CHAPTER – II

FROM SARC TO SAARC
THE DHAKA SUMMIT

South Asian Regional Cooperation (SARC) being the brain child of the late President of Bangladesh, Zia-ur-Rahman, it was quite obvious that Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh, would be the most appropriate venue of the first ever summit of the seven South Asian nations. The Dhaka summit held on 7–8 December 1985, was hailed as an epoch-making event in the history of South Asian politics since it was for the first time that the leaders of the seven countries of the sub-continent committed themselves to work together towards collective self-reliance in a spirit of friendship, trust and mutual understanding. In other words, the historic significance of the summit stemmed from the fact that it was the maiden attempt at giving shape to an idea that had appeared quite feasible given the willingness and consensus of the participants. Indeed, there is not an iota of doubt that the summit conference had “ushered in a new era of cooperation among the South Asian countries.”

The Beginning

An adequately long period involving meetings and deliberations among the member-states, both official as well as unofficial, at different stages preceded the Dhaka summit. Prior to the holding of the historic summit meeting in Dhaka, the Foreign Secretaries as well as the Foreign Ministers of the South

1. See the speech by India’s External Affairs Minister, Bali Ram Bhagat, in both Houses of India’s Parliament on 9 – 10 December 1985 in A New Impetus and Fresh Direction. South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, the External Publicity Division, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, New Delhi, February 1986, p. 16.

Asian countries had met at a full-fledged preparatory meeting.

The Foreign Secretaries, in their informal meeting held on 3 December, decided to make suggestion to the Heads of Government that in order to discharge its functions smoothly, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) must have a permanent Secretariat. 3 India proposed that the scope of the functioning of SAARC should be widened by incorporating the fields of energy and joint tourism plans for the region within the agenda of the SAARC activities. 4 These points were highlighted by the Indian Foreign Secretary, Romesh Bhandari, in his speech at the SAARC Standing Committee of Foreign Secretaries of the seven-nation regional forum. He also conveyed his desire to the Committee that India was very eager to set up a meteorological Centre for SAARC. In this context, he also mentioned that in order to realise this end, India had presented a super computer and a rent-free house where all facilities for the smooth sailing of the centre would be available. 5

On 4 December 1985, the SAARC Standing Committee gave a final shape to the declaration which the seven South Asian leaders adopted at the two-day summit. The declaration was unanimously sanctioned by the Foreign Secretaries. 6 Various statements were made at the meeting of the Foreign Secretaries, as well as during the course of informal discussion of Foreign Ministers, to usher in a new mood of cooperation and understanding among the governments and peoples of the region. Nevertheless, in spite of such tremendous efforts made by the Foreign Secretaries and Foreign Ministers to build up a broad framework of understanding, some differences on contentious political issues could not be altogether wiped out. Another point discussed at these meetings was the approval of an emblem for SAARC. Previously a Committee of judges had advised the Standing Committee to declare the entry submitted by Nepal as the best one and, accordingly, the Committee adhered

3. The Hindustan Times, 4 December 1985
4. Ibid, 5 December 1985
5. Ibid
6. Indian Express, 6 December 1985
to the recommendations. The Committee also confirmed the schedule of activities comprising 42 projects in the nine spheres, which the Foreign Ministers had sanctioned in advance at their meeting in Thimpu in May 1985.⁷

After the conclusion of the meeting of the Foreign Secretaries, the chief conference spokesman, Ambassador Abul Ahsan said that “there has not been any mention of specific international political issues”⁸ by the participants. India’s External Affairs Minister Bali Ram Bhagat expected that the SAARC “could make a great contribution to bring peace, harmony and cooperation in the region which in the past saw distrust, conflict and hostilities.” When he arrived in Dhaka to attend the SAARC Foreign Ministers’ Meeting and the summit, he told the media that “SAARC” spirit of cooperation would gradually leave its lasting impact upon all the countries of the region.⁹

On 5 December 1985, the Foreign Ministers at their conference proposed the establishment of two expert committees to recommend measures for cooperation among the South Asian countries to resolve the menace of international terrorism and drug trafficking in the region. Both these issues were raised by the Foreign Minister of Bangladesh and his advice for cooperation among the SAARC countries for overcoming them was supported by the Pakistani Foreign Minister.¹⁰

It was decided at Dhaka that the expert committee would send recommendations to the Standing Committee of Foreign Secretaries for final consideration by the Foreign Ministers. Foreign Minister of Bangladesh, Humayun Rasheed Chowdhury, was the chairperson of the meeting. Needless to say, the SAARC Charter, its emblem and the draft declaration were endorsed by him.

At the time the meeting was held in Dhaka, there had been less tension in the political environment of South Asia. There had been no major difference of

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⁷. *The Hindustan Times*, 5 December 1985
⁸. *Indian Express*, 5 December 1985
⁹. *The Times of India*, 5 December 1985
opinion on any issue in the preparatory meetings to the summit among the seven countries of the region. At the preparatory stage it became quite evident that the countries were very eager on arriving at an agreement for cooperation keeping in mind the turbulent global political scenario caused by the arms race and the financial crisis facing the developing countries. The delegates who attended the meeting hoped that the super power summit held in Geneva in November 1985 would cast a positive impact on international peace and security. The leaders also discussed several other issues at the meeting such as international economic situation, specifically with regard to the flow of resources from developed to developing countries, concessional rates of assistance, trade protectionism, shift from multilateralism to bilateralism and the lack of progress in the North-South dialogue.\textsuperscript{11} It is worth mentioning, here, that the Foreign Ministers had suggested an agenda for the forthcoming summit meeting.

It should be noted here that the SARC Foreign Ministers carefully avoided references to any contentious political and bilateral issues and highlighted the immense significance of regional cooperation and the role of SARC in promoting such a cooperation. In this context, the Foreign Minister of Pakistan, Yaqub Khan stated that in spite of past history, the relevance and significance of SAARC in the South Asian region could not altogether be refused. The Nepalese Foreign Minister, Randhir Subba, had gone a step ahead in expressing the hope that collective economic potential of South Asian nations will inevitably lead to a positive political understanding among them and will usher in a new era of friendship and tranquility in the region. Similarly, the views expressed by Humayun Rasheed Chowdhury, the Foreign Minister of Bangladesh, who had presided over the meeting, were very much akin to the speeches delivered by the former speakers.\textsuperscript{12}

At the meeting, Bali Ram Bhagat stated that in view of tense international

\textsuperscript{11} See Pramod Kumar Mishra, \textit{Dhaka Summit And SAARC}, K. P. Bagchi and Company, Calcutta, 1986, p. 20
\textsuperscript{12} \textit{Indian Express}, 6 December 1985
political situation and the economic crisis facing the world, cooperation among the South Asian countries had become an imperative necessity for promoting both national and collective self-reliance. It also constituted a significant contribution to South-South cooperation, he added.\textsuperscript{13} He also said that the entire potentialities of regional cooperation could not be realised unless and until the basic sectors of development such as, trade, energy and industry were incorporated within its purview. He also said that the decision of the SARC leaders to pursue a cautious step-by-step approach to regional cooperation at the initial stage was a very wise one. Moreover, he too believed that cooperation in one sector provided strong incentive for cooperation in other areas.\textsuperscript{14} At the same time, he felt the urgent need to establish a Secretariat for SAARC.

While accepting the fact that a Secretariat for SAARC was absolutely essential, the Bangladesh Foreign Minister, Humayun Rasheed Chowdhury felt that the Standing Committee of Foreign Secretaries should set up a Working Group to look into the matter.\textsuperscript{15} Humayun Rasheed Chowdhury in his speech at the meeting said that the entire sub-continent was reeling under the threat of terrorism. And that the new international framework of SAARC had a crucial role to play in strengthening security in the region against the scourge of terrorism. The Foreign Minister of Pakistan, Shahabzada Yaqub Khan realised that the meeting must make recommendations to the summit to approve the inclusion of alarming menace of terrorism and drug abuse in the SAARC's cooperative activities. In this context, he further mentioned that suitable measures to deal with these new areas could be devised by the Standing Committee of the Foreign Secretaries. Yaqub Khan supported the suggestion of Humayun Rasheed Chowdhury to set up a Programme Committee to help the Standing Committee in its task of reviewing the global priorities of the SAARC's Integrated Programme of Action (IPA). He was also in favour of setting up a Secretariat for SAARC. Furthermore, he added that

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid
\textsuperscript{14} See P. K. Mishra, n. 11, p.21
\textsuperscript{15} The Statesman, 6 December 1985
SAARC countries had become conscious of the immense value of the limited natural resources of the region and they had realised that the scarce natural resources should be utilised in such a manner that all of them were able to solve their common problems effectively.

In accordance with the opinions expressed by some member-states to proceed slowly by extending the areas of cooperation, some of the crucial areas like trade and industry were set aside for the time-being. There were some differences of opinion among the countries with regard to the location of the SAARC centres to be set up. For instances, both India and Bangladesh had been contending for the setting up of the meteorological centre.

Since both Nepal and Bangladesh were pressing their claims for the location of the Secretariat, the Foreign Ministers decided to refer the whole issue to the Standing Committee to report to them “at the appropriate time”. It was learnt from official sources that in this manner the Charter agenda, emblem and draft declaration received approval at the meeting of Foreign Ministers and thus the stage was set for the smooth proceedings of the summit.

**Birth of SAARC**

After a massive amount of preparatory work, the stage was gradually set for the formal launching of the first regional organisation in South Asia. Accordingly, the concept of South Asian Regional Cooperation (SARC), mooted five years ago, became a reality on 7 December 1985, with the leaders of the seven nations committing themselves to work together towards ensuring collective self-reliance. Indeed, a totally new chapter in the history of South Asia was opened at Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh, where the Charter of the association and the Dhaka declaration setting out its rationale was signed. It was attended by the Bangladesh President, Lt. General H.M. Ershad, the king of Bhutan, Jigme Singhye Wangchuk, the Prime Minister of India, late Rajiv Gandhi, the President of Maldives, Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, the king of

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16. *Indian Express*, 6 December 1985
Nepal, His Excellency King Birendra, the President of Pakistan, Zia-ul-Haq and the Sri Lankan President J.R. Jayewardene.

The summit was, on the whole, held in an extremely cordial and friendly atmosphere. However, just on the eve of the summit, the goodwill and enthusiasm for the summit was to some extent spoilt by the Pakistani President Zia-ul-Haq's attempt to introduce a contentious bilateral issue to the discussion, which was exclusively intended to find out concrete measures to enhance and consolidate regional cooperation in the sub-continent. Prior to the summit, Zia-ul-Haq raised the question of Indian dominance in the regional forum. In addition, he said, the big brotherly attitude of India might become an obstacle to the smooth functioning of SAARC. Not only this, the opening ceremonies of the summit seemed to have borne out the fact that both Pakistan and Sri Lanka wanted to transform a developmental forum into a pressure group against India, trying to put the latter into a corner and telling it to behave properly if it wanted to win the love and respect of small neighbours.  

Immediately, after the inauguration of the summit by Bangladesh President H.M. Ershad in the imposing Samsad Bhavan (Parliament House), the leaders met for a second time to decide that the summit would be held every year and accordingly amended the Charter of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) which had earlier insisted upon holding a summit once in two years. Thus, the next summit was hosted by New Delhi in November 1986 and the 1987 summit was held in Bhutan. They also decided that the Foreign Ministers of the seven countries would meet at least twice a year to discuss the main issues concerning SAARC. It was decided that SAARC would have a permanent Secretariat for which both Nepal and Bangladesh have made offers. However, the summit took into account the Nepalese offer to set up the SAARC Secretariat in Kathmandu but no decision was taken in this regard. The Council of Foreign Ministers of SAARC had been asked by the Heads of State and Government to work out the details of the Secretariat

including its venue. It was further decided that the Standing Committee of Foreign Secretaries would also meet twice a year.

Besides this, the summit endorsed the decision of the Foreign Ministers to submit the question of regional cooperation in combating drug trafficking and terrorism to a high-level committee which would report to the Standing Committee of Foreign Secretaries. The summit decided that an expert committee be set up to evolve joint strategies for commencing negotiations with international organisations like General Agreement on Tariff and Trade (GATT) in which developing countries particularly the least developed countries have an interest. President Zia of Pakistan offered to host the first meeting of the committee. He also suggested consultations on an organisation for raising the status of women of the SAARC countries and his suggestion was accepted by the summit. It was further decided that a committee will be set up for the purpose.

The role and function of the Standing Committees and Technical Committees were also decided upon by the summit. The Standing Committee was to “monitor and coordinate programmes of cooperation, approve projects and modalities of their financing, mobilize regional and external resources as also identify new areas of cooperation based on appropriate studies. Technical Committees comprising representatives of member-states were given broad responsibility for the implementation, coordination and monitoring of the programmes in the respective areas of cooperation.”

On the inaugural day, all the seven leaders made their opening statements, and the common tune ringing through their addresses clearly manifested their willingness to endow the newly born organisation with a political role in regional matters. H.M. Ershad, the then President of Bangladesh, was elected chairman of the SAARC. While inaugurating the summit, President Ershad stated that “SAARC marked the beginning of a larger cooperation.”


