

Regionalism, Regionalization and Inter-State Conflict: The Case of Pak-Indo Dispute and the SAARC Organization

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Abstract: The creation of SAARC in 1985 by the initiative of a relatively small country (Bangladesh) is a composition of several diffusion mechanisms such as domestic pressure, norm socialization and persuasion, competition, lesson drawing, normative emulation, and mimicry. Even though a broad agreement is located that the SAARC is an unsuccessful association in comparison to EU, NAFTA, and ASEAN, the influence of SAARC as an institution by shaping the identity is significant and efficient. Furthermore, extra-regional projects such as TAPI assists SAARC for minimizing Pak-Indo conflict in South Asia. The fundamental premises of this paper is to analyze how the SAARC shape and impacts the Pak-Indo conflict. The paper will neither investigate the Pak-Indo strife profoundly nor will discuss how the productivity of SAARC is undermined by Pak-Indo conflict.

Keywords: ASEAN, SAARC, TAPI, Regionalism.

1. INTRODUCTION

The South Asia geography despite sharing the collective history of British colonialism, the aftermath of their independence and the formation of the nationstate, the quest for the rivalry, autonomy, and sovereignty hinders the cooperation and integration in the region.

The region is a plural society in term of the languages, cultures, religions, regions, and ethnic. Furthermore, paraphrasing the work of Rajkumar Singh the South Asian people speak at least of twenty major languages, if other essential dialects are included the number rises to two hundred. This diversity of languages has an enormous contribution to the world literature.¹ Therefore, this diversity of identity complicates the collaboration, despite there is a successful example of cooperation among diverse identity, the Association of Southeast Nations (ASEAN).

The South Asia Association of Regional Cooperation (hence-after SAARC) is the only regional cooperation in South Asia. Majority of the scholars argue that the organization is obsolete due to the rivalry of two dominant power in the region, India, and Pakistan and refer it as a talk-shop. However, taking into consideration reversely, the SAARC organization has a blind but massive impact on not only on the conflict of Pak-Indo but also on other regional disputes. For instance, the since the creation of SAARC, the organization has sought to increase cooperation in non-political areas such as trade, social and cultural, education, and sport by providing a platform of negotiation and communication. Furthermore, other extra-regional projects such as Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India (TAPI) assists SAARC in cooperation and collaboration.

In this respect, this article is mainly focusing on how the SAARC organization and TAPI project have a positive influence on resolving the Pak-Indo strife and lessens this bilateral conflict. The author is interested in the regionalism studies and the importance of regionalism on inter-state disputes. Furthermore, South Asia, a region where bold rivalry hinders regional cooperation is widely studied by scholars, the impact of regional collaboration on the same conflict lacks studies.

¹ Rajkumar Singh, "Indian Political Science Association RELEVANCE OF SAARC IN SOUTH ASIAN CONTEXT RELEVANCE OF SAARC IN SOUTH ASIAN CONTEXT," Source: The Indian Journal of Political Science Indian Political Science Association The Indian Journal of Political Science 70, no. 1 (2009): 239–48.

In this regard, this article will provide a methodological framework in the next chapter, for better illuminating the main arguments of the article; brief historical background is presented in the third chapter. The literature review will be provided in the fourth chapter, and the fifth chapter will create a theoretical framework for the article. The next chapter will analyze the Pak-Indo dispute and its influence on SAARC. The influence of regionalism of interstate conflict will be discussed in the seventh chapter, and lastly, the impact of SAARC on the Pak-Indo conflict will be comprehensively addressed by providing subsections for the main arguments of the article.

2. METHODOLOGY

The research is an interpretive study which the arguments are mainly based on the secondary resources in addition to some statistical data. Furthermore, the existing resources are mostly focused on how the bilateral dispute of Pak-Indo has undermined the productivity of the SAARC organization. Therefore, to analysis inversely, the SAARC has a modest influence on Pak-Indo dispute, in this regard, this paper will be based on the secondary resource. However, the analysis will be done to illuminate the impact of SAARC on this bilateral conflict.

In this regard, the works of E. B. Haas, Amitive Acharya, Muni, Mukherjee, and Cokwitze will be my primary source of interpretive analysis and the statistical quantity from British Petroleum (BP) and SAARC Group on Statistics will be the primary source of quantitative analysis.

3. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The establishment of SAARC occurs in a period in which several regional and international developments arise. First of all, the 1980s is the period during which the so-called second Cold-War period occurred. By the invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, the South Asian countries in general and Pakistan particularly became apprehensive as the Soviet army may cross the border of Afghanistan and create a threat for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country. Furthermore, the influx of refugee to Pakistan will be later a severe problem for Pakistan political, social and economic system.

Secondly, the South Asian countries except Pakistan until 1979 were members of the non-aligned movement. In this regard, any regional integration or cooperation was considered as an exogenous project. For instance, India, a member of non-aligned movement consider the attempts of regional collaboration being a project of Jimmy Carter, president of US.² Moreover, South Asian Cooperation was pretended to Baghdad Pact, CENTO, and SEATO.

