CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

World War II was a cataclysmic event. It was by far the most deadly and destructive war in human history. The war raged on for almost six years in Europe, beginning with Nazi Germany's attack on Poland in September 1939 and ending with the surrender of Germany to the allied powers led by the United States, the Soviet Union, and Great Britain on May 9, 1945. The war lasted even longer in Asia, where it began with the Japanese invasion of China in July 1937, and ended with Japan's capitulation to the Allies on August 14, 1945. World War II represented a new dimension in warfare. It was a total war. It was total in the sense that all of the great powers and most of the nations of the world were engaged in it.¹

The enormous consequences of World War II gave shape to the postwar world. These consequences were as follows :-

First, the end of the European age. Europe ceased to be the centre of international power. Secondly, the rise of the United States to superpower status. United States played a decisive role in the global war and assumed a leadership role in the international arena. Thirdly, the expansion of Soviet Union and its rise to superpower status. Despite its severe war damage and its dire economic condition, the Soviet Union was determined to extend its power, especially in Eastern Europe, and play a major role in world affairs.

Fourthly, the emergence of the cold war contention, mistrust and hostility between the two superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union, developed quickly and produced an ongoing, global, bipolar power struggle. Fifthly, the beginning of the nuclear age. Sixthly, the rise of nationalism and independence movements in Asia and Africa. Nationalists movements became strong enough to challenge the colonial order in Asia and Africa. Last but not the least was the renewed effort to secure lasting peace through international organization i.e. the United States.\(^2\)

The process of decolonization after the end of the World War II created a large number of state actors in world politics necessitating a re-definition of International relations. As soon as the war was over, the leading powers sought to divide the world into competing spheres of influence. There was an ideological divide between the two camps, one led by the United States of America and the other by the Soviet Union.\(^3\)

The two super powers played very important role in the world affairs after the World War II with the result that the world was divided into power blocs. This was further intensified by the super powers advocating their own ideologies. The USA has the support of western bloc comprising countries of Western Europe, North America and pacific and described themselves as “Free world”. The erstwhile Soviet Union, on the other hand was dominant in socialist bloc, which came into being as a result of the capture of powers by Communists countries in Eastern Europe and later in China and North Korea.

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\(^2\) Ibid., pp. 3-4.
The USA established her bases all over the world encircling USSR and China with the aim of fighting “communist aggression” USA signed NATO in 1949, SEATO in 1957, and CENTO in 1954. Communist countries signed Warsaw pact among themselves, to help each other from external threat. The Super powers created many regional organizations some of them were “propitious atmosphere and discreet guidance.”

On the other hand, many Afro-Asian countries which had come out from the clutches of colonial rule began a sort of movement as NAM or AAPSO. In such organization they rejected the ideas of military alliances and concentrated on socio-economic development and cooperation. They accepted cooperation because most of them faced tremendous difficulties in planning their development strategies because of number of potential problems like population explosion, lack of technology and unskilled manpower, low rate of growth, poor per capita income, galloping inflation, unfavourable, balance of trade. They realized that larger solidarity was needed in order to “improve their bargaining capacity at the negotiating table and “tackling the problems of economic development.” A basic element for this search was of self reliant. Solution and for this they needed cooperation among themselves.” They needed this cooperation for the defence of their raw materials and maintaining their political and economic sovereignty which was very fragile. These freshly liberated countries found the regional cooperation to be the

4 Ibid.
5 Mishra Pramod, South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, Vikas Publications, 1986.
7 Ibid.
most suitable strategy of development. They joined the organizations, but were afraid of parting with a slice of sovereignty and this is one of the most important drawbacks of regional organization.

The cold war continued with arms race and acquired new dimensions with the advancement in technology and weapons of mass destruction. This increasing economic interaction and growing interdependence among the Third World countries gave rise to problems which could not be resolved within the territorial limits of sovereign states.\(^8\) The third world countries since long have been the victims of the designs of the big powers to maintain their respective control over them. In the past, before their independence, the control was generally exercised through the maintenance of colonial system. After the liquidation of colonialism they were exploited by the big powers to comply with their respective Foreign Policy objectives and motives. After the British withdrawal in post World War II from political scene in different continents specially West Asia and South Africa. The vacuum was filled up by both superpowers. Eversince its existence in South Asia has been very dynamic and strategically significant for great powers.

