



# Global Security Institute

Project Report

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## Symposium on South Asia

By Nadine M. Kjellberg  
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## South Asian Delegates Call for Elimination of Nuclear Arsenals

Addressing a spill over crowd of congressional staffers and religious representatives in the Cannon House Office Building of the U.S. Congress, Jonathan Granoff, President of the Global Security Institute, called on the United States to apply common sense to the security crises of South Asia.



Senator Sam Brownback (R-KA)  
and Jonathan Granoff, President, GSI

"Without taking immediate steps to eliminate its own massive stockpiles of nuclear weapons, the United States can not effectively argue restraint from countries like India and Pakistan," Mr. Granoff said. He was co-chair of a nuclear issues panel at the Symposium on South Asia, which was sponsored by the Policy Institute for Religion and State. Also chairing the panel was Senator Sam Brownback, member of the Committee on Foreign Relations and the ranking member of the Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs.

Mr. Granoff quoted India's Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh prior to the country's Pokhran Tests May 11, 1998: "If the permanent five continue to employ nuclear weapons as an international currency of force and power, why should India voluntarily devalue its own state power and national security."

Mr. Granoff criticized the destabilizing policy shift of the United States exemplified in its Nuclear Posture Review, which calls for the continued indefinite reliance on the threat to use nuclear weapons. He also criticized the termination of the ABM Treaty, the failure to obtain a comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, and the recent Moscow Treaty, which, he said, "is neither irreversible nor verifiable nor does it eliminate any weapons."

Other panelists echoed Mr. Granoff's statements calling on nuclear weapons states to move aggressively toward elimination of its nuclear arsenals.

"Permanent retention of nuclear weapons is ultimately incompatible with human survival," said panelist Douglas Shaw, who is Vice President for Policy and Programs at the Institute for Religion and Public Policy. "Those who challenge this assertion in the name of realism are the true idealists. In the real world, there is no standard of responsibility sufficient to make the permanent retention of nuclear weapons safe. Nuclear weapons bring the truly unthinkable—the instantaneous destruction of a city, a nation, or human civilization—into the realm of the possible. As long as nuclear weapons exist, each of these horrific events must be assigned a probability, and, over time, any non negative probability migrates toward certainty."

### 'Global Cooperation Needed to Prevent Nuclear Terrorism'

Panelists focused on the explosive situation existing between Pakistan and India that is putting millions of lives at risk. "There continue to be extremely high levels of troop mobilization on the borders," said Admiral Ramu Ramdas, a retired Chief of Naval Staff with the Indian Armed Forces. "There is a high possibility indeed of this escalating into actual hostilities, and from there into

nuclear exchange with catastrophic implications for not only the two countries, but for the region as a whole."

"For all the pronouncements of no first use," said Mr. Shaw, "the reality is that the command and control systems on both sides are primitive to say the least, thereby adding an even more dangerous dimension to the entire situation."

Referring to terrorism, Mr. Shaw said that controlling access to weapons-usable nuclear material is essential to the prevention of nuclear terrorism. "Even a small theft of the right kind of nuclear material could radically promote efforts by a terrorist organization to build a bomb," Mr. Shaw said.

He commented on the U.S. efforts to build a missile defense shield. "Efforts to use a nuclear deterrent threat to stop a terrorist armed with a nuclear explosive device would have important shortcomings in common with trying to cure head lice with a handgun,"

Mr. Shaw said. "At the same time, even one primitive nuclear explosive could give such an undeterrable group or individual the capability to cause thousands of deaths. The civilized world has no higher security priority than preventing terrorists from acquiring nuclear weapons."

"A global effort is clearly needed," Mr. Granoff said, "to safeguard nuclear materials, to intercept and respond to illicit trafficking and to ensure the protection of facilities against terrorism and sabotage."

Speakers issued clear statements to the United States to reconsider its unilateral policies.

"Any type of exclusivism—dividing humanity into believers and non-believers—be it one religion or one economic model, is itself sowing the seeds of violence and disharmony," said Admiral Ramdas.

Referring to "Armament Protected Consumerism," a buzzword circulating at the Symposium, Admiral Ramdas said that U.S. peacemakers are often accompanied on the same visit by another official seeking to sell the latest weapon or sensor."

He said the real effort should be directed at the high levels of global disparity, which are fundamentally unjust and incompatible with true global security. "We need to work collectively to strengthen institutions—political, economic and social, that can redress such grievances and begin to eliminate the root causes of injustice that can contribute to the false path of terrorism," Admiral Ramdas said.

Hindu Nationalism and Extremism

The Honorable Nina Shea chaired a panel discussing religious extremists and their destabilizing influence on nationalism in India.

An appearance was made by Dev Teereth Ji Maharaj of Puri, the head of the Govardhan Puri Peeth, one of the four governing institutions of Hinduism. The Maharaj criticized the racist policies of the extremist groups and called on all religions faiths in India to respect the values of the other.

Panelists articulated the nuclear dimension added by the political entry of the religious nationalist group the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP), which established power in 1998. Long before it came to power it had promised to turn India "into an explicitly declared nuclear power." (The Washington Post, "Testing Time in India," May 19, 1996.)

