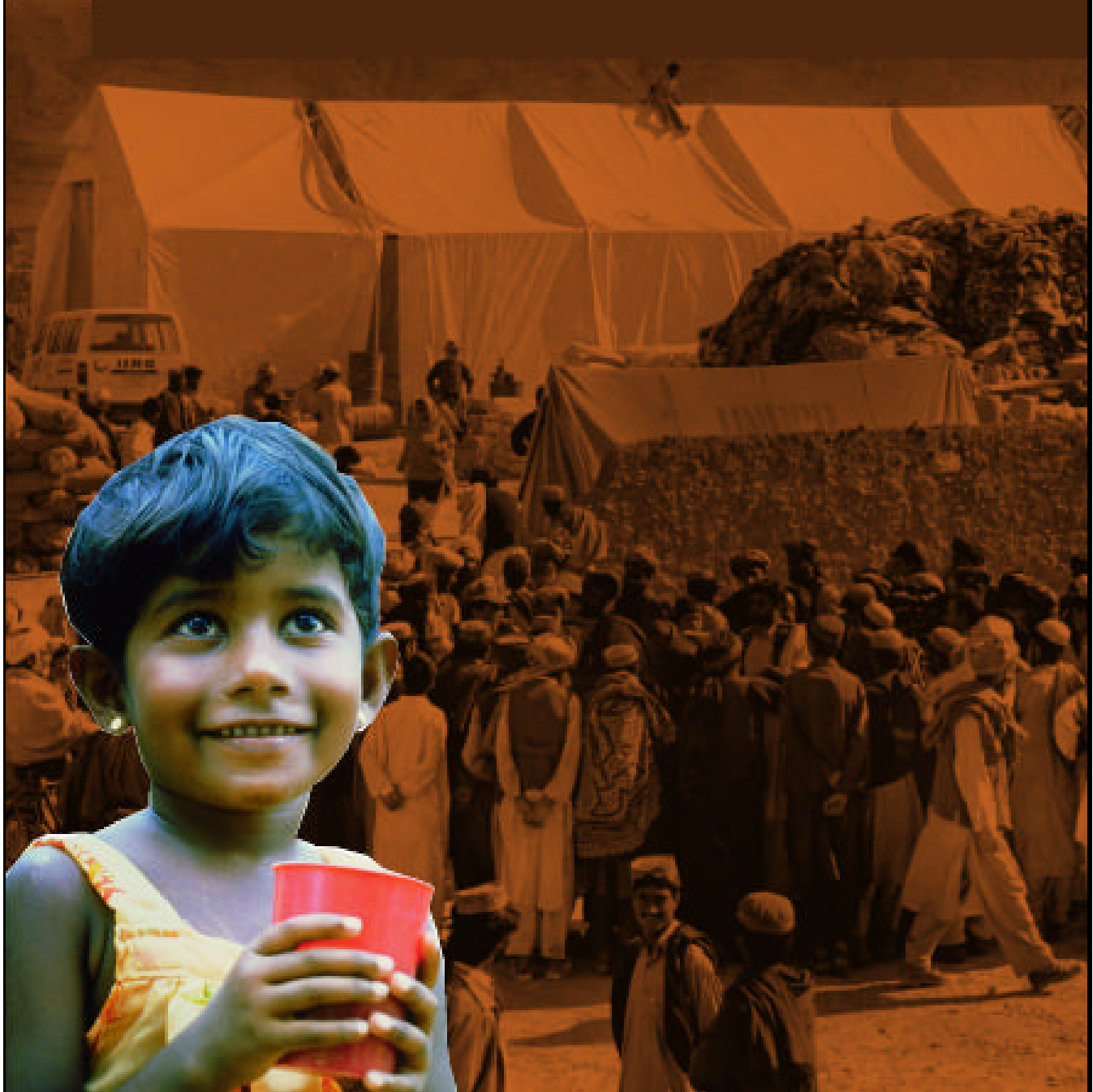# South Asia in the World

*Problem Solving Perspectives
on Security, Sustainable Development,
and Good Governance*

Edited by Ramesh Thakur and Oddny Wiggen

South Asia in the world: Problem solving perspectives on security, sustainable development, and good governance

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Introduction: South Asia's manifold challenge to the international community

Ramesh Thakur and Oddny Wiggen

The concept of "the international community", if it is to have practical meaning and encapsulate the notion of "solidarity without borders" instead of being an empty slogan, must come to terms with the multitude and gravity of the challenges confronting the peoples and nations of South Asia (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka). The scale of the problems faced in the region and the numbers of people involved are so huge that success or failure in South Asia pose defining challenges to the core mandates of the United Nations as the global arena for problem-solving. South Asia by itself accounts for one-fifth of "We the peoples of the United Nations". Developments in South Asia cut across the major faultlines of the UN system with respect to the challenges of economic development, environmental protection, food and water security, democratic governance and human rights, nuclear war and peace, inter-state and internal conflicts, and new security issues such as AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome) and international terrorism. What happens in South Asia will surely shape the contours of the global community in the decades ahead.