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welcomed the summit and said that after years of painstaking research, the areas of cooperation had been identified. Moreover, he stated that the SAARC strategy was based on the clear understanding that the joint endeavours did not in any way encroach upon each member’s freedom of judgement and freedom of choice and placed emphasis upon the fact that SAARC should not stand in the way of bilateral and multilateral obligations.\textsuperscript{21}

India’s position was spelt out by the late Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in his address to the first SAARC summit at Dhaka, when he said the model that was being developed was in consonance with the realities of the region, “not seeking to melt our bilateral relationships into a Common regional identity but rather to fit South Asian Cooperation into our respective foreign policies as an additional dimension.” The modalities evolved did not allow bilateral stresses and strains to impinge upon regional cooperation, he added. He further said that in the light of their recent experiences there was valid reason to hope that the practice of regional cooperation would generate a beneficial impact on bilateral relationships.\textsuperscript{22} Rajiv Gandhi focused attention on the deteriorating international security situation and the profound economic gloom. “International economic institutions are in disarray .......... Multilateralism has come under severe strain.”\textsuperscript{23}

The late Indian Prime Minister said that South Asian Cooperation unfolded the path to collective self-reliance and world-wide cooperation. Stressing the need for peace in carrying out development, he said that prevailing tensions and the continued arms race posed a threat to the region’s progress and prosperity. He further added, “We must make a conscious effort to remain outside the vortex of these tensions and conflicts. In the true spirit of Non-alignment, our cooperation should set an example to others.”\textsuperscript{24}

\begin{itemize}
  \item[21.] \textit{The Times of India}, 8 December 1985.
  \item[22.] Address by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi to the first SAARC Summit, Dhaka, 7 December 1985 in \textit{A New Impetus And Fresh Direction: South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation}, n.1, p.4.
  \item[23.] See \textit{Patriot}, 8 December, 1985.
  \item[24.] See \textit{A New Impetus And Fresh Direction: South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation}, n.1, p.4.
\end{itemize}
In his inaugural speech, the Sri Lankan President J. R. Jayewardene highlighted the responsibilities that rested on India in the South Asian region – being the largest country in the region and also due to its strategic location in the sub-continent. Indeed, one cannot think of SAARC without India. While referring to the issue of Tamil ethnic problem in Sri Lanka, Jayewardene added that terrorist movements have proliferated among several countries of the region. It is seen that leaders of the SAARC countries have been assassinated frequently. The terrorist leaders concealed themselves “under the umbrella of racial and minority discrimination and seek separation.” Naturally, he wanted the summit to pay special attention to non-violence.

King Birendra of Nepal said that the SAARC summit would help this region look forward to a new era of “enlightened self-interest” based on a desire to replace conflict with cooperation and substituted discord with harmony. The king observed that after a “long winter” of mistrust, coldness and suspicion, the countries of South Asia were moving from an attitude of selfishness to a spirit of reciprocity, give and take and live and let live! He added that the countries of the region had a common commitment towards promoting the cause of peace and uplifting the quality of life of their peoples.

King Jigme Singhye Wangchuk of Bhutan recommended “meaningful dialogue” between the countries concerned to remove the threat of development of nuclear weapons in the region. At the same time, he expressed his country’s firm conviction that SAARC was destined to play a crucial role in furthering better and closer understanding within the region to create an atmosphere favourable to peaceful settlement of disputes and differences.

The President of Maldives, Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, said that SAARC

25. For speeches made by different South Asian leaders, see Patriot, 8 December 1985
27. The Hindustan Times, 8 December 1985.
would be the main instrument for promoting peace, progress and stability in this part of the world.\textsuperscript{29}

Lt. General H. M. Ershad appealed to the Heads of State and Government assembled at the SAARC summit to unite themselves by shedding off their mutual differences in order to fight their common enemy – poverty and economic subjugation.\textsuperscript{30}

In spite of some controversial comments made by a handful of visiting statesmen, the summit, on the whole, was held in a very cordial atmosphere. The proceedings of the summit went on smoothly and on the concluding day of the session, that is, on 8 December, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) was formally launched. At a ceremonial function held in the Jatiya Samsad Bhavan, the seven Heads of State and Government signed seven copies of the Dhaka declaration and the Charter of SAARC to give their consent to the establishment of the organisation. The king of Nepal, Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev, proposed the adoption of the Charter of the organisation whereas the President of Pakistan, Zia-ul-Haq, proposed acceptance of the declaration.

Addressing the gathering, the late Rajiv Gandhi suggested that people’s participation at all levels was crucial to make the organisation a success.\textsuperscript{31} He also pointed out that each of the participating countries would have an equal voice in the organisation. He expressed the hope that the Charter would help make South Asia a zone of peace and harmony. While comparing the formation of the organisation with the dawn of a new era, the Indian Prime Minister was very optimistic that regional cooperation would help the seven participating countries implement their respective development plans in an effective manner.

\textsuperscript{29} The Statesman, 8 December 1985. 
\textsuperscript{30} The Times of India, 8 December 1985. 
\textsuperscript{31} Sudhin Dey, “SAARC Call (For) Collective self Reliance” in The Statesman, 8 December 1985.
The summit chairman, H. M. Ershad said that the discussions had been free and informal reflecting the basic unity which had brought them together. According to him, the summit had imparted a new political impetus for advancing the precious work of identifying new areas of cooperation.

The Pakistani President, Zia-ul-Haq realised that the new organisation would help the participating countries control their future better. He said that during their stay in Dhaka, the Heads of State and Government had held bilateral talks which had been fruitful and helped in understanding each other.

The President of Sri Lanka, J. R. Jayewardene compared the formation of SAARC with the voyage of a ship and warned that the participating countries must adopt necessary steps to "avoid mutiny on board." He believed that only through hard work the participating countries could make it a successful organisation.

The king of Bhutan, Jigme Singhye Wangchuk, said the central theme of the Dhaka declaration was that all the seven countries setting aside their conflicting stands and paying respect to each other's sovereignty, were determined to work together, "both within and outside the region, to promote the welfare of the people of their respective countries."

**The Charter**

The two-day Dhaka summit concluded on 8 December 1985 following the adoption of the Charter and declaration for the association, which would henceforth be christened as SAARC. These two significant documents were endorsed at the concluding session "with due ceremony" and affirmations of absolute support to the organisation by the leaders of the seven South Asian states. No change was made in the draft of the Charter as well as in the content

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33. *Ibid*
35. *Ibid*
of the declaration. They remained same as approved by the Foreign Ministers previously.

The Charter adopted by the Summiteers at Dhaka formally launched South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) with an institutional framework. It also provided the basic guidelines for the smooth functioning of the new-born regional association. It has been laid down in Article III of the Charter that the Heads of State or Government shall meet once a year or more often as and when considered urgent by the member countries. Article IV lays down that the Council of Ministers consisting of the Foreign ministers – the highest policy making body – will formulate policies, review the progress of the grouping and take decision on new areas of cooperation. The Council of Ministers shall meet twice a year. Article V states that the Standing Committee, composed of the Foreign Secretaries of the member-states, will meet as frequently as considered necessary but at least once a year to implement the decisions. Article VI lays down that the Technical Committees comprising representatives of all member-states will implement, coordinate and monitor programmes in their respective spheres of cooperation. Article VII empowers the Standing Committees to set up Action Committees consisting of member-states concerned with implementation of projects involving more than two but not all member states. There is provision for a Secretariat of the Association under Article VIII.36 The Secretariat is headed by a Secretary-General and seven Directors. The Secretary-General is appointed by the Council of Ministers on nomination by member-states on the basis of the principle of rotation in alphabetical order. Article IX deals with financial arrangements. According to it, the member-states will make voluntary contributions to meet the financial requirements of the Association.

The Charter is full of practical values. It begins with an expectation “to promote peace, stability, amity and progress in the region” by fostering “mutual understanding, good neighbourly relations and meaningful

36. For Articles I to X, see Charter of the South Asian Association For Regional Cooperation, SAARC Secretariat, Kathmandu, December 1985, pp. 1 – 12.
cooperation” among the member-states. Keeping in mind the diverse political systems and divergent development strategies, it has advocated the need for joint endeavour and cooperative efforts within the region.

Article X of the Charter deals with the general provisions. In view of the strained bilateral relations among the member-states of SAARC, the Charter very cautiously avoided bilateral and contentious issues. But in actual practice, it has been found that though bilateral and contentious issues are kept out of the agenda, each summit provided excellent opportunities to the leaders for holding discussion on bilateral issues in informal consultations.  

**Nature and Characteristics of SAARC**

SAARC is one of the latest among the regional organisations formed by the developing countries “to forge collective understanding at the regional level on issues pertaining to security, peace and development.” It was launched at the Dhaka summit of seven South Asian nations on 7 December 1985.

The SAARC is an Inter-Governmental Regional Organisation with restricted and well-defined authority. As a subject of international law, this organisation is expected to discharge its due role in restoring peace, stability, amity and progress in the troubled environment of South Asia.

The geographical location of South Asia has a strategic value of its own. It is situated almost in the centre of Middle-East and South-east Asia. Both these geographical spheres are regarded as highly sensitive and possessing immense strategic importance. It is separated from West Asia by the Karakoram Himalayan range. The northern frontiers of South Asia are very close to the Chinese borders and those of former Soviet Republics. In South it offers access to Persian Gulf as well as Malaccan straits. Ever since the

establishment of US nuclear-powered base at Diego Garcia, the Indian Ocean has acquired tremendous significance in global strategic consideration. \(^{40}\)

The member countries of SAARC have a geographical proximity providing contiguity of borders. All of them belong to the same geographical region. This compactness gives the region many infrastructural linkages based on colonial legacies, common history, race, religion, language and cultural heritage which are unparalleled as compared to other regions of the world, for instance, West Asia or South-east Asia. \(^{41}\) Another point to be taken into account here is that while most of the South Asian states are not connected with each other through common borders, most of them have common borders with India, either by land or sea.

Strategic consensus, political harmony and economic, social and cultural upliftment are the requisites of regional cooperation. However, these essential factors are altogether absent in case of SAARC. There is no common threat perception. Member-states often nurture altogether different views towards the global strategic concerns affecting South Asia. All the member countries rather have internal threat perception emanating from India's alleged hegemonistic attitude. In order to overcome their internal fear psychosis, the countries have formed alliances with the Big Powers, i.e., U.S.A, the former U.S.S.R. and China and received economic assistance from them.

Indo-centric nature of the region is one of the most significant features of SAARC. 'There is a bit of India in every other country of South Asia.' 'All the South Asian countries have only one thing in common amongst themselves and that is India.' \(^{42}\) The smaller neighbouring countries also feel dwarfed in relation to India. By virtue of its enormous size, population, gross national product (GNP), levels of economic and industrial development as well as military strength, India emerged as the dominant power in the region. This

\(^{41}\) Ibid
divergence in terms of power balance between India and other member-states of SAARC gave birth to a fear psychosis in the region. Neighbouring countries are also apprehensive of India's hegemonistic designs.\textsuperscript{43} Owing to political instability and economic dependence, the smaller states of the region adopted varied strategies towards their nation-building programme. Haunted by the fear of becoming economically dependant upon India, "Iron ore is imported by Pakistan from Africa and not from India and apples are imported by Sri Lanka from Australia and not from India".\textsuperscript{44}

The countries constituting SAARC are poverty-stricken --- they are poorest of the poor countries in the globe. Low per capita incomes and higher rate of population growth in SAARC countries have induced higher infant mortality rates, illiteracy and lower educational level.

Economies of the seven member-states of SAARC are basically competitive in nature. There is a lack of complementarity for intra-regional trade which is evident from the fact that the component states of SAARC compete for the same foreign markets offering products that are identical. For instance, Bangladesh, India and Nepal compete in selling jute products in the United Kingdom, the EEC and the United States markets. Apart from this, the economies of these member countries do not complement one another in "resource availability, the structure and content of production, and the supply of services".\textsuperscript{45}

SAARC has given much higher priority to economic cooperation. Since the countries of South Asia are very poor, the leaders of SAARC thought that a regional association should primarily concentrate its efforts to uplift the level of economic development. As a result, all the member countries of SAARC share a common concern for economic development. This characteristic of


\textsuperscript{44} Ibid, p.20.

SAARC follows from the fact that the Summiteers have made it clear that the primary objective of SAARC would be to alleviate the lot of the South Asian masses by accelerating the economic development of the member countries.

All the countries of the region have either achieved independence from colonial yoke of western imperialism or liberated themselves from oppressive regimes. Common legacy of British imperialism had ‘led to the development of common political, administrative and legal institutions in these countries’. 46

As a result, all of them share cultural affinities, common ethnicity, religion, language etc. Also, the structure of their society, their way of living, belief system are not much different from each other. Since all of them are members of the United Nations and of the Non-aligned Movement, they are wholeheartedly committed to the ideals of peace and non-interference in the domestic affairs of other nations.

