

## SAARC: Regionalism and Regional Security in South Asia

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### ABSTRACT

The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) has been initiated under the concept of regionalism in 1985, the peripheral smaller South Asian states gathered on one platform to ensure economic integration and cooperation. The forum remained underutilized due to the inherited structural security issues and interstate disputes among the South Asian member-states. SAARC couldn't prove its importance and deliver constructive development in the region due to the sustained security environment. The paper is highlighting the regional security issues and political cleavages that affected the bases of SAARC and didn't allow regionalism to function in South Asia, and it also explains the prevailed insecurities of the region with the help of Regional Security Complex Theory. The study examines that regionalism can prove fruitful if the security environment of the region is addressed and the inter-state conflicts are defused. Thus, the regional security of South Asia is the main impediment behind SAARC's productive economic success and integration.

**KEYWORDS:** SAARC, South Asia, regionalism, security, regional security, India, Pakistan, Regional Security Complex

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### INTRODUCTION

The South Asian states during the post-independence era were suffering from ideological differences, ethnic, religious and lingual diversities, political insecurities, clash of nationalism, territorial conflicts, poverty and bitter colonial legacies. Despite of their common issues, they never supported interstate cooperation that hardened the regional understanding in South Asia, until to the time when the academic discussions that had been initiated by the 'Marga Institute of Colombo', Sri Lanka, and later the President Zia-ur-Rehman's inventiveness for regional cooperation in 1977-80 [during his visits to Nepal, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka]. President Zia-ur-Rehman emphasized to cater many issues that had been faced by the South Asian states as poverty, inflation and unemployment. He eventually called for a summit meeting and published a paper of 'Regional Cooperation in South Asia', targeting the possible eleven areas for regional cooperation [there is another view that SAARC appeared due to the need of the small states for equal and sovereign regional representation and as a security guarantee from the growing Indian hegemony].

However, all seven states showed their assent for regional cooperation except Pakistan and India.

Pakistan was with the view that the South Asian regional cooperation would support the Indian hegemony, and India was concerned about a possible threat from the collective cooperation 'ganging up' by the small South Asian states. The seven countries met at Colombo in 1981 at the first conference of the Foreign Secretaries proceeding for the formation of SAARC approaching the economic, cultural and social spheres of life. They met again in Katmandu in the same year heading for regional mutual prosperity and then they had a meeting in Islamabad in 1982, followed by the first South Asian Foreign Ministers meeting at New Delhi in 1983 in which they defined their objectives and principles. After couple of meetings in New Delhi and Male, the South Asian Foreign Ministers finally met at the Dhaka Summit in 1985 and proclaimed for the regional cooperation through SAARC under a defined and agreed charter by the seven countries [India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and Maldives].

The charter of SAARC emphasized that "their mutual cooperation would be based on respect for the principle of sovereign equality, territorial integrity, political independence, non-interference in the internal affairs of others states and mutual benefits". (Rizvi, 2006) It focused on the idealistic framework

for the regional cooperating organization, not on the internal needs of regional political cohesiveness and security concerns. The process of South Asian integration never met the integrating essential ingredients as neither a collective external threat nor a strong political system with shared ideologies. General Zia-ur-Rehman had thought of SAARC as security guarantee against India's hegemony that indicated a threat within the region not as an external hazard.

The goals and objectives of SAARC are based on the concept of regionalism, to promote quality of life and economic growth in the region, to strengthen collective self-reliance, to encourage active collaboration in economic, technical and scientific fields, to increase people to people contact, and sharing of information among the SAARC members. SAARC's structural frame work and its configuration have all the required ingredients for regional cooperation. Its basic principles allocate all the obligatory ties for mutual understanding; it includes sovereign equality, territorial integrity, political independence, non-interference in internal affairs of other states and mutual benefit. Nonetheless, SAARC's conceptual development fulfils all the required grounds for economic cooperation and integration, but the ground realities reveal many other factors that never allowed SAARC to flourish in South Asia. According to Mujtaba (2005). All the SAARC members are ready to cooperate on mutual economic terms but not ready to harmonize the interstate conflicts, minimize the political cleavages and improve the regional security environment.

