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Shahid Javed Burki, *South Asia in the New World Order: The Role of Regional Cooperation*, Routledge, 2014, 210 pp. \$155 Hardcover.

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Books review

The ‘who vs whom’ contradistinction really matters for a review of any book in terms of sensible reasoning and excellent quality. In such a point of fact, I have a long track record of substantial, groundbreaking and meaningful research accomplishments, which received an exceptionally high-profile international recognition, relates immanently to relationship and partnership of South Asia with such extra-regional great power as Japan, while my extensively diversified areas of expertise circumscribe global governance, international relations, political economy and sustainable development of a thriving Asia amid the increasingly globalizing world today. This is mainly why I took interest in reviewing this volume. The book is actually the outcome of the author’s research project completed at the Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS) of National University of Singapore (NUS). As the writer acknowledges, he was grateful to this institution for its logistic support as well as many of his colleagues (senior South Asia scholars and researchers) at this institution for their sustained encouragement and enlightened recommendation. In the publication’s ‘Prologue’ (Chapter 1), he also enthusiastically rhapsodizes about the details of his incredible personal life with both academic career and professional history. Educated at Oxford University as a Rhodes scholar and at Harvard University as a Mason fellow, he has in fact served for the World Bank in various senior positions from 1974 to 1999, including Regional Vice President (for Latin America and the Caribbean). This seasoned economist, who is also a former Finance Minister of Pakistan, is currently acting as chairman of the Bukri Institute of Public Policy (BIPP), a Lahore (Pakistan)-based independent think-tank after his own name. However, as I have read his book to the furthest extent, it is better to revolve around its ‘more weaknesses’ than ‘less strengths’.

Seeing its heading, I thought that the book would have lucidly investigated why and whether the South Asian regional cooperation is considerably efficacious by this time, and how and when it could assume a serviceable contribution to South Asia in the midst of the 21st century’s new world order. But I have become bewildered, after unearthing the contents of this publication. Out of its eight chapters, four chapters (Chapters 4-6 and 8), which are not directly related to the thematic stream of this study, read inconsequential. The last sentence of the book’s last chapter reads: “The positive economic consequences of opening up to one another would be enormously significant. There would also be positive outcomes

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on the political side, but that is entirely different subject better dealt with by those who have greater competence in that area” (p. 182). This statement sounds quite contradictory, because a major position of the volume deals with a complete breadth of concerns covering political (and even strategic) concerns in addition to social and cultural facets of all countries of South Asia. For example, Chapter 4 fully deals with history’s many burdens confronting this sub-region of Asia. In words of the author himself: “I have focused so much attention on the importance of history for understanding why people and nations behave in certain ways” (p. 1). Indeed, he believes that one of the most crucial reasons South Asia has not been able to progress as a region is that history weighs heavily on the countries in the area. Also, a full-fledged chapter is concentrated on the three elections (in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan), which he regards as good indications for democratic advancement and the main priorities of the people in this region other than religion and politics, principally involving insurgencies based on ethnicity in Sri Lanka and Islamic fundamentalism in Pakistan.

In any case, I expected that the author would have determinately furnished a separate chapter on the theoretical literature for ‘international political economy’, which is the mixture of politics and economics intricately crisscrossed with international relations. But he, who is an expert basically on economic history, did not do it for this interdisciplinary research. Besides, although this volume’s title has run my eyes over the subject, the phrases ‘*World Order*’ (in the main title) and ‘*Regional Cooperation*’ (in the sub-title) are explained neither analytically nor prescriptively. In this respect, it is still unclear why the phrase ‘*Economic Integration*’ (as an economic arrangement between different regions) apart from or instead of ‘*Regional Cooperation*’ is not applied. Moreover, ‘East Asia’, ‘rising Asia’, ‘Asian century’, ‘bipolarity’, ‘multipolarity’, ‘superpower’, ‘globalization’, ‘global economy’, etc., are chiefly used without explanation of any of these locations. Lastly, viewing that the main title seems less applicable or too enthusiastic, it is unconnected with the sub-title to many extents.

