

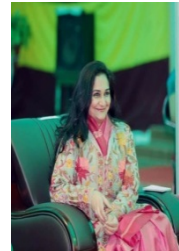


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Military Confidence Building Measures between India and Pakistan: An Analysis



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"In the interest of achieving mutually beneficial and sustainable peace along the borders, the two DGMOs agreed to address each other's core issues and concerns which have the propensity to disturb the peace and lead to violence. Both sides agreed for strict observance of all agreements, understandings and cease firing along the Line of Control and all other sectors with effect from midnight of February 24/25".

—Joint Statement by DGMOs of India and Pakistan, 26 February 2021¹

This joint statement by the Director General of Military Operations of both India and Pakistan, has certainly rekindled a ray of hope for re-initiating Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) between the two countries with a larger aim to maintain peace and stability in the South Asian region. The aim of the paper is to understand and analyse Military CBMs, their

Key Points

- The first ever military CBM- like arrangement was undertaken during the 1965 and 1971 Indo-Pak War, for instance the 'City Avoidance Strategy'.
- Military CBMs can broadly be divided into— Conventional; Communication & Information exchanges; Constraint Measures and Transparency measures.
- Dedicated hotlines are the easiest and frequently used medium of communication between the militaries of both- India and Pakistan.
- The most successful CBMs are the Nuclear CBMs.
- Establishing and maintaining a 'strategic consensus building' and practical 'confidence building measures' will help remove the trust deficit between the two countries.
- Risk reduction measures like monitoring and controlling of the conventional missiles and nuclear weapons' arms race, may boost the military CBMs.

typology, efficacy and thereafter construct a timeline in context of India and Pakistan.

What are Confidence Building Measures (CBMs)?

CBMs are varied ways and means that adversarial states can use to reduce tensions and avert the possibility of war. With the nuclearisation of the Indian subcontinent, CBMs have become even more important. These act as regulatory mechanisms for 'war prevention, war termination, war limitation, thereby enhancing the peace building mechanisms created by habits of cooperation and patterns of consistent communication between the adversaries, and ultimately establishing significant bilateral or multilateral cooperation.²

Defining CBMs is no problematic pursuit as it can be defined keeping in mind the literal meaning of the three words, "Confidence Building Measures". This implies that any action, any development, measure, arrangement or any understanding and agreement that generates confidence between adversaries could be interpreted as CBM. Its range could vary from a simple unwritten understanding between the two adversaries to a formal treaty. Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, a Pakistani political scientist, defines it as bilateral or multilateral measure that builds confidence, arrests the undesirable drift towards open hostilities, reduces tension and encourages the adversaries to make contact for negotiations without taxing too much on the operative policy outcomes.³ Kanti Bajpai sees them as investments in crisis and conflict management that may help in war termination if by chance the hostilities accentuate. They are tools of regulatory measures between states and can also be useful devices for conflict resolution.⁴ In South Asia, there appears to be a consensus in favour of 'incrementalism' with respect to CBMs— "ideally best measures are incremental that is building on earlier successes and developing and expanding on them."⁵ Therefore, incremental CBMs i.e. gradualist and consistent CBMs have greater chances of sustainability and efficacy.

CBMs can be divided broadly into two categories — formal and informal. Formal CBMs takes place at the official level with the consent of the respective governments like for instance military CBMs; whereas informal CBMs functions at the unofficial levels that is as backchannel or Track II diplomacy, for instance, the Neemrana dialogues, Chaophraya Track Two dialogues between India and Pakistan.

Military CBMs: An Overview

Military CBMs are defined as "type of arms control measures that comprise purposely designed, distinctly cooperative measures intended to help clarify the participating states military intentions, reduce uncertainties about their 'potentially threatening' military



escalations and constrain their opportunities for surprise attacks or coercive use of force i.e., as mechanisms aimed at constraining conflict.” It is a process that transforms ‘senior decision-makers’ belief about the nature of threats posed by other states, primarily entailing a shift from a basic assumption of hostile intentions to one of non-hostile intentions”.⁶

The first ever military CBM- like arrangement was followed during the 1965 and 1971 Indo-Pak War. A border dispute and subsequent skirmishes in the Rann of Kutch, in the western Indian state of Gujarat, had preceded the 1965 war in Kashmir. As the hostilities escalated, the then Air Marshal Arjan Singh called upon his Pakistani counterpart Air Marshal Ashghar Khan and reached an ‘informal agreement’ of not using their respective air forces in the open, desert-like area of Kutch. This move was done to protect the infantry, that was without any natural cover, and the mechanised armour from air strikes. Both sides honoured this agreement throughout the skirmish.⁷

A similar kind of agreement was the “*City Avoidance Strategy*”, wherein during wartime, both sides would refrain from bombing each other's population centres, dams and irrigation facilities. Though no explicit formal arrangements were made before the 1971 war, these had virtually assumed the stature of informal norms, respected by both India and Pakistan during 1971 War.⁸

Typology of Indo-Pak Military CBMs

Military CBMs can broadly be divided into the following types.