SAARC is based on the strategy of “developmental regionalism”, for example, ‘economies of scale, external economies, specialisation and increased economic efficiency through widening of market and proper use of regional resources’. 47

SAARC exhibits the social and political realities of the region and seeks unity in diversity. Unlike its earlier counterparts (for e.g. EEC, ASEAN, GCC etc.), SAARC is not based on shared security perceptions, which the political analysts usually consider as the primary source of motivation for regional cooperation. 48

South Asian countries have different political systems. India and Sri Lanka have democratic regimes, ‘but parliamentary and presidential respectively.’ Pakistan as well as Bangladesh have undergone military rule though they are

not identical in character. Nepal is totally different from the other six South Asian countries since it has a monarchical system of government.\textsuperscript{49}

SAARC has virtually excluded the bilateral political issues from its agenda, because the Heads of State or Government thought that discussion of political issues would only thwart the primary goal of SAARC – namely, enhancing the level of economic development of the respective countries through the maximum utilisation of their human and natural resources. Though bilateral and controversial issues are kept out of the agenda, all the periodical and annual summit meetings at Dhaka and at subsequent places offered ample opportunities to discuss bilateral issues in informal sessions that inevitably follow the formal meetings. And in many cases, it has been found that informal sessions of bilateral talks were able to reduce the tensions prevailing in the region.\textsuperscript{50} Thus, the inclusion of the ‘exclusion of bilateral and contentious issues’ clause under Article X of the SAARC Charter sounds contradictory. In this context, Palmer rightly comments, “..........[this] principle (that of exclusion of bilateral and contentious issues) is probably as impossible to abide by as it is essential, at least in the formative stages of SAARC. So many “bilateral” issues have multilateral and regional dimensions, and even “non-political” issues are often fundamentally political and contentious. Moreover, the fact that SAARC is a product of cooperative agreements among seven sovereign nation-states means that by its very nature it is an official political organisation; and an official political organisation can hardly be non-political. It can hardly avoid consideration of the political dimension of almost every issue with which it is concerned. Indeed, it can


\textsuperscript{50} At the Bangalore Summit, Prime Ministers of India and Pakistan defused the tension over India’s alleged military exercise along Pakistan’s borders through bilateral talks on the sidelines of the summit. Also, during the Kathmandu Summit, Rajiv Gandhi and M. K. Junejo met and agreed upon a series of high-level meetings. Inspite of differences of opinion on the ethnic issue, India and Sri Lanka held informal discussions at various SAARC summits and these meetings enabled them to compromise accord on the topic.
hardly eschew consideration of the very issues which its founders have proclaimed to be out of bounds, including even military and security issues".  

However, much contradictory the Article X of the Charter sounds, it should be mentioned time and again that the sole purpose behind the exclusion of bilateral and contentious issues from the SAARC deliberations is that the leaders intended 'to pursue regional cooperation autonomously' without being interrupted by the vicissitudes of bilateral relations. The leaders believed that once regional cooperation gathered momentum it would be able to remove all sorts of 'misunderstanding, suspicions and bitterness.'

Though the drafters of the Charter exhibited their political excellence by excluding bilateral and contentious matters from the SAARC agenda, yet it is very impractical to believe that ‘regional cooperation can progress in isolation from the climate and nature of bilateral relations.’ Rather, the leaders must pay due attention to this delicate fact so that all possible attempts are made for settling the major bilateral issues between the countries of South Asia.

**SAARC : Objectives and Principles**

The Charter of SAARC contains ten articles. Of these, Article I lays down the association’s objectives. These objectives are absolutely similar to those stated as objectives in the Delhi declaration of December 1983. Most of the objectives are basically economic in character. Article I of the SAARC Charter embodies eight broad objectives. Keeping in mind the extremely poor economic position of the SAARC countries, the leaders of SAARC thought that it would be very essential for the South Asian regional grouping to devote its attention to the basic needs of life such as to promote the welfare of the inhabitants of South Asia and to enhance their standard of living; to enhance the rate of economic development and provide opportunity to all to live in dignity; to strengthen collective self-reliance among the member-states of

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52. Ibid, p. 456.
South Asia; to contribute to mutual trust, understanding and realisation of one another’s problems; to promote active collaboration and mutual help in the economic, social, cultural, technical and scientific spheres; to strengthen cooperation with other developing countries and among themselves in global forums; and, finally, to increase people-to-people contacts among the member states of the region.

Article II primarily deals with the principles governing SAARC and the modalities of its functioning. Like the objectives, the principles too coincide with those contained in the Delhi declaration. Paragraph I of this Article embodies those principles and postulates which provide the foundation of modern international law and inter-state relations.\(^{53}\) Principles governing the SAARC form an indispensable part of the UN Charter and other international organisations. Article II, paragraph I states that SAARC honours the principles of sovereign equality, territorial integrity, political independence, non-interference in the domestic affairs of other states and mutual benefit. Besides this, it has also been laid down in paragraph 2 of Article II that cooperation in the region should not be treated as a substitute for bilateral and multilateral cooperation. And paragraph 3 of this Article states that the cooperative activities carried out in the region should not be incompatible with bilateral and multilateral obligations of the concerned states. Paragraph 3 of Article II does not overestimate the significance of SAARC as a regional grouping. Rather it is a ‘check upon its limited jurisdiction.’ These provisions embodied in the Charter of SAARC highlight the complicated mosaic of divergent bilateral and multilateral relationships involving different conflicting issues and mutual agreements prevailing among the member-states. It should be mentioned here that the conspicuous absence in the SAARC Charter of the principles of non-use of force in inter-state relations and pacific settlement of disputes have been pointed out by the critics time and again.\(^{54}\)

\(^{53}\) The Evolution of SAARC: Basic Documents, SAARC Directorate, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Bangladesh, Dhaka 1985, p. 9

\(^{54}\) Ibid, p. 7.
Institutional Framework of SAARC

In any attempt for regional cooperation among the states, the question of institutional framework acquires a special significance. Without a proper institutional apparatus, a regional grouping cannot make progress. The same holds good in the case of SAARC too. The first Foreign Ministers’ meeting held in New Delhi in August 1983 adopted the Declaration on South Asian Regional Cooperation providing for a two-tier institutional mechanism. The Study/Working Groups set up during the preparatory period were now christened Technical Committees and the Foreign Secretary level meetings were named as Standing Committees. Technical Committees set up in the nine agreed areas of cooperation were entrusted with the task of implementing, coordinating and monitoring of the programmes in their respective areas of cooperation. The Standing Committees consisting of the Foreign Secretaries were made responsible for approval of projects and programmes, mobilisation of regional and external resources and identification of new areas of cooperation. In the SARC Declaration (August 1983) the Foreign Secretaries were solely made responsible for highest level interactions for cooperation. The communique, issued at the end of the Delhi meeting of August 1983, laid down that the Standing Committee shall meet as frequently as deemed urgent. And, in actual practice, it has been found that each meeting of the Standing Committee was followed by a meeting at the level of Foreign Ministers. However, the present institutional arrangement of SAARC is an outcome of the Dhaka summit. The Charter adopted at Dhaka has provided for a five-tier institutional set-up which incorporates Meetings of Heads of State or Government (Article II), Council of Ministers (Article IV), Standing Committee (Article V), Technical Committees (Article VI) and Secretariat (Article VIII). Besides these, there is also a provision for setting up Action Committees (Article VII) if needed, consisting of Member States concerned with implementation of projects involving more than two but not all Member

States. Moreover, the Council of Ministers has been authorised to establish additional mechanism under the SAARC if and when the necessity arises (Article IV – d).

Apparently the above-mentioned institutional arrangements as provided by the Charter present a mature and strong institutional framework. But, in actual practice, it is not so. Going through a detailed analysis of the institutional arrangements, it has been found that the provisions of the Charter concerning different organs of the Association are incomplete, confusing and not sufficient. Powers and functions of the different organs and their mutual relations are not clearly spelt out. For instance, in practice, the functions of the Secretariat are not clear and the Secretary-General cannot send communications directly to the member governments. 56 Thus, the present institutional structure of SAARC is far away from the level of full satisfaction. Further, Article III of the Charter lays down that “the Heads of State or Government shall meet once a year or more often as and when considered necessary by the member-states.” 57

The Council of Ministers as laid down in Article IV is the highest policy-making body of SAARC. The powers and functions bestowed upon the Council are indeed enormous. In fact, the Council executes a number of crucially significant functions such as formulation of the policies of the regional grouping, review of its activities, decision on new areas of cooperation, establishment of additional mechanism under the Association and decision on other matters of general interest.

Membership of the Standing Committee under Article V of the Charter, comprises the Foreign Secretaries of the member countries of SAARC. Functions of the Standing Committee primarily consist of planning, approving, monitoring, coordination of activities in the agreed areas of cooperation and identification of new areas of cooperation. The Charter has

56. Ibid, p. 93.
57. For a detailed discussion on the different organs of SAARC, see Charter of the South Asian Association For Regional Cooperation, n. 36, pp. 6 – 12
authorised the Committee to devise ways for the mobilisation of regional and external resources. Being a subordinate body under the Council, the Standing Committee shall submit periodic reports to the Council of Ministers. It will meet as frequently as deemed appropriate.

It has been laid down in Article VI of the Charter that the Technical Committees shall consist of the representatives of the Member States. It is responsible for the implementation, coordination and monitoring of the programmes in their respective fields of cooperation. The Technical Committees shall submit periodic reports to the Standing Committee. Under normal circumstances, the chairmanship of the Technical Committees shall rotate among member countries in alphabetical order every two years.

Article VIII of the Charter lays down that “there shall be a Secretariat of the Association. Nothing more is said in the Article. This only proves the fact that there was no unanimity among the Member States as to the powers, functions, status and venue of the Secretariat. Since no clarification is made in the SAARC Charter regarding the Secretariat’s role and functions, it has given rise to a lot of confusion.

The notion of a Secretariat is generally associated with any international organisation. It is an indispensable part of any global association. Without the setting up of the Secretariat, an organisation’s institutional arrangement cannot be completed. In the case of SAARC too, the Member States could not do without the idea of the Secretariat.

The Secretariat is composed of a Secretary-General and seven Directors. The tenure of office of the Secretary-General is for two years. He is appointed by the Council of Ministers “on nomination by member-states on the basis of the principle of rotation in alphabetical order.” In consequence with this norm, Abul Ahsan of Bangladesh was appointed as the first Secretary-General.
SOUTH ASIAN ASSOCIATION FOR REGIONAL COOPERATION (SAARC)
ORGANISATIONAL FRAMEWORK

- Once a year / more often if deemed necessary
- Twice a year / Extra Ordinary Sessions on agreement
- As often as necessary / in practice twice a year
- As and when necessary subject to approval by SC

SUMMIT
Council of Ministers
Standing Committee

Regional Conventions / Agreements
- Adhoc Ministerial Meetings on specific themes

Standing Committee
- Action Committee
- When more than 2 but not all members are involved
- Periodic Reports

Integrated Programme of Action (IPA)
Technical Committee - once a year

- Agriculture
- Communication
- Education & Culture
- Environment
- Health & Population
- Meteorology
- Drugs
- Rural Development
- Science & Technology
- Tourism
- Transport
- Women in Develop.

Regional Funds

SAARC Secretariat
Secretary-General
Secretaries-General Directors

Coordination, Monitoring, Servicing Meetings
Channel of Communication & Linkages with other International Organizations

MOUs / Agreements with Int. Orgs.

UNCTAD, UNICEF, ESCAP, ITU, APT

SAARC Apex Bodies
SCCI

SAARC - Secretariat for South Asian Countries

Regional Institutions
- SAIC (Dhaka)
- STC (Kathmandu)
- SMRC (Dhaka)
- SDC (New Delhi)

People-to-People Contact
- Chairs, Scholarships & Fellowships Scheme
- SVVP
- Organized Tourism
- SAVE

Source: SAARC in brief, SAARC Secretariat, Kathmandu, March 1994
DHAKA DECLARATION

On 4 December, the Standing Committee of the Foreign Secretaries of the seven component states of SAARC finalised the Dhaka declaration containing the objectives and rationale for the establishment of SAARC. A brief analysis of the Dhaka declaration is given below.

In the first place, the declaration underlined the fact that the newly formed regional grouping known as SAARC would promote individual and collective self-reliance and accelerate the pace of economic and social development of the countries. The seven Heads of State or Government reiterated their conviction that the launching of SAARC would place regional cooperation on a firm footing. They considered the holding of the first summit meeting as a historic event since it manifested the determination of the South Asian people to cooperate regionally and to work together towards finding a solution to their common problems in a spirit of goodwill, “trust and mutual understanding” and to the creation of an environment based on “mutual respect, equity and shared benefits”.

Here, the leaders of the seven South Asian nations hoped that by shedding off their mutual differences, the masses of the region would be able to come together and participate wholeheartedly in the cooperative activities launched in the non-political areas. In this manner, they would be able to remove the hostile feelings shared by them about one another and usher in a peaceful atmosphere necessary for the successful operation of a regional association.

Secondly, they realised that periodic meetings at their level were very essential for the promotion of mutual trust, confidence and cooperation among the SAARC countries. The holding of periodic meetings would enable the leaders to come to know about each other’s problems and prescribe solutions for

58. See “Dhaka Declaration of the Heads of State or Government of the Member States of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation - 8 December 1985” in A New Impetus and Fresh Direction, n.1, p.8
Thirdly, the leaders who attended the Dhaka summit reiterated that their fundamental motive was to enhance the tempo of economic and social developmental process in their respective countries through fullest utilisation of their human and material resources so as to promote the welfare and prosperity of their people and usher in an improved quality of life. They were very much aware of the fact that without an environment of peace and security, the realisation of this objective was not feasible.

