

## THE CHALLENGES OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND THE QUEST FOR ENGENDERING PEACE: A STUDY OF THE SOUTH ASIAN REGIONAL MATRIX

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### ABSTRACT

*The region of South Asia has been one of the most strategically relevant, and at the same time, vulnerable, in the realms of International Politics. The most profound factor which has perhaps underlined the entire concept of regionalism in the subcontinent has been India's overarching presence, and the 'fear psychosis' generated in the minds of her smaller neighbors. The simmering tensions in the anvil of the region has also impeded the progress of the regional institution, the SAARC. And, without a doubt, it is India's relations with her neighbors, which has been the catalyst in determining the various contours of the politico-economic-socio-cultural-institutional framework in the subcontinent. The present study seeks to analyze the nature, functioning and the institutional reformulation of the SAARC, and thereby seek to recommend measures that can be utilized for diluting the sources of conflict and ink/sketch a better and durable future course for South Asian regionalism. The paper researches the typical Track-I solutions that have been and can be utilized for conflict resolution and be cementing peace and stability in the region and augment the spirit of regionalism in South Asia. In the last part, the paper analyses the prospects of Track IV/V methods of alternative diplomatic initiatives, especially the possible role of media images and citizen diplomacy etc in engendering durable peace or at least attempt to seek a way out of the perenniality of conflict in the South Asian region.*

*The paper enquires into the role of media images in the context of South Asian regionalism, and the inherent anti-Indianism and perenniality of conflict in the region especially harping on the prospective alternative role of media and citizen diplomacy and Track IV/V diplomatic initiatives and their viability in the betterment of the same. The **research question** is whether media images can act as a platform for citizen diplomacy, how it can play a better integrative role than already attempted Track-I/II endeavours and initiate peace initiatives, step-by-step, with the NGOs, Women's Groups etc working in tandem, in order to smoothen political rigidities, reduce trust deficit, breed spirit of cooperation, connect with the people across the borders.*

**KEYWORDS:** Regionalism, Indian Subcontinent, Conflict-Cooperation Dichotomy, India's 'Hegemony', Policy toward its Neighbours, SAARC, Media and Citizen Diplomacy, Aman Ki Asha, Romancing the Border, SAFMA