Two of the central purposes of the United Nations as expressed in the UN Charter – to maintain international peace and security and to promote social and economic advancement – make it imperative for the organization to address these issues in South Asia. The United Nations University (UNU), in collaboration with the UN agencies in Japan, organized an international conference in May 2002 on "The United

Nations and South Asia''. UNU in Tokyo is particularly well suited as a forum for discussing these issues as the major UN agencies are located in its headquarters building in Tokyo, ''UN House''. The South Asian embassies in Japan offered their support for the conference and collaborated in its organization. The conference was well timed in that 2002 marked the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations with Japan by India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. But it was ill timed in that on that date India and Pakistan were in the middle of the biggest and most tense mobilization of their full military mights along the full length of their border. Yet, by presenting a forum for communication between different actors within the various sectors, the conference helped to alleviate the substantial lack of interaction and thus contributed to improved efforts at addressing the problems in South Asia.

The chapters in this volume are revised versions of the papers presented at that conference. Their emphasis is on discussing issues of particular relevance to the region and exploring the potential for improvement in both domestic and international efforts at alleviating the problems of South Asia. If and where appropriate, the role that the United Nations can play in this respect is also underscored.

One of the more interesting features of this volume is the divergence of cultures and writing styles of the scholars and the practitioners (officials, politicians, generals). Academics are addicted to notes, whereas practitioners are allergic to them. Many academics have to be reined in so that their contributions form chapters in a book instead of mini-tomes in themselves, whereas some practitioners have to be coaxed into extending their brief vignettes to a length and intellectual weight suitable for publication by a university press. Two of the UNU's five mandated tasks are to serve as a bridge between the normally isolated worlds of scholarship and policy and to serve as a platform for dialogue.[1] This volume is testimony to the need for dialogue not only between participants from the different nations and societies of a deeply divided region of the world, but also between the different professional cultures in the modern world.

Overviews

Former prime minister of India, I. K. Gujral, expresses the hope that the recent international interest in South Asia is not temporary and based solely on the threat of terrorism and nuclearization, but rather reflects a realization that the world community cannot be safe or happy unless it involves the billion-plus people of South Asia in the critical decisions regarding peace, security and development. According to Gujral, the most serious current challenge facing South Asia is terrorism. But the fight

against terrorism cannot be won by force alone. It is of course necessary to fight the jihadi culture. But, even without jihad, there would still be manifestations of terrorism in all South Asian countries in the form of insurgency movements. Therefore there is an urgent need to address the root causes of terrorism, such as lack of good governance, low levels of human development, and new threats such as drug trafficking and the spread of AIDS. Although the main responsibility for the problems and their resolution lies with the South Asian countries, the region has not been brought into the global developmental mainstream by the international community. The international community needs a peaceful, co-operative and dynamic South Asia; it is in its interest to facilitate this. Gujral sees great potential for development in South Asia in the fields of science and technology, as well as in traditional industries such as chemicals, pharmaceuticals, heavy industries, steel and electronics. For this potential to be realized, however, regional cooperation is necessary. India, as the leading power, can afford to be accommodative to promote such cooperation.

Sartaj Aziz, while calling for a comprehensive programme to reduce poverty in South Asia, also asks for UN action to reduce tension between the region's two nuclear powers. There is an urgent need to accelerate the pace of economic and social progress in the region and to meet the challenges of globalization. The United Nations must assume and discharge its responsibility to focus on the inequalities of the globalization process and regain a leadership role in providing a level playing field. Nor can the international community continue to overlook the security problems in the region. International assistance is needed to fight terrorism and extremism in the region as well as to stabilize Afghanistan. At the same time, Aziz calls for the United Nations to curb "liberal imperialism", that is, the notion that the so-called "postmodern" world can use force, pre-emptive attack or even deception to violate international boundaries with impunity.

Peace and security

An immediate concern of the international community is the region's impact on international peace and security. South Asia poses many potential threats to regional and global peace and security: it has two nuclear powers engaged in a major territorial dispute; there are several dominant insurgency conflicts here; terrorism is pronounced; and the refugee situation has the potential to be deeply destabilizing. There are also significant cross-regional linkages with respect to relations with China (one of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council),

Central Asia (and Russia beyond), the Middle East and South-East Asia. How can domestic and international efforts at resolving conflicts in the region be improved?

