In the study we have analysed the concepts of region, regional cooperation, security and regional security and tried to gain a theoretical understanding of these concepts. We have also analysed the basic conceptual relationship between regional security and regional cooperation. With this background we have further examined the inter-relationship between regional associations and regional security in South East Asia and South Asia through a comparative study of ASEAN and SAARC. In this regard we have comparatively analysed intra-regional as well as extra-regional forces behind regional cooperation and regional security issues in South East Asia and South Asia.

The end of the 20th century is marked by profound changes in the structure of international relations. The revolution in science and technology has resulted in the shortening of distances. The development of modern weaponry, particularly weapons of mass destruction, has already undermined the defensibility of territorial boundaries. The rise of ‘issue areas’ has further led to an age of stronger international interdependence. The response of states to these developments can be seen in the process of internal and external adjustment in all spheres-economic, political and military. The dimension of external adjustment is manifested in the process of regional associations, which is gaining ground steadily since the second World War.

Today, with the end of the Cold War, this movement towards regional associations seems to have gained new impetus. The end of the bipolar confrontation
has led to a reduction in tensions and ideological strife, paving the way for a rapid expansion of inter-state ties.

We have already discussed and analysed the different questions with which we began the study. After a detailed study several inferences can be drawn:

The regional cooperation dynamic cannot be comprehended without taking into account non-military threats to regional and national security. The traditional concept of security took the sovereign state as the exclusive unit of analysis and was concerned primarily with external military threats. This notion of security has been called into question by the technological and information revolution, the rise of non-state actors, rise of 'issue areas' such as the environment and the internal nation-building threats faced by developing countries owing to their heterogeneous population with transnational ethnic allegiances.

With the end of the Cold War, security studies seem to have been liberated from narrow military strategic confines. Military power does remain a crucial factor in the overall power of states but it alone is no longer sufficient for the security of the state. Moreover, security threats today outweigh the capacity of a single state to deal with them. Be it transnational organized crime like terrorism or environmental hazards like deforestation, flooding - they call for a regional approach. Thus, the regional security problem calls for a broader approach by taking into account non-military threats also.

Regional security has both internal and external dimensions. Regional security can be disturbed by conflicts both among regional states as well as with extra-regional powers. Moreover, the more intimately a major power is committed to supporting
regional security of a particular region, the more dependent upon it the regional states tend to become. However, an external power could also act as a catalyst in forging the regional security notion among the regional states. Regional stability is vital for state level growth so as not to divert precious resources to non-productive military tasks. Moreover, lack of stability and widespread conflicts at the regional level invite external involvement.

Both intra-regional and extra-regional factors contributed to the creation and evolution of ASEAN and SAARC. President Zia-ur-Rahman (then President) of Bangladesh took the initiative in forming SAARC against the backdrop of the 1980s Afghanistan crisis. It was in realization that cooperation at the regional level is vital for preserving peace and stability which in turn is important for economic and social development of the regional states. It was also in reaction to the beneficial effects of regional arrangements in other parts of the world that SAARC was formed.

Established in Bangkok in 1967, ASEAN was conceived as an association for economic, social and cultural cooperation. But it was clear from the very beginning that the real objectives were regional and national security. ASEAN emerged after the cessation of hostilities between Indonesia and Malaysia. Thus one of the most important regional security goals for the ASEAN states was to expand and institutionalize this process of reconciliation.

Common security concerns arose as the ASEAN original five become more and more vulnerable to the externally supported threat of internal subversion by communism. This was further fuelled by lack of internal economic development. In this sense, formation of ASEAN can be seen as an effort to reduce the vulnerability of
fragile domestic political systems as well as reduce the meddling of external powers in internal affairs. The idea was also not to divert precious national resources from economic development to inter-mural fighting. Thus ASEAN was created to pave way for national security via-regional security and vice versa.

On the economic front, owing to differences in the economic conditions of the developed and developing countries, the integration effort in the latter is judged by its contribution to development and not necessarily to greater efficiency. This changes the traditional dynamic of measuring success as the amount of trade creation and trade diversion and makes all questions related to cooperation in the developing world highly political.

SAARC has adopted functional approach to cooperation. To begin with the areas chosen for cooperation are those where political concerns are least involved. Though economic growth and collective self-reliance are mentioned as aims and objectives in the SAARC Charter, cooperation in the economic field was taken up much later by the member states. ASEAN, on the other hand from the very beginning not only decided to cooperate in economic matters but also decided the issues in the field to be dealt with. However, in operational terms, till the 1976 Bali Summit, ASEAN did not collaborate much in the economic sphere.

Different economic perceptions and approaches, level of economic development of member states led to slow growth of economic cooperation in ASEAN. Indonesia preferred import substitution as part of its economic development, where as Singapore went in for export oriented industrial development. These were further complicated by the political differences and conflicts. Dispute over Sabah
between Malaysia and the Philippines held up all ASEAN meetings for almost a year in late 1960s.