It is known to all that South Asia, as a region, is very rich in natural resources. What is actually needed is the proper utilisation of these resources, which would enable the people of this region to get rid of a variety of common problems which haunt the region, namely, poverty, unemployment, malnutrition, disease, spiralling debt burden etc. While declaring this objective, the leaders always kept in mind that without a tension-free and peaceful atmosphere it would not be possible to achieve a good result.

Fourthly, the leaders of South Asian countries reaffirmed their commitment to the UN Charter and the principles governing sovereign equality of states, pacific settlement of disputes, non-interference in internal affairs and non-use or threat of use of force against the territorial integrity and political independence of other states.

Fifthly, since the South Asian countries are closely interlinked with one another by many common values rooted in their social, ethnic, cultural and historical traditions, regional cooperation provided a logical response to their common problems. They were aware of their individual and regional strengths, their potential as a huge market, their substantial human and natural resources and the complementarities of their economies. They were fully assured that with regional cooperative activities they could make maximum use of their capacities for the advantage of the inhabitants, accelerate the rate of their economic development and intensify their national and collective self-reliance. They believed that the South Asian countries had an important role to play in the sphere of international relations and thus influence the decision—
making process. By incorporating this objective, the leaders made it clear that the South Asian countries like the countries of the North could undertake regional cooperation and thus voice their grievances in the global forums.

In the sixth place, "the Heads of State or Government emphasised that strengthening of regional cooperation in South Asia required greater involvement of their peoples". In order to promote people-to-people contacts at different levels, they agreed to take steps to create awareness and public opinion in the region. Unless and until the inhabitants of the region are convinced of the advantages of regional cooperation and are induced to lend their wholehearted support, regional cooperation in any part of the globe cannot achieve its desired ends. South Asian experiment is no exception to this general proposition.

Seventhly, the Summiteers expressed their happiness at the progress so far made in the implementation of the Integrated Programme of Action in the nine mutually agreed areas. They also expressed their willingness to consolidate and further expand cooperative efforts within a proper institutional set-up.

Eighthly, they firmly believed that they could effectively follow their individual and collective objectives and improve their standard of living only in an undisturbed and calm environment. Here only they expressed their anxiety at the deteriorating international political situation. They also expressed concern at the unprecedented escalation of arms race particularly in the case of nuclear weapons. As a result, they called upon nuclear weapon states to negotiate among themselves and conclude a comprehensive test ban treaty leading to the "complete cessation of testing, production and deployment of nuclear weapons". The leaders who attended the summit expected that the summit between President Rāgan and General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev would impart a positive effect on international peace and

59. Dhaka And Bangalore Summits - Declaration And Joint Press Releases; South Asian Association For Regional Cooperation, SAARC Secretariat, Kathmandu, p.3.
60. Ibid, p.4.
security.\textsuperscript{61} From this standpoint, it becomes clear that the leaders who gathered at the Dhaka summit did not lose sight of the arms race which might have destroyed the cordial atmosphere prevailing in the sub-continent.

Ninthly, the Heads of State or Government expressed profound concern at the global economic crisis.\textsuperscript{62} They took note of the fact that deteriorating economic and social conditions had seriously affected the development prospects in South Asia and other developing countries. Sharply falling commodity prices, worsening tendency in terms of trade, enhancement of protectionist measures, mounting debt burden and a fall in the supply of external resources had severely hampered the economic growth of the developing countries. The leaders also expressed anxiety over the diminishing ability of international financial and technical institutions to cater to the needs of the poorer countries and regretted that the spirit of multilateralism had begun to weaken. As a remedy to the precarious global financial situation, the Heads of State or Government have prescribed that the least developed countries of South Asia, which were adversely affected by the prevailing economic gloom, must form an association of their own to improve their financial position vis-à-vis the North.

Tenthly, they advocated that tremendous efforts should be made by the global community towards the realisation of the goals and targets of the International Development Strategy as well as the Substantial New Programme of Action for the least developed countries. They also called the immediate convening of an international conference on money and finance for development.

Eleventhly, the main thrust of the declaration was, however, on regional cooperation. The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation

\textsuperscript{61.} In October 1986, a summit meeting took place between Mikhail Gorbachev and Ronald Reagan in Reykjavik.
\textsuperscript{62.} During Dhaka Summit, the world economy presented a very gloomy picture. Goods exported by the developing countries to the markets of the developed countries did not get their due price. Terms of trade had deteriorated. Besides this, a high rate of inflation, unfavourable balance of trade, low rate of growth, massive amount of debt and a remarkable decline in the flow of external resources had severely damaged the economic prospects of the developing countries.
(SAARC) to be launched here at the Heads of Government meeting on 7 and 8 December, "would place regional cooperation on a firm foundation, play an important role in accelerating the pace of economic and social development of their countries, promote the objectives of individual and collective self-reliance and further the cause of peace, progress and stability in our own region and the world," the draft said.

Lastly, the Heads of State or Government who attended the Dhaka summit highly praised the role played by the then President of Bangladesh, H. M. Ershad, as the chairperson of the first ever South Asian summit. Moreover, they expressed their thankfulness for the hospitality provided by the people of Bangladesh and also for the superb arrangements made for them. 63

**International reactions to the formation of SAARC**

The launching of SAARC marked the beginning of a new era of larger cooperation among the seven member countries and was an indication of their desire to unitedly oppose tooth and nail the discriminatory economic and trade policies of the industrialised Western countries.

The outcome of the first summit of the seven South Asian countries in Dhaka had been welcomed as an important development for Asia and the world at large by both Japan and China.

China was the first country to greet the leaders of South Asia for the formation of SAARC through their combined efforts. The Chinese Premier Zhao Ziyang welcomed the holding of the first ever South Asian summit in Dhaka as "an event of great significance" in the South Asian sub-continent. In a congratulatory message to the then Bangladesh President, on the eve of the Dhaka summit, Zhao said that China was happy to notice that considerable progress had been made in the sphere of regional cooperation in South Asia.

63. For the text of the Dhaka Declaration, see *A New Impetus and Fresh Direction*, n.1, pp. 8 – 9
since the concept was initiated by Bangladesh. According to Zhao, SAARC was formed not only for the sake of well-being of the South Asian people but was also thought to be conducive to serenity in the region. As a close neighbour and ally of the South Asian countries, he said, “China sincerely hopes that all the South Asian countries will live in a peaceful and friendly atmosphere, increase and broaden the cooperative activities for their common good in order to bring prosperity to the masses of the region”. Moreover, People’s Daily stated that the South Asian leaders tried sincerely to institutionalise the regional cooperation process since the time of its inception and at Dhaka the cooperative venture got institutionalised – “a historic achievement that is in keeping with the common desire of the people in the region”. It also mentioned that the close ties among the countries would help in restoring peace and stability in the sub-continent and promote the economic and social development of the masses.

President Reagan, in his message to the summit Chairman said that the United States was always ready to provide aid package in launching regional cooperative projects.

Japan was deeply impressed by the Dhaka summit which gave South Asian Regional Cooperation an exceptionally high political profile. The Japanese Prime Minister, Nakasone sent a warm congratulatory message to President Ershad for hosting the summit and expressed the hope that SAARC would generate greater momentum for regional cooperation. The Japanese Government expressed the desire that the creation of SAARC would help increase regional cooperation among the member-states and contribute to peace and stability in the region. Japan Times, the English language daily of Tokyo, described the formation of SAARC as the historical launching of a joint

64. For the Chinese reaction to the formation of SAARC, see The Hindu, 8 December 1985
65. Ibid, 13 December 1985
66. The Times of India, 8 December 1985
enterprise ‘to stabilise and develop one of the world’s trouble-torn areas through cooperative endeavours’.\(^67\)

Wishing a very good luck to the historic summit meeting, the U. N. Secretary General, Javier Perez de Cuellar, stated that within a very brief period the SAARC has achieved remarkable success in ‘promoting cooperation and understanding in the regions.’ The UN Chief conveyed his best wishes to President Ershad of Bangladesh and to all the Heads of State and Government present at Dhaka for their sincere efforts without which the inaugural conference of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) would not have succeeded. He further stated that he had minutely observed the positive development of this novel experiment in South Asia in the last few years. And to this, he added that it was not surprising at all that the capital of Bangladesh, Dhaka, was selected as the venue for the inaugural SAARC summit since its President Zia-ur-Rahman was solely instrumental in sowing the seed of regional cooperation in South Asia at its initial phase.

The Soviets too welcomed the first SAARC summit of December 1985 as a positive development in the South Asian political scenario. Scholars working at the India and South Asia Department of the Institute of Oriental Studies made detailed inquiries about the SAARC’s regional cooperation portfolios and the prospect of SAARC gathering momentum in 1987 after the establishment of SAARC Secretariat and the appointment of a Secretary-General. Also in the agenda of Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev’s foreign policy, South-South Cooperation occupied a prominent place.\(^68\)

**Achievements of the Dhaka Summit**

“The summit broadens the vision of South Asian cooperation. It gives a new impetus and fresh direction\(^69\) — to cooperative endeavours adopted by the

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South Asian countries. It succeeded in consolidating the institutional structure of South Asian cooperation. Moreover, it harboured ‘peaceful and good neighbourly relations’ among the component states of the region.

This, in a nutshell, is the story of SAARC’s successful achievement at Dhaka. The summit succeeded in implementing all the objectives spelt out in the SAARC Charter. It imparted a strong and structured basis to South Asian cooperation by establishing a South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and adopting a Charter for this organisation. The Heads of State or Government, assembled at the Dhaka summit, provided an example of their farsightedness by taking a decision on the establishment of a Secretariat for SAARC. The summit leaders went ahead and amended the relevant provisions of the Charter to read: “There shall be a Secretariat of SAARC” which would look after the overall functioning of the organisation. Without the Secretariat, SAARC would be inoperative like a ship without a captain.

Another significant decision taken by the SAARC leaders at the summit in Dhaka was that the Heads of State or Government of South Asian countries would meet once every year or more often as and when considered necessary and that the Council of Ministers would hold meeting twice a year in addition to its meeting in extraordinary sessions if necessity arises.

The summit leaders also decided to bring a number of new subjects within the purview of SAARC. They unanimously directed the Standing Committee of Foreign Secretaries to establish two Study Groups – the first one would go into the details of the problem of terrorism and the other would make enquiries about the problem of drug trafficking and abuse. This was, indeed, a notable achievement by SAARC to bring the alarming problem of terrorism within its agenda as it affects the security and stability of the member-states of SAARC. The leaders present at the Dhaka summit further directed the Council of Ministers to consider the report submitted by this Study Group and submit recommendations to them as to how best the member-states could cooperate among themselves to solve the problem. Cooperation by all member countries
of the region was essential to tackle the problem of terrorism which had assumed alarming proportions in South Asia. The leaders also approved that an identical exercise should be carried out with regard to the problem of drug trafficking and abuse.

Moreover, it was agreed upon by the summit that a Ministerial-level meeting would be convened to contrive programmes and projects so that the womenfolk participated in increasing number in the regional activities as well as in the development process. Furthermore, it was also decided at Dhaka that the conference would be held in India, presumably in March – April 1986.  

Besides this, it was agreed upon by the leaders that another meeting at the Ministerial-level should be held in Pakistan to make suggestions as to how the South Asian countries could combine their opinions on the New International Economic Order (NIEO).

Leaving aside these specific decisions the outstanding fact that the Heads of State or Government of the South Asian region held their first summit conference is of immense political significance. It provided for the first time a unique opportunity of direct contact among the leaders of South Asia and symbolised their will and commitment to place their mutual relations on a solid foundation of trust and alliance. Henceforth, it is quite appropriate to describe the summit as a historic event. “For the first time South Asian cooperation has been vested with the will and determination of the Heads of State or Government of these countries to make it grow and prosper”. The summit was held in a totally peaceful and friendly environment. Although attempt was made by General Zia-ul-Haq of Pakistan to introduce the issue of bilateralism, the other Heads of State or Government, on the whole, managed to steer clear of controversial issues.

