

The Period between Post Independence and Pre Establishment of SAARC

Abstract

South Asia cooperation will enhance the state of trade among the countries. If developing countries tread to cooperate on the regional level then it will be much reasonable on international level. On the regional level economic and technological cooperation is according to time's demand. So it's necessary for regional developing countries to make a strong base for economic and technological cooperation and to accept it enthusiastically.

Keywords: SAARC, Asian, CBMS, Central Asia, East Asia.

Introduction

Asian continent is divided into three parts West Asia; central eastern and gulf countries of Arab are its part, central Asia; India and adjoined (neighbouring) countries are situated and East Asian countries in which in far east Philippines, Thailand, Singapore form ASEAN. Indian subcontinent and central Asian countries India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Maldives are called South Asian countries.

Almost all south Asian countries faced a great political upheaval in 1977. Sri Julficar Ali Bhutto and Indira Gandhi swarned in. Bhutto came to the power by military junta while Indira Gandhi was elected by public. Zia-ur-Rahman stretched his power in 1977 after a long time of political ups and downs. In August 1975 Zia-ur-Rahman sworned in after the dispel of Muzib and his Awami League. Leading figure of regional cooperation Iran's Shah also caught in trouble and subsequently quit from power. In Sri Lanka Smt. Mao Bhandarnayake's government came to the power in the leadership of J.R. Jayewardene by United National party. These new rulers were not very much interested in regional cooperation without any experience of external relations and concentrated on the formation of the domestic political integration and strategy for their powerful opponents. Besides political pressure they were forced to face economic crisis in South Asia. In 1974-75 actual development rate was less than 2.2% while population growth rate was about 2.4%. Many troubles were present to maintain the development rate of 2% for South Asian countries; and this situation was continued till 1978. High population growths is one of the main reasons for poverty of this region. According to the World Bank's GDP report South Asian countries are in a lower state. Bangladesh is placed in 126th place Nepal in 124th place, India in 114th, Sri Lanka in 113th and Pakistan in 117th place.¹

South Asia cooperation will enhance the state of trade among the countries. If developing countries tread to cooperate on the regional level then it will be much reasonable on international level. On the regional level economic and technological cooperation is according to time's demand. So it's necessary for regional developing countries to make a strong base for economic and technological cooperation and to accept it enthusiastically.²

Aim of the Study

In 1977 then Bangladesh's president Zia-ur-Rahman communicated the idea of regional cooperation to overcome with the problem of establishment and peace of newly emerged country and even to reduce the poverty and troubles of public. It is said that the proposal of regional economic cooperation was due to Bangladesh's economic crisis. Primarily two main countries of South Asia India and Pakistan were not interested in this sort of regional organisation. But, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan and Maldives welcomed this proposal of Zia. Pakistan thought that India's presence in the organisation would not be profitable for Pakistan. Pakistan was of the view that India with its land area, economy, military power, industrial power, structure, science and technology may be a



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sovereign in any regional organisations India thought that if it accepts this policy of regional cooperation then its policy of via media would become weak. But India and Pakistan very soon ended their initial hesitation to establish social, economic and cultural cooperation in South Asia.

In 1968 Gunnar Mirdel stated that Basic economic condition of South Asian countries is homogenous. Generally they are extremely poor. Which is the biggest is the poor. All are accustomed to face breakages and life standard is either similar or lower to which was before the 11th world war. Unfortunately, today's condition is much similar with what is above mentioned by Mirdel.³

But in 1979-80 second oil crisis ended economic possibility. In gross import list of India the ratio of oil increased from 26% to 34% in 1980 and every country of the region faced the problem of soaring prices. And the new administrators of South Asia opposed its former relations with this regions.⁴

South Asia's regionalism was much affected due to the pressure of economic crisis and the political atmosphere and second thing that helps to promote regional cooperation is assurance of the western countries regarding monetary help.

United States of America's carter regime & British Prime Minister lord colegan were in favour of economic cooperation to establish, peace, friendship and mutual regional cooperation. At that time Janta Government of India adopted the policy of good relations with neighbouring countries and consequently came the results: Salal dam contract with Pakistan, Farakka water distribution project with Bangladesh, new trade & visa less transportation with Nepal and help to Sri Lanka and Bhutan in their crisis moments. Generally, South Asian countries were greatly attached with each other regarding economic matters in United States and other national conferences. Due to this a cooperative atmosphere came in this sphere.⁵

Bangladesh's president Zia-ur-Rahman made a serious effort for regional cooperation. He made a format for this purpose and propagated this in all south Asian countries in May 1980 and organised 1st SAARC Summit of South Asian countries heads.⁶ He was of the view that this sort of regional organisation must be formed in whole of the world and specially in the third world countries and South Asia needs this type of organisation keeping in the mind geographical, cultural, social and caste related matters.

