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### **ABSTRACT**

South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) is one of the earliest regional platforms in South Asia where both India and Pakistan share its membership. The logic behind regional cooperation among the SAARC members lies in the opportunities it pitches to its member states in the spheres of economic expansionism, management of shared possessions, trade and investment. But the fact is that both India and Pakistan has constantly adopted the attitude of animosity which remained a huge impediment in the way of realizing SAARC's declared goals. This research paper primarily focuses on prospects of tension escalation between Pakistan and India under the banner of SAARC and to study systematically the deterrents in a way of peaceful coexistence between the two rival neighbors since the establishment of SAARC 1985. The data for this paper has been collected from secondary sources through qualitative approach. The objective of this study is to pinpoint the strengths and weaknesses of SAARC in terms of realization of its designed goals and to determine some feasible prospects of generating maximum trust and confidence between Islamabad and New Delhi.

**Keywords:** Regionalism, South Asia, Animosity, Cooperation, weaknesses, Potentials.

## **Introduction**

SAARC being the first and largest regional organization was established on December 8, 1985, Headquartered in Kathmandu-Nepal, with the ambition to amalgamate South Asian countries to promote economic growth, regional cooperation, social and cultural development. The idea was first pioneered by Zia ur Rehman, the then Bangladeshi President. This idea was profoundly advocated and approved by the states to which it was proposed. The organization was promptly joined by Sri-Lanka, Bhutan, Maldives, and Nepal while Pakistan and India remained indifferent due to their hostile relationship. Later on, Afghanistan also joined the organization on November 13, 2005, and was granted full membership on April 3, 2007. The entrance of Afghanistan into the SAARC was supported by India but defied by Pakistan. The matter signifies multiple reasons; firstly, when Pakistan came into being, Afghanistan was the only Muslim country who opposed Pakistan's entry into United Nations. Secondly, Afghanistan remained for a long time under the influence of communism, whereas Pakistan joined capitalist camp. Later on tensions between the two further increased due to Afghan War (1979-1991). Thirdly, with the disapproval of Durand Line, Afghanistan claimed over the territories dominated by Pushtuns within Pakistan, which further aggregated the relations between them (Jabeenetal., 2010).

On January 16, 1987, the secretariat of SAARC was established in Kathmandu, Nepal with the objective to streamline the activities of SAARC and to act as a medium of interaction between the member states. One of the SAARC's most important goals is to establish economic interdependency among the member states through promoting free trade. But the long-established dissensions between its most important members i.e. Pakistan and India are the source of hindrance to achieve its goals. Both of them have a hostile history of relations particularly over the issue of Kashmir. They appeared four times in a battle field with full scale wars (1948, 1965, 1971, and 1999).

SAARC, through its policy of Confidence-Building Measures (CBMS) have also tried its level best to sort out issues between both of them. It has resolved several issues relating to trade but is incapable of solving the major dispute between the two. To accomplish its goals and become an effective actor in the region SAARC must pay heed to resolve the controversial issues between the conflicting states through dialogue and diplomacy (Yhome, 2019).

### **Evolving Factors in Pakistan-India Animosity:**

India and Pakistan are sworn enemies since their inception in 1947. The pogrom of millions of Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs who were moving across the borders was the root cause of antagonism between the newly born states (Malik, 2019).

According to Nabi and Khan (2014) conflicts whether for a smaller motive or bigger and whether it intends to deal with the political, economic, or any other interest it thus ruptures the normalcy of life. Kashmir formerly known for its capturing beauty in the world is time and again known as a bloodthirsty fight between India and Pakistan for a long time. The bloody conflict over Kashmir territory has become under discussion since 1947 when Maharaja Hari Singh the local ruler initially aimed for Kashmir to become independent but later in October 1947 chose to join India. A war in 1948 between India and Pakistan erupted and India approached United Nations for ceasefire. Thus UN General Assembly passes a resolution to hold plebiscite for the permanent settlement of the dispute but USSR vetoed the resolution, and the dispute remained unresolved. Moreover in July 1949 an agreement was signed by India and Pakistan to set up a cease-fire line recommended by the United Nations and the region was divided. In 1965 second war broke out between them followed by a third war in 1971 and then in 1999 Kargil episode. The disputed territory is internationally known as “Pakistan-administered Kashmir” and “Indian-administered Kashmir.