**SOUTH ASIA AND GREAT POWERS**

South Asia was also divided into two directions during the cold war period. Regional politics in South Asia emerged primarily to support and sustain military alliances and to rebuild, coordinate and integrate market and economies of allies. The South Asian nations could not do more than to preoccupy themselves with quarrels and conflicts. Infact, the divisions and

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conflicts in South Asia were seen to serve the greater and better purpose in cold war politics.⁹

Tensions between India and its neighbours were exploit to serve extra-regional interests. The dominant strategic interests associated with the cold war did not allow any attempt to create regional groupings outside the cold war context to succeed. South Asia was eventually divided in the cold war rivalries. Thus regionalism could neither be imposed from the global hegemonic forces, nor could it be evolved through autonomous initiatives from within the South Asia regions.¹⁰

The erosion of cold war and universal realization among the third world countries for self help and collective help in pursuing the goals of economic progress and development impelled the countries of South Asia to forge a regional grouping despite their earlier misgivings and apprehensions.

1. THE UNITED KINGDOM

During the entire colonial period, South Asia was under the sphere of influence of Great Britain. It enjoyed the colonial system in this region and exploited economically, politically and emotionally. Although Great Britain still continues to be a major trading partner with the countries of South Asia, its capacity to provide substantial economic and military aid to this region is rather limited. Naturally its influence as an arbiter in regional disputes gradually eroded.¹¹

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⁹ Ibid. p. 47.
¹⁰ Ibid, p. 47.
Nevertheless in its later attempts Britain collaborated with United States to increase its presence in South Asia. Thus the objectives of Great Britain in South Asia were to safeguard its economic and commercial interests in its former colonies. Besides, its small presence in the area to the east of Suez is motivated to protect its huge investments in the Persian Gulf area.\textsuperscript{12}

2. SUPERPOWERS

Both the superpowers entered in South Asian arena to counter each other besides their respective interests.

(a) THE UNITED STATES

The U.S. objectives in South Asia are to be viewed in the context of its global objectives as increasing its military capability, strengthening the military alliance, countering the spread of communist movement and finally its detente with China.\textsuperscript{13}

The United States interests in South Asia are largely because of its location in the vicinity of two strategic regions of the world i.e., the Persian Gulf and Southeast Asia. Besides that the Indian Ocean is strategically not so important to USA as the pacific and the Atlantic Oceans, still the facts remains that because of its vicinity to the two strategic regional outpost i.e. The Persian Gulf and the Malacca Strait, it has shown an increasing interest in

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., p. 17.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., p.17, can also see Leo E.Rose, \textit{The Super Powers in South Asia A Geostrategic Analysis in Orbis} (Pennsylvania), Vol. 2, no.2, Summer 1978, p. 396.
this area.\textsuperscript{14} South Asia where a number of riparian and the hinterland states of the Indian Ocean are located, cannot be ignored by the US in its overall global strategy.

New Political developments in South Asia and the emergence of Bangladesh on the world map were the further reasons for the United States interest. It was shown some revaluation in the South Asian Policy of the United States. India, in spite of its occasional domestic crises has emerged as a major regional power in this part of the world and has been recognized by the major global powers as a “New Influential”.\textsuperscript{15}

U.S. was also interested in this region because of the nuclear powers developments by India and Pakistan. It has alerted the global powers. Infact, United States started putting economic and diplomatic pressure on Pakistan in order to discourage its nuclear programme President Carter had unsuccessfully tried to persuade India to be a party to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. United States cannot afford to be a disinterested observer with India and Pakistan as potential nuclear powers in this region. As has been rightly suggested by an American scholar, “While no vital US interests in the narrow sense are at stake in South Asia, a low-profile policy for this region could be seriously detrimental to a wide range of American goals and policies at the global level.”\textsuperscript{16}

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\item\textsuperscript{16} Ibid. p. 17, See also Rose, op.cit., p. 400.
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(b) THE SOVIET UNION

