THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL STUDIES

Regionalism in the Era of Globalization: The Case Study of the SAARC in South Asia

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Abstract:
Globalisation has emerged as one of the defining features of International Relations, specifically since the latter half of the decade of the 1990s. With the preponderance of the World Bank and the IMF in each and every sector of global dynamics, there is no doubt that the world today seems to be dominated by the unstoppable forces unleashed by Globalisation and Economic Liberalization. This leads to the inevitable question- do regional organizations stand a chance in the globalised world of the 21st century? Regionalism has often been regarded as a panacea for resolving all the ills besetting a particular region. As such, the E.U., The ASEAN and the OAU-AU have all tasted varying degrees of success in the field of regional collaborative ventures. This brings us to the success-failure paradigm in the anvil of the regional cooperative endeavour in South Asia—the SAARC.

Keyword: Globalisation, Regionalism, Security, The success-failure of regional efforts, the E.U. experience, The reasons for growth of regional organizations, Origin of SAAR, SAARC in the 21st century

1. Introduction

The dawn of the new millennium heralded the beginning of a new chapter in the constantly evolving history of human civilization. The people throughout the world woke up to new opportunities and an entirely new future. However, the harsh inescapable realities of contemporary global politics soon dimmed the colours of a truly rosy picture, and the people realized that they had inherited a world full of violence and bloodshed, resonating with the horrors of the past decades.

The veritable end of the Communism in Europe, brought on by the collapse of the monolithic Soviet Union in 1991, brought the Cold War to its inevitable end. Along with it, the end of the reigning bipolar structure paved the way for the emergence of a completely transformed international structure. The West hailed the disintegration of the Soviet superpower and triumphantly claimed that the

"FREE WORLD" had won, and the "Evil Empire", as professed by the former U.S. President Ronald Reagan had been vanquished.

However, though it is an indisputable fact that there were certain profound changes in the reigning power dynamics, the vision of the emergence of the "New World Order", at the end of the era of super power rivalry, was quite opaque. In the absence of a clear picture of the future direction, the entire world structure was plagued by the absence of a single dominant structure to define the emerging realities. In their places, what clearly emerged were 3 overlapping structures, defining the contours of global politics. These were:-

I.   Declining superpower hegemony;
II. United globalism, and nationals heralding the triumph of the unity of the people worldwide;
III. The proliferation of Regionalism; spearheaded by a powerful triad, championed by the Asia-Pacific Triad, the E.U., and the North Atlantic trading bloc.

The one notion that pervaded the entire global structure in the 20th century, and continues its unrelenting presence in the new millennium is definitely the over arching   notion of "Security".

Security as a concept has become increasingly complex in the modern times. Its meaning goes far beyond the requirements of military defense against a 'particular enemy' (the traditional notion of security), and stresses the need to take into account the other aspects considered vital to human life and stability, like food, energy, environment, communication and social security—falling essentially in the category of non traditional forms of security. The most all-encompassing notion of non-traditional security is definitely "human security", which incorporates socio-economic development within the framework of non-traditional security, thus making the notion more holistic and acceptable to the international community.

2. The Security Paradox in South Asia

It is an established fact that the task of creating any security agenda for any particular region, must take into account the popular concerns regarding security, including both traditional and nontraditional issues, prevalent in the particular region. The evolution of a comprehensive framework of region specific security agenda must acknowledge the existing regional complexities. No doubt, with slowly changing and complex social structures with teeming millions steeped in poverty, and with an unbridled unsustainable development scheme unleashed by the forces of globalization, issues relating to Human Security have become major issues of concern in all the developing and under developed parts of the world.. And South Asia, with the specific region of the Indian subcontinent, has definitely faced the most generic problem in evolving a definite regional security framework, for addressing its indigenous regional complexities.

Chronic poverty and underdevelopment continue to be the most obvious and pernicious threat to human security in the region of South Asia. The teeming millions in the region wallow in poverty and destitution, which in turn, gives rise to numerous socio-political ills. Naturally, the need for enhancement of regional human security is particularly felt in the context of the region, experiencing the process of globalization. The process of globalization has resulted in greater unevenness mainly benefitting the developed world, while in the developing world; the benefits have accrued only to a few developing countries. Large sections of the already impoverished population have found themselves most often, at the receiving end of the globalization policies, during the early years of liberalization process. The major countries of the region of South Asia, which had initiated and adopted the Structural Adjustmemt Policies (SAPs) of growth and development, soon found large sections of their societies at the receiving end of such policies. Thus in spite of experiencing rise in economic performances, South Asia continued to be one of the world's most underdeveloped regions. The Three Tables given below (1, 2 and 3), provide some of the indicators of the dismal standards of life in all the South Asian countries.

