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PUBLIC OPINION AND REGIONAL COOPERATION IN SOUTH ASIA

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE DIVISION OF THE  
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By

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation argues that regional cooperation is a two-level process in which domestic support, (i.e., support of non-governing elites and attentive publics), and regional bargains and negotiations by governing elites must overlap if cooperation is to proceed. Negative or hostile attitudes of the non-governing elites and attentive publics for regional cooperation will have a dampening effect on the decision makers, and may lead them to postpone or even abandon regional cooperation policies. This argument is based on three interrelated perspectives: (a) Regional cooperation policies do not exclusively fall in the category of foreign policy issue-areas. Rather, they fall in the category of *community policies*, possessing the characteristics of both domestic and foreign policy-issue areas; (b) While attempts to achieve regional cooperation involve elite bargains and negotiations, domestic support is required for implementation of these bargains and negotiated agreements; (c) *Weak governments* need more domestic support than *strong governments* to pursue regional cooperation policies. The findings of this research, based on open-ended structured interviews of 408 South Asian elites and attentive publics and content analysis of six *prestige* newspapers in South Asia, suggest a link between the limited progress of regional cooperation in South Asia and the limited domestic support.

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## CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

Despite geographical contiguity and socio-economic and cultural commonalities, South Asian countries have experienced very little regional cooperation since their independence more than forty-five years ago. It is, therefore, a matter of considerable significance that the leaders of South Asian countries, of late, have endorsed the idea of regional cooperation. The process of regional cooperation in South Asia, which began in the 1950s, experienced a resurgence with the establishment of a regional organization called South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) in December 1985. Since then, the modest track record of SAARC has given rise to both skepticism and optimism about the future prospect of this organization.

Existing studies on SAARC have concentrated on a few themes. Differences in foreign policy and security perceptions, power asymmetry, India's pivotal role, the dependence-dominance syndrome, divergence in political systems, extent of economic development, ethnic factors and the Indo-Pakistan conflict are some of the themes which have received extensive attention in the literature. But no analysis of public opinion as a contributory factor toward the growth of SAARC has yet been attempted. This dissertation explores the nature of elite and attentive public opinion in South Asia toward SAARC.

In this chapter, after a brief discussion of the significance of the revival of regionalism, I will delineate the theoretical framework of the study, clarify the basic concepts I have used, and describe the outline of the project.

### **Revival of Regionalism**

Globalism, international regionalism and nationalism appear to be three of the most significant features in the contemporary world politics. While globalism and nationalism are apparent and pervasive, the trend toward regionalism is gaining a new momentum in the post-Cold War era. In today's interdependent world, the nation-states have come to realize that problems facing their societies are truly border-crossing in nature and cannot be adequately solved without some kind of cooperation at the regional or international level. While cooperation at the international level seems to be difficult, if not impossible, regional cooperation is considered to be a more practical and realistic strategy to address many of the Third World countries' problems. 'Think globally and act regionally' has become a motto for many nation-states. It is not surprising, therefore, to see the emergence of several (world-wide) cooperative schemes in both developed and developing regions. In the developed regions of Europe and North America, cooperative schemes, as evidenced by the creation of European single market and North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), are presumably designed to bring greater economic benefits to their societies. However, such cooperative arrangements have led to apprehension among

the Third World countries that the major centers of economic powers - notably Western Europe and North America - may form trading blocs and pursue protectionist policies, making the Third World participation in the global economy difficult.

The very idea of "Fortress Europe" and "Fortress America" may be a distant reality, or may not even be possible given the globalization of movements of capital and communications and the highly diversified character of new technology (Rostow, 1990:6). But such a scenario cannot be entirely ruled out.<sup>1</sup> In the wake of protectionism, as Helge Hveem (1989) sees, the Third World countries are likely to embrace "altruist" and "reformist" policies which stand for pro-development and pro-regionalism. Without such policies the Third World countries, given their limited resources, may not have any chance for an effective participation in the global economy, which will, in all likelihood, hamper the prospect of their national development (Hveem, 1989:269). Their aspiration for "effective participation" and economic development can perhaps be realized through some kind of regional cooperative arrangements among themselves (Gilpin, 1987:294). Regional cooperation among the Third World countries appears to have been guided by what Ernst Haas (1990:65) called an "ideology of pragmatic antidependency" which seeks to promote regional interdependence among the developing countries without delinking them from the global system.<sup>2</sup> Through regional interdependence, the Third World countries aspire to achieve what is often described as "structural empowerment" (Mortimer,

1980) and thus, hope to reduce their degree of dependence on the North and at the same time increase their collective bargaining in the global economy (Hettne, 1992:198; Kothari, 1974:135). Moreover, through regional cooperation the developing countries can hope to deal with the rising tide of aggressive nationalism and ethnic conflicts, which at once threaten their political stability and accentuate economic vulnerability. Thus, regionalism, as Kothari (1974) argued in mid-70s, has become "a necessary corrective to Third World fragmentation" (1989:iv).

In the post-Cold War world politics, regionalism seems to offer a possible path toward a stable world order, regional security, peace and development (M. Haas, 1992b:292; Tehranian, 1992:5). Not surprisingly, unlike the regionalism of 1950s and 1960s, when much of the successful regional cooperative activities were concentrated in the Western Europe, regionalism today seems to have prospered all over the world.<sup>3</sup> There are very few regions left in today's world which do not experience regionalism in some form or other. European Union (EU), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS, 1975), Organization of African Unity (OAU, 1963), and Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC, 1980), Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN, 1967), Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC, 1981), South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC, 1985), Organization of American States (OAS, since 1890s), Latin American Integration Association (LATA, 1980), South Pacific Forum (SPF, 1971) are some of the most notable examples of regional organizations which facilitate regional

cooperative activities in their specific regions. The continuing success of three unofficial yet important regional organizations in the Pacific, that is, the Pacific Trade and Development (PAFTAD), the Pacific Basin Economic Council (PBEC) and the Pacific Economic Cooperation Conference (PECC), along with the growing Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) has led many observers to believe<sup>4</sup> that the Pacific Basin is going to be the most exciting scene of regionalism in future other than Europe. With the UNDP-sponsored Tumen project<sup>5</sup> taking an operational shape, Northeast Asian regionalism appears to have flowered. Although there are few formal regional organizations in East Asia, extensive intra-regional and inter-regional linkages exist among East Asian countries. Moreover, East Asian countries are members and play a crucial role in APEC and PECC. The expansion of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)<sup>6</sup> between the United States and Canada to Mexico and the formation of Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO)<sup>7</sup> are yet other examples, which provide ample evidence that regionalism has become popular in the post-Cold War era. Additionally, as Bhagwati (1992:540) has argued, the decision of the United States to travel the regional route is significant and may prove critical for the growth and success of regionalism in its cycle II phase.<sup>8</sup>

The recent revival of regionalism is preceded by what is known as "locust years" of disillusionment<sup>9</sup> during which the growth of regionalism, both in

theoretic and practical terms, suffered significantly. Prior to the beginning of the "locust years" in 1970s, regionalism had experienced an exciting theoretical growth in the 1950s and 1960s. In the wake of the revival of nationalism and emergence of interdependence in the late 1960s and 1970s, the salience of regionalism seemed to decline. With the decline in regional integrative activities in Western Europe, integration theories seemed to lose their track. Indeed, Ernst Haas (1975), one of the chief architects of regional integration theories, pronounced these theories as "obsolete" and "obsolescent." Haas' disillusionment with the integration theories can be attributed to the latter's inability and inadequacy in explaining and predicting world events. A brief review of integration theories in the next section will shed some light on their inadequacy and narrowness.

### **Theories of Regional Integration: A Review and Critique**

Among various theories which attempted to explain and predict regionalism in Western Europe and elsewhere during 1950s and 1960s, *Communications Theory* or *Transactionalism*, *Functionalism* and *Neo-functionalism* stand out for their analytic rigor of empirical research.

### Communications Theory

One of the early theories of regional integration, *transactionalism* or *communications theory*, was developed by Karl Deutsch, the Czech-born German political scientist. Deriving his paradigm from cybernetics and information theory, Deutsch developed a communications approach to address the issue of community building in the international arena. His most substantive contribution to integration theory is found in his pioneering work *Political Community and the North Atlantic Area* (1957). In this book he defined integration as the "attainment, within a territory, of a 'sense of community' and of institutions and practices strong enough and widespread enough to assure, for a long time, dependable expectations of peaceful change among its population" (p.5). By "peaceful change", Deutsch refers to "the resolution of social problems, normally by institutionalized procedures, without resort to large-scale physical force" (Ibid., :5).