Kuszevska (2017) writes that this conflict can be considered a preliminary for other escalations. That conflict has been the bone of contention between both the countries till date. The military element, especially in Pakistan was also fortified due to this conflict.

In almost every diplomatic move Pakistan time and again accentuated over Kashmir issue but India never gave priority to discuss Kashmir conundrum these different inclinations of both the countries led to the failure of Swaran Singh-Bhutto talks from December 1962 to May 1963 (Ahmad, 2019). Furthermore, Pakistan and India for the second time jumped into a serious confrontation in 1965 over Kashmir. Later on, the United Nations Security Council declared ceasefire as a result of diplomatic intervention by the then President of USSR Alexi Kosygin As a result of Tashkent Declaration.

The long standing issue of representation, linguistic and distribution of resources brought the political leadership and common masses on one page against the West Pakistani establishment. The civil war was started in March 1971 which lasted till December 1971. India intervened and embarked land, air and sea attack on West Pakistan. Consequently around 90,000 Pakistan's army surrendered after 13 days and East Pakistan became independent on December 16, 1971 but tensions between Pakistan and India continued till 1972 till the Shimla agreement resolved the animosity between both the nations (Iqbal & Hussain, 2018). Moreover, in 1999 the Pakistan military and Kashmiri fighters tried to occupy Kargil (Joint capital of Indian union territory of Ladakh). This attempt led to a war between both the newly nuclear armed states. Both the states are targeting each other through media and surgical strikes and other propagandas.

### **An Assessment of shared challenges to SAARC member countries**

Member states face multi-dimensional challenges and conflicts. This paper is primarily concerned to apprehend the common issues that impede the process of SAARC's development as a productive and operative body.

Firstly, Afghanistan is a politically unstable country that has not prioritized its role in SAARC. The chief factor responsible for this is that Afghanistan remained politically unstable due to its engagement in War on terror. Currently, Afghanistan is in dire need to maintain peace within the country and beyond its borders. Afghanistan is confronted with the challenges like; terrorism, Talibanization, sectarianism and fragile Afghan peace. Such insecure Afghan conditions have significantly contributed to the conflicted relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan, constraining SAARC's goals of cooperation and agenda (Ahmed & Zahoor, 2018).

Secondly, densely populated Bangladesh never let it to develop as per their requirements and remained an ill governed nation. Although more than half of its GDP is generated through the service sector, nearly two-thirds of Bangladeshis are employed in the agriculture sector. Major impediments include frequent cyclones, floods, weak infrastructure and lack of quality education to its citizens which needs to be concentrated (Zaheer, 2013). Bangladesh's economic reforms are diverting in many ways for instance; rise of extremism including: terrorism, militancy and ethnic issues, political instability and corruption at all levels of government have also obstructed the progress.

Thirdly, Indian government under Narendra Modi greatly affected the SAARC platform in terms of cooperation. India's uncompromising attitude over the Kashmir issue and lockdown in the valley has never let the organization to bring the two rivals on table. Similarly, India's involvement in Afghanistan internal politics and using the Afghan soil against Pakistan further aggravated the regional peace (Sandhu & Sidhu, 2014).

Fourth; it has been seen that the strong economic growth of Maldives has brought a noticeable reduction in poverty and has brought a remarkable change in the living conditions of its citizens. But the growth which is driven by the Maldives tourism sector has not contributed much to the growth rate which needs a concentration. In addition to the challenges faced by the country includes; critical transport infrastructure which led to the county's connectivity issue on both internal and external fronts (Jdgz, 2015). The Country also needs to maintain its financial stability to help address the county's growth process. To improve the economic productivity Maldives' government needs to make investments in both private and public sectors.

Fifth, Pakistan, one of the underdeveloped countries has been facing multiple challenges for decades. One of the most noticeable problems includes an instable internal political system, ongoing disputes with neighboring India, poverty, high ratio of unemployment, and low level of economic productivity etc (Zaheer, 2013). Pakistan has steadily raised development pace by spending in recent years, including; a 52 percent of real increase in the budget allocation for developmental programs in the Fiscal Year 2007 (FY07) a necessary step towards inverting the broad under-development of its social sector. Although country is progressing slowly, but still confronted with major issues that needed to be addressed soon.