Very High &High Human Development (1-85)	Medium Human Development(86-127)	Low Human Development(128-169)
	Sri Lanka(91), Maldives(107), India(119), Pakistan(125), Bhutan(125)	Bangladesh(129), Nepal(138), Afghanistan(155).

Table 1: Human Development for South Asia
Source: UNDP Human Development Report, 2010.

Countries	Life Expectancy (Years) 2010	Adult Literacy Rate(%age 15 years and above) 2010	Combined Enrolment Ratio-Primary, Secondary and Tertiary school(%) 2010	GDP Per Capita US$2010
Sri Lanka	74.3	90.7	63	4390
Maldives	67	96.3	69	-
India	63.6	61	62	3139
Pakistan	63.4	49.9	38	2225
Bhutan	63.4	47	-	1969
Bangladesh	63.3	-	57	1870
Nepal	62.1	48.6	57	1490
Afghanistan	46	28.1	45.3	-
South Asia(in its entirety)	63.7	60.9	56	3072

Table 2: Selected Human Development Indicators: South Asia (I)
Source: UNDP Human Development Report, 2010

Countries	ADULT ILLITERACY RATE(%) 15 YEARS and Older,2010	Population Without Sustainable access to an improved water source(%),2010	Population Below Income Poverty Line(%) Below $ 1 a day/Below $2 a day/Below The National Poverty Line		
Sri Lanka	9.3	21	56/	41.6/	25.0
Maldives	3.7	17	-/	-/	-/
India	39.0	14	34.7/	79.9	26.6
Pakistan	50.1	9	17.0/	73.6/	32.6
Bhutan	-	38	-/	-/	-/
Bangladesh	-	26	36.0/	82.8/	49
Nepal	51.4	10	24.1/	68.5/	30.9
Afghanistan	71.9	61	-/	-/	-/

Table 3: Selected Human Development Indicators (II)
Source: UNDP Human Development Report 2010

Existence of underdevelopment and a lack of human security have resulted in a prevailing sense of deprivation and insecurity in the region of South Asia, which have often translated into violent conflicts. Especially at the intra-state level, lack of traditional security has continued to be an essential problem plaguing the region. Hence, it is quite apparent that along with the non-traditional aspects of security, the traditional security-oriented themes continue to remain crucially important to reach any real breakthrough in improving regional relations and improving the quality of life in the region. Such developments have led scholars like Barry Buzan And Ole Weaver (2003), to postulate the "Regional Security Complex Theory",(RSCT). This theory makes an attempt to persuade the main streams of both International Relations (IR) theory and diplomatic practice to pay attention to regions as one of the main levels of International Relations. And it is an indubitable fact that the entire phenomena of Region Based approaches in IR have clearly evolved from the all-encompassing notion of "Regionalism" itself.

3. Regionalism: An End by Itself

Regionalism refers to a process of integration among two or more states on a geographically confined basis. In 1970, Ernst B. Haas postulated a new definition of international integration—regional integration. Regional integration is concerned primarily with how and why states cease to be wholly sovereign, how they merge with their neighbours voluntarily, and ultimately acquire new tactics for resolving conflicts among themselves.[8] And a crucial way of looking at the place of regions in contemporary IR Theory is the "Regional Security Community Theory" and the idea of "Regional Security Communities", which was first introduced by Karl Deutsch and several other collaborators in 1957.[9] Karl Deutsch considered regional integration as a condition and laid great emphasis on the attainment of a "sense of community". In fact, Deutsch defined a Regional Security Community as being a region, or grouping of states, that have achieved such a level of cooperation, or even integration, that they simply do not consider fighting each other as a realistic possibility to resolve disputes. The key, to quote Deutsch is that such regions or groups have achieved a state where there are "dependable expectations of peaceful change".

Within a broad arena of the Regional Integration Theory, there are fundamentally two basic approaches --

i)The Integration Approach, and

ii) The Associational Approach. It is actually the Integration Approach which has evolved as the most essential framework of analysis in the understanding of regionalism, in the context of contemporary IR.