This paper is an attempt to explain the main factors behind the failure of SAARC and how regional security is affecting regionalism in South Asia. The paper has been divided into two parts, the first part explains the theoretical functioning of SAARC under regionalism, and how interstate political cleavages are building insecurities among SAARC members. The second part is explaining the generated security environment in South Asia due to the sustained political cleavages and interstate conflicts among SAARC members, and how Barry Buzan's Regional Security Complex explains the security mapping and trust deficit among the SAARC members, which ultimately affected regionalism in South Asia.

#### **SAARC under the Concept of Regionalism**

SAARC is a regional organization that claims economic integration among the South Asian states. The need of economic development increased in post-World War II scenario, especially after the commencement of independence among the nation-states. The era witnessed the dominance of regionalism through many regional agreements in the globalized world to enhance their regional cooperation and economic integration. Regionalism can be described as "an attempt by state actors at re-imposing them at a different level, consequently creating a new, large space out of smaller territorial spaces bounded in nation-states" (Nesadurai, 2003). It introduces regional cooperation, interdependence and interaction among the nation-states. The multi-dimensional cooperation through regionalism that covers an extraordinarily large range of political phenomena is integration, as Karl Deutsch defines integration as the "attainment of a sense of community, accompanied by formal or informal institutions and practices, sufficiently strong and widespread to assure peaceful change" (Mahmood, 1987). A desirable change is the ultimate objective of integration that can be achieved within regionalism. There are four major established approaches that contribute in the understanding process of regional integration, David Mitrany's Functionalism theory is considered as the root inspirations of regionalism. He argues that the growing complexity among the nation-states system and their incapability in satisfying their requirements, need highly trained specialists to collaborate among technicians rather than political elites, not only at the national level but on the international level as well. "The functionalist approach argues for an increase in the institutionalization of regional integration by internal demands for further integration such as increase of transactions i.e. intra-regional trade, a preferential regional trade agreement and free trade agreement within a particular region, and a collective response to the common problem". (Ashraf & Nasrudin, 2016) Whereas, Ernst Haas and Leon Lindberg under the second proposed approach combine the political and economic integration under the theory of Neo-Functionalism; they argue that the regional cooperation will spill over from economic to political spheres, Ernst Haas defines integration under the Neo-Functionalism theory as a process "whereby political actors in several distinct national settings are

persuaded to shift their loyalties, expectations, and political activities toward a new center, whose institutions possess or demand jurisdiction over the pre-existing national state”(Dougherty & Pfaltzgraff, 1981). Here we can distinguish the combination of political and economic spheres in order to achieve the desirable change.

Nevertheless, under the third approach that can be perceived as supporting to the concept of regionalism is Inter-governmentalism, it promotes the primacy of the nation-states in all forms of international organizations. “An influential school of integration theory is Inter-governmentalism that stems from structural realism and postulates that unitary states are the central actors in an international system, aiming to maximize their national interests. The individual states tend to collaborate with other states only when their national interests are compatible with that of other states.” (Zahid, 2012) Lastly, Supra-nationalism that leads the governments of the nation-states towards recognition of their common interests, and Transnationalism “the movement of people, goods, information, and other tangible or intangible objects, across national boundaries when at least one actor is not an agent of a government or an intergovernmental organization”. (Mahmood, 1987) However, the European integration revival, with the emergence of single market program in 1980’s, and the European activist commission under the idea of Neo-Functionalism Supranational activism led to a generalized regionalism, and contributed in the appearance of the regional integration schemes in Asia-Pacific and other parts of the world. The energy crises of 1973-74/1977-78 and the 1990 financial crises enhanced the sense of curiosity among the Asian scholars for the regional integration process. The economic regional integration has been made as the basis for SAARC’s evolution in 1980; several factors have been calculated in the initiative as regional peace, politics, economy, security and mutual economic benefits that have been combined in the regional cooperation of the South Asian States. Dominantly, economy and security are both the pre-determinant factors of SAARC [the other important missing factor is the economic self-reliance in the South Asian states]. SAARC was the first step towards the economic cooperation in the region especially after the financial crises in the late twentieth century and the dominance of the North on