Sixth, to solve the problems faced by Nepal it is therefore needed to trace its history when the last king of Nepal, Gyanendra Shah, left the royal palace and lived the life of a civilian. Gyanendra during his time was largely unpopular among the people. The conditions of the country worsened when in southern Nepal the ethnic group known as Madhesi started conflict with police and imposed a general strike in the region. Further this ethnic group cut off supplies that led to extreme shortage of medicines and fuel following the blockade of border crossings. During the protests more than 50 people were killed, however the protests were ended by February, 2016 in February 2016. Such ethnic groups demanded their separate states (Gurubacharya, 2016). Thus, short-lived governments, monarchy and ethnic troubles are the major challenges faced by the country.

Seventh, Sri Lanka's agricultural reforms created economic inequality and poverty. Socialism; from 1948 to 1977 has strongly influenced the economic policies of the Sri Lankan government. Thus the Colonial imprints in the field of agriculture were redesigned, industries were nationalized and a welfare state was established. While the literacy and living standard of its citizens significantly improved. On the other side the nation's economy suffered from inefficiency, lack of foreign investment and slowdown in growth (Zaheer, 2013).

Finally, Bhutan is confronted with multiple social problems that pose major challenges for its government. Bhutan requires significant funding to deal with problems such as; unemployment, poverty, and poor healthcare system. The country's ecological landscape, which promotes Bhutan's tourism sector and its flourishing hydropower sector, is under threat due to the growing impact of climate change (Ranjan, 2020). It is necessary to mention that to re-address the unfavorable situation, Bhutan needs sustainable development policies. Several other irregularities have been also reported in Bhutanese media by the government for the approval of environment related projects. In addition to these challenges Women violence and gender inequality at both social and domestic levels exists.

**Table 1: SAARC countries Overall Potential Resources that can contribute to the success of Association and Weaknesses that impedes the SAARC progress**

<b>Overall Potential Resources of SAARC members</b>	<b>Overall Weaknesses of SAARC members as a challenge faced by the Association</b>
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<p>1. Rising economies like Bangladesh, India can be a source of consumption markets at larger level.</p> <p>2. Countries that possess Natural resources could open up regional trade among countries.</p> <p>3. Mostly all SAARC members have common issues and there solution lies in the collective effort of member countries to contain them.</p> <p>4. To utilize the opportunity of economic cooperation among the countries to give the economy a fresh impetus.</p> <p>5. Member countries can gain the social benefits by improving the health sectors and education system.</p>	<p>1. There is less regional connectivity among SAARC member countries.</p> <p>2. Lack of Skilled labor.</p> <p>3. Within the national boundaries the countries have lack of Infrastructure development.</p> <p>4. Member states Trade barriers which is the huge impediment in terms of trade benefits e.g. India, Pakistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh.</p> <p>5. No productive efforts for the development of Infrastructure.</p> <p>6. The countries like Pak-Afghan and Indo-Pak issues obstructing the regional integration, and is considered one of the main challenge to the development and progress of SAARC.</p> <p>7. Members failure to prioritize economic opportunities to improve quality of lives of their citizens.</p> <p>8. Ineffective mutual cooperation due to an environment of mistrust and disputes.</p>
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**Conclusion:**

**It has been seen that potential resources of SAARC members are less than the weaknesses the member countries possess. Thus the Association has merely become a talk shop and not actually achieving any goal. Several summits have been held for the progress and development of SAARC, this signifies that the Association has**

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**moved ahead but the level of cooperation is below the potential of member countries of SAARC.**

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## Leading Challenges

### *1. Indo-Pak Venues of Hostilities: The Kashmir Case*

The members of SAARC have several conflicts with each other especially India and Pakistan. United India was divided after a long rivalry between Muslims and Hindus based on Two Nations Theory. The independence process added fuel to the already existing fire i.e. ideological gap. Kashmir has been an unresolved issue between both to date. Both the states have fought three wars 1948, 1965, 1971 and a battle of Kargil 1998 since its Inception. Pakistan and India are also facing conflicting situations in Siachen Glacier since 1983 (Yaseenetal., 2017). Pakistan and India have reached several mutual agreements such as the Indus Water Basin Treaty 1960, the Inter-dominion Karachi agreement in 1949, the Tashkent declaration of 1966, Simla agreement of 1972 but these agreements could not bring out a long term solution.