Lastly but not least significant, the change of regimes from Mrs. Gandhi to Janata in India, from Bhutto to Zia-ul-Haq in Pakistan, from Mrs. Bandaranaike to Jayawardene in Sri Lanka, and the consolidation of Zia-ur-Rahman in Bangladesh that withdrew the state from uncertainty. These new regimes not only hate the predecessor regimes but also they were enthusiastic to construct mutual understanding and harmony of interest with approaching each other in regional level. Furthermore, they were keen to look East and West issues in a form which the West was very sympathetic.³

In consideration of these developments, the establishment of SAARC in 1985 is crucial and critical. On the one hand, the upcoming member of the organization –Afghanistan will be the member of SAARC in 2007 –is invaded by the Soviet Union and on the other hand both in west and east the regionalism is witnessing its shining era such as European Community and ASEAN respectively. As a result, these developments had both substantial influences on bringing the member states whom they had deep apprehension from each other.

Regional cooperation in South Asia is not a novel notion, the area defined by Muni as ‘a region which is sandwiched between ASEAN and Gulf region, is characterized by political disharmony and strategic schism’.⁴ Efforts in the direction of cooperation in the region happened before the eighties. However, the South Asian states were colonialized, the states could not act independently toward agreement between the countries in their vicinities, despite having an original geographic, cultural, shared the history and somehow common language for communication. Furthermore, the aftermath of World War Two and the independence of South Asia states created a long era of bilateral and multilateral conflict in addition to the delicate issue of sharing sovereignty.

² The Carter doctrine emphasized that the US encourages the establishment of a cooperative regional security framework in South and Southwest Asia.

³ S.D. Muni, “SARC: Building Regionalism from Below,” *Asian Survey* 25, no. 4 (1985): 391–404.

⁴ *Ibid.*

On one side the integration process in Europe continent which was and is a benchmark in progress with high acceleration during Cold-War era, on the other hand, integration process was also taking shape in East Asia, Latin America, Africa, and even the Gulf region. Therefore, in late 1979, the president of Bangladesh propound the idea of South Asian regional cooperation –as there is a consensus that SAARC is a product of Bangladesh. In this regard, several meetings were held to give shape to the cooperation.

While the South Asian foreign ministers and officials were in New York for the summit of UN between June and September in the 1980s, they informally discussed the proposal of Bangladesh, and the motion was reformulated heavily. Thereby, a consensus was occurred in building regional cooperation from below in areas where the seven members did not have controversies. Furthermore, political aspect was mainly hold exempted.

After that, preliminary meetings were held for discussion to consolidate the cooperation and make it formalize and institutionalize. For instance, the meetings of Colombo (1981), Islamabad (1982) and Dhaka (1983). These attempts were not safe from positive and negative criticism. During the Cold-war, a bipolar international system, the attempts were supported by western leaders such as President Carter and Britain Prime Minister Callaghan on the one hand; these efforts were negatively criticized on the other side. This should be noticed that the criticism coming from the left-wing was not at a high-level but smoothly and intra-stately. For instance, citing the work of Muni ‘the criticism of Holiday Weekly –a left-wing Bangladesh newspaper – labeled the efforts of Zia-Ur-Rahman as “nothing but an echo” for the Carter Doctrine.⁵

Finally, the regional cooperation of South Asian countries has been institutionalized by Dhaka Declaration afterward of the Dhaka Summit on 8th December 1985 with a charter and seven members such as Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The secretariat of the organization will be set up two years later in 1987 in Kathmandu, Nepal.

4. LITERATURE REVIEW

Regionalism and Regionalization lacks a common definition, as Mansfield and Solingen highlight that “this is because observers do not agree on what constitutes a region” the authors provide a definition that “regions are frequently defined as a group of countries located in the same geographic space”.⁶ However, where a region ends or starts is not clear. Therefore, the authors cite some scholars for defining region, such as Katzenstein define the region as a “politically made areas”, whereas Russett defines a region as “geographic proximity, social and cultural homogeneity, shared political attitudes and political institutions, and economic interdependence”.⁷

According to Acharya “Regionalism used to be defined largely in terms of formal intergovernmental organizations with a charter and bureaucracy”.⁸ However, Kacowicz underlines that Regionalism can be described as “a process occurring in a certain geographical region where varying types of actors –states, regional institutions, social groups, etc –come together on the basis of some common core values, norms and interact in wide-ranging economic, cultural, scientific, diplomatic, political and military networks”.⁹ In this regard, regionalism is a process of cooperation and integration dominant by states whereas regionalization is mainly dominated by non-state actors such as business, social, economic, and cultural communities or chambers.

“SAARC -25 Years of Regional Integration in South Asia” by Dlinic is mainly arguing on the internal and external dispute of the members. Furthermore, he labeled the fresh member of the association -Afghanistan became a member of the organization as a “headache” to the organization, moreover, he underlines that how the dominant position of India in the region is undermining the cooperation.¹⁰

The work of S.G. Pandian focuses on how the Pak-Indo conflict undermines the SAARC efficiency. Therefore, other members of the association should move beyond the Indo-Pakistan paradigm and cooperate bilaterally or multilaterally.

⁵ S. D. Muni, “SARC: Building Regionalism from Below,” *Asian Survey* 25, no. 4 (1985): 391–404.

⁶ Edward D. Mansfield and Etel Solingen, “Regionalism,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 13, no. 1 (2010): 145–63.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Amitav Acharya, *Rethinking Power, Institutions and Ideas in World Politics* (London: Routledge, 2014): 74-83.