the underdeveloped countries. The idea was materialized as a relief for the small poor peripheral states of the sub-continent, and as ‘Madhavi Bhasin’ (2010) said, it was expected to be an instrument for the “promotion of peace, security, progress and stability in the region”. The King of Nepal, Briendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev had stated in 1985 that, “regional cooperation can strengthen the building of a lasting edifice of peaceful co-existence through initiatives and interactions in the fields like the cultural, scientific, technological and economic spheres”. (Bhasin, 2010) But again economic saturation and regional integration can’t be achieved without sustainable security environment within the traditional and non-traditional spheres of the region. Beside the conventional security threats and interstate conflicts, “the South Asian countries must regain control of regional security in non-conventional areas in order to coalesce as a force to reckon with, so as to tackle terrorism, poverty, malnutrition and other issues which are ultimately harmful for national security and the sovereignty of SAARC’s member states”. (Mitra, 2016)

Whereas the interstate conflicts have also considered impediment to regionalism, and one of the factors behind the prevailing security concerns in the region. This failure is clearly identified through India-Pakistan arch rivalry in the functioning of SAARC. “security issues and traditional rivalry between Pakistan and India did not allow them to move forward steadily in this direction. And, the process of regionalization in South Asia also became slower”. (Ashraf & Nasrudin, 2016) Thus, the interstate conflicts and security concerns of member states of the South Asian region have proven a decisive influence on the achievements of SAARC. “The continuing conflict between India and Pakistan has also led to ever-increasing investments in arms and ammunition to counter each other’s military capability. Both states continue to invest a huge amount of their financial resources in buying weapons from the US, China, Russia, Sweden and France”. (Ahmed & Bhatnagar, 2008)

#### **Regional Cooperation: Security and Political Cleavages among SAARC States**

**- India:** It has been claimed by the Indian authors that the Asian cooperation advocacy was rooted within the Indian heredity. In 1922 C.R Das, President of the Indian National Congress urged for

Indian participation in the Asian Federation, and Nehru also believed in the regional friendly atmosphere and strong economic background for fortified defense system. On the other hand, There is another aspect which cannot be ignored that the neighbor friendly atmosphere never sparked from the Indian foreign policy, as in a comment, it was been said that, “good neighbourliness as such is not an Indian foreign policy goal... the tendency is to take things for granted with the neighbors so called that it can pursue the broader foreign policy goals” (Khosla, 2006). The Indian disregarding attitude and insecurity has been felt by the small states in the South Asian region, therefore all the small states claimed for their separate identity to detach themselves from the Indian diversified culture, as I.P. Khosla (2006) wrote in his article that “there are more Muslims in India than in Pakistan which was created as the homeland of the Muslims of South Asia, half as many Bengali speakers as in Bangladesh which was created so that the people could speak their own language, and more Hindus than in Nepal, more Buddhists than in Bhutan”.

In due course, after all the support for Asian cooperation and their economic liberalization steps, India did not go for setting a regional organization that could promote first door trade among neighboring countries. Even after joining SAARC, India was afraid that it might take up the form of political union in future and prove threatening to the Indian Union. The Indian perception is correct somewhere, and can be based on three main reasons: 1) peripheral states’ security concerns are one of the most important factor behind the idea of SAARC which can be used against Indian Union, 2) sustained political and territorial conflicts between India and other South Asian states, lastly 3) fear of losing their absolute control on their land [as it happened after the Vedic period, 1200 CE marks the growth of Delhi Sultanate’s control that varied till the twentieth century resulting independence in 1947 with attributes of Colonialism and the India-Pakistan partition (Schmidt, 1995)]. However, India’s stance was in favor of economic cooperation only, they confined the proposal to economic, scientific, technical and cultural fields only, avoiding all the security and political spheres. As the Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi said in his speech at the Second

Summit in Bangalore, “regional cooperation cannot merely emerge from the fiat of leaders. It has grown from contacts between professionals at all levels... It is also through building a network of contacts at all levels among professionals among many disciplines, that we can start giving real content to regional cooperation”. (Sharma, 2002)

This kind of half-heartedly cooperating attitude never thrived. Many political disputes couldn’t be catered to pave the way for economic cooperation because of the resulting bilateral issues that included India as the second party, such as Kashmir dispute with Pakistan, water dispute with Bangladesh, Tamil issue with Sri Lanka, trade and transit between India and Nepal, and Maldives stance as no acceptances for Sikkim as a part of the Indian Union. India is possessed with paranoiac hegemony over the small states in South Asia; all the disputes are centered within the anti-Indian sentiments among the member countries. Although, India claimed many times that it was not a predatory country but it never succeeded in building up the trust among the SAARC countries. The late phenomenon of SAARC was a response to the actual adverse security scenario in the region. Bangladesh desired SAARC as a guarantee against India and for the economic advancement of the poor states, seeking security, inter-regional relations and economic synchronization.