The SAARC's balance sheet of success is very limited to the adoption of several conventions like SAARC regional conventions on combating terrorism and SAARC convention on narcotic drugs and psychotropic substance. There have been breakthroughs in the form of agreements forming South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) and SAARC Preferential Trading Agreement (SAPTA) but their success at the operational level is yet to be materialized. SAARC exclude political issues from its summits, which is also one of its inherent weaknesses (Khan, 2015).

### *2. Indo-Afghan nexus and Pakistan's concern*

Afghanistan is one of the most prioritized regional partners for India. Afghanistan is a vulnerable state to terrorism and is a potential threat to India from security point of view. Hence peaceful Afghanistan is in the best interest of India. Further Afghanistan is an important country for India in the South Asian region. Its importance for India could be understood from different aspects ranging from political to economic importance as mentioned in tabular form below (Gangulay, 2012).

**Table: 2 Indian interests in Afghanistan, and Pakistan's concerns**

<b>Political Importance</b>	<b>Strategic Importance</b>	<b>Economic Importance</b>
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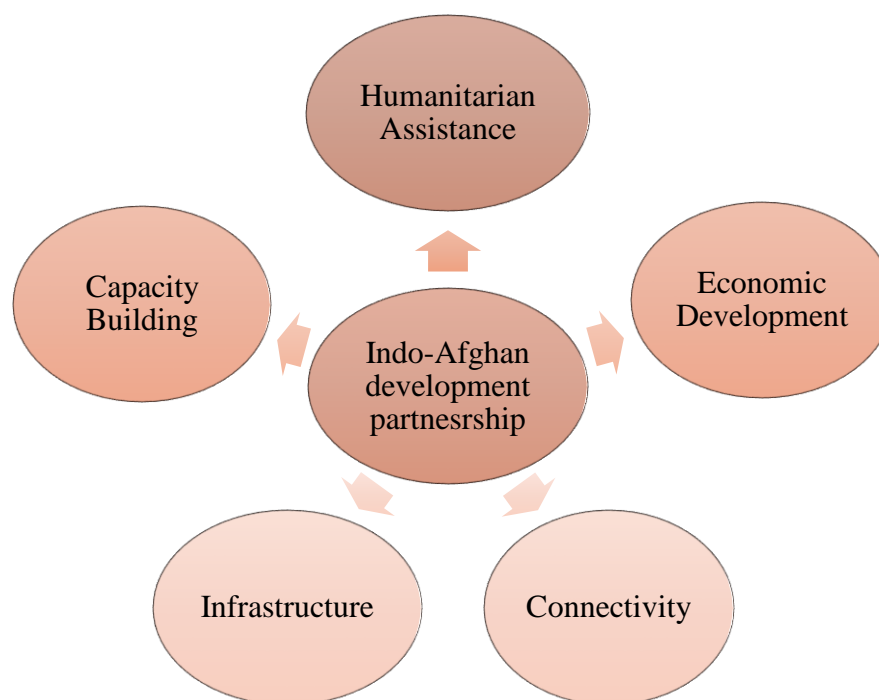


<p>1. India supports Afghanistan for its diplomatic influence in the country.</p> <p>2. Afghanistan in 2016 supported India's boycott of the SAARC summit which was hosted by Pakistan. Thus for India it was a major victory against Pakistan.</p> <p>3. India's economic assistance to Afghanistan demonstrates realpolitik to dominate the country.</p>	<p>1. The location of Afghanistan at the strategic crossroads between South Asia and Central Asia and Middle East and South Asia makes the country extremely important for India.</p> <p>2. Terrorists groups in Pakistan use Afghan border area for shelter which is of great concern for India from security point of view.</p>	<p>1. Economically India has been actively involved in the reconstruction process.</p> <p>2. In this connection India has a Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) with Afghanistan.</p> <p>3. In June 2017 the Pact namely Dedicated Air Cargo Corridor was signed between Kandahar-Delhi and Kabul-Delhi which has provided a fresh momentum to the bilateral trade between India and Afghanistan.</p>
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The Indo-Afghan relations can be comprehended in the context of Treaty of Friendship signed by India and Afghanistan on January 4<sup>th</sup> 1950. This treaty was basically signed for the purpose of maintaining peace between both them. The diplomatic relations were started and thus the treaty provided for start of consular relations between New Delhi and Kabul (Shah et al., 2020). Further under this friendship agreement both the governments had also agreed to respect each other's territorial integrity, sovereign rights and to recognize each other's independence.

