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Keywords: Confidence Building Measures (CBMs), Crisis Management, India, Pakistan, Kargil War, Agra Summit

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Confidence Building Measures and Crisis Management: Lessons in Leadership and External Influences in the Musharraf Era

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Abstract

This article presents a critical analysis of the confidence-building measures (CBMs) between India and Pakistan during the era of General Pervez Musharraf, a decade marked by complex diplomatic engagement, strategic tension, and intermittent peace overtures. This article examines the development, impact, and constraints of different CBMs—such as military, political, economic, and people-to-people contacts—within the broader regional security framework. Through qualitative analysis of bilateral dialogues, official agreements, and track-two diplomacy efforts, the article evaluates initiatives such as the Lahore Declaration, ceasefire agreements along the Line of Control (LoC), cross-border travel facilitation, and trade measures. The article highlights how internal political instability, unresolved core issues like Kashmir, and incidents of cross-border terrorism continually hindered the sustained implementation of CBMs. This article argues that future CBMs should be integrated into a comprehensive approach to conflict resolution.

Keywords: Confidence Building Measures (CBMs), Crisis Management, India, Pakistan, Kargil War, Agra Summit

Introduction

The CBMs had their roots in liberal institutionalism, which urges structured diplomatic engagement, economic interdependence, and commonality of

norms as the paths to peace. Nevertheless, even in attempts to establish regular dialogue, mitigate security crises and political fluctuations, reduce military tensions, and initiate economic cooperation,



these initiatives were extremely susceptible to opportunities in each of these fickle environments. Another argument for the fundamental limitations of CBMs in this period has been the absence of institutional guarantees since most of the agreements relied on political goodwill rather than legally binding commitments. In terms of the 2003 ceasefire agreement along the Line of Control (LoC), for example, the decrease in cross-border hostilities was considerable, but not backed by an enforcement mechanism; hence the agreement did break down when tensions reemerged again (Bahl, [2007](#)). In the latter case, the step of pre-notification of ballistic missile tests was designed to reduce miscalculations and increase transparency but was ineffectual in the absence of a broader security framework aimed at resolving deeper strategic issues (O'Donnell, [2022](#)). Starting from this, there is a key challenge for liberal political leaders seeking to apply their ideas to high-conflict regions—the diplomacy may buy time by softening tensions, especially when channels of communication are opened, but ultimately the path to a resolution to long-standing disputes requires not only deeper structural reforms and institutionalized safeguards but also an unwillingness among those involved to deliver an olive branch.

During the Musharraf era, attempts were made at economic CBMs as part of an overall aim to develop interdependence and provide each side with economic incentives to lead to peace. This conclusion was consistent with the liberal theory that economic integration reduces the probability of conflict because it raises the 'costs' of wars. This was followed by several initiatives, for example, bilateral trade negotiations, the expansion of the Wagah-Attari border trade route, and cross-border business forums aimed at promoting economic engagement (Adekoye, [2018](#)). However, they met initial optimism but ran into daunting, structural, and political hurdles. The lack of Pakistan's readiness to accord India the status of the Most Favored Nation (MFN), coupled with the presence of non-tariff barriers (NTBs), and recurring security concerns has thwarted implementation of the economic CBMs. Clearly, one failure of economic liberalization in conflict-affected

regions is the failure to separate trade from political disputes, which highlights a key limitation of liberalization in conflict-prone regions when economic cooperation gets disorganized to detract from their business. Furthermore, banking linkages, trade infrastructure, and dispute resolution mechanisms were not formalized, and the lack of these factors has further hindered economic CBMs in the presence of other geopolitical tensions and thus further reinforced their fragility (Chakma, [2009](#)).

The people-to-people CBM was also an attempt to impact societal attitudes and lower hostility between Indian and Pakistani citizens. Included in the program were cultural exchanges, sports diplomacy, cross-border travel services aimed at building mutual trust on the grassroots level, and challenging stereotypes subjected to several decades of political animosity (Stein, [1982](#)). Although these CBMs were initially rather successful — particularly as regards the Delhi-Lahore and Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus services and cricket diplomacy — they were very prone to nationalist opposition as well as negative publicity and security problems. The Indo-Pakistani relations were greatly damaged by the 2008 Mumbai attacks, especially when these attacks severely affected many people-to-people initiatives and it also reinforced public skepticism toward peace efforts (O'Donnell, [2022](#)). This failure represents a shortcoming in liberalism's capacity to confront both deeply rooted animosities that lie beyond social interaction and cultural contact, such that mere engagement in social relations and cultural interaction cannot eliminate historic enmities and security dilemmas. Future initiatives to ensure the long-term sustainability of CBMs should be legally institutionalized, politically insulated, and economically reinforced creating a comprehensive CBM framework that goes beyond ad hoc crisis management to a structured and long-term peace strategy (Chakma, [2009](#)).