**-Pakistan’s** post-independence policies are determined under threat of re-absorption by India. Since 1947, Pakistan is mapping battles to gain Kashmir from many times stronger opponent. It built its nationalism on the basis of two-nation doctrine; it designed its syllabi to encounter re-absorption. It let the army to govern and use two third of its budget on defense purposes leading to an arm race between the two countries for endurance. India-Pakistan rivalry, detached the truth and cause of Pakistan’s foundation from its soul. It reshaped the nation with anti-Indian sentiments that would never accept any regional coordination.

SAARC, as regional cooperation proposal from Bangladesh could not give ultimate satisfaction to Pakistan. Pakistan was reluctant to join SAARC and it was not ready to provide India with another hegemonic platform. Pakistan was also anxious that the more interaction and cooperation might dim their

political perspective of Kashmir. Later, Pakistan accepted SAARC on the basis of equal and sovereign share of every member state. According to P.L. Sharma, (2002) Pakistan's acceptance was designed due to the US backing for a regional approach to encounter the India-Soviet alliance during the Soviet-Afghan war. The current adverse scenario is changing and many positive cooperating aspirations have been sensed but at the same time we cannot ignore the extreme security concerns that still hindering the relations between both countries.

**- Bangladesh** headed for the inter-state cooperation in 1980, to harmonize the past and balance the regional effect of small nation states vis-à-vis a regional power. General Zia-ur-Rehman was also highly influenced by the cooperating attitude of ASEAN. After extensive efforts, Bangladesh was able to initiate the idea to encounter the economic compulsions and to guarantee regional security among the small states. SAARC's pragmatic approach was highly advocated by Bangladesh to boost the regional talks, economic gain, and to improve the socio-economic conditions from Himalayas to the Indian Ocean. Bangladesh strategically located within the Indian arms 'an India-locked state', surrounded by the Indian border that forces the authorities to build anti-Indian sentiments and forwards with the religious identity rather the Sheikh Mujeeb's secular ideologies. Ideological differences of Bangladesh and antagonism with Pakistan ended by their separation in 1971 and shifted towards India after their independence. Bangladesh lacks military strength and possesses undemocratic waves, as Tabarak Hussain, a former Bangladesh foreign secretary, writes that "Bangladesh's neighborhood is dominated by India's presence. A sense of its pervasiveness seems to prevail; heavy imbalance in the power equation between the two countries compounds the situation" (Khosla, 2006). Today Bangladesh is going through many conflicts with India like water dispute, illegal immigrants, land boundary, trade exploitations and restrictive import policies. It possesses a hostile and anti-secular attitude towards India.

**- Sri Lanka** is the island country, which has been renowned for its strategic location in the Indian Ocean. It is an undersized nation-state, fifty times

smaller than India. It is also constituted with the strong Tamil minority and their ethnic ties with India. India claimed that Sri-Lanka historically belongs to her and it should be united with the motherland. Nehru and some of the Congress leaders also supported this claim, 'Sri Lanka as part of India'. Sri Lanka's fears were justified by the crucial role of India in 1971 'creation of Bengal', the Sikkim's merger with Indian Union and India's interference in the Tamil ethnic issue. All the above mentioned evidences hardened the relations among the India-Sri Lanka and never paved the way for mutual trust and cooperation. To encounter the regional security and nuclear giant threat, Sri Lanka has sought multi-dimensional moves. It promoted its relations with United Nations, Britain, China and Pakistan when India was with the Soviet Bloc, it tried to threaten the Indian hegemony by supporting other extra-regional powers. In this regard, K.B. Vadya, a former Commander of the Indian Navy, wrote in 1974, "Sri Lanka is as important strategically to India as Eire is to the United Kingdom or Taiwan to China....As long as Sri Lanka is friendly or neutral, India has nothing to worry about but if there be any danger of Island falling under the domination of a power hostile to India, India cannot tolerate such a situation endangering her territorial integrity". Due to its diminutive land mass and limited militia as compared to India, Sri Lanka has aspired for SEATO and ASEAN membership to empower it geographical location and to pressurize India. General Zia-ur-Rehman's SAARC desire was highly appreciated by Sri Lanka. They hoped a forum for bilateral dialogues that could resolve the primordial conflicts with India and establish balance of power.

