

# **The Pursuit of Strategic Stability: An OSCE-like Infrastructure For South Asia**

Written by Davis Florick

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DAVIS FLORICK, JUN 10 2014

### **In the Pursuit of Strategic Stability: Framing an Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe-like Infrastructure in South Asia**

For policy-makers around the world, the need to identify cooperative opportunities, bilaterally and multilaterally, has become increasingly important as the impact of globalization has spread. Companies today are not as limited as they once were when it comes to the location of physical capital assets. Flexibility for multinational corporations (MNC) means that they can be increasingly selective when it comes to where they locate assets. In this environment, national and regional instability is a serious impediment to further economic growth. Unfortunately, South Asian nations have long since been plagued by a variety of security considerations, which have stunted regional growth. Cross-border tensions, domestic political upheavals, and minority ethnic group chafing are symptomatic of the obstacles inherent to the region. Across the board, South Asia's challenge today is to reduce security concerns in an effort to increase its economic attractiveness. However, solving the security dilemma is not simply a matter of increasing law enforcement and military strength. Moving forward, improving long-term standard of living concerns by addressing issues such as international trade, free and fair elections, migration stability, and so on will be vital in the pursuit of greater South Asian strategic stability.

With security at a premium, it is in the interest of all nations in South Asia to work together to reduce tensions. Drawing from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's (OSCE) advocacy for non-traditional security mechanisms, South Asian states can look at less cumbersome methods and tools to reduce the barriers and obstacles to improving security. By bringing together Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Thailand, an OSCE-like organization will utilize a number of national strengths to address important security areas of concern. The proposed organization would be ideal in developing burden sharing and mutually-beneficial relationships without the same challenges associated with highly-visible, large footprint military deployments. As will be covered later, bringing together this compilation of nations is, in some cases, the only way to address some of the fundamental security concerns that exist in the region. In any event, this OSCE-like entity is vital towards improving the overall outlook for South Asia.

### **Historical Background: Living with Tension**

As the colonial period came to an end, pre-existing ethnic and religious fault lines in South Asia came to define the post-colonial twentieth century. Countries such as Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, and Pakistan have all experienced internal unrest as each had sought to create a cohesive national identity. Further complicating matters has been external pressures placed on regional nations by their neighbors. For instance, tensions between India and Pakistan over the decades have only been exacerbated by each other's support of extremist elements acting within each state's respective border. Pakistani support of separatist movements in Kashmir and India's support of groups in East Pakistan (now known as Bangladesh) and Baluchistan have led to some of the most significant conflicts of the latter half of the twentieth century. Sadly, this is not the only case of cross-border interference. Across the region states have supported extremist elements elsewhere, which have led to greater mistrust and animosity. Recent historical tensions continue to play a significant role in shaping post-colonial South Asia.

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Further exacerbating the problems in the region have been outside parties with vested interests in shaping South Asian political affairs. For instance, the implications of the India-Pakistan conflict as a whole and what it meant for Cold War international politics has left lasting scars even today. At first, as Pakistan cultivated relationships with the United States (U.S.) and the People's Republic of China (PRC), India responded by strengthening ties with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). With the dissolving of the USSR, the U.S. looked to rebalance itself in many places throughout the world, including South Asia. This required policy-makers in Washington to distance themselves from Pakistan, which in turn pushed the government in Islamabad closer to Beijing. Meanwhile, having seen its largest patron, the USSR crumble, India began to look more toward the U.S. for support in South Asian affairs. The result of great power influence has been that neither India, nor Pakistan is comfortable with its strategic situation. This sort of international interference is emblematic of a number of bilateral and multilateral obstacles across the region. Addressing these challenges through a central dialogue-facilitating point is vital for the future of South Asia.

Returning to the India-Pakistan example, the lack of trust among the parties in the region has led to a growing need for deterrence capabilities. As a means to dissuade each other, both India and Pakistan have sought, and acquired, nuclear weapons. In response to the wide-spread use of missile delivery systems, both parties have turned to ballistic missile defense (BMD) as a means to erode the other sides offensive capabilities. However, the two states' proximity to one another has called into question the ability of BMD assets to respond in a time of crisis. The growing dangers posed by India and Pakistan have played no small role in driving Myanmar towards examining the possibility of nuclear weapons. Across the region states have responded to the ongoing security dilemma with various defense expenditures and security assistance arrangements with outside entities. As such, if deterrence were to fail the rapid escalation and territorial expansion of a possible conflict could be breathtaking.

The need for stronger regional deterrents has come at the price of economic growth. Over the long-term, strategic uncertainty has had a significant impact on economic growth in the region. Outside firms have shied away from investing, fearing the possible resumption of hostilities, while domestic businesses have looked to move elsewhere to the greatest possible extent based on the same concerns. Every time there is a missile test, major strategic exercise, or terrorist attack firms are reminded of the precarious nature of South Asian politics. In a cruel twist, the role of nuclear weapons has not only deterred conflict along the Indus but has also deterred investment along the border and throughout the region.

While there are plenty of historical reasons to be pessimistic about the prospects of strategic stability in South Asia, there are also a number of more recent indicators that suggest regional stability is increasingly possible. First, in recent years, globalization has significantly improved the lives of many Indians. While much still needs to be done to improve the quality of life for the majority of the nation, the accelerated economic growth of the last twenty years has allowed the government to embark on numerous new spending programs. Second, military dictatorships in Myanmar and Pakistan have given way to developing democracies. While these new governments are still fragile, they speak to the desire for change across the region. Third, the roles of China, Russia, and in particular the U.S. are beginning to change. While China has begun to develop stronger economic ties with India, Washington has not only developed stronger economic ties with New Delhi but has also supported India's civilian nuclear program and has distanced itself from Pakistan. The culmination of these different activities is a South Asia more open to multilateral cooperation. It is a region less polarized by outside forces and with more to gain economically from stability. While on the surface South Asia may appear very unstable, under the surface the framework is being laid for greater potential cooperation in the future.

## **Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE): A Blueprint for South Asia**

A future multilateral organization in South Asia should be modeled after the OSCE. The forerunner to the OSCE, the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), was first formalized with the Helsinki Final Act on August 1<sup>st</sup>, 1975. For decades, the group advanced member states' domestic and foreign policies with respect to politico-military, economic and environmental, and human rights activities.

'The CSCE Helsinki Final Act was one of the first international agreements to tie political and social rights to security.

