

## **Bilateral Issues Confronting Regional Cooperation: A Case Study of Indo-Pak Relation in Context of SAARC Experience**

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### **Abstract:**

*In the recent years there has seen a great increase in regional blocs internationally. The most important trend in the recent political system is proliferating of regional cooperative positioning across the world. South Asia is an economically underdeveloped and a politically volatile region of the world. The countries in the region are with different economic and developmental bases; however, these are socially and culturally homogeneous. The Prime purpose of this research study is to focus and highlight the importance of SAARC in South Asian region.*

**Keywords:** SAARC, Relations, Regional, India, Pakistan etc.

### **Introduction:**

Today's world is at a turning point. The changes that world experience is, revolutionary, global, fundamental and as well as structural in content. In the 21st century optimism sense prevails for attaining prosperity and peace by effective role-of regional and global organizations. In the recent years there has seen a great increase in regional blocs internationally. The widely accepted definition of a region is "a region with definite indices that endorse its existence. The countries which have close geographical contiguity with one another can be categorized as the region" (Mario. T, 2007). Regionalism anticipates a geographic region and different techniques of the conflicts resolution and probabilities of pursuing regular foreign policy objectives in more than a regional context. It also furnishes a mechanism for unification and integration leading to strong community building (Mohan. B, 1992).

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The most important trend in the recent political system is proliferating of regional cooperative positioning across the world. The concept of economic integration acquired political currency in the international political system with the birth event of European Union. The other leading examples of regional groupings are NAFTA, AU, SADC, WTO and ASEAN.

South Asia is an economically underdeveloped and a politically volatile region of the world. The countries in the region are with different economic and developmental bases; however, these are socially and culturally homogeneous. Nearly all the countries follow democratic pluralism. South Asia has a common history, yet political division is creating constraints in intensifying intra-regional homogeneity. All the countries have common various economic features like poverty, mass unemployment and income inequality. Relations among the south Asian countries turn out to be crucial as an outline of analysis to visualize a regional future regarding political and economic stability of the region (Michael. S, 2016).

SAARC was long-established in the year 1985 for endorsement of regional cooperation among South Asia countries, and the significance of regionalism has been amplified since its commencement. The core idea behind its foundation was the endorsement of socio-economic and political interaction between the South Asia countries. The proposal of regional cooperation in South Asia countries was presented in 1980 by the President of state of Bangladesh (Sir Zia-ur-Rehman). His thought was that regional cooperation will assist these countries to come closer and effort for economic and trade collaboration. South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation as established in Dhaka on 8<sup>th</sup> December, 1985. Charter members of the organization are Bhutan, Bangladesh, Maldives, Pakistan, Nepal, India and Sri Lanka. The Afghanistan coupled the organization in 2007 as its 8<sup>th</sup> member. The observer states are China, Iran, Japan, Myanmar, South Korea, Mauritius, Australia United States and the European Union.

The Charter of SAARC emphasizes the craving of South Asian States to endorse peace, stability and development in the area. The SAARC has been working since 1985 yet it could not turn into an active regional organization and the vision of greater cooperation among countries could not materialize completely. The bilateral issues between the states of the region are considering being the major barrier to cooperation. The Charter of SAARC built-in two provisions to discrete it from the bilateral issues.

Firstly, according to the charter the bilateral issues could not be address in the SAARC meetings. Secondly, all resolutions were to be taken with the approval of all members. Aside from the continuation of conflicts among the diverse states of the region, there is also a lack of consensus among countries on the mechanism to address the bilateral disputes and conflict resolution procedure. The disputed issues between the South Asian countries have evidences themselves in categorically wars (Pakistan and India), low-potency conflicts (Bangladesh and India, and the military presence of India in Sri Lanka, terrorism cross border (Kashmir state), a devastating arms race between the nuclear rivals of the region, and hostile propaganda. The SAARC has not been effective in managing these bilateral conflicts and its advancement has been flawed because of these conflicts, as observe in case of held up summits and cancellation of meetings.

The major South Asia issues/conflicts realm from boundary and strategic disputes, migration issues, water body's management, transit and trade and issues/ conflicts and ethno-nationalist interferences. The conflicts born from these sources are stubborn and prolonged between India and Pakistan. The mistrust between the rivals has prevailed intact since they achieve their independence in 1947. The four wars have been fought between Pakistan and India (1947-48, 1965, 1971 and 1999) and furthermore faced a large number of crises among which the impending for violence was elevated (1984, 1987, 1990 and 2002). The unresolved Kashmir dispute, nuclear and missile rivalry AND Terrorist threats are the major areas of strain between these two countries. The cooperation and Peace in South Asia is a hostage to India and Pakistan conflicts. There is substantial pledges and paperwork made on the summits and all other SAARC meetings to promote the procedure of regional cooperation yet the qualitative transform does not occur because the mindset of main stakeholders remain atavism. Established with a dream to create a South Asian identity, the SAARC has been incapable to deliver this pledge and has been condemn for its shortcomings and failures. Some features that can be notorious in the chassis of SAARC are: its failure to hoists inter-state issues and conflicts that has assembled it detain to the nationalistic interests and bilateral conflicts of member states. The lack of reliance among South Asian countries: SAARC was established with constraints and disabilities, which were basically self-imposed. It embraces a usable advancement of cooperation in all other non-controversial sectors like cultural and social fields. The SAARC presents the ideology that all the resolutions have to fabricate collectively and for this reason no contentious and bilateral issue can be presented as agenda. This exhibits a frail inter-state relationship

toward impartial involvement in making policies for the people of South Asia.