⁹ Arie M. Kacowicz, “Regionalization, Globalization, and Nationalism: Convergent, Divergent, or Overlapping?” *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 24, no. 4 (1999).

¹⁰ Tomislav, Delinić “SAARC -25 Years of Regional Integration in South Asia” *KAS International Reports*, 2011.

Furthermore, he underlines the benefits for both India and Pakistan provided by SAARC.¹¹ On the other hand, Pillai work underlines regional tensions and its impact of regional cooperation. He takes SAARC as a case study and analyze SAARC under the dispute of the India and Pakistan.¹²

S.D Muni does a comparative analysis of SAARC between other regionalism. He argues that the formation of SAARC is from below rather than a top-down project. In other words, like the formation of EU or NAFTA, the regions take place on the political aspect, and the political elites significantly dominate the process. However, the creation of SAARC is an agreement between member states in the social, cultural and economic sector and political aspect is exempted.¹³

Kunal Mukherjee work is widely dedicated for the analysis of the problems and prospects of SAARC. Moreover, he discusses the economic developments of the SAARC by signing the South Asian Preferential Trade Area (SAPTA) and South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) in 1993 and 2004 respectively. However, he still highlights the challenges rise by Indo-Pak disputes.¹⁴ On the other side, the work of Batra is mainly concentrated on the economic cooperation of SAARC. He analyzes the improvements of SAARC in the economic sector. Therefore, he puts the title of his article as “SAARC and economic cooperation.”¹⁵

Lastly but more significantly, the works of Acharya even though they are mainly concentrated on conceptualizing the regionalism in Asia – particular regionalism in Asia-Pacific –the theoretical arguments and comparison of Asian regionalism to other regions is highly dominant by Acharya’s works.¹⁶

5. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Louise Fawcett underlines that for the definitional and theoretical framework of regionalism “elasticity” is required. He adds that “there is no ideal region, or any single agenda to which all regions aspire. Regions, like states, are of varying composition, capabilities and aspirations. They may also be fluid and changing in their make up”. Moreover, he provides the argument of Maalouf that “regionness, like identity, is not given once and for all: it is built up and changes”.¹⁷

Coding the definition of regional integration provided by Earnest Hass “process whereby political actors in several distinct national settings are persuaded to shift their loyalties, expectations and political activities towards a new larger center whose institutions possesses or demand jurisdiction over pre-existing nation-states”.¹⁸ More region specifically, Andrew Hurrell underlines that if the EU would be a benchmark and the theoretical framework which the EU was established consider as neo-functionalism, the diffusion of regionalism to another part of the world and the process of the establishing regional institutions take shape distinctively.¹⁹ In this regard, cooperation or integration to avoid war and conflict, promote the welfare and provide a solution for natural disaster take shapes in a particular model. Therefore, before entering to the main arguments of the article, this would be better to provide a theoretical perspective for the integration process in SAARC.

Conventionally, regionalism is a debate between neo-functionalism in which parties cooperate in one sector, and this may spread to other industries by the spillover effect and inter-governmentalism in which parties seek to harmonize interests.²⁰ This debate usually occurs in the context of EU integration process.²¹ However, for the diffusion of regionalism from one region to other, these theories would not be sufficient. For instance, the regionalism in East Asia a theoretical framework

¹¹ S. G. Pandian, “Moving South Asia’s Economies beyond the Indo-Pakistan Paradigm in the South Asian Regional Association for Cooperation,” *Contemporary South Asia* 11, no. 3 (2002): 329–44.

¹² K Raman Pillai, “Indian Political Science Association TENSIONS WITHIN REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS: -A STUDY OF SAARC,” *Source The Indian Journal of Political Science Indian Political Science Association* 50, no. 1 (1989): 18–27.

¹³ S. D. Muni, “SARC: Building Regionalism from Below,” *Asian Survey* 25, no. 4 (1985): 391–404.

¹⁴ Kunal Mukherjee, “The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation: Problems and Prospects,” *Progress in Development Studies*, 2014.

¹⁵ Amita Batra, “SAARC and Economic Cooperation”, *India International Centre Quarterly*, Vol. 41, No.3/4: 50-60.I

¹⁶ Amitav Acharya, “Whose Ideas Matter?” 2009; Amitav Acharya, “Asia Rising: Who Is Leading?” 2008; Amitav Acharya and Alastair Iain Johnston, “Comparing Regional Institutions: An Introduction,” *Crafting Cooperation*.

¹⁷ Louise Fawcett, “Regionalism from an Historical Perspective,” *Global Politics of Regionalism*: 21-37.

¹⁸ Ernst Bernard, Haas, *The Uniting of Europe: Political, Social and Economical Forces, 1950-1957* (London: Stevens the London Institute of World Affairs, 1958).

¹⁹ Andrew Hurrell, “The Regional Dimension in International Relations Theory,” *Global Politics of Regionalism*: 38-53.

²⁰ K Raman Pillai, “Indian Political Science Association TENSIONS WITHIN REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS: -A STUDY OF SAARC,” *Source The Indian Journal of Political Science Indian Political Science Association* 50, no. 1 (1989): 18–27.