To be more comprehensive, the adverse implication of intra-regional strife between India and Pakistan in South Asia on regional cooperation and economic integration is traditionally explored in this study. Obviously, an already countless and expanding number of productions on each of these aspects written by South Asian scholars are available in the academic publishing world. Anyway, I wanted to know more specifically how Indo-Pak tug of war over Kashmir as the flashpoint for armageddon in addition to the reportedly regional ‘hegemony’ of India and ‘hypocrisy’ of Pakistan might bring a severely destructive ramification on South Asia, as both countries with their nuclear weapons constantly threaten each other and thereby escalate tension among other nations of this region. Some strategists foretell that India and Pakistan will fight against each other and Bangladesh will gain. Although the writer at the same time provides a gnomic report on the interstate conflicts between Pakistan and Afghanistan, he contrastingly commends that Bangladesh carries its own weight of history, which is different from the one Pakistan has borne. Nevertheless, understanding that ‘civil war’ in the simplest term is a war between citizens of the same country, the author (as Pakistani citizen) wrongly considers Bangladesh’s ‘liberation war’ as a ‘civil war’. He himself describes that this war was fought between a regular force from West Pakistan and irregulars called ‘freedom fighters’ (*mukti bahini*) by the people of East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). I am really wondering to see how he hides the historical facts that the West Pakistani armed forces with their targeted attack ferociously murdered thousands of unarmed and innocent civilians in East Pakistan and atrocities for mass rape and sexual violence by them. I do not think that punishment simply as the act of punishing these offenders will be enough. According to him, the people of West Pakistan treated East Pakistan’s freedom fighters merely as ‘miscreants’ (wrongdoers or lawbreakers) who similarly act in many civil wars. But he should have openly urged his nation, in which many Pakistanis in the new generation have still a very poor understanding of not only

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the never-forgettable contribution of these truly-courageous and ultimately life-sacrificing martyrs to the emergence of Bangladesh but also the history of an united Pakistan, to formally apologize to Bangladesh for the world's most heinous war crimes and particularly genocide (with as many as 3 million people killed) committed by the Pakistan military, their suppression of brutality and its eventual shameful surrender in the 1971 war. Also, he says that Pakistan was able to make quick economic adjustments of its own to the loss of East Pakistan, and he was summoned back from Harvard University to lend a helping hand with the process. But he avoids saying how the rulers of West Pakistan extremely deprived East Pakistan during 1947-1971 that consequently led to the liberation struggle. So, it would have been acceptable if he had fairly lighted upon the truth that Bangladesh is a 'heroic nation' that won its glorious independence from Pakistan in a bloody war in 1971 as well as Bangladesh is the only unprecedented example in Asia in such a successful revolution for a sovereign nation worldwide.

Notwithstanding, when it comes to the researcher's culminating arguments, I have my mixed reactions. In the beginning, he opines: "In Chapter Seven I will suggest why South Asia could do much better by adopting a regional approach, and become a part of the multilayered world that is becoming into being" (p. 6). As he continues, South Asia has two options as follows: it could pursue narrow national interests, or it could work as a region with the counties in the area prepared to step forward and devise ways of working as a cohesive and well-integrated region. He emphasizes that regional integration will help South Asia to find a place for itself in the rapidly changing global economy. As he also thinks, the full advantage of globalization will not be realized without integration, and South Asia, compared with other world regions, in particular those in an emerging Asia, will be left behind. I agree with such a conventionally held view behind the author's effort in the sense that reframing a 'regional approach' as against 'national approach' will definitely herald many successful economic development stories for South Asia, especially in terms of common commercial benefits from regional association, ie, an increase in the each individual country's economic growth rate. But I do not agree with him, because practicing a new regional approach might not be an absolutely single and novel idea about addressing the factors that lead to the regional dissection, let alone contributing to South Asia's engagement with the future multipolar world with a multifarious and multifaceted approach rather than the bipolarity between China and the United States (US).