The central objective of Deutsch's theory was to develop a political community to avert war and thus enhance the prospect of peace and prosperity among nation-states. Deutsch's effort, as Arend Lijphart (1981) perceptively remarks, revived significantly the Grotian paradigm of world society, which challenged the traditional paradigm of international relations.<sup>10</sup> Traditional international relations theory revolved around the notions of state sovereignty and its logical corollary,

international anarchy. Such notions reflected the Hobbesian paradigm, which underlined the fact that nation-states live in an international state of nature with no guarantee of security. Thus, they are forced to survive in a condition of mutual competition and conflict. Challenging this axiomatic view of the relationship between anarchy and war, Hugo Grotius and his followers claimed that the world consists of a society of states with a common framework of moral and legal norms and that "the normative consensus of international society is sufficiently strong and pervasive to render the image of the state of nature, at least in the Hobbesian sense of international anarchy, inapplicable".<sup>11</sup> Deutsch's analysis of political communities seems to be in line with the Grotian paradigm.

Deutsch noted that political communities can be of two types: pluralistic security communities and amalgamated security communities. An amalgamated security community has "one supreme decision-making center", whereas a pluralistic security community exists when nation-states maintaining their separate national identities pursue common goals and harmonize their policies to achieve joint economic rewards. Of these two communities, the pluralistic community is easier to attain and maintain, although Deutsch believes that amalgamated community is preferable because "it will not only preserve peace but will provide greater strength for accomplishing both general and specific governmental services and purposes, and possibly a larger sense of identity and psychic reassurance for the elites and masses of its population" (1978:243).

Deutsch and his associates (1957) found twelve social and economic background conditions to be necessary for the success of amalgamated security community,<sup>12</sup> whereas only three major conditions - i.e. value compatibility, mutual responsiveness and mutual predictability - were found to be important for the success of pluralistic security communities (p.29 & 58). Thus, he argues, pluralistic security communities are easier to establish and maintain. He further suggests that for the creation of both kinds of communities, changes in the political attitudes and behavior of individuals, in other words, development of a "we-feeling" are absolutely necessary.

Later, Deutsch attempted to measure the success of integration through such quantitative indicators as mail flows, electronic communication, student travel, tourism, and relative levels of intraregional trade. On the basis of aggregated data on social communications, public and elite opinion and content analysis of leading newspapers, that is, *Le Monde* and *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, Deutsch and his colleagues (1967) concluded that the process of European integration, at least in the sense of the growth of supranational state, had come to a halt. They observed that integration in Europe was at its peak in 1954; integration reached a plateau from 1957-58 and from then on integrative trends declined (p.218).

Deutsch's conclusion, however, was challenged by Inglehart and many other scholars. Using identical data, Inglehart (1968) found out that regional

integration in Europe, rather than declining, was progressing toward a fuller integration during the same time period studied by Deutsch (p.122). Sharing Inglehart's view, Lindberg (1970) commented that Western Europe, during the five-year period after the formation of EEC in 1958, experienced substantial progress toward integration (p.24). Carl J. Friedrich (1969), using other indicators, concluded that Western Europe had become more integrated since 1957, the year of the signing of the Rome Treaty, creating the Common Market. He criticized Deutsch and his associates both for their choice of indicators and for their use of statistical data in supporting their conclusion.<sup>13</sup> However, in a subsequent study with Richard Chadwick (1973), Deutsch appeared to have changed his mind about his earlier conclusions regarding the status of European integration from 1954 to 1967. Chadwick and Deutsch (1973) reported statistical errors of application of the Savage-Deutsch (1960) method for measuring relative trade concentration (RA indices), which led to Deutsch's earlier conclusion that European integration had reached a plateau in the mid-1950s. Instead, the study by Chadwick and Deutsch suggested that steady growth in the EEC had occurred since 1954 through 1967.<sup>14</sup>

In *The Uniting of Europe* (1958), Ernst Haas found Deutsch's paradigm inappropriate to account for the emergence of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). Haas argued that if one had to consider Deutsch's transactionalist criteria to gauge the level of regional integration in Europe, then ECSC would not have come into existence, because the six countries were not enjoying a

high level of transactions among themselves. Haas also did not find Deutsch's three qualitative indicators - mutual predictability, mutual responsiveness and value compatibility - useful in case of ECSC. Instead, Haas argued that political leaders and their expectation of mutual economic gains played crucial roles in the emergence of the ECSC.

However, in defence of Deutsch, it can be said that he always recognized and stressed the need to combine the quantitative approach with qualitative and humanistic thinking (Pentland, 1973:62). His quantitative indicators to measure structural integration in Europe may not be accurate, but his discussion of qualitative indicators of European integration still remains a useful analysis today, Haas' criticisms notwithstanding. Deutsch's emphasis on the formation of a "no-war" socio-psychological community to bring peace holds much promise today. His analysis of "social learning" and its role in transforming the self-centered individuals into a group of coherent people and the latter's positive role in the formation of a community (both pluralistic and amalgamated) by developing a "we-feeling" offers an exciting insight into today's revival of regionalism.<sup>15</sup> His unwavering faith in people has led him to paint an optimistic future. In contrast with Durkheim's pessimistic construction of world society,<sup>16</sup> Deutsch (1978) believed that people can learn to give up their narrow parochial orientations and form organizations to promote their interests (p.285).

Moreover, Deutsch believed that as interdependence grows, and as the world becomes more and more integrated socially and economically, nation-states will more readily pursue a policy of political cooperation. He stands vindicated on this point. Thus, as M.Haas (1992a) concludes, more than almost any other scholar, Deutsch developed a "paradigm that serves as a coherent alternative to realpolitik" (p.219).

### Functionalism

Functionalism, as developed by Hungarian political economist David Mitrany (1966), rests upon the assumption that in today's interdependent world no nation-state can individually solve all its economic and social problems. Hence, there is a need to identify common international economic and social problems and to create regional and global organizations to deal with them. However, Mitrany did not favor an organization like the League of Nations, which failed, according to him, because of its all-encompassing nature and overemphasis on military issues. Instead, he argued for monofunctional or functionally-specific organizations because they can address a single international problem and strive for its ultimate solution. Technical experts, rather than political actors, Mitrany believed, will play a vital role in these functional organizations. Once people are able to perceive increased benefits and the greater ability and efficiency of these organizations, demands will be raised for the solution of other problems with other functionally specific organizations. This process, known later as "spillover"<sup>17</sup> or what Mitrany calls "the doctrine of ramification", will result

in "ever-widening circles" of social and economic integration. As the role and number of these functionally specific organizations grow, the state system will collapse, resulting in the transfer of "slices of sovereignty" from nation-states to regional organizations. Thus, functionalism suggests that promotion of cooperation in the non-political fields (technical, social and economic) will bring about greater political cooperation among the nation-states in the long run, and may result in the emergence of supranational institutions. Mitrany hoped that the technical experts would create a new world culture dominated by "technical rationality" that would replace the narcissistic nation-state system.

Functionalism has been subject to several kinds of criticisms and modifications, mostly by neo-functionalists. Summing up the alleged deficiencies of functionalism, Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff, Jr. (1990) have commented:

It is difficult, if not impossible, to separate the economic and social tasks from the political; that governments have shown themselves unwilling to hand over to international authority tasks that encroach upon the political; that certain economic and social tasks do not ramify or spill-over into the political sector; and that the road to political integration lies through political "acts of will," rather than functional integration in economic and social sectors (p.458).

Pentland (1973), in his critique of functionalism, has concluded that in light of the Western European experience since World War II, there is little evidence to suggest that technology or economic growth *per se* will produce integration through

functional cooperation. Political influences and pressures from various interest groups, political parties and regimes have mattered greatly in the integrative process of Western Europe. In short, there has been little or nothing that is "non-political" in the integration experience of Western Europe since World War II (p.98).

### Neo-functionalism

Neo-functionalism emerged as a critique of functionalist theory. The major contributors to neo-functionalism are Ernst Haas, Phillippe Schmitter, Leon Lindberg and Joseph Nye. Emphasizing politics as the essence of the regional integration process, Ernst Haas criticized functionalism for its relative ignorance of political factors. Taking the European Coal and Steel Community as his exemplar, Haas (1958) argued that the key actors are not the regional institutions, as functionalism believes, but rather national and regional elites and pressure groups. It is the expectation of gain or loss of these groups that becomes the driving force for the regional integration process. As actors realize that their interests are best served by a commitment to a larger organization, learning contributes to integration. Besides, actors who experience gains from supranational institutions in one sector will tend to favor integration in other sector. Thus, there is an "expansive logic" of sector integration, Haas (1964) has argued, that contributes to "spill-over" from one sector to another (p.48).

