

## Non-Governmental Confidence-Building Initiatives In South Asia: Categorization, Interest, Hurdles, Policy Recommendations

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This paper's prime objective is to comprehensively and scientifically review the main framework parameters, which are determining the non-governmental sector's role in the process of confidence-building in South Asia, namely the seven states of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).

Throughout the paper, the focus of analysis is primarily on the Indo-Pakistan context, although there will be ample reference here and there to the multilateral (South Asian) context. This limitation is reasonable given our seminar venue, but above all because

- the confidence-building process between India and Pakistan is more relevant - and urgent - given the prevailing high level of tension between these two nuclearised adversaries.
- the conflictual relationship between India and Pakistan is acknowledged as the decisive stumbling block not only for their bilateral relations but also for multilateral cooperation in the broader South Asian context as well, and
- because most of the initiatives as well as available data and information about confidence-building is oriented towards India and Pakistan.

This paper addresses five issues:

1. The concept of "confidence-building" as applied in the governmental and non-governmental contexts in South Asia.

2. The categorization of non-governmental confidence - building initiatives in South Asia.
3. The main reasons, which in the author's opinion, have precipitated the upsurge of interest by the non-governmental sector in the confidence-building process in South Asia in recent years.
4. A general assessment of the impact of, and the prevailing major hurdles to, the non-governmental sector's involvement in the confidence-building process in South Asia.
5. Some recommendations for enhancing the non-governmental sector's role in the confidence-building process in South Asia.

### 1. Building Confidence between Adversarial States: Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs) and Confidence-Building Initiatives (CBIs) in South Asia

What are "Confidence-Building Measures"? Viewed in the governmental context, confidence-building measures - or CBMs - are the instruments of confidence-building, the: "tools that adversarial states can use to reduce tensions and avert the possibility of war". Basically, CBMs are an instrument for deescalating inter-state tensions and defusing on-going or imminent crisis situations which risk turning into open conflict between states with all its hazardous ramifications. They usually embody clearly-defined actions to be undertaken and tend to be predominately - though not exclusively - security-related. CBMs constitute a practical and desirable mechanism of conflict avoidance and are one of the numerous facilitating factors in the arduous process of inter-state conflict resolution on which cooperation between, and ultimately a multifaceted integration of, states hinges. CBMs have been applied in several regional conflictual contexts - for example, in cold-war Europe, Latin America, the Korean peninsula, in Sino-Indian relations and - more relevantly here - in the Indo-Pakistan context<sup>1</sup> (examples): Non-attack on nuclear installations, prevention of air space

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violations, joint border patrolling, establishment between military commanders along the line of control.

Another type of confidence-building measures - those which are outside the state purview and the focus of this paper - are initiatives emanating in the non-governmental sector. The term "non-governmental", as applied in this paper, connotes a broad spectrum of entities ranging from individuals acting in a non-official capacity on the one hand to large supranational private organisations on the other.

Non-governmental Confidence-Building Initiatives (CBIs) differ from governmental CBMs in a number of essential respects. Most importantly, CBIs lack the element of "consequential reciprocity", in other words, the policies, proposals and recommendations they embody are non-binding on governments in contrast to bi- or multilateral CBMs which are based on mutual consent and reached after an arduous process of inter-governmental negotiations followed (usually) by their subsequent implementation. This non-binding aspect is a major inherent weakness of the non-governmental confidence-building process, but, at the same time and as experience in the South Asian context has shown, it paves the way for non-governmental entities to be much more creative - perhaps often even too idealistic - in their conceptual approach towards tackling issues of inter-state contention.

Non-governmental confidence-building initiatives must thus be viewed in a comparatively much broader thematic perspective than governmental confidence-building measures ranging, for instance, not only from advocacy of a dialogue between governments and proposals of specific ways and means to deescalate tensions and peacefully and amicably resolve conflict situations, but also to advocacy of a mutual cooperation and integration in myriad fields, such as culture, economy and politics.