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This is not to argue that democracy had not been linked to international co-operation, as indeed it has been by Immanuel Kant, John Locke and Woodrow Wilson. Rather, this was one of the first agreements that had a rights-based approach to conflict prevention' (Galbreath 163).

With the end of the Cold War, the CSCE became the OSCE. The collapse of communism in Europe presented a whole new policy field for OSCE to engage in. As discussed in the David Galbreath's piece (163):

The 'Copenhagen Document,' adopted in 1990, was the first CSCE document to address democracy openly. The preamble states that 'pluralistic democracy and the rule of law are essential for ensuring respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms, the development of human contacts and the resolution of other issues of a related humanitarian character.'

Where pluralistic democracy had not been introduced into the Final Act, the changing geo-political and domestic situations allowed for its addition.

This change in OSCE policy would allow it to enter into a whole new dimension of stability promotion through security development. Since the Cold War ended the OSCE has expanded to 57 participating nations from Central Asia, to Europe, to North America. The organization has also created special relationships with Afghanistan, Algeria, Australia, Egypt, Israel, Japan, Jordan, Morocco, South Korea, Thailand, and Tunisia. In recent years the organizations operational footprint and its impact, particularly in Europe, has been significant.

'The OSCE has been an active external actor in the so-called 'coloured revolutions' in Georgia (2003), Ukraine (2004), and Kyrgyzstan (2005), not to mention Serbia (2000) and eventually Montenegro (2006)' (Galbreath 162).

Its supporting role as a promoter of democratic institutions, particularly in the former Warsaw Pact and Soviet satellite states, has had a positive impact on the lives of millions in the region.

OSCE has become the standard bearer for successful multinational organizations. The focus of the group is on security as a means to ensure stability and thereby create opportunities for growth in other fields. As a means to better promote regional security, OSCE categorizes its efforts into three categories. First, generate politico-military cooperation between member states in order to improve transparency. Second, develop economic and environmental independence and sustainability in order to reduce tension over finite resources. Third, advocate human rights protections as a tool for reducing intrastate and interstate ethnic tensions.

'The OSCE is based on a comprehensive understanding of security. Its philosophy reflects an approach that focuses on traditional security aspects, as well as on democracy building and the human, economic, environmental and humanitarian dimensions' (Wohlfeld 89).

Countries are most likely to go to war during times of internal and external struggle rather than during times of prosperity. This format allows OSCE to target the full spectrum of destabilizing activities. In doing so, the organization has taken the traditional notions of arms control, mutual security, and so on and turned them into a more holistic means of improving the future prospects of countries and of Europe writ large.

It is worth noting an operationalized example of how OSCE works. Violence in the Ukraine in recent months has necessitated the need for OSCE as a means to improve transparency, thereby improving trust in the region. In conjunction with the Open Skies Treaty (OST), OSCE has conducted flyovers across both the Ukraine and Russia. These missions have helped clarify positioning of Russia and non-attributed forces. Observers have also been sent to onsite locations in the Ukraine to monitor the situation on the ground. By placing OSCE personnel in potential volatile areas the organization is better positioned to receive an honest assessment of the instigators in the event of conflict. In practice, these observers are able to help deescalate tension without the naturally volatile impact of placing significant numbers of soldiers on the ground in the region.

## **A Framework for Multilateralism in South Asia**

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The appropriate composition of a multilateral organization in South Asia is critical to ensuring prospects for long-term success. Such a group must be appropriately scoped to include the most significant regional actors while not becoming too broad. The right sizing strategy will enable better communication and participation across the organization. A forum that brings together too many participants with disparate equities will not be able to focus on the most significant regional issues and appropriate resolution mechanisms. Obviously the larger states will need to be included to improve the groups' legitimacy and credibility. Bringing the smaller regional states into the organization is also necessary to ensure regional growth and development rather than on a nation-by-nation basis. Collectively, the eight nations previously listed offer the proper sizing given the region and the variety of challenges it faces.

Beyond just geographic concerns, an organization and a strategic concept that promote prosperity across the region are needed to reduce the possibility of failed states. Addressing systemic security issues will improve the image of the region as a collective group, thereby improving foreign investment and keeping South Asia's best and brightest at home. The effect of such action will be cyclical in nature. As security improves the economy will also improve, lifting people across the region out of poverty. As South Asia's impoverished decrease in number the regional security situation will improve. As this upward momentum continues the entire region will benefit and draw closer to one another in the pursuit of further economic success. What was once a region dominated by divisiveness will have been transformed into an eight state block working to forge commonalities for the purposes of mutual benefit. Moving forward, the common problems each of these nations face will bring them together for the purpose of developing mutually beneficial relationships.

For an OSCE-like organization in the region to work, it will need to address three items. First, transparency in member nations' armed forces is important in reducing the likelihood of misperceptions and misunderstandings. Second, investing in humanitarian aid to support the disenfranchised will make it more challenging for extremist movements to grow. Third, developing human and physical capital is vital toward establishing the foundation for long-run success for any country in the region. These three areas of development are vital components to the successful promotion of strategic stability in South Asia through a multilateral mechanism.

Transparency and Confidence Building Measures (TCBMs) can serve as both short and long-term means to address some of the most serious issues in South Asia. In particular, over the short term, notifications prior to the start of major strategic exercises would be an important tool to decrease the potential for misperceptions and misunderstandings. Additionally, a formal mechanism to notify regional partners of exercise activities is ideal for building trust and reducing the potential for tensions to rise quickly over a simple misinterpretation. To institutionalize this, a central repository for notifications is necessary. From one physical, focal point notifications can be culled together and disseminated to the other members of the organization. Notifying one another of troop and material movements is needed to reduce the element of surprise and the potential destabilizing effects of such an activity. Enacting those two TCBMs are initial measures necessary to begin the promotion of greater regional military transparency.

As mentioned in the Ukraine example, observation flyovers and onsite teams are important components of any future TCBM regime. Overflights are a valuable element of ensuring the integrity of the organization. It is far more difficult to hide large scale mobilizations when the other state parties to the treaty have the ability to fly over the state in questions territory. Observers on the ground are a more specific means of inspecting various sites as needed. A quota system will need to be developed to monitor both the number of visits a country is authorized and the number it can receive. Observers are an additional mechanism for improving transparency and confidence in the region.