In *Beyond the Nation State* (1964) Haas studied the International Labor

Organization. In this study Haas developed a model that brought together the input-output analysis of Easton's (1967) system theory and Mitrany's doctrine of ramification. The main concern of Haas was to see the extent to which an international organization can transcend national boundaries and thus transform the international system. The policies of the national government constitute inputs into the international system. International organizations are the structures of the international system. The structures receive inputs and convert them from tasks into actions. Collective decisions are outputs of the international system. These outputs are evaluated by the national actors and, if found beneficial, are extended to other issue-areas. Thus, a spillover occurs enhancing the prospect of integration.

Haas' neo-functionalism was subsequently revised by a number of other neo-functional writers. The first major revision came from Lindberg and Scheingold (1970), who suggested that the regional integration process may sometimes result in "spill-back" or "encapsulation" rather than always resulting in spill-over (p.137). Elaborating this theme further, Schmitter (1970) described, "encapsulation" as a "self-maintaining international sub-system". He argued that in the regional integration process "spill-back" may occur, "whereby in response to tensions actors consequently withdraw from their original objective, downgrading their commitment to mutual cooperation" (p.840).

Schmitter (1970) also discussed the relevance of "spill-around", "buildup" and "retrenchment" for the integration process. "Spill-around" refers to an increase in the scope of functions performed by an integrative organization but not a corresponding growth in authority. "Build-up" means an increase in decisional autonomy and authority of an integrative organization, without entry into new issue-areas. "Retrenchment" refers to an increase in the level of joint arbitration while reducing the authority of an integrative organization (p.846).

The second major revision of functionalism came from Joseph Nye (1971). Although Haas originally admitted the impact of such actors as DeGaulle and Monnet on the regional integration process, the role of external actors and events in this process was perceived to be peripheral. Exploring this variable in some detail, Nye (1971) came to the conclusion that both external actors and events should be included as a "process mechanism" in the evolution of any integrative scheme, with particular emphasis on the role of external actors (p.64).

Roger Hansen criticized the neo-functionalists for their failure to relate the process of regional integration to factors in the surrounding international system. The neo-functionalists, according to Hansen (1969), tend to deny rather than investigate the discontinuity between "high" (national interest) politics and "low" (welfare) politics, a distinction developed by Hoffmann (1968). The neo-functionalists also failed to

recognize, Hansen argued, that sizable economic gains would result from a common market coordinated by sovereign states rather than managed by ceaselessly expanding supranational authorities (1969:270).

Thus, despite the later revision of neo-functionalism, the theory proved to be inadequate in explaining and predicting world events in the late twentieth century. Other theories of regional integration also suffered from the same inadequacy. In the contemporary world, Haas (1975) found that more stress was laid on national self-interest than approaching issues on the basis of a joint incrementalist strategy. European integration in the 1970s can therefore be more fruitfully studied, Haas suggested, through a concept of global interdependence. He identified global interdependence as "fragmented issue linkage" (1975:25). "Issue linkage" occurs, Haas (1975) pointed out, "when older objectives are questioned, when there is a clamor for satisfaction of new objectives, and when the rationality accepted as adequate in the past ceases to be a guide to future action" (p. 26). Thus, regional integration, according to Haas, "has become a fragmented, disjointed process, heavily dependent upon motives of actors and their ability to link the solution of one problem with the solution of prior problems."<sup>18</sup>

Most of these theories, Haas' later efforts notwithstanding, remained more or less Eurocentric because they were most concerned with the success or failure of European integration effort. Regional cooperative efforts in Third World countries

were downplayed by Eurocentric scholars. Haas and Schmitter (1966) predicted that, because of the absence of four "background conditions" (relative equality in size and power as well as cultural homogeneity of the states working for integration; substantial rates of transaction among them; existence of a pluralistic sociopolitical structure; and high degree of complementarity of the values existing within the proposed union), integrative efforts in the Third World countries would be less likely to succeed (pp. 268-69).

Amitai Etzioni (1965) cited three reasons for the failure of unification efforts in the Third World countries. The first reason is a "restricted horizon" of the illiterate publics. Secondly, the Third World countries "lack citizens with the organizational and political skills to handle regional unification." Thirdly, these countries are so preoccupied with their own domestic problems that they have very little time left to think of regional unification (pp.319-21).

Roger Hansen (1969) came out with additional explanations for the lack of success in the integrative efforts of the Third World countries. The superpowers' interference in the economic and political systems of these countries is a major impediment in their integrative efforts. Moreover, integrative efforts, Hansen argued, would be impossible so long as developing countries were still engaged in the nation-building process.<sup>19</sup>

Following Karl Deutsch and his associates' observation that all integrative efforts have built-in expectations of gains and rewards, Lynn Mytelka (1973) argued that Third World integrative systems will fail unless there is a solution to the problem of unequal gains.<sup>20</sup> Characterizing the Third World countries' dependence on the industrialized nations for capital, markets and technology as asymmetrical interdependence, John Ravenhill (1979) argued that the Third World countries' vulnerability to external economic influence may impede regional cooperation (p.231).

#### **Dynamics of Third World Regionalism: Limitations of Eurocentric Explanations**

But these predictions proved wrong. In contrast with the slowing down of integrative process in Europe, cooperative efforts intensified in the Third World countries during the 1970s and 1980s. The Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) came into existence in 1967 and, after a brief period of "nonaction", has become a successful regional organization in Asia and thus a model of regional cooperation in the Third World. Since its inauguration in 1971, the South Pacific Forum (SPF) has grown in strength and has become one of the most important regional organizations in the entire Southwest Pacific-Oceania region (M. Haas, 1989b; Palmer, 1991).<sup>21</sup> The Economic Community of West African states (ECOWAS) came into being in 1975; after some initial problems among the member countries with regard to admission of new members, the organization has since stabilized and has

achieved some success in engaging the member states in fruitful discussion and negotiation regarding intra-regional trade matters (Okolo, 1985:136). The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) has been growing in stature since its inception in 1981 (Nakheleh 1986). With the inclusion of Bolivia as a new member, the Latin American Free Trade Association (LAFTA) formed in 1960, was superseded by the Latin American Integration Association (LAIA) in 1980. A recent organization to join the list of cooperative efforts in the Third World countries is the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) which came into existence in 1985. What is remarkable about these regional organizations is that they have emerged in regions which, unlike Europe, have little prior experience of regional cooperation.

How can one explain the relative success of more recent efforts at regional cooperation in the Third World, and particularly in Asia and the Pacific, when the integration theorists predicted failure?<sup>22</sup> The integration theorists' attempts (which they developed mainly in the context of Western Europe) to explain and predict regional cooperation efforts in Asia and elsewhere were clearly inadequate. Eurocentric theorists overemphasized integration, ignoring other more realistic regional approaches. As Palmer (1991) comments, "By concentrating too heavily on integration, which was interpreted in many different ways, they gave inadequate attention to the conceptualization and encouragement of other forms of regional cooperation of less intensive but more realizable nature"(p.11). Moreover, the Third World countries, as Michael Haas (1992:235) has suggested, after struggling and sacrificing so much to

achieve national independence - i.e. disintegration from European empires, did not want "to reintegrate just to suit theories of integration developed for Western Europe." Instead, Third World countries strove for regional cooperation to achieve mutual gains. The central weakness of the integration theorists is their emphasis on the creation of a supranational authority, which presupposes "a slicing of sovereignty" of the nation-states.<sup>23</sup> The Third World countries, still extremely emotional and sensitive about sovereignty, seem to resent any idea of surrender of their sovereignty (Krasner, 1985:73-75). As Philippe Schmitter (1991:114) has observed, even the European countries may find integration difficult and the European Community may never get completely "beyond the nation-state." However, the term integration may still be appropriate in the context of Europe, but is much less frequently used in other regions of the world.

