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Contemporary India's Foreign Policy: Special Reference SAARC Countries



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ROLE OF INDIA IN SOUTH ASIAN ASSOCIATION FOR REGIONAL COOPERATION

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Abstract

SAARC is the Regional intergovernmental organization and geopolitical union of nations in South Asia. its member states include Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. India, the largest economy and the most populous country in the region. India is an idealist as well as realist in its ongoing efforts to revitalize the SAARC as the preeminent forum of regional cooperation and integration. For the India Story can't be delinked from the state of south Asia, its choices and its conflicts and its surging hopes and aspirations. Twenty-nine years after its founding and in the run up to the 30th anniversary in 2015, it's time for SAARC to bridge the gap between grand-sounding declarations and concrete action that can make South Asia a potent and effective player in the region and the world at large.

Key Word: SARC, Role, trade, NSR

Introduction

SAARC was established in December 1985 during the first SAARC summit that was held in Dhaka. After gaining independence from the British rule, India adopted the policy of NSR or National Self Reliance and next formed SAARC along with 7 other member nation of South Asia namely: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Which continue to be its members till date.

India is one of the founding member nations of SAARC, or the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, and is the home of two regional centers within the organization, the SAARC Documentation Centre and the SAARC Disaster Management Centre. India holds a permanent seat on the SAARC Board of Directors, and Indian representatives have twice served as secretary general of the organization.

India succeeded in building excellent trade relations and cordial relations on social, political and economic front with the SAARC countries.

According to the International Democracy Watch, SAARC was founded by India and 7 other Southeast Asian nations in 1985. The organization was created to promote understanding and cooperation in a variety of fields between countries in the region. India has been a member of SAARC consistently since the organization's beginnings, and Indian representatives were heavily involved in drafting the charter that all the nations eventually signed.

India also frequently plays host to SAARC committee members when they meet for organizational summits. For example, the 1986 summit, in which the duties of the SAARC secretariat were revised and expanded, was held in Bangalore, India. In 2007, the 14th SAARC summit was held in Delhi, India. This summit was notable because it marked the first time a

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new country was invited to become a member of SAARC when representatives from Afghanistan signed the charter.

SAARC's prime objectives include: promoting the welfare of the people of South Asia, accelerating the Economic growth, social progress, providing dignified livelihood to all individuals and on a larger scale promoting the self-reliance amongst the South Asian nations and building trust and appreciation for other countries' problem.

History:

It was back in 1980 when the concept of regional political and economic cooperation in South Asia was first thought of and fired the public imagination. Even before that, the idea was discussed in three major conferences: Asian Relations Conference (New Delhi), Baguio Conference (Philippines) and Colombo Powers Conference (Sri Lanka), which were held between 1947 and 1954. Ex-president of Bangladesh, Ziaur Rahman was the one who made a formal proposal on May 2, 1980. The first SAARC summit was held in Dhaka on 8 December 1985, when the organization was established. Afghanistan is the only new inclusion that happened since SAARC was established.

Objectives

Main Object of the Research is

To study the role of India in South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation.
To promote the welfare of the peoples of south Asia and to improve their quality of life
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 realize their full potential;
To contribute to mutual trust, understanding and appreciation of one another's problem;
To promote and strengthen collective self-reliance among the countries of south Asia;
To promote active collaboration and mutual assistance in the economic, social, cultural technical and scientific fields;
To strengthen cooperation with other developing countries;
To strengthen cooperation among themselves in international forums of matters of common interests; and

To cooperate with international and regional Organizations with similar aims and purposes.

Collateral / Secondary object of the Research is

To know about the SAARC, its member countries.

Research Methodology

Sources of Data Collection

Data collection plays an important role in research work. Without proper data available for analysis you cannot do the research work accurately. The whole research has done on the secondary data.

Secondary data collection techniques

Study of various Journals, Notes & reference books.

Study of web links.

Why India needs a strong SAARC

If charity begins at home, then foreign trade should definitely begin with neighbors. Unfortunately, the total value of India's trade with all the other SAARC members, put together, is less than a third of its total trade with just China. PM Modi realized that a meaningful cooperation can materialize only when there is mutual trust and willingness among member countries to resolve and overcome bilateral differences and apprehensions for the greater good of their own people.

The PM plans to forge stronger economic cooperation and increase intra-South Asian trade by removing bottlenecks. He is also likely to focus on improving and expanding connectivity in the region that would lead to better economic partnership. He has also emphasized on energy cooperation, on the lines of power generation and trade with Bhutan and Nepal. He plans to set up a SAARC Bank, on the lines of the BRICS Bank, to take forward his South Asia initiative.

India has a major responsibility in this respect on account of several factors. The most important factor is that India is the only country, which shares borders with all the SAARC countries, barring Maldives and Afghanistan. The implication of this geographical reality is that India has to facilitate the establishment of strong economical linkage with the neighboring countries. More importantly, India should take initiatives to solve difficulties, which the partner countries have been experiencing in trade with India on matters relating transit facilities.

