INTRODUCTION

Regionalism has come to be a major area of study and research in International Relations in the post-war period. The term 'region' has never been clearly defined. In common parlance, it implies an area which is smaller than the size of an average state but in the realm of International Relations it has two different meanings. In the first place, a 'region' simply indicates an area embracing the territories of a number of states which, in turn, are unified by the ties of common interests as well as geography. Secondly, the term 'region' may be defined as areas where geographically dispersed nations form an association for the realisation of their common interests. Invariably related to the term 'regionalism' is the concept of regional integration. Integration is normally defined as a process whereby several fragmented parts form a unified whole and generate a feeling of interdependence among the comprising parts. Hence, regional integration is a process of cooperation among the nation-states of a particular geographical region of the international system, which culminates in the rise of a new unified system. This creates strong cohesiveness among people in the new integrated system. It involves mutual ties along with a sense of group identity and self-awareness. This should not make us believe that the process of regional integration is totally devoid of conflict. The fact is that cooperation prevails over conflict.

There are two different levels of integration, one is national and is concerned with the process of integration within a single country. The other is regional and can be applied to the growth of integration between two or more individual countries. "Regional integration means the process of joining together of the structural elements, process elements and parameters of two or more regional nation-states in such a way that, after an indefinite period of time, they function as one new system". 1

The classical school of functionalism, propounded by David Mitrany, treated integration as a multidimensional process, and insisted on separating the developmental and welfare-oriented dimensions of integration from its power political dimension and by proposing the priority of the former.\(^2\) It was Ernst Haas, a leading neo-functionalist scholar, who criticised the functionalist perspective and revived the unifocal Realist concern with the politics of control even in the analysis of integration.\(^3\) According to Haas, integration is a purely political process "whereby political actors in several distinct national settings are persuaded to shift their loyalties, expectation and political activities towards a new centre, whose institutions possess or demand jurisdiction over the pre-existing national states".\(^4\) Following Haas, Karl Deutsch defined regional integration as the creation of a "political community"\(^5\), while Amitai Etzioni viewed it as "political unification"\(^6\), and Joseph Nye also viewed it as a primarily political process. Haas however, revised his position and stated that integration was in fact too complex a phenomenon to theorize about and instead pleaded for the replacement of the model of regional integration by that of interdependence.\(^7\)

It is argued that integration and interdependence are not the same, i.e., to say, there are structural differences between the two. But the two are closely related. As one scholar argues that "interdependence may be a necessary pre-condition for the beginning of the process of integration, but it is not a

\(^4\) Ernst Haas, *The Uniting of Europe*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1958, p. 16.
\(^7\) Ernst B. Haas, *The Obsolescence of Regional Integration Theory*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1975. For details of the concept of regional integration and other related issues, see Jayantanuja Bandopadhyaya, n. 1, Chapter 7.
sufficient condition of integration, which means a structural convergence leading to a structural linkage between the integrating units”. 8

Despite the development of the theories of ‘interdependence’ and ‘regimes’ the integration theory has not lost all its usefulness. Rather, the recent theories, referred to above, should be regarded as complementary approaches to study the problem of regional integration.

Regionalism in South Asia started quite late in comparison to Europe and other parts of the world. Although India played a pioneering role in sowing the seed of regional cooperation among the South Asian countries by making a vigorous attempt to promote Asian unity at the Asian Relations Conference held in New Delhi in March – April 1947, the idea of regional cooperation was given a definite and concrete shape only in the 1980s. In South Asia, the quest for regional cooperation began with the initiative taken by the late President of Bangladesh, Zia-ur-Rahman. In course of his visits to different South Asian countries, namely, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, he advocated the need for regional cooperation and discussed with the regional leaders, the possibility of forming a regional organisation. In May 1980, in his letter addressed to each of the six South Asian Heads of State or Government, he explained the need to come together and form some kind of association for the mutual benefit of the countries of the region. Following Zia-ur-Rahman’s initiative, a comprehensive paper focusing on the rationale, feasibility, areas and mode of forging regional cooperation was prepared and circulated by the Government of Bangladesh. The circulation of Bangladesh Working Paper (BWP) was followed by a series of meetings at the level of Foreign Secretaries and Foreign Ministers. At the Foreign Ministerial meeting held in Thimpu in May 1985, a decision was taken regarding the summit meeting to be held in Dhaka. In accordance with the decision taken at Thimpu, the first

8. See Jayantanuja Bandopadhyaya, n.l., p. 188.
ever regional summit of the Heads of Governments of the seven SAARC countries was held in Dhaka in December 1985. At this summit, a new regional organisation, namely, SAARC was born. SAARC is the first regional organisation in South Asia.

Against this background I have identified the problems that SAARC faces and explored the future prospects of SAARC. I have examined the relations between the SAARC members like India and Pakistan with the respective big powers and studied the impact of these extra-regional powers on the policies of the countries like India and Pakistan. Thus, SAARC here has been viewed as a system, where its subsystems i.e., different member countries, respond to the stimuli coming from the external environment.

Although the period of my dissertation spans from 1980-88, the developments emerging from the SAARC summits of the nineties and also the early years of the twenty-first century have been integrated to my dissertation. I have added a new chapter in this regard. As a result, I have explored the problems and prospects of SAARC not only during the eighties but till the twentieth century.

This dissertation is based on an examination of the following hypotheses:

1) SAARC has failed in realising its objectives. In other words, SAARC has not succeeded in promoting the welfare of the people of South Asia and in improving their standard of living.

2) The Great Power relations of the eighties produced deep impact on the behaviour of SAARC members and the final performance of SAARC as a whole.

3) Hostile relations between India and Pakistan and unfriendly relations among the different SAARC members on some issues have adversely affected the healthy growth of SAARC.
4) Lack of any common external threat has influenced the final outcome of SAARC.

All these hypotheses have been tested and verified by me in this dissertation.

The dissertation can be split up into seven chapters. In my first chapter, *Regionalism in South Asia: Origin and Development*, I have studied the origin and evolution of the idea of regional cooperation. Also, the crucial role played by Zia-ur-Rahman and the entire preparatory stage leading to the formation of SAARC have been dealt with in this chapter. My second chapter, *From SARC to SAARC: The Dhaka Summit*, explores the nature and characteristics of SAARC as a regional organisation and the objectives, principles and institutional framework of SAARC as enshrined in the Charter. The next three chapters, i.e., the third, fourth and fifth chapter, deal with the *Bangalore, Kathmandu and Islamabad* summits and their declarations respectively. The name of the seventh chapter is *SAARC Summits in the Nineties*. As the name suggests, this chapter is concerned with the latest developments in SAARC. Here I have discussed the summits very briefly. This chapter has been added to make my work relevant and up-to-date. The seventh chapter – *Problems and Prospects of SAARC* – forms the essence of my dissertation. Here I have analysed the various problems faced by SAARC, since its inception and the future prospects of SAARC.

In the chapter on *Conclusion*, I have summed up the findings of my research regarding the problems faced by SAARC and the viability of the organisation.

In writing this dissertation, I have principally relied on primary sources which have been collected from the SAARC Secretariat Library at Kathmandu, where I spent a few months. Moreover, I have collected various other primary sources from different libraries and research centres stationed at Delhi and Calcutta.