CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSIONS
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Informatics has emerged as a major public issue in India during the mid 1980s. Our survey shows that in other SAARC countries also there is recognition that to meet the needs of the information and knowledge society there will have to be considerable restructuring to keep up with hectic pace of political, economic and social change. During Rajiv Gandhi's Prime Ministership Pitroda argued forcibly that it was time to develop alternative networking and convergence which would help in formulating demands, create freer choice and democratise the work culture. This study has provided practical evidence and theoretical arguments for the use of informatics for a progressive solution to problem facing the SAARC countries in context of the North-South nexus, the issues of regional security and the growing environmental crisis. The proliferation of nuclear weapons in South Asia has greatly increased the danger that nuclear weapons may actually be used in the next round of full scale war. This study has attempted to search for new ways to express the concern with conflict and peace-making in South Asia. Informatics can serve to give a fresh basis for peace studies and can help to blend a range of approaches to a conflict management.
The use of Information and Communication Technologies in South Asia and the development of conflict management procedures.

The South Asian countries find themselves in conflict syndrome primarily as a result of the struggle to establish their national identities since the late forties. At the same time they are in an age of global culture with dimensions of universalising economy, science and technology. Informatic infrastructure can be built rapidly which can help to accommodate both the world view and also build a prosperous and stable South Asian region out of state units which have emancipated themselves from their colonial status. The development of conflict management procedures has crucial informational requirements which have been overlooked so far. Given the enormous diversity of South Asian culture, SAARC cannot subscribe to a single value system like NATO. Peaceful coexistence has to be built on the complex ethnic and cultural mosaic of the South Asian region. Informatics thus becomes a key ingredient for cutting across all sorts of barriers. Our study has attempted to show that informatics is likely to play a positive and indispensable role in conflict management in the coming years.
Negotiating peace and security in South Asia: the enlargement of options through Information Technology

The radical changes in the global scenario have dispelled many of the myths and conceptualisations about the inevitability of political and military conflict. In the regional context, however, the changes in the international context, have not been emulated. The rise of tension in South Asia cannot be overcome unless the security/warfare ideologies are replaced by the politics of negotiation and conflict resolution. The demise of bipolarity at the global level can be utilised for removing the motives for threatening each other at the regional level. Informatics can help to remove the strait-jacket of confrontational politics and can strengthen confidence building. Constant monitoring and early warning can help the South Asian states to develop a level of interaction which can reduce national schizophrenia. A network of direct communications at the highest levels between New Delhi, Islamabad, Dacca, Kathmandu, Colombo, Male and Thimpu will promote peaceful resolution of politicised security problems. Informatics can eventually create a new perspective for negotiating peace and security since it will make it easier for all the SAARC countries to make necessary reassessments and readjustments in keeping with the new trends in the international system.
Cooperative international arrangements in SAARC: the role of informatics and techno-economic interrelatedness

Cooperative international arrangements in SAARC can only be achieved if there is emphasis on presenting realistic vision of present and future policy direction in this area. Informatics is an indispensable resource for intergovernmental cooperation and for stabilising economic and political relations in South Asia. All these countries are vulnerable to poor management for a variety of reasons including feudal and bureaucratic and other repressed forms of behaviour which have reduced the adaptability of national institutions to the processes of change. Our study has underlined the importance of sophisticated informatics development for developing an overview of basic regional issues and strengthening the motivations for intra-regional cooperation. One of the principal obstacles to understanding the nature of problems in the SAARC area and to reliably identifying them is lack of fundamental information. Informatics can ensure that the SAARC countries can structure their approaches to optimise the chances for success of cooperative international arrangement.
The contribution of informatics to the control of arms race on South Asia

Peace between India and Pakistan seems to have been elusive for four decades and security anxieties are continuing to fuel the arms race. In other SAARC countries also transfers of arms are regarded as yielding leverage for foreign policy goals. Experience anywhere has been that arms transfers develop a momentum of their own and get out of hand. Although the Cold War has ended and the U.S.-Soviet arms supply competition is no longer of crucial significance, yet the absence of a strategic consensus in SAARC area acts to undermine regional stability. Our study suggests that informatics can help to attenuate the view that transfers of arms is necessary as a mechanism to achieve leverage of one state over the other. The development of sound and creative ideas of "common security" can be promoted by informatics. Informatics can help to gain control of the arms race by providing an alternative definition of "leverage" and by underlining the complexity of issues of peace and conflict and permit valid quantitative analysis of the strategic environment.
Strategies for transferring resources from military to non-military use in the South Asian area and the potential of new information technologies

The convergence of computers and telecommunications has created a new opportunity for developing national and regional strategies for transferring resources from military to non-military use. Information technology has changed the way the world thinks about war and the power of governments to engage in hostilities. South Asians are beginning to identify these changes which are drastic and far reaching. Informatics can be used to facilitate a defence "build-down" without threatening common security and release of South Asian man-power, and other resources to be used for productive non-military uses. Informatics also ensures that the South Asian region will no longer ignore the positive trends in the East Asian area which is experiencing beneficial effects of civilian production. Informatics also helps South Asia to draw up talents and resources of non-resident South Asian who do not share the dismal assessments of old-style bureaucrats of policy-makers about the feasibility of transfer of resources from defense to non-defence industries.
Regional measures to control environmental deterioration and the development of environmental security in South Asia: The dynamics of information and communication interdependence

Traditional methodologies of policy analysis without the help of informatics cannot cope with the major causes of environmental disruption in South Asia. Informatics alone can help to develop a comprehensive institutional framework of the South Asian environment. Pitroda has emphasised the need to provide a wide enough focus which covers public health, housing, urban development, water, forestry and other related areas. Bureaucrats, and even social scientists have not been able to develop a non-elitist approach to environment. Informatics can reach out to the downtrodden strata of society and guide the emergence of environmental issues in a manner compatible with the needs of democratic society and open political systems. South Asia has a large genetic pool, and natural resources which can be safeguarded by creative ecopolices. Informatics can help in the formulation of a South Asian regional environment policy which can meet the challenge of the future.
Networking and convergence in development strategy: the role of informatics in the evolution of SAARC

In the post Cold War era, South Asia has a unique opportunity to promote purposeful cooperation in agriculture, science and technology and industry. This requires networking and convergence in the development strategies of the SAARC countries which have so far failed to make a dent on the problem of poverty. Informatics and economic cooperation are inseparable if xenophobiac reactions are to be avoided. It may sound common place to suggest that our Survey has shown that there is recognition in the SAARC countries that we are all in the same boat. There has been an explosive growth of social organizations in all the SAARC countries but this social mobilisation has not been networked. The authoritarian bureaucratic and conservative elements have the most to fear from the manifestations of change in the social and political landscape which informatics can bring about in South Asia. Once convergence and networking are inbuilt into national planning in the SAARC area, values, capabilities and actions will harmonise inputs into policy decisions.