

## REVIEWER'S REPORT

Manuscript No.: IJAR- 53102

**Date:** 04/08/2025

**Title:** "REIMAGINING REGIONALISM: REVITALIZING SAARC FOR A PRAGMATIC SOUTH ASIAN INTEGRATION"

**Recommendation:**

Accept

Rating	Excel.	Good	Fair	Poor
Originality		√		
Techno. Quality			√	
Clarity			√	
Significance			√	

Reviewer Name: Dr Abdul Haseeb Mir

**Date:** 04/08/2025

**Reviewer's Comment for Publication.**

This article presents a timely and well-structured analysis of SAARC's challenges and revitalization pathways, making a compelling case for pragmatic regional integration in South Asia. The author effectively contextualizes SAARC's historical underperformance while highlighting its latent potential through depoliticized cooperation, institutional reforms, and connectivity initiatives. The integration of theoretical frameworks (e.g., functionalism, neo-functionalism) strengthens the argument, and concrete proposals—such as the "SAARC Grid," seamless borders, and China's inclusion—add practical value. However, the article occasionally overstates SAARC's revivable potential without sufficiently addressing entrenched geopolitical tensions (e.g., India-Pakistan conflicts) or evaluating alternatives like BIMSTEC. While the policy recommendations are insightful, their feasibility warrants deeper scrutiny, particularly regarding political will and implementation barriers. Minor issues include repetitive points in the revitalization steps and outdated references (e.g., India's 2007 SAARC chairmanship). Despite these limitations, the paper contributes meaningfully to discourse on South Asian regionalism by reframing challenges as opportunities and advocating actionable solutions. With minor revisions to tighten the feasibility analysis and update contextual details, it merits publication for its relevance to policymakers and scholars.

**Detailed Reviewer's Report**

The manuscript offers a comprehensive examination of SAARC's stagnation and proposes a multifaceted strategy for its revival. Strengths include a clear historical overview of SAARC's objectives and

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achievements, adept application of regionalism theories (e.g., comparing EU's supranational model to SAARC's intergovernmental limitations), and innovative solutions like energy-sharing grids and "smart borders." The emphasis on non-traditional security threats (e.g., climate change, water scarcity) and economic synergies (e.g., untapped hydropower, trade potential) underscores the urgency of regional cooperation. However, the analysis occasionally downplays structural hurdles: India-Pakistan rivalries are acknowledged but not critically dissected, and the feasibility of China's membership—while intriguing—lacks geopolitical nuance (e.g., implications for India's influence). The revitalization steps, though thorough, are uneven; some (e.g., conflict-resolution mechanisms) are underdeveloped, while others (e.g., tourism promotion) seem peripheral. The conclusion's optimism about trust-building contrasts with earlier skepticism, creating tonal inconsistency. Additionally, minor factual errors (e.g., misdating India's SAARC chairmanship) and redundant arguments (e.g., repeated stress on "depoliticization") require attention. Recommendations: Deepen discussion of BIMSTEC's role vis-à-vis SAARC, address power asymmetries more critically, and refine policy proposals with implementation timelines. These revisions would enhance the manuscript's academic rigor and practical relevance.

**Recommendation:** Accept with minor revisions.

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