Humanitarian aid, improving the overall standards of living across the region, is an essential building block to reducing instability. In particular, a rapid response team to handle humanitarian crisis situations is vital towards improving goodwill across the region. Given the potential for typhoons, mudslides, earthquakes, and other natural disasters this is an area for the South Asian states to work together for the benefit of the community. Allotting and training a joint task force for providing relief works to both support those in need and increase trust and understanding across government entities throughout the region. Employing the unit would then build credibility and gratitude across the region. While this is a short-term opportunity, the reality is that natural disasters occur on a

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regular basis. Working on this sort of humanitarian aid issue is a very low-threat opportunity for politicians to operationalize this OSCE-like group.

In each of the eight nations listed as potential members of the organization, there exists a significant segment of the population below the poverty line. The challenge this creates lies in the fact that this group is susceptible to divisive political influences. Whether in Pakistan, Sri Lanka, or even Thailand, internal political friction can generate and expose domestic and foreign policy weaknesses. For instance, Islamist political parties in Pakistan have targeted constituencies in impoverished regions to garner votes. Using the madrassas and other public service groups, they have been able to provide services to Pakistanis in the expectation of receiving votes. This vote buying practice has allowed radical Islamists a voice in national policy-making which has contributed to the increased volatility in Kashmir and elsewhere. A multilateral organization would be in a better position to place resources where they are most needed and where they can be best utilized to address the existing demands placed on regional states.

While humanitarian relief can support short-term needs, investing in human and physical capital will address the long-term viability of the South Asian nations. Improving the educational infrastructure from grade school to graduate school is vital to creating a labor force that can flexibly transition from one discipline to the next, does not rely on the government for subsistence, and can actively participate in the electoral process. The strengthening of the labor force from an early age, while it will take time, is necessary to develop the civic vibrancy required to escape the current economic doldrums of the region. Equally important, better investment in physical capital, in particular the promotion of foreign direct investment (FDI), can leverage the improved labor force. Just as with investing in human capital, this process will not occur over night. Physical capital investments will promote the infrastructure development and modernization efforts required for long-term economic growth. A third element to this development track is government spending on public services. Addressing infrastructure shortfalls will significantly improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the market. These investments, taken as a whole, are key to tying this regional partnership together and promoting a greater sense of domestic and foreign policy awareness amongst the general public in each of the eight member nations.

## **State Party Equities Addressed**

Having overviewed some of the areas where OSCE can work to improve the long-term security of the region, it is important to recognize that the benefits for each potential member nation are likely to be unique. Highlighting tailored advantages for each nation will be crucial in creating support across the region. An individualized approach will be vital for national leaders looking to sell influential constituencies on the most significant short and long-term gains from the program. Identifying the benefits from membership will make it far more politically acceptable. As the proposed eight nations join the group, ideally as one block of founding members, this OSCE-like construct will have already targeted a series of short-term gains for each state party. With all that being said, it is necessary to articulate some advantages for each nation.

### *Bangladesh*

Bangladesh in many ways is a victim of history. Migration patterns and the spread of religions have severely complicated life for Bangladeshi decision-makers.

'Bangladesh was the original development 'basket case', the demeaning term used in Henry Kissinger's state department for countries that would always depend on aid. Its people are crammed onto a flood plain swept by cyclones and without big mineral and other natural resources. It suffered famines in 1943 and 1974 and military coups in 1975, 1982 and 2007' ("Bangladesh" 1).

The botched election, civil war, and ensuing secession movement separated Bangladesh, East Pakistan, from Pakistan, West Pakistan, in 1971. While Dhaka has struggled to really develop its economy the potential exists for growth.

'Yet over the past 20 years, Bangladesh has made some of the biggest gains in the basic condition of people's lives

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ever seen anywhere. Between 1990 and 2010 life expectancy rose by 10 years, from 59 to 69' ("Bangladesh" 1).

Bangladesh's rich agricultural sector and dense urban centers make it increasingly valuable in a globalized twenty-first century.

Further complicating matters for Dhaka, dating back prior to independence, is the impact of the India-Pakistan relationship. As outlined in a recent *Economist* article ("Crime and Politics" 1):

'India is close to the avowedly secular Awami League (AL), the incumbent party, and it endorsed the January election. Policymakers in Delhi tend to see Bangladesh in three ways. They are anxious to prevent Bangladesh resuming its role as a haven for the insurgent groups that operate in India. They also want Bangladesh to resist the sort of Islamist extremism prevalent in Pakistan. And they want their neighbour's co-operation in limiting the flow of Bangladeshi migrants who cross its border seeking work.'

Similarly, Pakistan has remained a threat towards Bangladesh's political autonomy. Its involvement with Islamic extremists throughout South Asia poses a grave concern to national governments in the region. Addressing these concerns through greater TCMB's will mitigate some of the mistrust that exists across the region.

In the short term, the proposed OSCE-like organization can garner considerable progress in addressing some of Bangladesh's ongoing ethnic challenges. As part of partition, Bangladesh represented both a Muslim state with a significant Hindu minority and a Bengali state with a significant Bihari minority. The events of 1971 including the botched national election in Pakistan, West Pakistan's brutal crackdown in East Pakistan, the formation of Bangladesh, and the Indo-Pakistan War of 1971 divided the small nation's population amongst Bengali Muslims, Bengali Hindus, and Biharis.

'British and American aid workers reported that in one town, two hundred Biharis were put up against a wall and shot. The Biharis took revenge, killing some four hundred Bengalis' (Bass, 85).

Unfortunately, the war crimes that occurred during this period have left deep and lasting scars.

Addressing the fate of potential war criminals in Bangladesh has become a political issue with no easy solution. As the *Economist* highlighted in December of 2013 ("Political Crisis" 1),

'Almost 42 years after the end of its war of secession from Pakistan, Bangladesh has executed the first man to be convicted of atrocities committed during the conflict. Abdul Quader Mollah, a leading member of the Jamaat-e-Islami, Bangladesh's biggest Islamic party, was hanged at the main jail in Dhaka on December 12th. The evidence on which the country's International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) convicted Mr Mollah was flimsy. The charge for which he was hanged, of killing six members of one family, was based on the testimony of a single witness, who was 13 at the time and was apparently hiding under a bed nearby. Despite its name the court is a domestic tribunal set up in 2010 by the AL, the party of the current Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina. In an environment where everybody assumes the judiciary to be the handmaiden of the executive, it was natural for foreign notables to try and change the Supreme Court's verdict. On December 11th the UN's secretary-general, Ban Ki-moon, and America's secretary of state, John Kerry, both called Sheikh Hasina to try to sort out this new mess. The execution of Mr Mollah, they knew, would result in further bloodshed. Almost 300 people have already died in political violence since the start of 2013, many as a direct result of the clashes that tend to mark decisions by the ICT.'

