

## Chapter III

# **SAARC: ITS EVOLUTION, OBJECTIVES, CONSTRAINTS/CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS**

## Chapter III

### SAARC: Its Evolution, Objectives, Constraints/Challenges and Prospects

#### Evolution of SAARC

The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation was formed under Article 52 of the United Nations' Charter providing existence of regional arrangements or agencies for dealing with such matters, relating to the maintenance of international peace and security with the purpose and principles of UN charter.<sup>1</sup>

It was established on 8<sup>th</sup> December, 1985 after about four and half years of its preparation. The basic aim of the Association is to accelerate the process of economic and social development in member countries through joint action in the agreed areas of cooperation. The region of SAARC lies in the South Himalayas surrounded by Hindu Kush mountains.<sup>2</sup> The idea of regional cooperation in South Asia was first initiated by late President Zia- Ur- Rehman of Bangladesh who visited Nepal, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka during 1977- 78 to explore the possibilities of regional economic cooperation among the SAARC Countries. He proposed for the collective self- reliance in a common quest for peace and development of all these countries. In May 1980, he issued a formal call for SAARC Regional Cooperation. His call received a positive response from all the SAARC countries. Hence, consultations at official level were carried out for the proposed cooperation. These preliminary exchanges brought out clearly that regional cooperation should on the hand, reflect the spirit of mutual trust, understanding and sympathetic appreciation of the political inspiration existing among the countries of the region, and on the other hand, such cooperation should be based in respect of the principles of sovereignty equality, territorial integrity, non- interference in internal affairs of other nations and mutual benefit.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Charter of the United Nations (December, 2006) "*Regional Arrangements*," Published by the United Nations Department of Public Information, DPI/511, New York- 10017, p 34.

<sup>2</sup> Davinder Kumar Madaan (1997) "SAARC: Origin and Development," *Encyclopaedia of SAARC Nations*, Volume 1, ed. Verinder Grover, Published by Deep and Deep Publications, F- 159, Rajouri Gander, New Delhi- 110027, pp 634- 636.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. pp 634- 636.

The first meeting of the foreign secretaries of the seven countries, viz., Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka was held in Colombo (Sri Lanka) in April 1981 for regional cooperation. It was agreed that regional cooperation should be based on mutual trust, understanding and sympathetic appreciation of the national aspirations of all the countries of the SAARC region. It led to the identification of five broad areas, for regional cooperation viz., Agriculture, Rural Development, Telecommunications, Meteorology, and Health and population activities.<sup>4</sup>

India since her freedom from foreign rule has always been keenly interested and deeply committed to regional cooperation for the solution of common problems in various fields viz. the cultural, economic political ones. Jawaharlal Nehru the great leader and first prime minister of India stresses for unity and solidarity of Asia in his speeches and writing repeatedly. On 7<sup>th</sup> September, 1946 in his very first ever broadcast to the nation, Jawaharlal Nehru said, “We are of Asia and the people of Asia are nearer and closer to us than other. India is so situated that she is pivot of Western, Southern and South-East Asia”. Similarly, on another occasion Nehru reiterated the same “When we talk of Asia, remember that India, not because of any ambition of hers, but because of the force of circumstances, because of geography, because of history and because of many other things, inevitably has to play a very important part in Asia... Even if you think in terms of regional organizations in Asia... you have to keep in touch with the other regions. And whatever regions you may in mind, the importance of India cannot be ignored.

Further, Nehru for the maintenance of an atmosphere of cordiality and cooperation in Asian relations conference in New Delhi emphasized the fact that countries of Asia have to meet together on an equal basis in a common task and endeavour. He said that “It is fitting that India should play her part in this new phase of Asian Development”. Nehru had an opinion and hoped that some permanent Asian Institute for the study of common problems and to bring about closer relations emerging perhaps as a school of Asian studies. While leaving the conference he said

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid. pp 634- 636

“I shall not venture to enumerate all the subjects; for it is for you to discuss them and arrive at decisions.”<sup>5</sup>

The idea of South Asian Regional Cooperation was first mooted in May 1980. It was followed by Foreign Secretaries of seven countries meeting for the first time in Colombo in April 1981 namely India, Pakistan, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Maldives. The formal formation of regional cooperation took place on December 8, 1985.<sup>6</sup>

The SAARC member countries include Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Afghanistan is the eighth member of the SAARC. The region is of strategic importance between the east and west with respect to defence, trade, transport population growth and economic development particular for India directly and indirectly. The Indian Ocean plays a vital role in defence, trade and water transport is in the proximity of the majority of South Asia countries.<sup>7</sup>

The SAARC region is a landmass of 3.3 percent of the world and has one-fifth of the population. All the SAARC countries can be categorized into different groups. Firstly, there are two land-locked countries namely Bhutan and Nepal. Secondly, there are two Islands such as Sri Lanka and Maldives and thirdly, the three countries, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh which have the Indian Ocean in the South and South West and the Indo-Gangatic plains stretching along these countries.<sup>8</sup>

Majority of the people in SAARC countries depend on agriculture and have poor education, lack in science and technology as well as suffer from over-population. Most of the countries depend on the developed countries for aid and trade.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Saroj Pathak (2006), “*India and SAARC: Challenges and Opportunities*”, Challenges to India Foreign Policy in the New Era, ed. Dr (Mrs) Annapurna Nautiyal, Gyan Publishing House, New Delhi- 110002, pp162- 163.

<sup>6</sup> Kanti Bajpai (1999) “*Security and SAARC*”, The Dynamics of South Asia Regional Cooperation and SAARC ed. Eric Gonslaves and Nancy Jetly, Sage Publications, New Delhi.

<sup>7</sup> S.D. Chamola (2006), “*Economic Co-operation in the SAARC Region: Potential, Constraints and Policies*”, Challenges to India Foreign Policy in the New Era, ed. Dr (Mrs) Annapurna Nautiyal, Gyan Publishing House, New Delhi- 110002, p 144.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, pp 145- 146.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p 146.

The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation was formed on 8<sup>th</sup> December 1985 as the first step towards regional corporation. In 1995 a decade after the formation of SAARC, the South Asian Free Preferential Trading Agreement (SAPTA) was launched at the end of year. The year 2001 was declared as the deadline to finalise a treaty for the South Asian Free Trade Association (SAFTA). The SAARC seven countries signed a treaty that would lead to free trade and movement of goods paving the way for South Asian Economic Union along the lines of EU in future.<sup>10</sup>

The South Asian Free Trade Association (SAFTA), in the treaty seeks to remove trade barriers, phased elimination of tariffs and establishment of a ministerial level mechanism for administering the treaty and dispute settlement among members. This treaty was to come into operation by January 1, 2006. In fact, the exchange of mutual experience among the countries is more relevant, cheap and cost effective and provides a vast scope for mutual cooperation in various areas. Mostly agriculture will continue to dominate these economies for many years to come. The economy development such as food for growing population, fodder for livestock, raw material and market for industries are the main market goods.<sup>11</sup>

### Principles

- a. Cooperation within the framework of the Association is based on respect for the principles of sovereign equality, territorial integrity, political independence, non-interference in the internal affairs of other states and mutual benefit.
- b. Such cooperation is to complement and not to substitute bilateral or multilateral cooperation.
- c. Such cooperation should be consistent with bilateral and multilateral obligations of the member states.
- d. Decisions at all levels in SAARC are taken on the basis of unanimity.
- e. Bilateral and contentious issues are excluded from its deliberations.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, pp 146- 147.

