Chapter 4

Geo-political Relationship between the member States at the time of the Establishment.

From time immemorial Indian Sub-continent is treated as one Geo-Political existence or entity. Afghanistan and Mayanmar were not included in the South Asian Region even though they are the part and parcel of this region by geography but political turmoil in these two states forced other seven states of this region to keep them away from regional organisation of Indian sub-continent i.e. termed as South Asia in the world politics, is now treated as a geo-politically one region. India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Maldives island are the Seven States which constitute this region. India is a centrally situated State and other six states are on its periphery. India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan have some traditional, cultural and historical background, they are bound together with each other through atmospheric oneness and interwoven with natural boundaries of Himalaya and Indian ocean.

Sindhu river, on whose banks Sindhu culture evolved is a great link between India and Pakistan; Bramhaputra is that river which passes through India and Bangladesh, the civilization on the Banks of Padma i.e. Bramhaputra and Ganga relates India closely with Bangladesh on cultural and linguistical level i.e. Bengali as a language of commoner as well as literature too in Bangladesh and the province of the west Bengal of India. Gandak is that river which brings geopolitical, cultural and religious harmony in between Nepal and India. There is no difference between citizen of Nepal and citizen of India who are territorially called “Gorakhas”. They have same body-feature same-language, same-tradition etc. Bhutan is as good as Nagaland. Arunachal,
Mizoram and Tripura having distinct tribe life in the secluded place of Himalaya under the protection of Indian Government.

From Centuries Ceylon is closely linked with Indian history. The state religion of Sri Lanka is Buddhism. Buddhism establishes the affinity between these two States. The Maldives Islands are surrounded by the tiny Islands of India in the Indian Ocean. The atmospheric conditions, life, religion and language are similar in the Indian ocean Islands. and this fact establishes that both India and Maldives are having same heritage and atmospheric conditions since, centuries.

1) Geo - political situation of the areas covered by SAARC:

South Asia region is spread within Himalaya and the Indian Ocean. Bhutan, Nepal, North and North eastern part of India is in the Himalaya Plateau. Pakistan is pre-dominantly in the plain of the Indus and the ranges of the Hindukush mountain. Bangladesh is in the plain of Gangas and Padma. Maldives and Sri Lanka are the Island states in the Indian Ocean. India as geographical region of Shivalik ranges, Thai desert, Himalayan ranges, Gangatic plain, North - Eastern plateau and the Deccan plateau with Eastern and Western ghats. All the atmospheric variation is found in the Indian Sub-Continent. India being centrally situated state has the atmospheric conditions of the six SAARC States on it’s periphery for example ,the Punjab the plain of five rivers of Punjab is common to India and Pakistan; Satlaj, Ravi, Chinab, Zelam and Sindhu are held in great esteem by the people of India as well as Pakistan. The civilization which evolved on the banks of Sindhu is common to India and Pakistan by culture of Mohanjodaro and Harappa. Nepal, Bhutan are in the Himalayan ranges along with the northern part of Uttarpradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Arunachal, Assam and Nagaland. Sri Lanka adopted Buddhism from India. Since
centuries Tamilians resided along with Sinhalies in Sri Lanka. They have common heritage, common culture and civilization and dedication to their mother Land. Maldives have Islam as their religion and they are closely associated with the Moplas of Kerala in religion, culture and tradition. Therefore all these six peripheral States of the SAARC have the common bonds with India and therefore they constitute a homogeneous geopolitical entity with India.

SAARC covers 45,903,000 Sq km of area in Asia. Out of this total area India has total sq.km. area of 32,880,000. If this sq.km. area of India is deleted from the SAARC, then remaining Six States have the area of 13,023,000 sq.km. If this is comparatively studied India covers 72% area of the SAARC and therefore India is dominant in geo-politics of the SAARC.

