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ROLE OF INDIA - IN THE RISE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF SAARC



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Abstract:-

India's view to regional cooperation in Asia can be well understood with its reference to the broader framework of SAARC. The roots of regionalism in Indian policy can be traced back to the years of its struggle for independence.

Keywords: Rise development and implementation , priorities – economic, cultural, political .



INTRODUCTION

The emergence and evolution of SAARC have been examined keeping in focus India's early responses and subsequent approaches and priorities – economic, cultural, political and strategic. Here attempt has been made to analyse how post-cold war developments have affected India's approach to regional cooperation process in Asia in general and SAARC in particular. India's initiatives and interest in both sub-regional and wider Asian groupings like ASEAN and Indian Ocean Rim Association have been taken into account to examine how it would affect SAARC.

Historical Context

India's independence in 1947 and the process of decolonization of Asian and Africa thereafter induced a desire among the newly independent states to forge a unity for reconstruction of the nation ravaged by Western colonialism. The Indian leadership, even before the dawn of independence, wove the visions of universal peace and an Equilant international Law on the context of Afro-Asian unity. The Indian National Congress spearheading the struggle for Indian independence.

The All India Congress Committee (AICC) in its Bombay session held in July 1921 took note of a resolution passed by the citizens of Bombay in April 1921 urging AICC 'to promote feelings of amity and concord with neighbouring states with a view to establish goodwill and sympathy to formulate a clear and definite foreign policy for 'India'.¹ Realising that Britain was using India's position and resources to promote its imperialistic designs in India's neighbourhood, the AICC in a historic declaration in Delhi on 4-5 November 1921, affirmed that the Congress let it be known to the neighbouring and other non-India states :

- (i) that the present Government of India in no way represent Indian opinion and that their policy has been traditionally guided by considerations more of holding India in subjection than of protecting her borders.
- (ii) That India as self-governing country can have nothing to fear from the neighbouring states or any state as her people have no designs upon any of them, and hence, no intention of establishing any trade relation hostile to or not desired by the people of such states; and
- (iii) That the people of India regard most treaties entered into with the Imperial Government by neighbouring states as mainly designed by the latter to perpetuate the exploitation of India by the Imperial power, and would, therefore, urge the states having no ill-will against the people of India and having no desire to injure her interest, to refrain from entering into any treaty with the Imperial power.²

Anti-colonialism became the concertation of the foreign policy of Congress make a directive principal for the states of Asia to come together. Gandhi observed that the common lot no less than territorial homogeneity and cultural affinity was bringing the Asiatic races wonderfully together and they seemed determined to take their fullest share in the world politics.³ The INC saw the emergence of a great Asiatic Federation as inevitable and participation of India in the union of the oppressed nationalities of Asia as the precursor to the freedom of every nationality to bring about world peace. The Congress world-view maintained that no nation on earth can really be free when other nations are held in bondage.⁴

Pursuing the idea of an Eastern-Federation Congress discussed political ideas that scaled the ramparts of the Himalayas and most of the surrounding seas to recognize that the freedom of Asiatic nations would contemplate the organization of an Eastern-Federation.⁵

India's role in the fight against imperialist repression was pivotal since she was considered to be the leading state fighting against imperialism. The leadership of Indian national movement before and immediately after Indian independence set before themselves an agenda for regional cooperation and unity in Asia. The INC nursed a sense of grievance that despite India's importance and leadership against colonialism, India could not secure its satisfactory place as a member of the Security Council of the U.N.O on account of its colonized status. The CWC in July 1945 adopted a resolution expressing strong resentment against the position allotted to the smaller nations in the United Nations Organisation. The Committee observed that the Great-Powers not only dominated and completely controlled the new organization but were placed above and beyond the law they had themselves helped in framing. In accordance with its perception of India's role in Local and Worldwide area the CWC felt that India must attain the status of an independent and sovereign state, having a place in the highest council of nations, and in a position to contribute to the maintenance of peace, security and freedom.⁶