South Asia's seven countries signed on this initiative in May 1980 - which was proposed by Zia-ur-Rahman of Bangladesh and he addressed the summit of seven countries modern form of the organisation is an outcome of that effort. The prime objective of the organisation was to enforce establishment and possibilities of future to make a powerful organisation.

Bangladesh's president was thinking on this since three years before giving this a complete form. When he came India in December 1977 he interacted with Indian leaders on this issue. After this then prime minister of India Morar Ji Desai went to visit Bangladesh on 15-17 April 1979 and during this visit

both political leaders interacted on the issues of regions. In India Janta party's govt. was not much endure able. In 1980 came Indira Gandhi led congress party's government. In January 1980 this Bangladeshi leader made recontact and discussed this issue. Nepal's king Virendra Vikram visited Bangladesh at that time and Zia-ur-Rahman welcomed and praised the proposal of regional organisation of King.

Bangladesh's president Zia-ur-Rahman was facing his country's internal political troubles and for that he was in want of an open & practical external or foreign policy. Through this he could make good relations with neighbouring countries and solve the internal problems of the country by their cooperation.⁷

The quick supporter and adopting countries of this proposal were; Nepal, Sri Lanka, Maldives and Bhutan but without India & Pakistan's cooperation was not finding its finality. In India Mrs. Gandhi's govt. adopted this proposal theoretically but practically she was not prepared to adopt the scheme because the format of this proposal was created by accompanying her former opponent Janta Govt.

This was the time when India was totally alienated in some issues in this sphere as Afghan crisis, Campuchia issue, competition in the dispute of Indian Ocean; India was totally different from his opponents. Smt Gandhi's relations with Pakistan's president Zia-ul-Haq and Bangladesh's president Zia-ur-Rahman were not satisfactory and good that is why these two countries of East and West Pakistan intended to make India frustrated on above mentioned issues.

In this memorandum of Bangladesh these factors were mentioned:

1. To satisfy the South Asian countries with the benefits of this organisation.
2. Through the policy of via media and United Nations organisation to maintain peace and stability in this area.
3. Sovereignty, national freedom, regional indivisibility.

Lasseze fair policy, negation of the use of power and to solve the disputes peacefully was the main objectives. Bangladesh's president said about the cut in arms capacity in the region and this aspect was focussed by King Virendra Vikram, who visited Bangladesh in 1978. Keeping these matters in his mind then Indian external affairs ministers Narsimha Rao wrote to America to make safe the issue of regional organisation from the view of strategy and defence.⁸

Pakistan was not interested to sign on the proposal of Bangladesh. This was on the basis of many reasons as: Pakistan created a misconception that the proposal was initiated by India-Pakistan knew India's economy was strong with its scientific & technological spheres and that this proposal will help to make a local market for Indian products.

Pakistan was suspicious that participation of trade will increase and thus through cooperation organisation's participation of exchange will also increase due to that Kashmir dispute with India will go to dilemma. Pakistan was afraid that India's good

relations with South Asian countries and powerful policy structure could make Pakistan's strategic and economic situations with west Asian countries less powerful or weak.

Text of the regional cooperation organisation was prepared and advertised in November 1980 by Bangladesh. Three important issues were present in this proposal. Firstly, regional cooperation's concept was widely described in this political and strategic subjects got importance. Cooperation's concept was not limited only to economic but the issue of active help or participation was also involved in it.⁹

Despite of economic, social, cultural, scientific and technological etc. Many type of issues like these were also admitted. In addition to this South Asian and other regional countries and with equal purposes and alternative subjects amongst international organisation this was to make a cooperative talks on this issue.

The second issue of Bangladesh's concept of organisation to trace out the backward areas of cooperation. In this concept those areas were included which were understood non governmental and disputeless. These were: Ports, transport, travel, telecommunication, space science, agriculture and rural development, road transport, trade (selected commodities to promote market) science and technical education and culture.

Third issue for regional cooperation was to admit the advices of many institutions and organisations. Proposal was made strong through the talks among the heads of many country's' governments. Although it was accepted that the way for the talks would be suggested by foreign secretaries and external affairs ministers.¹⁰

Certainly, SAARC was an outcome of efforts, which were made by Bangladesh on May 2, 1980. But Declaration on South Asian Regional co-operation was admitted only in August 1983 after the conference of seven country's foreign secretaries in New Delhi.

Working Paper on SAARC

Before the formal existence of SAARC many useful and beneficial primary works were done in seven S.A country's' meetings. Bangladesh made paper on working system in which this was readmitted that 'on regional basis economic and technological co-operation was adopted as essential and necessary skill by developing countries'. In this possible areas were also identified in South Asian countries.