In 2003, India Afghanistan concluded Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) to strengthen the trade. As a result India allowed Afghanistan substantial duty concessions, ranging from 50% to 100% on 38 items. Moreover in November 2011, India also removed basic custom duties for all of the products of Afghanistan except tobacco and alcohol and giving Afghanistan a duty free access to the Indian markets.

Indo-Afghan relations were further strengthened as a result of Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) in 2011. The agreement provides to help Afghanistan in the rebuilding of institutions (training to Afghan army) and infrastructure (roads, highways, railway lines, dams, schools, hospitals etc). Consequently India and Afghanistan engaged in development of partnership in the fields of Humanitarian assistance, Economic development, Capacity building, Infrastructure and connectivity (Shah et al., 2020).




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Figure 1: Shows Indo-Afghan Collaboration

### **Pakistan's concerns:**

Pakistan is sensitively thinking about Indo-Afghan bilateral relations and always blamed India for creating problems in the province of Baluchistan via Afghanistan and supporting terrorism in the other parts of Pakistan. Pakistan is also opposing India's participation in any kind of regional or international convention with Afghanistan. Despite the assurance of Hamid Karzai to Pakistan that the bilateral relations with India would not bring any harmful consequences to Pakistan, still it causes a serious discomfort for Pakistan when both the sides signed Strategic Partnership Agreement, under which India would provide Afghan's national security with training which will be unpalatable to Pakistan. In a nut shell Pakistan is in the new situation trying to review her foreign policy towards Afghanistan (Arslanetal., 2018).

### **3. Pak-Afghan border skirmishes**

Pak-Afghan ties are characterized by mutual mistrust and misconceptions. The rivalries existed since; Afghanistan became the only country to oppose Pakistan's inclusion into the United Nations. Rivalries between both the states also existed on the issue of Durand line (Pak-Afghan border) that remained a bone of contention between them. Afghanistan always claims the British Empire forcefully occupied the Afghan territory (currently KP Province of Pakistan) with the demarcation of Durand line, they never accepted as an international border. Further, the skirmishes worsened after 9/11 when the US started War against Terror and Pakistan duly

supported US. Afghanistan continuously is blaming Pakistan for sponsoring terrorism in Afghanistan. Both Pakistan and Afghanistan needs pleasant friendly ties for the stable South Asian region (Khan, 2017). Hence they need to improve healthy relations and, must know the importance of normalcy between them.

### **SAARC Summits: A Platform for Cooperation between India and Pakistan**

India and Pakistan are two important members of SAARC. They have been engaged in hostile relationship since 1947. Though multiple steps have been taken to iron out the differences, but SAARC, through its summits, has boosted up relations between both of them up to maximum degree by enabling leaders of both the states to meet frequently (Shaheen, 2013).

The first SAARC summit was held in Dhaka, Bangladesh on 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>, December 1985. This summit was held just a year after India captured the strategically important Siachen Glacier. The summit was attended by President of Pakistan General Zia ul Haq and Prime minister of India Rajiv Gandhi. That summit provided an opportunity to both the leaders to interact and negotiate the problems. Moreover, Zia visited New Delhi in 1985 on the invitation of Gandhi. The summit also led to the defense secretaries' level conference held at Rawalpindi on January 10-12, 1986 regarding Siachen Glacier.

The second summit of SAARC took place in Bangalore, India on 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> November, 1986. From Pakistan the Prime minister Muhammad Khan Junejo and Rajiv Gandhi from India attended the summit. Prior to this summit India had stationed its troops near Pakistani borders. Hence, this summit proved helpful in diffusing tensions between the rival partners. During this Summit Junejo and Gandhi concurred to initiate dialogues at home and foreign secretaries level in order to normalize relations. Moreover, both the counterparts agreed not to attack each other's nuclear arsenals.

The third summit of SAARC took place on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> November, 1987 in Kathmandu, Nepal. Muhammad Khan Junejo and Rajiv Gandhi from Pakistan and India attended the summit respectively. In this conference the issues of Siachen Glacier and Sir Creek were thoroughly discussed. Moreover, a consensus was reached to hold meeting and discuss possible ways in which the illegal border crossing can be deterred. They also agreed to hold meetings to lookout increasing coordination in trade and economics.