Inter-state conflict

Since the end of the Cold War, the global pattern of conflict has shifted from inter-state to intra-state conflicts (many of which have transnational regional links), yet one of the remaining potential inter-state conflicts is found in South Asia. The situation is aggravated by the fact that the two potential belligerents are armed with nuclear-armed weapons. Whereas the stability of the nuclear deterrence between the superpowers during the Cold War was itself somewhat suspect, the relationship between Pakistan and India is qualitatively different and even more volatile (see Thakur, 2000). The two countries share a long border, which allows little time to decide whether to ''use or lose'' nuclear weapons in response to a perceived threat. Furthermore, Pakistan and India are involved in a territorial dispute over Kashmir. This dispute has already resulted in two wars between the countries and the possibility of armed conflict has not yet been eliminated. Neither country has second-strike retaliatory capability, which makes both of them more vulnerable to a pre-emptive strike than was the case between the superpowers during the Cold War. South Asia's relationship with and ties to neighbouring countries also have implications for the involvement of the international community in the region. A complicating element is India's disputed border with China, a third nuclear power with tangible interests in the region. Resurgence of Islamic fundamentalism in the region is also a cause for concern for regional stability. The disruptive nature of this potential conflict is exacerbated by domestic political volatility in all South Asian countries. It is imperative for the United Nations to contribute to a de-escalation of this conflict in order to maintain international peace and security.

Stephen Cohen cautions that, in light of the failure of past predictions, it is impossible to predict future use of nuclear weapons by India and Pakistan with any confidence. It is likely that the future will look much like the current situation – a stable relationship between China and India and a rocky one between India and Pakistan, but with innate common sense or external mediation preventing an outbreak of nuclear conflict. However, Cohen also acknowledges the large number of political and military variables that might affect possible outcomes with regard to the nuclear future of South Asia, only some of which can be influenced or controlled by outside powers. He offers two suggestions: the international community should assist in managing crises; and security planners in the region should avoid overconfidence in deterrence and keep their arsenals

low so as to reduce the scale of the catastrophe if there should be a regional war.

Echoing many of the same themes, Christophe Carle emphasizes that the future security of South Asia depends on the relationship between Pakistan and India; the other security threats of the region pale in comparison. He points to the elements of instability in the subcontinent's nuclear deterrence. Contiguity undermines the development of effective and reliable command and control systems and, with ballistic missiles, decision-making time may be reduced to 5–10 minutes. The nuclearization of South Asia and the inherent volatility of the nuclear equation in the region mean that external actors, particularly the United States, have become increasingly important. Thus South Asian (in)security has been internationalized.

Intra-state conflict and transnational linkages

Most of the countries in South Asia have insurgency movements. The level of violence is variable, but several of these conflicts have been classified as high intensity. The separatist Tamil Tiger movement in Sri Lanka is one example, where an ethnic group seeks territorial withdrawal from the state entity. The Kashmir dispute feeds on and exacerbates political instability in both India and Pakistan. India faces further challenges in its north-eastern regions. The Maoist movement in Nepal impedes effective government in a similar way, and over the past few years commentators have expressed concern about the possible Talibanization of Pakistan. With these threats to political stability and territorial integrity, South Asia remains a region with a high potential for violence and conflict. How can the international community contribute to the peaceful settlement of these disputes? And what can be done domestically to defuse these conflicts?

Nepal has been much in the news in the past couple of years or so, in part because of the palace massacre of the royal family, but mainly because of the ferocity and intractability of the Maoist insurgency. Lok Raj Baral's chapter illustrates the close link between intra-state and inter-state conflicts. He points to the transnational elements of the conflict in Nepal, noting that India is often dragged into domestic issues in Nepal, a landlocked Himalayan kingdom sandwiched between two Asian giants with porous and open borders. Weakened states and enfeebled political institutions and leaderships are increasingly incapable of dealing with domestic crises in South Asia, which, in turn, breed inter-state conflicts. Cross-country migration and refugee flows, as well as the issue of treatment of one's own nationals in neighbouring countries, have the potential to trigger inter-state conflict. Conflicts occur over the exploitation of

natural resources such as Nepal's water, and over transit rights for a poor and small country seeking an outlet to the sea for its products. There are also challenges with respect to new security issues such as trafficking in drugs and women.

The insurgency in Sri Lanka has been going on for much longer and is also more ferocious: it is the Tamil Tigers, after all, who introduced and perfected the gruesome art of suicide terrorism. Kingsley de Silva notes that South Asia's record of violence in public life is unusual even compared with other post-colonial states. One special feature is the high number of public figures assassinated. Rajiv Gandhi was killed on Indian soil but in the context of Sri Lanka's bitter civil war. The Kashmir conflict has clearer external factors in its origin than Sri Lanka's but, once the conflict in Sri Lanka erupted and persisted, it was prolonged largely because of Indian intervention. In the Kashmir conflict, terrorism became a distinctive factor in the mid-1980s. The two principal protagonists remain inflexibly resistant to any change in their attitude on this issue. In Sri Lanka the Tamil movement was transformed from a relatively peaceful one until the 1960s into an extraordinarily violent struggle with regional ramifications in the 1980s. Assassinations and suicide bombings became central means of terror. Once terrorism becomes a major factor in the political struggle, de Silva notes, the prospects of negotiating a settlement become all the more difficult. A similar central trait is the marginalization of the so-called moderates.