Another reason why there exists little complementary among ASEAN economies is the fact that except for Thailand all ASEAN states are formal colonies whose economies were fashioned in such a way as to meet the requirements of the colonial powers till independence. These economic relationships continued even after independence even though the newly independent states tried to diversity their economic relations. The same is the case with SAARC members.

Economic crisis created by the 1973 oil shock seems to have reinforced the view among the ASEAN states that economic cooperation offered greater chances of increasing the countries' political influence. The unexpectedly swift communist victories in Indo china in 1975 proved to be a turning point for ASEAN.

In 1976 at the first ASEAN Heads of State Summit, Concord and Treaty of Amity and Cooperation were signed. It was another step towards building a regional identity and solidarity. The Concord called upon member states to take joint approaches on economic issues in international multilateral fora. It has become a standard practice for ASEAN economic ministers to meet regularly. The ASEAN Industrial Project (1976) and ASEAN Preferential Trading Arrangement (PTA) (1977) were not very successful. ASEAN Industrial Complementation Scheme (AIC) (1981) and ASEAN Industrial Joint Ventures (AIJV) (1983) did make some progress but did not have much impact on intra-regional trade.

With the growing uncertainty in the international economic market and greater economic integration movements, ASEAN concluded an agreement in 1992 for the
establishment of a Free Trade Area (AFTA). It is to be actualized through Common Effective Preferential Tariffs (CEPT) arrangement.

On the SAARC front, in 1987 the SAARC countries signed an Agreement on the establishment of SAARC Food Security Reserve. In practice there is no central granary to take care of it. Thus the agreement has never been functional. With all the member countries having ratified the SAPTA agreement it came into force in 1995. This also marked the beginning of SAARC cooperation in a ‘core’ area. The end of Cold War and the advent of democracy in Nepal, Bangladesh and Pakistan bought a new political class which was more open to cooperation. Moreover, by that time SAARC states had already embarked on a programme of economic liberalization. At the international level, proliferation of regional economic arrangement also acted as a catalyst.

Modest nature of concessions were exchanged during the first two rounds. Most of the products on which countries have offered duty reductions are either not at all traded among the member states or show limited trading. This is the same problem that ASEAN faced during the initial years of PTA. Negotiation for SAPTA fourth round were initiated in 1999. However due to the Pakistan’s misadventure in Kargil, the eleventh SAARC Summit was postponed (It was held in January 2002 in Kathmandu). Non-trade barriers (NTBs) especially in the form of quantitative restrictions (QRs), is another reason for low intra-SAARC Trade. In 1998, India unilaterally removed QRs (on 2000 items) on imports from SAARC countries.

While these efforts might be slow and modest, it is important that these steps are taken given the differences that the regional states have. Intra-SAARC exports in
total SAARC exports has risen from 3.16 per cent in 1990 to 4.25 per cent in 1996. The share of intra-SAARC imports rose from 1.91 per cent to 4.06 per cent during 1990-96. Another vital point is to create an integrated mega-sector of trade and services in the region. Only through this they can emerge as strong competitors in the economic field. Competition in the external market will mar the effects of whatever eco-cooperation and trade liberalisation the SAARC members will be able to achieve in the SAARC region. Inadequate transport and communication facilities constitute another obstacle to intra-regional cooperation in South Asia.

In South East Asia, in 1995 economies grew an average of 6.71 per cent. Things changed fast with the South East Asian economic crisis. However, politically and economically ASEAN is still a regional grouping of top rank, notwithstanding its problems. The ASEAN Hanoi Plan of Action (HPA) calls for maintaining regional macro-economic and financial stability by strengthening the ASEAN surveillance process. At the time of the expansion of ASEAN during the second half of the 1990s, the ASEAN leaders were worried about the possibility of a two-tier regional forum coming into effect. But now ASEAN has in effect become a multi-layer of economies at different levels of growth and recovery.

The most impressive aspect of ASEAN cooperation, be it in the field of economics or politics, is their common approach in dealing with external states or groupings irrespective of different perceptions at times. For example, in 1973, ASEAN took a joint stand in opposing Japan’s plans to increase production of synthetic rubber. ASEAN Dialogue Partners meetings with Australia, Canada, EEC, Japan, New Zealand and the US led to cooperation in economic matters. China is also
rapidly expanding its trade and investment links with ASEAN. Recently at Brunei, ASEAN and China agreed to set up a Free Trade Area within 10 year.

SAARC Secretariat has also negotiated and entered into cooperative economic agreements with United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the European Commission, Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and SAARC-Japan Special fund.

How extra-regional factors affect the regional economy can be gauged by the fact that US-Japanese bilateral trade imbalance and resultant trade policy conflicts since the late 1980s are a matter of concern for ASEAN countries. These conflicts could affect them adversely, if the US raises protectionist barriers to Japanese exports originating in offshore plants in the ASEAN states. In the absence of counterbalancing flows from other states specially the US, ASEAN fears it would become more dependent on Japan with reduced bargaining power in international trade investment and technology transfer.