One important mode to deal with these challenges is to change the behavior approach and attitudes the concerned countries so that new ideas, approaches and theories are given a reasonable chance. This would require prudent vision, tolerance, generosity, and practical approach to disengage countries from the past issues and move in the track of development in order to deal with these problems which obstruct the route of regional development. It is believed that as the countries of the region develop mutual buoyancy, the recital of SAARC will improve.

**Problem Statement:**

I have chosen the topic “Bilateral issues confronting regional cooperation (a case study of Indo-Pak relation in context of SAARC experience) to examine SAARC functioning with the objective of identifying its problems and achievements. Why and how conflicts among the states, especially India and Pakistan affected the performance of SAARC?

**Significance of the Study:**

This attempt to depict the regional political measures in South Asia together with regional co-operation and their various up and downward trends has turn out to be very sensitive and highlights inside and outside of South Asia region. The bilateral conflicts and other correlations indo Pak and the interaction with other all South Asian states itself indicates the implication of study. The media and other communication devises have provoked interest in people and public are very keen to these progress in this region. The study therefore, grasps great importance from viewpoint of regional security and peace.

**Objectives of the Study:**

This study pays attention on the following objectives.

1. To review the various dimensions of SAARC as an important regional organization of south Asia region.
2. To assess the performance of SAARC as a regional organization.

3. To scrutinize the working of SAARC in the light of Pakistan and India relations.
4. To study major bilateral issue which hamper progress of SAARC.
5. To examine the basic issues which hampering; the smooth running of co-operation in this region

#### **Limitation of Study:**

There were versatile areas, which generate many constraints while completing this study. The non-availability of primary sources was a chief constraint. The unstable relationships among these neighbor nations especially between Pakistan and India and its instantaneous shifts of policies also created difficulty while examining the incidents and events.

#### **Literature Review:**

Basu. A and Ray. C. (2006) reported that one of the key objectives of the SAARC is to safeguard friendly and peaceful relationship among its states and initiate ultimate cooperation in various areas among them. But such an enterprise would generate a constant tension among supra-nationality and state sovereignty.

Sridharan. K (2008) reported that both the ASEAN and the SAARC had a role in govern bilateral conflicts in their particular regions. He stated that the ASEAN detestation of its feeble official endorsement to solve conflicts proved to be more efficacious than SAARC. He identified and explained the important constituent, that had helped or slowed down the ASEAN and the SAARC in resolving and dealing with bilateral regional issues/ conflicts.

Tshering. L (2013) stated that in spite of traffic of financial statistics, reductions in tariff, exchange of views at ministerial levels along with signing of trade accords, the progression of regional cooperation is excessively slow in the region of South Asian. The South Asia is probably the minimal integrated area in the world. According to him the failure could be due to lack of eagerness of the regional federations to struggle for the communal good of the belt.

Samad. A (2014) reported that a key feature in the failure of South Asian regional cooperation in south Asia is the no rational enmity between Pakistan and India. The Pakistan-India conflicts has vetoed the region from

utilizing many right set of circumstances that this cooperation put up offer, together with the benefits of economic stability, energy resources and water security and social and cultural interaction.

Dr. Ahmad.M (2016) investigated the causes of the numerous cancellations of Summits of SAARC. He analyses impact of cancellation of Summits on the progression of regional cooperation. He concluded that the Summit provides regional leaders a chance to meet on a regular basis and also provides them a milieu to debate on issues of widespread interests. However, SAARC members have not reaped benefits from this great forum due to its recurrent cancellation.

Rashid.K.M. *etal* (2016) provided an overview of Regional Cooperation in the group of federations of South Asian regional cooperation. They highlighted the need for venture by relevant South Asian governments and an entitle to move ahead of lip service, speechifying, and fabricates statistics to deal with both health and literacy along with humanizing the climate of investment, and, most significant, substantially ameliorating indicators of governance.

Arshad, F and Lubna, A.A. (2017) stated that regionalism has become indispensable phenomenon after world war two in international relations. The era from 1950s to 1960s observed the amplification of various regional grouping in varied regions of the world. In 1980s the progression of regionalization coincided with globalization. They stated that the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation provides regional uniqueness and status to undeveloped countries of South Asia and SAARC also deal with the issues like overpopulation, terrorism, poverty, unemployment, and extremism etc. to endow with a better environment to the deprive people of South Asia.

### **Research Methodology:**

#### **Research Design:**

Qualitative Research Design was used

#### **Data Sources:**

The research was carried out by engaging descriptive, historical and analytical approaches to keep on and find out the conclusion. Various resources like review of literature, primary and secondary sources were

consulted to get perspective of SAARC performance and bilateral issues. Data were collected from books, Internet searches and journals.

**Conclusion:**

South Asia is an economically underdeveloped and a politically volatile region of the world. The countries in the region are with different economic and developmental bases; however, these are socially and culturally homogeneous. Nearly all the countries follow democratic pluralism. South Asia has a common history, yet political division is creating constraints in intensifying intra-regional homogeneity. All the countries have common various economic features like poverty, mass unemployment and income inequality. Relations among the south Asian countries turn out to be crucial as an outline of analysis to visualize a regional future regarding political and economic stability of the region.

The SAARC has been working since 1985 yet it could not turn into an active regional organization and the vision of greater cooperation among countries could not materialize completely. The bilateral issues between the states of the region are considering being the major barrier to cooperation. The SAARC has not been effective in managing these bilateral conflicts and its advancement has been flawed because of these conflicts, as observe in case of held up summits and cancellation of meetings.

One important mode to deal with these challenges is to change the behavior approach and attitudes the concerned countries so that new ideas, approaches and theories are given a reasonable chance. This would require prudent vision, tolerance, generosity, and practical approach to disengage countries from the past issues and move in the track of development in order to deal with these problems which obstruct the route of regional development. It is believed that as the countries of the region develop mutual buoyancy, the recital of SAARC will improve.

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