

Keynote Address at the Eleventh Asian Security Conference

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All-out wars are no longer the norm for settling disputes among states. Rapid globalisation has led to profound changes by creating interdependence amongst states and people making inter-state wars an era of bygone years. Liberal policies are increasingly connecting Asia to the world economy and building high stakes for peace and world order. India is committed to building a strong, non-discriminatory international norms and institutes to strengthen world peace and stability. We are engaged in a major diplomatic effort to construct a new Asian security order through bilateral and multilateral engagements towards creating confidence and enhancing capacities in the region.

The conference holds great significance as it assumes particular salience in the context of the attacks on Mumbai and the systematic use of terrorism and irregular warfare as state policy aimed at India. It is becoming increasingly clear that the nature of war and conflict is changing. All-out wars are no longer the norm for settling political disputes among states. In fact, despite the military modernisation underway in Asian countries, few wars have taken place. Afghanistan and Iraq are exceptions, since they are not typical inter-state wars. Most Asian states today are not inclined to engage in large-scale conventional warfare, as they are no longer seen as the most effective way to securing political, economic and diplomatic gains.

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The rapid globalisation of recent years has led to profound changes by creating interdependence amongst states and people. In this backdrop, it does not seem likely that the states would move back to the classical inter-state wars of the bygone era. Liberal economic policies are increasingly connecting Asia to the world economy. Economic growth and prosperity today are dependent on stable ties and cooperation with other nations of the world. Free movement of goods, services and people, cross-border financial flows and foreign direct investment are key drivers of

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economic growth today. These flourish only in a climate of peace and stability. Nation states, therefore, have high stakes in ensuring peace.

In such a situation, conflicts may occur, only if particular regimes facing internal economic and political problems unleash nationalism and war against an external 'enemy' to rally popular support. Asia, unfortunately, does have a number of unsettled territorial and sovereignty disputes and these can be manipulated by irresponsible states to ensure regime stability. Both internal and external checks and balances, against such possible abuses of power are, therefore, necessary. Fortunately, many Asian states have wisely agreed to set aside disputes that cannot be resolved immediately and to maintain status quo. They have encouraged a system of dialogue and negotiations to peacefully resolve these disputes and they are focussed on enhancing cooperation. The India-China relationship is a good example of this approach.

Although external wars are no longer in vogue, civil wars, insurgencies and militancy have become the principal modes of armed conflict today. Many flow from identity movements; others from extremist ideologies; and yet others from social, economic and political inequities that abound in our continent. These have made many Asian states extremely unstable and fragile. Dealing with these complex challenges through efficient and improved governance and effective development strategies must be of the highest importance for Asian nations. These will contribute to minimizing the scope and sources of violence between and within states. Steady democratisation of states in Asia is needed for better protection of peoples' rights, and also for security.

India is committed to build strong, non-discriminatory international norms and institutions, so as to strengthen world peace and stability. We have resolved to work with the international community on global and universal nuclear disarmament and institutions that have legitimacy and enhance the security of all states. India hopes to gain its rightful place in the United Nations Security Council and make significant contribution to global security as a major stakeholder and responsible power.

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We are engaged in a major diplomatic effort to construct a new Asian security order through bilateral and multilateral engagements. Our network of strategic defence and security ties with major powers such as the United States, Russia, China, Japan or with neighbouring countries of Southeast Asia, Africa, the Gulf and the Indian Ocean is aimed at creating confidence, enhancing state capacities to contribute to their security and stability and promoting transparency and understanding.

India's capacity building efforts in Afghanistan are particularly significant. The goal of our efforts is to contribute to Asian peace and stability and not undermine them.

India's role in the ASEAN Regional forum and the East Asia Summit are similarly aimed at building a new architecture of stability and peace with states that are focused on development and regional institution building, that will create conditions for long-term economic growth, interdependence and prosperity in Asia.

The India-specific waiver by the Nuclear Suppliers' Group in September 2008 has put aside a major roadblock to India's role and future development. For four decades, India had been subjected to an unfair and discriminatory international nuclear regime that has been brought to an end. The unique waiver for India—in recognition of its responsible role in non-proliferation—has opened the door for nuclear energy cooperation with the rest of the world. It enables us to play a more significant role in achieving the goals of non-proliferation and energy security. India would seek to ensure that the benefits of peaceful uses of nuclear energy will reach all states in keeping with their international obligations.

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Since I have shared with you my thoughts on security in our times and the efforts we are making for safeguarding it, I will now address the important issue raised at the start.

While the prospects of inter-state armed conflicts are indeed declining, India and the Asian continent continue to face the challenge of terrorism. Pakistan has become the epicentre of international terrorism.

The assault on Mumbai and many previous attacks on Indian cities over the past few years have gravely undermined peace and security. Afghanistan has been a victim of similar acts, as indeed have been other countries.

That the major attacks of large magnitude can be planned and executed by elements in Pakistan totally undermines the solemn commitments to us made by its leadership that territory in its control would not be permitted to be used for terrorism. The positive gains of the past years have been destroyed by the dastardly attack on Mumbai. The onus now is on the Government of Pakistan to act with sincerity and decisiveness against the perpetrators and controllers of such attacks. It is in the interest of this region and the rest of the world that such perpetrators of wanton violence are brought to justice and the infrastructure of terror is eliminated.

There is an onus equally on the international community to act. This Frankenstein is now a threat to democracy, stability and peace in Afghanistan and to Pakistan itself. The international community needs to act decisively and in concert to get rid of this scourge. We sincerely hope that this approach would be the way ahead. As a victim of terrorism, we must remain committed to safeguard the lives of our nationals and to take all the necessary steps to enhance and safeguard our security.

The conference is being held at a critical juncture when the world is facing the prospects of an economic meltdown. This will have unforeseen implications for the global order and security. How will the Asian countries be affected by the economic crisis? What will be its impact on military modernisation projects? Will non-state actors become more active? These are some of the issues which I hope the experts gathered here today will discuss in this conference.

The onus is now on the Government of Pakistan to tackle terrorism with decisiveness.

It is a matter of great satisfaction for us that so many leading experts and analysts from around the world have gathered here. Your participation raises the stature of the conference. At the end of your two-day deliberations, I hope, we come out with findings which will help our policymakers deal with the grave threats presented by the changing nature of war. 