70. First Ministerial-level meeting on ‘women in development’ of the SAARC was held on 6 – 8 May in Shillong. It was inaugurated by Rajiv Gandhi.
71. See M. Dubey, “SAARC: Achievements and Prospects,” n. 69, p. 17
By incorporating Article X of the Charter, which particularly excludes bilateral and contentious issues from the agenda of SAARC, the Summiteers had given proof of their political wisdom. The leaders tried to pursue regional cooperation autonomously without making it a victim of the strained bilateral relations. The leaders incorporated this principle keeping in mind the fact that once regional cooperation gained momentum, it would remove the dark clouds of misunderstanding, suspicion and bitterness prevailing in the subcontinent.72

**Failure of the Dhaka Summit**

In spite of the cordial and friendly atmosphere prevailing in the region, several problems cropped up during the course of the Dhaka summit. Amongst the problems faced by the Summiteers during the proceedings of the summit, the most prominent was the strained Indo-Pakistani relations. It is a well-known fact that India-Pakistan relations plays a crucial role in making regional cooperation a success in South Asia. This is solely because both India and Pakistan enjoy the status of big powers in the region. No discussion on regional cooperation can be carried out without involving these two big countries. It is impossible for SAARC to make any tangible progress unless attempts are made to improve the relation between India and Pakistan.73

Long before the partition of the sub-continent in 1947, Hindus and Muslims of undivided India professing different social, cultural and religious legacies, developed hostile feelings against each other. It is quite natural that the partition of the sub-continent in 1947, as a result of the “Two-nation theory”, further embittered the relations between the two arch-rivals. There are a number of contentious issues between the two countries arising out of security perceptions with divergent approaches which worsened the diplomatic relations and led to frequent skirmishes and wars. Of them, Kashmir is the

73. Shashi Upadhyay, “Pakistan and SAARC” in V. Narain and B.C. Upreti (ed.), n. 43, p. 81
main bone of contention, which triggered 1948 and 1965 wars. Ever since the
birth of Pakistan in 1947, both India and Pakistan claimed that Kashmir
belonged to it. In 1971, another war was fought between India and Pakistan.
This time on the issue of Bangladesh. Following the Indo-Pak war leading to
the emergence of an independent Bangladesh in 1971, the Shimla Agreement
was signed in 1972 between India and Pakistan. The Agreement referred to the
Kashmir issue and as per the terms of the Agreement, both parties agreed to
“refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or
political independence of each other,” convert the cease-fire line in Kashmir
into a “line-of-actual-control”, and that the two sides would raise bilateral
issues only in cases between themselves and not in international forums.
Pakistani leaders have never missed an opportunity to raise the Kashmir issue
wherever it seemed possible. Quite obviously, the occasion of the Dhaka
summit was not to be an exception to this usual trend. On the eve of the Dhaka
summit, President Zia-ul-Haq of Pakistan once again deployed his ancient
tricks.

Apart from Kashmir, the other contentious issues which have contributed in
further deteriorating the relations between the two countries are – Pakistani
support to the Khalistani terrorists of Punjab, Pakistan’s nuclear programme,
the ‘troop advances in Siachen glacier’ and nonetheless, the Pakistani charge
of India playing the role of a ‘big brother’ in South Asia. 74

Indian accusation of Pakistani assistance to the extremists in the sensitive
border states of Punjab and Kashmir destroyed amicable relations between the
two countries. It is now a well-established fact that Pakistan had trained the
extremists in secret camps, armed them with the sole aim of destroying
communal harmony and indulge in subversive activities in Punjab. 75 A
number of Pakistani agents acting as expatriate Sikhs had been appointed to
brainwash the young people with insidious propaganda. Many of the terrorists
confessed that they had been to Pakistan to receive military training and

74. See Ghulam Umar, n. 40, p.63
75. The Hindu, 15 February 1984
returned with weapons to engage themselves in violent activities. As a consequence, India had decided to maintain a round-the-clock vigil all along the border to prevent the return of terrorists trained at secret camps in Pakistan. The Government of India ordered the Army and the Border Security Force to deal strictly with the extremists crossing the border into Pakistan to receive training or returning to India after indoctrination. According to press reports, Pakistanis infiltrated into the Indian territory in the disguise of Sikhs so as to create internal disturbances in the country. Moreover, Pakistan was alleged to have provided financial and armed support to the Khalistani rebels and also imparted military training to the Khalistani youth in order to undermine the territorial integrity of India. Thus, Pakistan’s alleged support to the Khalistani movements was a serious factor producing baneful effect on Indo-Pakistani relations which itself is suffering from many other problems. Apart from the Khalistan issue, Pakistan’s support to the cause of the Kashmiri militants also produced tensions in India – Pakistan relations.

The Government of India expressed anxiety over the ‘acquisition of sophisticated arms by Pakistan’ from USA and China and the possibility of Pakistan manufacturing an ‘Islamic Bomb’ which would be detrimental to India’s security interest. Press reports also revealed that Pakistan was acquiring armaments at a feverish pitch. F–16 and Mirage 5 aircrafts of Pakistan were being equipped with latest weapons and its air defence systems were being strengthened. Reports further stated that Pakistan procured AWACS from America and was acquiring naval equipment such as Harpoon missiles. The Government of India described the stockpiling of arms in Pakistan as an imminent source of danger to India’s security environment. The Indian Government asked the Western Powers to restrain Pakistan ‘from proceeding along the nuclear path’ since Pakistan was ‘clandestinely acquiring

76. Ibid, 11 September 1985
77. Ibid, 19 December 1984
78. Ibid, 9 February 1984
79. The Times of India, 28 March 1985
80. The Hindustan Times, 27 April 1984
nuclear technology and material’ from them.\footnote{The Statesman, 2 September 1985} Apprehending the possibility of an arms race in the sub-containment, the Indian Government asked Pakistan to put a ceiling on the import of arms from the West.

The Siachen glacier\footnote{Siachen is an undemarcated area over which Pakistan does not accept India’s right. India, on the other hand, considers it a part of its own territory. Armed with the latest American sophisticated weapons, Pakistani Air Force planes made several attacks to grab Siachen glacier from the Indian possession. It is one of the important divisive issues in the relations between India and Pakistan.} became a source of hostilities since 1983 and many people from both the countries lost their lives with no permanent solution in sight. Pakistanis claimed that the Siachen area belonged to their country. At the same time, India was not prepared to vacate the territory and allow Pakistan to occupy it.\footnote{The Tribune, 15 December 1985} Armed with the latest American sophisticated weapons, Pakistani Air Force planes made several attacks to grab Siachen glacier from the Indian possession.

There is an unjustified suspicion in all the neighboring countries of India including Pakistan that the largest country of the region, namely India, ‘may harbour hegemonistic ambitions’ and that SAARC may be misused to fulfil sinister objects. In other words, the Indo-centric nature of the region acts as a crucial bottleneck for promoting regional cooperation in South Asia. The big-brotherly attitude displayed by India provoke distorted perceptions and is a constant source of enmity of all the South Asian siblings.\footnote{Ever since the liberation of Bangladesh in December 1971 the neighbouring countries of India became apprehensive of the possibility of India’s interference in their internal affairs. Their fears became pronounced after India’s inevitable involvement in the ethnic crisis of Sri Lanka, culminating in the signing of Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement in 1987 and India’s interference in Maldives, apparently by invitation from the Maldivian President in 1988. Pakistan often sought to exploit India’s alleged big-brotherly activities and tried to mobilise the support of other South Asian nations. This has undoubtedly cast a shadow on the prospects of SAARC.} This is more pronounced in case of Pakistan since it wants parity with India since the days of ‘traumatic partition which sundered the sub continent’ and ‘brought Pakistan into existence’.

It was Pakistani President Zia-ul-Haq, who in an interview published in the
Bangladesh Observer of 6 December 1985, observed that India’s dispute with all its neighbours and its overwhelming size were the two main factors disrupting the regional cooperation process. Strained and hostile India-Pakistan relations shaped Pakistani perceptions with regard to SAARC and affected the operationalisation of its aims and objectives. Without taking notice of the facts that India pays due respect to the sovereignty and integrity of other South Asian nations and believes in non-interference, that India is conscious of the enormous responsibilities that its vast size and power bestowed upon it and that in the SARC meetings India tried its best to remove the apprehension that it might wish to play the role of a big brother, President Zia-ul-Haq had advised New Delhi that it must not forget that all the South Asian countries enjoyed equal status and that it should try all possible means to win the confidence and trust of its small neighbours.

The above-mentioned fact simply revealed that India according to Zia, was the main obstacle in the smooth sailing of SAARC. Despite the incorporation of the basic postulate in the Charter of SAARC that bilateral and contentious issues should not be brought within the purview of SAARC deliberations, he introduced the factor of India’s bilateral problems with its neighbours. This factor, in turn, acted as a bottleneck in the progress of SAARC.

In fact, Pakistan did not hesitate at all to make use of the SAARC forum to launch an anti-India campaign during the Dhaka summit, by raising the unresolved Kashmir issue, defending Pakistan’s nuclear venture and portraying India as a hegemonist which was taking a “negative” attitude on SAARC proposals. At the outset of the first ever gathering of the seven South Asian countries and the explicit prohibition of reference to bilateral and contentious issues, such an intensive media attack through the distribution of biased literature totally damaged the so-called SAARC spirit which was considered to have pervaded Dhaka during the two-day summit.

85. See Shashi Upadhyay, “Pakistan and SAARC”, n.73, p.89
**Concluding Observation**

The emergence of SAARC is the culmination of an ardent desire and expectations of the masses inhabiting South Asia for restoring safety and security in the turbulent region through peace and development. The concept of regional cooperation, though ancient in the international sphere, 'is a late phenomenon in South Asia.' Much after the industrialised West recognised the need for setting up regional forums and regional groupings, the leaders of South Asian countries realised the urgent need for regional cooperation for solving their problems.

The first summit of the South Asian nations at Dhaka during 7–8 December 1985 left an indelible impression on the history of regional cooperation in South Asia since it was for the first time that the leaders of South Asia committed themselves to work together for finding common solution to their problems. The people of South Asia realised that like ASEAN or NAM movements, they could also have a regional forum of their own wherein they could seek redress of their grievances. Thus, the formation of SAARC has become an avenue for promoting regional cooperation and nation-building activities.

Uniqueness of SAARC lies in the fact its proposal came neither from any external power nor from any regional big power, India or Pakistan. Instead, the concept was initially mooted by the President of Bangladesh, General Zia-ur-Rahman.

The evolutionary process which gave birth to SAARC at the Dhaka summit was slow and lengthy. On the historic day of 8 December 1985, South Asian Regional Cooperation – which started its journey in August 1983 – was given a firm institutional base with seven Heads of State or Government signing the Charter and Dhaka declaration. From that day onwards, the newly-born organisation was christened as South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). Meeting at the level of Heads of State or Government had substantially contributed to restoring normalcy and order in an otherwise
turbulent South Asia. As a result of continuous diplomatic exercises, people of South Asia got opportunities to exchange their views on matters of common concern. The institutionalisation of SAARC enhanced 'the expressions of South Asian collectivity.' It fostered 'a sense of belonging to a region' and unanimously reiterated firm commitment to the principles of sovereign equality, territorial integrity, national independence and non-interference in the domestic affairs of other states and peaceful settlement of disputes.86

Diversities in size, level of economic development, resources and population are inherent in the nature of South Asia. India is the dominant power in South Asia in view of its vastness in size, population and economic development. India also occupies a central place in the region. There is a bit of India in all the other countries of South Asia. All the six South Asian countries share borders with India. As a result, India has bilateral problems with all its neighbours. The huge size and enormous powers of India have made its neighbours suspicious of India's hegemonistic ambitions. Being the largest country in South Asia, a lot of responsibilities rest upon India for making SAARC a success. With the setting up of SAARC as a regional body, the 'inequality syndrome' narrowed and the institutional forum helped in removing the fear psychosis of small powers. Although the SAARC leaders tried their best so as not to allow bilateralism cast a shadow over the proceedings of SAARC and thus impede its progress by inserting Article X in the Charter of SAARC, it was seen in actual practice that bilateralism had time and again obstructed the smooth functioning of the organisation. 'Given the unalterable geopolitical imperatives, bilateralism is going to remain a permanent feature of South Asian relationships' and SAARC cannot get rid of 'the need for bilateral settlement of bilateral problems'.87

In spite of the fact that SAARC did not make much headway since its

inception in the 1980s, it should be borne in mind that amidst the strife-ridden global environment, SAARC came as a ray of hope as it involved cooperation among the member-states to achieve a common desired goal i.e. to bring peace and territorial integrity within the region.\footnote{The Hindustan Times, 29 February 1984} The very fact that the people of South Asia realised that without intensified cooperation among themselves, they could not have their due share in international trade and improve their position, is an evidence of SAARC’s success in large measure. “Cooperation is a living process, it grows, expands and becomes forceful”.\footnote{Golam Hossain, “Bangladesh and SAARC”, n. 43, p. 79} The same also holds good in case of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). It is often said that without SAARC the regional strategic environment would have deteriorated faster.

Abul Ahsan, first Secretary-General of SAARC, commented that ‘despite bickerings among some member-states’ the new-born regional grouping achieved commendable progress.\footnote{Holiday, 18 March 1988} It cannot be denied that SAARC succeeded in removing the “psychological barriers of inter-state suspicion and mistrust”\footnote{Golam Hossain, “Bangladesh and SAARC”, n. 43, p. 79}. 

