

A Comparative Study of the Strategic Culture of India and Pakistan and their Impacts on SAARC in South Asia

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ABSTRACT: Culture, history and geography play a fundamental role in building perceptual framework of a state towards its enemies. These are the combined factors regarded as the constitutive elements of strategic culture. Diverse strategies are adopted by strategic thinkers to interpret, analyze and respond to strategic situations. It involves using force, building alliance or compromising to the demands of dominant powers. The preference for certain decisions and options in the face of crisis remains almost uniform. These peculiar choices remain a topic of significant exploration among regional and global security analysts. The strategic equation of India and Pakistan is complex and filled with the elements of mutual hostility, distrust along with traditional and non-traditional security threats. These threats develop a distinctive perceptual framework for each country. This unique approach mostly marked by skepticism and ill-will has been primarily remained major obstacle in making the SAARC successful. Indians see Pakistan as only south Asian country with the potential and desire to contest their regional hegemony, while Pakistanis see India as an eternal enemy and risk for its survival. The aim of this article is to explore the origin of strategic culture of both countries and how it has thwarted regional integration. The constituent elements of Strategic culture are analyzed in the qualitative research methodology with special emphasis on content analysis of documents for understanding and interpreting the narratives and discourses surrounding strategic culture. This research concludes that through strategic initiatives, institutional changes and policy changes, the dream of regional integration in South Asia can be materialized.

KEYWORDS: South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), Strategic Culture, Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), India, Pakistan, Traditional Security

Pages: 93 – 103

Volume: 5

Issue: 1 (Jan-Feb 2026)

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Cite this Article: Abideen, Z. U., Abubakar, F., & Qureshi, H. (2026). A Comparative Study of the Strategic Culture of India and Pakistan and their Impacts on SAARC in South Asia. *The Regional Tribune*, 5(1), 93-103.

<https://doi.org/10.55737/trt/v-i.205>

Introduction

Globalization & Regionalism are simultaneously prevalent all over the world. Many countries are focusing on regional organizations for enhancing their trade, resolving bilateral issues and improving socio-economic conditions. There exists a unanimous consensus among world economists on the premises that international trade is beneficial for socio-economic development of all countries. However, the same stands true in the case of regional cooperation & trade. The Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), European Union (EU), The Common Market for Eastern & Southern Africa (CMESA) – wherein the regional trade stands at 26%, 62%, 8%, 67% & 26%, respectively, are the foremost example of this premises (Ahmed et al., 2010).

In spite of many attempts to achieve a cohesive regional integration in South Asia, the dreams of creating an integrated union remain elusive, till to date. One of the most populous regions in the world, South Asia, despite its numerous trade potentials and vital geostrategic location remains least integrated. The unity in South Asia is marred by interstate conflicts, border clashes and historical animosities. The fragmentation in South Asia is taking huge toll on the region in terms terrorism, lack of human development, poverty, extremism and political instability. The South Asian Association of Regional Countries (SAARC) was established with the aspirations of regional unification. Though SAARC has achieved some tangible success by enhancing intra-regional trade, its potential was obstructed owing to intra-regional tensions, leading to its deadlock. The mutual mistrust between two major states India and Pakistan, the two hostile neighboring nuclear powers in the region, remains one of the major obstacles in the way SAARC to pave regional integration. The primary focus of this paper is the study of strategic culture of both countries, a fundamental factor that has been fueling the enmity between these two governments. It is suggested that South Asia region has potential to surpass and outperform the European Union (EU) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in terms of interregional connectivity by addressing and resolving these mistrust-related issues (Singh, 2010).

These sentiments of mistrust need to be addressed for reaping the benefits of regional connectivity and achieving meaningful collaboration in the regions. The understanding of strategic cultures of both countries, an invisible cognitive framework building forces driven by historical perceptions, is important for this. Effectively recognizing and tackling these issues can help south Asia is making strides in ending mistrust and enhancing an environment of trust and regionalism. The region has all potential to outperform other regional blocs in terms of trade. By enhancing collaboration in the areas like infrastructure building, cross-border trades, and energy sharing, the immense potential of regional can be unleashed, ending the rivalry and pulling millions out of vicious cycle of poverty. Such an increased regional connection in term of trade facilitates diplomatic ties, interpersonal interactions, cultural exchange, unanimity and common identity among south Asia States (Cowshish, 2021).