3.1. Regionalism: A Remedy for All Ills?

Regionalism has been a significant phenomenon in the post Second World War International Relations. Certainly, "regional approach" to resolving international crises or conflicts is much older than that. The 19th century "Concert Of Europe" is a good example. However, the emergence of a more organized inter-governmental groups in a geographical region was essentially a post World War II development. The period between the 1950s and the 1960s witnessed the rise of many regional groups in different parts of the world—The European Economic Community in Western Europe, The Organization Of African Unity in Africa, The OPEC in the Middle East, The Association of South East Asian Nations(ASEAN),IN South Asia, to name a few. These groupings have different aims and purposes respectively. Some were created for military purposes(NATO), some for political objectives ,such as promoting the cause of national liberation movements(OAU-AU), while some others were purely economic cartels (The OPEC).Among these groupings, the success of the EEC was the most spectacular, but the same was not replicated to a similar extent in other parts of the world. By the end of the 1980s, some of the established hitherto successful organizations had ceased to exist. However, the end of the Cold War gave a new fillip to the content of regionalism, and the process of globalization added a new vigour. And it is in this context, that the notion of "Regions" and "Regionalism" acquired whole new meanings in the realm of IR.

 "Regions" can be defined as primarily geographical entities emerging as more or less integrated units on the basis of shared interests or identities. Regionalism is a political process that leads to enhanced integration in a geographical region. Bjorn Hettne and Fredrik Soderbaum have made a comprehensive attempt to analyse "Regionalism" in South Asia. Hettne uses the term "region-ness" to indicate the different levels of integration in a geographical unit. According to him there are primarily five levels of "region-ness", which encompass –i) A region as a geographical unit or regional space, ii) Region as a social system or regional complex, iii)A region as a transnational cooperation or a regional society, iv) A region as civil society or regional community, and v) A region as acting subject or "region state". Based on these five levels of region-ness and the success of security and development, regionalism can be classified into three categories, namely:-a)Core regions, which are politically strong and economically dynamic; b)Intermediate regions, which are closely linked with some other core region; and c)Peripheral regions, which are politically turbulent and economically stagnant.

4. A Move towards Cooperative Security in South Asia

In South Asia, and specifically in the Indian subcontinent ,it has been an undeniable fact that the Cold War, which permeated the entire world politics and economy from the 1940s, engineered a super power system which grievously endangered the possibility of evolving a successful intra-regional system of the contemporary times. India, one of the largest countries in the South Asian region, professed the avowed principle of Non-alignment, and refused to become a part of the bipolar bloc system, sponsored by the two super powers, the USA and the Soviet Union. Gradually, even the regions of South Asia became embroiled in the Cold War politics, as epitomized by intense rivalry between the two neighbours, India and Pakistan. In spite of the escalating tensions between the two largest nations of the Indian subcontinent, one can never ignore the fact that, for over centuries, the entire vast land mass has been characterized and bound together by the common thread of cultural-linguistic—social homogeneity, and traditional commonality of

interests. In reality, ensuring cooperative security through greater regional endeavours has assumed greater relevance and significance for the developing countries of South Asia, in the post Cold War period.

It is unfortunate that the progress towards ensuring enhanced cooperative security in South Asia has been halting and often faltering. Given the changing nature of global politics as well as economics, it has become quite imperative for all the countries of South Asia to get involved in the process of ensuring constructive regional engagement ,and initiate reciprocal policy initiatives. The process requires further momentum through bilateral as well as multilateral initiatives. Furthermore, the south Asian policy makers must give due recognition to 'pluralism', which could go a long way in resolving vexed issues and also aim to reduce tensions, in order to create a better political and strategic atmosphere in the region. This would ensure the development of a "regional cooperative agenda" for the Indian subcontinent.While firmly remaining within the evolving field of peace and security issues, it has become extremely necessary to further develop the regional security agenda, as well as to develop a specific regional or sub regional approach focusing on localized security concerns and peace building initiatives in the South Asian region. And it is indeed commendable that despite the tensions and violence that swept across the entire South Asia, following the horrors of Partition if 1947, the prospects of South Asian cooperation and integration have been bright indeed. And the process of evolving a clear vision of an integrated South Asia could be traced back to the decade of the 1920s, which ultimately culminated in the formation of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation—the SAARC.

And thus began a new era in the annals of integration for the entire region of South Asia.

5. SAARC: A 21st Century Anachronism

In South Asia, the evolution of the idea of regional cooperation can be traced back to the decade of the 1920s itself. In August 1926, at the Paris Congress for Peace, a manifesto of the Asian delegation was presented. It stated that if China, India and the rest of Asia were free, then one could definitely envisage a family of free people willing to live together in cooperation. After the end of the devastating First World War, the idea of a Pan Asian Community, headed by India, was mooted. In September 1945, the All India Congress Committee declared that a free India would inevitably seek the close and friendly associated with her neighbouring countries. This was followed by the concerted efforts on the part of India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, who unequivocally stated in the Asian Relations Conference that was held in 1947, that the time had come for the people of Asia to meet together, hold together, and advance together.