\footnote{88. The Hindustan Times, 29 February 1984} \footnote{89. See Golam Hossain, “Bangladesh and SAARC”, n. 43, p. 79} \footnote{90. Holiday, 18 March 1988} \footnote{91. See Golam Hossain, “Bangladesh and SAARC”, n. 43, p. 79}
CHAPTER – III

THE BANGALORE SUMMIT

Following the principles laid down in the SAARC Charter, (which have been discussed in the preceding chapter) it became evident to the member nations that an annual summit meeting of the Heads of State or Government was necessary for the smooth functioning of the organisation. Consequently, after an interval of eleven months, the time was ripe for the holding of a second summit meeting of the Heads of State or Government of the seven South Asian nations. One of the major tasks of the second summit, which was held in Bangalore in November 1986, was to give real meaning and content to an organisation which had so far been functioning in a loose administrative framework provided by its initial Charter.¹

As an aftermath of the meeting between the Prime Minister of India, Rajiv Gandhi and the Pakistani President, Zia-ul-Haq on 17 December 1985, a friendly atmosphere was created in the South Asian scenario.² Delighted by the atmosphere of goodwill prevailing in South Asia, the leaders of SAARC expected that the second summit in Bangalore would be able to further consolidate and carry forward the objectives of SAARC. As against this optimistic view shared by some South Asian leaders, there were the sceptics who merely apprehended that the second SAARC summit might not be able to achieve the desired goals. The root of their apprehension lay in the fact that never before in the history of South Asia, so many Heads of Government agreed to meet with so little in common among them to generate the hope that the answer to all common evils of South Asia lay in regional cooperation and that regional cooperation was bound to grow and flourish.

The Bangalore summit (16 - 17 November 1986) was held against the tensed background of serious ethnic turmoil in Sri Lanka with its harmful impact on Indo-Sri Lanka bilateral relations. Just before the opening ceremony of the

¹. *The Hindustan Times*, 9 November 1986
². See *Ibid*, 8 November 1986
summit, an information was received by the Western media that Pakistan had successfully launched a nuclear device on its soil. This obviously made the Indian side apprehensive of Pakistan’s intentions and the bilateral relations between the two most prominent members of SAARC, namely, India and Pakistan received a severe blow and deteriorated. As a result of all these complications, it was presumed beforehand that unlike the first summit of the SAARC countries held in Dhaka in December 1985, the Bangalore summit would turn out to be a low-key affair. Launched barely a year earlier, SAARC was still in its nascent state and required proper nourishment with profound care.

**Prelude to the Summit**

According to the schedule prepared earlier, the pre-summit work commenced with the holding of the meeting of the SAARC Programme Committee on 11 November 1986. The meeting of the SAARC Programme Committee was to be followed by the sittings of various Standing Committees. The meeting of the Council of Ministers was scheduled for 14 and 15 November.

The focus of the SAARC session and the topics that were figured at the meetings of the Programme Committee and the Standing Committee were outlined by Muchkund Dubey, chief coordinator of SAARC, at a press conference on 10 November 1986. The issues were, namely, terrorism, international economic situation etc.

The Programme Committee of the SAARC, which concluded its two-day talks on 12 November, did not deal with the contentious issue of terrorism. The reason behind this was that on the very question of defining terrorism, India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Maldives failed to arrive at a consensus. Recommendations were made by the committee for the setting up

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of four more regional institutions to foster greater cooperation. Senior officials of the Programme Committee decided to make recommendations for the setting up of centres on telecommunications, software, tuberculosis eradication, transport and shipping.\(^7\)

The committee also finalised the assessment report of SAARC activities during the last one year and chalked out a calendar of projects for 1987. It also suggested specific guidelines for the future course of SAARC events.\(^8\) Moreover, it was also decided by the committee that no SAARC events would be given official status unless approved by the Standing Committee of Foreign Secretaries. It recommended that the administrative structure and the governing council of the meteorological centre, to be set up in New Delhi, should be finalised and put forward for approval by the member countries within February 1987.

The Foreign Secretaries of SAARC countries held their meeting on 13 November 1986 with the hope that the Bangalore summit would be a grand success. The Foreign Secretaries elaborately dealt with the measures to prevent, control and eliminate the menace of drug abuse and illegal drug trafficking in the South Asian sub-continent. They also held extensive discussion on the definition of terrorism and on the issue of extending cooperative activities on the basis of recognised international principles for prevention of terrorism. They also dealt with the matter of bearing the expenses of the SAARC Secretariat. The recommendation of the Programme Committee relating to streamlining and improvement of work programme under the Integrated Programme of Action (IPA) and a calendar of activities during 1987 were adopted by the Foreign Secretaries.\(^9\)

On the eve of the summit conference, the Council of Ministers formally met on 14 November 1986 and appreciated the progress of work and

\(^7\) Ibid  
\(^8\) Ibid  
recommendations made by the Standing Committee. The Foreign Ministers approved of the draft declaration to be adopted at the second SAARC summit. The Council of Ministers did not face much difficulty in approving the draft declaration since the main contentious issue of terrorism had been sorted out. Following Sri Lanka’s suggestion, some editing of the draft declaration was undertaken by a group. At one stage, Sri Lanka expressed surprise over the fact whether there was a need for a Bangalore declaration since SAARC countries had already adopted the Dhaka declaration in December 1985 at its first summit. In this context, it was pointed out by Pakistan that while the Non-Aligned summits issued declaration, the summits of industrialised nations did not. However, it was realised by the leaders of the participating countries that the matter should be decided by the host country, i.e. India. So, the ministers decided that there would be a “Bangalore declaration”.\(^\text{10}\) Pakistan, on its part, tried to introduce in the declaration a concept on disarmament that drew the distinction between a nuclear weapon test and a peaceful nuclear explosion. At the same time, it agreed not to press for its amendment when India pointed out that it had a different view on this issue.

Pakistan was also in favour of greater financial nexus between SAARC and other countries and world institutions. It also made suggestions for an ASEAN type approach which would give this regional grouping a Western orientation. India was, however, reluctant to adopt this approach and repeatedly emphasised the need for collective self-reliance and generation of internal resources. In other words, it did not allow SAARC to look for external financial help for the implementation of its projects. Moreover, India believed that by asking for external assistance, SAARC would be deviating from the goals of self-reliance and self-dependency.\(^\text{11}\)

Terrorism was a crucial issue before the Foreign Ministers of SAARC countries during the preparatory phase of the Bangalore summit. Foreign

\(^{10}\) *The Times of India*, 16 November 1986  
\(^{11}\) Ibid
Secretaries of the seven SAARC countries failed to reach an agreement over the question of terrorism. Although the member countries of SAARC unanimously agreed that combined action must be taken against all forms of terrorism, India and Sri Lanka differed from one another on the definition of terrorism. While defining terrorism as an extraditable offence, Sri Lanka altogether ignored the political and human rights aspects. It also submitted a list of offences, which were to be labelled as terrorist and not political for the purposes of extradition.\(^ {12}\) While expressing its anxiety over the problem, India had a different view regarding the measures that the member-states of SAARC should adopt in this context. India tried to draw the attention of South Asian states to a number of international conventions on terrorism that it had signed. For instance, the Montreal, Tokyo and Hague Conventions. Nevertheless, India made it clear that it was ready to join hands with other members of SAARC, in adopting a follow-up action on the recommendation of the expert groups.\(^ {13}\)

After failing to arrive at an agreed definition of "terrorism", the Foreign Ministers resolved the issue by taking a decision to absorb the spirit of U. N. resolution 2625.\(^ {14}\) They agreed that their states should not assist, instigate or organise terrorist activities on their territory against another country and cooperate with others in combating terrorism.

The Foreign Ministers finalising the draft declaration on 15 November also agreed upon the location and funding pattern of the SAARC Secretariat. It was also decided by the SAARC Foreign Ministers that the association's head

\(^{12}\) *The Times of India*, 21 November 1986


\(^{14}\) The United Nations (U.N.) General Assembly unanimously condemned all acts, methods and practices of terrorism and suggested steps to wipe out the menace. Thus, the U.N. resolution 2625 was adopted by the 159 member House on 9 December 1985, through consensus. It declared that terrorist acts "wherever and by whomever committed," were "criminal". It urged governments to sign existing global treaties against terrorism and take steps to eliminate the problem. Moreover, the resolution 2625 also urged governments to fulfil their assumed international obligations and refrain from "organising, instigating, assisting or participating in terrorist acts in other states or acquiescing in" activities within their territory directed towards such purposes.
quarter would be set up in Kathmandu and a distinguished diplomat of Bangladesh would hold the post of its Secretary General for two years.  

The second summit is remarkable for two significant documents adopted by the SAARC leaders after a lot of discussions, namely, the Bangalore declaration and a Memorandum of Understanding for the establishment of the SAARC Secretariat in Kathmandu. 

**The Bangalore Declaration**

The seven Heads of State or Government who assembled at the second SAARC summit in Bangalore on 16 and 17 November 1986, adopted the Bangalore declaration on 17 November 1986.

Following the footsteps of Dhaka declaration, the leaders, who were present at the Bangalore summit, emphatically stressed upon the fact that they were very much enthusiastic and keen about the idea of promoting peace, stability and progress in the region. In this connection, they made it clear that the South Asian countries engaged in the task of promoting peace and socio-economic development of the South Asian region, should obey the principles of the United Nations Charter.

The Heads of State or Government reiterated the desire of the inhabitants of South Asia and the Governments to work unitedly in accordance with the SAARC Charter and to adopt common policies and approaches for solving problems which all of them had to encounter in the adverse international

16. See P. K. Mishra, n.3, p.56
18. To enable the United Nations fulfil its avowed intention of saving the succeeding generations from the scourge of war, the framers of the Charter deemed it necessary to lay down certain principles in Article 2. The major principles to be followed by the organisation and its members are respect for the principle of sovereign equality of all its members, non-use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State and non-interference in the internal affairs of other states and pacific settlement of disputes.
As in Dhaka, here too, the leaders once again reiterated that the primary objective of SAARC was to promote the well-being of the masses of the entire region, to enhance the pace of economic growth as well as social and cultural upliftment of the region and to provide all individuals with an opportunity to lead a dignified life and to realise their potentialities fully. The leaders also highlighted the fact that the countries of South Asia had been brought under a common umbrella by a number of factors, such as, geographical proximity and ancient cultural, social and historical legacies. These common features provided a strong edifice for the South Asian regional cooperation for fighting the economic and social evils unitedly.

The seven leaders recalled that in terms of population, SAARC was the largest amongst all the regional groupings in the world, and that all the seven constituent states of SAARC were in possession of substantial human and natural resources. They expressed their strong desire to achieve maximum utilisation of these resources by identifying their cooperative activities, keeping in mind the large amount of present and potential complementarities among their economies. They were very sanguine that the countries of South Asia, which had been the cradle of human civilisation, acting in unison, could once again play their due role in the family of nations.

The Heads of State or Government stated that like all movements of cooperation, the South Asian cooperation would fail to attain its cherished goals unless and until the masses of South Asia were involved in it. To this end, they suggested promotion of people-to-people contact as a must.

The Summiteers expressed happiness about the steady and progressive implementation of SAARC Integrated Programme of Action. In the Bangalore declaration too, they made it clear that they were bent on consolidating and streamlining further the implementation of the IPA. In this context, they emphasised the significance of expanding cooperative activities under SAARC.
The leaders welcomed the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding on the establishment of the SAARC Secretariat by the Council of Ministers and their decision to locate the SAARC Secretariat in Kathmandu and appoint Ambassador Abul Ahsan of Bangladesh as the first Secretary General of SAARC.

Since the development of children was absolutely essential, the leaders attached highest priority to the needs of children in national development planning. They felt that the people of South Asian countries should be made conscious of the rights of children. In this context, they asked for the conclusion and adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child at the earliest. Furthermore, they advocated the realisation of the goals of universal immunisation, universal primary education, maternal and child nutrition, safe drinking water and adequate shelter before 2000 A. D.

They reiterated their profound commitment to the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and their unequivocal support to the U. N. as the most effective global forum for addressing the issues of peace, disarmament and development and an essential instrument for ushering in an equitable international political and economic order. In order to preserve and strengthen the U. N., they decided to concert their activities in all the multilateral agencies within the U. N. system.\(^\text{19}\)

In Bangalore, once again the leaders expressed their firm devotion to the principles and objectives of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and

\(^{19}\) During 1985-86 the United Nations faced an unprecedented financial crisis as a result of the accumulated deficit in the U. N. budget due to the refusal of many member countries to pay their respective share of contribution. Although more than half of the 159 countries comprising the U.N. were lagging behind in their allocated contributions, including the Soviet Union, the crisis mainly arose from the U.S. warning to curtail its contributions by five percent to the U.N. as it wanted ‘weighted voting’ to be incorporated in budgetary matters, i.e., a change from the one-country one-vote system to proportional voting according to the financial contributions. The then U. N. Secretary-General, Javier Perez de Cuellar appealed to the member states to stop withholding their U.N. dues and accused the U.S. of trying to cripple the world organisation by its decision to cut off U.S. contribution from 25 to 20 percent. Thus, the very existence, stability and the smooth working of the U.N. had been greatly jeopardised.
highlighted the significant role played by the movement in strengthening international peace, stability and progress. They offered unconditional support to the decisions adopted at the Harare summit\(^{20}\) of the Non-aligned countries and asked for their immediate implementation.

