

CHALLENGES TO SOUTH ASIAN SECURITY - APPROACHING THE 21ST CENTURY

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Today, security is not only a major challenge to the constituent nation-states of South Asia but also for the South Asian region. The emerging threats after the end of the Cold War transcend the territorial boundaries of the nation-state. The phenomena of globalization - increase in porosity of the boundaries, enhanced communication, rapid movement and migration of people, free flow of information and greater access to lethal technology - has added a new dimension to security, forcing the security planners to think afresh. No individual nation-state can protect its security without contributing to the security of its neighbour, if not the region. This presentation will focus on four areas - historical overview, trends and threats, prognosis, and policy options.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

At the end of the twentieth century, South Asia ranks among the most insecure geographic regions in the world.¹ South Asia is a region of a billion people where a fifth of the world's population live. By year 2025, the population of India will exceed the population of China. Although South Asia is the fastest growing region even exceeding South East Asia, it is also a region of poverty and corruption. While more US companies have invested in India during the past 12 months as compared to the past 40 years, over 50% of the youth in South

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¹ Mervyn G. Weinbaum, "Security Regimes in South Asia: Definitions and Priorities" in Marvin G. Weinbaum and Chetan Kumar, eds., *South Asia Approaches the Millennium - Reexamining National Security*, (Boulder: Westview, 1995) p. 1.