

Short Reviews of Recent Books

Cooperative Security Framework for South Asia. Edited by Nihar Nayak (New Delhi, Pentagon press, 2013), pp..256, Price ₹ 995/-, ISBN 9788182747050.

The book under review has recognised the need to establish a Cooperative Security Framework (CSF) in South Asia and examined the possibility of establishing such a Framework. The concept of CSF implies 'security with' rather than 'security against' one's adversary as the only possible method of interaction in an interdependent world. Scholars and analysts from the South Asian region have been debating this issue for quite some time. In the ensuing debate so far the question whether South Asia could replicate other successful cooperative security models; such as that of the European Union (EU) and Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Many scholars felt that this was an onerous task , while others thought this is impossible to achieve given what is perceived as asymmetry in South Asia. Indian continent's size in the centre of South Asia with land and maritime boundaries with all the countries, except Afghanistan, its resources and growing international profile, troubled India-Pakistan relations, and mistrust among India's smaller neighbours are perceived as limiting factors for cooperation in South Asia.

However, with the passage of time, the security environment in South Asia has become further complicated. New issues such as: ensuring energy and environmental security, water related disputes, endemic poverty in the region, illegal migration etc have added to the complexity of the security environment. Consequently, today there is greater awareness and recognition among scholars and analysts of the urgent need to establish a common security framework in South Asia in the interest of peace and stability and the well being of the people of South Asia.

The present volume brought out by the Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses has focused on the theme of Cooperative Security Framework in South Asia. Scholars representing the eight South Asian countries have given their respective perspectives and the best way forward. Farooq Sobhan from Bangladesh has

put forward a thought provoking suggestion. In his words, "Thus a cooperative security framework that is independent of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) could serve as a body to facilitate confidence building measures, preventive diplomacy and conflict resolution" (p 36). Professor SD Muni of India was also of the view that a new multidimensional security framework had to be set-up that was not within the framework of SAARC.

However, the most commendable aspect of the book is the "Consensus Document" on the way forward; a blueprint for future cooperation. As rightly pointed out the need of the hour is to generate the necessary political will. In short, written in a lucid style and well documented, the book is a useful addition to the literature on South Asia.

Professor Nirmala Joshi