Sri Lanka's aspiration with SAARC went down the drain, as it never provided the balance of power in the region, nor proved helpful in resolving any living conflict or interstate conflict. It also visualized SAARC as a tool to empower India economically or to double her dependence on India, as a way for Indian market in Sri Lanka 'an indirect hegemony'. Sri Lanka made it clear in the Male Foreign Secretaries Conference in 1985 that no genuine cooperation could be attained unless mutual trust and confidence prevailed among the SAARC countries. The President Jayewardene has emphasized that the countries have to realize about the internal problems have external dimensions and



these bilateral issues can affect the whole region and further worsen the security situation.

**-Nepal** is the unprivileged landlocked state that is lying between two major powers. It is rich with untapped natural and water resources and loaded with cultural heritage and poor population. Nepal is dependent on India for the marine and land access, its overwhelming economic dependence is challenging its identity. A small state, with absolute dependence on neighboring state made its aspiration for a sovereign identity and for independent economic development. Due to this suppressed atmosphere and lack of opportunities, the Nepali nation has developed anti-Indian sentiments. Nepal and India signed a peace and friendship treaty in 1950. On the other hand, Nepal is strategically very important to India in terms of security in the Himalayas and the way of important water resource that flow from Nepal to India.

SAARC appeared as the way out for Nepal, a regional forum to foster and preserve its identity and paved the way for economic ties with other regional states. Nepal welcomed the idea and established the SAARC secretariat in Kathmandu which reflects its enthusiasm and need for cooperation. Beside the security concerns, Nepal is looking to develop its technological, industrial and skilled manpower through SAARC and also approach other South Asian countries and especially Bangladesh for trading and alternative sea route.

**-Bhutan** is again a land lock, buffer state, located between India and China but comparatively holding better relations with India as compared to Nepal. Bhutan's relations with India are guided by the 1949 treaty, it is included under the Article 2 that India will not interfere in its internal matters and the state will be guided by the government of India. The treaty also provides a free trade zone. India never supported the pro-democracy movement in Bhutan and maintained the traditional ties since the treaty. India fears the Chinese threat, as China never regarded the 1949 treaty and considered it as discriminatory.

Bhutan encouraged the inception of SAARC's idea, to maintain security, to preserve its identity and to maintain economic development. Bhutan stressed that every member had to work on improving its relations with other member state to

establish a well-organized and harmonic cooperative momentum. It also accepted that the new sentiments of nationalism have been emerged with various regional disputes after the decolonization process; to encounter these planted conflicts Bhutan advised the need for political understanding in order to gain security and economic cooperation through SAARC. Bhutan's policy included both aspects economic and political as well, which considered against the charter of SAARC. However, Bhutan's main emphasis is to promote its political status and to preserve its sovereign identity through SAARC, both in the region and the world. The second core issue is the internal economic growth; SAARC is the right forum to accelerate its economic advancement. Bhutan belongs to the poorest states in the region; it is heavily dependent on external aid and tourism. India negates the idea of external aid and supports self-reliance as the core objective of SAARC, and it argues that external aid is the way for neo-colonialism.

**-Maldives** is the smallest nation on islands in the Indian Ocean, but strategically very important among all the super powers. Fishing and tourism are the major earning hands. On the other side, limited resources, slow rate of development, and dependency on external capital and technical assistance have raised many questions for its survival. Despite of being a Muslim state, Maldives is highly supported by India; the importance of its strategic location cannot be ignored by a dominating regional power. The Gan Island in Maldives is still maintains the British Naval base since colonial days. Iran, Libya and Soviet Union were also interested in the Gan Island due to its closeness to Diego Garcia, where the US central command base is located. SAARC and Maldives, again the same relation of a small state that seek large forum to present its status, maintain its security and strengthen its economic ties.