US trade policies towards developing states have caused problems between the US and the ASEAN. The US linking of market access with human rights, labour rights, democracy, environment and intellectual property rights is considered as unwarranted and political interference in their domestic affairs by ASEAN states.

In the Asian context there is strong preference for informal agreements and an incremental approach rather than legally binding treaties. Sub-regional economic cooperation appropriately fits into this context. At the fourth ASEAN Summit in
Singapore in 1992 the “growth triangle” approach was endorsed as a parallel and supportive mechanisms for regional economic cooperation.

The World Bank showing eagerness to support ASEAN type cooperative ventures in South Asia has unveiled “South Asia Development Triangle” (SADT). It encompasses most of the Ganga-Brahmaputra-Meghna Basin covering the Eastern and Northeastern parts of India, Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan. Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Maldives feared that establishment of sub-regional cooperation could adversely affect the SAARC. At Male, the SAARC agreed to consider sub-regional cooperation only under Article 7 of the Charter which allows cooperation among two or more states.

Bilaterally, India and Sri Lanka signed a Free-Trade Agreement in 1998. Nepal and Bhutan already have preferential trading arrangements with India. Bangladesh is also keen to have such an arrangement. Bilaterally Singapore has Free Trade Agreement with extra regional states like New Zealand and Mexico. However as with the SAARC region, ASEAN members too have some reservations regarding these free-trade agreements.

ASEAN Free Trade Agreement (AFTA) highlights the new wave of ‘open regionalism’, coming into vogue in the post Cold War period. Open regionalism means that the states of a particular region should reduce impediments to economic transactions within the region, without creating any new artificial trade impediments between their organization and other extra-regional economies, thus avoiding new forms of discrimination.
APEC too emphasized the notion of ‘open-regionalism’. The APEC Bogor Summit meeting in 1994 adopted a “variable speed” approach to regional economic integration. Developed countries are to remove all the trade barriers by 2010 and developing countries by 2020.

The main obstacle to regional cooperation in South Asia is political. Political differences and lack of political will on the part of member-states of SAARC to augment economic cooperation is unlike the ASEAN region. ASEAN members too have their own share of political differences and some of them are still unresolved - still members are cooperating in the economic field. They realise the international standing that ASEAN as an association has given them.

SAARC states can go the ASEAN way by learning from positive results of ASEAN cooperation and avoiding their mistakes. The ASEAN states are increasingly trading and investing in one another. Cooperation in the service sector will intensify interaction among the SAARC states as it happened with the ASEAN.

On the environmental front, problems of environmental degradation in South Asia are related to overpopulation, poverty and underdevelopment. Environmental degradation further reduces economic opportunities resulting in demographic displacements within states and across international borders. This often leads to political tensions between neighbouring states. In 1987 Kathmandu Summit SAARC members decided to commission a study on the Causes and Consequences of the Natural Disasters, and the Protection and Preservation of the Environment in South Asia. The SAARC Committee on Environment considered the report and identified
for immediate action, measures for strengthening the environmental infrastructure. However, not much is done in this direction.

SAARC Technical Committee on Environment has taken some measures like organising training courses on wetlands assessment and management and workshop of SAARC national experts on climate change. Technical committee on Meteorology has also organised seminar and workshops and training programmes. Reports are completed on Western Disturbances, Tropical Cyclones, Thunder Storms, Long-range forecasting of monsoon rain, and Tornadoes. The Technical Committees on Environment and Meteorology were merged and designated as Technical Committee on Environment and Meteorology with effect from 1 January 1996.

In South East Asia, in August 1999, thick haze from forest fires in Sumatra covered large parts of South East Asia reminiscent of the health threatening smog of 1997. The 1997 and 1998 fires in Indonesia did strain regional diplomatic ties as well as hurt tourism just when the region was facing economic crisis. Apart from other measures ASEAN 1998 Hanoi Plan of Action called for the establishment of an ASEAN Regional Research and Training Centre for Land and Forest Fire Management by the year 2004. In 1999, ASEAN Environment Ministers endorsed the terms of reference for a feasibility study to formulate a regional legal framework to combat the recurring problem transnational haze pollution. ASEAN has also cooperated on other concerned issues including compilation of an ASEAN Climatic Atlas and compendium of Climatic Statistics.

In May 1999, ASEAN and EU decided to set up a sub-committee on issues concerning environment. The meeting took place after several postponements due to
EU’s refusal to let Myanmar participate in such a Conference over its failure to enter into a dialogue with the democracy leader, Ms Aung San Suu Kyi. This shows how interlinked even environmental issues are to politics.