If the governmental study of states of the SAARC region is made and studied comparatively with India; India dominates all other states because it is a secular state and within it's secularism Islam, Sikkism, Jainism, Buddhism and Christianity prospered along with Hinduism. Thus the importance of Pakistan, Bangladesh and Maldives as Muslim States, Nepal as a Hindu State and Sri Lanka as a Buddhist State is nullified by the universal characteristic of India. In the democratic mechanism of the state also India is regarded as the largest democracy and strategical situated potential super power of the world whereas Pakistan is used as balancing power to India's might by the U.S.A. and China in world politics. But India's size, population, raw material, resources, scientific, technological, industrial strength, skilled manpower, infrastructure etc. is outstanding in Asia. Comparatively Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal are Categorised as moderate States. Bhutan and Maldives are treated as negligible states in the world politics. This being the situation of six neighboring
states of India in SAARC, India Stands out as a sun around which planets in the form of six neighbouring states are rotating in the solar system.

II) SAARC Member states on the Main Land of Asia:

Geo-politically SAARC member states are classified into the following two categories,

i) Member states of mainland of Asia and

ii) Member states which are not located on the mainland of Asia.

India, Pakistan, Bhutan, Nepal and Bangladesh are five states from Indian sub-continent. Their position in the Indian sub-continent, in the South Asia and the world has decided their geo-political and strategic importance.

a) India:

India has land area of 32,880,000 sq.km. India is centre of the South Asia. India is spread in between latitude 8° 04’ n, to 47° 18’ N longitude, - 68° 07’ E to 97° 24’ E. India square km. area India ranks 7th in the world. India has long land border and sea coasts. India has and 1280 Islands in the Indian Ocean and therefore it covers large area in the Indian Ocean; thereby making it a major share holder of the raw material which is available on the seabed of Indian Ocean. The location of India in Asia as well as in Indian Ocean has given it a upper hand in relation to geo-political and militarily strategic advantage over the neighbours and other states in Asia.
China on northern land border and Pakistan on north-western border are nuclear states. In the Indian Ocean Diego Garcia is an American naval base having nuclear driven naval power i.e. torpedoes, cruisers, submarines, anti-submarines; air craft carriers, frigates etc. India was geopolitically secured on northern border with Himalayas and Southern border with Indian Ocean; is now no more safe on both these frontiers even though it is accepted as super power of Asia. It was not combatant enough to match Chinese and Pakistani arsenals at a time and therefore India chose to be nuclear state and consequently today India is nuclear power with varieties of bombs.

b) Pakistan:

Pakistan is located in South Asia between Latitude 36° 55' N to 23° 41' N Longitude - 75° 23' E to 60° 52'E1. It is having Iran on it's western border, Afghanistan on its north-western border, and India on its eastern border. It has Arabian sea coast line on South. It has 804000 sq. km of land area. The strategic location of Pakistan has given it prominence in western military thinking and therefore it was associated with many western military pacts. U.S.'s and Chinese efforts to make Pakistan as a balancer to Indian might in Asia, has failed but Pakistan is trying to match Indian might in all the sphere, it still depends upon Western and Chinese help. This dependency of Pakistan on foreign states has made its strategic position vulnerable and pitiable.

c) Bhutan:

Bhutan is a kingdom located in Himalaya. It is spread in between latitude 26° 45' N to 28°N, Longitude - 89° E to 92° E2. It's land area is 47,000 sq. kms.

1. Op-Cit, P.P. 159
2. Ibid, P.P. 225
Bhutan is predominantly ruled by King and Thimpu is its capital. On northern side of Bhutan is China and on remaining three sides its neighbour is India. Bhutan is closely related with India for its security from foreign invasion. Bhutan is independent, but guided by the advice of India in its external relation. India has assured Bhutan for its security, sovereignty and therefore it is strategically and geopolitically dependent on India. Being land Locked Bhutan is also dependant on India for its trade, transportation and communication. Being educationally backward it depends upon India for services in the field of education, health, medicine, communication etc.

d) Nepal:

Nepal is a land-locked country located along the southern slopes of the Himalaya. It is spread over the 140,000 sq.kms of land area. It has the world’s highest mount i.e. Mount Everest. Nepal’s climate varies greatly according to altitude. It is located in between latitude 26° 21’ N to 30° 8’ N. Longitudes 80° 04’ E to 88° 13’ E°. Nepal is sandwiched between two super powers of Asia i.e. on its northern border People’s Republic of China and on its southern border Republic of India are located. Therefore the position of Nepal in world politics is that of an unofficial Buffer state. It has defence treaty with India and is dependent on India for utilising land, sea and air routes and commercial facilities for its imports and exports.

