
GLOBAL PEACE AND SOUTH ASIA

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Abstract: Global peace is the goal of every nation. In simple terms, peace is just the absence of war. But, in a much broader sense, it implies the absence of not just war, but also other forms of issues, disturbances, conflicts and controversies. With the end of cold war, there seemed to be much scope than before for cooperation in the prevention and resolution of conflict. But unfortunately, there are much greater issues that the world faces today in regard to global peace and harmony. The reality is that the end of bipolarism has only paved way for new kinds of turbulence and disorder. Understanding this unfortunate reality, peace building strategies are much spoken of in this era. The concept of peace building becomes much more important with regard to South Asia because no region in the world is as important as the South Asian region in terms of strategic importance. Because of this the region continues to be in the priority list of big powers. But unfortunately the region is encompassed with ethnic rivalries, human rights violations, poverty and inequality, terrorism, insurgency, religious fundamentalism etc. Hence they are not able to contribute to their fullest potential to global peace. This theoretical paper tries to define the concept of peace and its importance in this era. It attempts to discuss the various internal and external threats and issues that South Asia faces and how ultimately the region is not able to contribute to global peace. The paper also analyses the importance of SAARC in this regard. The various impediments to peace building process are also identified. Suggestions are also put forth in particular, to make conditions better in South Asia and also in general to achieve the goal of global peace and harmony. Thus the paper attempts to emphasize on the importance of global peace and as to how nations can earnestly contribute to it. As the study is analytical in nature, secondary data has been employed. The basic data are derived from journals, books and websites.

Keywords : Conflict, Co-operation, Global Peace, South Asia.

Introduction : War begins in the mind of man. In simple terms, peace is just the absence of war. But, in a much broader sense, it implies the absence of not just war, but also other forms of issues, disturbances, conflicts and controversies. With the end of cold war, there seemed to be much scope than before for cooperation in the prevention and resolution of conflict. But unfortunately, there are much greater issues that the world faces today in regard to global peace and harmony. The reality is that the end of bipolarize has only paved way for new kinds of turbulence and disorder. Understanding this unfortunate reality, peace building strategies are much spoken of in this era. Peace building strategies are those that seek to address the underlying causes of disputes, conflicts and crises and to ensure either that problems don't arise in the first place, or that if they do arise they won't recur. The concept of peace building is built around the understanding

of the need to provide security and order, reasonable standard of living, and most importantly, the recognition of the identity and worth of different groups. This approach to peace building is important because any kind of conflict begins and continues when the interests of one or more groups are threatened. Peace building involves putting in place international rules and regulations, dispute resolution mechanisms with cooperative techniques and concentrating into the economic, social and humanitarian needs of societies. Though most countries have understood the importance of international peace and the positive impact that it can have on their societies, they only struggle in their realization of this dream. The piling up of issues and conflicts in the international arena and the complexity of peace building operations has made the concept of global peace a distant dream. But no nation in the world would give up in their target to achieve peace and harmony. In regard to global peace the contributions of South Asia is much discussed, debated and criticized. South Asia continues to be one of the most volatile regions in the world. Though most of the South Asian countries stand by peace and harmony, the region is not free from conflicts and issues, which act as an impediment to their contribution to global peace. The region is submerged in ethnic conflicts, civil wars, communal and political violence, terrorism, gross violation of human rights, intra- state and inters- state conflicts etc. South Asia and Global Peace: South Asia is believed to have the oldest civilization in the world with unique characteristics. There is the presence of abundant literary works on religion, theology, astronomy and culture and most of these works have supported the cause of peace for the sake of humanity. Ironically, the Global Peace Index (GPI), 2013 has identified South Asia as the least peaceful region in the world'. The index brings to notice the shocking realities of the region. Pakistan and Afghanistan are marked very low in their degree of peacefulness. India is considered low, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka are considered medium and Bhutan is the only country in the region that is marked very high. Surprisingly, South Asia scored quite low on 'internal peace' indicators as opposed to 'external peace' indicators, which mainly focus on peace in inter-state relations. But however, India, the largest and most powerful country in South Asia, scored lower on external peace indicators this year. The findings of Global peace Index is not a shock to those who have been closely observing the developments in the region. South Asia has become a hotbed of the war on terror and a victim of the strategic interests of major power blocs keeping the region in constant turmoil and uncertainty. The seven countries in the region are under constant threat to internal and external security. Though counter terrorism is adopted in Afghanistan, the presence of foreign forces in the country has created a sort of uncertainty and distrust among the civilians and the impact is even felt by the neighboring country, Pakistan. Not wanting to let go this opportunity, the extremists groups have also not failed to play with the sentiments of the people. Situations seem much worse for Pakistan which is overshadowed by political crisis, religious fundamentalism and terrorism. Repeated clashes between groups, border disputes and the subsequent military operations, political violence, etc has prevented this nation from contributing much towards global peace. India, the