It is argued by some that the major locus of international terrorism has shifted to South Asia. Terrorist acts are committed in relation to both internal and inter-state conflicts, and the level of violence is alarming. Allegations are also frequently made that governments may support cross-border terrorism to undermine neighbouring states. The phrase "aid, abet and harbour" terrorists has entered the international policy-making agenda since 11 September 2001. How can terrorism be curbed; how can domestic and international actors work to decrease terrorist violence? Is terrorism a purely security problem with no significant political dimensions? Can the challenge of "political terrorism" be met without addressing the fundamental political issues that may underlie it?

Peacekeeping

If South Asia poses a challenge to international peace and security, it is also true that the region contributes strongly to the UN efforts at peacekeeping. The chapters by Lieutenant General Satish Nambiar and Brigadier-General Syed Roomy must be read in the context of three of the world's top four UN peacekeepers being currently from South Asia: Bangladesh, Pakistan and India. Of the total of 44,715 military observers,

civilian police and military troops involved in UN peacekeeping operations (PKOs) in July 2001, 12,590 (28 per cent) were from South Asian countries. As of March 2002, Bangladesh was the biggest contributor to UN PKOs, Pakistan was in second place, India third and Nepal eleventh. What accounts for their continued commitment to UN peace operations in the light of the marked reluctance of some Western countries to accept the burden of UN peacekeeping?[2] South Asian countries contribute with unique and useful skills, for example the Indian army's experience in counter-insurgency operations. Are there wider lessons to be drawn from their experience in peacekeeping operations? One might be improved cooperation on training and perhaps institutional cooperation in the future. In the light of the contributions by South Asia to the United Nations and the size and importance of the region, one may ask also if South Asia has gained the influence in international forums that it ought to have. The generals call for adherence to recommendations from the Brahimi Report on UN Peace Operations, especially that troop-contributing countries must be involved in decision-making on mandates for missions. In addition, though, should South Asia have permanent representation on the Security Council (see Krishnasamy, 2001)?

Social and economic advancement

South Asia is home to about a quarter of the world's population, but has 43 per cent of the world's poor and accounts for only 2 per cent of the world's gross domestic product. The region is characterized by poverty, illiteracy and low life expectancy.[3] It does not compare well even by developing-country standards, let alone global benchmarks (see Table 1.1). The region has experienced improvement in all the main indicators, but with large geographical differences. What can the United Nations and the respective governments do, and how can efforts both domestically and internationally be improved to foster growth and development? How can population control be practised in a humane and ethical way and in conformity with religious beliefs, precepts and practices?

Hafiz Pasha points out that the absolute number of poor in South Asia has remained stable at about 400 million, despite economic growth in the region. He calls therefore for pro-poor policies to ensure ''growth with equity'' as the way to achieve poverty reduction in South Asia. From a UN point of view, further economic growth in South Asia is necessary in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals of reducing the incidence of global poverty by half the 1990s level by 2015. Poverty reduction hinges on reducing inequality through targeted pro-poor policies. However, economic growth is necessary but not by itself sufficient to im-

Table 1.1 South Asia in the world, 2000

	GDP/ capita (US$)	Adult illiteracy (%)	Life expectancy (years)	Population growth, 1975–2000 (% per annum)
World	7,446	–	66.9	1.6
Developing countries	3,783	26.3	64.7	1.9
South Asia	2,404	44.4	62.9	2.1

Source: UNDP (2002).

plement such policies. An improved level of governance would facilitate the adoption of such policies by helping to protect the general public's interests rather than being hostage to vested interests. To achieve the targets for poverty reduction in South Asia, pro-poor policies will have to be implemented at all levels: global (Official Development Assistance targeted at South Asia, and trade restrictions relaxed), regional (regional cooperation for peace, growth of trade and development of infrastructure), national (reconciliation processes, improved investment climate, better governance) and local (governance reforms, social mobilization). Nevertheless, a word of caution may be in order. Decades of supposedly pro-poor policies in India produced outcomes of rapid poverty multiplication, not poverty eradication. How do we distinguish rhetoric from substance in pro-poor policies, taking care to eschew one while promoting the other?

East Asia has often been held up as providing examples of successful state-directed or managed development. By contrast, South Asia has been a notable example of the failures of *dirigisme*. Now, in part under the influence of the "Washington consensus" on economic orthodoxy,[4] even South Asian countries are trying to embrace the market and engage with the international economy. At the same time, and in the opposite direction, they face pressures to adjust to the reality of globalization even as it has come under attack from critics.[5] The benefits or penalties of globalization raise further questions of how to alleviate poverty and promote rapid growth in South Asia. How can the need to liberalize in a global market be balanced with the need to protect economic sovereignty and policy autonomy, safeguard vulnerable industrial/manufacturing sectors, or quarantine cultural icons from baleful external influences?

