

**Pak-Indian, Heads of States Sideline Meetings for Normalizing of Conditions in both Countries through SAARC Engine: Efforts and Outcomes**

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**Abstract**

*India and Pakistan have not friendly relations since independence from colonial rule of British Empire. Historical evidences shows that relations between Pakistan and India have been involved with contentious issues. Issues create the disputes, distrust, uncertainty and risk to peace and security in the region. Threat to peace is a great matter of concern as both countries are the atomic powers. Regionalism is an important tool for the regional integration and its gaining more strength day by day. In South Asian zone, the objective for the organization of SAARC is economic and social prosperity of the South Asian region through cooperation. In the regional politics of South Asia, India and Pakistan are the key Players but both states having mutual conflicts which are creating hurdles for economic prosperity in South Asia. Charter of SAARC does not allow addressing the mutual conflicts on the plate forum of the organization but it is examined that sideline meetings of both states heads were observed during the formal producing of SAARC. Study will explore that the efforts and outcomes of these informal sittings by Heads of the States of both countries to normalize the relations.*

**Key Words:** Regionalism, SAARC, Sideline Meetings, India and Pakistan, mutual Integration

**Introduction**

After the Second World War the concept of Regional organization was promoted and got importance in the world politics. Now the phenomenon of

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regionalism is common in the world. Increasing inter-dependence among the nations on one another is the key factor of promoting regionalism. It is viewed that States established and joined regional organizations for the regional security and economic integration. Regionalism got new dimension after the end of Cold war. Now States are making commitment for economic integration and have developed the free trade agreements at regional level by using the mechanism of regional organizations (Mukherjee, 2014).

For the regional cooperation in South Asian states, it was the Zia-Ur Rehman, former President of Bangladesh who has given the idea to establish a regional organization of South Asian Countries. He was impressed with the performance of ASEAN and European Union. He established consensus among the South Asian states for regional integration through a joint window of mutual cooperation (Lombaerde, 2013).

The South Asian States leadership gathered in Dhaka, the Capital of Bangladesh on 8th December 1985 and formulated “South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation” (SAARC). The Eight Nations of South Asia committed with each other to cooperate under the flag of SAARC (Kamisky& Long, 2011). Member States launched the SAARC Integrated Program of Action (SIPA). The basic goal of SIPA was increase the worth, honor and dignity of life through deep economic and social integration of SAARC States (Saez, 2012). The founding members of SAARC were India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Maldives and Bhutan. In April 2007 new membership was granted to Afghanistan. United States, Australia, Japan, Iran, European, South Korea, Mauritius and Myanmar has the Status of observers in SAARC (Ghosh, 2013). SAARC has an administrative mechanism to run the affairs of

association. Summits have the highest authority in SAARC. Head of government/states participate every year in the Summit. Second highest power in the structural frame is Council of Ministers. It is consisted of the foreign ministers of the member states of the SAARC (Jabeen & Goraya, 2010). Standing Committees are the third origin of the association. Foreign Secretaries of the member states are the part of Standing Committees. Standing Committees have also the right to establish the Action Committees. Action Committees deals with plans and projects of association. SAARC has established a Secretariat in Kathmandu to maintain its official frame work. Secretary General is the administrative head of Secretariat (Lyon, 2008).The organization has the objectives of bringing the nations of South Asia closer through policy of interdependency and deep connectivity. SAARC objectives also focused to uplift the social, economic and cultural development of the people of South Asia through joint structural frame work of integration. The association adopted the basic principal of equal sovereignty and self-respect. Since the creation of SAARC eighteen Summits have been held and nineteen SAARC Summit is hosted by Pakistan in the end of 2016 (Aneek, 2015).

The history of India and Pakistan dealings showed a very little trust and more confrontation. Sometimes the confrontation between India and Pakistan reached at the worst level. Both countries fought full scale wars in 1965 and then in 1971.Kargil war in 1999 and different terrorist attacks in India, and Indian involvement in Karachi and Baluchistan added more fuel on the relations of both countries. The historical evidences shows that relations between Pakistan and India have been caged with contentions issues. Issues have established the distrust, uncertainty and rick to peace and security of the

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South Asia. Threat to peace is great matter of concern for the international peace as both countries are the atomic powers (Rizvi, 2011).

### **Objectives of the Research**

Objective of this research paper is to analysis the role of SAARC as tool for regional integration especially in the light different sideline meetings of India and Pakistan heads of States to normalize the conditions between both countries. It is observed that both countries mutually engaged themselves informally using the SAARC Plate forum for normalize the conditions. Paper will also examine the sideline meetings outcomes for regional security and prosperity of South Asia. Study will examine the further possibilities for both countries to discuss the mutual matters of concerns in Pakistan and India.