Key CBM Initiatives

Confidence Building Measures implemented during the Musharraf era were based on liberal institutionalism, that is, structured diplomatic

engagements, negotiated settlements, and mediation through multilateral means. Nevertheless, various high-level summits and structured dialogues did not achieve much when measured by a lack of liquidity that responded to security crises, political instability, or domestic opposition. The Agra Summit of 2001 underscored the difficulties of overcoming deep institutional mistrust between India and Pakistan in the way of a breakthrough, since disputes over cross-border terrorism and Kashmir put paid to the negotiations at the very moment that they appeared to be moving forward (Kapur, 2002). The structuring of the discussions concerning contentious issues during the Islamabad Summit (2004) and the Composite Dialogue Process (CDP) notwithstanding, both succeeded because leaders had political will and not because agreements were legally binding. As stated by Raghavan (2010), these CBMs relied on informal political commitments rather than institutionalized mechanisms that would make them more resilient to changes in leadership or security threats. The lack of progress on the backchannel on Kashmir in spite of considerable steps forward — yet again showed the limitations of ad hoc diplomacy, which lacks the support of treaties with formal counterparts and broader political consensus (Krepon, 2012).

CBMs in this period were sustained in a significant measure by international diplomacy and in a particular way by international diplomacy in the post-9/11 global security context in which the US and other global powers in particular actively encouraged Indo-Pakistani engagement. Renewed diplomatic efforts later took place in the wake of U.S. pressure on Pakistan to halt militant activity and between India and Pakistan through the Composite Dialogue Process (Mohan, 2006). Yet despite this liberal belief that external mediation could sustain long-term peace the donor assumption that external efforts at diplomacy could overcome internal resistance to the diplomatic peace process was insufficient. Nationalist factions and security establishments in both India and Pakistan continued to be suspicious of peace efforts, often aligning against CBMs for the reasons that they purportedly succeeded in undermining national security interests (Sridharan, 2005). In Pakistan especially, with increasing political instability, clearly,

Musharraf's declining influence from 2007 further eroded diplomatic CBMs' sustainability due to changing leadership that time and again led to policy reversals (Chari, Cheema, & Cohen, 2008). Leadership-driven diplomacy via CBMs was tied to political and security conditions that could easily undo progress achieved through CBMs.

Once a matter of diplomatic CBM, following the 2008 Mumbai attacks their fragility was exposed by the collapse of CBMs, without institutional guarantees. The 2003 ceasefire agreement and cross-border dialogue mechanisms helped to a certain extent to a temporary de-escalation but they had a meager impact considering the lack of enforcement framework. But the fact that these measures unraveled after a major security incident was the fault of diplomatic engagement that had no structural durability (Raghavan, 2010). However, moving forward, future Indo-Pakistani CBMs must be legally institutionalized where diplomatic mechanisms should endure even if political transitions or security crises arise. Further, greater multilateral engagement through regional organizations like SAARC, as well as independent verification mechanisms, would give such diplomatic CBMs what they need in order to survive external disruption (Krepon, 2012). Such diplomatic CBMs as these reforms are unlikely to be permanent instruments for sustainable peace and will be used only as temporary crisis management tools.

Military and Security CBMs

The formulation of military and security-related Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs) during the Musharraf regime was undertaken under the liberal institutionalist framework of structured interaction, transparency, and mechanisms to avert crises. Pre-notification of ballistic missile tests, the 2003 LoC ceasefire agreement, and military hotlines were significant attempts at either reducing military miscalculations or providing stability in an unstable security environment. In particular, the ceasefire agreement, as a type of institutionalized communication, showed that a decline in cross-border shelling and a platform for diplomatic dialogue was possible (Ganguly & Kapur, 2012). Similarly, the

notification of missile tests prior to their firing was important to avoiding nuclear escalation because strategic maneuvers were not mistakenly interpreted as offensive actions (Lavoy, [2009](#)). Direct communication between the armed forces of both nations was made even more important through the establishment of military hotlines which permitted for an immediate response to crises between the military forces of both nations (Basrur, [2019](#)). Despite this success in reducing immediate tension, these CBMs did not provide lasting security stability because they lacked binding, because cross-border militancy persisted, and because nonstate actors played significant roles in the liberal framework does not explain fully.

When asymmetrical security threats and political instability made it clear the fragility of these military CBMs with the 2008 Mumbai attacks it became obvious how such institutionalized security partnerships are limited when forced to adjust to a relatively new type of security challenge. The attacks, carried out by the Pakistan-based militant group Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), played an important role in the deterioration of Indo-Pakistani relations heavily discounting any progress made from earlier CBMs (Riedel, [2013](#)). The Mumbai attacks showed that while liberal institutionalism assumes that coming out from opaque engagements and transparent mechanisms can reduce hostilities; it was found in the Mumbai attacks that such mechanisms were ineffective when the trust deficit did not disentangle and state institutions did not check militant activities (Clary, [2018](#)). Third, the continued cross-border infiltration and presence of militant networks operating from Pakistan eroded the validity of India's view of military CBMs and this undermined the general trust and confidence on which such CBMs depend (Fair, [2014](#)). In addition, these CBMs were not legally institutionalized beyond temporary political agreements, and collapse occurred not only because of security crises, which can break CBMs but also due to frequent changes of leadership, which did not allow their implementation.