Farooq Sobhan and Riffat Zaman point out that an immense opportunity exists in South Asia for a leap towards higher growth and welfare through expansion in trade and investment. But the countries of the region are constrained by inadequate access to finance for investment, a huge debt burden and current account deficits. Their share of official international trade is small, and trade among South Asian countries is still

more meagre. They suffer from an increasing trade deficit. They need to focus on trade, investment and technology. The role of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) will be crucial in the liberalization of intra-regional trade. SAARC cannot be an efficient organization unless and until all its members participate with full vigour on the same wavelength. In order to facilitate South Asian cooperation, a development mechanism needs to be in operation with effective regulatory bodies, well-functioning infrastructure and the determination of governments and civil society to carry forward a coordinated development strategy. In this context the utilization of power, water resources, transport and communications, pan-Asian highways, ports, capital markets, financial intermediaries and so on could promote trade and investment for development in South Asia.

Democratization, governance and human rights

When addressing these problems, the system of government is an integral part of the debate. South Asia has been central to the worldwide debate on bread versus liberty, and indeed on whether the choice is a false dichotomy. Arguments against the efficacy of democracy as a vehicle for sustainable growth within a framework of good governance in impoverished nations have been made for decades. In the South Asian context, there are two schools: one that holds that democracy in a liberal sense is not appropriate for South Asia, while the other (notably from the West) holds that democracy is not viable in unstable societies. India is the world's largest democracy, but is this necessarily the most efficient form of government for dealing with the low level of development in South Asia? Similarly, to meet the challenges posed by the ethnically heterogeneous South Asian states, does a strong central government or a decentralized political structure allow for more self-government? Is a secular state or a state asserting a religious identity better suited to face the problems of this region? Given experience elsewhere in the world, and given the size of the countries in South Asia, will the establishment and consolidation of institutions for protecting human rights in the countries of the region be a threat to or a safeguard for national integration?

Gautam Adhikari evaluates democracy in four states: Afghanistan (which has no democratic tradition and will depend on external assistance and security presence), Bangladesh (which is firmly on a democratic path but suffers from a lack of resources and should be externally supported), Pakistan (which because of prolonged and repeated spells of military rule has never had a sustained opportunity to develop democracy) and India (which is a democracy but ought to improve transparency

and accountability and decentralize). Afghanistan and Pakistan should be subjected to international pressure for incremental democratic nation-building; India and Bangladesh are democratic but need to improve their governance. Both Bangladesh and India are liberalizing their economies and decentralizing the polity. Adhikari argues that the international community should support transitions instead of dismissing democracy as irrelevant for stability with growth.

Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu believes that the problem of governance in South Asia stems in large measure from the failure to acknowledge social diversity and embed it in political and constitutional structures. This gives rise to and sustains a crisis of state legitimacy. Applying this to Sri Lanka specifically, he endorses the federal solution proposed in the peace talks in Sri Lanka as a tool for stability within social diversity. This has to be buttressed by an overarching political culture, as well as protection and strengthening of the electoral process, the media, multi-party democracy, the role and responsibility of civil society, and checks and balances on the exercise of authority. Perhaps most importantly, in order to substitute politics for violence, there is a need to provide effective political channels for articulating social grievances.

Environmental impacts and security

The economic development of South Asia can be closely linked to concerns about the degree of environmental degradation. Three major drivers behind this can be readily identified: a very high population growth rate, coupled with a lack of appropriate infrastructure; somewhat unfettered industrial growth without due environmental considerations; and major demographic shifts, including intense urbanization. Other factors, in particular poverty and lack of education, further exacerbate the impacts on the environment. Not without coincidence, these environmental impacts also adversely affect livelihoods and the availability of natural resources, forming a vicious cycle of destruction. Examples include exploitation of fisheries beyond the rate of replenishment, destruction of mangrove forests and the natural bounty contained therein, and pollution of river systems by urban and industrial wastes. In addition to affecting ecosystems and economic infrastructure, adverse environmental impacts also have very serious consequences for the health of people living in this region. The number of people suffering from poisoning by arsenic and fluoride is staggering. Air pollution in South Asia's congested cities is cited as a major cause of respiratory and cancer-related diseases. Access to clean drinking water remains a major challenge for this region.

Zafar Adeel and Awais Piracha review the current situation of human and economic development in South Asia, which is critically linked to the stresses on and depletion of environmental resources. With the help of a case-study of Punjab Province in Pakistan, they demonstrate that the environmental problems faced by the region are a result not of high levels of resource use or industrialization but of population pressure. They provide a summary of the available policy perspectives and set the stage for Adil Najam's discussion of environmental security issues. Najam draws five lessons from South Asia:

1. environment and security are best conceptualized within the context of sustainable development;
2. the challenge of environment and security in South Asia is principally a challenge at the domestic, even local, level, but it is a challenge common to the region;
3. institutions and governance are a bigger problem than resource endowments or geography;
4. the prospects of inter-state violence in South Asia over environmental issues are slim, but they can add to tensions and perpetuate distrust;
5. there is a small potential for a new generation of security relations in the region emerging around the nexus of environment and security that is based on the principles of mutual trust, harmony and cooperation rather than on legacies of distrust and dispute.