It is obvious that no integration theory, as discussed above, can claim to explain the regional cooperation process, in Asia or elsewhere in the Third World countries, independently by itself. Perhaps, a combination of Mitrany-style functionalism, Haas' neofunctionalism and Deutsch's transactionalism can help explain this process. In this context, Michael Haas' (1992) finding is significant. After comparing some seventy-five regional institutions in Asia and the Pacific since the 1950s, he suggested a "communitarian perspective" to explain the process of regional cooperation in Third World. According to this perspective:

modest technical cooperation pursued for joint economic gain, leads to the development of communitarian culture of interaction (Tehrani, 1990), which spills over into the building of a political community that is so firmly rooted in cultural affinity that economic collaboration proceeds and spillback becomes impossible (M. Haas, 1992b:294).

Central to the communitarian perspective is what Michael Haas calls the "Asian Way" (1989a) and the "Pacific way" (1989b) to cooperation. Regional organizations in one area, he has suggested, should learn lessons from failed organizations in other areas. Regional cooperation should proceed from less controversial issues (because consensus can be easily achieved on those issues) to more complex political and economic issues. The "Asian Way" and "Pacific Way" approaches suggest the following six principles:

(1) respect for the equality of cultures (rather than hierarchical, coercive methods of conducting diplomacy); (2) consensus building (rather than value maximization); (3) incrementalism (rather than blueprintish grand designs); (4) attention to principles (rather than technical details); (5) unique solutions (rather than universalistic remedies) and (6) a stress on cooperation (rather than integration). (M. Haas, 1992a:240)

Norman Palmer (1991) has discussed some distinctive features of Asian regionalism. The trend in Asia, he has explained, is toward "open regionalism" and "transregionalism" (1991:181; 2). Both these terms refer to the outward-looking character of Asian regionalism. Regional organizations in Asia (such as ASEAN and to some extent, SAARC) have established extensive external links and interregional contacts for their mutual benefits. Growing contacts between ASEAN-EU is an example of this trend. Recently, SAARC has also begun some efforts to establish

contacts with ASEAN and EU. Regional organizations in Asia have also maintained close links with such multilateral institutions as the IMF, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, ESCAP, and the United Nations and its various specialized agencies (i.e., FAO, UNESCO, WHO, ECOSOC, UNDP). Such linkages have proved complementary to the growth of Asian regionalism (Palmer, 1991:181).

In the context of Asian regionalism, the research in this study will focus on an analysis of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and its future prospects. The organization, which comprises seven countries in South Asia (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka), was established at the Dhaka summit held on 7-8 December 1985, with a basic objective of accelerating the process of economic and social development in the region. The organization's accomplishments, during the past decade, have not been spectacular enough to draw the attention of the world community. SAARC's modest growth, coupled with the conflicting nature of South Asian politics, has given rise to skepticism about the future prospect of the organization.

I have argued in this study that as long as South Asian non-governing elites and attentive public are supportive of, or at least, do not demonstrate a negative or hostile attitude toward SAARC, the organization is likely to grow. This argument has its intellectual roots in the ongoing debate among scholars of regionalism about the role of public opinion in the regional cooperation process. Does public opinion play

any role in the regional cooperation process? In order to examine this question, two related questions need to be explained. (1) What is the role of public opinion in foreign policy? (2) Is regional cooperation a foreign policy issue, domestic policy issue, or both? The following two sections briefly examine these questions.

### **Impact of Public Opinion on Foreign Policy**

Research on the effect of public opinion on foreign policy is relatively a recent trend. Classical notions of statecraft, which appeared to have originated with the Peace of Westphalia (1648), focused exclusively on the survival of the state in an anarchic international environment. Individual interests and opinions had to be subordinated to the state's survival, since the latter was by definition a precondition for societal prosperity. Sovereign rulers, according to the Westphalian norm of statecraft, must conduct foreign policy autonomously of domestic interests in order to ensure state's survival.

The first systematic breach of this Westphalian tradition came with the writings of the English scholar, J.H. Hobson, who recognized that a government's foreign policy was, at least in part, shaped by forces outside the state apparatus. Explaining the *modus operandi* of the nascent colonial empires of his time, Hobson (1902), in his influential book *Imperialism: A Study*, argued that the wealthy, who were an exceedingly narrow group in the society, did, in fact, influence states in order to "find

profitable employment for their capital which would otherwise be superfluous" (p.77). From Hobson's time on, scholars have occasionally debated about the relative influence of public opinion, or lack of it, on foreign policy-making process. It is only after the World War II that systematic studies of public opinion and foreign policy have grown in the United States. Thomas Baily's *The Man in the Street* (1948) and Gabriel Almond's *The American People and Foreign Policy* (1950) were the two most significant works on public opinion and foreign policy immediately after the World War II.

Much of the post-World War II scholarship on public opinion and foreign policy were developed in the United States on the logic of realist school and were centered on the following three general propositions (Holsti, 1992:442):

- (a) Public opinion is highly volatile and thus can not be the basis of a sound foreign policy (Almond, 1950; Lippmann, 1922, 1925; Bailey, 1948; Kenan, 1951; Morgenthau, 1978; Rosenau, 1961).
- (b) Public attitudes, unlike elite attitudes, lacks structure and coherence and hence can not provide consistent input into foreign policy matters (Converse, 1964; Campbell, Converse, Miller, and Stokes, 1964; Nie and Anderson, 1974).
- (c) Public opinion has a limited impact on foreign policy (Cohen, 1973; Miller and Stokes, 1963).

However, since 1970s, a revisionist school of thought has emerged in the United States which has effectively challenged these three realist school-inspired propositions. William Caspary (1970), in a detailed analysis of public opinion on a broader set of questions about American involvement in world affairs, presented the first systematic challenge to Almond's thesis about the volatility of public opinion on foreign policy issues. Caspary concluded that "American public opinion is characterized by a strong and stable permissive mood" toward active international involvement (1970:546). Since Caspary's challenge, a number of studies, based on both individual-level and aggregate-level analysis, have revealed that American public's foreign policy views are more or less "stable" (Mueller, 1973; Achen, 1975; Page and Shapiro, 1988, 1992; Graham, 1988; Peffley and Hurwitz, 1992), and "rational" (Page and Shapiro 1988, 1992; Powlick, 1991; Jentleson, 1992).

The second argument that mass public attitudes lack ideological structure and coherence in comparison with the elites, as pioneered by Converse (1964), has been challenged on both methodological grounds and the timing of the research. Some studies have raised significant methodological questions about Converse's findings (Achen, 1975). Challenging Converse's findings, a number of analysts found that there had been an increase in ideological consistency among the general public on foreign policy affairs since 1964 (Nie and Anderson, 1974; Nie, Verba, and Petrocik, 1976). Of course, this latter analysis is not free from criticisms.<sup>24</sup> The findings on the structure of public attitudes appear to be inconclusive. However, in the vast literature

on foreign policy attitudes there does appear to be a considerable convergence of findings about the mass belief structures. According to these findings, members of mass public, despite their lack of factual information, do use various heuristics to organize their political thinking at least in a moderately coherent way on foreign policy matters (Holsti and Rosenau, 1984, 1990; Chittick, Billingsley, and Travis, 1990; Wittkopf, 1990; Hinckley, 1988, 1992; Russett, 1990; Peffley and Hurwitz, 1985, 1992; Hurwitz and Peffley, 1987, 1990; Holsti, 1992).

One of the most important questions about public opinion is: Does public opinion have any impact on the policy-making process, particularly on foreign policy matters? There are clearly two schools of thought which have attempted to answer this question. One school, based on quantitative/correlational analyses and case studies, has argued that public opinion provides consistent input, and often exerts considerable degree of influence in the American foreign policy-making process (Monroe, 1979; Kusnitz, 1984; Graham, 1988; Russett, 1990; Powlick, 1991; Page and Shapiro, 1992; Wittkopf, 1990). Some comparative research on the impact of public opinion on foreign policy in France, Japan, West Germany and the United States by Eichenberg (1989) and Risse-Kappen (1991) have also lent support to this argument. However, the latter research has found that although public opinion was important in each of the four countries, its impact was significantly affected by domestic structures and coalition-building processes among elites.

The analyses of the other school have cast doubt on the impact of public opinion on the foreign policy-making process. According to this school of thought, public opinion is not an autonomous force and decision-makers, with the help of media, often succeed in manipulating public opinion. By providing incorrect, misleading and selective information to the public, and by propaganda in the media, the decision makers often become successful in creating a "false consciousness" among the mass public and getting their support for various policies, even though the policies may not be in the best interests of the public. (Herman and Chomsky, 1988; Chomsky 1989; Ginsburg, 1986). Antonio Gramsci (1971) used the phrase "cultural hegemony" to explain this process. The dominant culture or ideology, according to Gramsci, primarily reflects the class-based interests of the ruling elites. By successfully using the media, the ruling elites often are able to manipulate mass public and thus, perpetuate their status quo ideology in the society.