In the case of SAARC states, Nepal has enthusiastically supported the idea of sub-regional cooperation in the eastern-Himalayan region, involving north-eastern India, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal. Sub-regional cooperation could enhance mutual understanding among the SAARC states. Urgent action is also required on the regional study on Causes and Consequences of Natural Disasters in the SAARC region.

Energy is an important dimension of regional security. In 1988, SAARC commissioned a study on the Greenhouse Effect and its Impact on the Region. Today, with the increase in South Asian region’s dependence on imports of petroleum products, pressure will increase on their foreign exchange reserve. However, full and proper exploitation of unharnessed natural resources like Bangladesh’s large deposits of natural gas, exploitation of hydel resources in Bhutan and Nepal offers a way out through regional cooperation.

However, with domestic politics taking its toll on the regional and bilateral efforts even environmental issues get embroiled in controversy. In 1997 Bangladesh’s desire to import surplus power from Meghalaya was opposed by Begum Khalida Zia, who, in her own time, had showcased import of certain vital commodities from India as one of the biggest achievements of her government. Similarly, Bangladesh export of natural gas to India got mixed up in domestic politics.
ASEAN is also working in the direction of energy security. The ASEAN 1998 Hanoi plan of Action asked the member states to institute the policy framework and implementation modalities for the early realization of the trans-ASEAN energy networks covering the ASEAN power grid and the Trans-ASEAN Gas Pipeline Projects. Control over energy resources is considered as vital element in power politics. With China’s further economic development, its energy requirements are also increasing. It has already made clear its determination to take control of the Spratly Islands in the South China sea. These Islands are also claimed in all or part by ASEAN states - the Philippines, Brunei, Malaysia and Vietnam. Indonesia too was involved in a dispute with China over the Natuna gas field. In 1990s, ASEAN involved China in a ‘constructive engagement’ approach to reduce tension in South China Sea zone.

Transnational organized crime including drug trafficking and terrorism is another regional security issue in both South East Asia and South Asia. Two of world’s largest drug-producing regions are in Asia - ‘Golden Triangle’ spanning parts of Thailand, Myanmar and Laos and ‘Golden Crescent’ comprising Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan. This is of serious concern to India not only because India is used as a transit route for illicit narcotics from Afghanistan and Pakistan bound for Europe but also because this drug money is used for funding Pakistan-sponsored terrorism in India.

Drug trafficking further leads to social insecurity. In South East Asia drug trade is contributing to growing social instability leading to high rates of crime. In South Asia, cultivation of poppy and cannabis was encouraged during the military dictatorship of late Zia-ul Haq to finance terrorist activities in India. But he failed to
anticipate its repercussions on Pakistan. As much of the profit from the drug trade is
cchannelled into the arms business, easy availability of arms has increased
criminalisation fuelling ethnic violence in Pakistan.

It took almost three years for SAARC states to ratify the convention for
Narcotic Drug and Psychotropic Substances signed at the Male SAARC Summit in
1990. The convention aims at effective action for drug abuse prevention and control
and suppression of illicit traffic in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances. It has
always been the implementation part where SAARC lags behind other regional
associations. But in this particular case how can the convention be implemented when
one member is so deeply involved in drug production and trafficking that too with the
sole objective of using the drug money to sponsor terrorism in the neighboring state.

SAARC Technical Committee on Prevention of Drug Trafficking and Drug
Abuse was established in 1987. It has implemented some programmes in law
enforcement, prevention, treatment and rehabilitation. A Memorandum of
Understanding for Cooperation between SAARC and the United Nations International
Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) has been signed.

On the ASEAN front, the ASEAN Drug Experts Meeting in mid-1970s put
forward a number of important recommendations pertaining to law enforcement,
preventive education and treatment and rehabilitation. The 17th ASEAN Senior
Official on Drug Matters (ASOD) adopted a plan of Action in 1994 on Drug Abuse
Control. Funding problems and cost-sharing disputes seriously affected its working.
ASEAN and EU signed an accord establishing a sub-committee on anti-narcotics
drive in 1999.
Another issue related to the drug activities is 'narco-terrorism'. Drug trafficking is increasingly being considered as an effective and reliable means of quickly generating cash for arms, foreign expertise, communications and other logistical equipment. In South East Asia many ethnic and religious insurgency groups are seeking this way to finance their activities. In South Asia, during the Cold War era, the refugees from Afghanistan were converted into Mujahideens. In the name of mobilising money for the jehad, increased poppy cultivation and refining factories came up all along the Pak-Afghan border.

In South Asia domestic tensions often develop into inter-state tensions. The Tamil armed insurgency in Sri Lanka’s north and eastern provinces got the country involved with the ethnic politics of Tamil Nadu and also led to tension in Indo-Sri Lankan relations. The Chakma rebels of Bangladesh escape to the bordering Indian states of Tripura and Meghalaya while the Naga and Mizo rebels of India’s north-east use adjoining Bangladesh territories as sanctuaries. The United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) militants have also sought refuge in Bangladesh territory when chased by the Indian military or paramilitary forces. The repatriation of refugees has become a critical issue in Indo-Bangladesh relations. Bhutan holds Nepal responsible for terrorist activities in its territory. Thousands of Bhutanese of Nepali origin have escaped to Nepal through India after being pursued by Bhutanese security forces.