The notion of Pan Asianism, which was the avowed principle of India's foreign policy, ever since her independence, acted as a major fillip for the evolution and proliferation of the vision of regional cooperation in South Asia. The nationalist spirit in Indian Renaissance was associated with the realization on the part of the educated Indians that practically the whole of Asia was suffering from imperialistic oppression, and that the recent historical experience, and the destiny of the Asian countries were therefore, linked together. The rediscovery of India's ancient cultural influence in various Asian countries, further accentuated the sense of Asianism Hence it was quite apparent that when Jawaharlal Nehru convened the first Asian Relations Conference in New Delhi, in March 1947, and observed in his inaugural address, that in order to have ''one world'', it is imperative to ensure that all the countries of Asia must cooperate together for that larger ideal, he was merely giving concrete expression to a long felt idealistic aspiration of the Indian national movement.   All these endeavours found their realisation in the acceptance and constitution of the Colombo Plan. It represented Asia's most concrete effort at regional cooperation. The Colombo Plan was formally inaugurated on July 1, 1951. It symbolized the true efforts on the parts of South and South East Asia, to shed their difference, and to unite in a single cooperative venture leading to the establishment of an integrated regional organization.

In this context, the basic theoretical argument is that regionalism in South Asia, pursued within a functionalist paradigm and mainly through official channels, remained hostage to protecting the 'national identity'' defending the 'national interests', preserving the sanctity of 'national borders', and safeguarding the 'national security'. The nationalist discourse accords precedence to nation and nationalism over the region. Without the philosophical ethos underpinning the South Asian regionalism, the political leadership of these countries, have been unable to imagine and evolve a mindset that could be truly characterized as ''South Asian''. That is why the task of creating a South Asian mind and the necessary political and social milieu to forge a South Asian regional consciousness and develop a South asian community must be rooted in the domain of civil society. Unfettered by the nation-state, the players in the civil society, bound by a unique sense of solidarity, are better placed to conceive, shape and nurture the idea of ''South Asia''.

Due to the growth and proliferation of certain divisive forces, the entire region of South Asia continued to languish in a state of backwardness and underdevelopment, as the whole world advanced rapidly in terms of technologies, comparative advantage and global governance. In fact, the 2nd half of the 20th century, gradually came to be dominated by the quest for economic stability vis-a-vis political security.

Economic security requires access to resources, finances and markets necessary to sustain acceptable levels of welfare and state power. In this context, it cannot be denied that for developing countries the situation is far more precarious than the countries of the West, as their insecurity is a product of the prevailing international economic order, perpetuating the hegemony of the developed few, while reducing all others to a peripheral position. The complex system of interdependence and the increased politicisation of economic issues have made these states more vulnerable to the international economic system. In such a situation, regional economic cooperation in matters like enlarging markets leads definitely to higher levels of economic growth.

In Asia, the process of converging into a single unified regional economic entity was definitely initiated by the nations of East and South East Asia, which relegated their age old conflicts to the backburner and seized every opportunity for regional integration that emerged. However, one regrets to note that despite the enormous prospects of the region, the political leaders of South Asia, remained by and large, completely oblivious of the collective worth of the region. Given the miserable state of affairs, the onus fell on the civil

society in South Asia to don the mantle of responsibility, to ensure that interaction within the region could again start with renewed vigour. The burgeoning interaction at the level of the civil society in South Asia would not only ensure the rapid acceleration of the market driven integration within the region, but also transfer the entire region of South Asia into a seamless territory. The continuous level of interaction among the people of South Asia, along with the informal channels of communication, would definitely foster a sense of solidarity, cutting across all borders. The growing traffic at a personal level and through the market, within South Asia, has gradually been manifesting in the plethora of institutional exchanges of the academic, cultural and professional community. Through the multitude of seminars, workshops and through constant people-to-people interaction, the inhabitants of South Asia have become more conscious of the concerns of the entire region, and have realised the fact that it is possible to confront and resolve these problems only through a shared discourse and composite dialogue.