²¹ Andrew Hurrell, “The Regional Dimension in International Relations Theory,” *Global Politics of Regionalism*: 38-53.

in which weak organization, voluntary commitment, respect to sovereignty and noninterference. For these characteristics, Acharya provides the concept of “ASEAN-Way”²² which is not applicable to the theoretical framework provided for the EU by the EU specialist scholars. Furthermore, Acharya with his own words argued that “new regionalism does not represent a theory, much less a coherent theory, at least not in the sense that neo-functionalism or neoliberal institutionalism are regarded as theories”, therefore he provides the argument of ‘from Eurocentric to Euro-exceptionalism’.²³

With looking to the charter of SAARC in which the member states agreed on the articles of sovereignty equality, territorial integrity, noninterference, political independence, and adherence to the United Nation (UN) charter could not be theorize under the neo-functionalism or neoliberal institutionalism. In this regard, I being agreed with the argument of Acharya that Asian regionalism does not occur in the theoretical framework of neo-functionalism or neoliberal institutionalism but the South Asian regionalism take shape with indigenous characteristics of the region as Acharya conceptualize this as ASEAN-Way.

According to the classical theory of economic, integration could be measured in term of market economies and the central argument of the classical theory of economics is a comparative advantage. In this regard, if the parties specialized in the item in which they are very efficient will maximize their benefit. Nisar-Ul-Haq is criticizing the primary doctrine of the classic economic with ignoring the fundamental nexus between economics and politics.²⁴

6. THE PAK-INDO DISPUTE AND ITS INFLUENCE ON SAARC

Taking the whole SAARC region into consideration, the entire system struggle from these conflicts. First of all, the involvement of the states into the internal affairs of each other. Secondly, the uncontrolled arm transfer to the region in the first decade of the formation of the SAARC. Lastly but more significantly, the nuclear and arms competition between India and Pakistan. The work of Kodrikara is cited by Rajkumar Singh that in the region there are two types of dialectical struggles among the neighbors. One type is the role of India for dominating the region which is consider by other small regional states as a threat and the other is the ambitious role of India which is again consider by other states as a threat for their autonomy, independence and sovereignty.²⁵

SAARC in term of its achievement is not consider a successful organization by majority of scholars, however, the region is struggling from common problems such as poverty, child mortality, stagnation and illiteracy. Myrdal and Busch underline that “there is a similarity in the basic economic conditions of the South Asian countries. All are very poor in general, the largest are the poorest...All have endured a long period of stagnation...And the levels of living of the masses are either lower or not substantially higher today than they were before the Second World War”.²⁶

The ineffectiveness of SAARC is argued by scholars distinctively. On one side, some scholars claim that the lack of trade and economic integration is the cause -the trade transaction among the inter-SAARC countries is the lowest compared to other regions. For instance, the trade of USA with its NAFTA partners in 2002 was 69.7 billion dollar²⁷ and the trade of Germany with its EU partners in 2002 was 415 billion Euro.²⁸ However, the trade of India with SAARC partners in 2002 was approximately 3 billion dollars. Furthermore, the trade transaction among the SAARC members is still in million dollars (Figure 1).

²² Amitav Acharya, “Comparative Regionalism : A Field Whose Time Has Come? ”, *The International Spectator : Italian Journal of International Affairs*, no. July 2013 (2012): 37–41.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Safta Nisar-Ul-Haq, “Regional Cooperation in South Asia : A Theoretical Perspective and Prospects under SAFTA,” *Indian Journal of Asian Affairs* 17, no. 1 (2004): 67–92.

²⁵ Rajkumar Singh, “Indian Political Science Association RELEVANCE OF SAARC IN SOUTH ASIAN CONTEXT RELEVANCE OF SAARC IN SOUTH ASIAN CONTEXT,” Source: *The Indian Journal of Political Science Indian Political Science Association The Indian Journal of Political Science* 70, no. 1 (2009): 239–48.

²⁶ Joel H. Busch and Gunnar Myrdal, “Asian Drama: An Inquiry into the Poverty of Nations,” *The Australian Quarterly* 40, no. 4 (1968).

²⁷ “NAFTA: A Decade of Growth”, Prepared by Trade Partnership, Washington DC, 2004, http://tradepartnership.com/wpcontent/uploads/2014/06/NAFTA_Decade_of_Growth.pdf

²⁸ “Intra-EU trade in goods - recent trends”, Eurostat Statistics Explained, http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Intra-EU_trade_in_goods_-_recent_trends.