<sup>12</sup> “South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC),” <http://actrav.itcilo.org/actrav-english/telearn/global/ilo/blokit/saarc.htm#OBJECTIVES>,

## Objectives

The objectives, principles and general provisions, as mentioned in the SAARC Charter, are as follows:

- i. To promote the welfare of the peoples of South Asia and to improve their quality of life;
- ii. To accelerate economic growth, social progress and cultural development in the region and to provide all individuals the opportunity to live in dignity and to realise their full potentials;
- iii. To promote and strengthen collective self-reliance among the countries of South Asia;
- iv. To contribute to mutual trust, understanding and appreciation of one another's problems;
- v. To promote active collaboration and mutual assistance in the economic, social, cultural, technical and scientific fields;
- vi. To strengthen cooperation with other developing countries;
- vii. To strengthen cooperation among themselves in international forums on matters of common interests; and
- viii. To cooperate with international and regional organizations with similar aims and purposes.<sup>13</sup>

## Development of SAARC

### The First SAARC Summit

The First SAARC Summit was held in Dhaka, Bangladesh, on 7<sup>th</sup> -8<sup>th</sup> December 1985. In the First Summit it was approved that the Standing Committee should set up a Study Group to examine the problem of terrorism as it affects the security and stability of Member States of SAARC. Further, it also approved that a similar exercise be carried out with regard to the problem of drug trafficking and abuse.<sup>14</sup>

### The Second SAARC Summit

The Second SAARC summit met in Bangalore, India, on 16<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> November, 1986. The second SAARC summit agreed for South Asian Broadcasting Programme covering both radio

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> "1st Saarc Summit," <http://www.saarctourism.org/first-saarc-summit.html>, Accessed on 20<sup>th</sup> July, 2011.

and television to be launched. The Heads of State and Government laid emphasis on people-to-people contacts and for taking concrete steps to facilitate tourism in the region, including facilities for limited convertibility of national currencies for tourists from SAARC countries.<sup>15</sup>

Again, the Heads of State and Government emphasized the importance they attach to students, scholars and researchers in their countries having ready access to reliable and up-to-date information on technical, scientific and developmental matters. This need could be best met by a SAARC Documentation Centre as the repository of such information.<sup>16</sup>

### **The Third SAARC Summit**

The Third Summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) was held in Kathmandu, Nepal, on 2<sup>nd</sup> -4<sup>th</sup> November, 1987.

The Kathmandu Declaration provided for a renewed thrust and direction to the future course of regional cooperation in South Asia.<sup>17</sup>

The SAARC summit also declared on the intention to initiate the process of dealing with the causes and consequences of natural disasters and decided to commission a study on natural disasters and the protection and preservation of the environment in a well planned and comprehensive framework.<sup>18</sup>

### **The Fourth SAARC Summit**

The Fourth Summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation was held at Islamabad, Pakistan, from 29<sup>th</sup> -31<sup>st</sup> December, 1988.

The member states decided to declare 1989 as the *SAARC Year Against Drug Abuse* in order to focus attention on drug-related problems facing the region. They called upon member states to

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<sup>15</sup> "2nd Saarc Summit," <http://www.saarctourism.org/second-saarc-summit.html>, Accessed on 20<sup>th</sup> July, 2011.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> "3rd Saarc Summit," <http://www.saarctourism.org/third-saarc-summit.html>, Accessed on 20<sup>th</sup> July, 2011.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

prepare and implement national programmes in this regard. It also decided to declare 1990 as the *SAARC Year of the Girl Child*.<sup>19</sup>

### **The Fifth SAARC Summit**

The Fifth Summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation took place at Male, Maldives, from 21<sup>st</sup> -23<sup>rd</sup> November, 1990.

The SAARC Summit launched the Scheme for the Promotion of Organised Tourism during the first half of 1991. The members also welcomed the proposal for institutionalised cooperation among the tourist industries of the Member States with a view to attracting more tourists from outside the region.<sup>20</sup>

The Heads of State and Government emphasized the importance of cooperation among the SAARC Member States in the field of mass media and directed the Secretary General to facilitate, under the auspices of SAARC, increased interaction among federations/associations of journalists, news agencies and mass media of the region.<sup>21</sup>

The years 1991 to 2000 AD would be observed as the *SAARC Decade of the Girl Child*. They were deeply moved by the SAARC Girl Child's appeal for love and care for them and their right to childhood. They reiterated their resolve that the welfare of the child in general and the girl child in particular, would figure at the top of their list of priorities.<sup>22</sup>

The Summit also declared 1991 was observed as the *SAARC Year of Shelter*. They decided to observe 1992 as the "*SAARC Year of the Environment*".

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<sup>19</sup> "4th Saarc Summit," <http://www.saarctourism.org/forth-saarc-summit.html>, Accessed on 20<sup>th</sup> July, 2011.

<sup>20</sup> "5th Saarc Summit," <http://www.saarctourism.org/fifth-saarc-summit.html>, Accessed on 20<sup>th</sup> July, 2011.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.



Besides, the SAARC summit also decided to observe 1993 as the *SAARC Year of Disabled Persons*.<sup>23</sup>

The SAARC summit members also decided that appropriate programmes should be worked out for observing the SAARC Year of the Shelter in 1991, the SAARC Year of the Environment in 1992 and the SAARC Year of Disabled Persons in 1993.<sup>24</sup>

### **The Sixth SAARC Summit**

The Sixth SAARC Summit was held on the Colombo Declaration of the Heads of State or Government of the Member Countries of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation issued on 21<sup>st</sup> December, 1991.

The member states of SAARC also recalled the decision of the Malé Summit to institutionalise cooperation in the field of biotechnology. They welcomed the proposal for the establishment of a networking arrangement between Research and Development Centres in the Member States as an important step in advancing such cooperation. They also welcomed the emphasis on organised study tours, workshops and seminars proposed in the identified areas of cooperation in the field of science and technology.<sup>25</sup>

### **The Seventh SAARC Summit**

The Seventh Summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) was held at Dhaka, Bangladesh, on 10<sup>th</sup> - 11<sup>th</sup> April, 1993. The Member States reiterated once again to strengthen and enrich SAARC as an instrument endowing it with a clear set of forward looking goals and objectives as well as all the requisite institutional capacities, so that it can continue to work to enrich not only the lives of its own members but also promote peace, progress and stability in South Asia in a larger context.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> “6th Saarc Summit,” <http://www.saarctourism.org/sixth-saarc-summit.html>, Accessed on 20<sup>th</sup> July, 2011.

<sup>26</sup> “7th Saarc Summit,” <http://www.saarctourism.org/seventh-saarc-summit.html>, Accessed on 20<sup>th</sup> July, 2011.

### **The Eighth SAARC Summit**

The Eighth Summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) took place at New Delhi, India, on 2<sup>nd</sup> -4<sup>th</sup> May, 1995.

The Member States reiterated the need to fulfil the internationally agreed aid targets for the developing countries and the Least Developed Countries. They emphasised on the need for exceptional finance to facilitate implementation of economic reform programmes in SAARC Countries.<sup>27</sup>

### **The Ninth SAARC Summit**

The Ninth Summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation (SAARC) was held at Malé, Maldives, on 12<sup>th</sup> -14<sup>th</sup> May, 1997.

The SAARC Member States agreed to review the criteria for the determination of LDC status for consideration by the United Nations General Assembly on the current year, must take into account the special significance of the extent and magnitude of incidence of poverty in the poorest countries and the special vulnerabilities of small island states.<sup>28</sup>

### **The Tenth SAARC Summit**

The Tenth Summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) was held at Colombo from 29<sup>th</sup> -31<sup>st</sup> July, 1998, in the year of the Golden Jubilee of the Independence of Sri Lanka.

The SAARC Member States made re-affirmed Middle East their support for the achievement of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace based on Security Council Resolution 242 (1967) and Resolution 338 (1973) to restore the inalienable national rights of the Palestinian people.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> "8th Saarc Summit," <http://www.saarctourism.org/eighth-saarc-summit.html>, Accessed on 20<sup>th</sup> July, 2011.

<sup>28</sup> "9th Saarc Summit," <http://www.saarctourism.org/ninth-saarc-summit.html>, Accessed on 20<sup>th</sup> July, 2011.

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.saarctourism.org/tenth-saarc-summit.html>, Accessed on 20th July, 2011.

### **The Eleventh SAARC Summit**

The Eleventh Summit meeting of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) was held in Kathmandu, Nepal, from 4<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> January, 2002.

