CHAPTER III

INFORMATICS AND SAARC:
PEACE IMPERATIVES
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Introduction

J.D. Nyhart, Director, M.I.T. Project on Modelling for Negotiation Management has come to an important conclusion which has great relevance for the SAARC countries. He affirms that Information Technology can become an equalising element in negotiations and balance differences in politics and information levels.

Our survey suggests that a series of models that deal with peace imperatives can be developed for the SAARC region. The key political processes can be aided by informatics to provide the "equalising element". Unfortunately multidimensional data on peace-building in South Asia is hard to come by, but our Survey has enabled us to estimate many of the parameters of peace-building. The Indian respondents generally favour minimal salience of SAARC sponsored peace-building and favour the line of thinking that has dominated Indian foreign policy, i.e. bilateralism. Most of the answers from Pakistan are very sensitive to Indian dominance and favour the linkage method which could cope with India's size, economic weight and geographical situation. The Bangladesh respondents favour a cooperative dimension to systematic change in SAARC and claim that Bangladesh conceived the SAARC project because
its President felt that South Asia was on the threshold of a new regional order.

The Nepalese respondents convey the impression that they generally favour a *stable equilibrium* and do not want any new assertions to replace the intense rivalry of erstwhile bipolarity. The Sri Lankan respondents recognise the present period of turbulence and transition should be handled collectively and favour a gradual transition to a *collective security system*.

Responses from all the countries also suggest wider range of options if the dimensionality of a "peace-policy space" can be extended away from the existing arenas of security politics. A collective SAARC agreement helped by informatics has clear advantages in coping with changes in conflict formations and discarding obsolete concepts. In order to foster growth and stability, SAARC has to devise new strategies for harmonising the political and military influence of its member states. The main cause and catalyst for change is informatics which can relate the regional character of the SAARC to a comprehensive peace programme for dissolving existing threat images.

"GLOBAL PROBLEMS, SOCIAL SOLUTION" is not a slogan any more. It is the very condition of survival. Hence the relevance of the people, of movements and politics, information can hardly be underestimated any longer.
COMMUNICATIONS AS INFORMATICS in terms of positivist paradigm of modernization and transfer of sophisticated hardwares or softwares but also COMMUNICATIONS AS POLITICS in terms of its liberating paradigm of fundamental democratisation of societies through the active involvement of the diverse peoples of the world need to be brought home.

DEVELOPMENT succeeds when a society as a whole and not at all levels gets ready to have optimal use of its resources through the application of science and technology, towards improving the living standards of the people in many ways that are in consonance with their basic values and aspirations. This calls for the devise of means by which information about scientific and technological developments reach those who could use it most - such as small farmers and entrepreneurs. For such actual reach of information - what we need most is the appropriate information infrastructure the development of own capacity to generate, ingest and absorb information rather than the process of one-directional transmission. And for this to be a reality, micro-information environments must be built up to find ways to develop and use these technologies in a manner that successfully unlocks the local initiative and creativity.

The need is essentially to turn the information Revolution around to make it serve our own needs and especially the needs of the poor and the weak in the
society. With the information technologies we can act with great hope and promise, imagination and creativity to develop a new alternative societal response that will in the process enable us to safeguard our interests, values and aspirations in an increasingly interdependent world.

It is information itself that requires such broader areas in which to be collected, processed and exchanged that range beyond the borders of many states as they exist today. The concept of political and economic integration which might seem to be losing its relevance in terms of supply and market outlets, is paradoxically becoming an inevitable necessity for the new information technology.

Information technology is rightly called the command and control system for all other technologies for the control of information technology is a vital component, in the distribution and evolution of social power and differential access to the capacity to collect, process and use information is a decisive factor in social decision-making. The struggle about the control over information technology in society is essential because the outcome will determine how decision-making power is distributed and how major social decisions are made. Thus at the international level, information is both a factor of cooperation and mutual understanding as well as a serious source of confrontation and conflict.
WHY REGIONAL COOPERATION?

