wagner, *Indien als Regionalmacht und Chinas wachsender Einfluss in Südasien*, SWP-Studie 21/2012 (Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, October 2012).

# Prospects: Toward a Security Architecture in South Asia?

South Asia will remain one of the most dangerous regions in the future because of the different territorial, political, religious, and social conflicts. But it seems that the regional security scenario has improved in recent years.

The likelihood of a nuclear conflict between India and Pakistan, a result of bilateral tensions in the 1990s, has diminished due to the rapprochement of both sides. The present security challenges in South Asian countries are more linked to the various domestic conflicts rather than to external threats. The change in India's South Asia policy, which views the region today more as a part of India's market and less as a challenge to its national security, has contributed to a change in perspective that has resulted in unilateral trade concessions and in compromises on bilateral issues. The growing security collaboration signals that today India wants to achieve security through cooperation rather than confrontation, as was the case in the period of the Indira doctrine. These changes on the domestic level and in the field of foreign policy have therefore created new opportunities for security cooperation in the crisis-plagued region.

The collaboration is characterized by several features. First, it is more bilateral (between India and its neighbors) rather than regional or multilateral (for instance on the SAARC level). Second, security cooperation is still dependent on the overall context of bilateral relations and is therefore prone to setbacks. The forms of collaboration range from confidence-building measures between India and Pakistan; to capacity-building and training programs between India, Afghanistan, and Sri Lanka; and to military operations, as in the case of Bhutan. Finally, security cooperation is not exclusive, which means that military relations of India's neighbors with great powers such as China and the United States continue to play an important role. But extra-regional powers seem less inclined to interfere in domestic or cross-border conflicts in the region.

Despite these new forms of cooperation, it is not likely that South Asia will become a "security com-

munity."<sup>95</sup> This would require much more progress in the field of regional cooperation and on the SAARC level, especially in the societal and economic fields. But even high levels of economic interdependence, which can be observed, for instance, in East Asia between China and Japan, does not necessarily lead to a rapprochement in security matters. On the other hand, low levels of economic interdependence, as in the case of SAARC, does not rule out new security initiatives.

Following the discussions on soft or open regionalism, security cooperation in Asia will continue to be an assembly of different bi- and multilateral relations characterized by weak institutionalism and different levels of engagement by external powers. As to how far these emerging security architectures will be bi- or multilateral will depend on the respective regional constellations.

## Abbreviations

ARF	ASEAN Regional Forum
ASF	Afghan Security Forces
DGMO	Director General of Military Operations
DMK	Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam
EU	European Union
LoC	Line of Control
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organisation
UN	United Nations

<sup>95</sup> See Karl W. Deutsch and Sidney A. Burrell, *Political Community and the North Atlantic Area. International Organization in the Light of Historical Experience* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957).