Using the proposed multilateral organization as a final arbitrator, the Bangladeshi national government could help legitimize its actions with respect to judicial cases involving possible war crimes. More broadly though, through mediation efforts, options for relocation, and other potential maneuvers, the organization could offer alternative proposals in better-addressing ongoing ethnic and religious tension. The historic trials facing Bangladesh are by no means simple, but with regional support, the answers could prove both far reaching and impactful.

Tensions dating back to the Indo-Pakistan War of 1971 have recently spilled over into the national electoral process.

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With war crimes trials ongoing the recent national election was impeded by the primary opposition party's refusal to participate. This tactic should not be rewarded, but both undermining the opposition's resistance and making the incumbent government's actions more transparent are needed. The proposed OSCE-like organization would achieve both as it would monitor both the war crimes trials and the elections. The degree of its involvement could be worked out at a later date, but by bringing both Pakistan and India to the table on this matter would erode the positions of the various factions in Bangladesh. The matter of Bangladesh's recent history and how it has attempted to respond is emblematic of the role the proposed organization could play in the region.

While addressing historical tensions, Bangladesh would also greatly benefit from regional support in developing both human and physical capital. For over the first thirty years of the nation's existence, it was widely considered a lost cause. A backwater with high population density and limited natural resources, Bangladesh's prospects have largely appeared grim. Yet, for almost a decade, Bangladesh has experienced steady growth. To ensure the sustainment of this nation's economic development, the proposed organization could do wonders for the purposes of attracting outside support. As a central body to help validate Bangladesh's long-term prospects the organization would help legitimize the national governments policies and programs. In regard to human capital, using a centralized regional funding apparatus would better support study abroad programs for Bangladeshi students. Furthermore, direct regional support will help improve the domestic education system. Improving the human capital in the nation would be critical to opening up new business opportunities to leverage the globalized marketplace. Additionally, when discussing physical capital investment, the OSCE-like organization could easily serve as a central point to attract likely foreign investors. By promoting the idea of both FDI from private firms and Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) from foreign governments and intergovernmental organizations, the Bangladeshi infrastructure could be in a better position itself to ensure sustained growth. By targeting both human and physical capital, this South Asian non-traditional security organization would significantly improve Bangladesh's long-term outlook.

## *Bhutan*

As the last official Buddhist state, Bhutan has proven itself resilient beyond any normal expectation.

'It is trying to modernize, seeking to shake a dependence on foreign aid (much of it from India), though it is hampered by a lack of land suitable for industry. Tourism is a potential source of more income, though visitors are limited to well-heeled travelers who are willing to pay daily rates of up to \$200' ("Bhutan's King" 1).

It would greatly benefit from the potential economic integration, not dependency, which a South Asian multilateral forum would provide. In particular, applying the Thailand approach to agribusiness, Bhutan could take lessons learned from Thailand's agricultural development of the last few decades and transplant it. Using agriculture technology subsidies and a broader effort to encourage foreign agribusiness investment Bhutan can improve this vital sector of its economy. By introducing similar technologies that have been used elsewhere in the region, for instance motorized plows, the agricultural sector could increase production. At the same time, agribusiness would be able to help offset costs that serve as barriers to entry for family farms. As firms, agribusinesses would also be more likely and better able to introduce cash crops. The diversification and improved technology of Bhutanese agriculture could significantly support national production. With the OSCE-like construct as an opportunity to work with Thailand and its business investors, Bhutan would be able to negotiate a favorable deal at the national level to protect the nation's picturesque environment. Given the strain a growing regional population has had, and will continue to have, on the agricultural sector, improved production in Bhutan is mutually beneficial for the region.

Perhaps even more important than agriculture, tourism could become a boom industry for Thimphu. Policy adjustments with its tourism policy may be necessary, but Bhutan's visual appeal and its unique culture present opportunities for a budding tourism business. An OSCE-like organization would be an ideal mechanism for helping Bhutanese policy-makers restructure their policies to make it easier for the tourism field to flourish. While this may seem like a relatively small issue, a more prosperous Bhutan would be better positioned to exert its autonomy from India, while simultaneously negotiating its border disputes with China on a more balanced footing, if only slightly. Helping Bhutan develop its tourism industry is a small, yet relevant opportunity for the proposed organization to demonstrate how non-traditional approaches to security improvements can be carried out.

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## *India*

Economic growth in India is both a positive and a negative for the rest of the region. “India [is] home to some 1.2 billion people, around 17 percent of the global population” (Moyo 18), a fact not lost on its neighbors. Furthermore, “conservative estimates put the Indian subcontinent’s growth rate over the last several decades at an average of nearly 5 percent per year” (Moyo 18). When combined, the reality for India’s regional partners is fairly stark. For a nation like Pakistan, with a long history of aversion to India, it is nearly impossible to keep pace with New Delhi’s growth rate, particularly as India taps further into its potential. However, while historical animosities in the region persist, the prospect of cooperation with India is further incentivized by the fact that Indian territory is “over 50 percent arable land” (Moyo 29). Dependency on India’s agricultural sector for certain items could fundamentally improve the opportunities for the labor forces elsewhere in the region. Broadly though, in the face of the behemoth that is India, its neighbors must choose the battles they want to fight. As India’s economy holds the promise of rapid growth, nations such as Pakistan and Myanmar would greatly benefit from closer economic cooperation with India. Such ties would then promote cooperation in other fields. The proposed OSCE-like organization would serve as an ideal conduit to help facilitate this sort of revolutionary engagement. Through the proposed multilateral organization, leveraging all the various strengths heretofore laid out above holds the potential for significant opportunities when it comes to raising the standard of living across the region.

In the immediate future, two initiatives must be taken to bolster India’s economy. First, the agricultural labor force still stands at over fifty percent of the population – that number should be decreased. Using China as an example, the labor force there has shifted from predominately agriculture to a near-balance among agriculture, industry, and the service sector. As the agricultural labor force has dropped to roughly thirty percent of the workforce, the wage equilibrium has been reached in China’s economy. Given that India’s population is similar in size to the PRC’s, it would be reasonable to suggest that a similar decrease in the percentage and total population in the agricultural workforce could be suggested. The proposed multilateral organization could support such a move by introducing advanced agricultural technology to improve the efficiency of India’s farming sector, thereby reducing the current and expected labor requirement. Drawing from Thailand’s example, India could invest in improved technology to help raise the productivity of each agricultural worker. Financial offsets could then be provided, if necessary to encourage rural labor to move to the urban centers. Such a move would infuse the Indian economy with badly needed agricultural efficiency improvements to further leverage its incredible wealth of arable land; while at the same time increasing the quantity of available labor in the cities.