The North-South gap has become the information gap, demonstrating conclusively that information means power. If left to its present dynamics, the information Revolution will only strengthen disparities but that need not be the case. It should be possible for the South to use the information Revolution creatively as a vehicle to reduce and not widen the present gap for the communication and information technologies which become a basic need for survival by their utility in facilitating networking, deconcentration and independent uses at the level of communities and individuals. These give a new meaning and perspective to the concepts of regional economic cooperation and South-South solidarity.

The North-South discussion on the sharing of technology in a realist perspective is unfit to meet the interests of the South. A crucial question that needs answering is: How can the developing countries mobilize such bargaining power as to negotiate successfully with the North for access to that technology which they need in order to develop indigenous capacity to solve their own problems?

Since due to the lack of this bargaining power, many an initiatives like NIEO has failed to take shape, added emphasis needs to be placed on the strengthening of national, regional and inter-regional joint ventures in
South before any grand scheme for international recording is to be attempted.

At heart, technology transfer is transfer/transmission of information and as such is dependent upon the technology that provides mechanisms for this: information technology. Further the volume and structure of technology transfer and its development are intrinsically related to the presence and quality of information infrastructure.

Information technology has the capacity to provide for infrastructures through which technology knowledge/information may be produced, processed and transferred, research and development can be shared joint databases/banks can be established, resource data can be collected and processed and financial intelligence can flow. The design and implementation of such networks could be undertaken through joint ventures among developing countries.

Only the increasing strength of this base would lessen technological dependence and create the bargaining position from which the South could engage in technological relations with the North that would no longer pose any obstruction in the way of autonomous development. Third world will have a chance of playing an active part in the information Revolution - to be a part of the solution and not part of the problem, with the demonstration of its ability to collect the requisite political will and social and
political innovation.

Regional Cooperation seems to be a way out for harnessing information benefits at low cost to a greater number of nations regionwise.

The countries of the region have felt the need to work together towards such a pattern of industrialization as appropriate to their resource endowments and economic needs which has not been the case. But with three activities generated by information and the good use of such innovative products, they would be helped to envisage such industrialization measures as a necessary element in strengthening the economy of the region as a whole.

The encounter between the more and less dynamic, societies makes developing countries the targets of 'information bombardment'. Science, technology, values and organisation the 'active ingredients' in development - are all forms of information - a resource that is not merely renewable but expandable. The capacity of indigenous people to understand and manipulate the information flow-linking science ('know what') and technology ('know how') to human values (know why) and social authority and organization (know who) is consequently the key to the dynamics of development.

Further information is no longer a sector of development but has become a key strategy for development.
Its innovative nature requires a great deal of participation and anticipation - two very rare ingredients in a developmental world - for creativity, freedom, participatory democracy, human dignity and self fulfillment.

FOR STABLE PEACE IN THE REGION

We are living in a transitory period when a new socio-economic order is emerging in spite of the various crises, militarism and arms race. Militarisation of the world has resulted in increasing vulnerability of nations and peoples everywhere by rendering the whole development process both unsafe and exploitative. More so, level of development sets the need priorities and determines the values and policies, national leaders seek to maximize in the international setting. Any thinking on alternatives need discovering the sources of tension and inequity in the development as it exists today and accentuation of the same under the impact of militarisation to counter both simultaneously. Accurate 'problem diagnosis' is a necessary though not sufficient condition for successful 'political engineering' of voluntary cooperation. Much depends on such international communication cooperation as to what will be the international political climate accelerating or retarding such process as detente, disarmament and peace.

Since war begins in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be built on the
following lines, SAARC can devote itself, to develop and increase the means of communication between the peoples and to apply the means for the purposes of mutual understanding and a truer and more perfect knowledge of each other's lives. It can promote to the formulation of such stable policies leading to the reduction of international tensions and peaceful and equitable settlement of international disputes. Thereby it would be possible to make a contribution towards peace without sacrificing any one country's national interest/security by making a structure of the entire society as invulnerable as possible, through decentralised federal forms of organization, economic self-reliance at various levels and by creating an equitable social order. Peace initiatives can be undertaken by offering assistance to other nations when they need it, sharing useful information etc., so as to make war an impossibility.