The Heads of State and Government were unanimous in recognizing the need for further promoting a sense of regional identity amongst the peoples of the region. The leaders lauded the roles played by intellectuals, professionals and eminent persons in promoting people-to-people contacts within the region and agreed to encourage such endeavours as a healthy sign of regional cohesion and fraternity.<sup>30</sup>

### **The Twelfth SAARC Summit**

The Twelfth Summit meeting of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) was held in Islamabad, Pakistan, on 4<sup>th</sup> -6<sup>th</sup> January 2004. The Twelfth Summit was guided by the vision of a peaceful and prosperous South Asia and was proud of its rich culture and traditions.<sup>31</sup>

The Member States were desirous of promoting peace, stability, amity and progress in the region through strict adherence to the principles of the United Nations Charter and Non-Alignment, particularly respect for the principles of sovereign equality, territorial integrity, national independence, non-use of force and non-interference in the internal affairs of the states and peaceful settlement of all disputes.<sup>32</sup>

### **The Thirteenth SAARC Summit**

The Thirteenth Summit meeting of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) was held in Dhaka, Bangladesh, on 12<sup>th</sup> - 13<sup>th</sup> November, 2005.

The Heads of State and Government decided to declare the decade of 2006-2015 as the SAARC Decade of Poverty Alleviation. During the Decade, endeavours both at the national and regional

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<sup>30</sup> "11th Saarc Summit," <http://www.saarctourism.org/eleventh-saarc-summit.html>, Accessed on 20th July, 2011.

<sup>31</sup> "12th Saarc Summit," <http://www.saarctourism.org/twelth-saarc-summit.html>, Accessed on 20<sup>th</sup> July, 2011.

<sup>32</sup> "Ibid.

level will continue to be made with a sense of commitment and urgency to free South Asia from poverty.<sup>33</sup>

The Heads of State and Government noted that the spirit of SAARC needed to be sustained by efforts to promote people-to-people contact and by a vibrant civil society throughout South Asia actively engaged in forging links across national boundaries.<sup>34</sup>

### **The Fourteenth SAARC Summit**

The Fourteenth Summit meeting of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) was held in New Delhi, India, on 3<sup>rd</sup> - 4<sup>th</sup> April, 2007.

The SAARC States welcomed the entry of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan as a new member. The SAARC Car Rally, in the run-up to the Fourteenth SAARC Summit, had vividly symbolized this connectivity.<sup>35</sup>

### **The Fifteenth SAARC Summit**

The Fifteenth Summit meeting of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) was held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, on 2<sup>nd</sup> -3<sup>rd</sup> August, 2008.

The SAARC members renewed their resolve for collective regional efforts to accelerate economic growth, social progress and cultural development which would promote the welfare of the peoples of South Asia and improve their quality of life, thereby contributing to peace, stability, amity and progress in the region.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> "13th Saarc Summit," <http://www.saarctourism.org/thirteenth-saarc-summit.html>, Accessed on 20<sup>th</sup> July, 2011.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> "Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Colombo Declaration of the 15th SAARC Summit," <http://www.slmission.com/statements/88-ministry-statements/109-colombo-declaration-of-the-15th-saarc-summit.html?start=2>, Accessed on 2<sup>nd</sup> August, 2011.

The SAARC mechanisms were to continue to embody in their programs and project a strong focus on better connectivity not only within South Asia, but also between the region and the rest of the world.<sup>37</sup>

### **The Sixteenth SAARC Summit**

The Sixteenth Summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) was held at Thimphu, Bhutan, on 28<sup>th</sup> -29<sup>th</sup> April 2010 under the theme of *Towards a Green and Happy South Asia* to mark the silver jubilee celebration.

In this Silver Jubilee Year of SAARC, the Leaders emphasized the need to develop a Vision Statement.<sup>38</sup>

In commemoration of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the SAARC members laid emphasis on effective communications and public diplomacy. It also endorsed the recommendation to declare 2010-2020 as the Decade of Intra-regional Connectivity in SAARC. Further, it was agreed on the need to expedite negotiations with a view to finalizing the two agreements on Motor Vehicles and Railways.<sup>39</sup>

### **The Seventeenth SAARC Summit**

The 17<sup>th</sup> South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Summit was held on 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> November at Addu City, Maldives.<sup>40</sup>

Maldivian President Mohamed Nasheed in the inaugural address commented the economic stagnation in one member nation causes insecurity in another. Nasheed also appealed to integrate economically and create a political environment that creates security.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> "SAARC/SUMMIT.16/15 SIXTEENTH SAARC SUMMIT 28-29 April 2010 Thimphu ...," <http://www.saarc-sec.org/userfiles/16thSummit-Declaration29April10.pdf>, Accessed on 2<sup>nd</sup> August, 2011.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> "17th SAARC summit reaches fruitful decisions: Maldivian president," [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/world/2011-11/11/c\\_122269087.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/world/2011-11/11/c_122269087.htm), Accessed on 20<sup>th</sup> November, 2011.

Yousuf Raza Gilani Pakistani Prime Minister in the opening ceremony of the 17<sup>th</sup> SAARC Summit called for all SAARC countries to work together to eliminate terrorism.<sup>42</sup>

Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh pledged to promote fair trade in the region. Dr Singh also pointed out that many sectors including trade, transport, health and education have benefited from it.<sup>43</sup>

South Asia has been able to maintain a respectable growth rate and this encouraging trend has resulted in the integration of SAARC and shows the region is on the right path, Singh said.<sup>44</sup>

In the closing address Nasheed said the SAARC member countries agreed to direct the SAFTA (South Asian Free Trade Agreement) Ministerial Council to intensify efforts to reduce the sensitive list as well as reduce non-tariff barriers to trade.<sup>45</sup>

Maldivian President Mohamed Nasheed has informed that the SAARC secretary general has been instructed to ensure the final preparations for the Indian Ocean Cargo and Passenger Ferry Service are completed this year.<sup>46</sup>

Nasheed said the other efforts have also been made to promote communication between SAARC countries. The Summit has agreed to conclude the Regional Railways Agreement and convene the Expert Group Meeting on Motor Vehicles Agreement before the next Council of Ministers, he added. Further, the establishment of a South Asian Postal Union has also been agreed, said Nasheed.<sup>47</sup>

The 17<sup>th</sup> SAARC Summit came into the conclusion on Friday 11<sup>th</sup> November, 2011 with the adoption of Addu Declaration adopted by the eight SAARC member countries, reaffirms their

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<sup>41</sup> *17th SAARC summit kicks off in Maldives*, [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/world/2011-11/10/c\\_131239799.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/world/2011-11/10/c_131239799.htm), Accessed on 19<sup>th</sup> November, 2011.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> *“17th SAARC summit reaches fruitful decisions: Maldivian president,”* [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/world/2011-11/11/c\\_122269087.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/world/2011-11/11/c_122269087.htm), Accessed on 20<sup>th</sup> November, 2011

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

commitment to peace, confidence building, liberty, human dignity, democracy, mutual respect, good governance and human rights.<sup>48</sup>

The chairman of 17<sup>th</sup> SAARC Summit and Maldivian President Mohamed Nasheed has formally announced that 18<sup>th</sup> SAARC Summit is to be held in Nepal.<sup>49</sup>

### ***Constraints/ Challenges of SAARC***

The threats to India's peace and security environment have multiplied enormously, just as the threat to world peace is far more somber and sinister now. The regional and international balance of forces is menacingly hostile. The most ominous problem, the most agonizing issue, facing India today is the nuclear option.<sup>50</sup>

On the multilateral level Indo-Pak cooperation became a part of the South Asian effort to generate coordinated and concerted momentum for mutual development. India played a low-key role in the beginning for fear of arousing suspicion among smaller neighbours, but Bangladesh and Nepal displayed greater initiative. The Foreign Secretaries of the seven South Asian nations (Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Bhutan, Maldives and India) met in early 1981 in Colombo to promote mutual cooperation in areas which would benefit the entire region and set up working groups for studies for cooperation in the fields of agriculture, rural development, meteorology, health and population, and telecommunications. The working groups identified some 13 projects in these areas. The second meeting of the Foreign Secretaries in Kathmandu in November 1981 expanded the scope of regional cooperation by including for study three new projects, postal services, science and technology and transport. The Kathmandu meeting provided the much-needed spur and accelerated the process of finding common ground for cooperation.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> V.P. Dutt (1997) "Europe and Japan: Security and Conclusions," India's Foreign Policy, Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd. 576, Masjid Road, Jangpura, New Delhi- 110014, pp 503-504.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, pp 505- 506.