largest democracy in the world is also not free from issues and threats. Religious intolerance, communal hatred, persecution of minorities, casteism, unethical politics, etc are serious issues of concern in India. India's long cherished ideal of secularism received a tough blow when minorities were attacked and brutally killed in some parts of the country. Constitution, the supreme document of the land watched with dismay the violation of its Right to Religion. Though, the democratic transition in Bangladesh brought hope into the country, the issue of religious fundamentalism has to be seriously dealt with. Bhutan, Nepal and Maldives have brought a lot of hope and expectations into the region after their democratic transition. Intact, Bhutan is even called "Model of Peace" in South Asia². SAARC, South Asia and Global Peace: The evolution of SAARC when cold war was at its peak was considered a massive victory against arms race. It was the New Delhi Summit which was instrumental in establishing SARC (South Asia Regional Cooperation) which was converted into SAARC (The South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation). Since its inception, SAARC has seen dramatic expansion. The very first SAARC Summit held at Dhaka broadly discussed on no-use of military force against any country in the region and urged for the settlement of all disputes peacefully. In simple words, the main purpose of SAARC is to promote cooperation and friendly relations among member states. But this objective of SAARC seems unrealized to a great extent due to conflicting relations between two strong states in the region, India and Pakistan. Despite these obstacles, SAARC can still play an important communicative role in South Asia. It can serve as a forum for South Asian leaders to discuss security concerns in South Asia on a regular basis and as an outlet for South Asian countries to communicate with other regional economic blocks. The role of SAARC cannot be taken lightly. For example, informal talks between Indian and Pakistani Prime Ministers at the second SAARC summit in 1986 led to the diffusion of tension between the two countries. In January 2004, conciliatory talks between India and Pakistan were sparked by an upcoming SAARC conference. A breakthrough between Indian and Pakistani diplomats actually occurred at the conference. While the dialogue has yet to produce tangible results, the experiences indicate that SAARC can help promote political cooperation and serve as a forum for communication among South Asian leaders³. Regional associations are given top priority in the global space. The European Union has gone to the extent of introducing a common currency in the region. And the same level of efficiency can also be expected in the case of SAARC when all the obstacles are well tackled. Global Peace- The Way Forward: With regard to South Asia, poverty and unequal distribution of wealth are considered to be reasons to most of the instability and unrest in the region. Keeping in mind the diverse nature of issues in each country, different solutions should be prescribed for each issue. In this regard, India, the most powerful country in the region has a greater role to play in strengthening areas of governance, rule of law, democratic institutions and reconstruction of polity. Combined efforts from all countries in the region would definitely enhance their contribution to global peace. The strengthening of SAARC would also go a long way in easing tensions in the region. However, SAARC must battle the public

perception that it is more a figurehead of South Asian unity than an actual facilitator of regional cooperation⁴.

In general, peace and prosperity is the dream of every nation and if this dream stands fulfilled, the ultimate objective of global peace can be achieved. This requires a comprehensive peace building process all through the globe. Peace building strategies make sure that major crises do not arise in the first place or if at all they arise they do not subsequently recur⁵. There are peace maintenance, peace restoration and peace enforcement strategies that are to be effectively practiced by nations. Peace maintenance strategies try to resolve or at least contain disputes from escalating into armed conflicts. Nations can undertake preventive diplomacy i.e. solve issues through dialogues and mediations. Peace can be maintained also through preventive deployment wherein troops can be deployed in order to prevent disputes. Nations can also seriously adhere to peace restoration strategies like peacemaking and peace keeping. Peace enforcement strategies like sanctions can also deliver the desired results. Efficient peacemaking also requires greater coordination and cooperation between the various factors involved in the process. The role of peace keepers is no longer simple because peace building encompasses human security, rule of law, institutionalized transparency, justice etc⁶. Peace makers should take utmost care to take into account the needs of different groups at all stages of rebuilding of societies. Peace building measures also require better communication and transparency. Most of all, political support is a major factor that can contribute to the success of any peace keeping operation.

Citizens also have a great role to play in the peace movement because it is not possible for any nation to undertake any initiatives related to global peace without the support and sanction of the people. The positive role of NGO's can further strengthen peace initiatives all round the globe because most of them are directly or indirectly associated with various peace organizations.

Conclusion: No region in the world is as important as the South Asian region in terms of strategic importance. Because of this the region continues to be in the priority list of big powers. But unfortunately the region is encompassed with ethnic rivalries, human rights violations, poverty and inequality, terrorism, insurgency, religious fundamentalism etc. Hence they are not able to contribute to their fullest potential to global peace. But these issues have to face clear public scrutiny so that resolving of these issues is made possible with public support. There is a requirement of wider publicity and political backing at all levels. Effort should be made to enhance non-official dialogues through inter-regional connection, cultural globalization and greater independence. These requirements are to be undertaken with much concern because the very future of South Asia depends upon how successfully these issues are resolved, ultimately contributing towards global peace.

Not just South Asia but every single nation in the world aspires for global peace and harmony. It is the various internal and external conflicts and issues that act as an obstacle to the achievement of this objective. Each nation should contribute to global peace to the level possible. Each nation should strive towards solving the

regional and international issues that haunt them. Effective undertaking of peace keeping operations when required should be considered the duty of every nation. The noble ideas of various peace thinkers, social reformers and spiritual leaders should be revived as it would act as an impetus to peace building strategies. Peace is not only a desire but also the need of every nation, because not even the United States with all its power and prominence can devise a substitute to global peace.

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