The research unfolds that an attempt to repair or improve the global system in a casual or desultory way will not be effective for solving the global economic and financial problems the world faces in the concurrent millennium. Therefore, even though a set of arrangements established internationally for preserving global stability over a few decades after the end of the Second World War was practicable, it needs to be reformed fundamentally with the adjustable conditions for the humankind. In essence, the argument advanced in this work is that the emergence of a multipolar world is better aligned with Asia's interests. Nonetheless, the writer does not more persuasively examine the effect that such a framework has on the engagement of South Asia with the globe as well as on the relationships among and controlling events of the countries of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), even by making an approach on economic grounds. For instance, he does not indispensably ferret out why New Delhi seeks to find an option of dragging Pakistan to the dispute resolution body of the World Trade Organization (WTO) for refusing to reciprocate for 20 years India's granting of the Most Favored Nation (MFN) status to Pakistan. In particular, a discussion about how Pakistan as India's nuclear-armed foe reacts to India's membership (only one from South Asia) at the Group of Twenty (G20) that helps the latter boost its role in the global economic governance architecture is completely absent. On the other hand, the book lacks its answer to a question how India feels when China as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) manipulates its veto power resistant to India at a time when

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Beijing's strategic supports uses Pakistan as a pawn against India. Whereas, the author easily guesses that such a development will take place if China and India, each with its own sphere of influence, work with rather than against each other.

Anyway, the idea of the SAARC was mooted first by the then Bangladesh's President in Dhaka in 1985. But it is clear that this regional institution comprising eight member states created more than three decades ago has yet been able to develop a long-term and strongly coordinated approach to tackle the non-traditional security (ie, human security) issues including food insecurities, health vulnerabilities, natural disasters, etc., by enlarging its voice at such global multilateral organization as the UN. The author confesses that South Asia is one of the few regions in the world where regionalism did not work, while this region has relatively made a weak attempt at regional integration. A also stated in the book, the SAARC lags far behind other regional groupings in contrast to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in particular, in terms of not only level of per capita income but also its dominance in the world order while integrating itself in the global trading system.

Besides, as the writer sees Pakistan as a 'sick man' of South Asia now, it is a simple question whether Pakistan's longstanding rival (India as a 'healthy man') at all times will come in a race to keep this sick man healthy. In this connection, he defines the word 'emerging' as a geographic entity (a country or a region) that has achieved political stability, social steadiness as well as economic dynamism for a pathway towards its sustainable future. But he does not consider that this term can be applied to any of the South Asian countries except India. In short, he poses the questions whether India's growth will be sustained and whether South Asia as a whole is really emerging. In opposition to his perceptions, there are many opinions in favor of the SAARC. If we go into detail, the SAARC earlier dubbed as a 'poor countries' club' is currently walking up to redefine itself as group of powerful and booming economies. As the time has changed and things evolved in the world, so has the SAARC. The gravity of SAARC can be measured by the viabilities that it has so far become part of every locus of major global decision-making either as a participant or as an observer. As of now, all the global great powers are not only the observers to the SAARC but also they have incorporated the South Asian region in their strategic plans. However, although the researcher stresses the growing impact of demographic change with South Asia's well over one fifth of the world's population on the global economy, he misses to trace that the world will add nearly 4 billion people (with 1 billion plus population of India alone) into its middle-class during the next decade with the fastest-evolving consumer markets that is shifting to the South Asian region at present and that such a growth will attract many multinationals with their corporate social responsibilities not just their fresh marketing strategies. In addition, the writer himself identifies a number of ravishing potentials of South Asia as this region is set to design its better tomorrow, even though global warming has created some adversities for the region, the scope of which differs from other parts of the globe. He evinces that the location of this sub-continent with a large landmass (somewhat smaller than a continent) on the physical world's fringes, which is endowed huge hydrocarbon resources, has created scopes for a gradually energy-short world. As he is also hopeful, South Asia's colonial experience has left the SAARC member countries with a good working skills and abilities in English, which is the most dominating language in the universe not only to better help harness the competitive opportunities of the globalization process itself but also to work with other states in the region and in the world. Very briefly, neither South Asia is any longer a region nor the SAARC is no more a regional bloc that can merely be neglected.

