

# **An Analysis Of SAARC's Shortcomings And Urgency Of Working Together**

**Dr. Sardar Ahmed<sup>1</sup>, Mahajabeen<sup>2</sup>, Dr. Akbar Ali Chandio<sup>3</sup>, Dr. Syed Shuja Uddin<sup>4</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Assistant Professor and Head of Department Arabic, Federal Urdu University of Arts Science and Technology.

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor PST, Govt. Degree Girls College, Gulistan e Jauhar, Block13, Karachi.

<sup>3</sup>Lecturer Sindhi, Sindh Madressah Tul Islam University.

<sup>4</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of International Relation, Federal Urdu University of Arts, Science and technology, Karachi.

---

## **Abstract:**

This study attempts to find a solution as to why India and Pakistan are initially unwilling to join the regional cooperation, as well as when and how regional cooperation is possible. The study explains the concept of Association and the procedure of SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) cooperation in the South Asian region. In order to analyze SAARC's achievements and shortcomings, a qualitative research approach is being applied. The primary objective of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) is to facilitate cooperation and regular contact between political leaders, as well as to foster an environment that is conducive to the promotion of peace, harmony, and economic growth among the member states of South Asia. This will be accomplished through the pooling of the region's available resources, the cultivation of trust among the various parties involved, and the sharing of The collaboration within SAARC has suffered significant setbacks as a result of the tensions that have arisen between the two rivalry. The ongoing dispute over Kashmir also remained a significant obstacle in the way of development and collaboration in the process. All of the attempts that are being made to achieve deeper regional integration are hampered by India's hegemonic design, which fosters suspicion and a negative attitude toward South Asia's smaller nations.

## **Introduction:**

The previous President of Bangladesh, Zia-urRahman, is credited with having been the driving force behind the conception of the SAARC in 1980. The idea behind the organization was to address the many issues that are plaguing South Asian nations. In the end, he came up with a

publication titled "Regional Collaboration in South Asia," which focused on eleven different areas in which regional cooperation may be beneficial (Javaid, 2013). In April 1981, when the first conference was held in Columbo, Sri Lanka lay the framework for a further in-depth discussion by drafting up an action plan for regional cooperation. This was done in order to prepare for the meeting. "The formulation of the conceptual framework for regional cooperation was laid out in a series of meetings that took place in Khatmandu (November 1981), Islamabad (August 1982), Dhaka (March 1983), and Delhi (July 1983)." (Das, 1992). Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives are the eight nations that make up the South Asian area. India is also included in this group. The nations of South Asia are blessed with vast "natural resources and geographic variety," which contribute to the region's immense "potential for success." The stability of South Asia as a whole may be put at risk by issues originating both inside and outside of the area. It is crucial that these interrelated governments work together in a methodical manner to enhance the dangers that threaten the order and stability of the area. The "South Asian Association of regional cooperation" (SAARC) was established for the regional, political, and economic relations of South Asian states with the goals of achieving regional peace, economic prosperity, and social empowerment for the people. Its acronym stands for the South Asian Association of regional cooperation. India is bordered on almost every side by one or more of its constituent nations. Because of the almost 200 years that the British dominated the area, there is a strong economic, cultural, and social connection between the nations in the region. The South Asian Association for Regional Collaboration (SAARC) was established with the intention of establishing "a regional community for shared interest, value, activities, and inter-governmental cooperation" (Lamichhane, 2016).

Through collaboration in areas that are seen as having positive value, the primary aim is to provide assistance in bringing about constructive economic, social, and cultural transformation in the South Asian states. This demonstrates the reason why groups of individuals from South Asia combine territorially, which is to work on results on concerns in one entity of cooperation, in a manner that is comparable to other regional organizations found throughout the globe. At the many regular summits that SAARC has, they have also developed what they call a "institutional framework" to explore the ways in which its members may work together and the possibilities that exist for doing so. To this day, there have been more than a dozen summit sessions that have persistently worked toward achieving the primary objectives. They have contributed to the advancement of regional cooperation by providing mutual assistance and working together on economic, social, cultural, and scientific fronts. Nevertheless, in order to make SAARC more successful, efforts need to be undertaken at all levels to resolve a variety of bilateral and trilateral concerns that slow down regional cooperation procedures in a number of different domains (Singh, 2016).