## **2. Categorization of Non-Governmental Confidence-Building Initiatives in South Asia**

The theme of confidence-building in South Asia, especially between the regions two heavyweights and bitter adversaries

India and Pakistan, has attracted considerable attention in the South Asian mass media and amongst the intelligentsia, especially since the 1990s. Several non-governmental initiatives were launched in recent years, which also have been observed with growing interest as well as encouragement and practical support from governments and institutions outside South Asia.

In light of the rapid proliferation of non-governmental confidence-building initiatives in South Asia and given that these initiatives in to exhibit a considerable degree of diversity in terms of their respective approach, content and priorities, it is instructive to develop a categorization framework so that they and the non-governmental sector's confidence-building function can be better understood and assessed. The author proposes a two-fold categorization of confidence-building initiatives in South Asia: *explicit confidence-building initiatives and implicit confidence-building initiatives.*

**Explicit Initiatives:** What are "explicit initiatives"? Explicit - as the term suggests - encompasses those initiatives, which are specifically concerned with confidence building. In the Indo-Pakistan context, the terms "Track-II Diplomacy" or "Citizens Diplomacy" usually first comes to mind here. These initiatives, which are outside the ambit of the government sector, occur periodically in an informal, open, flexible and forthcoming atmosphere where the participants from India and Pakistan, who are usually persons of some renowned intellectual or social standing in their respective states who are acting in a non-official capacity, are open to discuss and adopt stances on contentious bilateral issues which would simply be too controversial to deliberate upon in official settings, which take place between government representatives in a formalised, uncompromising and often distrustful atmosphere. Track-II Diplomacy rose to prominence in the post World War II epoch and has been applied in the context of the cold war (USA, USSR) and subsequently in other regional hotspots, such as the Middle East, Northern Ireland and the Korean Peninsula. South Asia, which for decades has been plagued by the Indo-Pakistan political impasse as well as several other issues of contention between India and its other smaller neighbours, has provided a fertile breeding ground for Track-II Diplomacy, which has since evolved into an

ardent, articulate and dynamic movement in South Asian civil society, courageously endeavouring to seek an amicable, just and peaceful resolution of the region's conflicts and the developmental reorientation of the current pattern of inter-state relationships between the region's states.

Track-II initiatives in South Asia can be classed according to scope, that is, regional initiatives with participants from throughout the region, for example, the South Asian Summer School in Arms Control, and bilateral initiatives, whose participants are drawn from two antagonistic states, for instance in the Indo-Pakistan context, the Neemrana Initiative and the Pakistan-India Peoples Forum for Peace and Democracy. Confidence-building initiatives are also pursuable at the unilateral (national) level, examples in this regard being the peace rallies and coalitions which emerged in India and Pakistan after their nuclear test explosions in May 1998. These important initiatives, however, cannot be classed under Track - II Diplomacy because the crucial elements of interaction (bilateral or multilateral) and continuity are absent. The same reasoning (lack of continuity) applies also to other bilateral grass root level initiatives (Cross-Border Peace Marches)<sup>2</sup> and multilateral ones (Youth Leaders Expedition<sup>3</sup>).

The Henry Stimson Center in Washington D.C., which studies confidence-building initiatives in South Asia and other conflict regions across the globe, estimates the current number of non-governmental initiatives - or dialogue channels - in South Asia at around 40.

**Implicit Initiatives:** Implicit initiatives are the second category of non-governmental confidence-building initiatives. The term, "implicit" is applied to convey the point here that while the primal objectives of the non-governmental entities in question is neither conflict nor crisis-oriented, their activities are indirectly consistent with the process of confidence-building in South Asia. For example, several thousand Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) are operative in India, Pakistan and other South Asian states. All South Asian states are confronted more or less with identical acute and chronic development problems such as hunger and malnutrition, poverty, squalid living

conditions, unemployment, inadequate sanitation, lack of health amenities, environmental degradation, and so forth which are at the focus of efforts by these NGOs. Through their human development, poverty alleviation and environmental programmes, NGOs play an important indirect and largely unacknowledged role in the confidence-building process, mainly because they nurture a broad public awareness of the imperative for concentrating scarce national productive resources in developmental spheres instead of wasting them on bloated defence budgets. By devising mechanisms and procedures for the exchange of technical information, knowledge and expertise on a sustained basis and by endeavouring to evolve and propagate common standards and promote and expand contact-building and networking between institutions and professionals in South Asia, some regional NGOs are, moreover, helping lay the groundwork imperative for a future possible economic and social integration in the region. Examples of such non-governmental regional initiatives are the South Asian Federation of Accountants, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation of Architects, the SAARC Association of Management Development Institutions, the SAARC Federation of University Women, the SAARC Association of Town Planners and the SAARC Cardiac Society.

