

## REGIONAL INTEGRATION IN SOUTH ASIA: UTOPIA OR REALITY?

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### Abstract

*South Asia comprises almost one-quarter of the world's population. It faces a host of disputes of varying natures, including armed conflicts, proxy wars, and religious and ethnic strife. Despite its deplorable state of human security and impoverished people, South Asia is considered the least integrated region globally. Approximately 1.99 billion people suffer in terms of energy, food, water and health security due to conflicts and hostile interstate relationships. This paper analyses the socio-political and security environment of the region and explores the impediments to regional integration. Focusing on the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, it highlights that the idea of regional integration cannot be realized without resolving core issues. Economic cooperation between regional countries can only be achieved if integration models like the European Union and Association of South East Asian Nations are considered with necessary deviations.*

**Keywords:** South Asia, Regional Integration, Human Security, SAARC, Economic Cooperation.

**H**istory, geography and political construct play an essential role in the strategic make-up of a region. These factors help shape the region's security environment and translate national interests into socio-economic and political choices and priorities. National interest is usually reflected in statecraft; however, the state is responsible for the convergence of opinions on regional cooperation and social, political and economic aspects. National inspirations driven by national interests besides religious sentiments influence the state's decision-making process. Thus, the national interest-based approach drives the behaviour of states in the region.<sup>1</sup>

South Asia's strategic construct is distinct from the rest of the world owing to its unique security environment and ostensibly odd strategic culture. It is a militarized region with a host of inter-state and intra-state disputes that continue to mar the peace and stability in the region.<sup>2</sup> Security issues range from state to human security and traditional to non-traditional security. The primary determinant of human security, the people, however, continue to suffer. South Asia's rivalries and historical disputes have remained detrimental to regional integration. Pakistan and India being two nuclear states, have a long history of discord and rivalry, obstructing efforts for regional

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integration in South Asia. However, there is a massive potential for regional integration and economic interdependence, but there remains a vast gap between expectations and the outcome of integration on the ground.

In this context, the paper analyses the socio-political environment of the region within its distinct geographical settings and explores the impediments to regional integration. Focusing on the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), this paper argues that the idea of regional integration cannot be realized without resolving core issues. Economic cooperation between regional countries can only be achieved if integration models like the European Union (EU) and Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) are considered with necessary deviations.

## **Geography of South Asia**

South Asia consists of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Pakistan, home to about 1.99 billion people, almost one-fourth of the world's population.<sup>3</sup> Within Asia, this region is significant, carrying tremendous geopolitical importance, especially when viewed through the prism of global and regional power competition. Geographically, South Asia is located between Longitude 56 to 100. The tropic of Cancer, adjoining the southern part of Pakistan, passes through India and Bangladesh. The equator touches South Asia at the southern edge of Maldives. On its north and northeast, the region is bounded by the Himalayan Mountain Range, and its south and southeast opening into the Indian Ocean via the Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal.

The South Asian region is spread over an area of about 5.2 million square kilometres, approximately 11.71 percent of Asia and 3.5 percent of the total landmass of the globe.<sup>4</sup> Its population is approximately 39.49 percent of Asia's and about 25 percent of the world's population. It is an overpopulated region adjacent to the Indian Ocean, having significant global sea trade routes. The energy trade transported through the Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs) of the Indian Ocean is approximately 36 million barrels daily, around 40 percent of the international fuel supply and 64 percent of the world oil trade.<sup>5</sup> The region's GDP is \$4.08 trillion, and per capita income is \$ 2177.<sup>6</sup> The GDP of South Asia is 3.92 percent of the World GDP.<sup>7</sup>