The South Asian region was beset by many political problems, besides the massive economic difficulties. The legacies of suspicion, often bitterness, loomed too large to be easily dismissed. Clearly regional cooperation could not take the form of political cooperation forthwith. Yet, the lesson of history was equally clear. Either cooperate and advance together or suffer separately and individually. South Asia had to find its road towards regional cooperation that would not ignore regional realities and would not, therefore, die premature death. Necessarily this road had to be the road of economic cooperation to begin with, so as to lay a stronger foundation for overcoming political problems. The process had just begun and it was too early to say whether political turbulence would swamp it or whether it would be able to control political vicissitudes. It was for the politicians, bureaucrats, intellectuals, in fact for the whole people in all these countries to safeguard, consolidate and carry forward the process regional cooperation.<sup>52</sup>

The nexus between national interests and foreign policy is running thread in the evolution of foreign policy, whether of India or of any other country. This should not lead us to believe that ideas play no role. Ideas and even ideals have their place and there is no need to snigger at them. Unprincipled pursuit of what might be considered immediate, narrow national interests can often be counter-productive.<sup>53</sup>

Foreign policy is not the enactment of a morality play. Generally, foreign policy stumbles through, and then is significantly influenced by a country's experience. Perhaps one can even generalize that foreign policy is the summation of experience in international relations of a certain country at a certain given period of time. Certainly, it is India's actual experience that has determined whether relations are better with one country and somewhat indifferent with another, more friendly with one power and less with another. The actual state of relations with various countries is largely the function and consequence of experience.<sup>54</sup>

A big country like India should be able to retain some initiative in her hands and display a certain measure of dynamism in dealing with developments around her borders and in the world, and not just be doomed to a mere reactive foreign policy. Try to reduce existing hostilities and open new

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid, p 508.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, p 509.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, pp 509- 510.



options, without losing old friendships. To the extent India can pursue vigorously such a policy, with increased sophistication, she can more successfully meet the mounting challenges in a harsher and colder world.<sup>55</sup>

The SAARC countries have historical reasons, and many other factors for non-cooperation. The differences in political as well as mutual suspicion and lack of trust are the greatest enemies of cooperation among the SAARC countries, the problem and issue of Kashmir between India and Pakistan, water and refugee disputes between India and Bangladesh, the intervention of India in Sri Lanka's military, trade and transit treaty between India and Nepal, the ethnic problem between Bhutan and Nepal etc. are some of the troubled spots in the SAARC region where all the countries have to come out open and join for cooperation whole heartedly.<sup>56</sup>

There is also a compulsion and intra-competition among SAARC countries for political factors superseding the economic factors with each other. Some examples like competition between India and Sri Lanka for export of tea, jute market competition between India and Bangladesh, rice export competition between India and Pakistan, cotton textile between Pakistan and Sri Lanka, in the world market. The fear of the SAARC countries towards India is that India dominates in terms of area, population, technological advancement and military which may lead the basic factor for continuous and slow growth of cooperation among SAARC countries. The religious and cultural factors also hinder to some extent the growth of SAARC. Country like Pakistan prefers economic and cultural cooperation with Islamic nations; Nepal and Bhutan are religiously and culturally closer to India as these countries are dominated by the Hindu and Buddhist religions. In the economic perspectives also there are different apprehensions that India and Pakistan are more advanced and developed than Bhutan, Nepal and Maldives as more relatively developed partners would exploit them.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid, pp 510 511.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, p 153.

<sup>57</sup> Jyotirmoy Banerjee (2006) "*Growing Nuclear Danger in South Asia: Prospects for Cooperative Denuclearisation?*" , Challenges to India Foreign Policy in the New Era, ed. Dr (Mrs) Annupurna Nautiyal, Gyan Publishing House, New Delhi- 110002. p153

Though there is lack of trust and suspicion irritating one another, yet, still there is vast scope for cooperation among SAARC countries. The SAARC countries must focus on agriculture. Agriculture is the only way to grow and progress is cooperation because these countries have core competence in this sector and their economies are dominated by agriculture too. There must be constant attempts made to remove the major irritants of mutual apprehension in the form of political and economic domination by India. The best way and the need of the hour is the sincerity of purpose and honesty in efforts. The SAARC countries must realize and learn a lesson that in cooperation we can swim across the turbulent river while individually we may be drowned even in the still waters.<sup>58</sup>

### **Nuclearisation as Challenge for South Asia**

In the month of May 1998 India's nuclear test provoked Pakistan to go for nuclear test which lead both to be counted as Nuclear-Weapons States (NWS). Again, the year 2001, the Indian armed forces dubbed Pakistan in Kargil war as the 'Operation Poorna Vijay' ('complete victory') that stimulated nuclear war environment.<sup>59</sup>

Moreover, terrorism has introduced a fresh dimension to the nuclear question, which can be called as level two problems. Terrorist activists disturbed the peaceful coexistence in the country and surrounding neighbourhood states. Like on 26<sup>th</sup> November, 2008 terrorists' activity in Mumbai creates trauma and uncondusive environment in the country.<sup>60</sup>

Pakistan is military-dominated with deep-rooted fundamentalism. The nuclear policy of Pakistan is keeping the option open, unlike New Delhi's policy of No-First-Use (NFU).<sup>61</sup>

India has nuclear doctrine of 'minimum credible deterrence.' Yet, many countries miscalculations and adventurism would cost both adversaries dearly.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid. p153

<sup>59</sup> Ibid p 171.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. p 171

<sup>61</sup> Ibid. p 171.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid. p 174.

### **Great Potential for Cooperation**

There is great potential area for regional cooperation among South Asian nations. Since the formation of the SAARC in the year 1985 discussion from time to time for future cooperation among them has taken place. The scope of regional cooperation had been identified in twelve areas:

- (i) agriculture; (ii) health and rural development; (iii) meteorology; (iv) telecommunication; (v) postal services; (vi) transport; (vii) scientific and technological development; (viii) sports; (ix) art and culture; (x) prevention of drug trafficking and abuse; (xi) women and development and (xii) education. <sup>63</sup>

The SAARC countries generally suffer from the common problems of poverty, unemployment, inflationary pressure, unfavourable trade balance, high budget deficits and low growth rates. Despite common problems, the policies that have been adopted are contradictory to one another. The policy issues were more competitively natured than complementary or cooperative. It originated from historical facts that solving their problems through competition among themselves was better. <sup>64</sup>

The countries of South Asian linked themselves in the matter of aid and trade with developed economic nations. Like foreign exchange, advance technology, foreign aid etc. dragged the SAARC countries to the western industrialized countries. In the early stages of economic development there was shortage of capital investment and technology aids from developed nations. <sup>65</sup>

The developed nations forces the Third World countries like SAARC to come together and increase their bargaining power with industrially advanced nations of the world in different forums such as WTO, World Bank, IMF, etc., where more concessions can be obtained by the

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid. pp147.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid. p147

<sup>65</sup> Ibid. p 147

regional block rather than a single country. It has compelled South Asia to form SAARC for economic, social and political advancement.<sup>66</sup>

The SAARC Nations has now realized that it would solve their problems of poverty, unemployment, inflation and low rate of growth, by cooperating among themselves. The mutual fear and apprehensions disappear, to better their economies. After assessing and analysing the solution to their problems becomes more apparent that there are more areas of cooperation than areas of conflict.<sup>67</sup>

The best way for the SAARC countries to cooperate would be when intra-regional trade increases through providing facilities to one another. India and Bangladesh could make an example to consider signing a bilateral agreement for free movement of commercial vehicles, and use of southern Chittagong port as transit for ferrying goods to north eastern India to reduce the Indo-Bangladesh trade imbalance. Indo-Sri Lanka could also increase various commodities like tea and rubber.<sup>68</sup>