In fact the last point is taken up by Ashok Swain, who argues that, as a result of human-induced environmental destruction, the world is witnessing a sharp reduction in the availability of arable land, forests, fresh water, clean air and fisheries. The adverse effect of pollution on these scarce resources is worsened by the growing demand for them. The unequal distribution of these resources further complicates the situation. The outcome can be conflict. Nevertheless new research is pointing out that in some cases environmental scarcity might result in cooperation. Swain examines this with respect to two case-studies: the Indus River agreement of 1960 between India and Pakistan; and the Ganges River agreement of 1996 between India and Bangladesh. In both cases, despite volatile relationships between the countries, agreements on water-sharing have worked. The positive spillover effects of environmental cooperation are possible only if the state institutions are prepared and willing to take advantage of it. A democratically elected legitimate political authority will be more likely to provide a conducive atmosphere for the spread and sustenance of cooperation originating from environmental issues. This accounts for the success of the Ganges Agreement and the failure of the Indus Treaty.

Refugees

Of a total of more than 21 million ''refugees and others of concern to UNHCR'', South Asia has 3,030,562, or 14 per cent.[6] In view of current developments, this number may increase significantly. Neighbouring regions have similar or worse refugee situations, which may in turn exacerbate the problem in South Asia. Refugee flows are a destabilizing trait domestically, and since the 1990s the problem has increasingly been considered a threat to international peace and security and as such of particular interest to the United Nations. Similarly, there have been disputes over migration, such as when India tried to limit migration from Bangladesh. How do the United Nations and the respective states address refugee issues in South Asia, and how can this be done in a constructive and stabilizing way?

Regional cooperation

Another facet of these problems is the implications for regional security. As natural resources are over-exploited, increasing population pressures may lead to transboundary conflicts. This is most obvious for the sharing of water resources, and *inter alia* energy resources, in this region. The challenge for international organizations remains how to solve these problems in an integrated manner while promoting economic growth and development.

South Asia needs a regional identity and rationality. Niaz Naik laments the fact that South Asia remains mired in conflicts and tension. He lists the varied sources of instability: inter-state conflict, internal instability, terrorism, drug trafficking, clandestine arms sale, migration, trafficking in women and children, and the spread of HIV/AIDS. Regional cooperation is necessary to face the multidimensional threat to security in South Asia. Since the Male Summit in 1997, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) has addressed pivotal issues such as fostering mutual trust, conflict resolution, promoting good-neighbourly relations and confidence-building. But, in light of the experience of other regional organizations, Naik concludes that the absence of an institutionalized security mechanism has hindered South Asian regional stability. He warns that South Asia is at a crossroads: ''either it can pursue a path of purposeful cooperation based on peace, development and reconciliation, or it can sink deeper into the abyss of hopeless poverty, deprivation, disease and illiteracy, resulting in the gradual erosion of the very core of our ancient societies.''

Nihal Rodrigo acknowledges the existence of two extreme views of

SAARC: it is ineffectual and incapable of responding to the challenges facing South Asia: or, as the only functioning intergovernmental organization in South Asia, it can contribute to peace and stability in the region and help cooperation among its member states. A realistic assessment falls somewhere between these extremes, he believes. Although criticized and unable to accomplish much in the three years preceding the Kathmandu Summit in 2002, the institutional framework of SAARC has facilitated closer South Asian interaction in a number of arenas. And Rodrigo notes that closer relations among the seven South Asian countries and effective regional cooperation are bound together symbiotically.

Human insecurity in South Asia

In many ways, environmental pressures and refugees stand at the intersection of national and human security (as shown, for example, by the sudden flare-up of tension between India and Bangladesh in February 2003 over the subject of ''illegal immigrants''). Regional cooperation within the SAARC framework has proven problematical within traditional, state-based and territorially grounded ''national security''; it may fare better with respect to de-territorialized and de-nationalized ''human security''.

   Manzoor Ahmed discusses the concept of human security from the perspective of children and women in South Asia. South Asia scores badly on human development indicators, even compared with developing countries. The situation is especially grave for women and children with respect to education, health care, access to clean water and sanitation, and basic protection from threats to human existence. To improve the situation, effective and accountable governance and a redistribution of resources are required. For example, at present India spends 70 per cent more on defence and debt service than on the social sector. Ahmed recommends a prioritization of women and children politically, partnerships between different actors for social and development services, decentralization to improve governance, greater use of the legal system to promote the rights of the disadvantaged, higher priority to education, and regional cooperation. He also identifies possible roles for the United Nations in this process – as the forum for international consensus on goals for children and women, for raising awareness and for setting moral and legal norms; cooperation with countries on plans and action; and promotion of the role of civil society.

   Santosh Mehrotra takes up in a more focused way the question of whether the worst malnutrition is linked to the worst gender discrimination in the world. Half of the world's malnourished children are to be

found in just three countries: Bangladesh, India and Pakistan. Child malnutrition cannot be reversed as the child grows, and it is both a symptom and a cause of poverty. South Asia has the worst record on all three indices of malnutrition: under-weight, stunting and wasting. In developing countries, on average 29 per cent of children are under-weight; in South Asia the figure is 49 per cent. The record is similarly bad for women, as indicated by lower height and body mass index. To counteract this, Mehrotra suggests that public distribution networks for food must be improved and loss through spoilage in warehouse storage reduced. Also, given the skewed food allocation within households, which discriminates against women and children, school feeding programmes must be set up and health care for pregnant women and infants must be improved.