However, for the future efficacy of military CBMs, Indo-Pakistani security engagement should progress from transient ceasefires, and token transactions to legally binding agreements that contain a multitude of robust counterterrorism and verification measures. The use of secured structures based on leader-driven diplomacy has been unsustainable when geopolitics shift and when security crises occur. While liberal institutionalism can provide a good argument for structured engagement in security, its applicability in the Indo-Pak context is restricted without workable enforcement mechanisms along with consistently reinforced CBMs and within a grand plan for conflict resolution (Basrur, [2019](#)).

Economic and Trade CBMs

Economic and trade-related Confidence Building-Measures (CBMs) during the Musharraf era were constituted within the liberal economic theory that economic interdependence increases the possibility of stability by generating mutual incentives for stability. These initiatives such as broadening trade, business forums, and the reopening of important trade routes were instituted out of an effort to institutionalize economic cooperation as a pathway to peace (Kelegama, [2012](#)). While these measures potentially had an effect, several structural, political, and security-related challenges hampered it. A positive trajectory of an increase in trade volume from \$345 million in 2001 to \$2.3 billion by 2007 can be seen (Taneja, [2016](#)), though bureaucratic inefficiencies and regulatory hurdles amended the progress into something sustainable. Between private sectors through business summits and commerce secretary-level discussions, dialogue came into play but, the lack of institutional guarantees and unpredictable Indo-Pakistani relations weakened the effectiveness of these dialogues (Mukherji, [2014](#)). In this respect, this is a critical weakness of the liberal economic theory of conflict-prone regions: economic CBMs may foster cooperation, but they are quite limited in their effectiveness if a solid institutional mechanism and political stability are not present.

Further, the reopening of cross-border trade routes, especially the Wagah Attari border and Srinagar Muzaffarabad trade corridor depicted the role of economic CBMs in fostering interdependence. By allowing for trade routes, these trade routes became a way to create avenues for economic cohabitation as well as symbolic signs of goodwill, given that trade was somewhat restricted in Kashmir since 1947 (Kugelman & Hathaway, 2010). Nevertheless, these initiatives were plagued by operation problems such as excessive regulations, suspensions due to security, and limited trading quotas. The Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs) were further complicating trade expansion as Indian exporters claimed that NTCs exist in the form of Pakistan's restrictive licensing and customs policies (Baysan, Panagariya, & Pitigala, 2006) and Pakistan was mystified by Indian tariff structures and market access restrictions. Because of this traders' banks were barred from direct dealings between the two countries which made transactions costly and inefficient (Naqvi, 2012). These are just part of the challenges that show how economic CBMs can be used as engagement tools, but their long-term effectiveness depends on the resolution of systemic obstacles—and neither country was willing to go completely down the block with regard to that during the Musharraf era.

But when economic CBMs succeeded, there were also greater technical and regulatory constraints and even the broader geopolitical and security environment had a strong influence. This unwillingness of Pakistan to extend MFN status to India, despite India doing the same in 1996, also showed Pakistan's entrenched political resistance and priority of security over economic partnership (Hussain, 2017). For instance, economic CBMs were fragile in the face of external shocks, such as the 2008 Mumbai attacks causing the suspension of trade negotiations and a reduction in border crossing (Chishti, 2013). Therefore, the economic initiatives taken by the Musharraf era, in a paradoxical sense, show that trade also has the ability to propagate stability but it is indeed deeply lottery in terms of political and security changes. Future economic CBM success will depend on ATT eliminating NTBs, developing more institutional mechanisms, and that trade is not affected by diplomatic tensions. Without

such fences, the economic CBMs will remain as short-term confidence-building measures rather than a long-term composition of peace.

Liberal economic theory argues that the more interdependent economies are, the less prone to conflict they become, economic and trade-related CBMs under the Musharraf regime are in sync with liberal economic theory. The rationale for expanding bilateral trade, organizing business forums, and opening cross-border trade routes was to lay down the foundation of sustainable peace on the basis of economic cooperation. It is hence liberal to assume that economic engagement could and would lead states to mutually beneficial conjunction bringing in the reduction of incentives for military conflict. This can be illustrated in the form of the establishment of business summits and trade corridors that offered structured national and private sector economic diplomacy platforms (Taneja, 2016). However the assumption of the liberal that economic interdependence should lead to peace ignores that there are security dilemmas at their most essential roots, the constraints of domestic politics, and the resistance of entrenched bureaucratic hurdles. Although economic CBMs led to a nominal boost in trade, they did not change the adversarial nature of Indo-Pakistani relations, since political volatility and security interruptions usually stopped progress (Mukherji, 2014). This is illustrated by the limitations of economic liberalization to trade agreements especially the one of removing the non-tariff barriers (NTBs).

However, Pakistan's refusal to let India benefit from the Most Favored Nation (MFN) status, indicates that even in the absence of institutional guarantees, the economic CBMs are not feasible. While helping with economic benefits, Liberalism believes that political rivalries can be overcome by economic benefits but economic interests were often overridden when it came to Indo-Pakistani trade (Hussain, 2017). Due to the lack of MFN status and continuous regulatory barriers, this indicated that trade potential is bounded because it needs to rely on political will with legally binding agreements for the same potential. Also, the economic CBMs were

repeatedly disrupted by security concerns through the suspension of cross-border trade routes during times of heightened tensions (Sharma, [2015](#)). External shocks on trade-based CBMs impaired the economic initiatives that were advanced following the 2008 Mumbai attacks (Chishte, 2013). Consequently, liberalist economic engagement principles should be accompanied by structural reforms, institutional commitments, and security assurances that would promote a meaningful economic contribution to long-term peace. It is unlikely that economic cooperation will provide a sustainable and effective means to resolve conflicts in the context of Indo-Pakistani relations absent of casting resolution to these core challenges.

