# SAARC

Background

* Estd 1985, Dhaka
* Functions through a network of auxiliary bodies

Objective

* to promote the welfare of the peoples of South Asia and to improve their quality of life
* The member states sought to achieve this objective through active collaboration and mutual assistance in the economic, social, cultural, technical and scientific fields.
* Cooperation within the framework of SAARC was based on respect for the principles of sovereign equality, territorial integrity, political independence, non –interference in the internal affairs of other States and mutual benefit.
* it was explicitly stated in the SAARC Charter that bilateral contentious issues would not be discussed in the regional forum.

Two Phases

* The first was the preparatory phase based on gradual and step-by-step approach to initiating regional cooperation, in non-controversial and peripheral areas.
* In the second half of its evolution, SAARC moved into its expansionary phase, when regional cooperation was expanded in social and core economic sectors, including the operationalization of South Asian Preferential Trading Arrangement
* **Currently SAARC can be referred to be in the implementation phase of its journey.**

**Challenges**

* Several deferred summits
* limited intra-regional trade
* continued Indo-Pakistan tensions
* incomplete national integration process
* reversal of democratic process in most countries
* perceived role of extra-regional actors
* the continued threat of terrorism and intra-regional security threats demonstrate the multiple challenges yet awaiting regional agreement and response

Common Concerns/Opportunities for cooperation

* Terrorism
* Economic Development and poverty mitigation
* Human Development
* Regional security
* Sustainable development
* Climate change
* Water sharing

Steps taken

* SAARC Development goals

India’s role

* Largest country in the region
* Shares borders with all SAARC nations (except Afghanistan)

Impediments to Cooperation

* India-Pak rivalry
* India being seen as playing the role of big brother in the region

Steps forward

* Countries should have confidence and trust in each other
* They should acknowledge the common challenges faced by the countries of the region

During 4th meeting of SAARC Home/Interior ministers in Thimpu (2011) India proposed

* Regular direct contact among police chiefs of SAARC nations to fight terrorism and other trans-national crime
* Formulation of a regional organisation on the lines of Interpol: **SAARCPOL**

Table

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| Issue | Progress |
| Terrorism | 1988: SAARC Convention on Suppression of Terrorism  2006: Additional Protocol to the SAARC Convention on Suppression of Terrorism |
| Drug trade | 1995: SAARC Regional Convention on Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances |
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