An infusion of labor migration would serve as a jumpstart for economic growth across the region. The OSCE-like organization should leverage the increase in available Indian labor as an incentive for MNC’s to locate operations in the state. Growth would then raise the spending power in India. The organization could then help develop transportation routes between India and China, as well as other potential routes towards Southeast Asia, Central Asia, and elsewhere. The movement of goods and services through other members of the OSCE-like organization would create employment opportunities there as well. Then as the costs of labor in India increase, lower cost labor markets in Pakistan, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and elsewhere would become more attractive areas for MNC’s. The nature of economic growth in the region would build cross-benefit relationships, thereby improving the value in cooperation and decreasing the utility in conflict.

The second immediate role the proposed OSCE-like organization could play is in offering greater legitimacy to India’s internal political standing.

‘India needs its private sector to build roads, factories and cities. But the relationship between companies and the state is broken. Corruption produces bad decisions; concern over corruption produces indecision. Graft does not function, as some claim that it does elsewhere, as an unseemly but expedient market solution to inert bureaucracy’ (“Fighting Corruption” 1).

In recent years corruption has significantly increased in India. While an increase in corruption is hard to measure, it can be attributed to other, more quantifiable figures. For instance, “private firms have cut investments; a fall in investment from 17% of GDP in 2007 to 11% in 2011 is one reason why GDP growth has slumped to 5%, the lowest



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level for a decade" ("Fighting Corruption" 1). The proposed group would not necessarily be able to play an immediate role in improving the quality of politicians and bureaucrats India, but it could spearhead specific initiatives to improve transparency. Advocating for better accounting practices, a reduction in organized crime, and greater accountability are all systemic changes the organization could push for without impugning the sovereignty of the Indian government. By improving the perception of the Indian government, this South Asian body would be making its most attractive state even more attract for MNC's.

More broadly, India's economic growth will also need to focus on raising the nation's standard of living. Specifically, to help quell the Muslim extremists, the government will need to do more to invest in the long-term health of the community. Such an action could only occur as part of a larger investment in raising the standard of living throughout India. In particular, though, the government's focus should be on investing in human and physical capital development – the types of long-term investment options that promote sustained growth. Even stronger advocacy for a program similar to "BRAC (Bangladesh Rehabilitation Assistance Committee), which invented the idea of microcredit, that is, tiny loans to the destitute" ("Bangladesh" 1) has the potential to greatly change the lot of many. Within a multilateral context this investment should be part of a larger regional effort looking at investing in mutually-beneficial capital projects in an effort to reduce tensions in various states across the region. To attract firms, academic institutions, and other experts, a larger package offer granting access across the region would prove far more lucrative than access to any one nation. As the Muslim and other minority ethnic group population's standard of living improves, it will become increasingly interconnected with the rest of Indian society, and the likelihood of extremist activities will decrease.

Likewise, over the long-term India will need to do more in addressing its ongoing tension with its Naxalite minority. The Naxalites, a communist party located predominately in India's east "affects roughly a third of the country's 604 districts" ("India's Naxalites" 1). This region is largely agrarian and downtrodden. In recent years the Naxalites have undertaken a bloody insurgency. "As many as 2,850 civilians have been eliminated between 2008 and 2013, as against 1,204 securitymen done to death over this period. Of the 2,850 civilians, 1,169 were killed after being branded as police informers" (Bharti 1). Sadly the Naxalites' terrorist activities are ongoing. Bringing together the eight states proposed in the document would help India in three ways. First, drawing from Thailand's historical example of stunting the growth of communists in its rural area; India could apply the same sorts of economic incentives towards raising the standard of living in vulnerable areas. Second, India can work with Myanmar towards developing mechanisms and policies that can be applied to ongoing domestic upheaval in both nations. Third, the proposed group would be an ideal place to bring together all the parties in the region to deal with the issue of external support to the Naxalites. This does not mean New Delhi could use the organization as a means to strong-arm its regional partners. Rather, it could present its reform strategy(s) to the group and once buy-in occurs from the other South Asian governments, the other seven parties may be in positions to influence the Naxalite insurgents. The OSCE-like organization would be ideal in reducing much of the domestic tension in India.

An additional effort regarding India, but one that will take considerably longer to bring along, will be establishing TCBM's with Pakistan. As the multilateral organization establishes itself as a relevant factor in South Asian affairs, it will have the credibility to help tackle the most challenging relationship in the region. Over an extensive period, improving the India-Pakistan relationship will be one of the landmark efforts of this group. To do so, both sides must be willing to accept a gradual progression of TCBM's with long-term goals in mind. This will include using the OSCE-like organization as a central repository to notify the other member states of major strategic exercises and larger troop movements where definitions of both can be established at a later date. In the long term, addressing questions regarding Kashmir and other territorial disputes must occur only after extensive TCBM's are implemented over an extended period have built a greater level of trust regarding the India-Pakistan relationship.

## *Myanmar*

The proposed OSCE-like organization can do a great deal in addressing minority population concerns present today in Myanmar. "A common assumption is that the largest ethnic group, the Burmans, make up about 60% of the population. But Aung San Suu Kyi, the leader of the opposition, has suggested that the minorities make up 60%" ("Banyan: Don't Count 1). Myanmar has countless ethnic minority groups, particularly along its borders. Sadly, the

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tensions between some of these minorities and the Burmans pose the greatest threat to the country's future. In the ongoing census, "the most egregious issue is the exclusion of a group known as the Rohingyas—of whom Myanmar has about 1m. Muslims of South Asian descent, Rohingyas live mostly in the western state of Rakhine (once Arakan), which borders Bangladesh. Most are stateless, regarded by the authorities as illegal Bengali immigrants. Yet many have been in Rakhine for generations" ("Banyan: Don't Count"). This is just one example where the proposed OSCE-like group, particularly Bangladesh and Thailand, can work with Myanmar to address concerns over various ethnic minorities. Better controls on immigration and addressing questions over the movement of arms and other aid to insurgents could be offered as a trade-off for the Burmans to improve the standing of its ethnic minorities. Managing the issue of ethnic tension in Myanmar is critical towards ensuring the fledgling democracy's future and credibility.