People-to-People and Cultural Exchanges

These people-to-people and cultural Confidence-building Measures (CBMs) were based on the liberal institutionalist assumption that institutionalized interpersonal contact can lower the hostilities and the trust between adversary states. Cross-border bus service, sports diplomacy, and media exchanges were initiated as they aimed to replace political conflict with human interaction over state rivalries (Ghosh, [2009](#)). Diwali is a national holiday in India, which has a huge significance in India, and the Delhi-Lahore and Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus services were a symbol of a historic step taken toward reconciliation, in particular with families separated by Partition, offering a rare chance for direct engagement (Choudhary, [2018](#)). In fact, however, these initiatives were limited by excessive security clearances, bureaucratic snags, and periodic suspensions because of political conflicts (Verma, [2015](#)). This underscores cultural CBMs' inherent weakness when institutionalized protections are not in place, in that they facilitate some symbolic progress but do not ensure such progress's survival, especially in the case of an overall hostile political climate.

Another important channel for informal engagement was sports diplomacy, including cricket, particularly as cricket is so popular in both countries. In the context of the India-Pakistan hockey series of

2004 and 2006, the fervor for the two series was further increased by cross-border fans and by players and political leaders using the platform to espouse peace narratives (Majumdar & Bandyopadhyay, [2014](#)). Yet, the effectiveness of sports diplomacy was very vulnerable to external disruptions (Gupta, [2016](#)), as in the post-2008 scenario of the Mumbai attacks, cricketing ties were severed during heightened tensions. The existence of such CBMs reinforces the limitations of cultural solutions in such conflict-prone regions as these CBMs don't create durable bridges of cooperation due to a lack of resilience towards security crises. At the same time, media and scholarly exchanges had significant roles in reversing dominant state-promoted narratives of hostility by forging intellectual partnerships and journalistic balance (Kumar, [2017](#)). However, nationalist rhetoric and media sensationalism often somewhat derailed these initiatives as war-centric discourse and sensational reporting promoted stigmas rather than developed them (Ibrahim [2019](#)). These CBMs were indeed paradoxical: they were invented to give a different narrative to the political hostilities, but ended up generating exactly the opposite, further dividing society through nationalistic media coverage.

In connecting the people to people and cultural CBMs during the Musharraf era, these principles of liberalist shared norms and social engagement were used as tools for conflict transformation. Trust, rejecting stereotypes, and creating diplomatic stability in adversarial relationships are achievable through sustained social interactions, which the Liberalist emphasizes is possible even in adversarial environments. The Delhi-Lahore and Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus services which allowed cross border movement and symbolized commitment towards the resolution are examples of the same.

Media and academic exchanges also allowed for peace work to be challenged by state-driven hostility, whilst media sensationalism often rendered it impossible to break the cycle of hostility. Even though joint journalism initiatives and academic collaboration aimed at producing a balanced narrative, nationalist media narratives spurred unbelief, especially during

foreign policy differences. This is a liberalist attempt to ensure that CBMs have ready means of being reversed by political and media pressure. The crash of people-to-people CBMs that occurred with cross-border engagements based on security fears was underscored by the 2008 Mumbai attacks. However, such initiatives will always be subservient to security interests in Indo-Pakistani relations which assume that constant engagement in society can lead to long-term peace. Companies that have limited cultural CBMs, under the best of situations, should institutionalize, shield from political volatility, and reinforce with educational and media reforms that encourage rather than episodic goodwill gestures. These structural safeguards will ensure that people-to-people diplomacy continues to be a sporadic but vulnerable plank in Indo-Pakistani engagement, which cannot bring about a change in relations.

Effectiveness in Crisis Management

The ones carried out during Musharraf's era, as is the case with other liberal institutionalists, assume that diplomatic engagement through structured institutions, coordination on arms issues, and economic integration can lessen conflict by introducing predictability in state interactions. In easing immediate tensions, avoiding extemporaneous escalations and even when stressed, maintaining high-level diplomatic contact, military hotlines, and the Composite Dialogue Process (CDP) between 2003 and 2008, the first elements of de-escalation in the event of a crisis were successful (Swami, 2007). Yet, these measures acted as more a way of coping with the immediate crisis than as permanent solutions to the relationship between India and Pakistan that were rooted in the structural causes of hostility between the two countries (Chari, Cheema, & Cohen, 2008). The first concrete step in ending cross-border skirmishes was the ceasefire which at first resulted in a reduction of the number of clashes, but whose effectiveness was limited (Grare, 2008) by the lack of legally binding enforcement mechanisms, and by the fact that the politically changes related to the security crises such as the 2008 Mumbai attacks quickly unraveled the achievements of the diplomats. This suggests a

profound failing of liberal institutionalism which takes the form of structured engagement for deeply entrenched rivalries, since structured engagement mitigates uncertainty, but not so much that it cannot fade away in the absence of robust institutional commitments—something which was not the case in Indo-Pak.