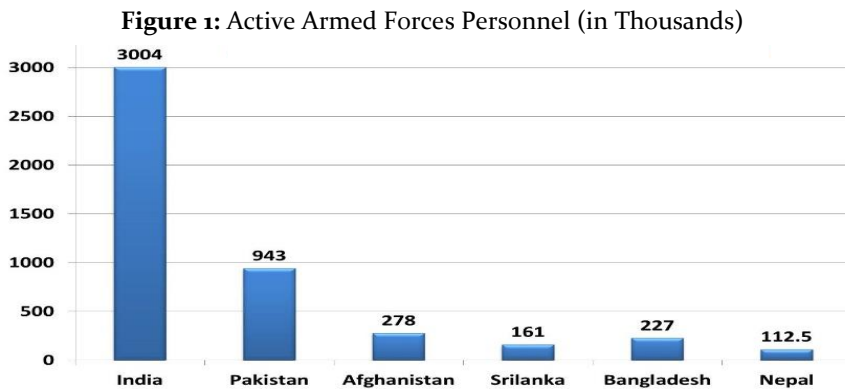
## **Security Calculus of South Asia**

South Asia, a militarized region, carries a history of traditional rivalries and animosity. These historical reminiscences range from the Muslim rule of India, the British colonial period and the bitterness attached to the partition of the subcontinent in 1947. Unfortunately, these events have been securitized by the state and non-state actors in the region, resulting in phenomenal bitterness and becoming barriers in human affairs, including policy-making and statecraft. Moreover, religion and security create a stumbling block to regional cooperation and integration in South Asia. The states' policies are significantly affected by security and political issues, thus creating an

environment of mistrust. Many discords, conflicts and disputes present the region's complex security situation.

The factors driving the security environment of South Asia are predominantly historical bitterness, colonial legacies, religious-ethnic beliefs and foreign powers' interests. These drivers have dangerous expressions and drastic consequences for South Asia.<sup>8</sup> The outcome of the conflict-driven security mosaic is ongoing instability, forcing regional states to prefer strengthening traditional security instead of focusing on human security.<sup>9</sup> The prime manifestations of these complex security dynamics are inter-state wars, intra-state proxies, an unending arms race, interventional politics, and persistent human insecurity. The security dynamics have resulted in bellicosity between two arch-rivals, Pakistan and India, and such animosity reflects even in sports and cultural events.

South Asia is overwhelmed with a security mindset. The large conventional armed forces have been maintained to upkeep states' security. The active strength of the military of six major regional countries is approximately 4,922,000, which is exclusive of the manpower of second-line forces. The security environment has translated into an unending arms race in the region. India was the 10<sup>th</sup> largest defence spender in the world in 2009, 8<sup>th</sup> in 2012, and 3<sup>rd</sup> in 2020-21.<sup>10</sup>



(Source: <https://www.statista.com>)

**Table-1: Military Spending in South Asia – 2022**

Country	Military Spending (Billions \$)	World Ranking
India	76.6	3
Pakistan	11.3	31
Bangladesh	3.80	50
Sri Lanka	2.50	69
Nepal	0.437	99
Afghanistan	0.262	118

(Source: SIPRI Year Book-2022 and World Population Review-2022<sup>11</sup>)

## **Regional Integration: An Historical Overview**

Regional cooperation is the primary driver that acts as a precursor to regional integration and sets in motion the integration process. Earnest B. Haas noted that regional integration is the process in which nations are convinced to transform their devotions and political endeavours towards a common centre whose institutions influence states' matters for cooperation. The end state of political integration is a new political community superimposed over the existing one,<sup>12</sup> and it brings together the regional nations in the collective decision-making process for collective benefits. Joseph Nye posits that "the integration translates into recognition and realization of common objectives and interests."<sup>13</sup> The role of regional organizations' institutional framework helps transform regional cooperation into reality.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, serious thought was given to regional integration. Supranational and regional organizations took over the concept of territorial integrity. Regional integration introduced a new angle to international relations. A sense of cooperation was created amidst the much divided and war-torn world, especially after World War II. The necessity for regional cooperation stemmed from the ashes of world wars, which caused global devastation. The regional integration initiative, therefore, brought nation-states together in world politics.<sup>14</sup> European integration was the first successful initiative of its kind and was an outcome of states' pursuit of national interests in the bipolar world characterized by the Cold War. The European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) was formed from France and Germany's mutual threat perception.<sup>15</sup> In addition to peace and security interests, economic interests were another factor related to mutuality. The Schuman Plan (1950) linked with Jean Monnet's vision of French industrial retrieval that profoundly relied on France's access to Germany's Coal.<sup>16</sup> According to some neorealists, the close cooperation of European states resulted from bloc politics because of the dynamics of superpowers' rivalry during the Cold War.<sup>17</sup> The US needed European integration much for the balance of power vis-à-vis the erstwhile USSR amid the heat of the Cold War.<sup>18</sup>