The South Asian region has been strategically and politically important to Russia because of its geopolitical compulsions after the liquidation of British colonialism. Thus as soon as the Stalinist policy of isolationism came to an end, the Soviet Union found itself directly involved in the intra-regional affairs of South Asia in the mid fifties. It could not always afford to remain a silent observer in any intra-regional dispute in this area. And this reached its high watermark in the Tashkent Declaration of 1966. This was in the context of its growing rivalry with the United States at the global level, and an ideological dispute with Communist China. Naturally such an interplay of global and regional factors brought the Soviet Union closer to India. The Soviets could not afford to ignore their basic interests in other nations of South Asia and sometimes provided them with sizable economic and technical aid. However, the Soviet Union never tilted the balance against India and clearly recognized its potentiality as a natural leader of the emergent Third world countries.\(^1\)

Another basic geo-strategic interest of the Soviet Union is that it being largely a land power, needs more and more outside channels not only for its national security but also to meet the growing demands of its expanding economy. So it urgently needs alternative channels and outlets to the Indian Ocean and through it to other prominent oceans.\(^2\)

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17 Ibid. p. 18.
18 Ibid., p. 18 See also Chopra, op.cit., p. 203.
Finally, the Soviet Union is in a position to provide large scale economic assistance and technical know-how to a number of projects undertaken by most of the South Asian countries. Even in terms of military hardware and strategic weapons, it is in position to provide substantial help. All these factors have increased the bargaining capacity of the Soviet Union in this part of the world.\(^{19}\)

3. CHINA

The Peoples’ Republic of China is the next major power which is directly involved in the intra-regional affairs in South Asia. In the initial phase i.e. till the mid fifties, the Chinese leadership was too cautious to take sides in any bilateral dispute in South Asia. But with the ideological dispute between the Soviet Union and China coming into the open and with New Delhi’s coming closer to Moscow, the Chinese decided to play largely a negative role in the subcontinent.\(^{20}\)

China not only fought a limited border war with India, but also decided to support the peripheral states of South Asia in their bilateral disputes with India. However, with the dismemberment of Pakistan and the wider recognition of India as a regional power, China restrained itself in taking sides in the bilateral disputes of the region. It has also given certain positive indications of resuming old ties with India.\(^{21}\)

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19 Ibid. p. 18
China being a peripheral power to the South Asian region was anxious to play a key role and tried to outmanoeuvre the Soviet Union. Soviet union was China’s major rival. Thus China in order to fulfill its objective had unhesitatingly collaborated with the United States. Besides this, there were three fundamental interests of China in the South Asian region.

China’s first vital interest was the security of its southern frontier. The Himalayan range which serves as the northern border of the South Asian states was equally important in any strategic calculation of China. Therefore, it maintained a ground force of five to six divisions, backed by a network of air bases in Tibet. In pursuance of its security interests, China had projected itself as a dependable ally of Pakistan and had already constructed on all weather road linking Sirkiang province with Gilgit in occupied Kashmir. It could be utilized for military purposes by China for the defence of its Southern frontier.  

China’s second basic interest was the search for an outlet to the outside world. By virtue of its growing hostility with the Soviet union, China wanted to widen its contact with other nations in its Eastern and Southern frontiers. Burma was treated as China’s window to the outside world during the World War II. Then in 1990’s China operated air services to Middle East and Europe over the territory of Pakistan. The all weather road between Pakistan and China made the Indian Ocean accessible to former. China’s effort to build a

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22 Ibid., p. 19, see also Dev Dutt in Dev Dutt (ed), The Himalayan Subcontinent (New Delhi 1972), preface pp. xx-xxi.
bridge of understanding with the states of the Persian Gulf through the good offices of Pakistan has been motivated to counter the Soviet presence.\textsuperscript{23}

Another aim of China was the quest for leadership in the developing world. As all the countries of South Asia belong to this category (developing countries), China liked to cultivate cordial ties with them. It had supported insurgent movement in India and Nepal. It had also inspired the Naxalite Movement in India. However its claim for leadership had lost its appeal because of its policy of duplicity. It did not favour the freedom fight of the people of Bangladesh and also suppressed the freedom and aspirations of the Tibetan people.\textsuperscript{24}