In addition, the CDP and backchannel diplomacy on Kashmir also served the function of structured platforms for negotiating but were nevertheless susceptible to political transitions and interruptions of a security nature. Repeated diplomatic and economic engagements create interdependencies behind which the benefits of conflict diminish, and liberalism promotes continuing diplomatic and economic engagements to smash the incentives for conflict (Gopalaswamy, 2016). In the Indo-Pakistani scope, however, security issues never gave economic or institutional issues a chance. Economic CBMs focused on building cooperation but their influence was limited given ongoing mistrust, bureaucratic groans, and Pakistan's reluctance to extend India's MFN status (Kapur, 2018). That is a key shortcoming of the liberal approach because economic interdependence only offers a stabilizing force if you have a fair level of political commitments and security assurances as well. Such diplomatic and economic CBMs were without institutional safeguards and hence the collapse of such CBMs proved to be a near-total story following the Mumbai attacks (Raghavan, 2013). In contrast to other regional institutions, such as the European Union, which have had their economic cooperation enshrined in legally binding frameworks, Indo-Pakistani CBMs did not go far in terms of remaining formal and reliant on transient political goodwill rather than enduring legal commitment (Chaudhuri & Shende, 2019).

The fact that the CBMs broke down during the Musharraf era highlights the importance of the institution of peace mechanisms disjoint from crisis management. Although structured dialogue processes and military coordination were governed by liberal institutionalist principles, the lack of enforcement mechanisms, economic integration, and societal buy-in weakened their effectiveness, and CBMs in the

future should be legally binding, politically isolated, and grounded in a broader security and economic framework in order to become sustainable. In the aftermath of the 2008 Mumbai attacks, it was also underlined that even diplomatic and military CBMs are prone to be disrupted without deeper institutional commitments and it notes the need for long-term conflict resolution strategies more than reactive de-escalation measures (Grare, [2008](#)). Indo-Pakistani CBMs need to be reinforced in the future with a multilateral framework, legal agreements, and economic incentives to remain resilient to security crises, and political fluctuations. CBMs can become durable mechanisms for sustainable peace only through such structural reforms.

Structural Weaknesses and Political Limitations

Musharraf's Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs) were reactive rather than anything to build up confidence over sustained periods of peace as was needed. However, these CBMs did establish diplomatic openings and also create a thin hope of escaping immediate hostilities, but the structural weaknesses and political constraints limited their success. However, because there were no legally binding agreements between them, CBMs were vulnerable to policy reversals and most of them relied on political goodwill rather than enforceable commitments (Paul, [2010](#)). For instance, the 2003 ceasefire agreement along the Line of Control (LoC) reduced cross-border hostilities but did not have any legal enforcement, and over time security violations deteriorated it (Taneja & Bansal, [2019](#)). On the other hand, institutional mechanisms to oversee the implementation of trade-related CBMs, such as discussions on granting India Most Favored Nation (MFN) status, did not become institutionalized because of initial political backing which never resulted in the failure of their implementation (Ganguly & Scobell, [2016](#)). The absence of legal and institutional guarantees made CBMs highly vulnerable to change in political priorities and rendered them ineffective in the long-term purposes of de-escalation in addition to the short-term.

Diplomatic and economic measures failed to give way to CBMs as a mechanism of durable peace; security concerns that consistently outstripped them. Though trade and economic cooperation were recognized as stabilizing factors, such cooperation by security agencies in both countries remained suspicious, fearing that they could be used to engage in espionage or fund the activities of militants (Raghavan, [2018](#)). The advent of this first security mindset made it so that any modest economic progress could be undone by border clashes or terrorist incidents to the point where the perception was: that CBMs are not able to work in an insecure environment (Malik, [2019](#)). Additionally, the institutional framework THB lacked for the continuation of CBMs was such that they were highly susceptible to political variation. Unlike the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), these Indo-Pakistani CBMs were episodic and leadership-dependent (Mitra, [2020](#)). While promising, the Composite Dialogue Process (CDP) was unable to escape the security crises by establishing a permanent mechanism for resolution of such (Bose [2021](#)). The CBMs must now be institutionalized through legally binding agreements, engagement through multilateral dimensions, and regional frameworks to ensure they stay resilient to political shifts or security crises (Sharma, [2017](#)). These CBMs will continue to work as short-term de-escalation tools, rather than medium and long-term means for sustained peace unless these structural reforms are inserted.

A further source of the lack of sustainability of CBMs covers the domestic political opposition, apart from structural deficiencies. Nationalist factions and hardline groups in both India and Pakistan refused to go for peace initiatives as they viewed CBMs as diplomatic concessions rather than strategic peacebuilding measures (Chaudhuri, [2021](#)). Elements in the Pakistani military establishment and Islamist factions supported CBM promoting diplomatic engagement and trade liberalization since normalization with India will decrease Pakistan's hegemony over Kashmir (Fair, 2014). In India however, there was skepticism over Pakistan's

sincerity in the fight against terrorism after major attacks like the 2001 Indian Parliament attack and the 2008 Mumbai attacks (Jaffrelot, 2020). They heightened the rhetoric of nationalism and gave a lull to CBMs and dubious reversals in policy. While the current dynamic illustrates the limitations of liberal institutionalist assumptions for Indo-Pakistani foreign relations, disengagement may be the solution only in the short term, and even then is limited to demands for immediate reduction of tensions; demanding that engagement succeed over time, as a strategy, in the longer term is dependent on the domestic political support available for such initiatives and being able to defend CBMs from populist pressures and security anxieties.