- **Conventional practices and norms.** These are unwritten, informal rules of engagement, wherein both the militaries abide by ‘unwritten conventions and practices’, like distribution of sweets amongst the border security forces during festivals like Diwali and Eid; in case of a visit of a sector level commander to the forward posts, prior intimation is given to the other side not to fire any shots.⁹
- **Communication & Information exchanges.** Such a measure helps in diffusing of tensions especially during crisis. These are to be regularly used as ‘consultative mechanisms to allow the states to put forth their grievances and therefore prevent the possibility of a crisis.’¹⁰ These transparency measures further help in reducing misunderstandings. Hotline links are a good example.
- **Constraint Measures.** These measures are designed to keep certain types and levels of states military forces at a distance from one another especially along the borders. The practice of respecting the ceasefire line during festival season is a good example of such measures.

- **Transparency Measures.** Transparency measures are engagements used to foster greater openness of the military capabilities and activities.
- **Communication Measures.** These are important initial verification steps in the confidence-building process. These involve measures like data exchanges, pre-notification of missiles tests, etc.

A timeline of Indo-Pak Military CBMs and their respective Typology is given in **Table 1** below.

Table 1: Timeline & Typology of Indo-Pak Military CBMs

Year	Military CBMs	Typology
1965	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refrain from using air force in an open desert area of the Rann of Kutch. • City Avoidance Strategy • Maritime CBMs process seen in the arbitration of the Sir Creek Boundary dispute between 1965 and 1968, which resulted in the delimitation of a line of 403 km that was demarcated later by Joint survey teams 	Conventional and Informal norms
1971	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A dedicated hotline communication link was established between the DGMOs of both the countries, to communicate important information in a short period of time. 	Communication Measures
1988	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attacking each other's nuclear installations and facilities was prohibited, including nuclear power and research reactors, fuel fabricators, uranium enricher, isotope separation and reprocessing facilities. • Agreed to share the latitudes and longitudes of all nuclear installations 	Constraint and Transparency Measures
1990	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hotline again established between the DGMOs on a weekly basis, for frequent communications. 	Communication Measures
1991	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreement on Prohibition of attack against nuclear facilities ratified and, • Sharing of information and exchange of updated list of Nuclear sites in the respective states on January 1 each year became operational. 	Communication, Constraint and Transparency Measures



1991	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Agreement on advance notifications of Military exercises, manoeuvres and troop movements was signed.• No military activity was permitted by land, naval and air force within 5km of the international border.• Notification made mandatory for exercises comprising two or more divisions.• Near LoC notification was required for any exercises involving division level or above.• At the division level, exercises were held twenty-five kilometres away from the border	Constraint, Transparency and Information Measures
1992	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attacks on nuclear facilities were prohibited. Annual exchange of lists was updated to include details of the location of nuclear facilities in both the countries.	Constraint and Transparency Measures
1992	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Agreement on prevention of airspace violations by military aircrafts was signed.• Combat aircraft (to include fighter, bomber, reconnaissance, jet military trainer and armed helicopter aircraft) will not fly within 10 kms of each other's airspace including ADIZ.• Unarmed transport and logistics aircraft including unarmed helicopters and air observation posts aircraft(AOP) permitted up to 1000 meters from each other's' airspace including ADIZ.¹¹• Aerial survey, supply dropping, and Rescue Missions, flights less than 1000 metres from each other's airspace including ADIZ will provide advance notification to their Air HQ.¹²	Constraint Measures
1992	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Accord on prohibition of the usage of chemical weapons was signed. The accord restricted the development, production and use of chemical weapons.	Constraint measure
1993	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• MoU on resumption of weekly hotline communication between DGMOs was signed	Information and Communication Measures
1998	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lahore Declaration was signed, wherein an agreement was concluded on the prevention of incidents at sea to ensure the safety of navigating naval vessels and aircrafts belonging to both countries.	Constraint Measures

1999	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As per the Lahore Declaration MoU on Ballistic Missile Flight Test, it was mandatory to provide a three-day notice prior to the commencement of a testing window. Launching from or targeting missiles within certain geographical proximity of the International Border and the LoC was prohibited, to ensure that the trajectory of the missiles neither transects nor is directed toward the same borders.¹³ 	Constraint and Information Measures
2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Informal ceasefire along LOC/AGPL was prohibited. Joint patrolling along the international border, and periodic flag meetings were made mandatory. Development of new forward posts were not allowed. 	Constraint, Information and Transparency Measures
2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bi-annual meeting between Indian Border Security Forces and Pakistani Rangers were held for the first time. 	Information and Communication Measures
2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Link between the Indian Coast Guard and the Pakistan Maritime Security Agency was established. Advance notice on Ballistic Missile tests was signed. 	Information and Transparency Measures
2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreement on reducing the risk from Nuclear weapons related accidents was signed and reaffirmed for a five-year term until 2012. 	Constraint Measures
2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indian military's announcement of observing ceasefire in Kashmir during the month of <i>Ramadan</i>, for the first time in nearly two decades. Restoring the terms of the 2003 Ceasefire Agreement. 	Constraint Measures
2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Joint Announcement by DGMOS for reverting to 2003 Ceasefire Agreement along the Line of Control. 	Constraint Measures