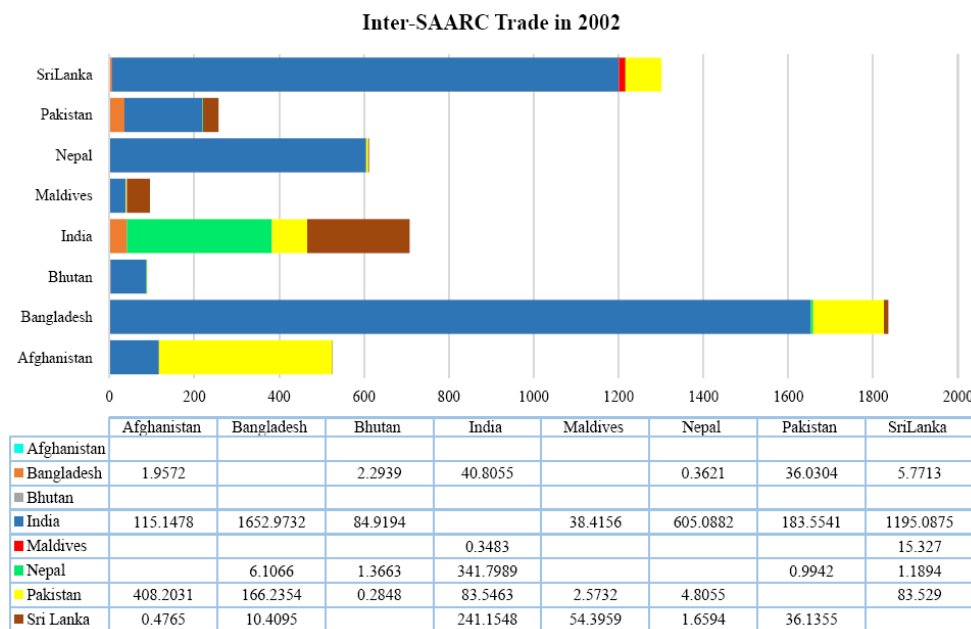


Figure 1:

Source: SAARC Group On Statistics, http://www.saarcstat.org/db/trade_stat/

Note: All Values are on Million US Dollar

On the other side, some argue that backwardness in education is the reason. However, principal argument is that the SAARC is India centralized position. Looking into the bilateral and multilateral conflicts between member states, they are all Indian-centric. For instance, Pakistan and India dispute, India and Sri Lanka dispute on minorities, India and Bangladesh conflict on water, India and Nepal conflict on intervening in internal affairs and finally India and Bhutan dispute on Bhutan creating good relations with China which India attempts to halt the influence of China in the region. Furthermore, India is geographical in a central position where other members are not sharing a border.

The dispute between Pakistan and India on the entire region is dominant and significant for several reasons. First of all, both countries are the biggest in term of population, geography and even economy. Secondly, both countries hold the ownership of nuclear arsenal. Lastly, the dominant position of India in the region, Pakistan could only balance it through its hard-power.

Pakistan and India independent states after the World War Two from United India has dispute since then. Border dispute, asset transfer, and the annexation of three sovereign states. Thereby, both parties have fought for several times, such as 1948, 1965, 1971 and the Kargil war in 1998. Even though both sides have several mutual agreements and negotiation for the conflict resolution, they are not considered sufficiently and successfully.

Looking into the charter of the SAARC, the members are agreed on issues such as social, economic, culture, non-interference, territorial integrity, education, health, and trade. Political matters are deliberately put into one side as the member states believe that this would undermine the productivity of SAARC, however, not adding political issues further impact negatively. For instance, the stance of Pakistan since from the very beginning of the organization argues that for further cooperation in other areas the Kashmir issue should be resolved.

7. THE INFLUENCE OF REGIONALISM ON INTER-STATE CONFLICTS

The impact of regionalism on the resolving bilateral or multilateral conflict in a region diversifies from region to region. Furthermore, the success of regional cooperation is generally measured by the impact of the association on the conflict. For instance, EU is regarded by scholars as successful cooperation by not only resolving the Franco-German strife but also it is influential on resolving other regional disputes. Moreover, EU cooperation has spilled over to other sectors of cooperation.

On the other hand, ASEAN has fruitful influence by resolving disputes in the East Pacific among the member states. In this regard, ASEAN is counted by scholars as a successful Asian regionalism. However, looking to other parts of the world such as South Asia, Latin America, Africa, Middle East and Central Asia, regional cooperations are not as influential as like EU and ASEAN.

8. THE INFLUENCE OF SAARC ON PAK-INDO CONFLICT

In the 1980s with the changing global environment, the public pressure of the country's in South Asia, the states felt to go into cooperation. Consequently, the countries isolate the economic activities from the political issues as the countries were in the deep contest. Thereby, the formation of SAARC is based on three assumptions. Firstly, the promotion of economic goals through cooperation. Secondly, through expansion of commerce and trade through the realization of equitable benefit distribution. Lastly but not least, creating an atmosphere of dialogue and negotiation. Though the formation of SAARC is to cooperate in social, economic cultural and other areas except for politic, through this cooperation in nonpolitical areas diplomacy and communication are facilitated for political areas. It has been 33 years since the creation of SAARC, during this period the SAARC has several distinguishable achievements, such as the formation of Integrated Program of Action (IPA) which is responsible of the identification of the areas for cooperation; in 1993 the member countries agreed on the formation of SAPTA for facilitating trade activities among the nations. Furthermore, the same body is changed in 2004 by SAARC SAFTA for trade liberalization and reduction or even elimination of tariffs. Also, SAARC is in close relation and cooperation with other regional and international governmental and nongovernmental organization. For instance, SAARC signed the agreement with the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) for trade transparency and facilitation; the agreement with World Health Organization (WHO) in 2000, UNICEF (1993), Asia-Pacific Tele-community (1994), UN Drug Program (1995), the Canadian International Development Agency (1997) and etc.