**-Afghanistan** is the linking state which connects South Asia with the Central Asia. "The idea of including Afghanistan in SAARC has been rotated in 1988 at the Katmandu meeting but couldn't be achieve. The concept of new addition was supported by India due to their mutual friendship with Afghanistan and as an encounter strategy against Pakistan" (Kamal, 2013). Because, Pakistan, since its

emergence as independent state, was facing Duran Line Issue (A border Line Issue between the two sovereign states) with Afghanistan. Later, Afghanistan was included in SAARC in 2007 at the New Delhi Summit and became the eighth member of the largest regional grouping. It sought help for sustainable security, economic development and to encounter terrorism. "All the members were not satisfied by the inclusion of Afghanistan. They perceived it as an open door to terrorism under another political umbrella. Some other states as Nepal claims that strategically, it doesn't belong to the South Asian region". (Kamal, 2013).

### Security Environment of South Asia

In post-world war II, regionalism proved to be the most opted viable route for prosperity among the new nation states, especially in Europe and Southeast Asia. It promoted collective interests, state interdependence, ensuring protection against negative impacts of globalization, economic free zones, and enhancing security through greater interdependence among the member states [i.e. ASEAN and EU]. Whereas the post-colonial era in South Asia was far from regional and economic cooperation and possessed very volatile environment due to India-Pakistan territorial disputes and hostility. "Through functionalism, particularly through economic cooperation, the political challenges of the region, especially between India and Pakistan, could be addressed". (Brar, 2003). Security and interstate conflicts appeared as the most obstructing factor behind regionalism in South Asia, thus, since 1985 SAARC couldn't be materialized because of nuclear states rivalry in the region.

"Given the fact that the region has an inordinately high share of disputed boundaries, divisive politics and chequered democracy, no one ever expected that regional cooperation in South Asia would be a runaway success. The Association was created with an underlying assumption that

cooperation can be achieved through SAARC without addressing the political problems of the region".(Zahid, 2012)

Moreover, the biggest challenges constraining the SAARC process has been structural, the hegemonic position of India among SAARC nations. Indian hegemony and regional security concerns have prompted the smaller states in South Asia to forge relations with the former European colonial powers (UK and France) and other developed countries (USA and Russia), and also with Asian states (China and Japan). The role of India in South Asian regional security, as a hegemon, has been a subject of study of regional security. India's nuclear test in 1998 gave an indication of its intentions of supremacy in South Asia, which was later followed by Pakistan's nuclear test in the same year, asserting security dilemma in the region. One aspect of India's grand strategy in South Asia includes a realist drive towards power maximization due to structural reasons, including the use of force when necessary, under the veneer of morality. Considering the implications of the growing fear of India in the region and occasionally its interference in the internal affairs of other SAARC members, scholars are of the view that New Delhi needs to practice 'strategic altruism' in South Asia.(Zahid, 2012)

### The Security Complex (RSC) in South Asia Region

The generic understanding of the term 'security' is crucial for explaining regional security. Security is relational in nature, understanding of the term 'security' is highly contested and ambiguous but according to the general definition that it implies, security can be described as 'freedom from threats'. However, the concept of regional security as well as security can be best understood through the lens of Barry Buzan's idea of Regional Security Complex (RSC). Usually, the security analysis is enclosed with domestic or global level, whereas the regional security level is at the junction of domestic and global level. In addition, regional security explains that "when a number of states or unit-actors link their shared security purposes closely and cannot separated

from each other to form RSC. These constituent units drive their security purposes or the regional security complexes from their domestic features and fractures” (Kamal, 2017). So, at regional level Unit-actors (the states which are located in any particular region) and global powers both affect the security dimensions. In the case study of SAARC and the regional security concerns, the SAARC state members or the South Asian regional unit actors are caught in inherited security dilemma due to their historical hostile background. Since the inception of SAARC, its member states have no collective traditional security threat from the outside region. Buzan (1991) “as a crucial factor towards a regional security mechanism in South Asia identifies a convergence of ‘national security concerns’ among the member states”. Differences in national security policies among the South Asian countries led to a slow initiation of regional cooperation in comparison to such moves in Southeast Asia.