Taking up the same theme, Rekha Datta identifies child labour and the lack of rights for self-employed women as major human security threats in South Asia. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are the primary agencies addressing issues of human security. She elaborates on a case-study of the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA), a trade union movement of sorts providing access to resources, capital, knowledge- and skill-building, use of technology, health care, savings for capital and for security, and literacy. SEWA has been at the forefront of NGO efforts for human security, silently changing women's lives. It has also had considerable policy impact – for instance, the Gujarat government recognized self-employed women as labourers – and, on an international level, SEWA has cooperated with the International Labour Organization (ILO). Datta concludes that, to improve human security, grass-roots activism must be integrated with policy-making on national, regional and global levels.

''9/11'', Afghanistan and South Asia

Afghanistan has been a historical gateway to South Asia and a playing-cum-killing field for imperialistic great games in the region. Its security problems demonstrate only too graphically and tragically how national and human insecurity can in fact intersect and feed off each other. The terrorist attacks on US targets on 11 September 2001 (''9/11'') provoked a massive US-led attack on the Taliban regime of Afghanistan. In discussing the implications of that, Samina Ahmed argues that continued conflict in Afghanistan will destabilize South Asia. Conversely, a pacified Afghanistan will promote regional stability, reduce the threat of terrorism in the region and create trade opportunities with Central Asian neighbours. Although the US-led coalition overthrew the Taliban, it has found it difficult to achieve the follow-up goal of eradicating the threat of

terrorism through political, economic and social reconstruction. Afghanistan's Transitional Administration faces multiple challenges: alienated ethnic actors contest its legitimacy; warlords still control their territories; infighting prevails over rule of law; and the slow pace of reconstruction is hampering reconciliation. National and regional security are threatened by the reluctance of international forces to expand their security presence beyond Kabul. As a consequence, the peace is fragile and, if conflict resumes, terrorism will return with it. Also, the unchecked war economy (involving drugs and arms trade) strengthens warlords and militias compared with the central government. India and Pakistan must refrain from interfering in Afghanistan's reconstruction to promote their own agendas, Ahmed urges. It is in the security interest of both to lobby for greater international reconstruction assistance. Non-intervention by neighbours in Afghanistan's affairs would enhance the prospects for peace and deprive extremists of support.

Mohammed Ayoob argues that, in its war on terrorism, Washington has attempted to untie the knot of Islamic extremism that has been at the centre of Pakistani–Afghan relations for years. It has recorded two modest successes: the establishment of an interim Afghan government with a moderate leader, and General Pervez Musharraf's pledge to break Pakistani-based terror groups and pull away from the theocratic state. But South-West Asia is still threatened by instability. Further conflict and fragmentation in Afghanistan could have ripple effects. Moreover, Afghan stability looks elusive: the government does not have control beyond Kabul; the strategic interests of external neighbours are at odds and they have different favourite clients; the warlords are benefiting from strife; the government has less resources and it is also unpopular because of the ban on poppy cultivation and the drug trade. With Afghanistan and Pakistan in unrest, Ayoob concludes that the United States needs support from India and Iran as the only responsible powers with capabilities and interest in South-West Asia's stability.[7]

In the third chapter on the subject, Amin Saikal agrees that "9/11" and the US response to it have had a profound impact on the political and strategic landscape of Central, West and South Asia, altering key geopolitical configurations in the area. The Taliban and al-Qaida have been replaced by a US-supported coalition, Pakistan has switched sides to join the United States, India has upped the ante with Pakistan over "cross-border terrorism" in the light of the US war on terror, Afghanistan and the Central Asian republics have been transformed into US footholds, Iran is encircled by US forces, and political Islam has been put on the defensive. In this fluid situation the United States and its allies have to choose either to remain fully engaged in Afghanistan for 5–10 years or to risk its falling into renewed fragmentation. The United States is ambiva-

lent about engaging in nation-building in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Central Asia. Yet this is necessary to stabilize Central, West and South Asia. The United States will need to adopt multilateralism in order to do this.

For a brighter tomorrow

The volume ends with two possible roadmaps for a better, more prosperous and peaceful South Asia. The pivot is the historic animosity between India and Pakistan.

