

WRAP Exams · wrapexams.com

Prelims PYQ, Mains model answers, and copy evaluation. Write to the desk for this paper, a doubt, or the AI waitlist.

ask@wrapexams.com · +91 85951 84903 · wrapexams.com

Q5(b)

What are the reasons for lack of 'regionness' in South Asia?

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2023 · PSIR GS 2 · 10 marks · India and South Asia

India and South Asia: Regional Co-operation; South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation; South Asian Economic cooperation; Impediments to regional co-operation; India and the Look East / Act East policy.

Core demand of the question

- Discuss the reasons for the lack of regionness in South Asia
- Keep the answer within a 10-mark length

Revision summary

Regionness is shared political identity plus working institutions.

South Asia has a dominant India, a blocked India-Pakistan pair, and Chinese alternatives for smaller States.

SAARC consensus cannot produce EU-style spillover.

Security is a conflict complex, not a community.

BIMSTEC is a work-around that still does not make a South Asian region.

Introduction

Regionness means a shared political identity and working regional institutions, as in the European Union's dense law. South Asia has geography and some culture in common. It has not produced that political region.

Body**Structural reasons**

- India is so much larger in economy, military, and population that neighbours fear a centre rather than join a club. **Asymmetry** is the first fact.
- India-Pakistan conflict over Kashmir, terrorism, and nuclear signalling blocks SAARC, which works by consensus.
- Extra-regional China offers arms, infrastructure, and political backing that lets smaller States hedge against India.

Identity and security

- **Barry Buzan's regional security complex idea fits:** South Asia is a conflict formation, not a security community.
- Nationalisms, Partition memory, and majority-minority politics inside States make a thin regional "we."
- Ethnic conflict and insurgency, treated in 5(d), spill across borders and poison trust.

Institutional thinness

- SAARC's charter and the South Asian Free Trade Area did not create EU-style spillover. Mitrany's functional path needs a political floor that is missing.
- **BIMSTEC** and the Bay of Bengal exclude Pakistan and still move slowly. They prove the demand for work-arounds, not the existence of regionness.
- People-to-people trade and culture exist. They have not been turned into a regional political community.

Flow diagram

Indian asymmetry -> Weak SAARC
India Pakistan conflict -> Weak SAARC
China hedge -> Weak SAARC
Weak SAARC -> Low regionness

Conclusion

South Asia lacks regionness because of Indian **asymmetry**, the India-Pakistan freeze, Chinese extra-regional pull, and conflictual identities. Geography is not a region in the EU sense without institutions and trust.

Facts & figures

SAARC 1985

Regional association whose summit process has repeatedly stalled on India-Pakistan politics.

SAFTA

South Asian Free Trade Area with limited actual integration compared with ASEAN or the EU.

Asymmetry

India's share of regional GDP and military power far exceeds any other South Asian State.

Barry Buzan

Regional security complex theory: patterns of amity and enmity define a region more than a map does.

BIMSTEC

Bay of Bengal grouping used when SAARC cannot meet, excluding Pakistan.