Although Gramsci's argument about cultural hegemony has not been empirically confirmed (Russett, 1990:95), his analysis, along with Chomsky's (1989) "propaganda model," nevertheless sheds some light on how public opinion is manipulated in a democratic system to serve the interests of the ruling class. Jurgen Habermas' (1979:200) discussion of "the decline of the public sphere" well sums up this process of elite manipulation and the consequent decline of the importance of the public opinion in the policy-making process:

The political public sphere of the social welfare state is characterized by a peculiar weakening of its critical functions. At one time the process of making proceedings public - *publizitat* - was intended to subject persons of affairs to public reason, and to make political decisions subject to appeal before the court of public opinion. But often enough the process of making public simply serves the arcane policies of special interests: in the form of "publicity" it wins public prestige for people of affairs, thus making them worthy of acclamation in a climate of nonpublic opinion.

Several research findings have revealed that by selectively taking external initiatives and responding to selective external events, the successive Presidents and their administration in the United States have successfully manipulated public opinion. Such selective engagements enable the Presidents to create favorable images in the media by which they not only often succeed in garnering enough public support for their policies, but also in increasing their domestic popularity (Holsti, 1992; Cohen, 1973). Richard Nixon's Cambodian adventure in 1970, Ronald Reagan's decision to attack the tiny country Grenada in 1983, the invasion of Panama in 1989 and Iraq in 1991 by George Bush, and Bill Clinton's occupation of Haiti in 1994 and the subsequent support these Presidents received from American public are some of the classic illustrations of elite manipulation of public opinion.

Taken as a whole, there seems to be no consensus in the literature about the impact of public opinion on the foreign policy-making process. However, research in the United States in the post-Vietnam era have vigorously challenged the Almond-Lippmann thesis of the mid 1960s about the nature, structure, and the impact of public opinion. A number of recent studies have shown that during recent decades the impact

of public opinion has increased in the American foreign policy-making process (Holsti, 1992; Powlick, 1991; Graham, 1989). Some other recent studies have also supported the same tentative conclusions in case of Europe (Nincic, 1992; Eichenberg and Dalton, 1993).

But, the impact of public opinion on foreign policy appears to be marginal in the Third World countries. While several factors may account for this, and there may be some country-specific factors, three broad reasons can be briefly outlined below to explain the marginal role of public opinion in foreign policy in the Third World societies.

First, the members of the general public in the Third World societies are too fully engaged in the requirements of earning a living and otherwise attending to their most immediate material needs such as food, shelter, clothing and safety to have the time or inclination to become more fully engaged in the complex foreign policy matters, which are too remote from their direct experience. Thus, the realist school's argument that the public might be more interested in local issues that impinge on their daily lives than the remote issues of foreign affairs appear to be quite true in case of Third World societies (this is also valid in case of the developed societies, the revisionist argument notwithstanding). But, while the public in the post-industrial societies may have developed more interest in such postmaterialist issues as women's liberation, nuclear power, green and peace movement etc., the public in the Third

World societies, given the widespread illiteracy and poverty, appear to be less interested in these matters.

Second, most Third World states are, to some degree, authoritarian, bureaucratized, and repressive, and lack a wide base of public support. In such regimes the bureaucracy and military play central and effective role in supervising and closely administering state policy. Besides, most Third World countries depend on external aid for their survival and often are required to conduct foreign policies directed by their donor countries, which may not be in the popular interest. Thus, the policy-makers tend to conduct their foreign policies secretly for the fear of any popular backlash against their policies. It is not surprising that most of the foreign policy officials in these countries demonstrate an attitude which can be summed up in Cohen's (1973:62) language as follows: "To hell with public opinion....We should lead rather than follow." Thus, the impact of public opinion on foreign policy matters in Third World countries appears to be marginal.

Thirdly, the policy makers are less worried about the impact of public opinion on foreign policy matters because the foreign policy issues, except those related to unresolved bilateral matters and ethnic and religious questions as in the case of South Asia, and Middle East, pose few dangers of electoral retribution by voters. Elections are said to be mostly decided by domestic questions, sometimes described as "bread and butter" issues.

Thus, while the impact of public opinion on foreign policy matters may have increased in the Western countries in recent years, the same may not be true in most of the Third World countries. It is reasonable to assume that the role of public opinion in the foreign policy-making process in the Third World countries is still very marginal. If this assumption is true, then what kind of role public opinion plays in the regional cooperation process? The answer to this question depends, to a large degree, on how regional cooperation policies of member states are understood in analytical terms - are these policies domestic policies, or foreign policies, or both? The next section explores this question.

### **Regional Cooperation As a "Community Policy Issue-Area"**

If we accept the traditional distinction between domestic and foreign policies, regional cooperation policies can be technically described as the representative of the latter. But as Charles Pentland (1973:220) has argued, such simple characterization seems to be inadequate because the member states' regional cooperation policies, in many ways, resemble the patterns of domestic policy-making process. In light of this, Pentland has suggested a third category of policy - "community policy" - to describe the policies of cooperating states toward each other. Pentland's discussion of the concept of "community policy" seems to be a useful framework for our examination of the role of public opinion in the regional cooperation process.

Community policy of a state, according to Pentland, "can be described as a subtype of foreign policy behavior marked by many features of domestic political processes" (1973:220). Pentland's discussion of community policy is based on Rosenau's (1967) analysis of foreign and domestic policies as issue areas. "Issue areas," as Rosenau (1967:15) has described, "are categories of issues that affect a political process in sufficiently similar ways to justify being clustered together." According to Rosenau (1967:24), domestic policy issue areas and foreign policy issue areas exhibit three important differences - that is, motivational differences, role differences, and interaction differences. An analysis of these three differences appears to have provided Pentland some scope to establish the existence of a third issue area, namely that of "community policy."

The first difference that Rosenau describes between the foreign and domestic issue areas is related to the type and degree of motivation found in each. According to Rosenau (1967:24), for general public, foreign policy matters, being largely beyond their immediate concern, interest and control, are likely to generate motivation "that is less complex and ambivalent, and therefore more clear-cut and intense, than is the domestic area," which are more immediate and hence more salient to the general public. However, the case is different for the political elites. Since the political elites are aware of extensive nature of foreign policy issues as well as the interdependence of foreign and domestic politics, their motivation in foreign policy matters is less intense and more complex. Thus, unlike the domestic issue areas, the foreign policy

issue areas are marked by a "motivational gap" between citizens and policy-makers. One important implication of this motivational gap, as Rosenau (1967:34) has discussed, is the apparent freedom of officials in foreign policy matters, unlike the domestic areas where public involvement is generally high, and is, thus, a constraint on official action.

In case of community policy, as Pentland (1973) has discussed, public motivation is same as in the case of domestic issues. But unlike pure foreign policy issues, the motivations of public in community policies are somewhat "less stark, simple and intense" (Pentland, 1973:221). Besides, a motivational gap exists not only between the public and the policy-makers, but also among political elites. Some members of the political elites tend to treat community policy issues as domestic, others try to make diplomatic gains from the interdependence of states' economic and political systems, while a third group tends to see such issues as opportunities to increase the level of cooperation among cooperating states (Pentland, 1973:221).

A second distinction between the foreign and domestic issue areas, according to Rosenau, is based on the number of actors involved and types of roles they play in each of these issue areas. Domestic issues, Rosenau (1967:39-41) argues, involve the distribution of resources and arrangement of relationship at home. Thus, in the enactment of these issues a number of generalized social roles, as represented by the healthy and sick, the old and the young, the rich and the poor in the society, and large

categories of occupational roles as represented by businessmen, workers, farmers, teachers, housewives, doctors, other professionals, and leaders of interest groups are involved. On the other hand, issues of foreign policy, being concerned with resources and arrangements abroad, do not normally involve the roles of such large classes of people. Basically, the occupational roles of government leaders, foreign ministers and senior officials are involved in the formulation of foreign policies.

In community policy, although the latter type of role predominates, actors playing traditionally domestic roles, such as, interest group leaders and opinion leaders are often involved (Pentland, 1973:222). The main reason for this is that a state involved in regional cooperation process may have to pursue accommodative policies and to take actions jointly for which the mobilization of support from different strata of the society becomes necessary. Moreover, community policies encompass issues of both high politics (that is, security) and low politics such as economics, technology and culture. All these issues can not be said to be within the scope of foreign policy officials, and, needless to say, require the involvement of non-official actors.