Nepal is more important for SAARC because Head Quarter of SAARC is located in Kathmandu, near the palace of the King of Nepal but geopolitically and Strategically it is one of the most neglected State in the Asian and world politics.

1. Ed. Grover Verinder: India’s Neighbours and Foreign Policy, P.P. 187
2. Ed. Board: Lands and Peoples, P.P. 221
e) Bangladesh:

Bangladesh is one of the youngest nation of the world and stands out as world's eighth largest Country in population. It is spread in between the latitude 26° 38' N to 20° 46' N. Longitude 92° 41' E to 88° 02' E'. Bay of Bengal is on the South side, on South eastern border Myanmar is located and its remaining land border is with Indian land border. Bangladesh is a region of Gangas and Bramhaputra plateau. It is culturally and traditionally linked with Bengali sub-culture of Indian culture. Bangladesh is the lead nation in the establishment of SAARC and therefore it is one of the most important state of SAARC as well as of the South Asian region. Geo-politically it is located in Sundarban and Gharo hills and is a cyclone prone area and therefore, it is treated as a ill fated nation. Strategically and geo-politically it has no importance and therefore it is neglected by the developed powers of the world.

iii) SAARC Member States outside the main land of Asia:

Sri Lanka and Maldives are the two SAARC Member States which are not located on the main land of Asia. They are located in the Indian Ocean but are included in Asian States for all purposes of the South Asian region and as such they are member states of the SAARC. The contribution of this two states varies from each other. Sri Lanka is treated as a moderate power not only in SAARC but also in world politics where as Maldives is a state made of Atolls and is treated as a negligible power through out the world. Therefore their geo-political study differs from each other.

a) Sri Lanka:

Sri Lanka which is member state of SAARC is located in the Indian Ocean and it is separated from India by a narrow stretch of water called Palk Strait. The distance between India and Sri Lanka is nearly 23 km of hollistic sea.

Sri Lanka is situated between latitude 5° 55' N to 9° 50' N. Longitude- 79° 42' E to 81° 53' E. The land area of Sri Lanka is 65,000 sq.kms. Geopolitically its position is not as important as other Island in the Indian Ocean. But its location at the bottom of India and on the sea route between West Asia and South East Asia has given it the importance of a main harbor for oil refilling, water and food storage and servicing for the ships travelling on this route. Further more the products of Sri Lanka depleted in world market, since, LTTE movement came into existence. The Civil war between the Government of Sri Lanka and LTTE has deteriorated the Sri Lankan reputation in the affairs of SAARC, NAM and Asian politics.

b) Maldives:

Maldives is one of the least known member state of SAARC in world politics due to its isolation policy and small size. Maldives is located in the central Indian Ocean and 700 Km westward of Sri Lanka and an almost equal distance from the southern coast line of India. Maldives is spread 2002 Atolls and its Head Quarter is at Male. It is located in the Indian Ocean in between latitude 7°6' N to 0° 42' S. Longitude 72°31' to 73°44' E. Maldives became independent in 1965 from British protectorate.
State. In 1968 Maldives citizens have constituted new constitution and converted the Sultanate of Maldives into Republic of Maldives. In 1968 elected President become the Head of the State. Majalis, Legislature Organ having members elected for the term of five years. Till recent times Sri Lanka was traditional gateway of Maldives to the world. Maldives had permanent mission only in Sri Lanka upto 1965.