### **3. Reasons for the Surge of Interest by the Non-Governmental Sector in the Process of Confidence - Building in South Asia**

In this author's opinion, several factors account for the non-governmental sectors increased interest in confidence-building processes in South Asia in the past two decades, inter alia, the:

**Political Impasse:** Politics is a key precipitating factor in the non-governmental sector's surge in confidence-building processes in South Asia. Since the end of the British colonial epoch, the region has been beset with unresolved inter-state territorial conflicts and other enduring and vexing issues of inter-state contention. In the Indo-Pakistan context, the dispute over Jammu and Kashmir - acknowledgeably the most serious bone of contention in South Asia - has already resulted in two armed conflicts and several near conflicts between India and

Pakistan in the past 53 years. This conflict, along with a host of other lower-profile (albeit major) contentious issues, have sustained the bitter animosity which characterized Indo-Pakistan relations already at the time of partition in 1947 and has persistently hindered a constructive bilateral political dialogue aimed at easing tension, preventing a meaningful level of cooperation between India and Pakistan in the economic, social and political fields from materializing. In the wake of the gradual erosion of antagonistic inter-state power structures in other conflictual contexts which has been observed across the globe since the 1980s, Indian and Pakistani intellectuals have (understandably) become increasingly disenchanted with this anachronistic situation and impasse prevailing between their states, launching a series of non-governmental initiatives aimed at pursuing a dialogue on unresolved issues of bilateral contention.

**Socio-Economic Opportunity Costs of Weaponisation:** The disastrous socio-economic consequences which the cold war on the Indian subcontinent has had, especially for arch rivals India and Pakistan, which traditionally rank amongst the world's most impoverished states with near-bottom socio-economic indices<sup>4</sup>, and the growing public cognisance as well as deep sense of frustration at the tremendous cost of this rivalry in terms of foregone socio-economic development opportunities, is a central theme which is regularly raised by advocates of a constructive political dialogue in South Asia. For instance, over the period 1990-96, India and Pakistan spent US dollars 70 billion on their "defence"; concurrently they spent only US dollars 12 billion on education. Research conducted by non-governmental entities lucidly depict the enormous costs of weaponisation in terms of foregone sacrificed socio-economic schemes: the US dollars 4 million spent on one battle tank would suffice to immunise one million children, the US dollars 90 million price tag on one Mirage-2000 would suffice to educate three million children through primary school and the US dollars 300 million price of a submarine could provide clean drinking water to sixty million people! Ironically, these massive investments in conventional defence armaments assure neither India nor Pakistan the absolute security they desperately seek - on the contrary, the

proliferation of nuclear weapons and missile delivery systems on the Subcontinent in the closing years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has heightened insecurity in South Asia, placing for the first time all Pakistani and several major Indian industrial and population centers within striking distance of nuclear warheads.

**Globalization and Rationalization:** These two complementary aspects have had a catalyzing effect on confidence-building processes in South Asia. Globalisation has become an imperative for virtually all states, even those which until the recent past rigorously endeavoured to encapsulate themselves from supranational influences. This process of globalisation, which is self-evident in several spheres - capital markets and financial investment, specialisation of production, the telecommunications sector and the dissemination of information and entertainment - has concurrently been accompanied by an increasing trend towards regionalism, evident in the formation of "regional trading blocs" across the globe. The immense potential welfare effects accruing to states from their inclusion in both globalisation and regionalisation processes have not gone unnoticed in India, Pakistan and the rest of South Asia where a growing public cognisance of the potential integrative benefits in the region and a lively and continuous public discussion and increasing vocal support in favour of pursuing such integration, especially in the economic field, has emerged.