The fourth summit of SAARC was held on 29<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> December, 1988 in Islamabad, Pakistan. Benazir Bhutto from Pakistan and Rajiv Gandhi from India took part in the summit. It was due to this conference that Indian prime minister had his first ever official tour to Pakistan since independence. Political questions such as Kashmir and nuclear issue were discussed. Both the heads also conversed about Pakistan's rumored support for Sikh uprising in India (Shaheen, 2013). They also agreed to solve the Kashmir issue by starting off the dialogue process. Furthermore, they underwent several agreements on not attacking each other's nuclear facilities and to avoid double taxation in the field of civil aviation.

The 5<sup>th</sup> summit of SAARC was held in Male, Maldives on 21<sup>st</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> November, 1990. It was attended by Nawaz Sharif; the then premier, from Pakistan and Chandra Shekhar Prime minister of India. During this summit both the leaders concurred to recommence the secretaries level meetings and resolve the bilateral issues through peace talks. It was due to this summit that the hotline reopened between both the states and Pakistan for the first time showed consent to focus on other issues instead of Kashmir only. Moreover, one of the breakthroughs in this summit was formation of working groups before starting off dialogue process.

The 6<sup>th</sup> summit of SAARC was held in Colombo, Sri-Lanka on 21<sup>st</sup> December, 1991. It was attended by Nawaz Sharif from Pakistan and P.V Narasimha Rao. The meeting between heads of government of both the states on the platform of SAARC proved helpful in improving relations between both the states. In 1992 another meeting between them was held in Davos, Switzerland in which different ways were discussed in order to fend off the forthcoming crisis that could be quite potential in disturbing the regional peace.

The 11<sup>th</sup> summit of SAARC was held on 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> January, 2002 in Kathmandu, Nepal. Pervaiz Musharraf from Pakistan and Atal Bihar Vaajpaye attended the summit. The summit provided golden chance for the “Famous Handshake” between both the leaders. Relations between them were slightly improved but soon deteriorated after Vaajpaye took hard stance against Pakistan because of political opposition in his country.

The 12<sup>th</sup> Summit was held in Islamabad, Pakistan on 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> January, 2004. Despite of strained relations between both the countries Vaajpaye arrived in Pakistan which in itself was a great breakthrough. Both the leaders discussed the hurdles in bilateral relations aimed to address these eight areas; Peace and Security, Jammu and Kashmir, Siachen, Sir Creek, Talbul navigation project, Terrorism and Drug trafficking, Trade and economic cooperation, Promotion of exchanges of friendly visits.

The 13<sup>th</sup> SAARC summit held in Dhaka, Bangladesh on 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> November, 2005. It was attended by Premier Shaukat Aziz from Pakistan and Manmohan Singh from India. They put forward the Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline project and discussed the ingression of Afghanistan in SAARC which was ultimately accepted. The meeting proved helpful in granting China (which was opposed by India at first) and Japan (On the demand of India) observer status.

The 14<sup>th</sup> summit of SAARC took place in New Delhi, India on 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> April, 2007. During this summit Shaukat Aziz and Manmohan Singh were agreed to precede the already started dialogue process, pursue the Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline project and figure out issues related to the project. Both the leaders also highlighted Kashmir issue and India’s alleged involvement in Baluchistan’s insurgency. Moreover, they also permitted banks to open branches in each other countries and increase air links.

The 16<sup>th</sup> summit took place in Thimphu, Bhutan on 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> April, 2010. It was attended by Yousaf Raza Gillani from Pakistan and Manmohan Singh from India. It was held right after Bombay attacks that took place on 26 November, 2008 Naazer (2018) writes that this incident brought both the countries on the brink of war because India accused a militant

group in Pakistan for the attack. But the summit paved the way for the normalization of relations as both the leaders met at the sidelines of summit and recommenced the dialogue process. Further they also talked about cross-border terrorism and India's alleged involvement in Baluchistan's insurgency.