There is a great scope for development within South Asian nations, telecommunication, roads, transport, energy and other infrastructural facilities can easily be developed through mutual cooperation. India, Bangladesh and Pakistan, Nepal and Bhutan can easily be developed through rail and road transport. In addition, Bhutan and Nepal have hydro electric power potentials which can easily be exported by India. Like the river valley projects on the river water flowing between India and Bangladesh, India and Pakistan, India and Nepal, Bhutan and India, Bhutan and Nepal can be developed in mutual interest as well as mutual benefit. Moreover, by proper management of water resources, floods and droughts can be minimized for the benefit of their agriculture. Development of common telecommunication services can help in monitoring weather reports, international market fluctuations in prices and products, exchange of scientific information and also regarding the spread of pests and diseases in particular.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid, pp 147- 148.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid, p 148.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid. p148

<sup>69</sup> Ibid. p148

## **The Policy Measures to Promote Cooperation**

The SAARC countries suggested promoting cooperation among the nations which are as follows:

- i. The information system has to be developed by the SAARC countries among themselves instead of depending on the information provided by developed countries to reduce the information gap. The information development would help out the exports and the importers to locate demand and supply position of various commodities in the SAARC region. This would be the first pre-requisite for any future cooperation.
- ii. There is need of complementarities instead of competition now. Conscious efforts are needed to develop the economic complementarities by reorienting the economies of the region towards each other. Again, expansion of market for each other's commodities, reduction in transportation cost and other trade concessions can go a long way.
- iii. The only possible way for expansion of trade is when there is cooperation in payments and financial transactions. There is also an urgent need of establishing a good network of banks and other financial institutions for liberal credit facilities.
- iv. There should be lowering of both tariff and non-tariff barriers which would be helpful in promoting trade relations. The SAARC countries can enter into bilateral and multilateral arrangements for such concessions.
- v. Conflicts in political and regional matters are natural. There is a great demand for Indian goods in Pakistan and Bangladesh but, due to political relations; a lot of smuggling and unreported trade is going on in these commodities across the border.
- vi. Fear of economic domination by India should be allayed. India shares 77 per cent of population, 72 per cent of area, 78 per cent of GDP, 88 per cent of exports and 81 per cent of imports in SAARC region. In this regards India have to be very careful in her dealings with the others partners.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid, pp 149- 150.

### **Focus on Agricultural Sector**

The SAARC countries major focus is on agriculture because their economies contribute the substantial share of GDP. There is a great potential of cooperation in the field of agriculture despite hostile, terrorism and highly unfavourable world environment. There is potential in the areas of production, marketing, finance, infrastructure, science and technology relating to agriculture.<sup>71</sup>

The green revolution in India was mainly from wheat and rice. Similarly, Pakistan in cotton, Bangladesh in rice, Maldives in fisheries, Sri Lanka in tea and coconut, Nepal and Bhutan in maize etc. which could be used for the benefit of others. There is much to learn in input management especially in fertilizers, soil and water management, farm mechanization, crop rotation etc.<sup>72</sup>

It is important to create scope for marketing cooperation of produce both inside and outside the country. Firstly, there is the need for requisite information system and transport cost for both internal and external marketing. It was a great step setting up SAARC Agriculture, Information Centre at Dhaka that could put in the right direction as it is fulfilling the information needs of member countries. There is a need to keep in contact with agricultural organizations of member countries and work on a common platform for exchanging information regarding the pest diseases of various crops and technical know-how for its control. The SAIC could make a possible way of cooperation in the field of crop production, animal husbandry, fisheries, forestry, wild life preservation and marketing intelligence.<sup>73</sup>

The SAARC countries must have good cooperation and coordination in the field of external marketing i.e. exports and imports. Firstly, a common approach like the developed countries must evolve within the member nations. There is a monopoly in tea, jute, spices, coconut and some fruits and vegetables from the SAARC countries.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup>Ibid, p 150.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid. p150

<sup>73</sup> Ibid, p151.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid. p 151

The World Trade Organisation accords provisions for Plant Breeders Rights, seeds, subsidies, opening of market for the import from developed countries, patenting etc., which is highly damaging for the smooth growth of the agricultural sector in SAARC countries that is directly and indirectly unfavourable for the region in particular. The role of WTO have already been articulated in farmers' agitations and political opposition.<sup>75</sup>

The SAARC least developed countries could supply timber and timber products, natural gas, raw jute, raw cotton etc. to other members of SAARC. On the other hand there is enough scope for joint marketing in the agricultural valued-added products. Indeed, the developed countries such as India and Pakistan among the SAARC countries need to produce sufficient agricultural based products, which could be substituted in imports from industrially developed countries to the SAARC nations. The best example, Pakistan could meet Sri Lanka's requirement of cotton yarn and in turn, get tea, rubber and some consumer goods. It would find a large market in India for Sri Lanka's copra and coconut where there is shortage of vegetable oil. There is also a good scope for Pakistan to export surplus rice, cotton and textile to Bangladesh where these products fetch a good market and in turn Bangladesh could get good markets for jute and newsprint in Pakistan. Similarly, India could supply fruits and vegetables to Sri Lanka and Maldives. Moreover, many more mutual discussions can identify the needs of market commodities amongst the SAARC countries.<sup>76</sup>

There is a bright scope for agricultural research and education in the most potent area for cooperation. The greatest advantage for SAARC is that India has one of the widest and best networks of agricultural education and research in the world. In fact, all SAARC countries could benefit from it by getting their students and scientists trained in Indian agricultural universities and research institutes. The SAARC countries also need to urgently develop a common syllabus and course catalogue in agricultural education, research and extension management.<sup>77</sup>

The financial institutions need to be set up on the pattern of Asian Development Bank, FAO, UNDP and World Bank. There is a great example for the successful experiment of Gramin

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid. p 151

<sup>76</sup> Ibid, p 152.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid. p 152

Banks in Bangladesh for the SAARC countries in particular. Like how India is launching rural development, public distribution system and government intervention in financial sector reform and so on.<sup>78</sup>

Moreover, the SAARC countries have to study the international trade theory of comparative cost to be applied to these nations. There should also be a technique to look for producing each and every produce, it should concentrate on products, which can give them comparative cost advantage.<sup>79</sup>

### **Denuclearisation Agenda for South Asia as the Tool of Peace**

1. De-targeting and de-alerting nuclear missiles,
2. Establishing a UN register of nuclear arms for greater transparency,
3. Separating nukes from missiles (and other delivery vehicles like bombers),
4. Placing excess weapons-grade fissile materials from retired nukes and production facilities under international controls,
5. Making a firm commitment in multinational fora to the goal of nuclear disarmament and ultimate elimination of nukes, and
6. Assuring non-NWS states of banning use of nukes against them.<sup>80</sup>

### **The Challenges on Environmental Security in South Asia**

The late 1970s include rising poverty, rapid population growth, spread of infectious diseases, and environmental degradation all over the world and South Asia in particular. But true security was understood on the power of state secrecy, nuclear and military power.<sup>81</sup>

When discussing about national security it leads one the realm of human rights, and internal repressions. Political instability is also one of the main threats to national security.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid. p 152

<sup>79</sup> Ibid. p 152

<sup>80</sup> Ibid, p 189.

