

Panel 13

South Asia in 2060

South Asia 2060 is a project of the Boston University Frederick S. Pardee Center for the Study of the Longer-Range Future. It aims to facilitate a dialogue amongst experts from across South Asia and the world, and from various disciplines, on the likely longer-range trajectories of South Asia's future *as a region*. The project will support dialogue amongst leading thinkers within and beyond the region and collect the ideas generated by these thinkers on the future of the region in an anthology of essays to be published by the Pardee Center.

For the purpose of this project we see South Asia as the member states of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC): Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka. There is a significant and growing literature that looks at current and future trends in specific South Asian countries – more for some than others. There is also a sizeable literature that looks at the relations between specific countries in the region – again, more for some than others. However, there is little discussion of *what the region means as a region* – today and into the emerging future. This project seeks to specifically **focus on South Asia as a region**, and on how the futures of individual South Asian countries are likely to impact the collective region.

Rather than assessing the future of specific countries the project focuses on regional dynamics – including whether regional aspects will become more prominent or wither away in the future. The project seeks to examine current regional trends, possible future trajectories over the next half century, and the key factors that will determine whether these trajectories are positive or negative for the region.

With over one-fifth of the world's population, a critical geo-strategic location, two nuclear weapon states, major human development challenges as well as striking economic momentum, and facing critical natural resource challenges, South Asia has been – and is likely to remain – a focus of great international attention with deep impacts on the rest of the world. Much of the region shares common historical and colonial legacies. Yet, as a region, South Asia remains largely un-integrated with deep and festering faultlines. Will this remain so in the future? Will the future see a strengthening or weakening regional identity? Will regional integration advance or retreat even further? Will we even be talking about a 'South Asian region' fifty years from now? How will the fate of individual countries within South Asia impact the region as a whole? And how might the fate of the region impact the rest of the world? These are some of the types of questions that this project would invite experts to think and write about.

The project will **facilitate writing and discussions on South Asia's regional futures** by eminent scholars, practitioners and policy-makers from within as well as from outside the region. To reach a wider cross-section of experts from a variety of disciplines, the project will also work with existing forums focusing on South Asia. **To contribute to the discussions, experts will be asked to write a short – approximately 3,000 words long**

– **opinion essay (or ‘Think Piece’) on particular issues related to South Asia’s regional futures.** A collection of essays written as part of this project – each written in an authoritative manner in the style of an op-ed and focusing on a particular aspect of South Asia’s regional futures – will later be published by the Pardee Center as an edited anthology.

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