Studies conducted in the regional integration framework indicate that similar political systems, which provide a congruence in their ideological and political perceptions, common foreign policy orientations regarding major issues and common threat perception and consensus regarding the role of pivotal power providing internal cohesiveness in the region, are required for the formulation of regional organizations, as perceived in the creation of strategic alliances like the NATO, and the economic organizations like the EEC and the ASEAN,. Taking the above factors into consideration, in the South Asian context, one may not be hopeful of finding the existence of cooperation at the regional level. All national systems, at the regional level, are not ideologically or politically in congruence, nor do they profess a common foreign policy in respect of major issues, and these nations possess different strategic and threat perceptions. Moreover, since pivotal powers in such regional systems are often used as intrusive actors by one regional power or the other, the intensity of mutual mistrust further intensifier the absence of internal cohesiveness. Mohammad Ayoob has succinctly stated that South Asia, is destined in the foreseeable future, to uneasily occupy the middle ground between regional polarisation and regional cooperation, and that it would be imprudent to expect much more in terms of regional cooperation

The nations of South Asia were quick to take cognizance of the fact that the existing international economic order had been operating against the basic interests of the poor nations. Thus it was imperative that the South should explore seriously the ways of mutual economic cooperation, and reduce its dependence on the North. The scope of regional economic cooperation is so vast, that if the initiative is present, then all the poor nations of every region can increase their interdependence on each other, and thereby reduce their dependence on the industrially advanced and rich countries. Regional economic associations, inspired by the European Union (EU) are increasingly seen as necessary for the achievement of economic security in a multipolar context of global interdependence. In South Asia, the fundamental necessity for ensuring the comprehensive development of the entire region, was the impetus that kick started the process of evolving a regional association, ultimately leading to the creation of the SAARC in 1985.

5.1. The Charter and Its Manifestations

The SAARC Charter is a comprehensive document which clearly stipulates the aims and objectives of the regional association. The objectives as enumerated in the Charter include - promotion of welfare of the people of South Asia, the acceleration of economic growth, the promotion and strengthening of collective self reliance, the contribution to mutual trust, and the understanding and resolution of one other's problems in the region.

The SAARC Charter consists of ten fundamental articles. Among them Article X is of prime significance. Article X of the Charter of the SAARC deals primarily with the general provisions of the regional association. This Article states that:

      1 Decisions at all levels shall be taken on the basis of unanimity.

      2 Bilateral and Contentious issues shall be excluded from the deliberations.

The crux of the provisions, as stipulated in Article X of the SAARC Charter, has been subject of great controversy and recurring debates. SAARC is a regional association, constituted by seven South Asian nations. Though the emphasis has been on multilateral negotiations and harmonious relations among the member countries, one cannot simply ignore the fact that the bilateral issues which create animosity among the members, can't be avoided and not be discussed at all. This is a Utopian concept, which cannot reflect the reality and complexity of the existing circumstances. And according to many noted analysts, it has been this Article, which has impeded the smooth and effective functioning of the SAARC, to a considerable extent.

In spite of the plethora of problems plaguing the very notion of an integrated   regional association in South Asia, it would be grievously erroneous to turn a blind eye to the achievements of the SAARC, in the years gone by. Since its establishment in 1985, and the subsequent summits - Dhaka 1985, Bangalore 1986, Kathmandu - 1987, Islamabad - 1988, Male - 1990, Colombo - 1991, Dhaka - 1993, New Delhi - 1995, Male - 1997, Colombo - 1998, Kathmandu - 2002, Islamabad - 2004, Dhaka - 2005, New Delhi - April 2007, Colombo 2008, Thimpu - 2010, Addu city - 2011, Kathmandu-2014, and Pakistan would host the 19th summit in 2016.

The achievements and the pogrammes adopted in the platform of the SAARC have sought to reflect and realise the basic aims and objectives of the regional association. In the first few summits, in the later half of the 1980s and the early 1990s, the member nations sought to expand the purview of the SAARC, and launched several new action programmes to bring the people of SAARC together, primarily ensuring that efforts for regional cooperation did not get bogged down by any extraneous factors. In order to promote people to people contact in the SAARC region, these summits took the following initiatives -

    1. SAARC Audio Visual Exchange (SAVE) Programme,

    2. SAARC chairs, Fellowships and Scholarship Scheme (SCFSS) for providing greater interaction among students, scholars and academics in the SAARC region.

    3. SAARC Visa Exemption Scheme (SVES) for specified categories,

    4. SAARC Agricultural Information Centre, for strengthening agricultural research and development activities in the SAARC region.