Myanmar's young democracy is an extraordinary step in the right direction, but further reforms need to be made to improve the government's credibility and legitimacy. The Economist covers this budding problem in great detail in the following passage ("Politics in Myanmar" 1):

'The military junta inserted it into the new constitution in 2008, Clause 59(f), specifically to stymie the political aspirations of their most feared opponent, Miss Aung San Suu Kyi, then languishing under house arrest. The clause bars from the presidency anyone whose spouse or children are foreign citizens. Miss Suu Kyi's late husband, Michael Aris, was a British academic, while her two sons were born in Britain and hold British passports. Miss Suu Kyi was released in late 2010. She won a by-election in April 2012 by a landslide and entered parliament as one of 43 newly elected members from the National League for Democracy (NLD). Such is her popularity that the NLD is thought likely more or less to sweep the board in the general election in late 2015. The president is then chosen by MPs. Were it not for the peccant clause, freshly elected NLD lawmakers would elevate Miss Suu Kyi to the presidency.'

As of today, the government has not laid out a clear path forward. Current president, and former general, Thein Sein, probably is on more shaky ground with his own political allies. Despite being the face of the Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), he must deal with the concerns of other former and current army officers. The degree of compromise is where the unknown lies today. Addressing Clause 59(f), potentially as part of any broader deal on minority groups, is something an OSCE-like organization would be ideally suited for. The army's move away from dictatorship, coupled with waning ties with Beijing, place Yangon in a difficult position as it looks to reform. However, with a collective South Asia actively working to assist the government on its path towards reform the danger of this process derailing would be significantly less.

Supporting Myanmar's reform program through economic support will be a critical component to the proposed organizations support for Yangon. "Long and costly approval procedures hamper much-needed construction work to rebuild dilapidated infrastructure. Burmese electricity is the priciest in the region" ("Myanmar's Economy" 1). Providing technical experts to help reform the government, thereby addressing public services would greatly improve the nation's economic outlook. Once technical experts are in country and are able to identify areas of specific need overseas development assistance (ODA) could then be applied to help Yangon further. Addressing these basic infrastructure concerns would allow the Myanmar government to invest in other areas, thereby providing a better and more stable standard of living. Taken as a whole, these non-traditional means of tackling the issue of security are vital when dealing with a government just emerging from authoritarianism.

Over the long term, to overcome some of the obstacles associated with a transitioning democracy, the multilateral organization would be in a strong position to attract FDI. For instance, while Thailand has invested in an overland route from Rangoon to a new harbor along the Myanmar coast, added foreign investment would greatly expedite the process. FDI in the form of agribusiness in Myanmar, similar to Thailand, would provide considerable economic support to farming communities across the nation. With improved technologies and an influx of excess capital, Myanmar farmers would easily be able to branch out their crop(s) and improve productivity. The long-term benefit of multilateral cooperation would undoubtedly offer Myanmar's new democracy a much better outlook than what it currently has.

*Nepal*

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Interestingly, a multilateral regional framework such as the one proposed here is an ideal tool for Nepal moving forward. As the country is still transitioning from a monarchy to a constitutional democracy, there remain three significant issues which the country still faces and for which regional support would be beneficial. First, Nepal would greatly benefit from clearly outlining the roles and responsibilities of all its political parties. This would be intended to address specific Indian concerns regarding Nepalese communists supporting insurgencies in Northern India. For decades, the government in India has attempted to suppress insurgent movements within its borders, including communist ones. These are particularly disconcerting given historical animosities with the PRC. Through a regional forum, Nepalese and Indian officials could work as part of a larger group in identifying ways to assuage Indian concerns. This would not be the detriment of Nepalese sovereignty, but rather it would bolster the legitimacy of ostensibly political movements.

Addressing the role of Nepal's communist party(s) would allow for broader cooperation on what are realistically secondary concerns. Either as part of the previous discussion or as an independent issue, the second problem Nepal faces is ongoing border disputes with India. This issue is primarily focused on the source of the Kalapani River. However, properly resolving this issue would at least cast India in a better light when it comes to Nepalese domestic politics and New Delhi's involvement. Addressing this would further improve Nepal's regional standing, and India's willingness to compromise on the border would show to the other six members of the multilateral organization that India does not intend to dominate it.

The third and final issue Nepal could leverage the group to address is predominately an internal one but with broad regional implications. Nepal of the 1990's is "remembered for corruption, ineffective rule and the brutal mishandling of a nascent Maoist rebellion which only helped it spread through the rugged countryside. Maoists went on to wage a decade-long civil war, in which they sought (and eventually achieved) the overthrow of the monarchy and the promotion of the interests of the lowest caste. The war ended in 2006" ("Nepal" 1). Unfortunately, the challenges of domestic strife are still being worked out.

'Today the ruling party seems not to think that lower castes matter much. The powerful ministries are all run by high-caste men, marking a return to earlier times. Though dalits – once known as "untouchables" – account for nearly one in six of Nepal's 28m people, they were unrepresented in the election, and none sit in the cabinet' ("Nepal" 1).

As the nation creates its democratic identity, issues such as forming a representative body(s) and finalizing a constitution will only be resolved through inclusive domestic policies. However, regional support can serve to mediate internal issues while also preventing outside influences from impacting the democratic process. In particular, bringing this OSCE-like entity onto the scene may very well reduce the role of India, while also preventing China from taking on a greater role. The domestic and foreign legitimacy of the Nepalese political process could be greatly bolstered by regional support in its creation of a legitimate democratic government.

## *Pakistan*

Particularly in the short term, supporting Pakistan's continued development is crucial to legitimizing this multilateral organization. In many ways, the government in Islamabad has become the linchpin to security in South Asia. Issues including corrupt civilian government officials, an overbearing military, ethnic tension, and support of terrorism have all contributed to Pakistan's struggles in the early twenty-first century. Whether examined through the lens of security, economics, or politics, the nation arguably cratered in the last decade. Over the long term, broader concerns including border tensions with India, domestic education, and Pakistan's long-term economic outlook will need to be addressed. The ensuing discussion will therefore focus on the short-term and then the long-term factors necessary toward rehabilitating Pakistan, with specific attention paid to the impact of the proposed multilateral organization.