Getting to the point, the author develops one of the main messages of the book, that is the role India in playing to shape South Asia's economic future. But he is simultaneously worried that it may be exceedingly difficult for India because of South Asia's troubled history to take the lead for nourishing a regional outlook to replace the country-centric approach in place today, and re-position the region

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firmly in the changing world order. As he also believes, some of the smaller countries in the area may deeply be fearful about the superpower stature of India as their neighbor and therefore will not be too ready to accept Indian leadership in organizing South Asia. Like many other phrases (as mentioned before), any clarification about the term 'leadership' is not given. But it is essential for us to know why and how India as a more operative state should/could shoulder its genuinely trustworthy and answerable role in leading South Asia not only to create a politically functional region but also to capture a reasonable amount of economic space for this region itself in the emerging global governance paradigm in such a manner as to achieve a desired result from now on. Even though the book's originator underlines the urgency for India's leadership for South Asia, he is at the same instant diffident that India may be tempted to go it alone. But he rightly maintains that this will not be possible for New Delhi, as India will get constantly distracted from instability somewhere around its periphery.

Another most recurrent theme of the book is that South Asians will need to find a leader (or leaders) from within their own structure what happened in the case of some of the world's most successful regional blocs, such as the European Union (EU). However, he hesitates that if India could (or would not) perform this role for political reasons, the region may seek the involvement of another state as a catalyst. He prescribes a list of four possible catalysts (the US, China, Russia and Saudi Arabia) outside South Asia. He envisages that any of these four countries, which has a strong strategic interest in this region and is in favor of behaving a regional approach to guide its relations with the rest of the world, might be cast in such a leadership role in South Asia. To me, as he remarks, it should not be a concern whether the smaller countries (such Bhutan and Maldives and Nepal) might welcome their intervention or India might be unwilling to countenance the presence of any of these external players on the South Asian stage. Rather, he should have more convincingly proposed how India, beyond New Delhi's orthodox and distorted belief that the region is its 'sphere of growing clout or interest', could attentively nurture a truly approachable and convivial relationship with its bordering nations and accordingly work together with all of them to develop South Asia for the days to come. Even though the researcher regards that the four countries mentioned above could play a role without containing Indian ambitions in the region for diverse reasons, giving an ineliminable space of any of these seriously controversial protagonists as the most prominent figure for a real drama of South Asia is likely to be problematic in the long. It is because we have most recently observed how the two military hegemonic powers (ie, the US with Saudi Arabia as a duteous partner and Russia with China as a strategic ally) has led to disrupt West Asia (the Middle East) for their own geo-political and geo-economic benefits while helping inflate the civil war in Syria. Further, Saudi Arabia as a middle power is illogically graded with the US, China, Russia as great powers. In fact, other SAARC nations are more and more skeptical of China's especial favoritism for Pakistan, since it has systemized a free trade agreement (FTA) only with Pakistan. Anyhow, while China as a 'rising star' of the global economy is spotlighted throughout this volume, the writer totally fails to notice some of the most important truisms related to Japan, and particularly the protracted contribution of this great global pacifist power to the latter's national interest over the decades as well as rapidly evolving role in all the SAARC countries for the future. Needless to say, the notable visibility of this truly trusted friend of Bangladesh in its sustainable development realm ever beats the same of China. Evidently, Japan has many years ago underscored the geo-strategic weight of Bangladesh as a 'business hub' between SAARC and ASEAN. Additionally and seemingly, Bangladesh compared with India and Pakistan enjoys a bargaining power to several occasions over the great powers inside/outside Asia. Perhaps, the author has dearth of a rigorous and punctilious academic knowledge on the Northeast Asian region, conceding that he has a long professional experience on the Latin American region.