### **Literature Review**

Regionalism is counted an importance force since 1945 and after Second World War most regional organizations came into existence with the aims of regional defence and security issues. North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and Warsaw Pact in term of defence blocs and European Union (EU), American Free Trade Agreement and North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement NAFTA for trading blocs promoted regionalism (Mukherjee, 2104).Emergence of SAARC, its administrative structure, importance, formation, goals and charter. Jabeen (2010) focused on the meetings of the heads of the government at the plate form of the SAARC. Dixit narrated India-Pakistan relations after independence. Military combat and conflicting approach from 1948 to 1965 and then 1971 to 1999 Kargil War and narrated the ups and downs in relations of both nations highlighted the different phases of military regime in Pakistan from 1972 to 1999 and

political role of military in the affairs of the State. The study counted 'Kashmir' as bone of contention and gave the details of Agra Summit and measured that because of Kashmir both Musharraf and Vajpayee remained unsuccessful in Agra (Dixit, N.,2003) SAARC dealings unofficially and contribution of different non-state actors, institutions, regional and international organizations to bring the people together (Gupta, 2013).Trivedi pointed out the Accords, agreements and the role of SAARC for bringing these two countries on a table for 'Composite Dialog' and to increase the economic growth through mutual trade in the region. Publication also investigated the different SAARC summits, Foreign Ministers, and secretaries' bilateral talks for agreements as a tool of CBMs between India and Pakistan (Trivedi, 2008). Syedanalyzed the role of education, sports, cultural events, trade and different SAARC institutions which are working at regional level in member states have played their role to create integration formally and informally among the member countries (Syed, 2003). Ahmar examined the Pak-India steps for creating confidence and role of SAARC the regional association of South Asia and also suggested that how America can contribute to reduce conflicts in the region. He highlighted role of SAARC and research institutions for creating better and friendly environment between India, Pakistan (Ahmar, 2001). Pattanaikfocusedon the SAARC summits, the highest top authority for decision making in the association. Study Pak-India relations, measures taken during Summits and high expectations from each other as well (Pattanaik, 2004).

### **Opportunities of Mutual Interaction on SAARC Forum in India, Pakistan**

South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation is a forum that provides the opportunities to build mutual trust between the members of SAARC states. The organizational mechanism of SAARC and informal sitting of Indian and Pakistani high profiled officials has resulted into trust building events and actions. It was examined that some major developments of Confidence Buildings Measures (CBMs) were taken by both sides to reduce the distrust through the SAARC platform. The annual conference of SAARC has played important role to bring closer both Indian and Pakistani leadership on different issues which laid unrest in the region. In fact organization has provided the possibilities for both nations' head of states/ government officially and unofficially to meet each other and to discuss about the matters of concern related to the good relationship of India-Pakistan.

The formation of SAARC in 1985 has proved that association has given the opportunity of both states heads/ officials to meet each other on common platform every year as annual sitting of the member states heads were already decided in the SAARC charter. General Zia-Ul-Haq and Indian Prime minister Rajiv Gandhi were at the same table during the formation of SAARC. The structural frame work of SAARC was developed with the consensus of all Member States. It was observed that annual Summits of SAARC provided chances to both countries leadership to tour each other countries (Syed, 2003).

After the creation of SAARC, to promote the peace through the games General Zia-Ul-Haq visited the India and introduced the Cricket diplomacy in 1987. Before this in 1986 the huge military movements of both countries were

observed on the joint borders which created threat to the regional peace. During the Bangalore Summit in November 1986 Indian Prime Minister and Pakistani President got the chance to meet and both leaders agreed to normalize the relations (Sir, 2012).

During the period of 1986-97 many sitting were viewed between the officials of both counties to strengthen the relations and defuse the tension. In December 1988 Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and first woman Prime Minister of Pakistan Benazir Bhutto met sideline during the 4<sup>th</sup> SAARC annual Summit in Islamabad. Both leaders agreed to bring peace in the region through mutual cooperation in different fields. Benazir Bhutto and Rajiv signed the accord in December 1988 during SAARC Summit not to attack against nuclear installations and was ratified in 1991 and enforced in January 1992. This Summit also opened the ways for visit Indian Prime Minister to Pakistan in July 1989 (Noor, 2012).

In 1990, the annual conference of SAARC brought PM Nawaz and Shekhar meeting in Male. It was decided in the meeting that both counties would started the process of dialogues to normalize the ties. The annual Summit of December 1991 in Colombo and again in April 1993 in Dhaka PM Nawaz and PM Narsima Rao met each other to develop good relations between both counties (Dixit N., 2003). In May 1995 President Farooq Khan Leghari attended the SAARC Summit in New Delhi. In October 1997 SAARC<sup>9<sup>th</sup></sup> Summit was arranged in Male. Muhammad Nawaz Sharif and Indian Prime Minister InderKumerGujral participated. Both leaders met informally and agreed to solve the issues and to reduce the distrust through dialogues (Dutt V., 2009).

### **Nawaz, Vajpayee informal meeting in SAARC after Nuclear Tests**

In 1998 India and Pakistan relations got worst after the nuclear tests. The same year SAARC Summit was held in Kathmandu, Prime Minister of India Atal Behari Vajpayee and Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif met sideline the Summit and agreed to resume talks between India and Pakistan. Soon after SAARC conference Prime Minister of India Mr. Vajpayee came to Lahore by bus in February 1999. Indian Prime Minister was received warmly and this visit established the Lahore Declaration. After Kargil again both countries were plugged into bad relations (Pattanaik, 2004).