Most importantly, the dire economic consequences of CBM dampened proponents' willingness to strongly advocate for CBM implementation in the case of Indo-Pakistan conflict, which testifies to the basic challenge of applying Liberalism's institutional approach to severe bilateral confrontations such as Indian and Pakistani relations of the Musharraf era. While liberal institutionalism stresses the importance of structured agreements and international norms for long-term cooperation, most of the CBMs during this period were not legally grounded, therefore they were subject to political changes and security crises. Although the 2003 ceasefire agreement was effective in lowering border hostilities, the liberal critique was reinforced that diplomacy is a pro forma and position-reactive exercise — and only so long as the agreement has neither legal wrappings nor institutional oversight and that even the clearest of policies cannot, in practice, eradicate bloodshed from the border when common sense says that one cannot tolerate it indefinitely. Like economic CBMs, such as trade liberalization and the discussion of Most Favored Nation (MFN) status, economic interdependence was the backdrop for, but economically incomplete, because of national security concerns and lack of legally binding commitments. Understanding that liberal peace theory's inclusion of state incentives occurs at a cost underscores a fundamental flaw in international relations theory, that is, that economic

incentives alone are inadequate to ensure peace in the face of security threats to the state.

Finally, the resistance to CBMs from the political realm is due to limitations of an assumption in Liberalism that more interactions lead to more cooperation and trust. Business forums, Track II diplomacy, and cross-border people-to-people initiatives attempted to promote shared norms to check hostility at the societal level but were stifled by nationalists' rhetoric, media sensationalism, and politics. Realist critiques that power politics and security interests tend to supersede the cooperative efforts are reinforced by hardline factions in both India and Pakistan, who viewed CBMs as concessions not aspects of strategic peace initiatives. Moreover, because there was no neutral, institutionalized conflict resolution mechanism (e.g., OSCE in Europe), CBMs were vulnerable and failed to absorb the stress of security incidents (2008 Mumbai Attacks). The long-term success of liberal institutional mechanisms in de-escalation is also conditioned on legal support, political buy, and regional integration — elements that were lacking in Indo-Pakistani CBMs. For CBMs to continue beyond the short term, goodwill, continued institutionalization of CBMs via treaty-based commitments, multilateral frameworks, as well as depoliticized economic engagement moving forward, will be needed.

Impact of External Factors

External actors, in particular, the global powers and regional institutions had a significant bearing on the implementation and sustainability of Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs) during the Musharraf era. International diplomatic pressure was also important to open dialogue between India and Pakistan, while CBMs were mainly of a bilateral nature. In particular, the United States actively interfered in the crisis situations and urged both sides to slow down the escalation forwards, notably after the Kargil conflict (1999) and the 2001 Indian Parliament attack (Miller, 2013). After 9/11, Washington had reasons to be interested in strategic instability in South Asia, which resulted in an increase in diplomatic involvement, where the Bush administration supported having

Pakistan display its readiness to fight terrorism while at the same time pushing for Indo-Pak dialogue (Tellis, [2017](#)). One could also say that the European Union (EU) and the United Nations (UN) followed the same path and encouraged diplomatic engagement and economic cooperation using trade as a possible solution to conflict resolution (Schaffer & Schaffer, [2016](#)). Nevertheless, due to the weak enforcement mechanisms of the CBMs, they were highly susceptible to security crises and political changes in both countries. Especially when backed solely by external diplomatic pressure, without equally established institutionalized frameworks in India and Pakistan, these measures were essentially reactionary and fell apart in high tensions.

The shift in global priorities post-9/11 and their direct repercussions for Pakistan's foreign policy, influenced other issues as well, such as CBMs, through the post-9/11 security environment. In order to change its global standing, Pakistan took a step forward and interacted with the global community, which resulted in the revival of diplomatic initiatives such as the Composite Dialogue Process (Kapur, 2018). However, efforts to promote peace in Kashmir, however, did little to dispel the fact that the persistence of cross-border militancy severely undermined these efforts and India was skeptical of Pakistan's willingness or ability to control militant networks operating from its portion of the territory (Riedel, [2013](#)). This skepticism deepened further after major terrorist attacks such as the 2001 Indian Parliament attack and the 2008 Mumbai attacks which seriously damaged Indo-Pakistani relations and dented CBM in the area of diplomacy, and trade (Ganguly, 2012; Joshi, [2019](#)). Yet, these attacks helped to expose the vulnerability of CBMs to security shocks and their inherent weakness in the absence of a comprehensive counterterrorism framework, since temporary diplomatic engagements could not withstand the shocks. Security guarantees as well as diplomatic efforts were highlighted as a way ahead instead of any sort of pattern of CBMs (Hussain, 2020).