The establishment of the SAARC in December 1985 regarded as a major breakthrough by many scholars in South Asia. However, the success garnered through the forum for fostering regional integration is not up to the mark. It has evoked different reaction among different people owing to its slow progress and achievements. For some the SAARC has been rendered as talking company that pays lip services to the issue of connectivity and integration in the region. For other though it is not panacea for regional issue, yet it offers precedented forum for regular interactions of regional countries to discuss the issue national and regional importance, thus a step in the right direction. This forum of discussion, according to them, by offering multiple chances of informal meeting helped in containing multiple difficult regional situations and building confidence in the region. By the ratification of SAARC Preferential Trading Agreement in 1995 and by creating SAARC Free Trade Area, all member countries have depicted their desires for promoting regional cooperation (Dash, 1996).

Constitutive Factors of Strategic Culture of India and Pakistan

The strategic culture of Pakistan is affected by alliance with China, military involvements, historical experiences and transitory geopolitical conditions. It focuses on maintaining credible deterrence, pursuing diplomacy and maintaining regional balance of power. The changing regional and global landscape of geopolitical interactions in the wake of end of cold war and war on terror have impacted the strategic culture of Pakistan (Khan, 2023). However, Nie argues that there is combination of factors including historical experiences, mode of production, geopolitical condition, diplomatic engagements and cultural tradition that form the strategic culture of Pakistan (Singh, 2016). Besides these factors, it is widely influenced by Islam and may be projected as outward-oriented strategic culture that is manifested by the country's strategic and political interactions (Nie, 2019). In addition to shaping strategic and political choices for countries, strategic culture of Pakistan exerts its influence in decision making, especially pertaining to security matter. Owing to its massive influence in shaping the thinking of elite of Pakistan, it is important to thoroughly understand it for assessing the underlying causes behind prevalent political instability in Pakistan and its regional repercussions; and in spite of facing numerous security crisis, the policy making mainly still hinges on strategic culture, facing numerous failures in materializing strategic goals (Heinkel, 2022). The intricate relations characterized by mutual distrust and shared hostility between India and Pakistan are due to their respective strategic cultures shaping perceptual framework for analyzing the security policy of each other (Ali, 2022). Fahim contends that Pakistan strategic culture is more inclined towards focusing on traditional security threats. This is not only causing the prioritization of traditional security concerns at the cost of neglecting non- traditional security threats, causing a "tunnel vision trap" in decision making (Khan & Raza, 2022). Briskey attributes the foundation of Pakistani Strategic culture to the fear of India, realpolitik, theories of martial race, identity crisis of Muslim and historical factors encompassing events of partition and irredentist claims for the territory of Kashmir (Briskey, 2022). These factors exert a collective influence in policy making and prioritizing country's security threats and shaping regional and global dynamics.

Various scholars have interpreted differently the intricate and multifaceted concept of Indian strategic culture. India has a unique consistent tradition of systemic strategic thinking that rests upon solid foundations and stems from its ancient historical and philosophical ideas. The central concept of Indian political and military system and strategic culture is derived through the genealogical tracing of concept of war and power prevalent in ancient political philosophy. Such reliance of ancient strategic thinking still influences contemporary state interactions of India with other countries (Aleksieva-Karnevali, 2022). These ideas structure, code, and drive the conceptual debate around the concepts of statehood, society, and politics peculiarly. This notion is also corroborated by Hall who has attributed the evolution of Indian strategic culture to three traditions including Nehruvianism, realpolitik, and Hindu(tva), while regarding the dominant character of Nehruvianism in the political discourses (Hall, 2016). His stance about the nature of a coherent Indian strategic culture is challenged by various scholars on the grounds of the rootedness of the concept of strategic autonomy in Indian civilization and the influence of various historical, cultural, and geopolitical factors.

The Imperative for Regional Integration in South Asia

Terrorism has wreaked havoc in South Asian region. This has led to the diversion of scarce resources from the developmental projects towards the modernization of security system. This detrimental situation needs to be addressed by building unity on security policy & regional cooperation. This seems an uphill task, but it is essential for overcoming the internal division in the region, making it a thriving economic hub, and achieving an influential

position on global stage. The geopolitical landscape of the world would fundamentally transform through an integrated and united South Asia in a positive manner for whole world (Pattanaik, 2010).