Notwithstanding the peaceful economic cooperation between the two states (France and Germany), the inspirations later extended to other domains of cooperation. The EU initially originated as an economic collaboration among six countries; however, the expansion took the form of a common currency in the markets of 16 countries.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, some supranational institutions, i.e., the European Parliament, also came up due to the integration. In addition to realism, neo-functionalism explains the regional integration of Europe. They propose that ECSC's economic spillover towards making the EU a robust regional organization involves a remarkable effort on the part of the leadership and interest groups. The economic spillover propagated by the neo-functionalists worked for Europe; however, if applied in other cases, i.e., South Asia or Southeast Asia, the varied regional dynamics need to be studied.

Southeast Asian nations got integrated with the emergence of ASEAN. It is a socio-political and economic union of 10-member states. According to T. V. Paul,

ASEAN got established due to US military presence in the Pacific Ocean.<sup>20</sup> It emerged within an environment of the struggle for power and distribution of power. Despite heterogeneity among Southeast Asian nations and peculiar ideologies, these states opted for integration. It is presumed that the big power relationship shaped their cooperation. Today, ASEAN is the most potent and effective organization having global inspiration.<sup>21</sup> It plays a considerable role in regional and global trade, economy, security and politics. Moreover, the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) is the most dynamic free trade area worldwide.<sup>22</sup>

The process of decolonization after World War II led to the independence of colonies. The newly born nation states had the humongous task of retaining their independence and reviving their economic condition. Internally, in line with their domestic imperatives and people's aspirations, they adopted political systems that included their constitutions. On the other hand, they started to foster cooperation at the global and regional levels to minimize the chance of tensions and confrontations. In the process, several regional organizations emerged to galvanize cooperation among the regional stakeholders. SAARC is one of such organizations established by the South Asian states in 1985, and subsequently, in 2007, the membership rose to eight with the joining of Afghanistan. It has given a system in which regional organizations will have a dominant role in world politics. Walter Lippmann's prediction seems accurate; he alluded to the future construct of international order as signified and characterized by the community of states.<sup>23</sup>

## **Regional Cooperation in South Asia – SAARC**

During the 1980s, the then President of Bangladesh, Zia Ur Rahman, coined the idea of regional cooperation in South Asia through an institutionalized framework.<sup>24</sup> Host of the aspects ranging from political, economic, security and likely dividends in economic and human security domains through regional integration might have been considered by him while proposing such an institutional framework for South Asia. The offer inspired smaller states (Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives) to embrace the initiative instantly. However, major players of South Asia, Pakistan and India, were sceptic of the idea initially owing to the security issues prevailing between both states. Indian policymakers remained apprehensive of the opportunity for smaller nations to regionalize their bilateral issues and the likelihood of clubbing together and ganging up against India.<sup>25</sup> Pakistan had its apprehensions related to using this regionalism as a conduit to consolidate India's economic dominance in South Asia.<sup>26</sup>