“In relation to regional security it is crucial to keep in mind the power balance between the states involved and nature of the patterns of enmity and amity between the actors (Schulz, Soderbaum&Ojendal 2001b:8). By looking at South Asia, it is not difficult to view patterns of enmity and amity due to the persistent India-Pakistan rivalry in the Kashmir dispute and the dominance of India in relation to its six smaller neighbors. That is why, according to Buzan (1991:190), the security concerns of the SAARC member states link them together to such an extent that the region is faced with a security complex – a situation

where the individual security problems of regional nations cannot be analyzed alone as they are so much linked to the security problems of neighboring countries”. (Zahid, 2012)

However, Barry Buzan, in his initial work (1983), expounded his views about regional security in the influence of realist school of thought and gave more importance to state-centric and military focused dimensions of security. For example, he defined territorial regional security as “a group of states whose primary security concern link together sufficiently closely that their national securities cannot reasonably be considered apart from one another”. But with the passage of time he reviewed his idea and gave more weightage to social aspects in his revised definition of regional security complex and defined it as “a set of units whose major processes of securitization, de securitization, or both are so interlinked that their security problems cannot reasonably be analyzed apart from one another”. Here, the centrality of unit-actors (regional states) is remained prominent but novel thing is that state security is not confined to military factor, while there are other factors which may cause serious security concerns for state i.e. political, societal, economic, and ecological. In his theory of securitization, he explained that any political, social and economic issue can be converted into a security issue any time whenever securitizing actors (usually they are politicians who have social and institutional power to move any issue beyond politics) consider them threat to state security. So, security is not a natural phenomenon but a socially constructed and politically planned state policy. He further argues that “the question of when a threat becomes a national security issue depends not just on what type of threat it is, and how much the recipient state perceives it, but also on the intensity with which the threat operates” (Salter, 2008). Furthermore, Buzan (under concept of RSC) breaks down international system in three tiers: first tier is based on state level, second tier is based on regional or inter-regional level, while the third tier is global level.



As for as the South Asian region is concerned RSC is affected by a number of socio-economic and political factors. For instance, at dis-functionalism of SAARC. India and Pakistan locked into the geographical proximity and their security purposes are linked with each other. While other factors as the social, political and economic are considered very important in process of security analysis at the domestic level.

#### a) Domestic Level

As Ahmed said, 'Pakistan is simply India-centric' (2006) the historic trial is the main reason for Pakistan's fear concerns about India. Pakistan's post-independence policies are determined under threat of re-absorption by India. Since 1947, Pakistan is mapping battles to gain Kashmir from many times stronger opponent. India's Kautilian legacy have enhanced Pakistan's fears and concerns about the Indian hegemonic intentions in the region. Whereas, Pakistan's ideological principle of a separate homeland fueled Indian fears due to her diverse and multi-ethnic identities. President Musharraf (2004) said in a press conference, 'we are like two elephants in South Asia, trampling the grass in our fight...Look where it has taken us. South Asia is one of the poorest regions and our economy refuses to take off because of our preoccupation with this dispute'.

"These two countries were born locked into a complicated rivalry that defined the central security problem for each of them. They easily overawed the smaller states, which were geographically entangled within their sphere, and so fell naturally into a power rivalry with each other" (Buzan & Rizvi, 1986: 14).

India and Pakistan are considered in the zero-sum position which means the gain of one is the loss of others. The mutually antagonistic relations of both countries have made the South Asia nuclear flashpoint. Both countries had been engaged in territorial (Kashmir) issues, waterways clashes, and religious-communal issues since the partition of the sub-continent. The interstate conflict between them appeared as the core issue of the Regional Security

Complex. India's ambitions to become hegemon create a self-centered security complex for it in the region. While, as for as Pakistan is concerned its internal political instability, a fragile economy, lack of visionary leadership, imbalanced civil-military relations, and lack of national integration (due to identity-related issues) have become the security concerns for it.