The Dynamics of Strategic Cultures: A Comparative Evaluation of India and Pakistan.

Point of Comparison	India	Pakistan
Historical Context	Religious texts of Hinduism, the approach of revivalism and modern thinkers equally influences the strategic culture of India. All these factors exist in different parity during the different phases of history.	The strategic culture of Pakistan is informed by and rooted in its Islamic ideology and identity which influences and shapes its approach towards security issues.
Military Doctrine	Indian maintains defensive nuclear doctrine with the policy of no first use.	The cold star doctrine has shaped its military doctrine wherein it has refrained from declaring no first used policy.
Nuclear Weapons	India has acquired nuclear weapons for exerting its regional dominance, along with maintain considerable deterrence.	Nuclear weapons are mainly seen as a tool for deterring the conventional military strategy of India.
Terrorism	India has been blaming for cross-border terrorism and plays a victim cards and as well has adopted a tough stance against terrorism.	It has been accused of supporting terrorist activities. Pakistan has vehemently denied these allegations and maintains that it too has been victim of terrorism.
Kashmir Issue	Maintains that resolution of through bilateral engagements as agreed in Shimla Agreement.	It wants to resolve the issue as per the UN Resolution & by holding plebiscite.
China Relations	Not only does it see China as its rival but also maintains strategic partnership with it too.	Pakistan has long history of cordial relations with China for counterbalancing India.
Role of Military	Military is subservient to civilians and has nothing to do in politics.	Military has been directly involved in state & political affairs.
Democracy	World's largest democracy with procedural set up as the substantive values are being hostage of Hindutva ideology.	Democracy with week procedural and substantive terms and has experienced military coup along with restriction of democratic freedoms.
International Order	India supports and actively participates in international order and advocates for its greater representation in International institutions like permanent membership in Security Council.	It sees itself as a victim of International system and has a history of challenging the status quo on numerous grounds.
Economic Development	It has made significant strides in economic development and seeks its major role in global economy.	Pakistan is struggling with economy and mainly dependent on foreign aid.
Shared animosity and Mutual distrust	India see Pakistan as only challenger to its regional dominance & thus pays special focus on constraining its influence and military capabilities (Bajpai, 2002)	The shared animosity is major component is characterizing the strategic culture of Pakistan marked by historical conflicts and territorial disputes, particularly over the region of Kashmir (Rizvi, 2002)

SAARC: From Aspirations of Regional Integration to Operational Obsolescence

From origin to its present-day evolution, the history of SAARC can be analyzed in four phases: Inception (1977-80), the convening of foreign secretaries (1981-83), the assembly of foreign ministers (1983-85) and the SAARC summits (1985- 2004) (Jamshed Iqbal, 2006). Zia Ur Rahman, late Bangladeshi president, on May 2, 1980, pioneered the proposal for developing a concrete framework of regional integration and cooperation in South Asia. The ideas for enhancing regional connectivity in the region were discussed in three different conferences earlier: April 1947, the Asian Relations Conference convened in New Delhi; May 1950, the Baguio Conference held in the Philippines and April 1954, the Colombo Powers Conference in Sri-Lanka, signifying key moments of engagement and collaboration (Malik, 2014). Similarly, this idea was discussed between Zia-ur-Rahman and Indian Premier Moraji Desai. During his speech at Colombo Plan Constitutive Committee in December 1977, the Nepalese King Birendra highlighted the need for regional cooperation for river water sharing in South Asia; this goodwill gesture was acknowledged by Zia-Ur-Rahman during the former's visit to Bangladesh in January 1978. During the summit of Commonwealth in 1979 and Non-Aligned Movement meeting in 1979, Zia-ur-Rahman informally discussed the idea of building a regional bloc with South Asian leaders. However, his efforts culminated into concrete foundation grounds during his discussion and meeting with Sri Lankan President, J.R. Jayewardene in 1979. Amidst this crucial juncture, the proposal to establish a regional organisation gained significant attention, offering South Asian leaders a platform & framework to better understand the interconnected challenges and address conflicts proactively (Verma, 2019).