It was the year 1985 which witnessed the establishment of SAARC at the heels of the Cold War. The member states were Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Pakistan (Afghanistan joined later). The inaugural Summit was held in Dhaka in December 1985, where the Charter of the SAARC was signed.<sup>27</sup> Since no international trigger caused the establishment of SAARC, the economic and domestic political imperatives of South Asian states might have compelled them to opt for such regional cooperation. The smaller nations also envy and want to benefit from the extant

market potential of significant economies and natural resources. Thus, SAARC's future hinges upon regional economic cooperation and domestic political dynamics more than international actors and the environment.<sup>28</sup>

## **Regional Integration in South Asia**

With liberal thought gaining impetus, the world has become a global village. Various regional forums surfaced in the form of the EU, North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), ASEAN, and SAARC. In the case of South Asia, SAARC was envisioned as a move toward globalization for broader regional cooperation to attain the shared dividend of peace, stability and prosperity in the region. However, poverty, illiteracy, economic woes, unemployment and social inequalities continue to haunt the people of South Asia in the human security domain.

Regional cooperation lies in interdependence and nation-states' common interests. Therefore, mutual trade and removing trade barriers, including opening borders for trade, help all member states. As a result, the region grows and develops. South Asian nations need to come forward and forge the maximum possible cooperation in trade, industry, agriculture and socio-economic development.<sup>29</sup> SAARC countries have a shared cultural heritage and bonding, which can be promoted further to foster the development of a common socio-political culture in the region. Through cultural exchanges, people-to-people contacts can be enhanced. There is a vast scope for cooperation in the economy, counter-terrorism, climate change and environmental degradation. However, some specific issues do not allow South Asia to integrate, ranging from global to regional levels. There is a great power competition in the Asia-Pacific region, of which South Asia is a part; due to the superpowers' contestation, this region is increasingly being affected. Pakistan and India, the major regional players and nuclear-armed states, have long-standing core political and territorial issues. These unresolved issues are considered detrimental to the overall spirit of regional integration and cooperation.

The sense of insecurity has forced both states to develop or acquire nuclear technology and delivery systems, thus spending a significant chunk of their national budgets on their defence. The nuclear-arms race continues in the region. Underscoring the need for cooperation in South Asia, former Indian Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral noted the South Asian proportion of the world population. He hinted at the deprivation aspect stemming from the lack of economic activity and an environment sans peace and stability; and linked it to the nuclear flash point. He added that if their internal conflicts and discontentment are breeding animosity, it can cast a deep shadow on the peace and stability of the world.<sup>30</sup> Political issues and disputes must be resolved before fostering regional integration in South Asia. If Germany and France, being the arch-rivals, can resolve their issues and integrate, what stops South Asian states? All needed is the collective will and visionary leadership, which can give practical shape to the much-desired regional integration.

## **Impediments of Regional Integration in South Asia**

SAARC was conceptualized to achieve a regional integration milestone, but the past legacy and experiences cast a shadow on regional integration in South Asia. The snailing pace at which regional integrating efforts are moving speaks of the nonseriousness of regional states and is an outcome of their complex web of animosity. The overall volatile political situation in the region is impeding such an effort. SAARC member states must put their past differences aside and converge upon their resolve through negotiations with an open mind. Achieving the desired ends requires hard work as the following impediments obstruct the path.

### **a) Unresolved Core Issues**

The unresolved Kashmir, Siachen and other politico-military issues keep on obstructing the realization of regional integration in South Asia. These disputes have virtually stalled the spirit of integration. The Kashmir issue between Pakistan and India, border disputes between various regional states and illegal migration between India and Bangladesh are some of the disputes affecting the relations of South Asian nations, which negatively impact integration. Several other high-intensity conflicts prevail in South Asia, including proxies and terrorism, decaying the stability and peace in the region. Such a conflicting situation seriously hinders establishing sustainable political systems and viable institutions of good governance. Peace, stability and prospects of cooperation in South Asia will remain elusive unless the governments of the member states overcome such hurdles.<sup>31</sup>