The third distinction that Rosenau draws between the foreign policy and domestic policy issue areas is related to the patterns of interaction among various actors and various agencies involved in the policy-making process. While the patterns of interaction in foreign policies, according to Rosenau, are largely hierarchical or "executive," these patterns are mostly horizontal or "legislative" in the domestic

policies.<sup>25</sup> Often, it is necessary to take quick and decisive action to deal with external environment. Because of this reason, in all political systems, foreign policies are made by few officials in the executive branch of the government. Invariably, the decision-making structure in the foreign policy areas is hierarchical with a vertical flow of information, initiatives and guidance coming from the executive branch. The pattern of interaction in the domestic policy areas, by contrast, is not so hierarchical and is highly competitive between various actors of the society. As Rosenau (1967:43) has argued, since every segment of the society has some claim on the resources, decision-making in the domestic issue areas is dispersed rather than concentrated in few hands. Accommodation of different views and demands is necessary for successful enactment of domestic policies. Thus, unlike foreign policy areas, a horizontal pattern of interaction among relatively equal actors is found in case of domestic policy areas.

Community policy, as Pentland (1973:223) has discussed, differs from the pure models of both the domestic and foreign policy issue areas. Since community policy deals with distribution and rearrangement of cooperating state's internal as well as external resources, both the horizontal and hierarchical pattern of interaction among various actors are necessary. Besides, as the states become more deeply engaged in the regional cooperation process, they need to deal with more and more border-crossing issues. A time comes when it becomes impossible for the traditional foreign policy hierarchy "to coordinate all the policies advocated and pursued by different departments and agencies - all with their different foreign and domestic clientele,

different priorities and perceptions, different methods, personnel and contacts" (Pentland, 1973:224). It is in this kind of environment that a unique pattern of interaction - neither absolutely hierarchical nor totally horizontal - takes place. According to Pentland, such a pattern of interaction is possible in the context of a community policy.

Attempts to achieve regional cooperation involve both elite bargaining as well as domestic support for the implementation of those bargains. Decision-makers will not feel encouraged to negotiate agreements with another state on issues which have no chance of getting support of various domestic groups and which may, thus, contribute adversely to their political survival. Thus, it is reasonable to argue that a state's regional cooperation policy does not exclusively fall in the realm of the traditional domestic or foreign policy areas. Rather, it falls in the category of Pentland's community policy areas possessing the characteristics of the domestic and foreign policy issue areas. Shepherd's (1975:179) writing on regional integration in Europe provided earlier support to this view.

Further support for regional cooperation as a community policy area can be derived from Robert Putnam's (1988) analysis of international cooperation as a "two level process" in which both domestic and international bargains must overlap if cooperation is to proceed.<sup>26</sup> Many of the recent works which have analyzed the process of European integration by focusing upon the links between the domestic

politics and intergovernmental bargaining provide additional support to the idea of community policy. The arguments of Sandholtz and Zysman (1989), and Moravcsik (1991) that the Single European Act (SEA) was the result of a combination of international structural change and changes in domestic politics and political economy of Europe, Keohane and Hoffmann's (1991) preference-convergence hypothesis, the analyses of Garrett (1992), Eichenberg and Dalton (1993), and Huelshoff (1994) focusing on both domestic and international politics as crucial variables in the European integration process provide useful insights to understand regional cooperation policies as community policy issue areas.

If regional cooperation policies are understood in terms of community policy, the influence of various domestic groups on these policies acquires added significance. It is in this context that the role of public opinion becomes important for the growth of regional cooperation. But public opinion, as a variable in the regional cooperation process, has been mostly neglected by the regional integration theorists. The following section reviews the literature of integration theories to assess the role of public opinion in the regional cooperation process.

## **Integration Theories and the Role of Public Opinion**

Functionalism considers the nature of human perceptions and motivations as crucial to the process of integration. Once the public is able to perceive increased benefits and the greater ability of functionally specific regional organizations, the theory suggests, demands will be raised for the solution of other problems with other functionally specific organizations. Nation-states, in functional theory, are seen as a hindrance to the collective solution of many of the social and economic problems of humankind. At times, nation-states are considered as a liability in seeking solutions to human and societal problems. To remedy this situation, the functionalist theory greatly depends upon the force of public opinion. A favorable public opinion is formed, functionalists argue, on the basis of a stimulus-response (SR) learning by a public increasingly exposed to new sources of need-satisfaction (Pentland, 1973:131). Functionalist theory further argues that public support for a regional institution (which has been earlier perceived as beneficial) will resist any "national retrenchment" from the scene of international cooperation (Pentland, 1973:82). Thus, a solid public support is essential not only in the beginning of an integration process, as functionalism seems to suggest, but also in the sustenance of that process. Table 1.1 describes the focus<sup>27</sup> of integration theorists regarding the role of public opinion in the regional cooperation process.

**Table 1.1. Relevance of Public Opinion for Regional Cooperation**

Theorist	Paradigm	Focus	Role of Public Opinion
Deutsch	Transactionalism	Preconditionist Transactionalist	Public support essential for the success and sustenance of regional cooperation
Mitrany	Functionalism	Developmentalist	Public support essential for the success and sustenance of regional cooperation
E. Haas	Neo-functionalism	Preconditionist	Ignored
E. Haas (Post-1980)	Neo-functionalism	Evolutionary epistemology	Public support essential for the maintenance of regional organizations
Lindberg & Scheingold	Neo-functionalism	Developmentalist	Passive influence
Inglehart	Neo-functionalism	Preconditionist Developmentalist	Public support essential for the success and sustenance of regional cooperation
Etzioni	Communitarianism	Preconditionist	Public support essential for the success and sustenance of regional cooperation
M. Haas	Communitarianism	Developmentalist	Public support essential for the success and sustenance of regional cooperation

Source: M. Haas (1992b), "A Paradigm of community for the post-Cold War world," In Katharine and Majid Tehranian eds., *Restructuring for World Peace: On the Threshold of the Twenty-First Century*, Cresskill, New Jersey: Hampton Press, Inc., 1992, pp. 285-301; Stephen Haggard (1991), "Structuralism and Its Critics: Recent Progress in International Relations Theory," In E. Adler and B. Crawford eds., *Progress in Postwar International Relations*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1991, pp.403-437.

Neo-functionalism, as developed by Ernst Haas, puts more emphasis on the thesis of the "cumulative logic of integration" rather than on the public support. The central argument of this thesis is that the political and economic elites (i.e., Jean Monnet, Robert Schuman etc.) will first initiate plans for integration in one sector of the economy (i.e., European Coal and Steel Community), which will inevitably lead to integration of more sectors of the economy (i.e. the European Economic Community) and, ultimately, to a full-blooded political unification (i.e. the United States of Europe) (Shepherd, 1975:47). Thus, according to Haas (1958), the role of political elites and their expectation of loss or gain from a regional institution are more crucial than public opinion in the integration process. However, in his later writings, particularly after the 1980s, Ernst Haas acknowledged the significance of Deutschian emphasis on the role of positive feedback and social learning in the integration process. Such changes in Haas's thinking may be attributed to his development of "evolutionary epistemology" (Adler, 1991:46-47) and "reflectivist" focus (Haggard, 1991:431-432) on the understanding of the dynamic nature of cooperation in international relations.

Haas' elite-centered thesis of 1950s and 1960s was revised and refined by many of his own students. Leon Lindberg and Stuart Scheingold, two students of Ernst Haas, brought out an important publication in 1970 entitled *Europe's Would-be Polity*, which placed a new emphasis on the role of public support for integration. Inspired by

Easton's (1967) system analysis,<sup>28</sup> the two authors analyzed support in terms of a matrix of *levels of interaction* and *basis of response*. *Levels of interactions* are *identitive* and *systemic*; the former refers to the perceived links among the peoples of the Community, and the latter refers to links between the public and the system. *Basis of response* is divided into two sources or two types of attitudes: *utilitarian* and *affective* support. *Utilitarian support* is more cognitive and related to perceptions of concrete gains and losses, such as higher standard of living or security (i.e., protection from foreign incursion). *Affective support* indicates a diffuse and perhaps emotional response to some abstract ideals, such as European identity (p.40). *Affective support* is related to the perceived legitimacy and popularity of, and loyalty to, the European Community (Hewstone, 1986:42).

Lindberg and Scheingold (1970) found that the strongest basis of support for the European Community was utilitarian. Affective support, although not totally lacking, was weaker in comparison. They concluded that in general "a permissive consensus" existed for the community among the public of the six (p.62). While incremental moves toward integration in the economic sphere found general acceptance, moves toward diplomatic or military integration did not receive any real support (p.62).