In concluding, it should be borne in mind that the considerations outlined above (political impasse, socio-economic costs of weaponisation and concurrent processes of globalisation and regionalisation) may have been largely inconsequential had it not been for the emergence in India and Pakistan - and, of course other South Asian states - over the past two decades of a well-informed, good-intentioned and critically inclined *Civil Society* or cadre of concerned citizens comprising, inter alia, Professors, Researchers, Scientists, Students, Teachers, Journalists, retired Civil Servants and Military Officers, Development Professionals, Social Activists and other Citizens who, despite the prevailing political climate, have courageously initiated or are actively supporting at the bi- or multilateral levels a dialogue on contentious issues overshadowing the

relations between South Asian states and striving to mobilise public support in the region in favour of peaceful coexistence and mutual cooperation and integration.

#### **4. The Non-Governmental Sector and Confidence-Building Processes in South Asia: Impact Assessment and Review of the Prevailing Hurdles**

##### *Impact Assessment*

Assessing the overall impact of non-governmental initiatives in the Indo-Pakistan context or in other South Asian bilateral contexts, namely, all initiatives explicitly and implicitly related to confidence-building processes presents myriad methodological and empirical difficulties. As indicated earlier, proposals and recommendations circulated by non-governmental entities are non-binding on governments whereas governmental CBMs usually tend to be clearly defined, their implementation (theoretically) legally binding, monitorable and their qualitative and/or quantitative impact more readily evaluable. Given the underlying complexity of interests and considerations at work, it is difficult to ascertain the actual factors precipitating the implementation of governmental CBMs, in other words, whether non-governmental entities have any influence in the evolution of CBMs in the first place. For instance, defence spending reductions and enhanced social sector investments are a persistent demand which are voiced routinely not only in the framework of the explicit non-governmental initiatives, but they are also a precondition for loans given to India and Pakistan by the international financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund, World Bank and Asian Development Bank on which both states are chronically dependent. However, whatever meagre progress has been achieved in regard to defence spending reductions in South Asia is considered attributable to pressure exclusively by the international institutions, not by the demands of non-governmental entities. On a more somber note, the occurrence of countless border skirmishes between India and Pakistan, allegations of mutual subversion and perpetration of terrorist

acts, harassment of diplomats, continued stringent travel restrictions, hostile media coverage and propaganda/counter-propaganda at international forums are a lucid testimony to the non-governmental sector's dismal performance in the confidence-building field. Bluntly formulated, they have failed to bring about any substantive reduction in bilateral tension, to say nothing of promoting Indo-Pakistan cooperation in a number of important fields for which there is an enormous acknowledged potential. The main success of these non-governmental initiatives lies in their "public relations effect", that is, they have conveyed to the watchful people and policy makers of South Asia - and to observers across the globe - that public awareness and support in India and Pakistan to peacefully and amicably resolve their conflicts and move on to concrete forms of cooperation and integration exists, is growing and that there are considerable developmental opportunities and vistas waiting to be tapped.

##### *Prevailing Hurdles*

The point has been made that, insofar as the Indo-Pakistan context is concerned, the various on-going non-governmental initiatives have, in toto, failed to achieve any substantive impact in terms of a reduction in tension levels, much less contribute to resolution of current conflicts or, more importantly, facilitate any meaningful long-term institutionalised levels of bilateral cooperation and integration. Nevertheless, these deficiencies should not be construed as implying that non-governmental initiatives are irrelevant or should be scrapped, rather they are indicative that the process of confidence-building is fraught with major hurdles and that in the pursuit of their objectives, a strategic re-thinking and reorientation of these non-governmental initiatives may be imperative. This latter aspect will be discussed in the following section. Some of the possible causes, which may account for the non-governmental sectors dismal performance are briefly elaborated below.