5. Launching the SAARC Media Forum, for greater interaction among the media and channels of Communication among the member - nations

5.2. Challenges Confronting the SAARC

South Asia has gradually emerged as a developing region facing the challenges that have stemmed not only from demographic explosion, but also from the compulsions of economic development. The one concrete step necessary for mitigating such divergences has been the evolution of a integrated regional framework. Geographical contiguity of the member countries is the cornerstone for the formation of regional blocs, and consequently people in a region have a sense of nostalgia for their respective regional frameworks. E.U. is for Europeans, ASEAN for South East Asians; so is South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) for South Asians. South Asia is also marked by the presence of cross-border similarities in traditions, languages and customs in South Asia; and hence the individual countries in South Asia have come closer to each other in terms of culture, ethnicity and religion. In the context of South Asia being perceived as a ''geo strategic, geo economic unit'', what matters much are the relative efforts at cooperation .When globalization has set free both opportunities and challenges, there is need for the revival of commonality among people of South Asia, as has emerged in both Europe and South East Asia.

The SAARC was conceptualized as an integrated regional organization having a great future. However, these lofty hopes have been belied by the presence of several impediments. In order to discuss these impediments and their implications, it is pertinent to discuss the evolving criterions in which the SAARC unfolded in its present avtar.

Regional organizations have been considered as the means of regional as well as global integration, an in this process, a number of schools of thought viz. functionalism, federalism and neo-functionalism appeared in the anvils of political thought At this juncture, one needs to examine the specific reasons hampering the progress of the SAARC. The factor of geography that has been a great impediment in the effective functioning of the SAARC is India's central position in South Asia. The historical factor, has been a major impediment stemming from the British rule over the Indian sub-continent. The historical memory of the British domination has naturally made India's smaller neighbours apprehensive of the former's move in the region, and quite weary that India's actions might be motivated by hegemonistic ambitions. The divergences in the political systems of the South Asian countries are another cause of disharmony in the region. The differences in religious affinities have also contributed to a sense of divisiveness, permeating in the entire region. Pakistan, Bangladesh and Maldives are Islamic states, while Bhutan and Sri Lanka are avowed followers of Buddhism. Nepal is a predominantly Hindu Kingdom. Indian population in the border regions tend to share common ethnic bonds with the populations in the adjacent countries. This is true, for example, of Tamils and Sri Lanka, Muslims in Kashmir, Punjabis with their cousins in Pakistan, Indian populations bordering the Tarai region of Nepal, and even Keralites and their ties to the Gulf countries. The broad territorial division of ethnic groups within India and the strength of regional ethnic identities ensure that Indian policy towards the countries in question is often attentive to the preference of the domestic actors in these regions, as with Sri Lanka, where at one time the Indian government acquiesced in the brutal armed tactics of the LTTE. Similarly, there is widespread sympathy in Indian border regions for the campaign for autonomy in the Tarai region of Nepal, for which ''most Indian politicians and bureaucrats do not hesitate to express moral support.'' And Pakistan has been widely believed to have supported Sikh separatist movements within India's state of Punjab during the 1980s. It has often been categorically noted that because of India's vast size and heterogeneous society and polity, it has been home to many (often armed) movements aiming for sovereign status separate from the union. Some of these secessionist movements have allowed the neighbouring states interested in destabilising India, to interfere in its internal affairs.

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The emergence of India, Bangladesh and Pakistan - which were the parts of a single polity for about 190 years under the British Empire - as separate national entities, created a situation where the main conflict was centered on the issue of territorial inadequacies. The problem of development and in particular, the problems related to the management of natural resources has also been a major source of constraint in the anvils of the intra-state relations in South Asia. Each nation in South Asia always strive to safeguard its natural resources, at all costs India will not give an inch on the issue of having the maximum control over its natural resources. Bangladesh feels apprehensive that if it sells natural gas to India it will ultimately submit to Indian ambitions and interests. Nepal has

worries about its territories and natural resources being depleted, if it enters into too many hydroelectric arguments affecting its river resources. So there gradually emerges a problem of development of and   management of natural resources, which are essentially the fallouts of national complexes and insecurities. The problem of demography also vitiates the harmonious relations among the countries of South Asia. This region is one of the most populous regions of the world, and in the coming few decades, given the frightening speed of population explosion, there will be myriad pressures on South Asia, in terms of migration, economic burdens and a disadvantageous land-to-people ratio—Essentially, the Indo-centric nature of the region has been a major source of friction between India and her smaller neighbour. This has led to, on one hand, a ''big brotherly'' attitude on the part of India, which has often tried to step into the shoes of the British Raj and assume a ''leadership'' role. On the other hand, it has led to a pervading sense of threat and a ''fear psychosis'' among the smaller nations, instigating them to team up against India.