In the immediate short term, the proposed group will need to offer its support to Pakistan in tackling ethnic strife and terrorism. Issues regarding ethnic tension in Pakistan, in particular, challenges regarding both Baluch and Pashtun sovereignty, must be addressed immediately. Historically, Pakistan has accused both Iran and India of supporting the ethnic minority Baluchis in the southwest of the country. As a group, the proposed multilateral organization could

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help mediate the current tension in the region. Moving forward, as most of South Asia has had to deal with similar minority upheaval, jointly finding mechanisms to reduce perceived disenfranchisement could be useful. A more delicate issue, though, would be persuading Pakistan to end its support for terrorist organizations must be done through a carrot and stick approach. Here again, a multilateral organization such as the one proposed could offer Pakistan a menu of foreign direct investment opportunities and potential discussions on the controversial India-Pakistan border. These potential benefits to Islamabad would then be contingent on its efforts to detach itself from terrorist organizations. Focusing on ethnic tensions and terrorism today would greatly improve Pakistan's outlook tomorrow.

Having concentrated on some of the short-term hurdles, it is important to tackle some of the other problem areas including the credibility of the civilian government and the role of the military. Regarding the civilian government, the multilateral organization should be used as a focus to attract academic opportunities abroad to further the professional growth of regional leaders. Attendance at prestigious schools in the United States, Europe, and East Asia could enhance the credibility of politicians and also present alternative mechanisms to addressing domestic problems. In a country like Pakistan where political parties are often dominated by a relatively small number of ruling families, a process by which they and other potential senior leaders are exposed to new ideas would present significant benefits. Furthermore, the military must be willing to extricate itself from the political dialogue. Four times in Pakistan's history, the military has removed the democratically elected government when it views the civilian leadership as having failed. Once the integrity and credibility of civilian leaders is addressed, it will be vitally important that the military remove itself from politics. It should look to become a more modern, non-political force. Addressing the political dynamics in Pakistan is vital to improving its regional ties and international reputation.

Over the long term, it is imperative that Pakistan invest in human and physical capital development. To bring the nation into the globalized twenty-first century, education must be improved. A nation with a literacy rate below sixty percent cannot compete globally. The labor market simply lacks the vitality and the skills to compete. Foreign investment in domestic education opportunities throughout all levels and aspects of Pakistani society is necessary. Additionally, more opportunities need to be made available for Pakistanis to obtain education and professional training abroad. Once the education system begins to improve, both the political system and the foreign policy will be greatly bolstered. As mentioned previously, strengthening the integrity and credibility of civilian bureaucrats is key toward addressing some of the domestic and foreign policy concerns the nation faces. It will make for a more stable and encouraging climate for FDI. Furthermore, political stability will do wonders for the nation as it attempts to deal with regional partners through the proposed multilateral forum. In particular, on matters such as the India-Pakistan border, a stable civilian government would be better positioned and more likely to agree to a compromise solution. While military dictators often come and go during times of domestic unrest, the peaceful transition of elected civilian officials would make it more likely than a negotiated settlement would have permanence.

## *Sri Lanka*

In recent years, Sri Lanka has been only a small negotiating tool in the triangular relationship among India, Pakistan, and China. Strategically China and Pakistan have viewed the small island in the Indian Ocean as a useful tool in drawing Indian attention. This has led all parties to support various political movements on the small island nation. Similar to the case of Nepal, it would benefit all parties to support a free and independent Sri Lankan national government. Such an entity could relieve India's strategic fears over Chinese and Pakistani use of the island, but also it would alleviate Chinese concerns regarding the safety and security of its shipping lanes in the Indian Ocean. The proposed multilateral organization could further support the government's autonomy by serving as a means to attract FDI. Leveraging Sri Lankan utility as a major transit point, its port facilities could afford to be modernized. Other investment opportunities including long-term human and physical capital tools to create a more readily available and affordable labor pool would further attract prospective foreign enterprises. Sri Lankan sovereignty, while a small contribution to a more stable Asian continent, is an additional benefit to the proposed multilateral organization.

In the short-term the proposed OSCE-like organization could immediately mediate and work through issues related to the recent civil war. "The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) were the brutal organization that was crushed

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militarily in 2009" ("Banyan Sri Lanka" 1). This Muslim group had opposed the predominately Hindu government.

'To this day both sides in their war against the state stand accused of horrific war crimes; among the governments were the orchestrated disappearances of thousands of civilian men, women and children. Nearly five years since the war ended, the government has avoided undertaking any independent inquiry of its own into allegations against its troops' ("Banyan Sri Lanka" 1).

In response to international concerns the United Nations (UN) has opened up an investigation into war crimes stemming from the civil war. Sadly though, "the government has already said that anyone who co-operates with international organizations to investigate abuses is a 'traitor' or a 'conspirator'" ("Banyan Sri Lanka" 1). Predictably the international community has raised serious concerns over the government's practices. Yet, in response:

'The government told the human-rights council that it has significantly reduced the army's presence in the former conflict areas of the country's north. It said a majority of the war's displaced have been resettled and that life there is returning to normal' ("Banyan Sri Lanka" 1).

The proposed OSCE-like organization could provide clarity to the investigation and breathing-space for the government.

The organization would find itself in a unique position to deal with the post-civil war fallout in Sri Lanka. The UN investigation could use the support of other South Asian nations in terms of encouraging the Sri Lankan government to participate and support the inquiry. Additionally, neighbors could support relocation efforts, if necessary, for individuals and families of those involved in the civil war. At the same time, by providing a conduit with which the UN and Sri Lanka can communicate, the proposed OSCE-like organization would be well positioned to arbitrate and gloss over certain sticking points. This would help avoid placing Colombo in a potential compromising position with respect to the inquiry. The proposed group of eight nations would be ideally suited for the purpose of managing regional affairs, both intrastate and interstate.

## *Thailand*

Thailand presents the most unique range of opportunities of any potential member of the proposed multilateral organization. For over forty years, the nation has strove to improve the lives of rural Thais. This effort, principally in the nation's north, has led to significant improvements in the region's standard of living. While neighbor states experienced political upheaval stemming from the income disparity between rural and urban segments of the population, Thailand largely avoided such problems. Over the last decade, it has become a model relationship for small farmers and agribusiness.

'Through contracts Ban Tiam's farmers have been able to draw the economic power of agroindustrial capital into the village, using the capital of contracting companies to make up for some of the main deficiencies in the local economy' (Walker 112).

Large firms have played an important role in providing improved technology and increased financial capital which have helped farmers to increase production and diversify. While farmers are expected to then provide the firm with a percentage of their yield, farmers that have felt mistreated or have come upon a better offer find it acceptable to provide a different firm with a portion of their yield. The relative autonomy small farmers still enjoy in Thailand has allowed for a mutually-beneficial relationship with agribusiness. As this proposed OSCE-like organization attempts to support rural development across South Asia, lessons learned from Thailand's farmer-agribusiness relationship could prove quite useful.