Pakistan has been sponsoring terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab and other Indian states. It stepped up its proxy war in Jammu and Kashmir in the 1990s. Today Pakistan itself is facing backlash of nurturing these mercenaries. Pakistan is going through its own phase of sectarian or sub-nationalist violence today.
In South East Asia during the Cold War both communist organizations and armed separatist movements involving indigenous ethnic or religious minorities used terrorist methods to further their aims. Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore effectively neutralized communist insurgency by the mid-eighties. The Thai-Muslim irredentist movement also slowed down around the same time. Separatism remains a problem in Indonesian Irian Jaya and Aceh. During the mid eighties, the NPA, the military wing of the communist party of the Philippines, developed into a serious problem for the Philippines Government.

In the post Cold War period, in Thailand, PULO and other smaller groups continue their Muslim separatist campaign in the Southern region. In Indonesia, separatist Free Aceh Movement (GAM) and other radical Islamist rebels are fighting for the secession of the resources rich Aceh from Indonesia. In the Philippines, a bitter religious - separatist struggle is going on in the southern island of Mindanao.

SAARC members signed the Regional Convention on Suppression of Terrorism in 1987 Kathmandu Summit. It came into force in August 1988 following ratification by all member-states. The convention adopts and gives a regional focus to many of the principles of international law with regard to terrorism. The convention asks member-states to extradite or prosecute alleged terrorists. Exchange of information, intelligence and expertise are stressed.

It is ironical that in a region so severely affected by terrorism at their tenth Summit in 1998, SAARC member - states were still emphasising the urgent need to complete enabling legislation at the national level in order to implement the SAARC convention on suppression of terrorism. This shows lack of will - power and
seriousness on the part of member-states. It also show the absence of consensus on
definition of terrorism among the members. How can there be a consensus when
Pakistan is not only sponsoring terrorism in India but also calls these terrorists as
*jehadis*. In the eleventh Summit held in Kathmandu in January 2002 SAARC meeting,
India’s initiative in putting the fight against terrorism as top priority issue of the
Declaration was endorsed unanimously.

On the ASEAN front a high level of regional cooperation effort has not been
undertaken yet. Since its inception ASEAN member states have considered ethnic and
religious separatism as internal affairs of state, thus ASEAN has to keep out of it.
Moreover there is some amount of suspicion that certain Islamic organizations have
received support from neighbouring countries.

Nevertheless some initiatives are undertaken. ASEAN Police Chiefs
Association (ASEAN POL) is engaged in periodic data exchanges in this field. In
November 2001 ASEAN leaders agreed upon to enhance information and intelligence
exchange on terrorist organizations.

Bilaterally, joint operations by Indonesia and Malaysia were conducted against
communist guerrillas in 1971. The Thais and Malaysians launched large unit joint
military operations against the MCP till 1980. In February 2002, Indonesia, Malaysia
and the Philippines agreed to set up a system of sharing intelligence to fight terrorism.

The Philippines has recently invited American military advisors to help in the
battle against the Abu Sayyaf operating in the southern Philippines. The United States
and India have also established a joint working group on counter-terrorism in January
2002.
In the military and politico-strategic field we can say that over the years ASEAN has evolved into a ‘security community’. War seems to be highly unlikely option of resolving conflicts among the member states. ASEAN has followed and developed a set of principles and a code conduct to deal with the regional as well as extra-regional affairs.

On a different platform we find SAARC designed to be functional association with a modest beginning moving on to core areas like the economic arena. The SAARC Charter did reflect the security concerns of the region. The preamble clearly mentions the desire of the member states to promote peace, stability, amity and progress in the region. However, the SAARC Charter excludes bilateral and contentious issues from its deliberations on a regional basis.

SAARC has adopted a gradualist approach towards cooperation and deliberately excluded bilateral and contentious issues, so as not to impede its progress given the number of conflicts that member-states have. However, this is not to say that SAARC did not play any role in the political arena. International political and military issues have always found a place on SAARC Summit agendas. Moreover though SAARC keeps the bilateral political issues out of its formal agenda, all SAARC Summits, informal bilateral meetings between leaders on such occasions, ministerial meetings, foreign secretary meetings are conducted at the political level and frequently bilateral political issues are discussed; even important decisions are taken. SAARC provides an opportunity for confidence-building measures among members through the multilateral framework.
In January 2002 Kathmandu SAARC Summit, Indian and Pakistan leaders got another opportunity to meet informally even if for a short time. Despite the reports to the contrary, it was the Sri Lankan effort that paved the way for the meeting. Kathmandu Summit showed that even a smaller member could exercise some influence over the larger neighbours. Moreover it also showcased South Asia's own way of dialogue and compromise at a time when outside powers like the US and Britain are trying to mediate in the Indo-Pakistan conflict.