While this proposal was almost universally hailed among South Asian countries, India and Pakistan remained skeptical earlier. India was concerned on security grounds, fearing that smaller states would join hands with other states to pressurize India to resolve the bilateral issues with other states, thus transforming bilateral issues into regional issues. On the other side, Pakistan assumed it as a tactical India brainchild for establishing its hegemony by creating a regional market of Indian products across the region. However, a series of ministerial level dialogues and meetings at UNO headquarters at New York in August to September 1980 concluded with entrusting Bangladesh with the responsibility to draft a working paper for discussing the proposal formally. Following the Dhaka meeting, the name of the organization was changed from South Asian Regional Cooperation (SARC) to South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). This change of acronym was on the thinking to denote the establishment of an association, rather than a process, to promote and develop regional cooperation. At the end, all these efforts culminated in the first meeting heads of state of South Asian states was conducted in Dhaka on December 7 & 8, 1985 (Pattanaik, 2010).

Aims and Objectives of SAARC:

The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) was established with the aim to provide for a dynamic regional institution for fostering economic and political cooperation for accelerating the pace of regional socio-economic and cultural development (OpenLibrary.org, 2024). Following are the objectives mutually agreed on the charter of SAARC.

- ▶ Promoting and strengthening a sense of self-reliance among South Asian Countries.
- ▶ Striving for the development of and contribution towards developing mutual trust through understanding, acknowledging, appreciating and extending help in one another's' problem.
- ▶ Promoting collaboration and mutual assistance in the fields of science, society, culture, technology and economics.
- ▶ Strengthening and building cooperation with developing countries.

- ▶ Strengthening and building cooperation among member countries on international forums in the matters of common interests.
- ▶ Strengthening and building cooperation with international and regional forums established with similar aims and purposes.

Understanding the Failure of SAARC: Key Factors behind its Ineffectiveness.

Most of the SAARC achievements were on paper; and it has unfortunately nothing substantial to provide in reality. Comparatively, its progress and performance remained bleak than SAARC. In its history of almost 40 years, it failed to hold 11 annual summits mainly due to political tension between member states till 2016 (Muni, 2014). The organization failed in achieving its objectives; and this fact was endorsed by the head of states during the last summit in 2014. Former Indian Minister for External Affairs, Yashwant Sinha, even regarded SAARC as a complete failure. He said, “I find SAARC’s future is bleak as the organization cannot move beyond organizing a cultural event or establishing an educational institution as part of its initiatives (Ziyasa Johardeen, 2019).”

In terms of trade potential, the combined region of South Asia has the 3rd largest GDP (8th largest nominal GDP) in the world, only behind America and China. Similarly, the region comprises 3% of world area and 21% of world population. Yet the regional countries failed to capitalize on that advantage. The total foreign Direct Investment of SAARC region is 3% while the total trade is only 2% of total global trade. Almost one fourth of its population remains below the poverty line. Despite signing the South Asian Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA), the net states intra-regional trade remains dismal. The total intra-regional trade is less than 5% of total commerce and in services it is less than 0.2% compared to 26% in ASEAN (Hafeez, 2016). These stats paint a bleak picture of regional integration, compelled Lyon to describe South Asia as a region without regionalism. Despite the deeply felt need for regional cooperation especially for tackling energy crisis, political instability characterized hegemonic aspirations of India and consequent stemming of mistrust is the stumbling block in ushering regional integration. Following are some of the prominent factors that has led towards the failure of SAARC.

- ▶ The complex trajectory of India-Pakistan relations marked by shared history of wars and deeply entrenched animosity & distrust. The major chunk of the budget of both countries was spent on building defense capabilities at the expense of the neglect of human development. The actual volume of trade between two countries is less than \$2 bn, much less than the actual potential of almost \$10 bn annually. The contentious ties between both countries have fallout on SAARC, rendering it ineffective.
- ▶ Another impediment in the way of building regional cooperation is terrorism. South Asian states lack unanimity over the definition of terrorism. Although additional protocol was adopted in 2004 summits, major differences erupted during negotiations (Wagner, 2020).
- ▶ During its role as a front-line state in the war on terrorism, Pakistan has seen a massive wave of radicalization along with the emergence of Kalashnikov culture, causing huge loss in terms of human and capital owing to prevalent attacks from terrorists. These tensions have also resulted in further deteriorating relations with India that regard any independent movement for freedom in Kashmir as Pakistan-backed infiltration in the region. Similarly, terrorist tendencies were also predominant in other regional countries like ethnic conflict in Sri-Lanka, Maoist movement in Nepal and Naxalites insurgency in India. The political instability stemming from these terrorist activities deeply marred the prospect of regional cooperation.
- ▶ Geographic location of South Asian Countries can be another factor for the dismal performance of SAARC. India is the only country that shares a border either land or maritime with almost all other South Asian states, except Afghanistan, resulting in the dependence of these smaller states on India.