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This Pakistani writer further encourages that Pakistan due to its economy's size being only one-eighth of India's will have to change its stance from a competitor of India and become a collaborator with India as its large neighbor as well as the 'anchor economy' (accounting for 82 percent of total of South Asian product) in many economic fields, mainly trade. On the other hand, as he recommends, India has to realize that it can only gain the status of an economic superpower if it works with the countries in its immediate neighborhood. As he proceeds, when making the South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) an efficacious organization is vitally urgent, India should not be tempted to leapfrog the smaller members of the SAARC to form distant associations with groups such as ASEAN and EU, because no large economy has succeeded without first developing strong regional institutions. As per him, greater intra-regional trade in South Asia would have a palpable effect on the fabric of the smaller countries, as they enhanced links with large enterprises in India. Although I agree with all the rational points above, I am not satisfied with his assessments on the plausible impact on the rates of growth of South Asia as an outcome of its action as a region than a collection of countries that occur to occupy the same geographic space. It is because he shares with other economists who developed several conjectural predictions for South Asia's future growth scenarios with or without economic integration in the book's concluding chapter, rather than confidently putting forward with some realistic counsels. More explicitly, he asks: What will this region's future look like, given the situation of South Asia today? What could we posit for South Asia, say, in the next 10 to 15 years? His initial assumption is that the South Asian inter-state conflict will continue to define this region's landscape, if such a condition becomes apparent. On the contrary, he interrogates: What kind of future could the South Asians produce for themselves by, say, the year 2025, if they can get to work together? He forecasts that, in between these two scenarios, the SAARC countries will continue to take advantage of the rapidly transitioning economic position of East Asia (including China) in the global economy but are still not able to work in tandem. In such a way, individual South Asian countries will become the partners of 'emerging Asia'. But it is indubitable that many of the most illustrious predictions have been proven spectacularly misrepresented and flawed. For example: How will he evaluate his personal thinking about India's emergence to a limited extent in opposition to the popular divination that the 21st century will be controlled by India?

What is more, though the author admits that three countries (Bangladesh, India and Pakistan) will have critical roles for SAARC in reshaping the world economy, he in his volume pinpoints the last two that have a long record of deep-seated mistrust and hostility. Even though he treats Bangladesh as one of the SAARC's striking examples of the state weakness caused heavily by substandard governance that will result in considerable uncertainty about the future of this country, he unfolds some of the most recent signs of Bangladesh's sustainable economic progress. As he cites, this nation's rate of steady gross domestic product (GDP) growth has averaged five percent a year over the last decade (but it has reached an all time high of 7.05 percent in 2016). To quote him: "In many ways Bangladesh has surprised the international community. At the time of its birth in December 1971, it was dependent entirely on foreign assistance for its survival. The then United States Secretary of State Henry Kissinger called the new country an international basket case. Now it is the second best performing country in South Asia after India" (p. 168). He continues to admire: "Bangladesh's remarkable economic and social progress was the result of a set of circumstances entirely different from those of India and Pakistan, the two other large economies of South Asia" (p. 172). If these are the fact-based statements from a Pakistani perspective, ie, Bangladesh is of higher quality when doing better than Pakistan, it is clearly and contrarily his wrong stance for Pakistan as against more genuine positivism for Bangladesh. Frankly, he generalizes all the South Asian countries (whether big, middle or small in size) rather than specializing a distinct nation like Bangladesh.