**The Salience of the Region**

The term South Asia is used for the countries lying south of Himalayas and Hindukush mountains and surrounded by the Indian ocean from three sides. The countries of this region include India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bhutan. Some writers include even Afghanistan and Maldives in this region. Apart from Afghanistan, Nepal and Bhutan the rest of the South Asian region has been subject to colonial rule. These countries gained independence in 1947; Pakistan came into existence as a result of partition of India in 1947; Sri Lanka got independence in 1948. Bangladesh emerged as an independent sovereign state after breaking away from Pakistan in 1971. Though the countries differ from each other with regard to climate,

\textsuperscript{23} V.P. Dutt, *Super Powers Interests in South Asia* in K. Subramaniam (ed.), *Self-Reliance and National Resilience*, New Delhi, 1975, p. 68.

race, religion and history they constitute a single region, and possess some common features. First, most of the countries are economically very poor and majority of their people live below poverty line. Secondly, religion and caste is a predominant factor in these states. In fact some of the states like Pakistan and Bangladesh were created on religious basis. Thirdly, these countries are faced with problems of unemployment, illiteracy, over population, malnutrition, diseases, etc. Fourthly, the countries are basically agricultural and industrially backward. All remain engaged in massive task of socio-economic transformation of their societies against heavy odds.  

The region is characterized by diversities among the nations in terms of size, power, governance, economic level, development, foreign policy, security perspective and nation building process etc. This area has been conspicuous for its high level of tensions.

**REGIONAL COOPERATION - THE KEY LINK**

In man’s search for peace, development and excellence, a regional cooperation is fast becoming a key link. Countries with different sizes, geographical features and natural resources, countries speaking different languages, countries with diverse religions plural societies and political systems, and countries at various levels of growth and development are finding ways of building up regional cooperation.

In order to banish war, remove inter-state tensions, improve living conditions and bring about peace and prosperity, regional cooperation has

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reached a new stage of development in the annals of human history. In the wake of the World War II and after the founding of the United Nations in 1945, a number of regional organizations have been established, such as the European Union, North American Free Trade Association (NAFTA), Latin America Free Trade Association (LAFTA) etc. As the World War II ended, the United Nations, representing the common aspirations of mankind, set for itself the following objectives:26

i) to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind.

ii) to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small;

iii) to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations rising from treaties and

iv) to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom.

Achievement of these lofty goals is not feasible without regional cooperation. Today more than 180 nations have joined the UN, adopting its charter and committing themselves to these objectives. They represent nearly five and a half billion people on earth. While the United Nations Organization with its various organs and agencies is making strenuous efforts to achieve

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these goals globally, it is obvious that between the world today and its individual member, an intermediately stage is required to promote these objectives. That need is fulfilled by regional organizations. For this the UN has provided articles related to the “regional arrangements” under chapter VIII of the U.N. Charter. Article 52, 53 and 54 of the UN Charter described about the regional arrangements.

Article 52

1. Nothing in the present Charter precludes the existence of regional arrangements or agencies for dealing with such matters relating to the maintenance of international peace and security as are appropriate for regional action, provided that such arrangements or agencies of their activities are consistent with the purpose and principles of the United Nations.

2. The members of the United Nations entering into such arrangements or constituting such agencies shall make very effort to achieve pacific settlements of local disputes through such regional agencies before referring them to Security Council.

3. The Security Council shall encourage the development of pacific settlement of local disputes through such regional arrangements or by such regional agencies either on the initiatives of the states concerned or by reference from the Security Council.

4. This article in no way impairs the application of Article 34 and 35.

Article 53

1. The Security Council shall, where appropriate, utilize such regional arrangements or agencies for enforcement action under its authority. But no enforcement action shall be taken under regional arrangements or by regional agencies without the authorization of the security Council, with the exception of measures against any enemy state, as defined in paragraph 2 of this Article, provided for pursuant to Article 107 or in regional arrangements directed against renewal of aggressive policy on the part of any such state, until such time as the organization may, on request of the Governments concerned, be charged with the responsibility for preventing further aggression by such a state.

2. The term enemy state as used in paragraph I of this Article applies to any state which during the World War II has been an enemy of any signatory of the present charter.

Article 54

The Security Council shall at all times be kept fully informed of activities undertaken or in contemplation under regional arrangements or by regional agencies for the maintenance of international peace and security.