South Asia needs some confidence building measures under the aegis of SAARC like the publication of an annual report of military exercises, maintenance of a regional register on all weapons sale and procurement agreements and transfer of technology agreements on the lines of the UN arms register.

ASEAN 1976 Bali Summit led to the institutionalization of the already existing norms and procedures of political cooperation among the ASEAN members. The TAC called for settlement of differences or disputes by peaceful means and renunciation of threat or use of force. Thus ASEAN put forward an idea of South East Asian regional order and wanted Indochina states to be a part of it. However, Vietnam rejected the prospect outrightly.

Regional as well as extra-regional environment condition the role a regional association can play in security matters. During the late 1960s, ASEAN was concerned with the prospect of dealing with post war Vietnam. Moreover, the question of eventual withdrawal of the US forces from Vietnam pose another problem of how to cope with Chinese and Soviet continued interference in the region.
Through its Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN) idea, ASEAN showed its desire to be free of the influence of external powers. However, initially ASEAN members were not very enthusiastic about the ZOPFAN concept. Thailand and the Philippines feel that their relationships with the US were a far stronger guarantee of security than being part of ZOPFAN. The ZOPFAN concept was finally ratified by the ASEAN Foreign Ministers in 1971 at Kuala Lumpur.

Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia in 1978 provided ASEAN with an urgent sense of unity and common-goal of making Vietnam abandon its position in Cambodia. Not only did Vietnam's actions threaten Thailand which shares a border with Cambodia, but by invading Cambodia it had violated the basic tenets of TAC. As a result ASEAN in the next decade tried to seek the economic and diplomatic isolation of Vietnam. ASEAN kept the Kampuchean issue high on the UN agenda, urging the international community not to recognise Vietnamese's puppet regime in Cambodia and not to provide aid to Vietnam. This issue brought ASEAN forward as a successful diplomatic body but it also tested ASEAN's solidarity. It was a question of different threat perceptions among member states with Indonesia and Malaysia regarding China as a bigger threat than Vietnam. China had supported the 1965 attempted PKI coup in Indonesia and supported the MCP in the 1945-47 emergency in Malaysia. Moreover, China had a potentially significant influence and the large Chinese community in Malaysia. Despite such differences Indonesia and Malaysia were able to adjust their views with other ASEAN states. This shows the importance of ASEAN process of consultation and consensus.

In the post Cold War period ASEAN institutionalized the cooperation in the security field through ASEAN Regional Form (ARF) which is modelled on ASEAN
Post-Ministerial Conferences with its dialogue partners. Canada and Australia advocated something on the lines of Conference on Security Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). ASEAN members felt that what worked in Europe could not be transplanted in Asia. The US was unwilling to commit large number of troops in the post Cold War era. The American decision to close down its largest overseas base facilities in Subic Bay in the Philippines after failing to secure the renewal from the Philippines created fears of power vacuum and resultant competition among the other powers to fill the void.

In the post-Cold War period China has become assertive with its military modernization programme. Differences on the question of sovereignty over the South China Sea Islands persist. ASEAN adopted a policy of 'constructive engagement' towards China since the early 1990s. Sino-ASEAN cooperation was institutionalised with the creation of five dialogue mechanisms including China-ASEAN Senior Leaders' Political consultations, China-ASEAN Joint Committee of Economic and Trade Cooperation, China has finally agreed to talk on number of disputes including the South China Sea. ASEAN-China Senior Officials working group is engaged in developing a regional code of conduct in the South China Sea.

Regional Nuclear Security today form an essential component of overall security environment in both South East and South Asia. Establishment of the South East Asia Nuclear Weapons Free Zone (SEANWFZ) was decided to be an important component of ZOPFAN in 1971. With the end of Cold War, withdrawal of US troops from the Philippines and assertiveness of China contributed to renewed ASEAN effort in this direction. SEANWFZ Treaty was finally signed in Bangkok in December 1995. The United States expressed concerns that because of the geographical extent of
the Zone regular movement of naval vessels and aircraft through South East Asia would be restricted. China express displeasure over the inclusion of South China Sea in the treaty.

On the SAARC front discussions on the threat of nuclear weapons and the need for disarmament have always been part of Summit agenda from the very beginning. India and Pakistan are now nuclear weapons states irrespective of whether they are granted the status or not by the other five nuclear weapon states. India's primary objective, as stated in its draft nuclear doctrine is to provide an effective, credible nuclear deterrence and adequate retaliatory capability should deterrence fail. The Indian decision on the CTBT now must take into account the kind of nuclear force structure it aspires to build and whether that would require any further testing. India has resolved no first use, non-use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear states and a firm commitment to the elimination of nuclear weapons.