The non-governmental sector in South Asia faces several obstacles in its confidence-building endeavours. In the Indo-Pakistan context, four factors merit special attention:

**Politics of Hegemony:** India's hegemonical ambitions constitute a core impediment to the normalisation of Indo-Pakistan relations and the pursuit of a broad-based and substantive long-term cooperation in the political, economic and socio-cultural fields between these two South Asian rivals which have already thrice gone to war in the mere 53 years of their existence. Belligerent statements and occasional existentialist threats directed by the Indian political and military establishment against Pakistan have had a zero impact in terms of confidence-building. Furthermore, India's hegemonical policy viz-a-viz its other smaller neighbouring states over the years has been self-evident. Indian hegemony manifests itself primarily in three basic forms (economic<sup>5</sup>, political<sup>6</sup>, military<sup>7</sup>) and is grounded on India's enormous comparative advantage over all its South Asian neighbours in terms of its geographic size, population, industrial base and military power. Unless and until India forsakes its evident ambitions of regional domination and leadership and commits itself instead to seeking a constructive political dialogue with Pakistan (and its other South Asian neighbours) on an equal footing, the prospects for an alleviation of tension in the region and, more importantly, the undertaking of a meaningful, long-term cooperation and integration appear very bleak indeed.

**Cultural & Religious Chauvinism:** Degenerative cultural and religious trends in India and Pakistan in the past two decades constitute another major obstacle to bilateral confidence-building processes. A particularly disturbing trend is the progressive erosion of liberal and secular values in Indian society and the emergence of reactionary religious Hindu fundamentalist / extremist movements with an inherent and strong confrontational predisposition towards other religious groups. For example, vehemently anti-Pakistan and anti-Muslim extremist forces, centering on (though not confined to) the Bharatiya Janata Party, have emerged since the 1980s from obscurity to a position where they currently head the central government and some state governments. Influenced by Hindu extremism, a series of measures have been initiated in India to systematically undermine the secular foundations of Indian society and victimise minorities. In Pakistan, whereas Islamic

extremist parties have (fortunately) failed to attain any significant electoral gains to date, their electoral deficiency has (unfortunately) been overcompensated by the reactionary religious undercurrents which have emerged in Pakistani society over time, spurred on initially by General Zia-ul-Haq's Islamisation policies in the late 1970s and 1980s and metastasizing further under the rotten civilian autocracies of Benazir Bhutto and Zia's protégé Nawaz Sharif. These Islamic social currents are vehemently anti-Indian in orientation. Consequently, the *issue-oriented* conflict dimension in Indo-Pakistan relations is being increasingly supplemented by a new, more ominous facet, namely, an emotive *religious-oriented* conflict dimension - or, to state it more bluntly - an apparent Hindu-Muslim clash of cultures. As history has shown on countless occasions, religious discord tend to be more profoundly embedded in the psyche and memory of people and the rifts, divisions and wounds they cause are significantly more difficult to heal over time.

**Vested Elite Interests:** Resistance by "elite groups" in India and Pakistan constitute a crucial hindrance to confidence-building processes. Vested elites connote those well-entrenched groups in society, which are mostly organised on institutional lines, have established traditions and a high social status, and enjoy substantive political influence. In India and Pakistan various elite groups exist - most notable of which are the military, bureaucracy and the political establishment - and these may have an interest in obstructing confidence-building processes, their reasons for which have not yet been the subject of any rigorous scientific analysis and hence can only be the object of speculation by this author. For instance, the military's interest in preserving the status quo may not be based solely on patriotic considerations or its interest in defending national frontiers against external aggression, but could stem from its desire to preserve or enhance its comparative power standing as well as public image and reputation; it may on the other hand be indicative of the military establishments interest to personally cash in on the enormous commissions which usually accompany the procurement of sophisticated and expensive weaponry<sup>8</sup>. For its part, the bureaucracy may be disinclined towards confidence-building initiatives because it apprehends that the demands of