### **b) Heterogeneity of the Region**

The common known contributing factor toward EU regional integration was homogeneity. In the case of South Asia, homogeneity does not exist in the region. There is diversity in the political systems of regional states; there are monarchic and theocratic states, and others are republics and secular states. In such a heterogeneity, it is challenging for regional organizations and their institutions to integrate the region. Moreover, the political instability and lack of governance defeat the purpose of regional integration as governments are either unstable or unable to focus on the idea of regional integration in an environment of political uncertainty. Governance systems have failed to deliver, as people are not adequately empowered. The elites of the society are not accountable; corruption is rampant and blemishes the chances of administrative responsiveness.

### **c) Structural Inadequacies of SAARC**

SAARC's objectives include promoting and ensuring the welfare of the people, hastening economic growth, increasing social and cultural development, improving self-reliance, collaborating and cooperating in technical and scientific fields, and enhancing assistance amongst member states and with other regional and international organizations.<sup>32</sup> However, there has been a paradox in envisioned objectives and

functioning of the organization. SAARC aims to provide an instrument of regional cooperation and resultant socio-economic dividends to its member states.<sup>33</sup> The inability to deliver tangible benefits to the people of South Asia is, therefore, attributed to member states' priorities and preferences for state security over economic and human security. India's role is mainly deemed more crucial than any other regional state due to its size and commitment to regionalism.<sup>34</sup> One of the critical aspects of the SAARC Charter is Article X, a manifestation of the politico-strategic nature of the organization. It augments that bilateral and core contentious issues shall be excluded from deliberations,<sup>35</sup> so these should not hamper regional cooperation and integration. This optimism will remain hollow and fruitless if resolving core disputes is not prioritized.

#### **d) State-centric Socio-political Construct**

One of the major impediments to cooperation and regionalism in South Asia is the socio-political environment influenced by realism and neo-realism. South Asia's socio-politico-economic and security construct is considered anarchic and state-centric, against the spirit of liberalism, human security and regional cooperation. The state-centric policies and political choices have hindered South Asia's growth and regional cooperation and integration effectiveness.<sup>36</sup>

#### **e) Role of Global Powers**

The role of global powers is of paramount importance for the regional integration of South Asia. The US had played a key role in bringing together the regional players of Europe owing to bipolar politics, as the US had apprehensions about Soviet expansionism towards western Europe. The US also played some role in the regional integration of ASEAN again owing to its global interests. However, the role of the US in South Asia is not very optimistic. US and Indian interests converge in the Asia-Pacific, and the confluence of their interests is against Chinese interests in the region. The US is supporting India to achieve a balance of power in the Asia Pacific besides perceiving Chinese maritime engagements as a threat to US dominance; hence, an environment of competition and contestation prevails in the region. The recent significant developments of AUKUS and QUAD are also tantamount to fuelling further contestation in the region in general and South Asia in particular.

#### **f) Indian Hegemonic Design in the Region**

The world's most significant number of disputes prevail in South Asia,<sup>37</sup> and in most cases, India's centrality is evident. These include the Indo-China Aksai Chin, South Tibet and Arunachal Pradesh disputes,<sup>38</sup> Pakistan-India Kashmir, Sir Creek, and Indus Waters Treaty disputes, Pak-Afghan issues on militants' movement across borders, the border dispute between India and Bangladesh over enclaves, sea boundary dispute over New Moore, South Talpatty and Purbasha Island in the Bay of Bengal,<sup>39</sup> Farraka Dam dispute between India and Bangladesh, India-Nepal Boundary dispute including 400 square kilometres on the source of Kalapani River and cross-borders movement of militants. Figure 2 below highlights the India-centric disputes in the region, which



negatively impact regional peace and stability. The mindset of Indian leadership reflects Bharatiya Janata Party’s (BJP) religious-ethnic nationalism, which is mainly responsible for domestic political polarization.