On the south of Maldives the island of Diego Garcia is located. Diego Garcia is militarily strongest base in the Indian Ocean, just besides the weakest military base in the Indian Ocean i.e. Maldives Atolls. The vulnerability of Maldives' land was disclosed when Government of India was requested to interfere to oust the rebels to save the Government of Abdul Gayoom and thereby save the Republic of Maldives. This incidence has made it clear that geo-politically Maldives island is neglected by the community of the States of the world and is only respected as equal partner by the SAARC members, therefore it is actively participating in all the deliberations of the SAARC. SAARC is a platform which has increased importance and gave identity to Maldives in the community of States and is known today through out the world as one of the member state of the SAARC.

iv) Traditional relationship among the member states:

The SAARC brought Seven States together, leaving aside Maldives other Six States had traditional relationship among themselves. India is being the core of these states; Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka had traditional relationship with India. Indian Sub-continent known as Hindustan, is also referred in ancient scriptures as Aryawart. At the time of its Aryawart period Sri Lanka was culturally, religiously and traditionally related with it, even though there were several independent Kings ruling their own Kingdoms. Individually Buddhism, Jainism, Sikkism,
Zionism, Islam and to some extent Christianity was also practiced by the Indian society with tolerance. There were great emperors who founded their empire and ruled most part of Indian subcontinent. The battles of Ramayanas and Mahabharat along with the references of kingdom in Puranas, Jatak Katha, Panchatantra etc. are the proofs that since ancient time even though there were different type of Governments ruling different portion of Indian sub-continent but these kings were related to each other by blood, civilization and culture.

Chandra Gupta, Samudra Gupta, King Ashoka etc. studied as the founders and rulers of empires in Indian sub-continent and thereby proving that the religion and the language were no barriers for unifying the Indian society. British rulers after establishing their colony in India spread British colonial rule to the most part of the Indian Sub-continent. The princely States which existed till the independence of India were also under British dominance and as such through British rule and influence today's India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and Sri Lanka were closely knit with each other.

The independence movement in Asia and the work of the Indian National Congress along with the revolutionaries and the various fact lead British parliament to pass the Indian Independence Act, 1947. This act brought into existence India and Pakistan. East Bengal of Pakistan was created as an independent, sovereign Bangladesh in 1971. Sri Lanka, then Ceylon, became an independent state and sovereign state on Feb. 1948 from British colonial rule. Sri Lanka became Buddhist State, Pakistan and Bangladesh became Muslim States, Nepal remained Hindu State. Hinduism and Buddhism is equally practiced in Bhutan.

1. Parmanand: Political Development in South Asia, P.P. 14
Maldives remained isolated and unknown State till 16th century. Maldives had traditional link with Sri Lanka and even today it is dependent upon Sri Lanka for its education system and especially for seeking higher education to their citizens. The tribesmen of middle east Islamic Countries converted total population of Maldives into Islamic religion; for faith and belief Maldivians were and are aligned to Mecca and Madina.

Pakistan and Bangladesh were the part of one Nation till Bangladesh acquired independence. Bhutan being the Himalayan Kingdom had links only with India and Nepal. The policy of Bhutan was to link itself to India has secluded it from other member States of SAARC. Even though Bhutan is a member of the united Nations as well as NAM and supported Nepal and India in their cause in international relations. Bhutan did not take active part in the meetings of the UN and the NAM.

After independence Pakistan tried to be the leader of the Islamic world. It kept itself away from India, Nepal and Bhutan but tried to establish cordial relationship with.

Sri-Lanka was active partner along with India in NAM. Sri Lanka kept good relationship with India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Maldives.

v) Member States alienation in the world politics:

India is pre-dominantly active State in the world politics in comparison to other Six Members of the SAARC; therefore, India's participation in world politics acquires more weightage and importance in comparison to other Six Members of the SAARC.
In the age of bi-polarity India kept away from military pacts and followed the path of non-alignment thereby side tracking the U.S.A.’s and the U.S.S.R.’s influence. By making use of NAM India established third bloc in world politics. Besides forming third bloc India created Indo-Arab Bloc, Indo Africa Bloc and made use of them to influence world politics to achieve certain decided aims and objectives. Even at the time of war i.e. 1962, 1965 and 1971; India did not align with the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. The independent characteristic of India in the community of Nations has created the influence zone of India in world politics.