Information cooperation in the SAARC area can only help the member nations to keep domestic politics from casting along shadow on the task of regional economic integration. What needs to be avoided is the fault found often in the thinking of problems and their solutions in the SAARC area in unidimensional terms from the perspectives of the internal politics of the region and then relating the same to the fabric of the region's external linkages. From
an outside-inward paradigm as by the regional information network, SAARC would be able to devise such modes of communication across peoples and activists working among them to build countervailing forces in all these societies and to call for a countervailing global project for survival for development, for redefining the agenda of politics, for human freedom and integrity of the environment and for a basic commitment to values without which the human species cannot survive anymore.

The need of the hour is to engage in joint thinking, new conceptualization of the development problematique, rethink the basis of development cooperation and technology transfers, recapture the real basis of self-reliance and the basic needs perspective and no less important through active participation in the global political process create new information systems to help establish a stable peace system in the region, endowing people with true freedom/information to recreate the universal and lasting peace.

PEACE SYSTEM

**ESSENCE OF PROBLEM**   -  **IMPERFECT INFORMATION**

**COMMUNICATION FAILURE**

**ESSENCE OF 'CURE'**   -  **INFORMATION, OR COMMUNICATION 'PERFECTION'**

**TACTICAL IMPLICATION**   -  **JOINT PROBLEM-SOLVING LIKELY.**
FOR NEGOTIATION

The implications of information technology for meeting South Asian challenges and achieving the goals of SAARC have been overlooked by scholars and officials in the search for peace in South Asia. Information technology provides the only powerful force to South Asia for uniting the countries of the sub-continent into a community free of threat of war and conflict as it helps the decision-makers to consider meaningful options to eliminate armed aggression and protect the SAARC countries from state sponsored terrorist methods. Information strategies can be used to optimise the benefits of economic, technical, social and educational cooperation as the building of an interdependent South Asia only calls for new attitudinal response to development dialogue.

Part of the problem of not having regional cooperation any priority in the foreign policy agenda of the SAARC member states is due to the exchange of information in the region being dismally meager which is taken advantage of by the ruling elites of each country to project adverse images of their counterparts and people of the concerned states, as a result of which not only are stereotyped images created but continually reinforced. This is all the more so due to the region's overall underdevelopment itself, the telecommunication system in the region for example is pathetic.
It is time the South Asian nations in SAARC embark on a sound regional communication/information exchange policy to shift the focus of mutual perceptions from conflict to cooperation and act as a catalyst as well as a carrier of multidimensional information, knowledge and understanding of each country of the region by the peoples of the other countries in the neighbourhood. This would reflect the basic urge of the region to get away from the conflicted relationships to the past and the present and field pathways to new relationships of cooperation, strengthening the centripetal forces operating within the region for cooperation and spotlighting areas of common interests.

Nuclear Terrorism and Informatics - a case study

The countries of the region faced with such enormous problems of tension, discord and conflict rooted as they are, in such internal factors as
a) ethnic, religious, linguistic and ideological frictions,
b) rivalry for political power among, disparate groups, subgroups and regions,
c) pressures stemming from the state of underdevelopment both economic and political and as for example maldistribution of wealth and power, conflicting claims of growth and justice,
d) destabilizing centrifugal forces sometimes exploding
into even inter-state conflicts. have singlehandedly proved far from being competent enough to manage their state of affairs of the nation in a systematic coordinated result oriented manner. But trapped as they are in the mirror images of mutual suspicion and distrust, these nation states have also not been able to concentrate vigorously on inter-state cooperation, including political and economic cooperation aimed at collective economic and military security, to promote fast economics development of each country in the region and to tackle ruthless the war insurgents snipping at the emerges of the nations.