Lindberg and Scheingold also discussed four "mechanisms" which are said to induce integration. (1) "Functional spillover" means that policy-making areas (or tasks) are related to one another and actors cannot take a decision in one area without involving the other. (2) "Side-payments and log-rolling" refer to the bargaining exchanges made by the decision-makers, whereby they gain in one sector and lose in other. (3) "Actor socialization" refers to governmental and non-governmental elite's acquisition of new perspectives, loyalties and identifications as a result of their mutual interactions. (4) "Feedback" essentially refers to support extended to the community's action and decision by the population of the member-states (p.117-21).

In Lindberg and Scheingold's analysis, feedback (public support) may establish important parameters for the decision-making process but does not move the community, because successful policy initiatives for integration can only come from the political elites. Public support, as the two authors argued, can exert, at best, a "passive influence" on the integration process (p.121).

Regarding the relevance of public opinion to integration, Karl Deutsch's contribution is important. In *The Nerves of Government* (1963), Deutsch discussed the significance of "feedback" on the decision-makers. By "feedback" he means the public's response to government policy. According to Deutsch, government policies become successful and are reinforced only when they receive a "positive feedback" from the public, that is, when the public reacts favorably agreeing with the decision

that has been made. "Negative feedback", i.e., an unfavorable public reaction to the government policies, has a dampening effect on decision-makers. What Deutsch seemed to be arguing was that integration policies, to be successful, need to have a positive feedback from the public. In a later work, *The Analysis of International Relations* (1978), Deutsch clarified his arguments on the role of feedback. The main tasks of integration, Deutsch observed, can be listed under four headings:

"(1) maintaining peace; (2) attaining greater multi-purpose capabilities; (3) accomplishing some specific task; and (4) gaining a new self-image and role identity" (1978:239-40). A positive feedback or favorable public opinion, as Deutsch believed, can only facilitate the accomplishment of these tasks. Deutsch (1978) argued:

As a political process, integration has a take off point in time, when it is no longer a matter of a few prophets or scattered and powerless supporters, but turns into a larger and more coordinated movement with some significant power behind it. Before take off a proposal for integration is a theory; after take off it is a force. (p.247)

It is in this context that Deutsch's faith in people comes out forcefully. By "significant power," Deutsch referred to the whole gamut of social force comprising peoples of all walks of life. Deutsch (1978), however, argued that "the basic issue of integration must become salient to substantial interest-groups and to large numbers of people" (p.247). Salience for integration develops, in Deutsch's view, only when people experience a "new and attractive way of life" and share "common expectations for good things to come" through integration. Some "external challenge", which

require some joint and new response, is also a crucial condition for integration. Finally, Deutsch observed, arrival of a "new generation" on the political scene, who usually take the earlier degree of common interest and outlook for granted and develop a "we-feeling" much faster, facilitates the process of integration (1978:248).

For the success of both pluralistic security community and amalgamated security community, Deutsch argued, development of a "sense of community" is necessary. By "sense of community" he means that people who are potential participants in the communities should share feelings of "mutual relevance" and "mutual responsiveness", that is, they should see each other as being relevant to each other's interests and responsive to each other's demands. Although Deutsch claimed that pluralistic security communities, as exemplified by Norway-Sweden today, are easier to attain and maintain, he showed equal concern for the development of amalgamated security communities (of which USA is an example). For the success of amalgamated security communities, Deutsch argued, positive popular support is absolutely necessary. He commented:

To promote political amalgamation, all the usual political methods have been used, but not all have been equally effective. By far the most effective method, in terms of the relative frequency with which it was followed by success, was the enlistment of broad popular participation and support. Among the cases studied, every amalgamation movement that won such popular participation was eventually successful.  
(1978:249-50)

Thus, Deutsch argued, effective popular participation in terms of a favorable public opinion must exist toward international integration for an amalgamated security community to succeed. If an amalgamation occurs without popular participation or support, or as a result of military conquest, Deutsch believed, it is less likely to be successful. Although Deutsch's subsequent attempt to measure the success of regional integration in quantitative terms has been subject to much criticism, his discussion on political communities remains one of the most impressive treatises on the relevance of public opinion toward regional integration.

Ronald Inglehart's examination of public attitudes toward European integration provides a useful framework for an analysis of the role of public opinion in the regional integration process. Unlike other neofunctionalists, who see the public as apathetic and hence their role in the integration process as secondary, Inglehart (1970) has considered public opinion as an effective force. For him, the basic issue is: "To what extent do public preferences constitute an effective influence on a given set of national decision-makers, encouraging them to make decisions which increase (or diminish) regional integration? (1970:764) Answers to this question, Inglehart argued, depend on three factors. (1) For the public opinion to be effective, the national decision making structure has to be pluralistic, because in a monolithic structure, the ideologically motivated leadership usually plays down "the importance and legitimacy of independent inputs from the public" (p.766). Moreover, in the absence of any genuine alternative, public influence can only be minor. (2) The distribution of

political skills in the society is important. By political skills, Inglehart referred to cognitive changes associated with a politically more sophisticated public. The political sophistication, what Handley (1981) calls "political empathy," is seen as a precondition for a pro-European attitude. Among the Europeans, Inglehart has argued, the Italian publics demonstrate the lowest political skills by their responses of "no opinions" to questions concerning European affairs and are not "cognitively mobilized". As Inglehart (1970:766) argued, only "cognitive mobilization" produces a public attitude more favorable to integration, because cognitively mobilized people are "relatively likely to know about and discuss European politics and to view things from a European perspective" (Inglehart and Rabier, 1978:86). (3) The degree to which the given decision relates to deep-seated values among the public will determine the nature of public opinion. Public opinion can easily swing on issues which are generally referred to as "low politics, i.e., prices of essential commodities. On matters of "high politics," i.e., national sovereignty, public attitudes tend to be more deep-seated.<sup>29</sup> Individuals seem to form their national identities quite early in life, and these identities persist through their later life. Jean Piaget's findings reveal that Swiss children generally form a sense of nationality by the age of twelve.<sup>30</sup> Applying this line of reasoning to the study of regional integration, Inglehart (1967) argued, a new "age cohort" who have received their socialization in the post-World War II period will favor regional integration more than the older cohorts who were socialized prior to World War II in an atmosphere of traditional nationalism (pp.91-105). He has found that the European public opinion since 1945 has been consistently supportive of

European integration (1970:773). Sharing Inglehart's views, Puchala (1970) observed that age cohorts socialized in the post 1945 era of peace and integration in Western Europe have generally favored regional integration.

Thus, while Lindberg and Scheingold merely talk of an emergent "permissive consensus" toward European integration, both Inglehart and Puchala have found existence of favorable opinion among the European public toward regional integration. Lerner and Gordon (1969) have found the existence of "a pragmatic consensus" among West Europeans for the European Community. On the question of the intensity of favorable attitude toward integration, Inglehart in his later findings (1977) has suggested that people in the "post-industrial" European society, with their "post-materialist values," tend to be more cosmopolitan in outlook and hence are more likely to favor integration policies. However, in his later work, Inglehart (1984) has found that the linkage between pro-materialist values and pro-European attitudes has declined, because the European Community has been losing the support of the opinion leaders.

Examining a set of propositions, mostly derived from Inglehart's analysis and other regional integration theorists in the context of European integration, Shepherd (1975) has come to the conclusion that public opinion did play a crucial role in the European integration process. He has rejected the neo-functionalist thesis that integration is essentially an "elite pull" rather than a "mass push" phenomenon. With some qualifications, he has accepted both Lindberg's "permissive consensus" and

Inglehart's "cognitive mobilization" thesis and has found that public opinion in the six member states was generally supportive of European integration policies (pp.59-60).