The South Asian leaders were very much aware of the fact that without a peaceful atmosphere, the South Asian countries could not achieve their much desired goals of growth and stability. But the prevailing atmosphere at that time was not at all suitable for the fulfilment of their cherished goals. The realm of international politics was marred by tension due to the superpower rivalry and their unhealthy policies and practices of domination, intervention, use of force, aggression, occupation, economic coercion and interference in the domestic matters of other countries by violating the purposes and principles of the U.N. Charter.\(^{21}\)

The leaders expressed their disappointment over the fact that the resolutions adopted by the Reykjavik summit could not be implemented in practice. Nevertheless, they satisfactorily noted that the proposals adopted by the summit were still on the table. They earnestly hoped that the negotiations would be resumed immediately in order to realise the ultimate goal of eliminating nuclear weapons. They also pressed for the early conclusion of the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).\(^{22}\)

\(^{20}\) The eighth Non-Aligned Summit was held at Harare in 1986. The summit adopted a concrete plan to assist the African Frontline States facing hardships due to the policies of South African racist regime.

\(^{21}\) Since the Cold War days, the Superpowers had often been interfering in the internal affairs of the Third World countries, applying pressure tactics in order to enlist their support on various international issues and exploiting their economies in various ways. Latin America, Central America and South America were nominally independent – but virtually under the domination of the U.S. economic control. The U.S.A. intervened in the affairs of all the nations to which it had given military and economic assistance. The US armed intervention in Cuba, Guatemala and Dominican Republic are worth mentioning. After the promulgation of the Monroe Doctrine, the U.S.A. annexed Texas in 1845, waged war upon Mexico and forcibly snatched away almost half of its territory. Similarly, the Soviet Union intervened in the affairs of the East European countries so that the Communists could retain control over them.

\(^{22}\) The CTBT is one of the most significant arms control measures of the nuclear weapons era. It is also quite elusive. Its central objective is a multi-lateral and effectively verifiable treaty that should lead to nuclear disarmament worldwide. However, it should be noted that disagreements prevail among nations about the CTBT. For example, India has rejected the U.S. – backed CTBT text as being easy on the nuclear-haves but not so on the have-nots.
The Heads of State or Government were very much worried about the prevailing world economic crisis, with particularly harsh and severe consequences for the economic and developmental prospect of the developing countries. They endorsed the declaration of the SAARC Ministerial Meeting on International Economic Issues held in Islamabad in April 1986 and its analysis of the exceptionally adverse external economic environment which posed an obstacle to the growth prospects of the South Asian and other developing countries. They particularly expressed their concern over the negative factors such as depressed commodity prices, rising trend of protectionism, global recession, lower export earnings, net outflow of financial resources from developing countries and an aggravated debt burden. The leaders noted that the rates of growth had fallen much faster than what was previously projected and that the future growth prospects in these countries were not at all bright. Further, they pointed out that the implications of these trends for the development prospects of the developing countries were not at all encouraging.

The Summiteers strongly recommended that “the recent retreat from multilateralism should be reversed through a revival of North-South dialogue”. They also added that such dialogue must be directed to initiating a process of reform of the monetary and financial systems. Moreover, in their opinion, in the quest for revival of global growth, priority must be given to exploiting the huge potential for expanded production, consumption and trade which exists in the developing countries.

The summit leaders were happy with the resolution adopted by the SAARC Ministerial Meeting on International Economic Issues. At this meeting, identification of a number of objectives to be pursued by the SAARC countries was attempted, namely, widening the amount of concessional assistance, doubling the rate of financial flows for the development of developing countries, ameliorating official debts, liberalising trade policies

23. A two-day ministerial conference of the SAARC countries on international economic issues was held in Islamabad on 4 – 5 April 1986. It was inaugurated by Pakistani Prime Minister M.K. Junejo.
especially in textile and agriculture, ensuring stability in the prices of commodities, transferring technology and special treatment for the least developed SAARC countries. The Heads of State suggested effective measures such as regular consultation and cooperation in relevant global economic conferences and institutions for the fulfilment of the above mentioned goals.

The leaders opined that the deliberations made by the New round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations posed a challenge as well as an opportunity to promote their development prospects through the expansion of their exports.

The Summiters were of the view that the Bangalore summit had helped in consolidating the gains of regional cooperative efforts so far launched by SAARC and simultaneously exploring new avenues and possibilities for such cooperation. The Bangalore summit made an important contribution towards strengthening and streamlining the basis for such cooperation.

The Heads of State expressed their willingness to expand and strengthen their cooperative efforts under SAARC. They also expressed their faith in SAARC. In their opinion, SAARC reflected a revival of South Asian consciousness which had inspired the inhabitants of this region over the years. The leaders also exhibited their firm belief that the SAARC would not only exert a favourable impact on bilateral relations between the countries of the region, but also impart a new vigour and stability to these relations.

Welcoming the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding, which led to the establishment of the SAARC Secretariat, they strongly believed that the Secretariat would assist in the coordination of SAARC activities and more fruitful implementation of its programmes and objects.

A Memorandum of Understanding on the setting up of the SAARC Secretariat was signed by the Foreign ministers during the closing session of the Bangalore summit.24

The Memorandum covered issues such as the Secretariat’s functions, service matters, cost etc, which were already covered in the recommendations of the SAARC Standing Committee meeting held in Dhaka on 11 August 1986.

Achievements of the Bangalore Summit

The second summit held in Bangalore in November 1986 was another milestone in the history of regional cooperation in South Asia. The Bangalore summit had made an important contribution to strengthen and streamline the institutional basis of SAARC. In other words, it provided a solid foundation for the functioning of SAARC by setting up a Permanent Secretariat in Kathmandu. The seven Foreign Ministers signed a Memorandum of Understanding on 17 November 1986 for the establishment of a Secretariat in Kathmandu with the Secretary General at its head who would be assisted by seven directors, one from each state. The summit also requested the Secretary General to assume his office from January 1987.²⁵ The signing of the Memorandum of Understanding relating to the setting up of the Permanent Secretariat in Kathmandu induced an optimism that the spirit of sharing and joint striving would soon become a corporate habit with the member countries.

The Bangalore Declaration clearly identified a close connection between SAARC and bilateral relations. Indeed, many South Asian leaders used the informal meetings in SAARC to discuss their bilateral problems. That the modalities of the SAARC summits both at Dhaka and at Bangalore were conducive to informal confabulations touching on bilateral issues can itself be described as a constructive development.²⁶

Bangalore declaration voiced the urgency of a peaceful global atmosphere without which all developmental activities, whether they related to children, agriculture or telecommunications, would be devoid of any real substance.

²⁶. The Hindu, 18 November 1986.
Dhaka summit saw the birth of SAARC. Bangalore reaffirmed the commitment of the SAARC leaders to regional cooperation and gave the organisation a new impetus.\textsuperscript{27}

A creative and progressive approach to the future development of SAARC was evident in the deliberations of the second SAARC summit. It was hoped that by putting emphasis upon similarities rather than on differences, on their rich heritage rooted in a common historical background and on the immense possibilities of regional cooperation, SAARC could in the forthcoming years lead to increasing extension and intensification of cooperation beneficial to all the peoples of the region. It was thought that the implementation of the decisions taken at the Bangalore summit would certainly strengthen the initiatives towards this end.

It was evident from the proceedings of the first South Asian summit conference that to enable regional cooperation achieve its desired goals, people-to-people contacts at various levels were urgently required. Keeping this in mind, the leaders who assembled at the second summit, approved of five additional areas for the realisation of this end. The five new areas identified at the second summit in Bangalore were – (a) establishment of regional broadcasting system; (b) a documentation centre; (c) institution of SAARC chairs, fellowships and scholarships; (d) organised volunteers programme and (e) promotion of tourism.\textsuperscript{28}

SAARC Audio-visual Exchange Programme (SAVE) had been an effective medium for promoting South Asian consciousness amongst the masses of the region and for establishing people-to-people contact.\textsuperscript{29} Regular television and radio programmes had been telecast on the 1\textsuperscript{st} and 15\textsuperscript{th} of each month respectively under SAVE. As a result of these programmes, inhabitants of the

\textsuperscript{27} Abul Ahsan, “South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation in Historical Perspective”, \textit{SAARC Perspective}, SAARC Secretariat, Kathmandu, vol. 2 No. 4, December 1988, p. 29.


\textsuperscript{29} See Shamsul Haq, “Beyond Bangalore”, \textit{South Asia Journal}, vol. 1 No. 1, July - September 1987, p. 7
seven SAARC countries became familiar with the cultural traits and heritages of each other. The SAVE quiz programme also evoked keen interest amongst the youth of the region. Previously, the programmes were mostly on social and cultural issues but now-a-days attempts are being made to prepare programmes on developmental themes. SAVE programmes also incorporate co-productions on designated SAARC Year Themes.

Considering the fact that the radio had reached even the remotest corners of the region and television was well within the reach of the majority of the people of the region, the leaders at Bangalore had demonstrated their political farsightedness by formulating SAVE programmes. Save Programme also embarked on bridging the information gap that had so long separated the people from one another.

SAARC Documentation Centre had been set up with the sole aim of providing instant access to reliable and up-to-date findings on technical, scientific and developmental matters. It was set up at the Indian National Scientific Documentation Centre (INSDC) in New Delhi and it was to start functioning by the middle of 1994. The SAARC Documentation System (SDS) is the main instrument of SDC. In order to cope with the requirement of the member-states for ready access to scientific and technical information, SDC would highlight the documents published in the constituent states of SAARC, documents concerning global data bases in the fields of biological, physical, chemical, engineering and life sciences as well as matters relating to development.30

The SAARC Chairs, Fellowships and Scholarships Scheme (SCFSS) was instituted with the objective of providing increased cross-fertilisation of ideas through greater interaction among students, scholars and academics in the SAARC countries. Later, the scheme was brought under the purview of the

The main aim of the SAARC Youth Volunteers Programme (SYVOP) was to harness the idealism of Youth for regional cooperation programmes by enabling them to work in other countries in the field of agriculture and forestry extension work. SYVOP was brought under the purview of the Technical Committee on Rural Development in 1989.

In order to be acquainted with the life-styles of the neighbouring SAARC countries, people of South Asia should be given facilities for travelling. With this end in view, the leaders initiated the SAARC Scheme for Promotion of Organised Tourism. It was also assumed that the scheme would, in particular, act as a step to facilitate development of intra-regional tourism. The Technical Committee was entrusted with the task of taking necessary action to ensure speedy implementation of the scheme.31

Since children are the future of any country, the Summiteers realised that they should be accorded highest priority in national developmental planning. The leaders also wanted to make it sure that towards the end of the twentieth century, no child should die or be denied development for lack of adequate financial resources in the family. To realise this goal, the leaders suggested an early conclusion and adoption of the UN Convention on the rights of the child and extended their support to the goals of universal primary education, provision of safe drinking water, universal immunisation by the year 1990, material and child nutrition and adequate shelter by the year 2000 AD. A decision was taken by them that the Standing Committee would undertake annual surveys on the situation of the children in South Asia and monitor programmes relating to the development of children.

Apart from the resolution on terrorism, the leaders, without any hesitation, condemned all acts, methods and practices of terrorism as criminal and condemned their harmful impact on political stability, regional and global

31. Ibid, pp. 23 – 26
peace, cooperation and socio-economic development.

The Summiteers were contented with the implementation and progress of the Integrated Programme of Action. They appreciated the establishment of the Technical Committee on Women in development, and on the prevention of drug trafficking and drug abuse. The report of the SAARC Ministerial Meeting on International Economic Issues was also discussed at the second summit and the major objectives identified in the report such as enlarged economic assistance, amelioration of official debts, special treatment for least developed countries, trade liberalisation, price stabilisation, transfer of technology etc. were endorsed.

Thus, it cannot be denied that the Bangalore summit had not only unfolded a new horizon for SAARC but had provided India with an unparallel opportunity “to lead SAARC along the path of growing trust and confidence in unity in diversity and closer cooperation in improving the standard of living of the masses of the region”. 32

Apparently, however, the immediate result of the second summit at Bangalore was not so remarkable. Yet, the very process of reaffirming faith in organised regional cooperation for raising the standard of living of the one-fifth of humanity who inhabit the sub-continent, had a positive value. That the leaders of the seven South Asian countries resolved to cooperate in combating and eliminating terrorism from the entire region was indeed a great achievement.

**Failures of the Bangalore Summit**

It was very unfortunate to note that the second summit of the SAARC countries at Bangalore did not engender any great expectation regarding regional cooperation in the Indian sub-continent. The showy cavalcade and high-pressure publicity campaign could not succeed in establishing the SAARC identity in the South Asian people’s collective consciousness. 33

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32. See Shamsul Haq, n.29, p. 17
Owing to the unavailability of the rhetorics at the Bangalore summit meeting, the Summiteers had merely reiterated their unanimous stand which they had adopted eleven months prior to their first formal summit in Dhaka. The Bangalore declaration, in most part, was nothing more than an exercise in paraphrasing the SAARC Charter itself. 34 In most cases, it was devoid of any practical value.

On the burning topic of terrorism in the region – the leaders condemned it as criminal without identifying the accused and endorsed the U. N. resolution 2625, asking each state to “refrain from organising, instigating, assisting or participating in” such acts against another state, but abstained from making any practical suggestion that could initiate joint effort to banish this scourge totally from the region.

