

Expanding Developmental Horizons through Education, Research & Innovation: SAARC Perspective

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The defence expenditure in South Asia has increased after the end of the Cold War. This is because concerns about traditional inter-state and military security issues have persisted after the end of the Cold War. Realists would say this is the reality but one could say this is more of a perception. One must ask the question, why do decision makers in South Asia still give so much importance to traditional security issues, when there are so many non-traditional security issues demanding their attention. This is because of a conceptual and organizational mismatch resulting from the fact that South Asia is still following blindly the western literature. South Asia must critically engage that literature and attempt to transform the state-centric philosophy of realism into a more people-centric philosophy. South Asians must change the way they understand the concept of National Security. In this regard South Asia has a lot to learn from the concept of Human Security. One might

even say that through the eminent Pakistani economist Mahbub-ul-Haq South Asia has contributed significantly to the development of this concept. The concept of Human Security draws attention to many non-traditional security issues without ignoring traditional security. One cannot separate economic issues from security issues. A few years back there was a lot of talk about connectivity in South Asia and many people supported the idea from an economic point of view but it faced resistance because of traditional security concerns. This point out the need for a more holistic understanding of security and this is precisely what a comprehensive approach can facilitate. There is a crucial need to look at Human Security from a national perspective. Doing that will put South Asian decision makers in a position to understand and address the security needs of their people that really matter.