As a result of Pakistan's position as a bridge nation, it had an advantage over the other South Asian governments in terms of strategic location. The political and strategic position of Bangladesh is also highly significant for China to reach the Bay of Bengal via Nepal and Bhutan, which both have a wealth of energy resources and are very vital to India. This is because Nepal and Bhutan

are both crucial to India. India is not only essential in terms of a stable economy and nuclear power, but it also dominates the area and has a position that is geographically in the middle of it. "Asia will dominate the 21st century, and in the next two decades, South Asia and China, which are home to half of the world's population, will have the opportunity to work together to rewrite history" (Alam, 2006). Big power interests have been highly prominent in the south Asian area, particularly during the cold war and the war on terror, as well as to meet China because it is an emerging economic behemoth (Javaid, 2013). "Seven countries of South Asia and recently added Afghanistan have before it the proposal to include the People's Republic of China. These countries sit at the crossroads of the concentration of Northeast Asia's industrial, technological, and military power; the Indian subcontinent; its population region; and the Middle East; Australia; and Southeast Pacific's oil reserves. Afghanistan was added to this group of countries only recently. Due to the advantageous positioning of these countries, which collectively make up what is known as South Asia, a significant proportion of the trade and oil shipments that are conducted on behalf of Japan, Korea, Taiwan, and Australia pass through the seaways and straits that are found in this region. In addition, this position is significant from a strategic standpoint for the United States as it relates to the movement of American troops from the Western Pacific to the Indian Ocean and the Pakistan Gulf (Qadri, 2008).

### **Literature Review:**

According to Barry Buzan, India is the "central state" in this area, which also gives it the title of "local hegemon." India has often utilized its influence to further its hegemonic aspirations at the cost of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) recently had a meeting scheduled to take place in Islamabad, but due to Indian maneuvering, it had to be postponed. This is one example of how SAARC has had to pay the price for Indian aspirations (Falak, 2017). All of the area's attempts to achieve economic and social progress have been derailed as a result of Indian hegemonic views, and in addition to this, the region is in the midst of a severe security crisis. With the exception of India, much of South Asia is poor and faces a large number of difficulties and dangers. It does not seem that either the members or the organization are particularly interested in improving the socioeconomic standing of the South Asian area. Because of these shortcomings, SAARC is unable to identify the true answers to the most pressing challenges (Iftikhar, 2014). This paper asks significant issues that seek explanations for both the achievements and the shortcomings of SAARC. From a public policy standpoint, its success is insufficient to justify organizing, founding, and developing the greatest regional organizations.

In a manner analogous to that of other organizations, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) has developed what it refers to as a "institutional framework." This framework routinely organizes multi-level summits and has led to the formation of a large number of institutions and states for the purpose of discussing the various opportunities and avenues open to its members in terms of working together. The South Asian Association for Regional

Cooperation (SAARC) will thus promote the South Asian identity and foster the prosperity of south Asia (Singh, 2016). Because of this, the regional process of cooperation in South Asia will continue to be inconsequential and unreliable, and the only feasible plan for the development of SAARC is a "stop-and-go" design. This is because India and Pakistan will not be able to settle their differences and tensions if they do not resolve them (Dash, 2008). As a result, South Asia finds itself in a predicament in which it has an insufficient number of established alternatives for multilateral cooperation but an excessive number of new possibilities. Because of local animosities (most notably those between India and Pakistan) and a lack of interest on the part of foreigners, the existing frameworks, SAARC and SAFTA, face the danger of collapsing. On the other hand, new efforts provide opportunity, but they also carry with them the uncertainty that may feed political concern and inflame the security dilemma, which is characterized by conflict taking precedence over collaboration (Rynning, 2017).