The existing Tamil problem in Sri Lanka, and problems in India like those of Punjab and Kashmir and Sind in Pakistan have spilled over into neighbouring territories, undermining inter-state relations into region. The activities armed groups fighting for successionism and sedition from across the neighbouring territory combined with acts of vandalism, violence and murderous assaults against the innocent citizens and governmental elites have been major sources of irrigation amongst the countries. The terrorists acts of Tamil separatists from Indian coasts, the acts of Pakistan based Indian sikhs and muslims against the Indian mainland have assumed a far more proportion endangering the security of states in the region.
One of the more ominous developments in the region has been the emergence of state-sponsored terrorism. Terrorists are no longer necessarily solitary free agents pursing individual ends or grievances. Increasing terrorists are supported, directed or employed by governments that see them as weapons of choice in advancing national interests through means short of declared conventional war. With the active support and backing of hostile regimes, terrorists have benefited immensely in terms of their weapons, mobility, logistics and intelligence resources.

The sustained allegation by India against Pakistan has been that the country is directly supporting the armed insurgency groups fighting the government and people of India acts with the acts of terrorists with money, material and other means to help destabilize the country, which Pakistan, of course, stridently denies and calls the terrorists in Kashmir as freedom fighters whom it only extends moral support.

Support under the guise of freedom fighting or otherwise resistance for illegitimate insurgency may create conditions in which other states may feel obliged to oppose such acts with terrorists measures that over time and certain locations could take a nuclear form. They would justify their action on the basis of the accused state's behaviour.
The continued failure of the United States and former Soviet Union to control their arms race including nuclear arsenals has only hastened the spread of nuclear weapons to other countries like India and Pakistan. This development has certainly increased the potential for nuclear war as well as the availability of nuclear weapons and installations as potential terrorist targets.

This same rationale: the failure on the part of the two major powers to reduce their nuclear arsenals which justified in the eyes of these South Asian countries, their own development of nuclear arms capability, may well also justify in the eyes of some terrorists organizations operating in the region, their own resort to nuclear means which in the process would engulf the region with the threat or actual materialisation of nuclear terrorism.

There are different kinds of conceivable nuclear terrorism, and the range with regard to type and effect of even motivation is enormous.

Ten forms of nuclear terrorism have so far been established in the realm of policy making. In some cases the nuclear devices are the means of the action while in the others nuclear installations are the target.

1. The making (stealing) of a weapon and detonation.

2. The making (stealing) of a weapon and blackmail.

3. The damaging of a nuclear plant for radioactive use.
4. The attack on a nuclear weapon's site to spread alarm.
5. The attack on a nuclear plant to spread alarm.
6. The holding of a nuclear plant for blackmail.
7. The holding off-site of nuclear plant personnel.
8. The theft of special nuclear material (SNM) for blackmail or radioactive release.
9. The theft or sabotage of things nuclear for demonstration purposes.
10. An attack on a transport of nuclear weapons or materials.

It is imperative for us to consider every possible source of terrorism (including nuclear ones) against any country in the region. Given the potential consequences, we cannot afford to ignore any of them. And unless we recognise all the potential problems we cannot fashion solutions.

Understanding Terrorist Grievances:

There are two important reasons for understanding terrorists' grievances against any country. One is to enable the affected country to formulate policies that may address those grievances in advance in order to prevent nuclear terrorism. The other is to enable it to respond in the event of a nuclear terrorist incident in the most appropriate manner that is to engage in effective situation management. In the event, any country cannot depend on the physical security means now in fashion. Rather if we need a
play that rests on a greatly improved understanding of terrorism generally and especially the motives behind the groups that might seek to harm the respective country.

It may not always be practical to deter nuclear violence or to respond in a non-pre-emptive, that is, non-violent way. According to Louis Rene Beres, Professor of Political Sciences and International Law at Purdue University, the following conditions when a pre-emptive response may altogether be unavoidable.

The first is an effort to respond to terrorists grievances will be successful only if the terrorists genuinely value their stated political demands more than enormous destruction for its own sake. Responding to grievances will have little effect on militant terrorists, who may even act without stating their grievances.

The second relates to the terrorists' believing that nuclear violence is essential to their political objectives. If they believe that nuclear violence is vital to their ends and that those ends are of more importance than anything else, they might initiate nuclear violence without warning and state their grievances solely for propaganda effect.