6. Major Power Intervention

A steady accumulation of global crises since the catastrophic attacks on the US in September 2001 transformed what in the previous decade had remained a somewhat academic debate about the likely shape of the post Cold War world order into an immediate and insistent matter of foreign policy. And exactly where South Asia would fit in the emerging world order inevitably formed a subset of the questions confronting the world leaders. For the policy makers of the U.S, Russia and China, implicated for decades in South Asia's strategic development, the question of the region's evolving strategic role and importance in the world has become especially urgent. For each of the external actors, shaping strategic policy towards South Asia, in the new century, continues to present formidable difficulties. No small part of the difficulty arises from the inescapable fact of the South Asian region's premier strategic dilemma, the longstanding and intractable rivalry, now nuclear, between India and Pakistan. And the Great - Power foreign policies, especially of the U.S. and China, in South Asia, have also had a tremendous bearing on the evolution and emergence of regional cooperative ventures in the region.

For most of the period between India's independence and the end of the Cold War, with the brief exception of the 1962 Sino - Indian war, India and the US remained at loggerheads over matters of both principle and national interest. However, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the decade of the 1990, provided a period of gradual rapprochment between the US and India. India's nuclear tests of 1998, though sharply criticised and met with sanctions by the US, were not allowed to obstruct USA's view of regarding India as a growing market for US companies, and a potentially helpful player in South Asia. Undoubtedly, throughout the Cold War era, and even more so in the light of USA's military offensive in Afghanistan, Pakistan was and continues to a prime player in the alignment of USA's South Asian Policy. However, the upward trend in Indo-US relations, especially in the aftermath of 11 September 2001, continues to be a major determinant of the equations in the South Asian polity in the present century. In fact, one of the key US motivations in courting India, especially through the game changing deal on nuclear cooperation consummated in 2008, and the gradual realisation on the part of the US administration, that Pakistan's sponsorship of cross border terrorism can no longer be ignored or condoned, has undoubtedly bolstered Delhi as a reliable democratic counterweight to China's growing influence in Asia and indeed the world.

And this brings us to the other Great Power with vital strategic and economic interests in the region - China. Analysts of the strained relationship between India and China have been divided into two camps on the issue of the prospects of a breakthrough in Sino-Indian relations. On the side are those strategic analysts who consider the enmity to be the natural outgrowth of a growing clash of interests between two of Asia's largest most populous and powerful players. On the other side are those who trace the enmity to more immediate and irresolvable irritants. Eminent China scholar John W. Graver Points to a fundamental ''security dilemma'' confounding Sino-Indian relations. He succinctly states that ''China harbors deep suspicions about possible future Indian policies towards Tibet, whereas India holds similar fears about possible Chinese intervention in a future Indo-Pakistan war. India struggles to maintain over, and China to neutralise Indian control over strategic frontier zones in the Himalayan lands of Nepal and Bhutan. In fact, the primary activities that constitute the Sino-Indian security dilemma are the Chinese efforts to establish and expand political and security relations with the countries of the South Asia - Indian Ocean region on the one hand, and Indian efforts to threaten the establishment of such links, on the other. From the Indian prospective, Chinese ''aggressive'' actives in this region include i) continuing nuclear, missile and conventional arms assistance to Pakistan, ii)Development of a military - intelligence relationship with Nepal, iii) mounting People's Liberation Army activities in the Indian Ocean; iv) formation of military relations with Bangladesh, and v) efforts to establish normal diplomatic relations with Bhutan. From China's prospective, these activities are fully warranted by two fundamental Chinese security vulnerabilities - i)ensuring the stability of China's control over Tibet, and ii) ensuring the safety of China's sea lines of communication across the Indian Ocean.

7. Economic Parameters of the SAARC

SAARC had begun its journey as essentially a regional organization which ameliorate the economic woes of South Asia and ensure that each and every member state would have competitive advantage in the world of development and prosperity. The 20th century had been remarkable in many ways, and no less remarkable was the double impact of Globalisation and Economic Liberalization on each and every contour of world politics. In this rapidly changing world of internal finances, it was earnestly desired by the leaders of South Asia, that SAARC would not only lend stability to the economies of the South Asian countries, but would also ensure that the member states could develop a very powerful voice in an era gradually being dominated by Globalisation and Economic Liberalization. However, the moribund stature of the SAARC has belied this grand hope. In an increasingly interconnected world of instant communications, rising popular expectations and relentless scrutiny, the national leadership in the relatively impoverished countries of South Asia is struggling to balance the competing demands for enhanced security, economic growth and environmental safety among

others. This task has been made more complicated with the intensification of the forces of globalisation that has brought with itself great opportunities as well as great perils. And in this context, it becomes necessary to examine the national economy in seven countries, (excluding Afghanistan, whose war ravaged economy has necessitated economic relief packages from across the globe), including how globalisation has influenced their policy choices and might impact their future. And thus it becomes imperative to ascertain the true meaning of Globalisation and Economic Liberalization in the annals of international economy.