Currently, India runs a huge \$ 15 billion trade surplus with other SAARC countries, with Exports worth \$ 17.5 billion and imports of just \$2.5 billion. The idea is to correct this skewed figure in a way so that Indian businesses can source more from other SAARC countries and build better value chains. For this, India has to invest more in the region by taking advantage of the arbitrage in wage and electricity rates. From Maldives in the south of India to Bhutan in the north several SAARC countries are keen to seek Indian investment and expertise. It is estimated that 55% of intra-regional trade potential in South Asia remains untapped.

Bhutan is keen to seek Indian investments in four to five sectors, including power, tourism, construction and industry. In the future, there will be openings for smaller power projects for private sectors companies to consider. In Maldives, Indian investors can look at tourism, hotel, ports, airports and fisheries. It is for the Indian the \$1 billion level in the next three years from the current level of about \$200 million.

Modi also wants trade to be a key element in improving ties with Pakistan.

Substantial increase in cooperation

Since the formation of SAARC in 1985, the level of cooperation among the member countries increased substantially. SAARC was established with the objective of improving with other regions of the world during the recent years realizing and development SAARC members have now created a sense of accelerating regional economic development and they advocate

revival of the organization by declarations to practical implementation of the plans and policies to turn this weak region into a potentially developed one this recognition has led towards increasing the pace of cooperation among the member countries. This cooperation can be witnessed in the various programs and forums for mutual benefits.

- South Asian university, new Delhi
- Agreement on judicial cooperation on counter-terrorism
- Establishment of foot bank
- Establishment of development fund
- SAARC international college Bangladesh
- SAARC writes and literature foundation
- Telemedicine network
- South Asia foundation
- Some other related centers include
- South Asia co-operative environment programmer
- South Asia centre for policy studies
- South Asia women's centre

Economic and trade discussions -

For the success of SAARC economic and trade cooperation is very much important and indeed the first thing to be focused on for the development of south Asia. Many years of discussions have at least established the bases of cooperation in this particular area. During the 1990s, SAARC discussed the preferential trading area (SAARC) among the member countries which was materialized in the shape of free trade agreement which is now known as South Asian free trade area (SAFTA). According to this agreement, the tariff reduction plan was chalked out and since 2006, this reduction had been carried out in two phases i.e. Pakistan and India pledged to put tariffs on all the goods down to twenty percent within two years and all other countries to thirty percent within three years. While in the second phases, Pakistan and India decided to put the tariffs on goods initiatives taken to trade freely in the region has encountered a lot of problem but still we cannot ignore that the member countries are proceeding ahead with their plans to improve the regional growth and cooperation.

Regional Economic Integration

"Deeper Integration for Peace, Progress and Prosperity." The agreement on South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) has led to a scaling up of intra-regional exports to about US\$22 billion in 2013 from US\$ 10 billion in 2006, but experts say this is just the tip of the iceberg. The best is yet to come, and India is expected to proactively join efforts with other countries for actualizing the vision of a South Asia Economic Union. The economic union envisages greater trade liberalization, the development of cross-border trade infrastructure and the removal of non-tariff barriers, which is hindering the free movement of goods and services in the region. With the Modi government looking to make India a manufacturing powerhouse, Prime Minister Modi is expected to push for creating new cross-border production networks.

and joint manufacturing projects. India should also be pushing for proactive implementation of the SAARC agreement on services as the long-range goal of creating a seamless economic space in the region can only be achieved by free movement of not just goods, but through the liberalization of services and the free movement of professionals.

India's disputes and military rivalry with Pakistan is believed to be the cause of ineffectiveness of SAARC in integrating South Asian countries. If Indo-Pak relations improve, many SAARC nations could benefit from it by improved trade relations and creation of better export markets. SAARC has failed to work towards regional co-operation mainly because India has been reluctant to solve major regional disputes which have given rise to economic and problems in south Asia.

Since India has an unbeatable economic, military strength and international influence compared to all 7 members of SAARC the disparity of power brings in the reluctance from smaller states to work with India. They have fear of dominance from India if they co-operate in order to facilitate faster economic growth.

Conclusion

SAARC is the Regional intergovernmental organization and geopolitical union of nations in South Asia. Its member states include Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. India has been an active member of the SAARC and aims fostering better mutual understanding by supporting people-to-people initiatives. India offers a great source of potential investment in terms of trade and commerce as it is the sole SAARC member to be sharing borders with all 7 members via land or sea. All eight members of SAARC led by India can draw up a common plan to eliminate poverty from the region and make South Asia a global power.

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 9. *The SAARC's balance sheet of success is very limited to adoption of several conventions like SAARC regional convention on suppressions of terrorism, SAARC convention on narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances*
- There have also been breakthroughs in the form of agreements forming SAFTA and SAPTA, but their success at operational level is still expected.*
- SAARC totally exclude political issues from its summits, this is also one of its inherent weakness.*



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This is to certify that Dr./Mr./Mrs. Bharat L. Rathod of
Mamasahab Mohol College, Paud Road, Pune-38 has attended One-Day National

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