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***THE BECKONING GIANT:
NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY TOWARD SOUTH ASIA
IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY***

**A NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY
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Report Documentation Page				Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
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1. REPORT DATE 1996		2. REPORT TYPE		3. DATES COVERED 00-00-1996 to 00-00-1996	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE The Beckoning Giant: National Security Strategy Toward South Asia in the Twenty-First Century				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S)				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) National War College, 300 5th Avenue, Fort Lesley J. McNair, Washington, DC, 20319-6000				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT see report					
15. SUBJECT TERMS					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 12	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT unclassified	b. ABSTRACT unclassified	c. THIS PAGE unclassified			

I. INTRODUCTION: Current national security policy on South Asia has tended to emphasize the negative. The region is *too* populated. Its policies are *too* protective. Religious differences are *too* destabilizing. We must *prevent* the proliferation of nuclear weapons, *avoid* the emergence of a regional hegemon, and *stop* the trafficking of drugs through the region. Yet the South Asia region occupies a key strategic position between the demonstrated volatility of the Middle East and the potential volatility of East Asia. It is in a position to balance the emergence of an expansionist China or the religious radicalism of an adventurous Iran. Moreover, South Asia is a resource-rich, emerging market of enormous significance which has made a substantial and deep-thinking commitment to the development of human capital. This paper argues that the United States should revise its national security strategy to focus on the opportunities present in South Asia. Formulating such a long-range security strategy requires several assumptions about the future:

1. Nation-states likely will remain the dominant actors in world security affairs
2. Technological advancements are likely to “de-glamorize” nuclear weapons
3. Transnational issues will likely dominate inter-state security concerns

II. CONTEXT: The end of the Cold War has set the stage for improved U.S. ties with the nations of South Asia. The region holds the promise of expanding democracies and exponential economic growth that could benefit U.S. political, business and security interests, but it also harbors conflicts that could explode into nuclear war.

The region is dominated by the relationship between India and Pakistan, with India projected to have the world's largest population early in the next century. Washington is interested in promoting regional stability and abating any conflict or threat to peace such as the India-Pakistan dispute over Kashmir. Settling this conflict is central to helping solve other vital matters, such as the problem of potential nuclear confrontation or the proliferation of nuclear weapons and their delivery systems.

In the economic realm, the region is characterised by an acceleration toward economic reform and the growth of market-based economies, as well as the appearance of an emerging middle class amenable to fostering economic ties with the United States.

It is clear that social or political unrest could increase without progress in alleviating the grinding poverty, rapid population growth, water usage disputes and other environmental concerns that continue to afflict the area. Illicit narcotics production and trade have increased as has local consumption of drugs.

Finally, it is important to note that although the United States is seeking to deal in an "even-handed" way with the region, our activities in the region are conducted in the shadow of Cold War policies. During the Cold War, the U.S. policies favored Pakistan because of its anti-communist stance and its support for Afghan rebels fighting the Soviet-supported regime in Kabul. This policy "tilt" counter-balanced an Indian government whose leadership role in the Non-Aligned Movement and whose Indo-Soviet Friendship Treaty produced strained relationships with the United States.

III. THREATS: The primary threat to peace in the region is the conflict over

Kashmir, which threatens to expand to involve a nuclear exchange between Pakistan and India. The two nations are bitter rivals that have fought three wars between 1948 and 1972 (Raphel, 248)

Another challenge to U.S. interests is the potential for the further development of nuclear weapons and their deployment, as well as the possible transfer of nuclear matter, technical know-how, or delivery systems to other entities or nations.

Both India and Pakistan have resisted initiatives by the United States and others to join nonproliferation accords. Washington continues to press for pledges of no-first use, no nuclear testing, and no nuclear-related transfers to third countries, as well as freezes on the production of fissile materials as part of a global agreement (Asia Society, 50)

Another concern within the region is the on-going internal conflict in Afghanistan which could affect Pakistan's stability. Regional strategists are also aware of the potential vulnerabilities which are a consequence of the region's strategic position straddling the oil trade route between East Asia and the Middle East.