Being agree with argument of Gonsalves and Jetly which are cited by Kunal Mukherjee, underline that "the immediate goals of the SAARC are non-political in nature, which stress on national development through economic cooperation. The long-term goal is political in nature, which aims at the ultimate creation of a durable, stable and peaceful regional order".²⁹

The tensions between members of SAARC discussed in the previous chapter as Pillai classifies these tension as geopolitical imbalance, Indophobia, ethnic tension, mutual distrust and divergent political perceptions.³⁰ However, from my perspective of view, at the backbone of all these tensions is the lack of communication. In other words, looking to the trade transaction among the members of the region is very low, it's more focused on extra-region trade rather than intra-region. In this regard, SAARC provides trade and economic opportunities besides platforms of negotiation. Moreover, an extra-regional project such as TAPI will have a positive implication on the dispute of Pak-Indo. Therefore, the author prefers to analysis these sections separately.

8.1 Trade Opportunity

Looking at the statistics of trade between SAARC members, it is not very satisfactory. For instance, the trade of two major states in the organization (Pakistan and India) is lower than 2% even though the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of these two countries is approximately 80% of the South Asia GDP.³¹ Moreover, the intra-regional trade between member states is the lowest compared to another region. Despite holding a huge population which in term of economy is demand. In this regard, SAARC since its creation has focused on increasing trade between its members, this will improve the communication of people-to people. Therefore, from my standpoint on the base of neo-functionalism theory, the increase of communication between people by developing trade activities among the rivals which SAARC has been doing such as creating SAPTA (1993) and SAFTA (2004) declines the tension between Pakistan and India. More specifically, the only hot-war between Pakistan and India (Kargil 1998) since being members of SAARC is the modest positive influence of the association.

²⁹ Kunal Mukherjee, "The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation: Problems and Prospects," Progress in Development Studies, 2014.

³⁰ K Raman Pillai, "Indian Political Science Association TENSIONS WITHIN REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS: -A STUDY OF SAARC," Source The Indian Journal of Political Science Indian Political Science Association 50, no. 1 (1989): 18-27.

³¹ S. G. Pandian, "Moving South Asia's Economies beyond the Indo-Pakistan Paradigm in the South Asian Regional Association for Cooperation," Contemporary South Asia 11, no. 3 (2002): 329-44.

In other words, before the SAFTA agreement (2004) the India-Pakistan export transaction for instance in 2003 was 680 million dollars. Aftermath of SAFTA agreement which went into effect in 2006 the export transaction rises sharply (Figure 2). Within this context, I can argue that the rise in trade between the rivals not only minimize the dispute among the states but also increase communication among people-to-people. For instance, since the implementation of SAFTA both India and Pakistan have carried out speech diplomacy rather than going to hot conflict. Furthermore, the lack of communication among the people in the region and low and power transportation is at the base of these conflicts thereby the effectiveness of SAARC has been undermined. For instance, the eruption of bilateral or multilateral crisis among the members, they are declaring non-participation in the upcoming SAARC summit which is used constantly my member states as a pressure on the adverse party. However, SAARC is a platform where officials of the member states come together, they have been socialized there by exchanging their ideas in this platform. In this regard, SAARC has enormous influence on the Pak-Indo dispute by creating platform of negotiation and beneficial realistic economic opportunities to both sides which I will discuss in the next chapter.

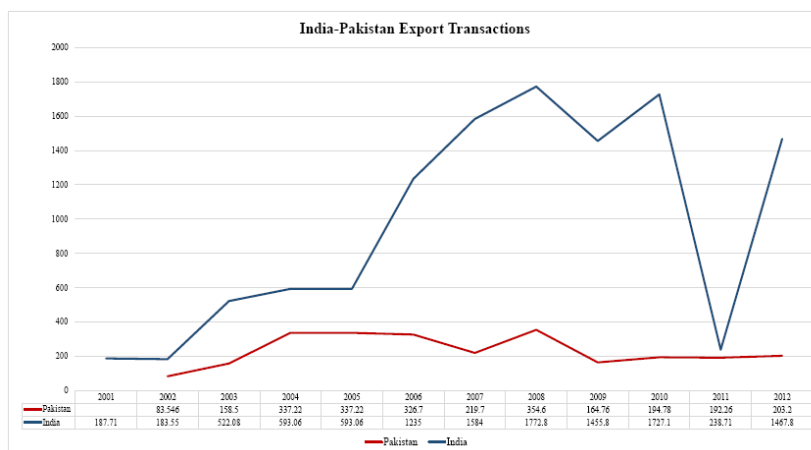


Figure 2:

Source: SAARC Group On Statistics, http://www.saarcstat.org/db/trade_stat/

Note: All Values are on Million US Dollar

8.2 Platform of Negotiation

Since 1974 when India detonated its first nuclear bomb under the name of “Smiling Buddha”, the relations of Pak-Indo were in its lowest since then. However, by the end of 1980s, aftermath of the formation of SAARC, the officials of both states had bilateral and informal discussion behind the scene in the first summit of SAARC. Thereby, the leaders of both states agreed on not striking the nuclear arsenal of each other’s. Furthermore, in the second summit of SAARC in Bangalore held in an atmosphere when India was conducting its huge military exercise under the name of Operation Brass Tacks, in her western border with Pakistan with a number of 150,000 troops had caused the provocation of Pakistan which later mobilized its border too, SAARC created a corridor of talks for the primers of both states for discussion.³² Consequently, both side agreed with the withdrawal of their troops from the border and for the confidence building a bilateral agreement under the name of “Agreement on the Prohibition of Attack against Nuclear Installations and Facilities” was signed.³³