<sup>81</sup> Narottam Gaan (2006), "*Environmental Security in South Asia*", Challenges to India Foreign Policy in the New Era, ed. Dr (Mrs) Annupurna Nautiyal, Gyan Publishing House, New Delhi- 110002, p 327.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid. p 327



In addition, other problems which plague the entire humanity in South Asia in particular are grinding poverty, burgeoning population growth, spread of diseases, scarcity of resources and environmental degradation.<sup>83</sup>

### *The Perspective on Environmental Security*

The end of the World Wars and Cold War did not fully free the problems. Global integration of national economies, erosion of national identities and cultures, shifts of priority from military rivalry to economic competition, and the diminishing role of state as the dominant actor in international politics have added new perspectives to environmental security.<sup>84</sup>

Besides, the emergence of diverse non-traditional and new issues-ranging from poverty to refugee crises, information privacy to cyber-terrorism, environmental problems to natural disasters which require non- state and non- military policies and strategies, are now being considered a major component of what is christened as comprehensive security.<sup>85</sup>

The problem of the East-West which threatens the world in ideological division, military aggression and struggle is replaced by global preponderance in the global environmental crisis. In the present age, the world faces problems in terms of global warming, sea level rise, acid rain, greenhouse effect, diminishing capacity of the agricultural system, depletion of earth's finite resources, punching holes in the ozone layer, and biodiversity loss. In fact, the time has come for the world to join hands together for a common agenda for solution of the problems.<sup>86</sup>

The environmental question has become a worldwide security issue. The scope of environmental issues being debated in all-pervasive nature, cross-national and inter generational implications.<sup>87</sup>

The environment or the resources issues seem to have little or no direct connection with past peace, conflict and war. At the same time, linking certain resource and environmental problems

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid. p 327

<sup>84</sup> Ibid, p 328.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid. p 328

<sup>86</sup> Ibid. p 328

<sup>87</sup> Ibid, p 329.

causing political frictions and tensions to the whole world or international politics. In fact, ongoing debate is the assertion that resource scarcity and certain forms of environmental degradation are contributing to political instability or violent conflict at local, regional and interstate levels.<sup>88</sup>

The General Secretary of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev in the year 1987 states:

[The World] is not secure in the direct meaning of the word when currents of poison flow along river channels, when poison rains pour down from the sky, when an atmosphere polluted with industrial and transport waste chokes cities and whole regions, when the development of atomic engineering is justified by unacceptable risks. The relationship between man and the environment has become menacing. Problems of ecological security affect all the rich and the poor.<sup>89</sup>

The Secretary of State of the United States of America, Madeleine Korblová Albright in April 1997 says: Not so long ago, many believed that the pursuit of clean air, clean water, and healthy forests was a worthy goal, but not part of our national security. Today environmental issues are part of the mainstream of American foreign policy.<sup>90</sup>

Studies and research institutions undertook works to determine how environmental factors could prove as future threats to the intra and inter-state conflict or violence that appeared to be surfacing around the globe. It analyzed and used in its terminology explanations suggesting that environmental stress, operating through a set of intervening variables, could contribute to violent conflicts, and thus constituted a threat to national and international security. Jeremy Rifkin describes: The environmental threats facing the planet are not simply the result of scientific miscalculation. Nor are they merely the consequences of ill-conceived management decisions. Ironically it is the notion of security upon which our entire modern worldview is based that has led us to the verge of ecocide...In less than a century the practice of geopolitics thus pushed the

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid. p 329

<sup>89</sup> Ibid. p 329

<sup>90</sup> Ibid, p 330.

world to the brink of both nuclear Armageddon and environmental catastrophe forcing us to reconsider the basic assumption of security that animates the modern world view.<sup>91</sup>

Lodgaard states that the concept of environmental security challenges established frames of mind and political conflicts. It conveys a message that environmental problems have a legitimate claim for status as military problems have.

Again, another proponent opines about environmental security: national security is not just about fighting forces and weaponry. It relates to watersheds, croplands, forests, genetic resources, climatic and other factors that rarely figure in the minds of military experts and political leaders, but increasingly deserve in their collectively to rank along side military approaches as crucial to a nation's security.<sup>92</sup>

The concerns for environmental security have grown in the domestic as well as international forum. In the year 1972, the United Nations Conference on Human Environment, Ottawa Conference on Conservation and Development in 1986. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992. The year 1995 World Summit for social Development and UN symposium on the Global Environment in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century in 1997. Supplemented the environmental security in 1987 by Harking like The World Commission on Environmental Development (Brundtland Report) entitled "Our common Future", highlights the factor of environmental degradation causing the violent relationship between states: environmental stress is both a cause and effect of political tension and military conflict..nations have fought to assist or resist control over raw materials, energy supplies, land, river basin, sea passages and other key environmental resources.<sup>93</sup>

According to the report, such conflicts are likely to increase as these resources became scarcer and competition for them will increase.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid. p 330

<sup>92</sup> Ibid, p 331.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid. p 331

<sup>94</sup> Ibid. p 331

The environmental security as a concept encompassing non-military aspects was officially mentioned for the first time by the UN General Assembly in New York from 24<sup>th</sup> August to 11<sup>th</sup> September 1987, International conference for the Relationship between Disarmament and Development. The final document was adopted by consensus states: The non-military threats Security have moved to the forefront of global concern. Underdevelopment and declining prospects for development as well as mismanagement and waste of resources, constitute challenges to security. Environment degradation is a threat to sustainable development...Mass poverty, illiteracy, diseases, squalor and malnutrition affecting a large proportion of world's population often becomes the cause of social strain, tension and strife.

The environmental security can be given in two distinct features:

Firstly, the environmental causes of conflict causing potentially violent conflicts;

Secondly, the impact of environmental degradation on political, economy, health and life of the people. Environmental degradation or deficiencies create the conditions that render conflicts, which act as multipliers that aggravate core causes of conflict or act as a catalyst factor in creating conflicts, then environmental degradation or scarcity of resources becomes a national security issue.<sup>95</sup>

Stephan Libiszewski an authority from Swiss Peace Institute's Environment and Conflicts Project (ENCOP) distinguished between traditional resources wars and environmental causes of conflicts stated that "an environmental conflict caused by the environmental scarcity of resource, that means: caused by a human made disturbance of its normal regeneration rate. Environmental scarcity can result from the overuse of renewable resource or from the overstrain of the ecosystem's sink capacity, that is pollution. Both can reach the stage of destruction of space of living. Conflicts caused by physical, geographical or socio-economic resource scarcity are not

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid, pp 331- 332.

environmental conflicts but traditional conflicts of resource distribution.” The Toronto Group’s research from ENCOP found that scarcity leads to rise of conflict.<sup>96</sup>

## **The Environmental Issues in Different Aspects**

### ***The Degradation of Land***

The resources vary from region to region. Soil suffers tragic degrees of degradation on account of rapid deforestation, poor irrigation and drainage practices, and overgrazing. Desertification leads to depletion of land and the loss of nutrient-rich topsoil through water and wind erosion threatens the livelihood of countless millions throughout the region. India suffers as much as 27 per cent of soil from severe erosion. Selected watersheds in the Himalayan regions of India and Nepal are among the worst affected. The greatest causes of land degradation common to the countries in the region is mining, which is typically unorganized and unscientific, without any defined environmental management and land reclamation plans.<sup>97</sup>

### ***The Deforestation***

For industrial and agriculture developments as well as trade forestry products, deforestation remains a major concern in the world and South Asia in particular. Countries like Bangladesh and Pakistan have the highest rates of deforestation. Moreover, 75 per cent of population in Nepal depends on fuel wood for energy needs, which puts tremendous pressures on the country’s forest resources. In addition to landslides and soil erosion, deforestation causes sediment loads in rivers resulting in floods. Again, construction of road connectivity also plays a major role in deforestation in the region of South Asia.<sup>98</sup>

### ***The Marine Ecology***

Improper monitoring of effluents from industries and cities in coastal regions has contaminated large areas of the Indian Ocean which has impacted marine life and fisheries. The major polluters of the marine environment are chemical, paper, and sugar industries. The agricultural run-off has

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid, p 335.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid, pp 342- 343.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid, p343.

contributed to ocean pollution from pesticides. An estimated 1800 tons of pesticides enter the Bay of Bengal annually and increased use of pesticides in some areas has resulted in contamination of mollusks and fish species. The major depletion of mangroves in estuaries, lagoons, and bays, encouraged in part by shrimp breeding in coastal swamps, threatens such important natural processes as soil binding, nutrition recycling, and the prevention of soil erosion and silt accretion.<sup>99</sup>

Another major threat to ocean resources is oil spills. In the Arabian Sea approximately 5 million tons of oil is deposited every year, and 4,00,000 tons is added to the Bay of Bengal. The Indian Ocean has a growth of tanker traffic and increased offshore exploration. Oil spills has increase tremendously causing threat to offshore development.<sup>100</sup>

### ***Threat on Biodiversity Loss***

The loss of biodiversity within the region of Asia-Pacific has been the most acute in the Indian subcontinent. The international trade in timber is one of the root causes. Introduction of non-native species, improper use of agro-chemicals, excessive hunting and poaching, etc are some other causes.<sup>101</sup>