### **Discussion:**

As a result, the journey across South Asia has been fraught with a great deal of misfortune in this respect. "Regionalism in the form of the SAARC was put into action more than three decades ago, but the progress towards regional cooperation, economic integration, and the development of the security community in South Asia has been virtually stagnated." However, regionalism in South Asia has been met with a number of significant problems. For example, despite the fact that SAARC was founded in 1985, regionalism does not have the full backing of the elites in some of the nations. Therefore, the first political difficulty that has to be addressed is to bring the elites of the area together so that they can support regionalism. (Pattanaik, 2011). "Regionalism, in addition to its strategic, geopolitical, and foreign policy elements, has been a fundamental pillar of development cooperation and integration in a variety of different areas of the globe. There are enough instances of regional organizations that have changed the traditional view and goals into more open, dynamic, and widespread systems and practices of peaceful cohabitation, common responsibility, and regional development. These examples can be found all over the world. There have been occasions in which the bigger notion of a win-win scenario established by regionalism and multilateralism has been successfully used to deal with the efficient resolution of bilateral concerns. The new regionalism seeks, in addition, to foster the development of a regional civil society that favors the implementation of regional solutions to issues that are of a local, national, and regional nature. The ramifications of this or that, which are not only economic, but also social and cultural network, are expanding more fast than the formal political corporation at the regional level. (Rizal, 2012) In its early days, SAARC was involved in activities spanning fields as diverse as population, health, climatology, culture, athletics, and telecommunications. At the Summit held in Islamabad in December of 1988, great progress was made in this area. He emphasized the critical need of the inclusion of the commercial sector in "real and result-oriented activities" as a key criterion of the SAARC Agreement. At the sixth summit that the world's leaders held in Colombo in December 1991, they made a commitment to liberalize trade in the area via a consistent procedure and by sharing the benefits of fair trade.

The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) came up with the idea for the South Asian Free Commerce Area (SAFTA) in December 1995 so that member states might increase their level of trade with one another (SAFTA). During the 12th Summit, which took place in Islamabad, the deal was finally finalized and signed. The government of India gave its approval to SAFTA in December 2005 and set the date for its formal start on January 1, 2006. At that time, it was anticipated that all of the participating nations would reduce their interest rates by the deadline of 2016, which was set.

The most significant things that SAARC has accomplished are bringing the member nations closer together and encouraging thought about regional concerns and identities. This is because of the beneficial aspects of the particular state, which the people of the SAARC nations should find appealing and want to imitate. It is essential to not conceive of oneself as a South Asian but rather to be proud of one's identity as a South Asian within the area. In addition, there is an urgent need for individuals in South Asia to work together and make more personal connections with one another in order to strengthen cultural identities and reduce obstacles (Pattanaik, 2011).

"The South Asian region has the potential to become a place free of war provided the people and nations that make up that region can reach a maximum level of acceptance of the issues that are necessary for forward movement. It is imperative that South Asia get a higher level of aid and collaboration if it is to continue to accomplish and grow its goals and maintain its level of safety. The South Asian perspective, the actions of SAARC members, and the policies that have been defined to increase the degree of aid in the area all play a significant role in determining the outcome. There is an urgent need to make some serious efforts to foster a sense of brotherhood among the people of South Asia, as this is essential for the maintenance of peace and harmony in the region. "There is a need of the hour to make some serious efforts to foster a sense of close understanding between the people of South Asia" (Ahmar, 1982).