Pakistan tried to follow independent course but could not withstand the strain and stresses of bi-polarity and became active member of the capitalist bloc. It is the only member state of the SAARC which was active member of the military pact i.e. CEANTO. Pakistan also tried to lead Organization of Islamic States and wanted to produced ‘Islamic Bomb’ for the security of the Islamic States of the world. The association of Pakistan with CENTO and Organizatio of Islamic States did not fulfill the ambition to be par with India and therefore Pakistan joined SAARC to contradict the benefits of India or nullify the advantage of India which India might have gained by being a prominent member of SAARC.

Nepal and Bhutan being the Himalayan Kingdoms remained isolated from the world politics due to its geographical location and atmospheric conditions. Traditionally they were secured by natural barriers but the advancement in science and technology has created problems for their security. Both these States have protected treaty with India. They are the members of United Nations and Non-alignment Movement (NAM), but their participation in these world organizations are negligible.
After attaining independence, Bangladesh expressed its gratitude toward India for the help rendered in acquiring independence. Bangladesh was established as a secular state but after the murder of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman it turned into an Islamic State. Bangladesh acquired membership of the Islamic Organization. It became a member of the United Nations. Its contribution in the formation of SAARC is immense because it wanted to be at par with India.

Sri Lanka attained independence in 1948 and immediately became active in the Common-Wealth of Nations as an influential state along with India and Pakistan. Smt. Bhandarnayake of Sri Lanka became one of the leaders of NAM to establish cordial relationships among the members of the Non-aligned bloc. Colombo plan is an unique example of the involvement of Sri Lanka in world politics. Sri Lanka wanted to be active in South Asian politics therefore it willingly joined SAARC.

Maldives became independent in 1965 from British protectorate. Prior to it Maldives had relationships with Holland, Portuguese, England, Sri Lanka and some of the Islamic States of the middle East. Maldives became a member of the United Nations and through UN's it established relationships with many democratic states of the world, including the United States Of America and India. Maldives was never a member of any bloc in world politics and therefore the opportunity to be a member of SAARC was utilized immediately.

vi) Guidelines for the establishment of the new relations as per the SAARC Charter:

In the First Summit meeting of the SAARC the Heads of State or Government of the member States unanimously decided the guidelines for the
establishment of the new relations among themselves and embodied these guidelines in
the Charter of the SAARC. These guidelines are serially given in the Charter, in
following order -

1. **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 other States and peaceful settlement of all disputes;

2. **Conscious** that in an increasingly interdependent world, the objectives of peace,
freedom, social justice and economic prosperity are best achieved in the SOUTH
ASIAN region by fostering mutual understanding, good neighbourly relations and
meaningful cooperation among the Member States which are bound by ties of
history and culture;

3. **Aware** of the common problems, interests and aspirations of the people of
SOUTH ASIA and the need for joint action and enhanced cooperation within their
respective political and economic systems and cultural traditions;

4. **Convinced** that regional cooperation among the countries of SOUTH ASIA is
mutually beneficial, desirable and necessary for promoting the welfare and
improving the quality of life in the peoples of the region;

5. **Convinced** further that economic, social and technical cooperation among the
countries of SOUTH ASIA would contribute significantly to national and collective
self reliance;
6. Recognizing that increased cooperation, contacts and exchanges among the countries of the region will contribute to the promotion of friendship and understanding among their peoples;

7. Recalling the DECLARATION signed by their Foreign Ministers in NEW DELHI on August 2, 1983 and noting the progress achieved in regional cooperation.

8. Reaffirming their determination to promote such cooperation within an institutional framework;¹

Above guidelines were used to construct a format in which new relationship of seven member states of the SAARC was materialized. The official study of these guidelines by the respective states was made to determine its role in establishing and conducting the new relationship among member states of the SAARC. Guidelines gave equal status and equal opportunity to every member state to contribute in establishing new relationship for the betterment of the citizen of all the member states. In short, these guidelines were made primarily to minimise the sorrows and induct happiness through cooperation among Governments and citizen of the member states.

¹ CHARTER OF SAARC: CHARTER of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, P.P. 1, 2 & 3