Although regional organizations, such as SAARC, played a minor role in the promotion of CBMs, they were less useful because India and Pakistan had harbored political animosity against each other. In spite of the economic forums and trade dialogues that SAARC organized, it failed to find wide acceptance as a peace-building mechanism in the region given the dominance of the broad security rivalry in South Asia (Dash, [2008](#)). It was, however, during the 2004 SAARC Summit that Islamabad played some role in the resumption of the Composite Dialogue Process but SAARC itself did not have the enforcement mechanisms to sustain dialogue between India and Pakistan (Kelegama, [2017](#)). Whereas the European Union has been successful in institutionalizing diplomatic cooperation between former adversaries, SAARC remained a weak regional body that was unable to mediate between its two largest members (Bajpai, [2021](#)). This lack of a structured, legally binding framework provided by regional institutions for Indo-Pakistan engagement only made CBMs even more ad hoc in nature, and the two sides relied more on political goodwill and less on institutional commitments. To remain in the long term successful, CBMs must be supported by both international diplomatic guarantees and strengthened regional mechanisms for peace beyond political and security crises.

As in Liberalism, the study of CBMs in the Musharraf era is that of external actors and geopolitical dynamics in shaping CBMs. The 2001 Indian Parliament Attack and Kargil show that global powers exert U.S. pressure on India and Pakistan to engage in CBMs, and external stabilizers can serve as positive external forces working to ameliorate dialogue between adversarial states. Nevertheless, liberal institutionalism is severely limited by the absence of long-term enforcement mechanisms by international actors, as cooperation is only sustainable if such institutional guarantees have scope effects that neither rely on external diplomatic pressure. In addition, CBMs have overall failed to withstand security crises such as the 2008 Mumbai attacks, and without strong institutional frameworks in place on the domestic level, externally initiated peace efforts are still at risk

of collapse. Despite SAARC's efforts to bring about this engagement through the mold of economic cooperation, its failure to get over political deadlock and enforce its agreements points to the not-so-insignificant challenge of a lack of regional institutions for sustaining peace.

Lessons Learned from the Musharraf Era

The Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs) of the Musharraf era that were developed on the premise of a structured approach to de-escalating the Indo-Pakistani tensions were not institutionalized enough to be sustained. Diplomatic dialogues, military agreements, and economic initiatives temporarily took that stability for granted, but at the cost of being extremely susceptible to leadership-driven goodwill; rather than being text-based. (Ghosh, 2019) When the political decline of Musharraf freed India of pressure on Kashmir, it illustrates how CBMs, which lack the leverage and impunity of legal enforcement, are unsuccessful with impunity ending with leadership changes, as argued by Chaudhuri (2020). CBMs, however, remained vulnerable to the shifting priorities of diplomacy without well-established institutionalized bodies to monitor and enforce the terms of agreements as the continuation of agreements depends on its structures to continue even with shifting priorities (Raghavan, 2018). CBM implementation within a legally recognized framework during the Musharraf era validates that sustained peace initiatives need CBMs to be deeply rooted behind a framework that is not at risk of being changed overnight based on diplomatic and security infringements.

During this period, the limitations of CBMs make it all the more fitting the need to incorporate them into a more comprehensive, proactive peace framework. The CBMs that were initiated under Musharraf were many of them reactive and were adopted as a measure to tackle crises rather than as an instrument of a long-term strategy to resolve conflicts (Singh, 2021). Although a structured diplomatic platform such as the Composite Dialogue Process (CDP) was created to address some critical issues such as Kashmir, terrorism, and trade, it relied on a

nonbinding roadmap for making peace durable (Malik, 2022). Thus, it results in the failure of the diplomatic efforts made as progress in previous CBMs if there was a security crisis like the 2008 Mumbai attacks (Sharma, 2020). The pattern illustrated here shows that CBMs remain fragile and liable to collapse in the face of increased tension unless coordinated with the next CBM if it is put into a legally binding peace framework with stipulations of a structured dispute resolution mechanism that would help to prevent the deterioration of the situation. (Mehta, 2023) Future efforts need to move away from crisis management in an ad hoc fashion to a complex peace strategy of legally enforceable agreements, well-defined and feasible crisis management protocols, and sustained involvement between the military and diplomatic levels.

However, the Musharraf era also adds a key takeaway from the economic interdependence mechanism is that it tends to promote long-lasting stability; although economic CBMs have always confronted political and structural difficulties. Both cross-border trade routes and business forums offered a real potential for economic engagement to be a stabilizing force in Indo-Pakistani relations (Taneja, 2019). Although, these initiatives did very little due to failure to remove trade barriers, non-tariff barriers (NTBs), and because of political hesitation, particularly Pakistan's reluctance to move towards granting India's Most Favored Nation (MFN) status (Ahmed, 2021). In general, such CBMs in economic areas are at risk without political commitment and security guarantees to undermine trade initiatives, which are often also vulnerable to diplomatic crises and national policy reversals. However, if for servicing peacebuilding purposes economic CBMs are to be potent as instruments, they must be protected from the volatility of politeness and supported by multilateral trade mechanisms that persist beyond such diplomatic goodwill (Basu, 2020). In addition, private sector engagement and bilateral investment agreements are given priority for the promotion of economic interdependence, and economic incentives for cooperation ought to outweigh the costs of conflict.