### **Obstacles:**

Development, peace, and concord have all been helped along by regional cooperation in different parts of the globe. Because to regional collaboration, there is a high degree of both regional cooperation and dependency, as shown by excellent examples such as the European Union (EU), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). The people who live in these areas have seen a dramatic improvement in both the quality of their lives and the safeguarding of their civil freedoms in recent years. South Asia, on the other hand, is distinguished from other regions in that it has a far lower degree of regional cooperation. The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), a regional organization, has not been very successful in achieving its goals of development and welfare (Upreti, & Shashi, 2012). In spite of the accomplishments listed above, SAARC sometimes engages in less structured planning in order to examine topics and difficulties. This goal has also been accomplished via the use of bilateral summits (Sridharan, 2008). The eight South Asian nations that make up the SAARC have not come together to establish an economic bloc despite

the historical connections that exist between them in terms of the social, economic, and cultural domains. There are, of course, a great number of variables that are to blame for this delay and the lack of collaboration in this area; hence, the rate of development in achieving cooperation in this region has been sluggish owing to these circumstances ever since SAARC was established (Das, 1992). The group has not been successful in reaching the targeted goal for a number of its causes, despite the fact that they have close geographical, cultural, and historical similarities. The issue is that the policies of the governments in the area have not changed to either take advantage of the ideas that have been produced as a result of these exchanges or to diminish the suspicions that are so high with each of the states. This is the dilemma. One can only hold out hope that the efforts put into such interactions may one day be rewarded with fruitful outcomes. Regrettably, we have not yet arrived at that point in time (Rynning, 2017). As a result of the wars that have broken out in South Asia, the regional power politics have been preventing SAARC from making its maximum potential advancements. In this sense, the Charter of SAARC is believed to be the root of the problem since it does not include provisions for discussing politics or any of the other major topics. Without the settlement of political difficulties, gaining an understanding of the other regional organizations can only keep actual change at the "wishful thinking" stage. It has come to the attention of SAARC's members that the organization's charter needs to be revised in order to make it possible to conceive of methods for resolving political issues. This, in turn, would pave the way for South Asian member states to realize their objectives in the context of SAARC. This observation has been met with widespread consensus.

The territorial disputes over Kashmir continue to be the most contentious issue in the subcontinent and a major source of animosity between the two states. This is due to the fact that both states have already fought more than three wars over the Kashmir issue, including ones in 1948, 1965, and 1999. The division of the subcontinent in 1947 is the event that may be traced back to the beginning of the conflict in Kashmir. After then, both India and Pakistan said that they were speaking on behalf of the people of Kashmir, but neither country has been willing to address the desire of many Kashmiris for independence from India and Pakistan. Pakistan contends that the accession to India and subsequent ratification by the Jammu and Kashmir State Assembly had no firm basis in law and was never accepted by the United Nations. India, on the other hand, claims that Kashmir is an indisputable part of its territory and that Pakistan is in breach of international law. In addition, a large number of significant nations, including the United States of America, China, and the United Kingdom, concur that Kashmir is contested territory. According to authorities from Pakistan, Kashmir is still the unfinished business from the partition of 1947, and India's rule of the Muslim majority territories in J&K went against the broader logic of the division. Pakistani officials made these statements. Pakistan is of the opinion that a peaceful resolution is only possible if India is willing to make concessions on the aforementioned issues, as opposed to continuing to refuse to acknowledge the reality of Pakistan and its hegemonic goals (Chari, Cheema, & Cohen. 2009). "The security and stability of the area is under jeopardy as a result of frozen wars, which also continue on our borders. They endanger people's lives as well as social and physical infrastructures, and they pose a threat to basic freedom, human rights, and the rights of minorities.

Extremism, terrorism, and the collapse of states are all potential outcomes of armed conflict. It offers opportunity for those involved in organized crime (Kumar,2005).

SAARC is making extremely slow progress in terms of its growth and development. Because of this, SAARC is unable to discuss a number of pressing issues in the South Asian area, including transportation and commerce, the management of adversity, the transfer of energy, terrorism, and security (Lamichhane, 2016). The meeting also encouraged them to limit the flow of terrorists across borders by exchanging information with one another. Efforts have been made, via a combination of global and bilateral methods, to improve the degree to which nations cooperate with one another in the fight against terrorism. However, the SAARC is a long way from developing a unified policy to combat terrorism, and all of its members have the same level of responsibility for this issue. It is very necessary for members to put aside their political disagreements in order to work together toward a shared goal, since any delay would only serve to empower terrorist groups. The SAARC Summit, the highest authority of the forum, has not been successful in developing a unified and all-encompassing strategy to combat terrorism, despite having adopted and formulated a variety of plans and processes on bilateral and multilateral levels. The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) should develop a strategy that is far more comprehensive and region-specific, and all agreements agreed against terrorism must be followed (Jabeen & Choudhry, 2013).