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Therefore, an independent chapter on the comparative but heuristic case study on Bangladesh with his answers to my following questions would have made this volume a really lofty piece for the readers: First, Is it not true that Bangladesh owing to its reasonably well-done successes portended its resilience even in the face of diverse political, social and economic hurdles spawned by both internal and external strains in the last 45 years and thereby proved the then belief of Kissinger fictitious, since Bangladesh is the second (after India) fastest growing economy within the SAARC? Second, Why is Pakistan lagging far behind Bangladesh in several economic sectors, consisting especially of the ready-made garment (RMG) that is the world's second (after China) biggest apparel exporting industry with the largest employer of women, although Pakistan has outshined Bangladesh as the second (after India) largest recipient of foreign remittances? Third, What lessons can the SAARC smaller states (Pakistan in particular) learn from Bangladesh whose economy has been listed among the 'Next 11' economic giants and termed as 'the miracle of the East' by Goldman Sachs (a leading global investment banking headquartered at New York in the US), recognizing that Bangladesh is expected to overtake Pakistan's economy in 2020? Fourth, How can today's Bangladesh be definitely showcased for any other countries of South Asia and beyond this sub-region, justly because this nation regardless of some constructive skepticisms has emerged as a 'role model' of not only natural disaster management and globally agreed sustainable development goals (SDGs) but also the UN peacekeeping operations (PKO)? Fifth, Whether may Bangladesh's unique foreign policy pledge for 'Friendship with all and malice towards none' be well taken for the peace-spirited cultural 'soft power' diplomacy by all kinds of powers worldwide, even though Dhaka's such a strategy was criticized in that this foreign aid-dependent country could not afford to antagonize any big power by joining the other bloc(s)? In sum, even though Bangladesh as a sharply 'divided nation' (from the political viewpoint) along with frequent military interventions in politics is still struggling to be self-reliant and find its feet in a complex world order, it has already proven itself as a 'creative country' of which it can certainly feel proud.

To summarize, when this book on account of its illusionary title evokes no admiration or inspiration, its makeup is in a mess. Lacking a conceptual underpinning, the research at the same time does not think up a most important argument or a focal point method. Visibly, the author poses a wide range of questions throughout the book, which are not more convincingly answered as its ultimate purpose. Also, the publication has multiple oversights concerned with what are actually the cases rather than interpretations of or reactions to them aside from some illusory speculations without firm evidence. It is undeniable that he offers a few worthwhile suggestions as well as future directions, but these are haphazardly misplaced in each chapter. In accordance, a complete chapter together all these might have conveniently been useful for the audiences, viewing that the study does not include any chapter on conclusion. In other words, the writer could not and did not come up with an integrated decision based on all chapters. In addition, he has shown his inclination for some nations or against others, when it has become apparent that the volume deals basically with economics as the basis of cooperation. Discovering that the long list of references (a few of which with erratic style) does not incorporate any work in any language of any South Asian country, it has some too old references published in the 1920s. For grammatical errors, omission of commas as punctuation marks everywhere in the book reads a particular problem. Moreover, many parts of the book's every chapter are in the form of descriptive chronicles. In a nutshell, it cannot be ranked a sedulous research with the highest level of intellectual stimulation.

Granted that some upfront cynicisms do matter for improvement any publisher's undertakings for the future, this single-authored book deserves a number of credits. Of course, this work brings together several strands of thinking in dealing with the current situations (perplexing but heartening) in South Asia. More categorically, the author does not conventionally view the negative aspects of

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South Asian historical experience of nation-building. I agree with his views as follows: “To take advantage of the opportunities that are being created is, therefore, a major challenge for the leaders of South Asia. If they can overcome their prejudices and cast off the heavy burdens that history has left on their shoulders they will be able to ensure a better life for their billion-and-a-half people. If they fail, they will only prolong the misery in which more than one-half of this large population lives” (p. 7). In other expressions, by bringing a drastic change in the old mindsets that are built on a difficult collective history as well as without jeopardizing the business partnership deals, the South Asian political leaders would have to make a concerted effort not only to develop a regional identity as against strong national interests but also to better integrate the deserving regional economies for getting the ripple benefits for their individual nations while carving out a place for their SAARC within the rapidly changing international economic trading system in the commonly projected Asian century. According to him, in search of a humanistic and welfare state-oriented South Asia, a permanent set of institutions in place of the safety nets on temporary basis is a must for the South Asian states to protect and provide for the poor. But he infers that albeit SAARC has survived, it has not triumphed as was envisaged.

