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“Regional integration in South Asia: Chasing the EU Model”

The EU is touted as the most successful model of regional integration of contemporary time. EU's journey at the end of the Second World War kicked off primarily by the decision of the warring parties to make peace the future of Europe and its success in doing so has been especially attractive in a international system where states pursuing their national interests more often than not collide and come to conflict. Benedict Anderson in his famous formulation 'Imagined Communities' in describing the rise and nature of modern nation states argued that nationality, nation-ness and nationalism are cultural artefacts created towards the end of the eighteenth century 'as a result of spontaneous distillation of a complex crossing of discrete historical forces; but that once created they became 'modular' capable of being transplanted with varying degrees of self consciousness to a great variety of social terrains....'. So is the EU 'modular' in the Andersonian sense? If so why have other regional integrations not really taken off? Many attempts at regional integration has since the EU inception been made at different corners of the globe. In Asia two such attempts have been the SAARC and the ASEAN. Focusing on the SAARC this paper argues that given the specificities of the region the chances of SAARC becoming a EU appears remote if not impossible. Given its record of regional integration it is time to abandon it rather than continuing it based on unending optimism.