In addition to the situation in Kashmir, a number of other issues have also contributed to an escalation of tension in south Asia. "The dispute that sprang out between India and Pakistan over the allocation of water and the distribution of assets also gave rise to competition among the South Asian governments" (Ahmar, 1982). If an efficient and supporting system is not built quickly, the water issues that plague South Asian states might become a cause of future intrastate and interstate strife. In point of fact, there is an urgent need for the South Asian area to provide alternative concepts on cooperative transboundary water management in order to address the looming problems (Gulf News, 2017).

### **Recommendation:**

The future of SAARC is also in jeopardy for the same reason as a result of India's attitude of treating other nations in the area according to her own plans. This is the same reason why the future of SAARC is in jeopardy. The words that appear in Indian media provide a vivid image of Indian designs in South Asian countries. According to what Kuldip Nayar writes in Indian Express, the interests of developed nations in India are naturally lot larger owing to her diversified potential. This is a comparative statement. Now, it was India's responsibility to be the proponent of universal progress and prosperity in the area and the guardian of their interests on a global scale. However, sadly, her size has been shown to be the source of worry and concern for the nations that are surrounding her, rather than being of benefit to those countries. The nations that are geographically close to India have traditionally maintained the position that India, because to its advanced age, both threatens and attempts to gain an unfair advantage over them. Because of this, all of India's

bordering nations have developed a leaning toward anti-India sentiment. The issue of dissatisfaction with Pakistan may be seen as both a historical and a psychological one. Although the theoretical gaps between the two countries are too wide to bridge, it is still possible to maintain friendly ties between the two nations. The way in which one person thinks about the other is hostile. However, this (situation) is not something that is unique to Pakistan; attitudes of animosity against India may also be seen in Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh. They share the similar accusations leveled against India, which are that India's territory has been utilized for actions directed against them, and there are political problems relating to them that have not been resolved. As a result of the animosity between them, the future of SAARC is in jeopardy.

All of the members need to make expansion and complete development their top objective, and in order to be successful in meeting this challenge, they must maintain stability and work together to establish a security system. After years of fruitless discussions and a series of difficult steps, both parties would need to be serious about resolving their disagreements in order to concurrently forward the process of peaceful economic growth and cooperation with full sincerity. To do this, an appropriate atmosphere of trust and give-and-take has to be established in order to arrive at a feasible solution to the complicated problems. The SAARC process seemed to have come to a total halt after getting off to a very promising start and making many great moves in the opening years; however, the unpleasant reality is that this did not happen. The pessimism of the business sector, along with the disparities in political opinion, has erected a significant barrier in the way of commercial collaboration. It is essential for the growth of the area that our political disagreements be ignored; once the economic benefits have become clear, political support will be secured.

### **Conclusion:**

Members of the South Asian Region have been able to optimize the integration trend ever since the foundation of SAARC about 35 years ago. In conclusion, it is possible to claim that SAARC, despite the fact that it is very significant, was prevented from achieving its full potential and performance by a number of internal issues. Building up the organization is something that should be prioritized for the area. Despite the fact that SAARC has many flaws, it is the sole forum in which the leaders of South Asia may meet to discuss regional issues with the region's 1.6 billion population. The leaders of SAARC need to collaborate in order to ensure the continued peaceful and economic development of South Asia. On the other hand, it is essential to recognize that there are instances when a nation does not wish to cooperate due to factors such as national pride, a lack of trust between the parties involved, political friction, or an unfair allocation of the costs and rewards. By easing the way for collaboration and more regular communication between political leaders, regional cooperation agreements may contribute to the development of trust among various parties. It is essential to have an understanding of the domestic institutional structures, the ability of the government, the support from the domestic community, and the inclinations of political and social actors toward regional cooperation. If one looks at the history of SAARC's successes and failures over the last three decades, one may conclude that the organization's rhetoric



has typically been more impressive than its actual performance. The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) has not produced many tangible benefits in the fields of commerce, security, and economic development.