Regional Cooperation was seen as an effective way of achieving peace, security and development in Europe after World War II. The end of the cold war, the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the rise of new economic powers

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28 Ibid.
29 Ibid.
in Europe and Asia, created conditions for more autonomous regional spheres to emerge. Though great powers will continue to influence regions of their interest, security related issues are increasingly seen as regional in scope. Therefore, the process of regional cooperation has assumed new significance today.\textsuperscript{30}

Regional cooperation has two important purposes which are political and economic. Politically, the purpose of regional cooperation is to develop a sense of common interest necessary to successfully thwart external intervention. It can create an atmosphere of goodwill and trust among regional states making war unlikely mechanism in future conflicts. Moreover, stability inside a region allows member states to concentrate more energy and resources on governance and developmental tasks. On the economic front, regional cooperation in matters of management and enlarging markets could lead to higher level of overall economic growth. A regional integrated arrangement provides better opportunities to collectively deal with environmental degradation or conservation.\textsuperscript{31}

**EARLIER REGIONAL INITIATIVES IN ASIA**

There were several attempts made by Asia for regional cooperation. It was as early as in 1920 that Gandhiji wrote of the growing solidarity of the Asian Countries. In 1922, C.R. Das, President of Indian National Congress urged India’s participation in an Asian federation which he regarded as inevitable.\textsuperscript{32} A resolution to this effect was adopted by the Congress in 1928.


\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., p. 1.

In 1945 Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru declared that the small states of the world would have no future and they were sure to be reduced to the status of satellite states. Therefore he advocated creation of South Asian Federation of India, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan and Burma.  

The Afro-Asian Conferences held before the emergence of SAARC were: Asian Relations Conference (1947), The New Delhi Conference on Indonesia (1949), The Baguio (Philippines) Conference (May 1950), The Colombo Powers Conference, (April 1954), The Bogor Conference (December 1954), The Afro-Asian Conference (*April 1955), Bandung (Indonesia); the Simla (India) Conference (May 1955), The Brioni Conference (July 1956); the New Delhi Conference (1961) and the Belgrade Conference (1961). Some of them are discuss below:

1. ASIAN RELATIONS CONFERENCE (1947)

This Conference was convened in New Delhi in March 1947. This conference was attended by 28 countries including the then Soviet – Asian Republics and Egypt. There were observers from the UNO, Arab League and several institutions from Sydney, London, Moscow and New York. Eight different subjects by five groups were discussed in the Conference.

i) National Movements for Freedom

ii) Racial problems and Inter-Asian Migrations

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33 J.S. Bright (ed) Before and after independence (collection of Nehru’s speeches 1922-50), New Delhi, 1950, p. 279

34 Suman Sharma, Op.cit., p. 36, Also see G.S. Pohekar India’s Relation with Asia and Africa.

iii) Transition from colonial to National Economy; Agricultural Reconstruction and Industrial Development; Labour Problems and social services.

iv) Cultural problems.

v) Status of women and women’s Movement.\textsuperscript{36}

The steering committee of the Conference took two important decisions – (1) one, that the Conference would not adopt resolutions but would merely accept a report embodying the consensus of opinions expressed in various discussion forums; and (2) two, that a sub-committee of fifteen persons be set up to consider the advisability of establishing a permanent institute.\textsuperscript{37}

The outcome of the Conference lacked clarity due to its decisions that there should be no resolutions. This conference never meet again and wound up in 1957.\textsuperscript{38}

**CONFERENCE ON INDONESIA (1949)**

The New Delhi Conference on Indonesia was convened by India in 1949. The Conference was attended by India, Afghanistan, Australia, Burma, Ceylon, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Pakistan, the Philippines, Saudi Arabia and Yemen, and observers from Kumitang China, Nepal, New Zealand and Thailand. They are condemned the Dutch aggression and called for the release of the arrested members of the Government of Indonesian

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid. p.33, Also see “Asian Relations”. Report of the Proceedings and Documentation of the First Asian Relations Conference, New Delhi, March –April 1947, Asian Relations Organisations, New Delhi, 1948, p. 3.