In the post-Cold War era when Pakistan was now relatively relaxed from its northern border with Afghanistan due to the withdrawal of Red Forces from Afghanistan. However, in Kashmir India and Pakistan were rhetorically accusing each other of supporting the insurgency in the region. In the 5th summit of SAARC held in Male, the primers of both parties pledged to resolve the dispute through bilateral negotiation. Furthermore, Inder Kumar Gujral the foreign minister of India and later the prime minister declare “Gujral doctrine” in 1997 which highlights the principle of “India should go the

³² Steven R. Weisman and Special To the New York Times, “ON INDIA’S BORDER, A HUGE MOCK WAR,” The New York Times, March 06, 1987.

³³ “Agreement on the Prohibition of Attack Against Nuclear Installations and Facilities,” Walsh Iran / Contra Report - Part I Iran/contra: The Underlying Facts, Federation of American Scientists, 1988.

extra mile with its neighbors without expecting reciprocity - as long as they did not endanger India's security".³⁴ However, the eruption of Kargil War in 1999 this period of prospect was demolished.

Kargil war is the only hot conflict between Pakistan and India since the formation of SAARC. If we look into the history of the war between the parties since getting their independence in 1947 more than one war was occurred until 1985. For instance, the wars in 1948, 1965 and 1971. In this regard, we can easily notice the modest achievement of SAARC by decreasing the number of hot conflicts. This should be mention that the achievement of SAARC should not be compared to the achievements of EU, NAFTA or ASEAN. In other words, EU, NAFTA, and ASEAN have more distinguishable achievements in a short period whereas for SAARC there is not such kind of achievements. However, this kind of comparison would not be very logic and appropriate for several reasons.

First of all, a nation-state in all three organizations (EU, ASEAN, NAFTA) are not as fresh independent as the states in SAARC are. In other words, nationstates in the association of SAARC are just formed aftermath of World War Two except Afghanistan even Afghanistan was not a member state in SAARC until 2007. However, the formation of nation-states in ASEAN and NAFTA have a long history needless to mention EU as EU members are the benchmark for nation-state model.

Secondly, the impact of colonialism is at the base of the ineffectiveness of SAARC from my point of view. The border and territorial dispute among the member countries in SAARC has a linkage of colonialism period. For instance, the Kashmir and Durrand-line dispute between Pak-Indo and Pak-Afghan respectively. Lastly, illiteracy and a big population of SAARC with the lowest income is hindering the effectiveness of the association. However, EU, NAFTA, and ASEAN relatively possess small population but with high-quality of literacy and high quantity of income.

In this regard, the summits of SAARC create corridors for talk and negotiation and facilitate diplomacy between the rival parties. An official of the states could communicate face-to-face and exchange their ideas and perception through these summits. Since the creation of the association, every annually held summit is concluded by pledging of cooperation and collaboration and creates an environment of optimism. Moreover, some of the summits have significant achievements by resolving conflict or creating multilateral agreements on diverse sectors. Such as SAFTA 2004, Dhaka 2005, New Delhi 2007, Colombo 2008, Thimpu 2010, Addu City of Maldives 2011, Kathmandu 2014.

Some extra-regional projects may assist SAARC for declining the tensions among its members which undermines the productivity. For instance, TAPI project which not only brings Pakistan and India together but also Afghanistan. The next chapter will have a brief look at TAPI project.

8.3 TAPI project

The pipeline project agreement between Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India (TAPI) which will transport approximately 33 billion cubic meters of natural gas per year from Dawlatabad gas field of Turkmenistan to Fazilka, India through passing the territory of Afghanistan and Pakistan. The initiative of the project rose during the second half of the 1990s when the Taliban regime was in power in Afghanistan. Several negotiations were done between USA and Taliban regime regard to the project. However, the September 11 attack stopped this process.

The new regime in Afghanistan under the administration of Karzai resume the attempts for the project. The initial plan was to link Afghanistan and Pakistan, however, in 2008 India was officially joined the pipeline. Asian Development Bank (ADB) is the coordinator of the project. ADB did the technical feasibility survey, the length of the pipeline will be 1700 kilometer passing from Herat, Helmand, and Kandahar in Afghanistan, and Quetta and Multan in Pakistan.

The energy deficient South Asian region depends heavily on imports due to its inability to produce required oil and gas and generate enough electricity to meet its needs. Estimates indicate three times greater energy needs for the region in next fifteen to twenty years. For instance, the natural gas consumption of India and Pakistan is the highest among the SAARC countries. Furthermore, the majority of this quantity is fulfilled from imports (Figure 3).

³⁴ Bharat Bhushan, "Obituary: Inder Kumar Gujral," BBC News, November 30, 2012.