The true meaning of the term "globalisation, its core contents and its impact on the economies and societies of developed versus developing countries, have been the focus of hotly contested debates for a long time. It would be extremely prudent to state that globalisation is a complex dynamic that is still unfolding. In reality, globalisation has long been a feature of the international system. Globalisation signals a logical progression of the free market capitalist ideology, and embracing it proactively can assist in devising a policy and regulatory framework that optimises the gains from this powerful force. At the international level, it underlines the need for policy coordination among the community of nations. And at the domestic level it underscores the need for generating wider clarity and subsequent consensus on proactive policy making where significant national actors and interacts act in concert to pursue realistic goals. In comparison, economic liberalization is relatively easier to comprehend. In essence, economic liberalization denotes an attitudinal change along with changes in the structure and processes of an economy that was hitherto closed to international markets. The structural and procedural derivatives of liberalization signify the entire gamut of changes that range from the deliberate policies of the governments to permit a greater role for market forces in the functioning of the economy. More broadly, it means a greater role for market forces to determine resource allocation in different sectors of production, as well as in the mobility of labour and capital. This is accompanied by a host of policy changes that a government enacts to implement economic liberalization. This has had a profound impact on the various contours of the SAARC.

It is a given fact of International Relations that political intransigencies can be overcome by economic considerations. The E.U. is the biggest example of te success of such an endeavour. The E.U has portrayed the supreme picture of two traditional rivals—Germany and France—setting apart their differences and coming together as a unified. The ASEAN in South East Asia is also an inspiration for all the aspiring regional organizations, as the component states have all been embroiled in protracted land-sea territorial disputes(Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Vietnam)—but which have unified and coagulated in a unified whole, to foster a common and united strategic and economic front in South East Asia. It was earnestly desired that South Asia would also follow these examples, and set forth for the realisation of the avowed principle of cooperation. However, this was not to be. And the SAARC ultimately floundered on the brink of disaster.

The two primary initiatives undertaken to foster regional economic cooperation in South Asia are the SOUTH Asian Preferential Trading Agreement (SAPTA), and the South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA). The SAFTA and the SAPTA would definitely ameliorate the financial woes of the region and ensure sustainable growth and development in the Indian Subcontinent. The Islamabad Declaration was a great step in this direction, with all the member-c=states of the SAARC, declaring their intention and commitment towards the reduction of the debilitating tariff barriers and doing away with the customs regulations. In fact, the states were determined to succeed in this realm. Extremely unfortunately, this avowed principle has also remained a pipe dream.

7.1. SAARC: Visions of a Better Future

Regional organizations are essentially constituted in order to bring together disparate entities, tide over the irreconcilable differences and form a coordinated whole, which would ensure the all round development and progress of the region under consideration. The main question that arises at this point, in the context of the SAARC, is whether this association has truly fulfilled the purpose for which it was created. The SAARC is beset with a plethora of problems: mutually suspicious relations among the member-states; the perennial acrimony between India and Pakistan; constant haggling in the ambit of economic considerations; India's relative omnipotence in the region, giving rise to a 'fear psychosis' among the other smaller states; and last, but not the least, the presence of certain major powers in the region, all with an eye on the treasures of the rich subcontinent. This has definitely weakened the regional association to a great extent.

Even with such negativities, one must not lose sight of the fact that the SAARC is the only association in the region of South Asia which can address all the maladies indigenous to the region. The SAARC must set aside all its divergences and realize that only through its forum can true development be ensured in South Asia. The domestic political realities, the conflicting national interests, the mutually exclusive national identities—have all created an aura of hostility and suspicion. It is up to the leaders, the concerned political authorities, and above all, the incumbent civil society, to boldly seize the initiative and build the SAARC into a truly functional, collaborative platform in South Asia. The Gujral Doctrine (1996), enunciated in the wake of India's New Foreign Policy Initiative, was an attempt to integrate India's neighbours with the behemoth, which aimed at fostering 'good relations' with the neighbours, on the basis of mutual consideration and non-reciprocity. As the larger country has taken this initiative, so all the smaller members should accept the proposals and reciprocate in good faith. India, Pakistan must bury the hatchet and resolve their differences to satisfaction. Nepal, Bhutan and Sri Lanka must put implicit faith in the regional venture and stop pandering to the demands of the External Powers. Afghanistan must speed up its process of economic and political reconstruction and cope with the exigencies of Islamic militancy. And only in this way can the SAARC be the true association in South Asia.

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