Source: Prepared by the Author

Analysis

As is evident from **Table 1** above, although the Indo-Pak relations have remained rather 'blotchy' for the past few years, however, the history of military CBMs over the last seventy years have shown an upward positive growth, that have stood the test of time. To prove this the following section will analyse and highlight the efficacy of such military CBMs:

- **Dedicated Hotlines.** As stated in the timeline data (Table1), a dedicated communication link/hotline was established after the 1971 Indo-Pak war between both the DGMOs. By 1990, it was re-established and used on a weekly basis—on Tuesday morning—to help in the exchange of routine information. Post the 1999 Lahore summit the usage of the hotline was increased from once a week to more frequent usage, depending on the situation. The hotlines were used to communicate information with respect to drone activities, fire control, infiltration attempts, etc. Its efficacy was proved time when the border skirmishes and standoffs were diffused by using this measure. For instance, On 13 July 2018, Lt Gen A K Bhatt, the then DGMO of the Indian Army, held an exhaustive discussion with his Pakistan counterpart, the issue of Pakistani troops "deliberately targeting" civilians and firing at school children along the LoC in Jammu and Kashmir. During a telephonic conversation, Bhatt asked Maj Gen Sahir Shamshad Mirza to exercise "strict control" over his troops and instruct them to refrain from any "nefarious activities".¹⁴ Such hotlines are also present at four more border posts— Poonch-Rawalakot Sector, Tangdhar Sector, Uri Sector and Mandher Sector. They are supervised by the Company Commanders of the respective units and whenever any infringement takes place in the vicinity of LoC, it is settled immediately between the local sector-level commanders.¹⁵ Therefore, regular and frequent use of hotline helps in keeping the contact alive and eliminates the elements of secrecy in military activities.
- **Nuclear Issues.** Military CBMs reflect a 'disproportionate' emphasis on nuclear issues, since they act as deterrence measures. The efficacy of Nuclear CBMs has been proved by the fact that, for the last twenty-nine years, since its inception, the annual exchange of data has been taking place every year on January 1, however both the countries are yet to reach an agreement with respect to the definition of 'nuclear facilities'. Another example showing a glimmer of hope for progress in nuclear transparency is that in 1998, despite animosities being worsened by reciprocal nuclear weapon tests, Indian and Pakistani representatives worked jointly on nuclear safety issues within the Regional Co-operative Agreement for Research, Development and Training in Nuclear Science and Technology in Asia and the Pacific (RCA) framework of the IAEA. Historically, many Indian and Pakistani cooperative agreements have been actively pursued and have survived the tumultuous course of the past five decades.¹⁶
- **Joint Declaration on Chemical Weapons.** The joint declaration on chemical weapons and its implementation is 'not up to the mark' as when the lists were

submitted, India did not mention its complete facilities and stockpiles when it joined the Chemical Weapons Convention, and Pakistan did not even join the Convention.¹⁷

- **Conflict Resolution.** There needs to be some level of basic trust between India and Pakistan for operationalising CBMs— maintaining and sustaining them truthfully and comprehensively. These must be applied at the ground level also. A consistent negotiating channel will help create an enabling environment for moving a step closer to the resolution of conflicts.
- **Military Exercise.** Military CBMs establish the ‘ground rules for a military exercise to avoid the outbreak of an accidental conflict’. But notifying the other side of military exercises in advance, has not been followed many times. For instance, many division level exercises were not pre-notified and even if they were, full details of the same was not provided, as was seen in the Brass-tacks Indian Military Exercise (1987) and the Zarb-e Momin Pakistan Military Exercise (1989).¹⁸
- **Airspace Agreement.** The airspace agreement on prevention of airspace violations (1991) has been violated many times in the Siachen region, wherein aggressive clashes occurred often. Many times, helicopters, drones, unmanned aircrafts have been shot down if they crossed the LoC— latest report being of 24 Oct 2020 when a Pakistani quadcopter was shot down by the Indian Army in J&K’s Keran Sector.¹⁹