According to Mr. Shaw, "The advent of a Hindu nationalist government in India was inseparably linked to India's 1998 nuclear explosives tests and explicit declaration of a nuclear arsenal." He noted that although India's May 11 tests caused many in Washington to question whether or not the intelligence apparatus had failed, "it would hardly have taken a spy satellite to predict what anyone could read in The Washington Post."

The United States "did not see the writing on the walls when [it] made [its] assessments about India's immediate future during the elections of 1998," said P.D. John., Executive Director of the Policy Institute for Religion and State.

Dr. Lise McKean, author of "Divine Enterprise, Gurus and the Hindu Nationalist Movement," discussed the formation of the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) and other member groups of the Sangh Parivar. According to Dr. McKean, the VHP supporters belong to the BJP as well as to Congress and other political parties. "Such followers and members participate in religious organizations for the purpose of obtaining power." They model their movement on the fascist movement in Italy, which is viewed by many extreme nationalists as a positive alternative to the democracy manifested by the British.

Facing these threats to global security, the Policy Institute for Religion and State issued the following recommendations to the United States regarding its policies towards South Asia:

- The U.S. government send a clear message to extremist political parties that they can not be legitimate forces in a functioning democracy.
- We urge U.S. congressional delegations and state department officials to meet with the religious leadership in South Asia who favor pluralism and fair democracies when they meet with government leaders and opposition political parties.
- We urge a restriction on the funding efforts of identified religious extremist groups in the United States and Europe.
- We strongly favor an investigation into the fundraising activities and the channeling of that money by some South Asian extremist ideological groups based in the United States.
- The United States must immediately start programs to strengthen the institutions of democracy in South Asia and give prominence and recognition to those political leaders who favor pluralism and democracy.
- We must have long-term policies in the region and set our priorities for the mutual benefit of the people of both South Asia and the United States.
- U.S. policies must reflect all aspects of our interest and not just the economic or military interest in the region.

- Programs must be developed to expose the young and upcoming political leadership from South Asia to the outside world through exchange programs and by providing educational options to learn about how a healthy democracy functions.
- The United States must try to be an honest broker and not seen as favoring one regime or one party for any political, strategic, or trade benefits. It is the most important way to maintain credibility and standing in the region.
- The United States must clearly avoid applying a double standard when it comes to certain governments.
- A trouble spot in South Asia must be identified and dealt with before it manifests itself.
- We recommend a training program for congressional staff to learn more about the region and preferably travel to the region before advising members of congress on the issues that confront South Asia.

### **Awards Banquet**

"We need not agree on theology to address cooperatively global crises of human rights, justice, poverty, hunger, ecological destruction and nuclear annihilation," Mr. Granoff said during the keynote of the Awards Banquet honoring the efforts of those who had worked toward achieving stability in South Asia. "Compassion and helping those in need are universally recognized spiritual principles, but we need to communicate to learn this.

"Why should the imam not visit the temple and share and the rabbi not visit the mosque and share? Will someone be diminished or confused? Why should the priest not share with the minister and so on. How else will we really learn what is profoundly held as truth by our neighbor so that we might love one another?"

Mr. Granoff said there was a community of some 20,000 cannibals living in the flat mangrove swampland of Indonesian New Guinea. Calling themselves the Asmat, "the human beings," they refer to everyone else as Manowe, "the edible ones." "What difference is there in the civilized world," Mr. Granoff said "where trillions have been spent since World War II organizing to destroy all life on the planet many times over? In the Post Cold War, conflicts rage in over thirty killing fields driven by religious, ethnic and racial bigotry. In good conscience, religions permit this honor where the vast majority of victims are innocent women and children—noncombatants.

"We are fully aware of each tradition's ability to destroy the other either by conversion or genocide. We are also aware that there are no edible ones—there is just us." Quoting Saadi, the Persian Poet of the 13th Century, Mr. Granoff said. " 'You who fail to feel the pain of others cannot be called truly human.' It is up to each nation, each individual, to make the choice."

### **South Asia Crystal awards were presented to:**

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr., for Promoting International Understanding  
The Honorable Sam Brownback, for Combating International Trafficking in Persons

The Honorable Ed Bryant, for Exemplary Partnership with the Indian-American Community  
The Honorable Robert J. Dole for Statesmanship  
The Honorable Henry J. Hyde for Promoting International Understanding  
The Honorable Joseph R. Pitts, for Promoting International Religious Freedom  
The Honorable Dana Rohrabacher, for Human Rights Advocacy  
The Honorable Ronnie Shows, for Exemplary Partnership with the Indian-American Christian Community.  
Shri. Jagadguru Shankaracharya Swami Shri Adhokshjanand Dev Teerath Ji Maharaj of Puri for Efforts to  
Keep India a Pluralistic Country

**Awards were presented to the following individuals for outstanding contributions to the  
Community:**

Mr. Nazir Bhagat  
Dr. Jose Nidiry  
Mr. Kaleem Kawaja  
Professor B. P. Shah  
Mr. Charan Reddy  
Dr. Fred Semendy