bilateral integration which envisageably may follow on the heels of confidence-building measures may necessitate a substantive revamping of public administration to bring it into conformity with the transformed political, economic and social priorities and challenges. Transformation processes imply a degree of uncertainty, readjustment and a potential alteration in patterns of authority and influence - considerations which complacent, risk-averse and prestige-conscious bureaucracies such as those of India and Pakistan would presumably seek to avoid. Finally, political establishments may for various reasons be averse to confidence-building processes, for instance, because they may be resisted by other influential elite groups such as the military and bureaucracy, or because it may encounter opposition from the general public or powerful domestic reactionary forces - the media, for instance, informs us time and again that any concessions granted by India or Pakistan on the Kashmir issue would bring about the demise of the acquiescing government the same day - or because such processes may eventually bring about a transformation in social attitudes and expectations and with it challenge traditional feudal-style power structures. Furthermore, any future large-scale cooperation and integration between India and Pakistan would presumably be accompanied by a dilution of national sovereignty as some policy and decision-making would have to be conducted jointly - a deterring prospect for the self-conscious and shaky political establishments of both India and Pakistan.

**Exclusion of the Grassroots:** Most of the non-governmental initiatives in the Indo-Pakistan context are characterised, by and large, by their confinement to a very select group of individuals and organisations. The grassroots are basically excluded from confidence-building processes and this may be one key factor accounting for the failure of these initiatives to be taken more seriously at the policy-making level. While this exclusion is in part understandable keeping in mind the multifaceted practical constraints obstructing a broadbased grassroot participation in the still evolving and maturing confidence-building processes in South Asia, the confinement of most (explicit) non-governmental initiatives to some hundred or thousand persons is hardly

morally justifiable or consistent with democratic norms and the ideal of peoples empowerment.

## 5. Enhancing the Non-Governmental Sector's Role in Confidence-Building Processes in South Asia: Recommendations

Having considered the core issues concerning the non-governmental sector's function in the context of bi- and multilateral confidence-building processes, the section briefly addresses specific promotional measures which, in this author's opinion, the non-governmental sector could and should undertake with a view towards pursuing the objective of confidence-building in South Asia.

As stated earlier, the non-governmental sector is subject to diverse limitations with regard to the attainment of its objectives, foremost of which is the absence of implementing power. The non-governmental sector's role - whether explicit or implicit in the sense defined earlier in this paper - is primarily *awareness-oriented*: It strives to apprise policy-makers and the public at large in South Asia of the multifaceted costs ensuing from the confrontational status quo and the foregone opportunities for national and regional economic and social development, and is vocally supportive of a policy which seeks reconciliation, the curtailment of bloated defence budgets and the pursuit of integration across a broad spectrum of fields for which numerous proposals have been floated over time.

The non-governmental sector could play a more active role in South Asian confidence-building processes. The author proposes a three-dimensional approach (*Institutional, Target Group and Programming Model (ITAGPROM)*) which is briefly outlined below:

A. **Institutional Approach:** The term "institutional" connotes all institutions/organizations involved in confidence-building processes at the national, bilateral and/or regional level. The term "non-governmental" is construed here in a broader perspective and includes, apart from institutions / organizations or recurring initiatives which are purely "non-governmental" (such as the Track-II initiatives), some which

are based in the public-sector or are in large measure or fully dependant on the state for their funding requirements, but which possess a high degree of autonomy with regard to the confidence-building related programmes and projects they pursue and are actively supportive of the on-going confidence-building initiatives. Notable examples of such public-sector institutions/organizations in South Asia are certain college and university departments, such as History, International Relations, Political Science, and policy research institutes. Other noteworthy examples are the numerous foreign - mainly western - and international development agencies presently operative in South Asia, which are providing substantial financial and logistical support as well as expertise for a number of on-going confidence-building initiatives in the region.

The institutional level has evolved evidently comparatively well with the passage of time and presently encompasses numerous entities, which - directly and/or indirectly - are supporting confidence-building processes in South Asia. Despite their failure to alleviate inter-state tension, which is self-evident in the Indo-Pakistan context, their collective impact in terms of awareness generation and promoting a critical and open public discussion of the issues of contention overshadowing the development of relations and cooperation between the states of South Asia through their respective activities such as periodic conferences, meetings, seminars, workshops, joint research studies and so forth has been quite significant and, if nothing else, they have at least laid the intellectual groundwork for possible future meaningful levels of cooperation and integration between the states of South Asia.