In Pakistan hunting is still pursued as a popular sport. The smuggle of falcons to the Middle East and the killing of lizards and snakes for their skins. The destruction of coral reefs along the Maldives coast which is vulnerable to tourism. Increasing of population in India and Pakistan also leads to pressure together with industrial activity that directly and indirectly causes the loss of diversity of both plant and animal species.<sup>102</sup>

### ***The Climate Change***

The climate change is one of the most significant in tropical Asia which has impacted the ecosystem (both land and coastal) in water resources and agriculture that affects the human health. There is

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid. p 343

<sup>100</sup> Ibid, p 344.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid. p 344

<sup>102</sup> Ibid. p 344

imbalance in climate. Heavy and less and unseasonable rainfall from region to region that affects both plants and animals in the planet. Drought, flood, acid rain are the other causes of climate change.<sup>103</sup>

### **South Asia Cooperative Environment Programme (SACEP)**

The South Asia Cooperative Environment Programme (SACEP) was established in 1982 under the aegis of the United Nations with nine members from SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation), Afghanistan, and Iran.<sup>104</sup>

Though SACEP has no formal affiliation with SAARC that might limit its mobilization resource to implement regional actions. The SACEP strategy and programme in the period of 1992-96 incorporates some key features to implement:

- Capacity-building and raising awareness.
- Information exchange and technology transfer.
- Training in environmental management and institutional development.
- Cooperative management of mountain ecosystems.
- Conservation of wildlife and their habitat.<sup>105</sup>

The SACEP made an action plan relating to environmental cooperation within the region. The proposals are:

1. assessment of the environment,
2. development and revision of national environmental plans
3. development of legal instruments, and
4. awareness building.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid, pp 344- 345.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid, p345.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid ,pp 345- 346.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid, p 346.

### *Aims of SACEP*

Apart from implementation process, the declaration aims at the following:

- Creating an air pollution.
- Raising regional awareness on acidification.
- Knowledge-sharing and improvements in pollution monitoring systems.
- Review of policy
- Preparation of national sub.<sup>107</sup>

### **The Democratic Principles and Its Challenges in South Asia**

The term democracy is used for the rule by the people, either directly (pure democracy) or through representatives (republicanism). Democracy considers the value and the fundamental equality of all individuals, although the precise meaning of this has been somewhat uncertain and has long been debated.

South Asia consists of a cultural diversity and geo-political dynamics making it a unique region similar to India.

India's sheer size, its economic potential has added to its ability to intervene. This is seen by its neighbourhood with apprehensions. Since India is a dominant power in the region, its apprehensions and security imperatives invariably bring the smaller neighbours within the parameter of its security calculation. This notion of security without the concurrence of the neighbours is perceived as hegemonic in design, rather than genuine considerations. The foreign policies of India's neighbours are based upon expectations that strive for greater accommodation by India.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid. p 346

<sup>108</sup> Sanjeev Kumar H.M. (2006), "*Democratic Paralysis in South Asia: Major Issues and India's Concern*", *India Quarterly*, A Journal of International Affairs, Vol.LXII, No 3, July- September, 2006, published by Indian Council of World Affairs, Sapru House, Barakhamba Road, New Delhi 110001, p128.



The conflicts within the nation and between the South Asian countries occurs due to a dominant population of an ethnic conflict configurations, which could acquire the form of an ethnic conflict and lead to domestic tension and instability in the region. Similarly, coexistence and cohabitant of multi-ethnic character of the Indian society creates the epicenter of ethnic tensions, steered and maneuvered by external forces having some affiliation with the communities involved in the conflict. Besides, lack of education and exposure result in narrow minded, ethnic psychosis, tension, conflict and civil war.<sup>109</sup>

The geographical contiguity among the South Asian countries particularly with India paves a congenial atmosphere to the interconnection among the people of the region. The ethnic group also inclines to support its own ethnic identity. The geographical adjacent helps in facilitating the accessibility for their own fraternal ethnic groups across borders in times of crisis and during sensitive times. The geo-ethnic convergences in the region is not conducive for the smooth functioning of democracy in South Asia.<sup>110</sup>

SAARC has tried to institutionalize democracy which has already experienced disruptions in the smooth process of living as democratic states in the region. SAARC does not put a mechanism of regional cooperation for democracy affecting its summits, hence it does not weaken the spirit of multilateralism.

The South Asia region has been marked by its own internal conflicts in ethnic violence, communal tensions, and militant activities, misuse of political power, insecurity and criminality for several decades.<sup>111</sup>

India is a democratic state and Pakistan has military administration which leads to difference in ideology and conception in the peace process of border issues and relations. Terrorism is also supported unofficially by Pakistan and India has its own principles of zero tolerance on anti-social activity within the country and outside the country. Terrorism which originated from Pakistan is disruptive to Indian society which is peace loving.

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid, p129.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid, p129

<sup>111</sup> Ibid, p129

The history of South Asia has been thus a witness to varieties of domestic unrests within its states as well as the external ferment surrounding them. One common characteristic of the region is that most of the states are victims of ethnic tensions and Leftist insurgencies.<sup>112</sup>

### **The security problems in South Asia in different perspectives**

The security problems in South Asia may be analysed in different perspectives.

#### **i. *Cross-border terrorism:***

The most disturbing challenge for peace, security and democracy is terrorism. The cross-border terrorism can be described as *Terrorism, secessionism and ethnic conflict, particularly in multi-cultural, multi-religious and multi-ethnic societies, have assumed new dimensions both in their sweep and intensity in the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.*

Strong militant aggressive postures and its capabilities pose serious threats to the peace and stability of South Asia.<sup>113</sup>

Terrorism has become more complex because of insurgent movements in north-eastern India. Moreover the Pakistani establishment for sponsoring insurgency using Bangladeshi soil in order to carry out subversive activities in the region is more harmful. Quoting *Now Bangladesh has become the main epicenter of the North Eastern region for propagating and promoting the ultra-Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism.* According to some scholars and geo-political analysts, the epicenter of the concept and practices of Islamist jihad has shifted from Pakistan to Bangladesh. This is how terrorist activism and suicide bomb blast becomes a moral life for some section of people of a particular religious practice.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid. p129

<sup>113</sup> Ibid, p136.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid, p137.

ii. ***Civil Wars***

Civil war is one of the common diseases of the Third World countries including South Asian Nations. Civil war may be compared with 'two crabs in the basin.' The nations are incapable to control and rule the world due to the economic backwardness and lack of political strength when there is domestic conflict and violence. The main factors for civil wars are ethnic cleansing and religious issues.

The ethno-religious conflict has been one of the most horrendous victims of violence and some of the bloodiest incidents in the history of South Asia. During the time of India's partition in the name of religion (Hindu-Muslim), mass migration was a compelled catastrophe. Adding to that *Communal riots in post independence India have recurred with a vicious frequency. The trajectory they have followed in almost every instance has rarely also varied.*<sup>115</sup>

The seed of communism was rooted by British rule in India. The 'divide and rule' policy, the representation of Muslim in the national movement caused sensitivity among the Muslims and the Hindus leading to communal separation resulting in the partition of India. Communalism itself is the cause of clashes between right wing Hindutva ideology and extremist Islamist groups. The communal violence persists right from the ignominy of the demolition of Babri Masjid in 1992 to the pathetic communal carnage in Gujarat in the year 2002.<sup>116</sup>

### **SAARC and North East India**

SAARC plays a vital role in the development and stability of South Asia nations in general and North East India in particular. The relevance of SAARC to the North East India may be studied under the following points:

- i. The First SAARC Summit took an initiative to examine the problem of terrorism as it affects the security and stability of member states of SAARC. Further, a similar exercise be carried out with regard to the problem of drug trafficking and abuse.

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid, p138.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid, pp 138- 139.

The North East India is a gateway and strategically located which adjoining territories of Bangladesh, Myanmar and China. The relevance of SAARC could be analysed in the perspectives of security, drug and human trafficking and linkage with insurgency training and their neighbouring countries.

ii. The Second SAARC Summit laid emphasis on people-to-people contacts and for taking concrete steps to facilitate tourism in the region, including facilities for limited convertibility of national currencies for tourists from SAARC countries.