Finally there is the area of concessions. Are the opposing groups willing to negotiate? If not, the option of reasoned response is avoided. This issue is important because to date governments faced by terrorists demands have
essentially followed a policy of non-negotiation. One reason of belief is that negotiation is a sign of weakness, another the belief that one concession will lead to demands for another, and so on, like the proverbial snowball. The question that needs to be asked, however, is whether this could be a rational policy in the event of a nuclear terrorist threat.

Redressing the terrorists' grievances

In this content, it is of enormous importance to attempt again a better understanding of the terrorist grievances as the basis for formulating a long-term strategy. Once this is done, we can develop effective responses that will greatly minimise the potential for nuclear terrorism against the countries or that can allow officials to deal more effectively with actual incidents. Thus the first step in responding is to understand the grievances. Here it should be emphasized that the political dimension that underlies most potential terrorist aggression. The second could be to develop an effective strategy for responding to the grievances that goes beyond physical security and other traditional measures. This strategy needs to be fashioned as part of a larger plan for countering terrorism generally.

The need to exert greater control over the various
armed insurgent groups operating from across one's territory against the other neighbouring countries in the region can hardly be ignored. The end result will only be to bolster world order and informatics can enhance the ability of the countries to ensure broad compliance of these goals and thereby prevent nuclear terrorism and other terrorist attacks.

These alarming trends in terrorism and nuclear proliferation if they converge, the world would clearly face a menace of unprecedented dimension. The threat posed by nuclear terrorism would not remain limited to the almost unimaginable loss of life and damage that could be inflicted on a single city or area should a nuclear armed terrorist deteriorate a device through design or inadvertence. Rather this threat of nuclear terrorism has the potential of plugging of much of the world including the region of South Asia into the accidental or unintentional nuclear devastation.

It is this aspect of nuclear terrorism more than any other factor that should necessarily force us to promote mutual agreements on the establishment of a SAARC Nuclear Risk Reduction Centre in each member state to eliminate accidental nuclear exchange among the member states and recommend timely initiatives for dealing with related problems.
It would inter alia require improvement in our warning and attack characterization capabilities to deal with the use of a nuclear device by a terrorist or other third party in either peace time or or a crisis.

It is understood that since it will not be possible to determine the party responsible for such an attack, it is important to establish quick channels of communication amongst the countries of the region.

The four specific risk reduction measures need to be considered to avoid nuclear disaster are as follows:

1. Adding a high speed facsimile capability to the hot line.
2. Creating a regional military communications link among the military command of the countries.
3. Installing high-rate data links amongst the member countries and their embassies in each other country.
4. Promulgating a multilateral agreement for nations to consult in the event of a nuclear incident involving terrorists.

The intended facsimile capability added to the hotline will enable each country to transmit and receive graphic materials. In addition, the planned, improvements will allow heads of government to exchange messages more rapidly than they can ever. The increase in the speed of communication and the ability to send pictures and maps could be
especially critical in future areas, including possible nuclear terrorism.

The direct communication link will require application of satellite circuits plus wire telegraph circuits at one earth station in each country. The satellite circuits and terminals in each country must be linked and equipped with wire telegraph and facsimile equipment.

These would facilitate immediate notification should there arise the threat of nuclear war from such incidents. They would help to identify objects on early warning systems in the context of accidental, unauthorised or other unexplained incidents involving a possible detonation of nuclear weapons.

The attempts at risk reductions are now central to present day security needs of advanced countries. Such Nuclear Risk Reduction Centres can play an invaluable role in facilitating discussions aimed at forestalling possible contingencies and in providing a mechanism for dampering escalatory dangers that might otherwise result from any future nuclear terrorism incident.

The SAARC convention on suppression of terrorism which came into force on 22nd August 1989, would encourage and institutionalise expanded patterns of cooperation among governments based on the principle that even sovereignty must yield to the requirements of justice aimed at
formulation of viable strategies of prevention and control, cooperative intelligence activities and exchange of information, setting up multilateral forces to infiltrate terrorist organisations and if necessary to take action against them. The concerned use of the media should publicize terrorist acts and intentions and emphasise acts of cooperation between member states at effective counter terrorism.