A package of measures could be pursued to consolidate the confidence-building promotional role of non-governmental institutions in South Asian confidence-building processes:

- More effort needs to be channelled into promoting *institutional networking arrangements*. It often seems apparent that the coordination and informational feedback between many on-going confidence-building initiatives appears inadequate. An annual

conference of representatives from each initiative at which the main activities conducted within the framework of each individual initiative are discussed and appraised, joint resolutions adopted and specific recommendations tabled may constitute a useful remedial measure in this regard, conveying to policy makers and the public in South Asia, and to watchful observers outside the region, that the protagonists of the initiatives are united in their pursuit of a common objective. In addition to boosting the credibility of the initiatives, institutional networking may envisageably bring about several significant operational advantages, for instance, an increased exchange and flow of information, ideas and concepts, improved logistical efficiency and the evolution of more effective strategies. Furthermore, with the arrival of modern information and communication technology in South Asia in recent years - and especially the rapid proliferation in the use of the internet in the region - the means for networking and communicating between non-governmental organisations within and across national borders has become not only a technically simple matter but cost wise a much more affordable one as well.

- By virtue of their comparatively strong resource and experience base, foreign organisation may in particular play a pivotal role in promoting institutional networking arrangements. A good example is the co-sponsor of this seminar, the Hanns-Seidel Foundation of Germany, whose generous and sustained programme of assistance since 1993 to a number of Pakistani governmental and non-governmental organisations for holding national, regional and international conferences, seminars and workshops on diverse topical themes - on frequent occasions highlighting South Asian regional cooperation, integration and development - has brought together institutions and scholars



from throughout South Asia to discuss at length contemporary economic, political, social and other dire problem issues in this impoverished region and to highlight the imperative for mutual cooperation and integration as a vehicle for resolving these pressing problems.

- All non-governmental organisations presently active in diverse developmental fields in South Asia (the "implicit" initiatives referred to earlier in this paper) should be encouraged to explicitly endorse and commit themselves to the confidence-building process in their charters of aims and objectives and, as an integral part of their respective field activities at the grass-root level, they should strive to educate their beneficiaries of the potential long-term economic and social developmental benefits stemming from regional cooperative/integrative processes. This would bring the concept of confidence-building and regional cooperation and integration directly and systematically, on a very wide-scale to the grass-root fold where these vital issues could be openly discussed, and broad support for confidence-building and cooperative/integrative processes sought.
- B. **Target Group Approach:** The objects of attention at this level are diverse groups of individuals with basically identical roles and functions and who by virtue of their power and status in society are, to some extent or the other, in a position to influence policy-makers and/or the public opinion in South Asia in favour of the confidence-building process. Systematically focusing the non-governmental sector's efforts on educating these target groups about the potential benefits of regional cooperative and integrative schemes and encouraging them to play a more active role in promoting confidence-building processes could prove to be a highly conducive measure which in the long-term could help considerable in alleviating inter-state tensions and prompt South Asian governments to adopt a more

conciliatory and constructive relationship-building approach. Examples of prospective target groups in South Asia are politicians and parliamentarians, civil servants, community and spiritual leaders, actors and musicians, sportsmen, media representatives, military officials and representatives from the business community and labour, students and women organisations. Interestingly, some representatives from these target groups are already involved in some on-going confidence-building initiatives though so far no concerted attempt has been made to systematically focus on and bring on a broad scale these and other key target groups into the fold of regional confidence-building processes.