### References:

1. Ahmar, M.. (1982).The politics of conflict and cooperation in south Asia. Pakistan institute of international affairs, 35( 3), 44-59
2. Chari, P. R., Cheema, P. I., & Cohen, S. P. (2009). Four crises and a peace process: American engagement in South Asia. Brookings Institution Press.
3. Cote, K.R. (2016). A Proposed Agenda for the South Asian Regional Standards Organisation. Jaipur, Centre for International Trade, Economics & Environment
4. Das, D.K. (n.d) SAARC: Regional cooperation and development. New Delhi, DEEP and Deep Publications.
5. Dr. Taha Shabbir, Zafar Ali, Imran Arif, Shuja Uddin, Samina Abbasi, & Dr. Mujeeb Abro. (2021). AUTISM AWARENESS IN PARENTS IN THE AGE OF DIGITAL MEDIA (A CRITICAL STUDY). Emergent: Journal of Educational Discoveries and Lifelong Learning (EJEDL), 2(05), 54–64. <https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/FZB3W>
6. Dash, K. C. (2008). Regionalism in South Asia: Negotiating cooperation, institutional structures, 8, Routledge.
7. Dogra, S. (2010). South Asian University: Catalyst for Regional Cooperation?Institute of South Asian Studies.
8. Falak, J. (2017). Implacable Failures of the SAARC, Centre for Strategic and contemporary Research.
9. Iftikhar, M. (2014). Achievements and Failures of SAARC, <https://hamariweb.com/articles/45919>.
10. Iqbal, M. J. (2006). SAARC: origin, growth, potential and achievements. Pakistan Journal of History and Culture, 27(2), 127-140
11. Jabeen, M., & Choudhry, I. A. (2013). Role of SAARC for countering terrorism in South Asia. South Asian Studies, 28(2), 389.
12. Javaid, U. (2013). South Asia in Perspective. Lahore , Punjab university Press.p.136.
13. Kumar, R.. ( 2005). South Asian Union. New Delhi Manas Publications. p131.
14. Lamichhane, S. (2016). Enhancing SAARC disaster management: a comparative study with ASEAN coordinating centre for humanitarian assistance on disaster management, Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, California.
15. Pattanaik, S. (2011). South Asia: Envisioning a Regional Future. New Delhi, Pantagon Security International
16. Qadri, H.M. (2008).SAARC and globalization: issues, Prospects & Policy Prescriptions. Lahore, Minhaj ul Quran publications. P.p 30-34
17. Rizal, D. (2012). South Asia and beyond: Discourses on emerging security challenges and concerns. New Delhi, Adroit Publishers.

18. Rynning, Sten. (2017). South Asia and the great powers: International relations and regional Security. London, I.B. Tauris.
19. Shabbir, T., M Nadeemullah, & Saeed Memon. (2020). Uses and Impact of 'Open Data' Technology for Developing Social Sector in Pakistan. Pakistan Journal of Multidisciplinary Research, 1(1), 50-64. Retrieved from <https://www.pjmr.org/pjmr/article/view/24>
20. SAARC Summit. (2011). SAARC Food Bank: Will It Be Enough Broad Based, People's Campaign on 17<sup>th</sup> SAARC Summit, House 13/3, Road 2, Shamoli Dhaka -1207, Bangladesh.
21. Sengupta, S. (2017). Gulf News, 29 march, 2017 Singh, R. (2016). Development is the Spirit of SAARC, South Asian Journal Blog.
22. Sridharan, K. (2008). Regional Organisations and Conflict Management: Comparing Asean And SAARC, Crisis States Research Centre, National University of Singapore.
23. Upreti, B.C. & Upaydhay, S. (2012). Emerging Challenges of Security in South Asia. New Delhi: Kalinga Publications.