In line with the writer’s responsible advice, I would however like to supplement my personal feelings as follows. The lives of millions of ordinary people around South Asia depend largely on their political leaders’ giving noble desires. Many of these purblind leaders must be aware of the ironic reality that South Asia (including India) has more than 40 percent of the world’s poor, and the income disparities in this region are one of globe’s the largest. So, they should make the SAARC ‘reliably sensible’ and ‘symbolically ambitious’ for the less fortunate population rather than repeatedly making this regional setup a rhetorical mechanism, even though South Asian nations pursue different ideologies. By learning invaluable lessons from other regions of Asia and beyond, the SAARC countries would also have to unitedly (not separately) act now on their own (rather than largely relying on mercy of any external power) to bring about a paradigmatic transformation across this long trivialized region, when providing a genuinely visionary leadership that will take their region there where hunger is treated as a historical element, peace for every human being is secured as well as success will be a state of dynamic everyday process. By unlocking the political gridlock and creating viable system of governance within all countries in the region, they ought to march forward. In particular, India and Pakistan must be able to imagine that their strategic quarrels have not only made the SAARC dysfunctional but also made the whole region of a culturally rich South Asia vulnerable to peace, stability as well as prosperity. In essence, the SAARC with a vibrant civil society must try its best in unison to make itself thoroughly familiar with and efficiently confident in a new global order. Undeniably, the SAARC nations were able to turn themselves into ‘emerging economies’ of a modern day miracle from ‘unbending victims’ of a colonial day injustice. With it massive diaspora, masses of South Asians are today regarded as global citizens who are with their wonderfully purposeful actions part and parcel of an emerging world community. But the industrialization and modernization of SAARC members ought now to be readily fostered to catch up with the newly industrialized economies (NIE) of Asia and elsewhere, by keeping step with the spirit of the ‘rise of the rest’ in the post-American world. This means that the SAARC should not move away from its original aim of and steadfast commitment in a cherished, appropriate and planned course to bringing collective good for its people in a more developed South Asian region. Finally, I cannot but mention the following three very relevant and famous quotes as the words of wisdom made by two most influential leaders in the Indian independence movement, the first two of which are stipulated for India and the third one is generally marked for the all the SAARC countries: (1) “India could not play an inferior role in the world. It should either be a superpower or disappear” (Jawaharlal Nehru); (2) “One who serves his neighbor serves all the world”

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(Mahatma Gandhi); and (3) “You must be the change you wish to see in the world” (Mahatma Gandhi).

There are countless literary works realized by both South Asian and non-Asian scholars on the problems and prospects of South Asian economic cooperation and integration that are similar to the theme of this book. In contrast, I have for the first time read such a timely volume written in a panoramic fashion, which present insights into South Asia’s interactions with the international configuration, by particularly engaging the defined role of each individual country of this sub-region with Asia in the competitive global economy as well as its meaningful response to the era of globalization. Because of its success in goals, this significant and pioneering work, which has been accomplished by a professional economist (unlike a traditional economist) who has a broadly diversified outlook on the global issues or affairs, will definitely prove an enthralling read for and contributive addition to a wide-ranging readers encompassing students, researchers, academics and policymakers in a number of fields covering South Asian studies, Asian political economy, international development policy, global economic governance, etc. Last not but least, I express my warm admiration for Bukri’s indefatigable initiative for this production and my unrestricted approval of his book.



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