Musharraf and Vajpayee organized a sitting in Indian city Agra in July 2001 but Agra dialogues remained fruitless. Attacks on Indian and Kashmir parliament by terrorists added more fuel on the fire and relations gone worst between India and Pakistan (Chakma, 2015).

### **Musharraf Met Vajpayee sideline SAARC Summit**

In 2002 SAARC has again played its role for integration through its annual Summit that was held in Kathmandu. During the summit the President of Pakistan General Musharraf surprised the Indian Prime Minister by shaking a hand of friendship with him. This act of Musharraf reduced this tension between both countries and it was all happened because of SAARC mechanism. Pakistan hosted the SAARC Summit in 2004 at Islamabad. President Musharraf and Prime Minister Atal Vajpayee met with each other informally during SAARC Summit. The informal meeting of these two leaders brought the start of Composite Dialogue and both sides decided to address the bilateral conflicted issues including the Kashmir Issue. It was great achievement but it is fact that SAARC has provided this opportunity to both



sides leadership. Outstanding issues of India-Pakistan were considered to be solved through dialogues in 2004 SAARC Summit. Six core issues; Kashmir, terrorism, Sir Creek, Tulbul Navigation, Siachen and drug tariff icing were identified to discuss. PM Shoukat Aziz met PM Manmohan Singh in Dhaka in 2005 and again in April 2007 in New Delhi during SAARC Summits. They discussed the regional issues and role of India-Pakistan and agreed to share their contribution to solve the issues (Chopra, 2006).

Prime Minister Galini and Prime Minister Singh in Thimphu met informally during the 16<sup>th</sup> Summit of SAARC in April 2010 and again in Addu in November 2011. The revival of dialogue process was viewed which was suspended after Mumbai attacks in December 2008 by terrorists (Jain, 2010).

Recently SAARC has again given the chance to Indian and Pakistani leadership in 2014 at Kathmandu where Nawaz and Modi participated in annual conference of association. Both leaders shook hands on the lunch at Dhulikhel and this practice was again repeated in the closing ceremony of eighteen SAARC Summit. The offer of Pakistan was warmly welcomed by the Member States to host the Nineteen Summit of SAARC in Islamabad by Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif (Biswal, 2015).

## **Conclusion**

All these evidences show that SAARC has given the opportunity to both India-Pakistan formally and informally through its structural frame work to sit on a common table and discuss the bilateral issues. SAARC is an important engine for political, economic, cultural and educational integration between its member states especially in the case of India and Pakistan. The

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mechanism of SAARC can be used more effectively for deep integration and improving good relations between its member states. Pakistan and India must realized the issues of the region and must sit on the common table to bring peace and economic prosperity in the South Asia. Agreements, plans and projects were formulated with the complete consensus of the Member States. There are clear evidences that SAARC has done its work to bring South Asian States closer. In the case of India and Pakistan, relations can be made friendlier by using the engine of SAARC. The association can be used more effectively for the people to people connectivity and for reducing distrust between India-Pakistan. SAARC Summits that created trust between both countries such as Rajiv met with Gen Zia in Dhaka summit in 1985 and then Zia visited New Delhi and again Rajiv and Muhammad Khan Janejo met in Bangalore Summit in 1986, in 1988 Benazir and Rajiv in Islamabad summit gathered signed agreement related to nuclear installations, in Male 1997 during SAARC Summit Nawaz and I.K Gujral met and after then composite dialogue started at foreign secretaries level. Researcher also analyzed the SAARC Summit 2004 in Islamabad and issues of terrorism and tariff reduction and agreement on SAFTA coined new hope for mutual trade and economic integration. Since the formation of the SAARC eighteen Summits were viewed. The leadership of Pakistan and India met each other through SAARC formally and informally. Both sides' high officials met with each other in the sideline of the SAARC annual Summit. The study examined that these sideline meetings reduced the distrust and uncertainty and after these meetings mutual activities were observed. SAARC forum gave the

opportunities to Pakistan and India to come close for deep integration in different fields of life.

### **Recommendations**

1. SAARC Charter must be amended again and States must be allowed formally to discuss the mutual conflicts to the member states by using this plate forum. Sideline meetings of the high officials should be organized formally in SAARC.
2. India and Pakistan should take more reasonability as both countries are the key player of SAARC engine.
3. An enabling or comfortable environment should be created to address the issues of importance through peaceful means. Pakistan and India should take deep responsibility to set the example of good will gesture for prompting peace and prosperity in the region.
4. Member of States must strengthen the SAARC for achieving the goals of SAARC objectives. It will be possible by addressing the mutual issues of states. Especially in the care of India and Pakistan.
5. India and Pakistan leadership should not issue such statements which make both nations aggressive and emotional against each other. SAARC should promote the policy of understanding and tolerance in each member state.
6. India and Pakistan should leave behind the blame gaming and scouring points on the political grounds for the regional progress.
7. More chances of integration should be increased by both countries through civil society, academia, universities and non- government organizations.

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8. Dialogue process must not be stopped in any stage. Seminars, lecturer workshops and conferences must be arranged at all level to enhance mutual understanding on the solving issues between both states.

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