- ▶ India has a hegemonic aspiration to act as regional leader of the South Asian region by establishing its dominance. It has border disputes with all neighboring states. The threat perception from India deeply affects the bilateral relations with India. The charter of SAARC, however, explicitly ruled out the discussion on contentious bilateral issues. General Musharraf while commenting on this situation in his speech in 11th SAARC summit in 2002 said: “The way forward is to make SAARC genuinely potent and through it sink differences, resolve disputes on the basis of sovereign equality. Let none amongst us be considered more equal than others.” Similarly, Indian ambitions for becoming global leader by prioritizing the look-East Policy and collaborating with the USA to contain China is also leaving SAARC behind other regional organizations. Similarly, political will is also missing in building regional integration (Hafeez, 2016).

Assessing the Relevance of SAARC: Has it Lost its Significance?

SAARC as a forum for enhancing regional cooperation stands at dead end since its beginning in 1985. It can be regarded as a debating club where the focus lies on discussion rather resolving grave issues the member states has been facing. It has failed in implementing its Charter. Cooperation in the areas of trade remains below the mark, necessitating a dire need for initiating holistic reforms to address the factors that ails SAARC. In comparison to other regional forums, it has failed in meeting anticipated outcomes. Such a dismal state of performance has compelled the regional countries to look for alternate options. Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi Sectoral Technical & Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) is considered favorable alternate, despite its minimal success since its inception in 1997 (Bonagani, 2021). In spite of establishing itself as a regional forum, SAARC falls short in achieving its objectives. Several agreements and structural arrangements made under SAARC couldn't be adequately implemented. The most prominent outcome of SAARC was the South Asia Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA), which too remained unimplemented. It came into effect in 2006 but could succeeded in enhancing the regional trade more than 5 % (Qadri, 2022).

The major impediment in growing regional trade and connectivity is the lack of distrust and mutual hostility among India & Pakistan, causing the halt in more than 8 major initiatives undertaken under SAARC (Majid, 2017). Similarly, regional countries lack cooperation in dealing with security issues. This non-cooperation emanates from lack of trust and consensus in threat perception as there exist severe disagreement over the idea of threat. For example, Pakistan views India as enemy states for its involvement in deteriorating security situation in Pakistan by supporting separatist and terrorist groups; on the other hand, India blames Pakistan for cross-border terrorism. Similarly, the perceived role India as a hegemonic state owing to power asymmetry emanating from sheer difference between India & other regional countries in terms of geography, military capabilities, global standing and economy. The small neighboring states fears that agreements implemented under the auspice of SAARC may be tool for hegemonic aspirations of India. Moreover, lack of concrete mechanism for resolving bilateral disputes impedes the decision making & consensus building in the region. These factors are giving air to the growth of bilateralism rather than regionalism (Bonagani, 2021).

In order to revive SAARC, not only does it charter need to be amended but also developing consensus through resolving bilateral issues is paramount. The requisite consensus seems an uphill task, given the animosity between India & Pakistan. This has been giving impetus to the growing popularity of BIMSTEC. Five members countries of SAARC have also membership of BIMSTEC. This connects the littoral states of the Bay of Bengal and Himalayan region. Contrary to SAARC, the members state of BIMSTEC share cordial relations among them. Many observers have raised skepticism of the legitimacy of SAARC as an alternative given its lackadaisical performance in terms of garnering tangible achievements (Murthy, 2008). Similarly, despite facing multifaceted obstacles SAARC seems to

gain some relevance during the Covid-19 pandemic. This showcases its potential for enduring cooperation in spite of some occasional setbacks (Shar & CHANDIO, 2024).