Republic, withdrawal of Dutch troops from the Capital Jog Jakarta and from Indonesia at large with a view to transfer power by January 1, 1950 to the United States of Indonesia.\textsuperscript{39}

**THE COLOMBO CONFERENCE\textsuperscript{40}**

The victory of communist movement in China in 1949 changed the political context of Asia. The cold war ambience with its impact on all regions of the world was taking a firm shape. India had declared its firm commitment to stay clear of East-West antagonism. The Colombo Conference was convened in 1954 to consider inter-alia the Indo-China situation. It could not contribute in any significant manner to regionalism in Asia except that it provided to be the starting point for the historic Afro-Asian Conference at Bandung. This conference was attended by countries like Sri Lanka, Burma, India, Indonesia and Pakistan. The main purpose was to discuss the Indo-China problem, Nuclear Bomb and Economic Cooperation.

**4. BANDUNG CONFERENCE**

The Bandung Conference was considered to be the high point of Afro-Asian attempt to develop common policies and approach to their problems. It was convened by the five Colombo Conference participants i.e. Burma, Ceylon, India, Indonesia and Pakistan in April 1955. The Conference was attended by 29 Asian and African nations included almost all nations which had gained freedom from colonial rule.


\textsuperscript{40} Suman Sharma, op.cit., p. 39.
Though Bandung Conference was the most important conference among the various Afro-Asian Conferences. But it was also failed to promote the cause of Afro-Asian regionalism. It was happened because some of the participants in the conference like the Philippines, Japan, South Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, Turkey, Pakistan, Ethiopia, and Libya were considered as friends of the U.S. These friends were expected to display a positive and constructive attitude at the Conference but resist any anti-American proposals. Thus the Bandung Conference had became a hot bed of cold war politics and a story of rivalry between India and China.41

THE COLOMBO PLAN

A Colombo plan for economic and technical cooperation was earlier launched in 1951 by Burma, Cambodia, Ceylon, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam (South), Malaya, Singapore and British Borneo. India once again convened a conference at Simla in May 1955 inviting all Colombo plan members. The response to Indian invitation was lukewarm – a very low level representation by most countries with Burma declining the invitation and Sri Lanka objecting to any multilateral arrangement. The Colombo plan on account of political and economic divergence in Asian countries and lack of outside support, could not become a vehicle for economic regeneration of Asia.42

41 Ibid. p 43
Above are some of the important efforts made by Afro-Asian countries. There were some other initiatives also, took by the Afro-Asian Countries. These can be better sum up in a following manner:

**REGIONAL COOPERATION AND SOUTH ASIA**

South Asian region is comprised of seven states viz. Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. The region constitutes roughly 3.3 percent of the world’s land surface, but accounts for 22.1 percent of its population. The states of South Asia are not only linked geographically, but also share a common history, religious traditions, and cultural values.  

The economies of the States of South Asia were by and large complementary in the colonial period. But with the down of Independence the complementarily has been reversed, because of political considerations and shortsighted policies pursued in these states.

The economies of the South Asian Countries had number of identical problems. For instance all the states face in varying degrees the challenges of low per capita income, poverty, malnutrition, and population explosion. The other aspects of economy under development like excessive dependence on agriculture, low labour productivity, unemployment, unfavourable terms of trade, lack of infrastructure, inequality of income, low levels of consumption, etc. Thus, the countries of South Asia exhibit all the classic symptoms of economic underdevelopment.  

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Besides, the South Asian Governments were unable to found any solutions to the serious problems of both poverty and unemployment. Similarly the alarming increase in the populations of the countries of South Asia threatens the economic well being of these countries. The unhelpful attitudes of the developed North, have provided sufficient grounds for the countries of South Asia to join hands in pushing the idea of regional cooperation.\textsuperscript{45}

Although South Asia has long been recognized as a distinct region in the world, marked not only by geographical contiguity, but also by socio-economic and cultural commonalities, it has been quite late in waking up to the need for regional cooperation.\textsuperscript{46} They were unaware of any type of cooperation till 1980. Their leaders have hardly made any systematic moves for cooperation among themselves on a regional basis during the first three decades after their independence from British colonialism. There were different reasons responsible for this. These were: \textsuperscript{47}

1. Firstly the South Asian region was plagued by serious differences among the states because of bilateral and multilateral issues.

2. Secondly, the narrow base of the ruling elites, in several South Asian states like Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Maldives and Bangladesh, a sort of artificial hostility towards India has been cultivated by some of them.