Pakistan's rational for its nuclear weapons is not only to deter the threat of India's nuclear weapons but also to counter India's conventional military superiority. Nuclear weapons have added another dimension to the regional security environment of South Asia. But definitely South Asia does not face any additional danger than any other region with nuclear weapons state. The fragmentation of Pakistan society has led the governments in Pakistan to use Kashmir and nuclear deterrence to generate a sense of national unity. As is well known, Pakistan nuclear weapons programme is aided and abetted by China. It is Chinese policy to keep India tied to South Asia and club it with Pakistan. This also helps Pakistan to overplay Indo-Pakistan nuclear threat to keep the US and other powers engaged in the region.
Some nuclear CBMs do exist between India and Pakistan like Agreement on the Non-attack on each other’s Nuclear Facilities. Nuclear related CBMs were negotiated at the Lahore Summit between India and Pakistan but it was undone by Pakistan Army’s Kargil misadventure.

Cooperation in the strictly defence terms under the ASEAN umbrella has been rejected by the member-states. Instead, member-states have stressed continuation of bilateral cooperation between regional states and with extra-regional powers. The Philippines has a Visiting Forces Arrangement to expand military cooperation with the US. Thailand has military alliance with the US. Malaysia supports continued US presence in Asia and makes available naval and air maintenance and repair facilities. Brunei too shares military relations with the US.

On the bilateral level, Vietnam shares some military contact with Laos at the highest level. Vietnam and Thailand have signed a border demarcation agreement. In South Asia, Indo-US Defence Policy Group has worked out areas of military cooperation including special operations training, small unit ground/air exercises and combined training exercises.

Thus, regional cooperation and regional security share a basic conceptual relationship. The process of regional cooperation enhances regional security. Regional associations promotes not only beneficial cooperation in diverse fields of activity but also provides an institutional framework for the peaceful resolution of conflictual issues among member countries.

Conversely, for the success of a regional cooperation effort, resolution of regional security problems is essential. The establishment of ASEAN in 1967 flowed
from the end of confrontation between Indonesia and Malaysia and also reflecting a strong desire on the part of the original five members to minimise the prospects of any further conflict among themselves.

This also shows how intra-state and inter-regional environment affect security perceptions. Change in leadership in Indonesia from Sukarno to Suharto and the resultant change in domestic and foreign policies was a crucial factor in immediate suspension of *Kanfrontasi* between Indonesia and Malaysia.

The South Asian region is characterized by the preponderant position of India in every sphere be it military, economic or territorial. So the security perceptions of India and her smaller neighbours are divergent. The smaller states in South Asia want to counterbalance India’s pre-eminent position by forging alliance with the external powers. Thus far from trying to keep the world powers out of the region the urge is to get them involved in the region. As for India, its regional security policy is based on the assumption of South Asia as a single strategic area.

SAARC Charter specifically mentions that all decisions shall be taken on the basis of unanimity. Thus allaying fears in both India and other members of each other. If SAARC has not been able to progress as desired it does not mean that beneficial effects of regional cooperation do not exist in South Asia, they do, as they exist all over the world. What is lacking is the perception of common enemy and common threat that was the driving force in South East Asia. Thus corollary to the argument of the resolution of regional security problem is the second argument dealing with perception of common external threat of an enemy, which brings the nations together to collectively deal with the threat. Though all the States forming ASEAN were anti-
communist, even then it was plagued by the internal disputes during the initial years. The unification of Vietnam and above all Vietnamese intervention in Cambodia acted as a catalyst for member-states to act collectively.

Both ASEAN and SAARC have adopted a loose, decentralized model of regional cooperation. ASEAN adopted the integrative features of the west and moulded them to meet indigenous needs. A regional association was envisaged to strengthen national identity and autonomy rather than to diminish it. Emphasis has always been on an 'Asian-way' of managing inter-state relations.

Most of the literature, developed on regional cooperation in international relations is best suited to the developed states. The model for regional cooperation for the developing states has to be different due to the prevailing economic imbalances weak/underdeveloped infrastructure, lack of internal cohesion, and problems of state legitimacy which are quite unlike the western conditions after the second World War.

Regional cooperation in the developing states does not necessarily lead to or aim at political or economic union but rather the effective functioning of an intergovernmental association with specific purposes. The goal is not to create a supranational authority. Regional cooperation is only an adjustment for mutual benefit based on national interests. In the context of developing states regional cooperation essentially comes under the framework of 'collective self-reliance' through economic cooperation which is sometimes called 'developmental regionalism' or 'indigenous conflict management'. Regional cooperation can either be functional which stresses on piecemeal development of non-political cooperation in the economic, ecological, social or cultural sectors or be security oriented.
Both the ASEAN-Bangkok Declaration, 1967 and the SAARC Charter, 1985 make it clear that the association concerned is an inter-governmental one, not a supranational one. Neither involves a pooling of any part of the sovereignty of the member countries. ASEAN gives importance to process leading to a result rather than only be concerned about the end. It has adopted the twin approaches of *mufakat* i.e. a decision be arrived at unanimously and *musfawarah* i.e. decision be reached through largely informal discussions and consultations without coercion. This process might be slow but it helps in confidence-building and conflict management and allows members with divergent perceptions to come together and closer.