Strategic Culture of India and Pakistan as a Barrier: Impeding the Advancement of SAARC

Strategic culture rationalizes certain strategic assumption of predominant elite mainly with regard to the nature of enemy and perception of threat that it poses. Besides that, it also provides certain definite measures to cope up with adverse environment and enemy. Those who put firm belief in the relevance of strategic culture maintains that the decisions pertaining to the matters of security management are shaped by numerous cultural influences on policymakers, instead of the pursuit of rational pathway in the unentangling national security and organizational functional interests. The behavioral disposition with regard to the matters of security and defense of a state are widely influenced by the historical narratives peddled by dominant political and military elite, their perception of enemy and conception of peace and war and the power politics dynamics within a state. These narratives are rationalized, self-justifying & stubbornly resistant. In this backdrop of strategic culture, the information pertaining to security related issues is interpreted, which consequently also determine the response options in the face of strategic situation. Thus, the word of Jack Snyder aptly summarizes the essence of strategic culture by attributing it with “sum total of ideas, conditioned emotional responses, and patterns of habitual behavior that members of a national strategic community have acquired through instruction or imitation and share with each other.”

So, as the central thesis of this research revolves around exploring how the strategic culture of India and Pakistan has influenced the SAARC in South Asia. Numerous research articles in literature review have highlighted the following characteristic elements of strategic culture of both countries.

Strategic equation of India & Pakistan relations is complex. Indian strategic thinking mainly revolves around the ideology of Hindutva, while that of Pakistan is marked by the two-nation theory and custodian of Islam. Both of these countries carry antithetical ideologies at the level of state (Khan, 1984). Pakistan is not only aware of India hegemonic aspirations of India in South Asia but also considerate of protecting itself against Indian Intransigencies in the wake of attempting to normalize its relations with the neighbors. These divergent approaches in the strategic thinking harbors hostility between both countries, thus curbing any attempt to establish peace in region or promote regional integration.

Despite being more than four decades old, SAARC still faces same persistent structural weaknesses. Members states of SAARC see the large military and economy with suspicion. There is no denying the fact that the rivalry between India and Pakistan impedes the regional cooperation. Unlike the biggest Country of ASEAN Indonesia, India remains failed in resolving and harmonizing the differences with small neighboring states. The failure of two rival states i.e. India and Pakistan to resolve their bilateral issues like Germany and France did after WW-II on the grounds of functionalist dynamics have compromised the spirit of SAARC. The intra-regional trade in SAARC region is very poor in comparison to the ASEAN & EU (M Chowdhury, 2022). Although the spirit of lack of regional integrative consciousness is prevalent throughout the Asia as no entente is visible between China and Japan, the more pronounced lack of integration is visible in Subcontinent.

Undeveloped and disinterested civil societies cannot reap the benefits of regional cooperation. The development of civil societies stems from the democratic spirit in communities that in itself is the product of political consciousness, literacy, free and independent media, and active & functional institutions. Superpowers can act both as facilitator as well as inhibitor of regional cooperation. They back the regional integration programmes as soon as their programs aligned with the interests of major powers. As US is averse to Iran and it is against any project that may be beneficial for the economy of Iran like Tehran-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline.

Another factor that pinpoints the missing of spirit of engagement and cooperation at the heart of SAARC is the luring of India to its member countries except Pakistan to join multilateral forum of BIMSTEC. The Indian attempt to distance itself from SAARC is the indicator of its aspiration to isolate Pakistan, only potential threat to Indian hegemonic aspirations in South Asia. The strategic partnership between India and the USA, where the latter wants to use the former for containing China, has also bolstered its sense of dominant power.

Conclusion

Despite being more than four decades old, SAARC still faces same persistent structural weaknesses. Members states of SAARC see the large military and economy with suspicion. There is no denying the fact that the rivalry between India and Pakistan impedes the regional cooperation. Unlike the biggest Country of ASEAN Indonesia, India remains failed in resolving and harmonizing the differences with small neighboring states. The failure of two rival states i.e. India and Pakistan to resolve their bilateral issues like Germany and France did after WW-II on the grounds of functionalist dynamics have compromised the spirit of SAARC. The intra-regional trade in SAARC region is very poor in comparison to the ASEAN & EU. Although the spirit of lack of regional integrative consciousness is prevalent throughout the Asia as no entente is visible between China and Japan, the more pronounced lack of integration is visible in Subcontinent. The revival of SAARC hinges on the normalization of relation between India & Pakistan. The hope of regional cooperation may get some stimulation, if in some distant future the bilateral relations between both states normalizes. There is a unanimous agreement among scholars that bitter trajectory of India & Pakistan is adversely impacting overall working of the SAARC. The timelines of cancellation of SAARC summit owing to India-Pakistan rivalry bears testimony to the same fact.

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