C. **Programming Approach:** As the name indicates, this approach is programme-oriented in essence. It can be sub-categorised into:

- A *programme-exchange level*: which is long-term oriented and largely static. This level focuses on specific collaborative programmes which are systematically pursued and implemented in several carefully chosen spheres and with a view to promoting confidence-building through various people-to-people interaction schemes, for example, professor, student and researcher exchange programmes, school networking and pupil exchange programmes, internship exchange programmes and town twinning programmes. Such programmes are being applied for several years in the western European context in both the public and private sector domains and the resonance over time has been quite positive with considerable funds are being invested in their pursuit. Of course, the financial and logistical requirements - to say nothing of the political and bureaucratic endorsement - needed to pursue and realise these schemes on a meaningful basis would be enormous and their implementation would constitute a major challenge for the fragmented and largely cash-

strapped South Asian non-governmental sector to cooperate and coordinate in pooling their resources, expertise and funds. Foreign development organisations could play a crucial role in this regard by providing the resources indispensable for the pursuit of such schemes.

- *A programme-contingency level:* In comparison to its programme-exchange counterpart, which is grounded on pre-planned and systematically implemented bi- and/or multilateral collaborative networking schemes, the programme-contingency level is event-oriented and characterised by spontaneity. Contingency comes into play when unforeseen natural calamities of a major impact which occasionally frequent India, Pakistan and other South Asian states, such as earthquakes, floods, drought-induced famines and ecological disasters, occur and when these have major adverse ramifications for large numbers of people, the economy and/or environment. Whereas the non-governmental sector for years is involved in assisting in South Asian crisis situation relief efforts, well-conceived, coordinated and large-scale bilateral/multilateral non-governmental initiatives to supplement national disaster relief efforts may constitute a psychologically very productive confidence-promoting exercise. Examples in this regard are joint fund-raising schemes for victims by South Asian actors, musicians and singers and sportsmen. The merit of non-governmental contingency initiatives from the confidence-building perspective lies above all, and apart from humanitarian considerations, in their signalling effect - they convey a lasting impression to the people of South Asia of mutual solidarity and a shared desire and responsibility for tackling a common menace in the hour of need. Of course, analogous to programme-exchange schemes, the endorsement of contingency initiatives by policy-

makers along with a display of organisational resourcefulness and sustained commitment by the non-governmental sector and the assistance of foreign organisations is a sine qua non for their success. ■

## Notes and References

1. Reported already at the time of independence, although most of the Indo-Pakistan CBMs materialised after the Simla Accord (1972). It may be noted that some Indo-Pakistan CBMs adopted since the 1970s are not being properly implemented. An Indian observer, General (retired) Raghavan attributed mixed performance of Indo-Pakistan CBMs to two factors: (1) India and Pakistan view CBMs as a means of gaining advantage over each other rather than creating an environment for peace (2) the governments of India and Pakistan find it difficult to muster the political strength needed to confidence instead of sustaining tensions.
2. In the early part of the year 2000 a busload of Indian female peace activists spent a week in Pakistan.
3. This occurred between March and May 1999 when 14 youth leaders from South Asia marched with 18,000 people through the interiors of Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal and 16 Indian states to demand peace and development. The expedition encountered hundreds of thousands of people along the way and attended 1,000 public meetings and civic receptions in villages, schools and colleges. An agenda entitled "Together Towards Tomorrow" was presented to South Asian Heads of State.
4. For instance, 500 million South Asians live in absolute poverty, 230 million are susceptible to disease, 620 million have no access to safe drinking water, 800 million lack decent sanitation and 50% of the world's illiterates are in South Asia.
5. Apprehensions of an Indian economic domination of South Asia is one of the key factors obstructing progress in economic integration efforts in South Asia.
6. This goes largely hand in hand with control over economic and natural resources, for instance, in the case of Bhutan whose economy is largely dependent on Indian aid, in the case of landlocked Nepal, the bulk of whose external trade

is processed at Indian sea ports, and in the case of Bangladesh, whose major rivers flow in from India.

7. For instance, the Indian-occupied eastern part of Kashmir. Other post-independence examples are Sikkim, Goa and Pondicherry. India has also suppressed domestic popular insurgencies in Punjab and Assam through military means rather than seeking a political settlement.
8. This is well documented in both India and Pakistan. Interestingly, it has been noted by this author – and indeed by others as well - that a relaxation of tension between India and Pakistan was on several occasions accompanied almost immediately by military-related incidents which have reescalated tensions. Whether these incidents were intentional or accidental is a question which would be interesting to look into.