It was in keeping with this grandiose image of India that the INC considered India to be the central Role in Asia. Thus Jawaharlal Nehru, who more than anyone else represented Congress views on foreign policy matters, observed that "whether one talked of the Middle East or Southeast Asia or China, all impinged on India and all depended on India economically, politically and strategically. They could not help looking at India and India could not help looking at them. In the modern world it was inevitable for India to be the centre of things in Asia."⁷ Nehru also maintained that the small states of the future world had no future in store and they were certain to be reduced to the status of the satellite states. He advocated the creation of a South Asian Federation of India, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan and Burma.⁸

Inspired by Jawaharlal Nehru, a landmark Asian Relations Conference (ARC) was organised on the eve of Indian independence in March 1947 to discuss issues like National Movement for Freedom, Racial Problems and Inter-Asian Migrations, Transition from Colonial to National Economy, etc.⁹ This conference was attended by twenty eight countries including Soviet-Asian Republics. The basic idea's of Indian under Nehru's leadership was to alounce Asia's resurgence, the need for Asian unity and greater cooperation, and to work for larger ideal of 'one world'. India's strong desire for Asian unity was underlined

by her move in convening a New Delhi Conference on Indonesia in 1949 against Dutch police action in Indonesia and continued efforts to organise the newly independent states of Asia and Africa which process culminated in the historic Bandung Conference held in Indonesia in 1955. In the backdrop of cold-war rhetoric between the East and the West unleashed in the aftermath of the Second World War, Nehru's India put forth the five principles of peaceful co-existence (later known as Panchsheel) as an alternative world-view to the 'immorality' of the cold-war.

These initial efforts to unite Asia failed primarily due to the power politics of cold-war ideology, Sino-Indian rivalry, victory of communist movement in China and the threat perception of some Asian countries from rising tide of communism. There was also lack of clarity about the specific region which was sought to be evolved into a collective identity." 10 The high ideals of 'Panchsheel' and a strong anti-colonial sentiment failed to counter the strong pulls and pressures of the cold-war and Asia to evolve a regional level.

A pioneer in studying India's regional policy, Sisir Gupta, reflecting on the problems and prospects of regional integration in Asia, found that in developing countries like India, foreign policy was not the function of mass opinion but rather of modernized elite groups often represented by one man or a group of men who represented the urges and aspirations of the elite. The foreign policy of India was thus largely seen as creation of Jawaharlal Nehru. The lack of communication among the elites of different Asian countries and the tendency of the Indian elite to identify with European context were seen as a serious difficulty in the process of territoriality in Asia. 11

The cold-war conflict which impeded the process of regionalism in Asia, facilitated the same in Western Europe. Blessed by the patron saint of Western bloc, the United States of America, Western Europe embraced on post-war reconstruction by evolving a common identity in search of peaceful and prosperous Europe devoid of war and blind nationalism. The European Economic Community was launched in 1957. Three and a half decades later, through a painstaking long process, fifteen countries of Western and Central Europe in 1993 launched a European Union (EU) with an array of impressive regional institutions like a European Council of Heads of State/Government, a European Parliament, a European Court of Justice, a European Commission - the bureaucracy, and a common currency with a Central European Bank. The EU has ambitious projects to evolve a common foreign and security policy and common policy in the field of justice and home affairs. The Western Europe thus achieved a significant level of political and economic integration.

Rising of SAARC

A universal realisation among the third world countries for self-help and collective help in pursuing the goals of economic progress and development, impelled the countries of South Asia to forge a regional grouping despite their earlier misgivings and apprehensions. India with her experience of initial efforts to organise the Asia community and recent history of conflicts in the region cautiously welcomed the initiative of Bangladesh in 1980 for an association of South Asian nations, namely, Indian, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and Maldives. 12 Five year later, after a painstaking, gradual step-by-step progress, the seven South Asian nations launched South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) in 1985.