IV. OPPORTUNITIES: Despite the grim outlook on some issues, there are specific opportunities that Washington can seize to achieve its overall objectives in the region.

India's population will soon become the largest on the globe. This has obvious implications for a nation like ours seeking to expand its markets. More important, India's investment in human capital is strong and deep and reflected in a growing middle class estimated to be approaching 200 million consumers.

Perhaps a hidden resource might well be relatives of that middle class who have contacts in the United States and who might be encouraged to form a population block to foster U S -South Asian ties

The fact that the “green revolution” has taken hold in the region is a significant development because the region may for the first time in its recent history be able to avoid famine and its associated disruptions to development

An important positive indicator of opportunity is the fact that the Indian government has taken steps to temper its socialist economic policies, peel away the layers of planning controls that have afflicted growth, and work to keep inflation down. The fact that the English language is so widespread also provides an advantage for India’s ventures into worldwide business operations and certainly a more comfortable atmosphere for U S business initiatives (Blackton Lecture)

V. U.S. NATIONAL INTERESTS AND OBJECTIVES:

The U S has several key national interests in South Asia, and the U S Government lists the following as its top priority foreign policy goals in the region

- Reducing tensions and helping to resolve conflicts peacefully,
- Preventing further development or deployment of weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles,
- Encouraging free market economies and U S trade and investment,

- Promoting democracy and fostering protection of universally recognized human rights, and
- Curbing narcotics production and flows (Raphel, 248-250)

The top priority U S interest in South Asia should be considered the stability of the region. Regional stability has been adversely affected by the continuing Tamil insurgency in Sri Lanka and is manifested by the large number of refugees generated by internal conflicts in various countries of the region. The overriding U S concern, however, is in the potential for conflict between two nuclear “threshold states,” India and Pakistan, over Kashmir.

At the time of independence in 1947, Kashmir had a majority Muslim population but was ruled by an unpopular Hindu Maharajah. After communal disorders, Britain conditionally accepted Kashmir’s accession to India until a popular vote could determine the final status. Fighting continued, and Britain and the United States led the United Nations Security Council to establish the U N Commission for India and Pakistan. Kashmir became the first major bilateral difference between the U S and independent India. The U S in the early years periodically sent high-level envoys in hopes of resolving the dispute, but to no avail (Kux, 57-60).

India and Pakistan remain bitter rivals, and both sides exhibit inflexible policies and attitudes which aggravate serious tensions. These are heightened by the possession of a nuclear weapons capability by both countries. In the face of this concern, current U S policy is to urge that there be “sustained, direct discussion between senior Indian

and Pakistani officials ” As to active U S involvement, “the United States has offered to assist with this process if India and Pakistan so request We have no preferred solutions” (Raphel, 248)

Some would argue that the region, despite its huge population, has become of marginal U S interest since the demise of the Soviet Union and warrants a passive U S policy This neglects, however, the extremely dangerous global precedent that would be set if India and Pakistan were to go to war over Kashmir using their nuclear capability Resolution of the Kashmir conflict is the key to defusing serious tensions between two key threshold states and thus constitutes a major U S. national security interest Current U S policy, however, is to sit on the sidelines until asked to participate

As described earlier, regional dynamics have changed considerably since the end of the Cold War For the first time since 1947, the U S is in the position where it can be seen as an even-handed intermediary Past controversies over proposed UN plebiscites and other methods of resolving the conflict do not prevent the U S from taking a fresh approach and making resolution of the Kashmir conflict its top foreign policy goal in the region

Another goal of the U S is the enhancement of multilateral mechanisms such as the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), which has the potential for reducing regional misunderstandings or conflicts but whose progress is hampered by the India-Pakistan dispute

In the context of South Asia, the global U S goal of non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems becomes problematical Due to already-existing capabilities and other reasons, both India and Pakistan have refused to sign the

Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) It remains a U S goal to have both countries accept NPT and to make progress with both countries on such other multilateral treaties as the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the Fissile Materials Cutoff Treaty (FMCT)