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid. p. 201.
\textsuperscript{46} Sinha, P. Rameshwar, \textit{Asia, Political Dimensions and Economic Challenge}, Kanishka Publishers, p. 5.
Similarly, the development strategies pursued by the rulers of South Asia have been at variance with one another.

3. Lastly, there are major differences in the security perceptions of the core-state (India) on the one hand and the States in periphery (like Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Maldives and Sri Lanka on the other.

Soviet Intervention in Afghanistan and South Asian Security Problem

The new cold war begins with the occupation of Afghanistan by the Soviet forces. The super powers conflict on the doorsteps of South Asia was realized significantly.48

The most blatant art and controversial involvement of the Soviet Union in the region of South Asia came in the last few days of 1979. It was in the shape of military involvement in Afghanistan to protect the communist and pre-Soviet regime of Tarakki. The consequences of this intervention had considerably affected the peace and cordiality of the relations between the South Asian states in general and India and Pakistan in particular. The involvement of the United States to counter the Soviet intervention and the status of frontline state assigned to Pakistan followed by the offer of enormous military build up of Pakistan caused severe tensions in the region. The ostensible overarming of Pakistan triggered an unending arms race between India and Pakistan.49

48  P.M. Mishra, op.cit., p. 17 see also S.N. Mishra, India – The Cold War Years, New Delhi 1994.

The Soviet intervention in Afghanistan received a widespread criticism in almost all the states of South Asia. China was the bitter critic of USSR’s involvement in Afghanistan. Pakistan also raised the alarm that it would be the next target of the Soviet attack, which appeared quite in line with the American perceptions. This, however provided an opportunity to Pakistanis to transform their country into a strong military power.\(^{50}\)

The Afghan crises raised the tensions in this region for over a decade. It has reached a transitional stage with the withdrawal of the Soviet troops in the late eighties. But the unalterable consequences of the Soviet action, the military build up of Pakistan remained in tact and continued to be a source of tension in the sub-continent. After a decade dramatic developments in international politics brought about the East-West détente and demise of the cold war. The South Asian regionalism during this period evolved into the reality of SAARC.

**SOUTH ASIA AND NEED OF REGIONAL COOPERATION**

The Countries of South Asia learnt a lesson from the Soviet-Afghan conflict and the need for regional cooperation arose in these countries. They realized the need of cooperation and made some progress in this direction. Infact a number of factors impelled the region to cooperate with each other.\(^{51}\)

- Firstly the growing rivalry between USA and Soviet Union and China encouraged the outside powers to intervene in the affairs of South Asia. USA was able to interfere in Pakistan because of its conflicts with India

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51 Prakash Chandra, op.cit., p. 187.
and Afghanistan. Similarly, the Soviet Union and China were able to interfere in the region due to conflicts between various countries. Subsequently, the countries of the region realized that they must cooperate with each other to prevent interference by outside powers.

- Secondly, the countries of the region are economically very backward and realized that they can improve their bargaining powers vis-à-vis the developed countries only if they attain self-reliance through mutual cooperation. This desire is reflected in their support to the New International Economic order.

- Thirdly, the ecological considerations also demand greater cooperation among the countries. The problem of soil salinity in Bangladesh caused by tidal waters flowing inland can be solved only if India agreed to augment the waters of the Ganges river system. Similarly, the problem of floods and soil erosion in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar is intricately connected with the problem of deforestation and harnessing of fast flowing rivers in Nepal.

- Finally, the presence of Naval forces of the European Powers in the Indian Ocean had also posed a threat to the freedom of the region.

Regional cooperation in developing states like South Asia does not necessarily aim at political and economic integration but rather at the effective functioning of an inter-governmental association with specific purposes. Regional cooperation essentially comes under the framework of collective self-reliance through economic, technical cooperation as well as indigenous
conflict management. Regional cooperation is an endeavour to attain a better position in an international system which continues to be inequitably structured. Regional cooperation can be either functional, stressing, social or cultural sectors, or be security oriented and address political and perhaps military issues or both.\textsuperscript{52}

Regional Cooperation among states is promoted by common factors which may be geographic, ethnic, linguistic, religious, civilization, politico-historical or socio-economic. The greater the interaction, the better are the chances of success of cooperative endeavours. The South Asian region certainly has above mention commonalities with minor variations.