Colombo Summit of External Affairs Ministers of SAARC Member in 1981

At this meeting it was considered that regional cooperation was indispensable for development but it was also accepted that this was not option or alternative for bilateral or multilateral co-operation. On this meeting five sectors as agriculture, rural development communication mediums, science, health and population were identified to seek possibilities of cooperation. An integrated committee was made by all the countries which were to maintain information and figures of these sectors and to give the impetus.

Kathmandu Summit of foreign Secretaries (in Nov. 1981)

On This summit the report of five examining groups and integrated committee of the institution was sanctioned. On this summit it was also decided that other areas for example, transportation, postal services, science and technological co-operation were to examine.

Summit of Islamabad in August 1982

On this summit the report of examining group was evaluated which was formed in Kathmandu (1981). The report was sanctioned and the decision was made that examining groups will be forced for. Sports, Arts and Culture. An important urge was made on this summit for South Asians countries ministerial label summit in May-Sep 1983.¹¹

Foreign secretary of Sri Lanka W.T. Jayasingha thanked Pakistan's foreign secretary for enthusiastic efforts. The invitation of Bangladesh govt. to meet in Feb or March 1983 in Dhaka was accepted happily by foreign secretaries. They accepted that they will investigate committee's report and preparation will find finality on minister's meeting.

Dhaka Summit in March 1983

In March 1983 a summit was organised in Dhaka headed by Bangladesh. On this proposals of committee were sanctioned and an organised working scheme was advocated by foreign ministers. A permanent committee will be found for integration of working scheme.

Foreign Affairs Ministers' Summit in August 1983 in New Delhi

On this summit foreign ministers signed on a manifest of South Asean co-operation and that they are unanimous to the fulfilment of people's social and economical joint ambitions of these countries. They have also accepted that regional co-operation is an important need for development. In this manifest it was mentioned that it should be depended on the equality of sovereignty, regional indivisibility, political freedom, non interference in the internal matters of other countries and mutual benefits. On this summit further steps were taken to institutionalise SAARC. Decision was made to form different committees before December 1985.

New Delhi Summit in 1984

To show the solidarity of South Asian regional co-operation a summit was organised on 27th Feb; 1984. On this summit it was said that besides of social, economic, cultural co-operation there should be friendly political relations.

Standing Committee's Summit in Maley in Feb 1985

A Summit of standing committee was organised in Maley in Feb 1985. In this summit it was said that there should be a ministerial level committee for SAARC countries joint actions institutionalisation. Foreign minister admitted this proposal and became constant to adopt this in first SAARC summit which was to be held in Dec. 1985 in Dhaka.¹²

On 7-8 Dec., 1985 a conference of 7 countries heads of South Asia was organised and thus SAARC was formed officially. These countries are India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri

Lanka, and Maldives. It was the first case of regional co-operation in the world politics by seven neighbouring south Asian countries. In this summit its initial name "South Asian Regional Co-operation" was changed to "South Asian Regional Co-operation organisation", it was to focus on the fact that this is such an organisation which have had a purpose to promote regional co-operation. Inauguration of the summit was started with Kuran, Gita, Tripitika and Bible scriptures and ended with the manifestation of SAARC, which was headed by General H.M. Irsad.

In this the main participants were: Sri Rajiv Gandhi (India), Mohhammed Zia-ul-Haq (Pakistan), General H.M. Irsad (Bangladesh), Sri J.R. Jayavardene (Sri Lanka), King Birandra (Nepal), King Zigme Chumme Vanchung (Bhutan) and Sri Mamun Abdul Gyoom (Maldives). On the occasion of the foundation of SAARC the speeches which were delivered by the heads South Asia intended to promote regional co-operation and to reduce tensions. They said with the birth of this organisation a new era of co-operation, goodwill will start brotherhood among these countries. They termed the birth of regional co-operation the expression organisation an epoch-making incident, starting of new age, mutual understanding and political will.

SAARC's full name is – South Asian Association for Regional co-operation. As it is confirmed by its name SAARC is an organisation of South Asian countries.

Conclusion

"From the view of regional co-operation India and its seven neighbouring counties (Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, Afghanistan and Maldives) are the forming countries of SAARC."

Indian sub-continent and central Asia's countries: India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and Maldives are called South Asian countries. These South Asia countries together are tended to improve the relations, solve of regional

problems and mainly to search new for economic cooperation and co-existence which is known as South Asian Association for Regional co-operation.

Thus, we can say that in SAARC mutual reliance and regional peace and prosperity are main criteria. Economic development, mutual co-operation and tensionless regional atmosphere are the main objectives behind the formation of this Regional economic development, security peace-disarmament and international economy etc. are the subjects to be solved at this association.

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