It is with this knowledge that the Musharraf era reconfirmed the importance of Track II diplomacy in keeping Indo-Pak relations going amidst diplomatic slumps. However, academic collaborations, cultural dialogues, and media exchanges adopted by Track-II initiatives were far more effective in overcoming bureaucracy and politics vis-à-vis official CBMs (Kapoor, 2019). Such sports diplomacy, peace conferences, and cross-border artistic collaborations by civil society proved important in challenging hostile narratives and building grassroots trust (Verma, 2022). Nevertheless, although capable, such initiatives too usually could not prise themselves away from influencing official policymaking due to nationalist rhetoric and security concerns. With this in mind, moving forward there is a need for greater institutional support for Track-II diplomacy, including the disbursement of budgeted funds for academic partnership and cultural exchange (Mukherjee, 2023). Integration of Track II diplomacy with official CBMs will enhance the chances of further peace initiatives by giving deeper societal support for SOL than agreed political deals.

The lessons from the CBMs under Musharraf are so valuable that we should institutionalize, spell out long-term peace terms, embrace economic interdependence, and turn to Track II diplomacy. Sustaining efforts at peace entail the lack of binding agreements, the lack of attachment of CBMs in a broader peace process, and the vulnerability of economic cooperation to political tension. The choices of future CBMs must be legally structured, economically incentivized, and sanctioned by means of official as well as political initiatives. Learning from this period, it is needless to say that CBMs must be pursued with a broader, multi-dimensional approach that goes beyond the restrictive limits of crisis management to promote a sustainable peace process.

The Musharraf era CBMs have demonstrated both the strengths and weaknesses of Liberalism as a doctrine of conflict resolution, especially in the perpetually adversarial relationship of Indo-Pakistani ties. Liberalism is a principle of institutionalization, a stronger institution and legally binding agreements

create conditions for sustained peace. During this time, however, it is the failure of CBMs that demonstrates the lack of institutional guarantees that would guarantee diplomatic progress irrespective of political transitions and security crises. The breakdown of back-channel diplomacy after Musharraf's reign ended, and the failure to continue the Composite Dialogue Process (CDP) in past moments of crisis management show a sense of the lack of formalized mechanisms with oversight bodies' cooperation in case is shallow and fragile. This is consistent with Keohane's (2005) 'international institution which sets the institutional framework for continuous engagement, hence lessening the possibility of reversals consequent to political changes'. Starting from now on, the Indo-Pakistani CBMs must be integrated into strong institutional structures that are going to continue irrespective of security threats or changes in leadership.

Furthermore, it will be shown that CBMs and the role of economic interdependence and Track II diplomacy to that effect fit well with the Liberal concept of a globalized world, based on transnational linkages and cooperative engagement. The liberal assumption that the creation of commercial ties involved mutual incentives for stability informed the use of economic CBMs like trade facilitation and business forums. Nevertheless, Pakistan was unwilling to grant MFN status to India, free trade relations of the country were not fully liberalized, and there persisted security concerns; all of which were in line with the Realist critique that national security preoccupations supersede economic benefits. Similarly, the argument for liberalism was shown in Track II diplomacy: people-to-people contact in the form of cultural exchanges, media collaborations, and academic dialogue which foster long-term trust and reduce animosity over time. However, these fronts were often undermined by nationalist politics and politics of opposition to state-based institutional support hindering the durability of grassroots peace efforts. Future CBMs have to be integrated with economic liberalization and Track II initiatives, in structure and multilaterally, with economic and social

cooperation continuing to be the case during periods of political stress.

Conclusion

The journey of Confidence-building measures (CBMs) between India and Pakistan has been complex, reflective of the explosive history, deep-rooted mistrust, and risky geopolitics that signify the bilateral relationship. Despite intermittent progress and countless CBMs ranging from military-to-military engagements, people-to-contact, trade initiatives, and Crisis management mechanisms real peace remains elusive. The critical analysis reveals that even as some CBMs, including the hotline between military leadership, the agreement on nuclear threat depletion, and cultural exchanges, briefly eased tensions, most tasks lacked continuity, institutional support, and a prolonged period of political will. Many efforts were reactive, launched for the duration of intervals of disaster or global strain, instead of being pushed by way of a sustained vision of reconciliation. One of the major challenges has been the asymmetry

in threat perceptions and strategic pursuits, particularly over core problems like Kashmir, cross-border terrorism, and water sharing. These unresolved disputes have frequently undermined any goodwill generated by using CBMs. Additionally, the lack of belief and frequent regime adjustments in each country have regularly caused the reversal or stagnation of development made by preceding governments. For CBMs to be actually effective, they must pass past symbolic gestures. There wishes to be a sustained and established framework supported by using each civilian and military establishment. This consists of regular talk, war resolution mechanisms, and robust backchannel diplomacy insulated from political fluctuations and media rhetoric. In conclusion, CBMs in India and Pakistan have shown ability but continue to be fully exploited due to strategic tension, political distrust, and a shortage of long-term dedication. Only through honest dialogue, mutual trust, and an honest effort to rectify contentious problems can CBMs evolve from temporary pacifiers into everlasting pillars of peace and stability in South Asia.

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