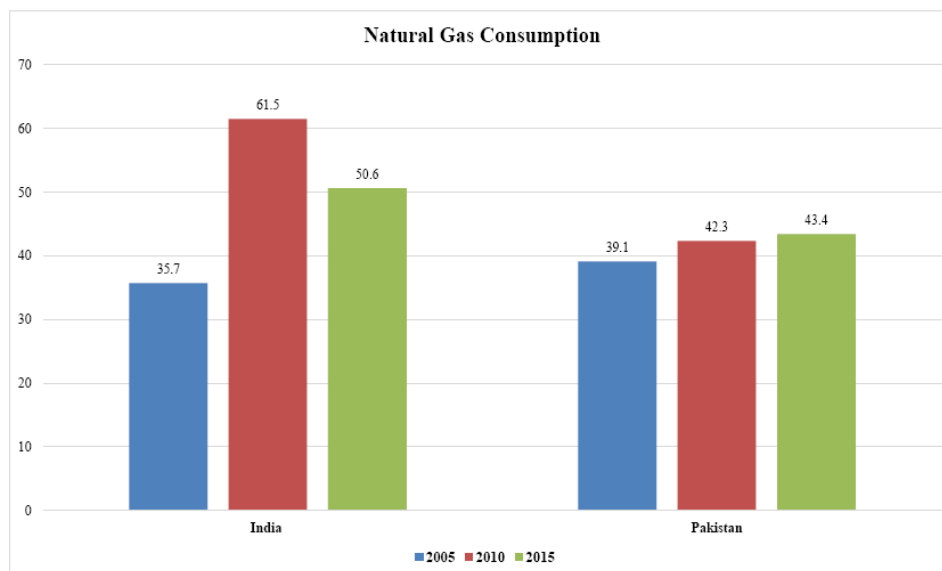


Figure 3:

Source: BP Statistical Review of World Energy, June 2016, bp.com/statistical-review.

Note: Consumption Values are in Billion Cubic Meters.

The energy trade among rich energy regions and starving energy regions impacts on not only economic and social aspects but also on the political area. In other words, on the one hand, Central Asia in general and Turkmenistan, in particular, is a landlocked region with having abundant reserves of natural gas (Figure 4). On the other hand, South Asia, with dense population and lack of energy resources is struggling not only economically but also both socially and politically. Therefore, the TAPI pipeline will not only provide economic opportunities for the four parties but also this project will integrate the communities of these competitive states. Furthermore, the essence of the conflict

Natural Gas Production in 2015

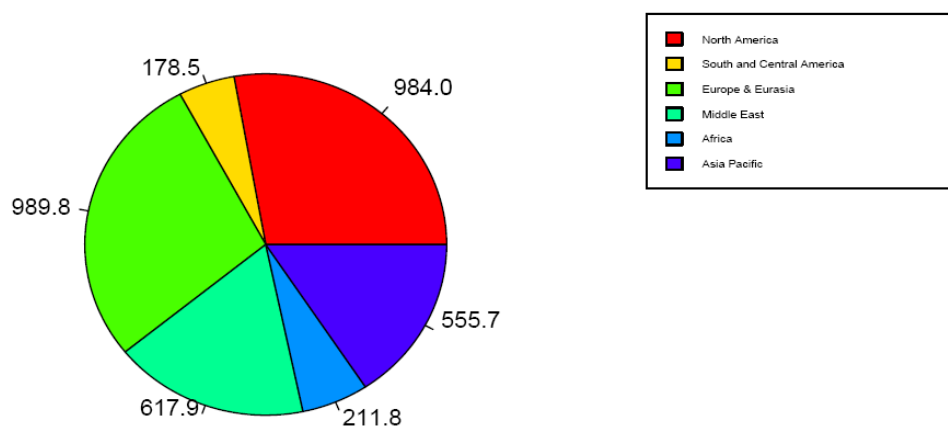


Figure 4:

Source: BP Statistical Review of World Energy

Note: Production Values are in Billion Cubic Meters

between India and Pakistan means facilitating the path for SAARC for further collaboration and integration. In this respect, the extra-regional project such as TAPI assists SAARC to bring together rival parties into cooperation and collaboration.

9. CONCLUSION

The SAARC organization which is not very successful in comparison to ASEAN and EU, the association productivity is widely undermined by the conflict of Pak-Indo. However, the SAARC has an enormous impact on the resolution of Pak-Indo dispute. For instance, the environment of negotiation and discussion provided by SAARC for communication flow and transaction of ideas for the officials of South Asian, has a modest impact on changing the identity of the SAARC at least at the elite level. Furthermore, as Jeff Checkel highlights the institution effect on shaping the identity through mimicking, persuasion and social influence.³⁵ In this regard, SAARC makes the officials and diplomats of India and Pakistan socialize by creating an atmosphere of negotiation.

Also, SAARC provides significant economic opportunities for the member countries by creating the free trade areas such as SAPTA and SAFTA. The improvement of trade and commercial transaction increase the communication of people-to-people. Therefore, both states instead of directly going to hot conflict, use the corridor of talk initially, this corridor of talk is nowhere as significant as SAARC. Additionally, the extra-regional projects like TAPI help the SAARC organization in term of bringing together the rival parties and make them socialize and persuade through communication flow beside trade commodity transaction.

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³⁵ Jeff Checkel, "Regional Identities and Communities," no. January 2017 (2016): 1–26.

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