**Figure 2: India-centric Disputes in South Asia**



(Source: Author’s Compilation)

Another impediment to regional integration in South Asia is its disturbing balance of power, owing to India’s geographical size, military might, and economic wherewithal compared with other regional states and their medium- or small-sized economies. Indian hegemonic policies and historic arrogance in dealing with South Asian neighbours dominate instead of building stable relations and bringing regional states together by reinvigorating SAARC and SAFTA initiatives. India is more inclined to promote its bilateral relations with the US, Europe, the Middle East and ASEAN.

**Lessons from EU and ASEAN**

The EU and ASEAN success stories hold lessons for regional integration in South Asia. The key takeaways are that bilateral conflicts should be resolved or negotiated on the table with a corresponding attitude besides encouraging economic cooperation and free flow of goods, as in the case of the EU. There is a need to identify areas where SAARC member states are eager to cooperate and endorse mutual benefits. In this regard, a shift from conventional red-tapism to fast-track mechanisms and one-window operations is much needed. It is also necessary to revisit the custom laws and protocols, immigration procedures, trade protocols, and non-tariff barriers, among other things. A joint customs union can abolish conflicting protocols and clauses to smooth goods and trade flow.

No single state can flourish in isolation without collaborating with its neighbours and regional states. Regions grow together due to the mutuality of benefits and threats. There is a requirement to distinguish domestic politics from regional cooperation. The divergence of interests in the political realm should not prevent states

from cooperating on socio-economic issues. In this context, the role of civil societies has increased manifold.

## **Prospects of Regional Integration in South Asia**

In the globalized world, the concept of regionalism is essential to promote while achieving a certain level of regional integration. In addition, the evolution of regional intergovernmental institutions like NAFTA, EU and ASEAN have proved effective and beneficial.<sup>40</sup> In South Asia, the intergovernmental initiative for economic cooperation, SAFTA was introduced in 2004. However, the initiative could not bring desired results due to the state-centric policies of SAARC countries.<sup>41</sup> The 19<sup>th</sup> SAARC Summit (2016) planned in Pakistan was boycotted by India owing to false allegations against Pakistan for a terrorist attack in Uri.

Moreover, India appears to be lining up the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC). It is an organization comprising Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Thailand as an alternative for regional cooperation.<sup>42</sup> The changing orientation of India was visible during the recent tenures of the BJP government. In his first term, Prime Minister Narendra Modi invited leaders of SAARC; conversely, during the inauguration of his second term in 2019, he invited BIMSTEC leaders, signalling the changed priorities of New Delhi. Furthermore, Prime Minister Modi invited the leaders of BIMSTEC to the session of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) Summit in Goa in 2017, thus signifying India's model of regionalism. Putting its stakes in different blocs and ignoring regional cooperation translates into India's seriousness towards SAARC. India is constantly in denial mode to sit with Pakistan, resolve the outstanding core issues and work for the regional integration of South Asia. Instead, Indian policymakers insist on economic cooperation sans political resolution.

Power transition dynamics define the success or failure of regional integration. Historically, the role of the US has always been crucial to the success of regional integration. The two success stories of the EU and ASEAN may be taken as empirical evidence for this argument. As mentioned earlier, the expansion of the former Soviet Union to eastern Europe posed a threat to the US that led to the creation of the EU as it supported the US-led western liberal order. Similarly, the creation of ASEAN resulted from the US safeguarding its interests in East Asia. However, regarding South Asia, regional integration does not benefit the US interests and western-led global order as it provides China economic and diplomatic space, affecting the balance of power.