The initial years of SAARC were marked by significant political developments in the world culminating in the demise of the cold war and dismemberment in the Soviet Union. The end of the cold war brought about a fundamental change, a paradigm shift in international relations. The predominant strain was of the primacy of economics in a market driven international politics. There have also been significant attempts by the world's rich to consolidate 'regionally' in order to prepare for the global future. Almost every country in the rich club of the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) is a member of some sort of regional cooperative arrangement. As already noted, Western Europe achieved an advanced state of economic integration and much more after the creation of European Union (EU) in 1993. The emergence of a free trade area of North American continent (NAFTA) has further fuelled the phenomenon of regional cooperative arrangements. In fact, nearly all countries of Latin America, Caribbean and continental Africa are also involved in some form of regional cooperation. The dynamic economies of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN). The Gulf countries are bonded together in a cooperative arrangement called Gulf-Cooperation Council (GCC). There is a Southern Cone Market (MERCOSUR) in Latin America, a South African Customs Union (SACU) and an upcoming powerful bloc of Asia-Pacific region-Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC). In fact, with APEC and the newly emerging Indian Ocean Rim-Association for area Cooperation (IOR-ARC) an entirely new dimension of 'open-area' has been added to the concept of regionalism. Open-regionalism seeks to promote the objectives of free-global trade without attempting to form a trade bloc as such. It is thus found that the urge to merge into some form of cooperative arrangement seems to have become almost universal. 13

India's Policy for Regional Cooperation in South Asia

The proposal for regional cooperation in South Asia was made by Bangladesh in 1980 in the wake of significant political developments in the region. 14 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 had intensified East-West divide and brought the cold war conflict on the door-steps of South Asia. The West led by United States wanted a regional security arrangement in South and South-West Asia. This was a critical and crucial

time for Indian policy in the region. In pursuance of its of its policy of non-alignment India never wanted to get embroiled in East-West cold-war and also was in favour of keeping at bay the influence of extra-regional powers in south Asia. India's friendship and with the Soviet Union her free expression of condemnation of Soviet action in Afghanistan. India's suspicion of possible Western sponsorship of the proposal for regional cooperation and also of neighbours 'ganging up' against her made her respond cautiously to the proposal. Analysing India's dilemma and policy predicament S.D. Muni has rightly observed that :

India could not reject the proposal either because the idea of regional cooperation in itself was a positive one and could play a useful role in India's own regional policy. An outright rejection of the proposal by India could also give legitimacy to the neighbouring states going ahead with it on their own. This in effect would have made the forum an instrument of neighbours "ganging-up" against India. It would also have aggravated India's isolation Indian Ocean, Kampuchea and Afghanistan. India, therefore, had to be careful in its response to the proposal. It activated its diplomacy to see that the proposal was moderated and redefined so as to become compatible with essential aspects of its interests in the region.¹⁵

India, thus, favoured a slow, gradual step approach and put forth two important preconditions for regional cooperation in South Asia. These pre-conditions were that no bilateral contentious issue be discussed in the proposed regional grouping and that all decisions be taken on the basis of unanimity. India wanted to shut out politics and contentious bilateral issues foreign Secretary put forth two important pre-conditions for regional cooperation in South Asia when he said:

At this stage it would also be useful to stress that we reach unequivocal agreement on what I would call the "Flat rules" which should govern regional cooperation exercise and which in fact appear in the Bangladesh paper itself. Here I would submit that principle of avoiding discussions in regional framework of all bilateral and contentious issues and of unanimity as the principle on the basis of which decisions in regard to regional cooperation are taken should be followed scrupulously.¹⁶

India's approach was to soften the political and strategic divergence in South Asia through greater economic and cultural cooperation. In line with India's cautious approach, which was shared by Pakistan as well for its own reasons,¹⁷ the bureaucracy of the seven nations tried to identify and evolve the possible areas of cooperation in the fields such as agriculture, rural development, telecommunication, meteorology, health and population activities. This process went on for three years till 1983 when the baton was passed on to the political establishment to push further the agenda for regional cooperation. The Foreign Ministers of seven South Asian countries adopted a declaration on South Asian Regional Cooperation (SARC)¹⁸ in August 1983 with the objective to promote the welfare of the peoples of South Asia and improvement in the quality of their life. Significantly, the two pre-conditions proposed by India were incorporated in the declaration. The SARC declaration also provided for an institutional arrangement of Technical Committees for each area of cooperation, an Action Committee for implementation of projects and a Standing Committee of the Foreign Secretaries for the co-ordination and monitoring of an Integrated Programme of action (IPA) in the identified areas of cooperation. Two years later in December 1985, after an intensive political interaction and adequate spade work, the seven South Asian nations launched South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) at a Summit Meeting of the Heads of state/Government in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Thus despite the absence of some acknowledged essential ingredients like common ideological/political perception and common foreign policy orientations, the move for regional cooperation in South Asia reached its launching where South Asia was threatened to be left out of the global march to peace and progress. The Indian Foreign Secretary mentioned 'trade' as a field of great importance for regional cooperation. He said:

