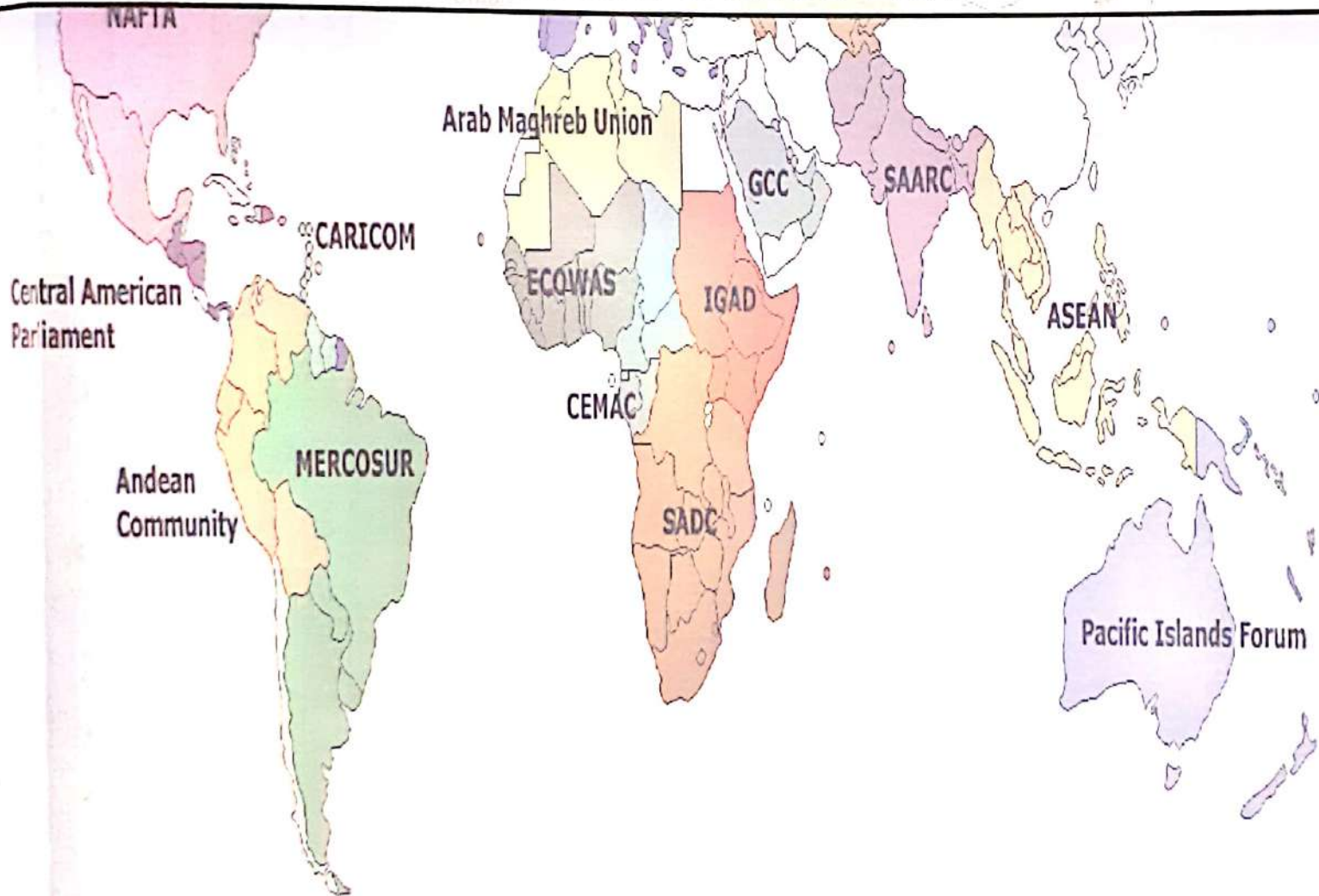


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Regional Integrity through SAARC: The rough way Ahead

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Abstract

The success of regional cooperation is measured in the form of regional development. Development can be defined in numerous ways, in the context of regional cooperation it means a lot. Economic prosperity, multilateral and bilateral trade opportunities, contribution of the region in global GDP, living standard of people, social welfare programme, technological advancement and sustainable business practices are some of the indicator of regional development. In the last two decades regional cooperation association play a distinct role in economic growth. The role and importance of European union in the economic reform of France, Germany and Greece is highly appreciable. Similarly in Asia, ASEAN have distinct role in the boosting trade partnership among member nations as well as in developing bilateral relationship on economic and non-economic front. SAARC, which is South Asia's regional cooperation couldn't perform well on any of the above parameter. Except the exchange of dialogues and declaration by the head of the member nations, SAARC is losing its relevance in real terms. However, India, which is the most powerful member of this association, is trying its level best to strengthen SAARC. Strengthen SAARC is the need of India or Strengthen India is the need of SAARC may be a question of debate. But, to achieve sustainable growth, and to be a global economic power India needs strong SAARC. This article is about the journey of SAARC. With the help of available literature, author has tried to explore the reasons of SAARC failures. Author has also identified areas where SAARC have got success to maintain regional integrity and to achieve its objectives. At last some of the important areas are suggested where SAARC member especially India have to focus for regional cooperation and for a strong SAARC. Key words: SAARC, Regional development, Maritime issues, Power Grid

Introduction

The World is prospering, South Asia is leading, India is strengthening but SAARC is struggling. According to IMF's Regional Economic Outlook for April 2015, South Asia is one of the fastest growing regions in the world today with GDP growth of 6.9 percent in 2013. IMF also predicted the growth for this region 7.9 percent by 2016, that will make it the fastest growing region of the World. But, besides these facts there are certain other facts which cannot be ignored or hide behind the growth story. South Asia is home to 23 percent of the world's population (SAARC, 2014) but it accounts less than 3.5 percent of the global GDP (Kapoor.