Samina Yasmeen postulates that the negative mythology of ''the other'' provides the context for perceptions and decision-making between India and Pakistan. This has permeated the relationship since independence, and has been aggravated by three wars and the continuing rivalry over Kashmir. The symmetrical negative imagery pervades the two civil societies as well. Education (for example, history books), the media and cultural elements such as movies contribute to a ''shared consciousness'' that rests upon and fuels the demonization of the other. Yasmeen distinguishes between hawkish/orthodox and moderate schools of thought in both countries, and identifies the moderate tendencies throughout the turbulent relationship. Nevertheless, the orthodox perception of the relationship as a zero-sum conflict has influenced decision-making on the process of nuclearization as well as the missile race. Hawkish leaders in both countries have used the other country's difficulties and problems to tilt the balance in their favour. While recommending continuing efforts for moderation within and between the two countries, such as the Gujral Doctrine and Lahore agreement, Yasmeen suggests that, among external actors, the United States is better placed to play a short-term role as the facilitating superpower, while the United Nations should play a longer-term part, addressing the root causes of instability such as poverty, population growth rates, environmental degradation and the AIDS epidemic.

India's former High Commissioner (ambassador) to Pakistan, Gopalaswami Parthasarathy, reminds us that the conflict in Afghanistan has spilled over into Pakistan, the Taliban and its supporters have not been eliminated, and the Indian and Pakistani armies are still facing each other in Kashmir. But he argues that the nuclear dimension is exaggerated, being less threatening than the West thinks. For practical purposes, the two defence forces have known of each other's nuclear capability for a decade. Despite the persistent volatility, there are positive trends in the relationship between India and Pakistan, including the Lahore Summit (1999) and progress towards economic integration. It is now necessary to create the conditions for moving from conflict to cooperation. Parthasarathy compares the situation to that of Ireland and the United King-

dom over Northern Ireland, conciliated in part because they are both members of the European Union. He hopes that the vision statement from Lahore – of an economic union in South Asia by 2020 – will be implemented, because economic links and integration will facilitate conflict resolution. Mistrust must be reduced in populations – by people-to-people contact (tourism and exchange programmes), the media, trade and the promotion of cultural understanding – and also between governments, for example through agreements on a set of confidence-building measures for both nuclear and conventional weapons. It is important to create a climate conducive to bilateral dialogue. The SAARC summits in Lahore and Kathmandu show that positive development is possible, and that neither party gains by remaining hostage to the mistrust and animosity of the past.

In sum, the facts of geography have given the seven countries of South Asia a shared history and will ensure a common destiny. Neither enmity nor friendship, neither poverty nor prosperity, is predestined. With mutual and international goodwill, with the mustering of the necessary political will, and with the adoption of mutually conciliatory, market-friendly and pro-growth policies, the peoples and governments of South Asia could as yet take their fate back into their own hands and rediscover the greatness and the glory that once were theirs.

Notes

1. The other three roles are: serving as a think-tank for the United Nations, fostering a global community of scholars, and capacity development.
2. With respect to India, this is discussed in Thakur and Banerjee (2003). For a warning about the dangers of ''creeping apartheid'' in international peacekeeping, see Thakur and Malone (2000).
3. In the *Human Development Report 2002* (UNDP, 2002: 149–152), Maldives and Sri Lanka are ranked 84 and 89 on the Human Development Index, and India is ranked 124, which means they are all at the lower end of the medium Human Development bracket; Pakistan (138), Bhutan (140), Nepal (142) and Bangladesh (145) are in the low Human Development bracket.
4. The ''Washington consensus'' refers to the broad agreement among the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the US Government Treasury (all based in Washington DC) on three policy pillars: fiscal austerity (no government profligacy), privatization (no big government), and liberalization-cum-deregulation (free market competition rather than protection in both domestic and international economic exchanges).
5. One of the more powerful and trenchant critiques of globalization is from Joseph E. Stiglitz (2002), the former chief economist of the World Bank and the 2001 Nobel Laureate; see also Nayyar (2002).
6. Figures from UNHCR's estimate at the end of 2000 (PGDS/UNHCR, 2001).
7. For a comment along the same lines in the aftermath of the visit to India by the President of Iran, see Weiss (2003).

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South Asia in the World: Problem Solving Perspectives on Security, Sustainable Development, and Good Governance

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One out of every five people in the world lives in the countries of South Asia – Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. The problems they face are so huge that they present a defining challenge to the core mandates of the United Nations as the global arena for problem-solving.

These challenges range from economic development, environmental protection, and food and water security, to democratic governance and human rights, nuclear war and peace, inter-state and internal conflicts, and new security issues like AIDS and international terrorism.

What happens in South Asia will help shape the contours of the global community in the decades ahead. We must come to terms with the multitude and gravity of these challenges in order to give the concept of the 'international community' a practical meaning and encapsulate the notion of 'solidarity without borders'.

Two of the central purposes of the United Nations – to maintain international peace and security and to promote social and economic advancement – make it imperative for the organisation to address these issues in South Asia.

South Asia in the World develops the dialogue between academics and practitioners from a deeply divided region. In it they explore the potential for improvement in domestic and international efforts to alleviate the problems of South Asia and the role that the UN can play in this respect.

"The book makes a strong and compelling case why this region deserves serious attention by analysts and policymakers concerned with issues of global security. The world needs the infusion of ideas, energy and political weight that South Asians can bring to creating a more stable, equitable, sustainable world*"*
From the Foreword by Lloyd Axworthy

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