In fact, in many other regions of the world, cooperation in trade was established at a relatively early stage starting with certain specific sections. As developing countries we all have understandable difficulties in liberalising trade flows which might necessitate drastic changes in our trade regimes. But it should be possible to consider limited cooperation based on a regional system of trade preferences, cooperation among state trading agencies and trade related institutions and cooperation in the marketing and processing of commodities of interest to countries of the region.¹⁹

The issue of 'trade' for India was an important element of regional cooperation. However, this was excluded from the initial process of cooperation due to fear of India's neighbours that a liberal trade regime would work to the advantage of 'big' India. India's approach was to suggest a carefully balanced interdependence and a division of labour based on local factors that could provide strength to the region's economic base and infrastructure. India, nevertheless, did not force the issue since her policy was to hasten slowly the process of regional cooperation in South Asia.

The size, power potential and centrality of India in South Asia makes her the most significant feature of SAARC. While India shares the typical features of underdevelopment with her South Asian neighbours, she also shows characteristics sharply distinguishing her from them. India has laid down a vast industrial infrastructure, has a strong military machine, a large scientific and technological manpower and a relatively stable democracy with a vast, politically stabilizing middle class having significant purchasing power. Such an India, seeking a global role after exercising her nuclear option, gives rise to serious misgivings about her objectives and role in South Asia among her smaller neighbours, particularly Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka.²⁰ SAARC with this 'baggage' of Indo-centrality and a region prone to the intra-state and inter-state conflicts, made a modest beginning by adopting a Charter in 1985 Dhaka Summit enunciating the objectives and the principles and an institutional framework for SAARC.²¹ The principal objectives of SAARC being socio-economic welfare and cultural development of the South Asian peoples, emphasis was laid on the achievement of the goal of collective collaboration in the economic, social,

cultural, technical and scientific fields.

The institutional framework for SAARC provides for pyramidal structure with Summit for the Heads of State/government at the apex, supported by the council of Ministers (Foreign Ministers of the Member States) and the arrangement of the Standing Committee and Technical Committees as earlier mentioned in the SARC declaration. The Charter also provided for setting up a Secretariat with Secretary General, seven Directors and General Services Staff. This came into being rather quickly when it was set up in Kathmandu in 1987 to coordinate and monitor implementation of SAARC activities and to service the meetings of the association. The most significant feature of the Charter is considered to be the provision that the Heads of State/Government would meet once a year, or more often, if necessary. This provides an excellent opportunity to give a political direction to the regional cooperation process as well as to informally discuss the contentious, bilateral issues on the sidelines of the Summit meetings.

During the period 1985-1990 SAARC process moved slowly through five Summit meetings with expansion of activities including those incorporated in the Integrated Programme of Action (IPA), and institutionalization of SAARC. Apart from the IPA, this period witnessed promotion of people-to-people contact, setting up of SAARC regional institutions like Agricultural Information Centre, Meteorological Research Centre and Institute of Rural Technical and Regional Software Centre, a Centre for Human Resource Development etc. ASAARC Food Security Reserve of 2,21,480 metric tonnes meant for emergency situations like droughts and floods was established and a Regional Convention on Suppression of Terrorism was ratified.²²

During this period India continued to pursue her objectives in SAARC and emphasized on cultural and trade cooperation and the exclusion of divisive and contentious politics in SAARC. However, in the Fourth Summit at Islamabad in 1988, India expressed her frustration at the slow pace of cooperation and lack of cooperation in economic areas in SAARC. This was reflected in the Prime Minister's statement when he said:

We also need to strengthen linkages between ourselves to give us strength, individually and as a region. This calls for increased economic exchanges within our region, covering the gamut of economic activities from agriculture to industry, infrastructure, technology and human resource development. Economic cooperation must lie at the heart of a regional cooperation. There has to be a degree of harmonization to ensure that complementarities in our economies are matched to give strength to our respective economies and strength to our voice and influence in world forums..... Yet we shy away from trade and economic cooperation.²³