The people of North East India have a general conception that they were discriminated and alienated in social and political as well as economic fields with respect to other parts of the country. The ethnic tension and ethnic related separatist movements are plaguing the North East region of India. The policy of people-to-people contacts is a fundamental principle of human lives. People-to-people contacts pave way for confidence building, promoting trust, mutual understanding and development.

Launching of people-to-people contacts by SAARC countries is an opportunity for North East region for promoting of tourism, trade and commerce, and education. It also created an opportunity for making a better standard of living and higher quality life. This could help in achieving a dream of building friendly relations to all over the nation and world too. Moreover, the natural phenomenon of suspicion, prejudice and blunder tension from each other of the neighbouring nations and North East India in particular. In addition, human relations required for social affinity feeling which reflects directly or indirectly to foreign policy of India. The positive people-to-people contacts are the bloodstream of human development being a social animal. This is the dynamic role to prevent any negative eventuality amongst North East India towards South Asia.

iii. The Third SAARC Summit was to initiate the process of dealing with the protection and preservation of the environment.

The North East India is yet to implement environment preservation policy in an appropriate manner. Lack of public awareness, environment protection is harshly devastation. It is imbalance of ecology in the region that affects to the whole nation, South Asia and the globe in general. The protection and preservation of the environment is very relevant for the North East region in the study of Indian foreign policy.

iv. The Fourth SAARC Summit was decided to declare 1990 as the *SAARC Year of the Girl Child*.

The declaration Year of the Girl Child could facilitate better care and promote to the destitute and downtrodden child of the family. As many family of the North East India region are under the category of below average standard of living that could ensure to enjoy the privilege of dignity and rights in day to day life. Above all, the evil about discrimination of female could wash away from the mind and heart of the people. The declaration could enlighten towards girl child in ever generation to go.

v. The Fifth SAARC Summit had the proposal for institutionalised cooperation among the tourist industries of the Member States with a view to attracting more tourists from outside the region.

The North East people have rich cultural heritage. The topography has a bounty natural beauty with an enormous gift of fauna and flora. There is a great potential for tourism when peaceful atmosphere is created with good connectivity to all region states.

vi. The Sixth SAARC Summit focused on institutionalising cooperation in the field of biotechnology.

The region of North East India has great scope in biotechnology as rich reservoir of unexplored of natural resources exists in the region. With full utilization and exploitation could promote economy the region of North East, India and South Asia.

vii. The Seventh SAARC Summit promotes peace, progress and stability in South Asia in a larger context.

The region of North East suffered a trauma of ethnic tension. The region also has a chronic of terrorism, insurgency and inconclusive political problem. Peace, progress and stability are the basic and common morality in human society.

In the SAARC Summit to promote peace, progress and stability in South Asia was the policy that could benefit to the people of North East India and to the whole South Asia at large. In brief, what happen in North East India happens in South Asia. Indeed, North East is the heartland of South Asia in peace and tension, development and destruction, stability and instability, security and insecurity. This is how progress and prosperity of the North East India could project by the SAARC's policy and programme for the global arena.

viii. The Eighth SAARC Summit the need to fulfil the internationally agreed aid targets for the developing countries and the Least Developed Countries. They emphasised on the need for exceptional finance to facilitate implementation of economic reform programmes.

The North East is in the category of developing countries and the Least Developed Countries. The proper initiative and implementation could much befitted to the North East states. The question would pose for between peace and development, violence and for development. Development and creation of employment avenue could solve all-round solution and sow a seed of peace to the whole North East and South Asia as a whole.

ix. The Ninth SAARC Summit also agreed to review of the criteria for the determination of LDC status for consideration by the United Nations General Assembly on the current year, must take into account the special significance of the extent and magnitude of incidence of poverty in the poorest countries and the special vulnerabilities of small island states.

The North East India states are to take into account LDC status for consideration by the United Nations General Assembly. The regions which are the poorest affect the whole states and neighbouring countries as a whole. The programme and policy of eradication of poverty could be very essential and relevant in the social life of the North East region.

x. The Tenth SAARC Summit, member states made re-affirmed Middle East their support for the achievement of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace based on Security Council Resolution 242 (1967) and Resolution 338 (1973) to restore the inalienable national rights of the Palestinian people.

SAARC is an objective of peace and harmony amongst the member states and to the whole world. North East India requires permanent peace for peaceful coexistence and development. Wisely says 'no peace no development, no development no peace.

xi. The Eleventh SAARC Summit, the need for further promoting a sense of regional identity amongst the peoples of the region.

The North East region people are indispensable feeling of regional and ethnic identity. In promoting a sense of regional identity could serve a purpose of thirst and psychological satisfaction. The culture, social, religion, ethnic and land inheritance are a unique practice from other parts of India and South Asia at large.

xii. The Twelfth SAARC Summit, guided by the vision of a peaceful and prosperous South Asia and proud of its rich culture and traditions.

The ideology and principles of *unity in diversity* is the essence to South Asia. Being rich cultural heritage and traditions in North East and India's nation have a moral upright proud. Through preservation and honour of culture and traditions would attain the vision of a peaceful and prosperous South Asia and specifically to the North East.

xiii. The Thirteenth SAARC Summit, Heads of State and Government decided to declare the decade of 2006-2015 as the SAARC Decade of Poverty Alleviation. During the Decade, endeavours both at the national and regional level will continue to be made with a sense of commitment and urgency to free South Asia from poverty.

The Heads of State and Government noted that the spirit of SAARC needed to be sustained by efforts to promote people-to-people contact and by a vibrant civil society throughout South Asia actively engaged in forging links across national boundaries.

It is observed that due to poverty and lack of people-to-people contact, the region of North East India could not grow as the expectation of a vibrant civil society.

xiv. The Fourteenth SAARC Summit, states welcomed the entry of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan as a new member. The SAARC Car Rally, in the run-up to the Fourteenth SAARC Summit, had vividly symbolized this connectivity.

SAARC wants friendly relations to member states and create a confidence building in the greater extent. SAARC connectivity symbolizes to all regions where North East India would directly or indirectly benefit out of it.

xv. The Fifteenth SAARC Summit, members renewed their resolve for collective regional efforts to accelerate economic growth, social progress and cultural development which would promote the welfare of the peoples of South Asia and improve their quality of life, thereby contributing to peace, stability, amity and progress in the region.

SAARC accelerates on economic growth, social progress and cultural development is the essence of North East India progress and development. This would eliminate the poverty and improve the standard of living.

xvi. The Sixteenth SAARC Summit, Thimphu Silver Jubilee Declaration laid emphasis on effective communications and public diplomacy.

Further, it was agreed on the need to expedite negotiations with a view to finalizing the two agreements on Motor Vehicles and Railways.



The better connectivity of motor vehicles and railways would directly benefit to the people of North East India. This would generate economy, more opportunity for people-to-people contacts which is the way to erase evil hearts and mind like prejudice, suspicion and cynic attitude towards each other. The fraternal feeling and commonality sense could create for oneness to North East and South Asia as a whole.

xvii. The Seventeenth SAARC Summit, Addu Declaration adopted by the eight SAARC member countries, reaffirms their commitment to peace, confidence building, liberty, human dignity, democracy, mutual respect, good governance and human rights.

SAARC adoption of peace, confidence building, liberty, human dignity, democracy, mutual respect, good governance and human rights would enlighten North East India. Like peace, human dignity, good governance and human rights in need of the region as well free from corruption.

### **Conclusion**

The SAARC strength and progress is determined by the member states. Cooperation and friendly relations would bring a change develop the region. It is very interesting that international politics is always awake for SAARC blends.

The expectation and dream would progress and fulfill the needs of the people and region in particular through mutual respect and understanding. Prejudice, suspicion, hatred and discrimination in its role would destroy and defeat all objectives. Technology sharing, facilitation of trade amongst the nation states for economic and political development will enhance development towards global growth. Population explosion should be controlled to speed up the process of development.

Culture, religion, social and race commonality would keep the essence of attachment in every sphere. Any disharmony and social turbulence would defeat any positive development. The

future is in the hand of the SAARC nations. The choice is development or to harbour anti social activities with different ideologies.