The 17<sup>th</sup> summit was held in Addu city, Maldives on 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> November, 2011. This summit proved really helpful in improvement of bilateral relations between Pakistan and India. Yousaf Raza Gillani and Manmohan Singh agreed to figure out obstacles in bilateral relations, liberalize visa regime and start off trade arrangement. As a result of these discussions Pakistan granted India Most-Favored-Nation (MFN) status. The trade related agreements concluded by both the countries in 2012 were also result of the talks between both the leaders during 2011 summit (Naazer, 2018).

### **Recommendations:**

Major issues can be addressed if the following steps are followed by the organization.

- ***To pursue CBMs (Confidence Building Measures):***

The role of CBMs is extremely crucial to the cooperation between Pakistan and India on the platform of SAARC. The role of CBMs is inevitable as the history is witness to the fact that the CBMs in past such as Indus Water Treaty promoted peace and cooperation. Now need of the time is that such CBM must be agreed upon in order to end the hostility between the traditional rivals but they need to be monitored and reviewed periodically.

- ***Inclusion of resolution of bilateral issues in SAARC charter:***

The SAARC charter does not allow the discussion on bilateral issues which has made it less effective in promoting Regional Cooperation. It must allow discussion on bilateral issues and take practical steps for resolution of these issues because only then the true purpose of the organization can be realized and trust can be built between its member states.

- ***SAARC to play a crucial role to resolve Indo-Pak Kashmir Issue***

SAARC has always been dominated by the Indo-Pak issues and is unable to play a crucial role. Although this association has conceptualized to collaborate upon common problems of its member states like; infrastructure, poverty eradication, promotion of intra-regional trade, and sustainable development, SAARC has failed to work affectively. Moreover it is clear that the two big rivals India and Pakistan could not come to common terms on Kashmir issue; one of the major impediments in the success of association. SAARC can play its affective role by forcing its member countries, particularly India and Pakistan to ensure peace in the region.

- ***Making the region a “zone of peace”:***

While making a South Asian region a zone of peace all SAARC countries should come together with serious collaboration and working collectively to bring peace as a common good for the member states. For this purpose information of terrorism must be shared among countries for combating terrorism. Furthermore, joint exercises should be conducted to bring peace and stability.

- ***Frequent Conduction of Summits:***

The summit on the platform of SAARC has played great role in bringing Pakistan and India closer and blurring the lines of enmity between them. SAARC must organize and hold summits frequently in order to promote cooperation among member states.

- ***CCGs (Conflict Conciliation Groups):***

The conflict conciliation groups should be formed which will help in resolving conflicts when all parties to a particular dispute agree to seek SAARC's assistance.

- ***Promotion of Trade:***

SAARC must play great role in promoting trade between its member states especially Pakistan and India. Because, when the countries become economically dependent on each other, then peace prevails there and the hostilities vanquished to a greater extent.

- ***Bringing Coherence in Relations:***

It has been grasped that the disharmony among or between member nations have slow down the progress of SAARC, and have also risen the tensions between its members such as India-Pakistan case. Most of the members use the platform of SAARC to obtain their own goals for instance, India; who refused attending the 19<sup>th</sup> SAARC Summit which was to be held in Pakistan, and thus boycotted the Summit and due India's lobbying, some other member countries including; Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, and Bangladesh also opted to cancel the summit. Hence, to establish harmony between the rival states by normalizing their relations must be in the best interest of the association to further the progress and success of this important regional organization.

- ***To ensure clear objective of SAARC:***

One of the major reasons that the association has attempted to fail in its agenda is the ambiguity in its objectives. The reason is that member states are engaged to further their own purposes and not the association's objectives. Practical steps needed to be taken to achieve the group's objective and to set aside the interstate rivalries and issues.

### **Conclusion:**

The regional organization of South Asian countries has failed to play its role effectively in integrating South Asia in terms of cooperation. SAARC was established for the purpose of regional stability and integrity; in the field of development and progress, but remained unsuccessful in attaining the required objectives. Thus regional instability is credited by the

political and economic issues in general and territorial disputes in particular mainly between India and Pakistan. Consequently South Asian countries have failed to utilize the benefits of a unified economy. Although countries have bilateral or multilateral differences therefore it is necessary to work with differences to have a positive effect on relations among states. Moreover, SAARC has great potential to play a vital role of autonomous institution, therefore, keeping in view the contemporary increasing importance of regionalism, the association need to focus on agenda implementation and to follow the policy of unification and strategic actions.

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