

## Upcoming International Conference

on

# Policy Approaches of South Asian Countries and their Impact on the Region

Organized by



**Islamabad Policy Research Institute**

in Collaboration with



**Hanns Seidel Foundation (HSF)**

at

**Serena Hotel, Islamabad  
June 2-3, 2015**

The South Asian countries can learn from best practices in regional cooperation. For instance, in the ASEAN region, the integration has been achieved by a multi-pronged process and by following a multilateral approach. Such an approach will encourage a shift towards stronger cooperation and will increase focus on regional objectives. Multilateral agreements take the existing bilateral/domestic issues to a regional level and may bind signatory countries to a timetable for implementation at a regional level.

To evolve recommendations for transforming the policy approaches of the South Asian countries from conflict or competitive mode to a cooperative endeavour, Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI), in collaboration with Hanns Seidel Foundation (HSF), is organising an international conference on “Policy Approaches of South Asian Countries and their Impact on the Region” on June 2-3, 2015.

Besides Pakistan, scholars from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, China, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Germany have been invited to present their views.

## Themes

### Policy Formulation and Implementation Challenges in South Asia

1. Policy Formulation Processes in South Asian Countries
2. Policy Formulation and Implementation Process in South Asia: Domestic Challenges
3. Policy Formulation and Implementation Process in South Asia: External Challenges

### Imperatives of Non-traditional Security in South Asia

1. Countering Extremism and Terrorism: Learning from Best Practices
2. Climate Change: Implications for Security and Governance in South Asia
3. Prospects of Energy Cooperation in South Asia

### Regional Connectivity

1. Prospects of Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM) Corridor
2. Regional Benefits of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor
3. Political Disputes: Implication for Regional Trade and Economic Cooperation

### Policy Approaches towards Peace and Security in South Asia

1. Regional Dividends of Peace in Afghanistan
2. Prospects of India-Pakistan Peace Process
3. Peace and Security in South Asia: A Way Forward

**Note: Participation would be through invitation cards only.**

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## The Institute

Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI) is an autonomous think tank. It is dedicated to undertaking research, analyses and evaluations of important national and international politico-strategic issues and developments affecting Pakistan and the region. One of the prominent areas of activity of the institute is organizing national and international seminars/conferences. To know more about IPRI, you may visit our website, [www.ipripak.org](http://www.ipripak.org)

## Conference Outline

South Asia is one of the most important regions of the world. It has one fifth population of the world, covers an area of 5.22 million sq. kms, and is home to two nuclear weapon states: India and Pakistan. Other important South Asian countries include: Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka and Maldives. The region's economic growth has made it a big global market. Growth in South Asia rose to an estimated 5.5 percent in 2014 from a 10-year low of 4.9 percent in 2013. Regional growth is projected to rise to 6.8 percent by 2017. The political, economic and strategic importance of South Asia is increasing with every passing day.

South Asia is facing multi-dimensional security challenges both traditional and non-traditional. Notwithstanding these challenges, there exists an enormous untapped regional economic potential. Most of the challenges faced by the region are based on deep rooted historic differences. Consequently political issues and conflicts have not allowed economic and strategic interests to take precedence in matters of policy and development. Some other threats of common concern to most of the South Asian nations are non-traditional security threats such as, drug trafficking, terrorism, environment, climate change, food security, intra region migration, infrastructure and energy crisis.

Political will and political action will certainly play their part in breaking the vicious circle of conflict, insecurity and underdevelopment in South Asia. Economic policies should be geared not just to maximise growth, but also to address the distributional or political factors that lead to conflict. Regional states have an opportunity, through regional integration, to work together to manage their numerous common regional issues. Domestic as well as external factors have played their role in influencing the process of policy formulation in South Asia.

The most common approach of policymakers in South Asia to deal with insurgencies, terrorism, or internal violence is to use the security forces to establish law and order in the affected areas. Sheer use of force has not been a successful strategy. There is also a need to simultaneously use political and economic approaches to overcome the internal security threats. Further, cross-border cooperation between countries should be an integral part of any strategy to reduce conflict. Considerable potential exists for reducing conflicts through regional cooperation, but this strategy has not been given due attention in South Asia.

The role of Pakistan in countering terrorism has been very critical. Pakistan and Afghanistan believe that the menace of terrorism could only be countered through joint cross-border cooperation. Similarly, Pakistan and India should make sincere

efforts to resolve their disputes by resuming composite dialogue.

Bangladesh is looking forward to furthering its own interests which include foreign investments, cooperative use of water resources, access to raw materials and development of infrastructure. India needs Bangladesh's cooperation for its security as well as for transit to north east India and for countering terrorism. To ensure sustainable relations between Pakistan and Bangladesh, the political leadership on both sides needs to eliminate emotionalism with pragmatism. Sri Lanka is supportive of regional integration. It is interested in expanding trade and investment in South Asian region. Sri Lanka's bilateral relationship with India is deeply linked to the sensitive domestic issue: reconciliation with the Tamil minority. Given its strategic location within South Asia, Sri Lanka stands to benefit from a more skillful foreign policy.

Nepal maintains cordial ties with all its neighbours. Since it is one of the less developed countries in the region, it is interested in seeking investment for its economic development. Kathmandu intends to diversify its economic interdependence and develop its reliance on all the South Asian countries for resources and development. Nepal and Bhutan can be a big source of hydropower for neighbours. Bhutan and Maldives view regional economic cooperation as a strategy to bring about economic self-reliance and mutual prosperity. Bhutan aims to improve air links and telecommunication between member states. Maldives on the other hand is interested in joint economic ventures, and in achieving greater liberalisation of its economy.

China's observer status in SAARC was a product of the push from Nepal, Bangladesh and Pakistan. China's involvement in South Asia is critical in terms of regional connectivity. China is investing in several infrastructure projects such as, China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (PCEC) and Bangladesh- China- India - Myanmar (BCIM) Corridor in South Asia. It is also investing in mega projects in Sri Lanka and Maldives and enjoys cordial relations with Nepal.

The withdrawal of foreign forces from Afghanistan requires the regional countries to participate in its stability and development. The instability in Afghanistan will harm its neighbours, especially Pakistan. On the other hand, the dividends of peace in Afghanistan would be shared by all the South Asian nations. Afghanistan's connectivity with Central Asia can make the country a trade and energy corridor for the entire South Asian region.

The region is facing challenges which are intra-regional in nature. Different policy perspectives and the existing political disputes prevent the neighbouring states from cooperation. Inter-connectivity and sharing best practices could be a better approach towards rooting out emerging security threats and promoting regional cooperation. The cooperative attitude among the South Asian countries can also effectively resolve their water disputes. The river networks have the potential to meet a portion of the energy needs of the region and also create economic opportunities. Proper cooperative management of the water resources would also contribute towards controlling floods, providing irrigation, generating electricity and improving water transport facilities. Another area where common approach is required is climate change. The exchange of data and joint research will help South Asian countries in mitigating the negative impacts of this phenomenon.