The Military CBMs have proved to be more pragmatic than mere idealistic in their approach and functioning, as is evident from the recent statement of the DGMOs which has set the ball rolling for other military and diplomatic measures to follow suit. The next step was the brigade commander level flag meeting at Poonch -Rawalkot Crossing Point, which was held on 26 March 2021, that upheld the agreement to observe ceasefire along the LoC and all sectors. The Indian Army Chief General M M Naravane remarked that, the LoC has been silent for the first time in around five to six years. That really boards well for the future.²⁰

As long as both the militaries remain committed to the ceasefire, no untoward incident is likely to happen. Hence, unlike non-military CBMs which lacks proper implementation, military CBMs, despite their limitations, has been successful in avoiding an all-out war between the two countries.²¹

Figure 1: File photograph of a flag meeting in Poonch sector between Indian and Pakistani Army



Source: Photo: PTI Frontline (2015)

Recommendations and Takeaways

Trust is the single most factor in building confidence between the militaries of both India and Pakistan. A few recommendations for the way ahead are enumerated below:

- Establish and maintain a ‘strategic consensus building’ to remove the trust deficit. This could be achieved by maintaining a strategic dialogue mechanism as a channel for institutional exchanges and engagements to share relevant information on military security. For instance, a joint border management approach by means of a joint military inspection team along the borders and the ceasefire line, can help in reducing the trust deficit. Any border skirmishes on either side should be settled by the militaries bilaterally, and both the countries should ‘refrain from politicising the issue’, as this will only escalate the tension.
- Some additional CBMs as suggested by Air Commodore Jasjit Singh, entails adopting a ‘Politico-military doctrine of non-provocative defence’, which is a natural corollary of the Simla Agreement, the UN charter and the doctrine of Panchsheel enunciated.
 - The two armies should ‘remove their artillery guns, deployed near LoC’ to positions that are out of the range of the LoC, to avoid unnecessary panic situations.



- Both countries should 'jointly sign conventions' to outlaw the use and threat of use of nuclear weapons or capabilities; chemical/biological weapons or capabilities; ballistic missiles.
 - Agree on areas of 'zero deployment' in conflict-prone zones and gradually the army could move away from the LoC.²²
- A regular bilateral military delegation exchange meeting between the two countries should be undertaken.
- Focus on 'practical confidence-building measures' in areas such as conflict prevention, misperception, and damage limitation in case of a conflict. Otherwise, the chances of inadvertent or accidental use of nuclear weapons could increase, which has the potential to cause 'Nuclear Armageddon' in the region.²³ However, Pakistan support to terrorism and proxy war in Kashmir remains a stumbling block towards building confidence and trust.
- Another risk reduction measure which could give a boost to the military CBMs is the exploration of the possibility of 'monitoring and controlling' the conventional, missiles and nuclear weapons arms race.
- A possible 'arms control regime' which does not undermine the military security arrangements and creates greater openness in military matters, would be in the interest of both India and Pakistan. Maybe negotiating bilateral arms control with Pakistan for instance can be the start point, but however, the concerns of the Indian Security Forces vis-a vis China, should also be taken into consideration in this mechanism and thought process.
- Another risk avoiding measure in the context of force limitation zone, is to establish a bilateral agreement on the force limitation zone along the common border area. This would lower armament levels in the forward positions and eliminate the threat of surprise attack, thereby reducing the danger of miscalculation, risks of a surprise armed attack and therefore the triggering of major offensive operation. For instance, during the 2002 military standoff between India and Pakistan, India shifted its forces from Eastern Command to Western Command, to increase the intensity of its coercive diplomacy. The week-long mobilisation undermined the element of surprise in the making and operationalisation of the strategy. The 2002 parallel troop withdrawal from the common border area eased tensions and consequently, full diplomatic ties and transportation links were restored between New-Delhi and Islamabad, resulting in a ceasefire at the Siachen Glacier and the LoC.²⁴



The credit for the thaw in Indo - Pak relations has to be given to both the countries' militaries, but one must not forget that back-channel diplomacy had laid the ground for the formal CBMs to restart. The military CBMs will always remain necessary as both countries continue to exhibit coercive strategic behaviour and carry out provocative troop movements and military exercises near the 'tense' borders.²⁵ The political and security realities of the Indian and Pakistani strategic environment demand a realistic, long term and holistic approach, for successful implementation of military CBMs.

End Notes

¹ "India, Pakistan agree to follow ceasefire pacts, stop cross border firing along LoC", *The Times of India*, 26 February 2021. Accessible at http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/81211368.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppt. Accessed on 28 March 2021.

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¹⁹ Posted by Arpan Rai, "Kupwara, Jammu and Kashmir", *Asian News International*, updated on 24 Oct 2020. Accessible at <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/pakistan-quadcopter-shot-down-by--indian-army-in-jammu-and-kashmir-s-keran-sector/story-LTwYS2WrpqCQq8mov7SONM.html>. Accessed on 31 March 2021.

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