South Asia has massive potential for cooperation. Bilateral disputes impede cordial relations among South Asian states; these should be settled through negotiations, leaving no chance for outside powers to play politics in the region. Amidst the trust deficit, there is a need to involve all stakeholders and agree on win-win formulae to materialize cooperation in economic and other related fields. Undoubtedly, the trust deficit among states obstructs the development of full-fledged cooperation,

but efforts for regional integration cannot be overlooked. States must come forward, putting their myopic perceptions aside, to pledge the resolution of all outstanding disputes. The notion of dubbing SAARC as only economic cooperation organization would not serve the long-due goal of peace, stability and wellbeing of the people. Similarly, leaving aside the outstanding core issues for regional trade through vested interests may not serve the purpose.<sup>43</sup>

The common issues of poverty, unemployment, terrorism and climate change should be the priority instead of embarking upon an unending arms race in the region. Both significant players of South Asia, Pakistan and India, have the onus of responsibility, especially India, for the sake of the poor masses of the region. Global powers engaging in power politics in Asia-Pacific should not embroil South Asian states into their blocs, instead uniting them to integrate as a region. There is a need to realize SAARC member states' shared responsibilities towards shared dividends. South Asian nations must understand that their interests interlink due to socio-cultural proximity. The prospects of integration in South Asia have always been more substantial than those related to any other group of neighbouring states.<sup>44</sup>

## Conclusion

South Asia became a regional entity due to the establishment of SAARC; however, it could not succeed in achieving the envisaged regional integration. Regional integration could not evolve in South Asia for multiple reasons; however, primarily due to regional conflicts. The institutional framework of SAARC could not stand the test of time. The antagonistic nature of inter-state relations, disjointed economic policies, inadequate infrastructure, low trade initiatives, religion-centric issues and militarized security speak of the failure of regionalism in South Asia, having low prospects for sustainable regional integration. The experiences of the EU and ASEAN indicate that regional organizations cannot thrive until proving a willingness to remove all impediments obstructing integration.

The prospects of peace and stability in South Asia depend upon peacefully resolving all outstanding disputes. However, the significance of economic cooperation and trade remains vital for regional integration. No state can succeed in isolation without taking along the socio-political perspective of regional economies. Unfortunately, SAARC has little chance to succeed unless its member states, especially India and Pakistan, display the desired level of cooperation. Indian relations with neighbouring states and its overall behaviour need to be more constructive for SAARC to be a cooperative forum. Given South Asia's heterogeneity and economic situation, the prospects of regional integration hinge upon how member states manage their core issues and resolve to promote regional cooperation. Unresolved political issues usually stall the endeavours toward regional integration.

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- <sup>35</sup> South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), *Social Charter*, January 4, 2004. <https://www.refworld.org/docid/595c933c4.html> (accessed May 2022).
- <sup>36</sup> Ghazanfar Lateef Dar. p. 20.
- <sup>37</sup> Ehsan Mehmood Khan. p. 27.

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- <sup>38</sup> The disputed territory is situated south of McMahon Line agreed between the United Kingdom and Tibet in 1914 Simla Accord, which has not been accepted by China. The dispute became major reason of 1962 war between India and China.
- <sup>39</sup> Interestingly, claim of common Indians over the Indian Ocean and common Bangladeshis claiming the Bay of Bengal belonging to them.
- <sup>40</sup> A. D. Unlu. 2017. "Global Governance vs. Regional Governance in Social Policy: The Social Policy of the EU." In *Handbook of Research on Technology Adoption, Social Policy, and Global Integration*, edited by Mehdi Khosrow-Pour. Hershey, PA: IGI Global. p.41.
- <sup>41</sup> Ghazanfar Lateef Dar. p. 20.
- <sup>42</sup> The manifesto of BJP in 2019 general elections of India noted. Reflecting visible leaning towards BIMSTEC, BIMSTEC leaders were invited to the inauguration of the Modi government after win of the 2019 general elections.
- <sup>43</sup> Indian authors advocate economic cooperation on the plea that critical issues can be handled later. This is a non-starter to forge cooperation and integration in South Asia.
- <sup>44</sup> Jagat Mehta. 2006. "The Future in South Asia: Beware of the Hypnosis of History." *South Asia Politics* 4(11): 18.