Geographically, the government in Bangkok is currently in the midst of a unique time. As the various national economies of Southeast Asia and China continue to expand, moving goods internationally is critical. To that end, the port at Bangkok has proven sufficient to meet many of its regional partners' current trade requirements. However, as cargo vessels continue to grow larger, the port in Bangkok may simply not be deep enough to handle the new

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vessels. Furthermore, the already crowded Straits of Malacca are a significant barrier to increasing trade volume with Europe, Africa, and the Middle East. To overcome this challenge, Thailand is already working with Myanmar to build both an overland transit line and a port that would connect Bangkok to the Myanmar coast. Such a move would significantly improve the economies of both Myanmar and Thailand. However, further investment needs to be provided in order to fully leverage the potential of the new port. South Asian regional partners could both provide overseas development assistance (ODA) and support in attracting international FDI. Regardless, as Thailand's role in the regional economy continues to grow, more opportunities will exist for service-oriented jobs in the nation. Leveraging the human and physical capital requirements to support this growth is critical to Thailand's continued economic expansion.

## Barriers to Cooperation

Regarding potential hurdles to cooperation, three areas of concern exist. First, the impact China, Russia, and the US might have on the organization must be highlighted. While these three nations have played significant roles in shaping the South Asia of today, a more stabilized region would allow each of the three aforementioned nations more freedom to commit resources elsewhere around the world. Second, there will be self-interested individuals who look to leverage the proposed organization for their own personal gain. Third, extremist groups across the regional will view the proposed multilateral organization as a threat and look to destabilize it. Addressing these three areas of concern is necessary toward ensuring the short and long-term viability of the organization.

Concerning the China, Russia, and US triumvirate, it is no great secret that each has influenced the political dynamics of the region since the end of World War Two and Partition. The Soviet Union saw India as a potential counterweight to Chinese ambitions in Asia. Meanwhile, US policy-makers sought to support both India and Pakistan, while paying particular attention to maintaining an effective Pakistani military to deter Indian aggression. While both Russia and the United States looked to support different elements within South Asia, the PRC actively sought to deter Indian aggression through its own use of force. The China-India War of 1962 was the culmination of growing Chinese fears regarding a possible Russia-India encirclement. Particularly since 1962, PRC leadership has sought to support the Pakistani military in an effort to encircle India. While most international observers recognize China's role in supporting Pakistan, Indian policy-makers have also had to tangle with Chinese-supported regimes in Nepal, Myanmar, and Sri Lanka. Furthermore, the government in New Delhi would also highlight Chinese support, material or otherwise, for communist guerilla factions operating within Indian territory. In no small measure the regional policies of this powerful triumvirate have led to the confused situation regarding India and Pakistan today.

Moving forward, the proposed multilateral organization does not threaten the regional interests of China, Russia, and the US. Quite the contrary, the proposed structure would support the growth and development of all eight South Asian regional states. As each state's domestic and foreign policy concerns are favorably altered through non-traditional security means, they will be more self-sufficient. For instance, Pakistan will require less foreign aid to remain viable. While the improved regional security situation may very well mean a decrease in the defense budgets of some of the member states, it will also relieve the triumvirate of some of its regional expenditures. In a time of global fiscal constraints, diverting funds that would have been spent in South Asia is not only necessary but vital for China, Russia, and the US.

The major international powers will not only benefit from the reduction in support they must provide to once struggling states, but they will also benefit from the growth in preexisting trade relationships. For instance, "China has a massive \$60 billion trade and business relationship with India, which it envisages will rise sixfold in the next ten years" (Rashid 195). Recently,

'trade, investment and economic cooperation between India and Russia has been growing steadily. In 2012, bilateral trade increased by 24.5% to reach US\$ 11 billion out of which Indian exports amounted to US\$ 3 billion while Russian exports were valued at US\$ 8 billion. In January-September 2013, bilateral trade amounted to US\$ 6.94 billion' ("Bilateral Relations" 1).

Washington holds similar relationships in the region. In a more secure environment, more conducive to economic

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growth, the potential trade relationships between the U.S., Russia, and China and nations in South Asia will only continue to grow.

Second, self-motivated individuals will seek to abuse the multilateral organization for their own personal aims. In places such as Myanmar, Pakistan, and Thailand, there is a risk that military-led dictatorships could emerge, particularly over the short term, which might look toward this organization as a means for legitimacy. Over the long term, it is possible that various individuals may try to leverage the organization for their own personal gain, but self-interest exists in every intergovernmental organization across the world. Finding the appropriate means to deal with such problems will be a matter for the multilateral organization once it has been formed. Making use of the appropriate mechanisms and tools will be important, but measures will have to be devised such that accepted practices are amenable to all parties involved. Handling the challenges of various individuals must be dealt with over the course of time as the group develops a better working relationship writ large.

Third, extremist elements rely on lackluster security to survive and indeed to thrive. Extremism comes in many forms whether Muslim fundamentalists in Pakistan, communist insurgents in India, or ethnic minorities in Myanmar. Each of these groups largely benefits from domestic and even regional instability. It is likely that, particularly in the short term, acts of violence will be committed across the region to test the resolve of policy-makers in the eight member states. The response to such terrorist actions must be measured and agreeable to each of the member states. In the short term, this will present a real challenge as vulnerable and concerned constituencies will pressure officials into seeking retribution against suspected terrorist perpetrators. That however is precisely what such extremist groups would want. Rather, finding acceptable mechanisms for dealing with violent acts in the short term will better enable the group to conduct its long-term mission of non-traditional security. Through the practice of non-traditional security activities, the regional states will be, collectively, in a better position to address extremist elements through not only policing and military actions but also by improving the standard of living across the region, thereby reducing the likely pool of people extremists can draw from.

## Conclusion

Strategic stability in South Asia is absolutely vital to regional prosperity. Modeling a multinational organization on the OSCE is an ideal method for achieving improved regional security through the most effective means possible. By veering away from traditional security activities such as military deployments, financial loans, and support of political groups, the proposed organization reduces the tension the measures often lead to. Rather, it is more beneficial in the long-term to target areas that will improve the standards of living for people across the region. In keeping with that objective, the proposed multilateral organization will focus on areas such as economic development, the promotion of free and fair elections, and a new emphasis placed on the value of human rights. By addressing some of these non-traditional security measures, an OSCE-like organization will reduce the traditional costs associated regional security enhancement and thereby provide a better future for South Asian strategic stability.

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