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**Title:** “Regionalism in South Asia: Alternative Approaches to Peace”

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### **Abstract**

In South Asia marked similarities can be found in the state systems, economic activities, language, culture, religion, architecture and values. And, due to these identity markers, South Asian states continue to relate to each other. However, the commonalities are not without diversities. The asymmetrical geographical size, demographic structure and levels of economic growth have led to mistrust and perceptual differences in both opinion and action. Alongside, the role played by the external powers especially, United States, China, Russia and Britain has not been positive and divides the states of South Asia. This has not been the case in Europe and South East Asia where the extra-regional powers played a uniting force to manage the security dilemmas.

Regionalism becomes essential for transforming the political and economic policies of the states and reshaping the values and culture. South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) was established in 1985 with the functional cooperation. However, the success of SAARC in terms of creating a regional space, political friendship, economic integration and cultural identity has been far from impressive. Yet, SAARC has not ceased to be a forum for deliberations and cooperative endeavours in human security areas. SAARC continues to uphold its foundational principles even though the progress has been limited, trade liberalisation slow, and security cooperation problematic.

In a nutshell, the research seeks to test the theoretical assumptions of the liberal school of thought on regionalism. The thesis examines the relevance, appropriateness and consequences of regionalism in areas of human security adopted by SAARC. The research explores those expectations, unifying elements and diplomatic methodologies that not only help address the laggards of regionalism in South Asia but improve its ability to guarantee peace and security to its member states. The thesis examines the rationale behind institutionalizing regional cooperation in South Asia. Moreover, two case studies draw a comparative assessment of regional organizations active in two different regions, namely, Europe and South East Asia, to see what approaches, succeed in creating a stable regional order and under what circumstances.

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