It is through ASEAN collective dealing with extra-regional states and the diplomatic solidarity shown when regional security is threatened that it is recognised as an association to be reckoned with. ASEAN decided to sideline all the bilateral disputes like one between the Philippines and Malaysia over Sabah for the sake of successful working of the association.

ASEAN countries have been stressing values and beliefs on a number of issues contradicting western views like democracy, human rights. In late 1990s, ASEAN firmly took a position on Myanmar. The America and many European states severely criticised Myanmar and were even toying with the idea of imposing sanctions on Myanmar due to its human rights violations and lack of democracy. But ASEAN made it quite clear that it will not be a part of any such action and would further engage Myanmar.

With the growing interdependent nature of security, line between national issues and external or trans-national issues is blurring. So, there was suggestion of
ASEAN's role in the national matters of the member states termed as "flexible engagement". Majority of the members did not want to deviate from the well established norms and principles of ASEAN. ASEAN was reluctant to head the multinational group to stop pro-Jakarta militia violence. Non-interference in the internal affairs of each other is one of the cardinal principles of ASEAN.

ASEAN has further adopted the 'Asian way' of regional cooperation in ARF. Instead of concentrating on formal legalistic structures, it works towards a consensus-building, informal approach to reach the desired goals. ARF is definitely not a collective defence organization. Its aim was to create a mechanism flexible enough to accommodate divergent opinions. The 'concept paper' discusses three stages in the evolution of ARF namely Promotion of Confidence Building Measures, Development of Preventive Diplomacy and Development of Conflict Resolution Mechanisms.

SAARC provides a forum to the regional states to interact frequently which itself is a big point given the conflicts and different perceptions that exist among the member-states. Initially, ASEAN was accused of being an association limited to the ruling elite to legitimize their regimes. Later a determined campaign was undertaken to make the people of South East Asia aware of ASEAN, its aims and its advantages. Today, we can see a sense of 'we-feeling' a sense of ASEANness among the ASEAN members.

Non-governmental activities usually referred to as 'second track' process play vital role in regional cooperation. ASEAN Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS) does much of the networking on security cooperation in the region. In
1991 ISIS proposed ‘Senior Officials Meeting’ (SOM) comprising senior officials from ASEAN states and dialogue parties to support the ASEAN PMC functioning.

On similar lines, the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific (CSCAP) was established to provide a more structured regional process of a non-governmental nature to contribute to the efforts towards regional confidence-building and having regional security through dialogues, consultation and cooperation.

However, in the SAARC region involving common man in the implementation of programmes is a distant thing with people not even informed about SAARC properly. SAARC did take small steps in this direction. SAARC has extended recognition to the SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Association of SAARC Speakers and Parliamentarians is another such group. Citizens’ Commission for South Asia met for the first time in Kathmandu in December 2000. The main objectives of the Commission are to increase public awareness regarding South Asian cooperation and the need to intensify the concept. On similar lines the Indo-Pak People’s Forum organised a joint convention for Peace and Democracy in April 2000 in Bangalore. In Kathmandu in January this year journalists from SAARC states pledged to work for free flow of information and free movement of media personnel in the region.

In the final, the ASEAN way is all about containing and managing conflicts. It is a process of interaction, consultation and cooperation that has evolved over the years to develop national and in turn regional resilience. In the post-Cold War period as members realized, it is difficult to keep external powers from interfering in the
region, they devised the way of 'constructive engagement'. ASEAN-PMC and the ARF are the culmination of this mode of thinking.

SAARC took a step-by-step approach. During the first decade of its existence SAARC identified many areas of cooperation including agriculture, forestry, health, population, meteorology, rural development, telecommunication, transport, science and technology, postal services, sports, arts, culture, drug trafficking and tourism. SAARC is not designed as a conflict resolving mechanism, as the Charter specifically rules out bilateral and contentious issues.

Pakistan's attitude shows its frustration in trying to gaining parity with India in military and economic fields. Moreover, post - Cold War period has provided India with opportunities to move to larger arena of the Asia-Pacific region. It is also time that the people-to-people contact, the civil society in India and Pakistan be more assertive in quest of stable relations between the two states. Finally, perhaps it is also time that SAARC should gradually introduce political issues in its agenda through the amendment of the Charter. But, it has to be done in a steady and phased manners given the divergent views and perceptions of the member - states in this regard. Regional association is no panacea for the many social, economic, environmental, political and military problems that we face today. But it can definitely play a substantial role in preventing deteriorating conditions specially in the developing countries of the world.