Pakistan and Bangladesh continued to oppose inclusion of 'trade' among areas of cooperation. Trade with India, for them, was a sensitive issue which was not confined to mere economic arguments. Their opposition to freer trade regime in the region symbolised the political resistance to possible Indian domination. These initial formative years also provided the first test for Indian policy of insulating SAARC from contentious bilateral issues when in 1989 Sri Lanka refused to host the SAARC Summit due to a dispute with India on the withdrawal of Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) from the island nation. This force was stationed in Sri Lanka in accordance with an agreement to facilitate resolution of Tamil-Sinhala ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka.²⁴ The SAARC process survived this crisis and the Summit meeting was held in Male in Maldives in 1990 after the withdrawal of IPKF from Sri Lanka.²⁵

The second half of 1980s coinciding with the formative years of SAARC witnessed erosion and disappearance of cold war, consensus between US-USSR on major international issues, indications of Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan and an increasing thaw in Sino-Soviet relations. However, South Asia could not reap the benefits of this global detente. The conflict situation their foreign policies, exclusion of bilateral contentious issues from SAARC agenda and the failure to develop any policy consensus marked slow growth of SAARC during these initial years.

Indian Diplomacy and Post-Cold War

The end of the cold-war coinciding roughly with the beginning of the last decade of the twentieth century brought about a fundamental paradigm shift in international relations. Some analysts argue that with the end of the cold-war the 'geo-politics' of the cold-war got transformed into the 'geo-economics', i.e. into competitive areas of de-regulation and free trade.²⁶ The world's largest economic and military power, the United States of America, emerged as a clear hegemon in the global politics. This further reinforced the political, economic and ideology of the countries of the North. With the collapse of the competitive power bloc of Soviet Union, the capitalist ideology became fiercely assertive and we saw the ascendance of the neo-liberal 'Washington Consensus' prescribing the ideology of the free-market for economic propagate the western world-view of resolving the problems of mankind through unhindered and free market forces.

The ascendance of the process of globalization saw the decline in the power of the 'State' and erosion of the role of the United Nations. The efforts of UN agencies to promote the ideology of the New International Economic Order (NIEO) envisaging a just and equitable international economic order were superseded by the new market fundamentalism operationalised by the Bretton Woods institutions (IMF and World Bank) and the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

The process of regional cooperation in South Asia and India's policy regime in this regard could not remain immune to these historic developments of great political and economic significance. In 1991 India, as a matter of deliberate design or probably compelled by the consequences of the profligacy of 1980s, announced a change in her economic policy dispensation to dovetail her policies with the phenomenon of

global marketisation. The new logic of globalization also impelled the governments of other SAARC Member Countries to embark on a process of economic policy change to open up their markets and economies to the outside world. With the exception of Sri Lanka where this process started much earlier, the decade of 1990s represents a turning point for all countries of South Asia where major political parties of these countries committed themselves to the path of economic liberalisation and globalization.²⁷

South Asia also witnessed significant political changes during this period. With the revival of representative democracy in Pakistan (1988) and victory of democratic movements in Nepal (1990 and 2006) and Bangladesh (1991), the forces of representative democracy seemed to bring hope and positive sentiments for regional cooperation process. During 1991-2006, SAARC process despite serious road-blocks created by intra-state and inter-state conflicts went through eight Summit meetings. It moved into core areas of economic cooperation, established a SAARC Preferential Trade Arrangement (SAPTA), a SAARC Fund for Regional Projects (SFRP), a South Asian Development Fund (SADF) and SAFTA. Some very significant decisions were taken at the latest Dhaka summit. These are South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA), the SAARC convention on terrorism, cooperation on the issue of admission of new member (Afghanistan) to SAARC and granting of observer status to China and Japan. It may be mentioned here that Pakistan establishment has refused to ratify SAFTA treaty with India. South Asian regionalism, therefore, has been a victim of conflictual regional relationships between India and her neighbours.²⁸ There seems to be a set pattern of such relationships with neighbours suspecting India's objectives²⁹ in the region and India feeling that her sensitivities and genuine security concerns are not respected by her neighbours, particularly by Pakistan. The asymmetry between them and consequently retards the SAARC process.