**REGIONAL COOPERATION IN SOUTH ASIA AND THE GENESIS OF SAARC**

The South Asian countries with time and experiences realized the need of regional cooperation. They understood the importance of self reliance and mutual cooperation. They learnt a good lesson from their past experiences of cold war, super powers and their greedy games, Afghan conflict etc. In 1977, the idea of South Asian regional organization was floated by the then President of Bangladesh General Zia-ur-Rehman.

**ROLE OF BANGLADESH IN THE EMERGENCE OF SAARC**

Bangladesh played an important role in the emergence of SAARC. Infact the idea was first mooted by the President of Bangladesh Zia-ur-

Rahman. The process which culminated in the foundation of the South Asian Association for regional cooperation i.e. SAARC was began in May 1980.

The President of Bangladesh discussed the possibility to organize regional cooperation for the common good of the people of South Asia during his visits to Nepal, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka in late 70s and in 1980. He got an encouragement and positive response from South Asian capitals. After that the Ministry of Foreign affairs of the Government of Bangladesh formulated a proposal for regional cooperation in South Asia and circulated the proposal among the countries of the region in November 1980.

The process was underwent the two important phases before the emergence of SAARC. These were:

**Phases before the emergence of SAARC**

The first phase was from April 1981 to March 1983. It witnessed a series of meetings of the Foreign secretaries of all the seven South Asian countries respectively at Colombo, Kathmandu, Islamabad and Dhaka. These meetings resulted in the identification of nine areas of cooperation and the appointment of as many working groups to prepare plans for each area. The areas which were identified were Agriculture, Rural Development, Meteorology, Telecommunications, Science and Technology, Health and population control, Transport, Postal Services, Sports and Arts and Culture.

These meetings were also significant and proved to be catalysts to pursue the path of regional cooperation. At the same time they formulated the

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principles and guidelines which were to shape the future growth of regional cooperation. Thus the very first meeting held in April 1981, in Colombo underlined the historic significance of that meeting and declared that it was a manifestation of the will of the seven countries to cooperate regionally. The Foreign Secretaries also affirmed that regional cooperation in South Asia was beneficial, desirable and necessary. They also stressed that such cooperation should be based on and in turn contribute to mutual trust, understanding and sympathetic appreciation of the national aspirations of the countries of the region. It was also emphasized that such co-operation required respect for the principles of sovereign equality, territorial integrity, political independence, non-interference in internal affairs of other states and mutual benefit.\textsuperscript{55}

The first meeting at the level of Foreign Ministers was held in New Delhi in August 1983. The deliberations of this meeting showed that all the seven South Asian countries were now more deeply committed than even before to the goal of regional cooperation. The meeting resulted in the adaptation of a Declaration on South Asian Regional Cooperation (SARC). It affirmed the collective resolution of the seven South Asian Governments to actively pursue such co-operation and setting out its objectives, principles and institutional and financial arrangements. It also decided to launch or integrated programme of action in the nine areas already selected for regional cooperation.\textsuperscript{56}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
  \item 55 Ibid. p. 2.
  \item 56 Ibid., p. 3.
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The final stage in the formation of SAARC was reached when the Heads of States/Governments of all the seven South Asian Countries met at Dhaka on Dec. 7-8 1985 and decided to set up the organization. The Charter for this organization was adopted at that meeting. The objectives of the regional cooperation which plans were to set out in the New Delhi Declaration of 1983 were accepted word by word by all the participant countries. The objectives were as follows.  

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a. to promote the welfare of the peoples of South Asia and to improve their quality of life.

b. 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 potentials;

c. To promote and strengthen collective self-reliance among the countries of South Asia.

d. To contribute to mutual trust, understanding, and appreciation of one another’s problems.

e. To promote active collaboration and mutual assistance in the economic social, cultural, technical and scientific fields.

f. To strengthen cooperation among themselves in international forms on matters of common interest; and

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57 Ibid., p. 3.
g. To cooperate with international and regional organizations with similar aims and purposes.

This can be said that South Asian countries tried their best for form a regional organization despite being plagued by inter-state conflicts and many other internal problems. The emergence of SAARC is manifestation of long desire of billions of people for the welfare and development of the region. And the organization has been doing well in this direction.