The Commerce Department has designated India as one of its top ten “big emerging markets ” The U S encourages U S trade and investment in the region Given the huge populations in several of the countries, their long-term economic and social development will also depend on limiting population growth This requires active U S support for family planning programs

Several transnational issues are key U S interests in the region South Asia is a major producer of illicit (as well as legal) opium, and the U S remains interested in curbing narcotics production and flows The U S also continues to advance its humanitarian goal of providing relief (primarily through international organizations) to refugees and internally-displaced persons Instability in the region is manifest in the large number of refugees living in various countries of asylum Pakistan has over a million Afghan refugees, Bangladesh hosts over 100,000 Burmese, India has, inter alia, over 100,000 Tibetans and 73,500 Sri Lankans, and Nepal hosts 103,000 Bhutanese (UNHCR, 249)

U S national security strategy of engagement and enlargement applies to the fragile democracies of South Asia, such as Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal Human rights violations, including violations against women and use of child labor, occur to varying degrees throughout the region Stated U S strategy seeks to consolidate

democracy and to bring South Asian countries up to worldwide standards of human rights

VI. U.S. NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY: In light of these interests.

objectives, threats and opportunities. future U S national security strategy toward South Asia should be formulated as follows

A The United States must emphasize its concern for regional security and deemphasize its concern with nuclear weapons in the region This is not to suggest that we will ignore the issue of nuclear weapons and their proliferation, but it is to suggest that in this region we are attempting to treat the symptom and not the disease The United States should seek to assume a major, even dominant, diplomatic role in the resolution of the current dispute in Kashmir We have clearly defined national interests with both India and Pakistan The dispute in Kashmir--despite its seemingly intractable nature--is an opportunity to engage with both countries toward a positive resolution of regional instability With Kashmir resolved, the potential for a more meaningful SARCC and for real progress in non-proliferation efforts becomes possible

B In the near term, we must make it clear that what we seek in the region is nuclear responsibility That is, we must continue to seek agreements renouncing first use and the transfer of nuclear weapons technology Furthermore, it is likely that within the next ten years, the United States will possess the technology to de-glamorize nuclear weapons by rendering them counterproductive or even unusable to a potential user Agreements concerning nuclear weapons should therefore be considered opportunities for

building transparency and confidence among nations in the region. Seen in this light, multi-national control regimes such as the CTBT and FMCT will bring cohesion rather than controversy to the region. In any case, disagreements about nuclear weaponry must not preclude engagement on the variety of interests we have in common with the region.

C The United States is at the threshold of the information age, but we have not yet examined how our national interests will change in an information (3rd wave) society. Few question the potential of the traditional emerging market that is South Asia. Yet the real potential of the South Asia market may be in its investments in human capital which will bear greatest fruit in the information age. In the United States, for example, “investment in information technology accounts for 50% of total new capital investments by corporations” (Dedrick and Kraemer, 463), a circumstance which will benefit India where “R&D expenditures are well ahead of the other developing countries in the Asia-Pacific region”(473) and a nation with “the third largest pool of engineering and scientific manpower in the world”(470). The economic instrument of our national security policy should seek to increase economic engagement in South Asia as the market of greatest potential in Asia.

D Transnational issues such as the environment, population growth, resource scarcity, crime, and narcotics provide the opportunity to engage South Asia in multi-national cooperation. In the near-term, such multi-national efforts are important in allaying regional fears and suspicions. In the future, transnational issues will dominate inter-state security concerns.

E Until such time as South Asia reaches its economic growth potential, the United States should act as its advocate in multi-national development and humanitarian

assistance organizations Assistance in this region will produce a positive result and is likely to be required only in the near term

F We must build consensus on the importance of the region among the American people, Congress, and policy-makers This will necessitate a carefully considered campaign of public diplomacy Engagement on the Kashmir issue and the appointment of a special envoy to the region will be important first steps in this effort

VI. CONCLUSION

South Asia must not be relegated to a policy based in passivity and negativism It is too big, potentially too dangerous, and located in a geo-strategic position too critical to ignore More important, it is a region of enormous potential to our information age national interests It is time that U S policy seek and take advantage of the opportunities extant in South Asia

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