The post cold-war imperatives of economic liberalization and globalization, as well as absence of great power rivalry in South Asia, probably provided a greater opportunity to India to give desired shape to SAARC. India during a brief phase of 1996-97 experimented with a new doctrine to break the log-jam of her bilateral disputes with neighbours. This doctrine known as Gujral Doctrine (after the name of Inder Gujral who was the Foreign Minister and later the Prime Minister of India during 1996-97) envisaged, among other things, a more accommodating and generous Indian policy without demanding reciprocity from neighbours in resolving long-standing bilateral disputes. While the practice of Gujral Doctrine helped in improving India's relations with Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka, her relations with Pakistan remained mired in traditional animosity. The bonhomie and warmth generated by the Lahore visit of Indian Prime Minister in 1999 proved short-lived due to subsequent fierce Kargil border conflict between India and Pakistan and return of military dictatorship in Pakistan. The shift in Indian policy approach may not bring any meaningful breakthrough in Indo-Pak relations but certainly brings hope for revival of SAARC process in near future.

In the context of the slow growth of SAARC process in economic areas and positive political climate generated by India's adoption of Gujral Doctrine, an idea for sub-regional cooperation involving India, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal was mooted. Thus, a large number of projects were identified for implementation under the aegis of SAARC Regional Project fund. However, due to serious misgivings and reservations about the concept of a sub-regional groupings within SAARC among other member countries, the idea of a South Asian Growth Quadrangle (SAGQ) involving India's North-East, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal has not taken off. India has also been looking to other trans-regional grouping like ASEAN, APEC and IOR-ARC to pursue its goal of a larger Asian and probably global role in the world affairs. India is a full dialogue partner of ASEAN but could not secure the membership of the rich club of APEC. She has become a member of Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) which is considered to be a link between SAARC and ASEAN. India is also a member of IOR-ARC which was formed in 1997.³⁰ In pursuit of its 'Look East' policy India launched a new cooperative forum-The Mekong Ganga Cooperation (MGC) forum - with five of its eastern neighbours, namely, Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam in the year 2000. Some observers see this as an Indian effort for battling Chinese influence in Indo-China. Some critics consider relevance of SAARC in respect of reducing bilateral tensions, enhancing regional security and promoting economic well-being of people as almost negligible. Its structure as an inter-government body is seen as limiting its role and merely embodying the relationship of forces between member countries and their inter-state tensions. India as the largest state of South Asia has been making efforts to soften the political and strategic divergence among SAARC member countries through greater economic and socio-cultural cooperation. SAARC has generated considerable dynamism at the social, NGO/Civil Society levels. India has taken a lead in this respect. But the Achilles' heel of Indian policy thrust in SAARC has been the attitude and policy of Pakistan whose ruling establishment seems determined to thwart any Indian attempt for promotion of regional cooperation.

CONCLUSION

The end cold war seemed to have provided greater leeway to India to promote her perception of South Asian regionalism through SAARC. However, the bilateral disputes between India and other SAARC countries, particularly between India and Pakistan, are deep rooted and defy the general global trend towards lessening of tensions in the post-cold war period. would grow that military confrontation cannot resolve the territorial dispute between the two neighbours now possessing sophisticated missiles and nuclear weapons. It is quite probable that paradoxically nuclear terror (as in case of Europe) brings in peace and an end to war in South Asia. This could be an ideal ground for the sane civil society to step in and create a bond of friendship and amity in South Asia.

The bilateral disputes between India and other members of SAARC, particularly between India and

Pakistan, will continue to impede and torment SAARC process. India's neighbours expect her to play down the big-brotherly attitude and keep a low-key but positive profile in SAARC. India, on the other hand, distrusts her neighbours, particularly Pakistan which is seen as attempting to undermine the secular basis of the Indian State and harbouring and sustaining cross border terrorism and proxy war against India. Probably India feels that she has much more at stake than the smaller nations of SAARC and a mere South Asian regional status may not fulfill her global aspirations. This explains her 'Look-East Policy' and pursuit of sub-regional and trans-regional cooperation. This might prove to be detrimental to the growth of SAARC process. However, the future of SAARC will depend not only on Indo-Pak relations and the contours of future global economy but also on the intervention of the civil society and non-government initiatives in South Asia to promote peace, harmony and economic progress.

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