The most important task undertaken by SAARC was the removal of poverty of the inhabitants of South Asia and improving the quality of life of the region. But, the Bangalore declaration did not specify or direct the priority of the projects to be undertaken in order to realise this goal. The most outstanding omission had been the absence of the proposal by India that SAARC concentrated on what is called the core sector of trade, industry, energy, money and finance.

Failure of the second summit can be attributed to the bilateral relations between the two major countries of SAARC, namely, India and Pakistan. Bilateral relations between India and Sri Lanka were also not cordial during the summit. This factor quite naturally hampered the achievements of SAARC at Bangalore.

Although it is a well-known fact that a peaceful environment in the South Asian region depends on the development of harmonious relationship between the two South Asian neighbours, namely, India and Pakistan, yet it was found that during the year 1986, i.e., at the time of the Bangalore SAARC summit, 34. *Ibid*
the two countries were at logger-heads with each other. This adversarial 'Cold-war type' relationship between India and Pakistan affected the smooth proceedings of the SAARC summits. The Bangalore summit also experienced this general trend. On major global issues like the zone of peace proposal, Kampuchea, Afghanistan, the ethnic turmoil in Sri Lanka, the role of the Superpowers in the region – the two countries were poles apart from each other.

Indo-Pakistan relations which were never cordial in the aftermath of the partition in 1947 deteriorated in 1986. Although no efforts were spared by the Indian and Pakistani Prime Ministers to improve the relations between the two countries, their endeavours were marred by the happenings at Karachi – the seizure of a Pan American plane by the hijackers, the sheer lack of professionalism on the part of the Pakistani commandos in dealing with a delicate situation, massive loss of Indian lives and the conflicting reports made by the Pakistani Press in this connection.

A month before the second SAARC summit at Bangalore, India and Pakistan clashed at the United Nations over the issue of Kashmir when a Pakistani delegate brought it up in a debate over people's right to self-determination. The Indian representative clarified that Kashmir was an integral part of independent and sovereign India and there was no question of self-determination of its people.

The success of the Bangalore summit was marred by Indo-Pakistan conflict on

37. The leaders of India and Pakistan tried their best to solve the prevailing bitterness in their relations. This is testified to by the New Delhi meeting between Rajiv Gandhi and Zia-ul-Haq, held on 17 December 1985. During this meeting they took a major confidence building measure by agreeing not to attack each other's nuclear installations and speed up discussions on a comprehensive peace treaty. Here, the question of terrorism in Punjab had been discussed at length and General Zia had assured Rajiv Gandhi that Pakistan was totally against terrorism of any kind. On the question of clashes in the Siachen glacier, Gandhi and General Zia had agreed that Indian and Pakistani Defence Secretaries would meet and find a way of avoiding these conflicts. Regarding Kashmir, General Zia said that the issue would be solved in the spirit and letter of Shimla agreement at an appropriate time.
38. The Times of India, 12 October 1986

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various issues. One of the main irritants between the two countries was the nuclear issue and the issues pertaining to the regulation of armaments and mutual reduction of defence equipments. India’s acquisition of nuclear capability leading to its nuclear explosion at Pokhran in 1974 constituted a potential source of tension between India and Pakistan, since India’s nuclear explosion at Pokhran\(^{39}\) inevitably led to an arms race between the two countries with Pakistan trying hard to match India by manufacturing a nuclear bomb. In this context, it should be mentioned that in early November 1986, Pakistan’s accumulation of sophisticated weapons on a massive scale, had clouded the atmosphere prevailing in the sub-continent.\(^{40}\) Though Pakistan tried to give this impression that the armaments acquired by Pakistan from the United States would be deployed by it on the Afghan front, India could not reconcile itself to such argument. India’s suspicion about Pakistan’s motives arose out of the fact that on numerous occasions in the past, Pakistan had received arms intended to be used elsewhere but they had been used against India.

On the eve of the second summit in Bangalore, it became evident that Pakistan had mastered the technology of making a nuclear bomb. That Pakistan possessed ‘both the designs and materials for making nuclear weapons’ at a politically relevant moment was no longer a secret. Information was also received by the Indian mediamen that the gas centrifuge uranium enrichment plant at Kahuta near Islamabad had the ability to produce U-235 of requisite purity of over ninety percent for being used in the production of nuclear

\(^{39}\) In 1974, India exploded its nuclear weapons at Pokhran in Rajasthan. India’s detonation of nuclear device took the West by surprise as India’s foreign policy is usually marked by an orientation towards peace and cooperation with other countries. Indira Gandhi announced that this explosion of India was essentially a peaceful nuclear explosion and that India sought to utilise the development of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes and to raise the level of economic development. Pokhran explosion created a consternation in the leadership of Pakistan and this provoked Pakistan to enter into an arms race with India. So the effects of Pokhran were two – 1) the beginning of Indo-Pakistani arms race and 2) the urge among the Pakistani leaders to manufacture a nuclear bomb to match India.

\(^{40}\) *The Statesman*, 3 November 1986
India also expressed anxiety over the issue of Pakistan acquiring Airborne Early Warning and Control System Aircraft (AWACS)\(^41\) from the USA. Talking to the mediamen on the eve of the second summit, Foreign Secretary of Pakistan, Abdus Sattar, stated that regarding AWACS, India’s concern was baseless. He also made it clear that Pakistan had not placed any order for acquisition of electronic surveillance aircrafts. He explicitly denied the allegation that Pakistan was manufacturing weapon-grade uranium at its nuclear plants. He stated that what Pakistan was actually doing was ‘development of low-level fuel-grade enriched uranium to develop the capacity of production of reactor fuel’.\(^42\) He also declared that Pakistan was ready to accept any bilateral, regional or global inspection of its nuclear plants on a non-discriminatory ground to prove the peaceful intentions behind its nuclear programme. The then Prime Minister of India, Rajiv Gandhi, outrightly rejected the suggestion made by Abdus Sattar for joint inspection to verify the allegations of terrorists’ training centres in Pakistan.\(^43\)

However, it should be stated here that despite mutual bickerings during this period, there had been no troop movements on the Indian side of the border with Pakistan and uptill early November 1986, no prior notification of troop movement by India had been received by the Pakistani Press from New Delhi. It was learnt that the Indian Government had assured Pakistan that if there was any troop movement, it would immediately inform the latter. This assurance

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\(^{41}\) AWACS is considered to be the most sophisticated airborne surveillance system in the world. It is a command and a communication platform built inside the airframe of a Boeing 707. It operates at the height of 29,000 feet and has a range of nearly 470 kilometers. It can detect, track and identify all aircrafts flying within that range. The supply of AWACS to Pakistan by the U.S. in early eighties was designed mainly to counter any possible infiltration of Soviet army in to Pakistan. But this constituted a severe threat to India’s security interests as Moscow was undergoing a crisis of leadership coupled with the dismal economic condition of the country and also due to the fact that Moscow was now not as committed as it had been during the Brezhnev era to act in defending India’s interests. So, the US supply of AWACS to Pakistan encouraged India to diversify the sources of its arms acquisition from external countries and sought to rely on France, Britain and Germany for acquiring modern weapons.

\(^{42}\) *The Statesman*, 15 November 1986.

\(^{43}\) *Patriot*, 18 November 1986.
had helped to remove Pakistan apprehension regarding troop movement to a certain extent. 44

At the end of the two-day summit at Bangalore, the late Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, had to answer various types of questions, most of which pertained to the strained relations between India and Pakistan. Rajiv Gandhi regretted that the process of normalisation, which started at the initiative of President Zia-ul-Haq could not proceed uninterrupted at a fast speed as was earlier anticipated because of a number of problems between India and Pakistan. The Indian Prime minister was extremely disappointed by General Zia’s inability to keep even half of the promises he had made during their meeting in New Delhi eleven months ago. 45

Strained Indo-Sri Lanka relations had also affected the smooth proceedings of SAARC summits. The Bangalore summit was not an exception to this general trend. Relations between India and Sri Lanka had never been very cordial since the days of liberation. A host of important factors were responsible for a set-back in India-Sri Lanka relations. Of them, the problem of statelessness of the Indian Tamils in Sri Lanka and the resultant ethnic turmoil was one of the major irritants in Indo-Sri Lanka relations.

Behind the pomp and grandeur of banquet diplomacy and cordial talks at Bangalore, however, things were not so simple as they were made out to be. Differences of opinion on the issue of terrorism and the scope for expansion of SAARC programmes between India and its neighbours were clearly visible. 46

While India was trying to divert the threat of terrorism, Sri Lanka wanted to proclaim a declaration on the topic. Due to India’s unwillingness, Sri Lanka was unable to make a declaration on the subject. Because, one of the principles of SAARC meeting is that all the decisions must be unanimous. Likewise, India’s insistence on extending SAARC programmes to trade, industry, energy, money and finance had not been approved by other member

44. See The Hindustan Times, 15 November 1986.
45. Ibid, 8 November 1986
46. The Statesman, 16 November 1986
countries.

The Ministerial level talks between India and Sri Lanka did not make much headway. The Indian Foreign Minister, N. D. Tiwari, asked his Sri Lankan counterpart to take necessary steps to restore peace in the island state and to ensure that peace efforts were not thwarted by violence on innocent civilians. In response to this request, the Sri Lankan Foreign Minister described the atrocities unleashed by Tamil militants on innocent civilians, particularly the Sinhalese.

During the two-day summit, Rajiv Gandhi and the Sri Lankan President J. R. Jayewardene, had extensive talks on the island’s ethnic problem. Jayewardene was of the view that there was no substitute to the ongoing peace talks and expressed his country’s faith in India as a mediator. On the burning question of linking the Northern and Eastern provinces to form a single Tamil linguistic state to which power could be devolved, Jayewardene pointed out the difficulties involved as the territory was not contiguous to the large number of Sinhalese and Muslim settlements in Trincomalee district wedged between the predominantly Tamil districts of Mullaitivu and Batticaloa, and the Amparai district where the Tamils were in the minority.

Indian Foreign Minister, N.D. Tiwari raised the issue of fresh bouts of fighting in the northern parts of the Jaffna peninsula taking a heavy toll of civilian lives and put emphasis on the cessation of hostilities to restore peace in the region.

A notice was given by some local Tamil organisations to hold a black flag demonstration in front of the Vidhan Saudha, venue of the summit conference, when President Jayewardene would be arriving there. India was vehemently criticised by the Sri Lankan Government for this incident.

47. Ibid
48. Ibid
49. Ibid
Concluding Observations

As a consequence of the serious ethnic confrontation in Sri Lanka, the political environment of South Asia was very tensed at the time of the second SAARC summit in Bangalore. Relations between Pakistan and India were also not friendly. It had been alleged by the Indian Government that Pakistan was assisting the Sikh terrorists. Moreover, the regional political scene was further vitiated by the nuclear power issue. Being informed by the mediamen that Pakistan had been steadily increasing its nuclear stockpiles with U.S. assistance and had successfully launched a nuclear device, India became apprehensive of Pakistani intentions and in turn, also started manufacturing nuclear arms with assistance from the Soviet Union.  

Despite such a turbulent political atmosphere prevailing in South Asia, the proceedings of the Bangalore summit passed off peacefully. The second SAARC summit was a remarkable event in the onward journey of SAARC for the adoption of two significant documents, viz., the Bangalore declaration and a Memorandum of Understanding for the establishment of the SAARC Secretariat in Kathmandu.

The Bangalore summit made a remarkable contribution to strengthen and streamline the institutional basis of SAARC. The seven Foreign Ministers signed a Memorandum of Understanding on 17 November 1986, dealing with the setting up of a SAARC Secretariat in Kathmandu headed by a Secretary-General. Indeed, it was aptly commented by many scholars that the Bangalore summit provided a solid foundation to SAARC by establishing a Permanent Secretariat in Kathmandu.

A careful analysis of the deliberations of the second SAARC summit revealed a creative and progressive looking approach to the future development of SAARC. The South Asian leaders tried to prove the fact that by shifting the emphasis from differences to similarities, from past anomalies to their rich heritage, rooted in a common historical background, and to the immense

50. Shamsul Haq, n.29, p. 15
possibilities of regional cooperation in various fields, SAARC could in the future bring about extension and intensification of cooperative activities extremely beneficial to all the people of the South Asian region. The Bangalore summit also identified five new areas for expanding and strengthening the cooperative programmes under SAARC.

The second SAARC summit, however, could not achieve the desired success due to the strained bilateral relations amongst the South Asian neighbours, particularly between India and Pakistan and India and Sri Lanka. For instance, on the controversial issue of terrorism – the leaders were unable to achieve much since they differed among themselves on an unanimous definition of terrorism.

The utmost significance that SAARC attached to the task of uplifting material conditions of the people, more specifically removing poverty and thereby improving the standard of living of the people, remained a distant dream since the Bangalore declaration did not specify the projects to be undertaken on a priority basis in order to realise the target. Moreover, a detailed analysis of the Bangalore declaration manifested that the leaders had merely reiterated the points which they had unanimously adopted at Dhaka.

Nevertheless, despite certain loopholes, it must be admitted that the Bangalore summit had opened up a new horizon for SAARC. Furthermore, it provided India with a novel opportunity to lead SAARC amidst growing trust and confidence in raising the quality of life of all the people of the region.

51. See Patriot, 19 November 1986.