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*Yelyzaveta Sirina,
Borys Grinchenko Kyiv Metropolitan University
ORCID ID: 0009-0003-7679-2526*

Security challenges in the South Asian Region

Abstract. The South Asian Region has become a significant center for security studies, as it has witnessed numerous interstate conflicts, centers of international terrorism, separatism, and political instability, as well as the presence of nuclear-armed states in the region. South Asia represents the growing role of the security factor and the problem of building a regional security system. The study highlights security problems in South Asia, existing mechanisms to counter them, future development prospects, and lessons for Ukraine.

Keywords: security, conflicts, cooperation.

Although the region's states share many similarities, especially in cultural and civilizational characteristics and historical development, deep-rooted conflicts and wars dating back to the colonial and pre-colonial periods are significant characteristics of the region.

The main security issues can be divided into four categories:

1) Intrastate – ethnic, religious, political separatism and terrorism fueled by various forces, the spread of Islamic radicalism, massive political instability, and growing economic dependence within the region, as well as a high degree of militarization.

2) Regional – territorial conflicts, the confrontation between India and Pakistan, in particular in the Jammu and Kashmir region – both countries have nuclear weapons, and any new clash between them takes on a new dimension.

3) Interregional – the Sino-Indian territorial conflict and their confrontation.

4) Global – the struggle of great powers for influence in the region - with the beginning of the 21st century, South Asia is becoming an arena for a new geopolitical competition between the United States and the People's Republic of China. The region is crucial for the US goal of promoting an open Indo-Pacific region and China's desire to become a leading Asian power.

The region is both vulnerable to external influence and internally politically and ideologically divided, which creates conditions for conscious decisions by one country to use the internal conflicts of another country to achieve its strategic, external, or internal political interests. All this weakens the collective ability of states to work for peaceful progress and development.

The region's current problems are both armed and violent, as well as those manifested by political tension and non-violent means. Both armed and non-armed conflicts tend to influence and transform each other.

Security Mechanisms. Due to such a high degree of conflict between states, the region is characterized by more bilateral contacts between states than cooperation. Therefore, South Asia is one of the least integrated regions in the world. Such measures as conflict resolution through mediation, peacekeeping activities, countries' participation in counterterrorism initiatives, etc., arise irregularly.

Development prospects and ways of solving security problems. South Asia is believed to become soon a place of intensified rivalry between the United States and China. In this context, the main task of both sides will be to prevent an increase in the risk of armed conflict. Measures

to avoid escalation include encouraging the peaceful resolution of territorial disputes and promoting the development of regional institutions and partnerships.

The escalation of territorial interstate conflicts will not threaten the region shortly. There is a prospect of tension over several issues related to border resource distribution and migration, but war seems unlikely. However, internal conflicts in the countries of South Asia will continue to be a major destabilizing factor. Eliminating socio-economic inequalities, protecting minority rights and individual freedoms, resolving problems through dialogue, and finding a compromise can, if not solve, then help mitigate some of the root causes of conflicts. Countries should also strengthen efforts to combat terrorism through intelligence sharing, operations coordination, and counterterrorism strategy implementation.

All these problems require a joint, consolidated solution, so it is necessary to create conditions for cooperation.

The escalation of territorial interstate conflicts will not threaten the region in the near future. There is a prospect of tension over several issues related to border resource distribution and migration, but war seems unlikely. However, internal conflicts in the countries of South Asia will continue to be a major destabilizing factor. Eliminating socio-economic inequalities, protecting minority rights and individual freedoms, resolving problems through dialogue, and finding a compromise can, if not solve, then help mitigate some of the root causes of conflicts. Countries should also strengthen efforts to combat terrorism through intelligence sharing, coordination of operations, and the implementing of a counterterrorism strategy.

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Conclusions for Ukraine. South Asia is a place of constant tension and instability. Even though the region's problems are due to its complicated historical past and its specifics, this brief analysis of the situation can highlight valuable lessons for Ukraine:

✓ South Asia is a region that is complex in its structure and content. It is home to three major world religions, and the population reaches about one and a half billion people, representing a wide range of ethnic and cultural groups. However, ethnicity and religious affiliation are not responsible for the growth of conflicts. The politicization of this affiliation has exacerbated contradictions, differences, and generated conflicts, ultimately affecting regional cooperation and holding the region back economically, politically, and socially.

Ukraine must strengthen its internal ethnic and territorial unity and courageously resist the provocations and propaganda of the enemy, which are aimed at inciting separatism and instability in the country. Only in unity is the strength of the Ukrainian people.

✓ The inability to cope with challenges due to the weakness of the state structure and economic dependence of the region's countries gave rise to foreign direct or covert intervention and, later - political domination in the region, which shaped the modern development of South Asian nations. The spread of influence in the region was facilitated by both its proximity to the great powers and its strategic interest in its sea routes and resources.

Internal strengthening and development of Ukraine are necessary for an effective fight against the invaders and to establish stable peace and prosperity. Ukraine must improve its approaches to implementing domestic policy, which includes building statehood and democracy, by improving public administration, strengthening the fight against corruption in all areas, ensuring sustainable development of the national economy, building national security and defense,

etc. A strong democratic, social, and legal European state with a strong army and a conscious civil society is necessary for countering foreign interference and influence.

As already noted, a characteristic feature of South Asian countries is the tendency to support bilateral contacts rather than collective cooperation. That makes conducting dialogue and cooperation impossible and reaching decisions on guaranteed peace in the region.

Ukraine should pursue an active foreign policy, deepening European and Euro-Atlantic integration, maintain strong relations with strategic partners, and be actively involved in bilateral and multilateral processes to protect the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and inviolability of Ukraine's state borders and advance national interests. Only through active engagement and cooperation will we collectively achieve prosperity and peace for our country.

Conclusions. South Asia has been and remains an epicenter of conflicts. The countries of the region suffer from an unstable security situation due to terrorism, escalation of armed conflicts on the borders, and the broader confrontation between the nuclear powers, India and Pakistan.

Despite these seemingly local and regional conflicts of various kinds, the influence of foreign powers in their development or extinction is undeniable. The conflicts in South Asia will continue until global players stop intensifying and inflaming them for their strategic interests. The prospects for disputes in South Asia remain complex and unpredictable. Although a full-scale war seems unlikely, internal conflicts within countries are likely to continue.

Compared to other regions, the formation of regional security in South Asia is taking place rather slowly and gradually and is complicated by several negative factors. The region's countries need a comprehensive approach to solving problems and intensifying the processes of regional integration and security policy.

Analyzing the security situation in the remote region of South Asia from the outside, we can trace the main measures that may be useful for developing Ukraine's policy.

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