#### Regional or Interregional Level

At the regional level, The RSC model includes the China factor along with Pakistan and India. At this level, China-India border issues and their mutual tussle to become the global player is making the security issue more complex in south Asia. China supports Pakistan to counter India, while Pakistan's good relations with China intensify the already mutually hostile relations of India and Pakistan. This situation posing a regional security threat and causing the escalation of an arms race in the region. "China continued to back Pakistan's attempt to match India's achievement in nuclear and missile technology, and India continued to cite the threat from China, more than Pakistan, as the justification for its nuclear and missile program" (Buzan & Weave, 2003). China's recent concerns are very serious about the radicalization of Pakistan's Muslims, which has been much controlled by Pakistan, while China's relations with India are more towards the conflict freezing strategy. Since 1980, China and India have maintained cool liaison, but change has been felt in India-China relations after the recent border clashes.

#### b) Global Level

At the global level, superpowers proxy wars during the Cold War Era (America Vs USSR) in the South Asian region is the global manifestation of Buzan's RSC model. Two global powers exploited the mutually antagonistic relations of India and Pakistan and used them for their vested interests in the Afghan War. In addition, the US manipulating strategy escalated the hostility between India and Pakistan especially when the USA, in post 9/11, brought an obvious shift in its foreign policy in South Asia (from pro-Pakistan to pro-India). The deep analysis of domestic, regional, and global dynamics of security endorses Barry Buzan's RSC model in South Asia. Each unit-actor (India and Pakistan) is in a state of anarchy shaping its internal and external dynamics according to its material and social gains and posing

a security threat to each other's interests. In this sense, Buzan's theory of RSC helps to understand the relational aspects behind India-Pakistan and the major power role in the region. Further, it also helps to explain how the regional security scenario in South Asia is negatively affecting the functionalism of SAARC and hindering economic integration.

### CONCLUSION

SAARC's dis-functionalism in South Asia is highly based on the security and trust deficit among the member states. The South Asian region possesses an adverse historical background that by default seeded hostility and rivalry among the SAARC members, which later formed permanent patterns of enmity and conflicts in the post-Colonial era. According to the concept of Neo-Functionalism under Regionalism that regional economic cooperation may lead to a political settlement and peaceful coexistence, but in the case of SAARC states, their political cleavages and territorial disputes led to an uncompromising security environment in the region. The regional security situation is highly explosive which may spark conventional clash at any time, which is the biggest limitation for SAARC's operative measures in the region.

Moreover, besides the security concerns, India's structural supremacy in the region led to a strategic imbalance among the SAARC members. Although India has claimed many times that it is not a predatory state, the fact is that India is involved in many conflicts with the peripherally small states. SAARC is basically outlined for economic cooperation, which has never been attained due to the regional security and political adverse scenario. The true spirit of SAARC was a security guarantee that can ensure economic cooperation but India emphasized only on economic ties and kept the political and security concerns aside. The success of SAARC without Indian cooperation was not possible. The tense regional security environment is paralyzing the economic development in South Asia. However, it is inevitable that regional security is not confined to military pacts, peace treaties, or the ideological complexion of governments, but improvement in governance standards and collective responses to the common social and economic challenges are needed to make the South Asian region peaceful and prosperous. However, SAARC had no mandate by default, to deal with security issues. Therefore,

studies of regionalism have ignored the analysis of regional security regarding South Asian regionalism.

In the developing world, the path to genuine, fruitful community-building lies with security. Therefore, in the context of the security complex of south Asia, the idea of economic development and security is indispensable to each other. SAARC needs to include political and security issues on its agenda for realistic moves towards a 'South Asian Community'. Considering security cooperation is crucial to regional integration, a lack of focus has led to a complete disregard of an important aspect of cooperation in South Asia which could provide SAARC with intellectual support for a regional security mechanism, albeit in the distant future.

Thus, the only way to maximize SAARC's credibility is to enhance the security environment among the SAARC countries and turn the diversified national interests under the umbrella of regional cooperation. SAARC's structural faults and its political destabilizing factors cannot undermine its importance. It is the forum through which national voices can be raised for inter-state cooperation and to satisfy the national aspirations and goals, with a proven impact on the world. The prospects of SAARC can only be proven if the organization works after resolving their inter-state political conflicts, and improving the regional security, and forward for mutual economic cooperation under their defined goals and principles.

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