### **Regional Organization and Relevance of Favorable Public Opinion**

Regional integration theorists have focussed more on the role of elites than on the role of public opinion in the integration process. Conventionally, the process of regional integration is seen as being driven by elite initiatives and actions with or without public support. But as the experience of the European integration process demonstrates, public opinion is exercising growing influence on national policy makers and on the institutions of the EU. In fact, over the past two decades the European public has become much more directly involved in the European integration process. Danish and Irish referenda in 1972 led directly to their countries' EC membership, while Norwegian voters chose to stay outside the community. Britain's entry into EC in 1975 was made possible by a popular British referendum. The role of European publics in the governance of EC is further institutionalized by the provision of direct election of European Parliament that began in 1979. Eichenberg and Dalton (1993:508) have noted that when the Danish Folketing failed to pass the SEA reform package in 1986, it was left to the public to decide the issue by referendum. Similarly, a public referendum in Ireland in 1987 made it possible for the Irish government to overcome constitutional limits on the Dail's ability to endorse the SEA legislation. The impact of the Danish, Irish, and French votes on the Maastricht treaty provides a clear illustration of how public opinion is now affecting the course of European Union. As

the public debates on Maastricht referenda in Denmark, Ireland, and France have shown, ruling elites can not expect to carry on the European integration process without convincing their domestic public about the cost and benefit of further integration.

Robert Putnam's (1988) conceptualization of international cooperation as a "two-level games" provides a useful framework to explain the relevance of public opinion in the European integration process. According to Putnam's analysis, international cooperation not only involves elite bargaining but also domestic ratification of such bargains. In the absence of adequate domestic support to international bargains, international cooperation is difficult to achieve. As the two most recent works on European integration show, further expansion of EU's authorities were possible by European elites' bargains and subsequent domestic support to those bargains by European citizens.<sup>31</sup> Some earlier research on European integration also lend support to the relevance of a supportive public opinion for further expansion of European integrative activities (Merritt and Puchala, 1968; Shepherd, 1975; Mathew, 1980; Feld, 1981; Handley, 1981; Hewstone, 1986).

While public opinion has played, and continues to play, a useful role in the integration process of Europe, the same may not be true in case of regional organizations in Third World regions. Of course, this assumption needs to be qualified on the basis of what kind of public a researcher is dealing with. Scholars involved in

the public opinion research have typically drawn distinction between various strata of the public, such as opinion leaders, the informed public, attentive public, and the mass or uninformed public, although the precise terms, definition, and the shape of the distribution among strata vary from study to study (Holsti, 1992; Almond, 1950; Rosenau, 1961; Genco, 1984; Neuman, 1986; Holsti and Rosenau, 1988; Wittkopf, 1990; Devine, 1970). General or uninformed public may not have much role to play in influencing the regional cooperation policies in the Third World regions, but, it will be premature to conclude that members of other strata of the public do not play any role in the regional cooperation processes. In fact, as the following findings suggest, the support of opinion leaders, attentive or informed public were important for the growth of ASEAN and GCC. Michael Haas (1989a) has found that a favorable public opinion made the initial progress of ASEAN possible, whereas a hostile public opinion contributed to the demise of the Asian and Pacific Council (ASPAC) and the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) (p.47). Hans Indorf (1984) has offered a similar view about ASEAN (p.10). Nakheleh (1986) has attributed the survival and success of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), despite a persistent conflictual situation in the Middle East region, to a sympathetic and supportive public opinion (pp.87-95).

It is, however, true that until recently most of the studies on the role of the public opinion in the regional cooperation process are based on European public opinion and European integration process. Very few studies (as cited in the above

paragraph), have been attempted to address the question of the role of public opinion in the regional cooperation processes in the Third World regions. Any role of public opinion in the regional cooperation process in the Third World regions is simply dismissed basically on two grounds: (1) the general public have little detailed familiarity with foreign policies and, thus, have very low interest in foreign policies, and (2) foreign policies have a low salience for the average citizen. Such arguments make sense if the regional cooperation policies are understood in exclusive terms as foreign policies. But as argued in this study, regional cooperation policies, being community policies, include both domestic and foreign policy issue areas. It is, thus, obvious that domestic support is required for successful formulation of regional cooperation policies. Domestic support, as will be examined in this study, refers to supportive attitude of the non-governing elites and attentive publics toward regional cooperation policies as initiated and pursued by the governing elites.

### **Domestic Support, Weak Governments and Regional Cooperation**

The recent literature on cooperation among nations has largely neglected the role of domestic politics and the necessity of domestic support for expansion of regional cooperation.<sup>32</sup> At least, two reasons can be cited for the neglect of domestic politics in the literature. One is the obsession of international theorists to explain possibilities of cooperation within a framework of international systemic conditions described as anarchic; the other is the use of game theory, with its assumption of

unitary, rational actors (Milner, 1992:489). However, I argue in this study, drawing on Putnam's (1988) and Milner's (1992) analyses, that examination of domestic politics is essential for understanding international and regional cooperation for three reasons. First, domestic politics facilitates our understanding about actor's preferences, how national interests are constructed, and how states calculate their gains (both absolute gains and relative gains) or losses from any cooperative arrangements. Second, domestic factors explain the kinds of strategies states usually employ to realize their goals. Of course, a state's structural position is important, but at the same time the nature of its political system, the role of bureaucracy and military, the influence of special interests, and public opinion may ultimately determine which strategies a state can realistically pursue at the international and regional level. Third, the policy-makers can always negotiate international and regional agreements, but the implementation of these agreements require domestic support.

The necessity of domestic support for regional cooperation acquires even more significance when states involved in the cooperation process are "weak." A state is said to be either weak or strong on the basis of the centralization of decision-making authority (Rockman, 1989). Strong states have centralized institutions and single-party governments. Weak states, on the other hand, are associated with division of powers between executive and legislative branch of governments (federalism), judicial independence, coalition governments, and para-public institutions. The weak-strong classification of states in the statist literature (Katzenstein, 1978; Nordlinger, 1981;

Krasner, 1984) is, however, clearly arbitrary.<sup>33</sup> Not surprisingly, many scholars have rejected this institution-based categorization of states (Mitchell, 1991; Huelshoff, 1994). Often, popular leaders can overcome the institutional weaknesses and pursue their views of national interest. It is, therefore, analytically useful to distinguish between institutions, (i.e., constitutional arrangements), and governments, (i.e., political leaders who operate within these constitutional arrangements) to determine the ability of decision-makers to resist domestic demands and pursue their views of national interests (Huelshoff, 1994:264).

Thus, I have focused on the variable "government strength" in this study because it allows space to distinguish between institutions and the power of political leaders who constitute government. As Huelshoff (1994:265) has argued, "a government is *strong* if it is led by politicians with clear electoral mandates or strong public support, and operates in a constitutional order that concentrates decision-making power." *Weak* governments, on the other hand, have "unpopular heads of government, divisions within parliament, and/or constitutional order that limit the power of the head of government." Centralization of decision-making authority, nature of party politics (single-party, two-party, or multi-party systems), and popular base of the political leaders are three essential aspects of government strength. According to this analysis, even authoritarian states can be said to have weak governments because of their lack of wide public support and broad social base.

Weak governments, suffering from divided decision-making capacity, inter-party strife, or led by politically ineffective leaders without a broad public support and social base, tend to be more coercive, and are less able to design and implement policies independently from elite pressure or "pressure from above" (Crouch, 1984:6; Crone, 1988:257).<sup>34</sup> Two implications implicit in the nature of the weak governments and which are relevant for our discussion are: (1) policy-makers may remain unresponsive to general public opinion, but (2) they require support from dominant domestic actors, i.e., non-governing elites and attentive publics to pursue regional cooperation policies. One important reason why policy-makers in weak governments depend on the support of domestic actors is the latter's ability to politicize issues, thereby making ratification and implementation of international and regional cooperative agreements more difficult. Besides, the concern for political survival of weak governments drive the policy-makers to be more responsive to domestic demands and to seek coalition with other domestic groups.

### **Scope of the Research and Formulation of Research Questions**

The central argument of this study, that domestic support is essential for expansion of regional cooperation, is based on three interrelated perspectives as discussed in the preceding sections and as summarized below:

(i) A state's regional cooperation policies do not exclusively fall in the realms of either domestic or foreign policy areas. Rather, these policies fall in the category of community policy areas possessing the characteristics of both domestic and foreign policy issue areas. Hence, the influence of domestic actors in the formulation and implementation of regional cooperation policies is not less significant.

(ii) Attempts to achieve regional cooperation involve elite bargaining and negotiation in various political and economic areas. But, domestic support is essential for implementation of these bargains and negotiated agreements. Policy-makers know this, and hence, when negotiating internationally or regionally they always anticipate domestic reactions. In other words, policy-makers' anticipation and calculation of the nature of domestic reactions (favorable or hostile/negative) largely determine their scope of bargains and negotiation on various regional issues.

(iii) Weak governments may afford to be unresponsive to the general public opinion, but they can not remain insensitive to the interests and opinions of dominant socio-economic elites (or non-governing elites) and attentive publics to pursue important political and economic policies at the domestic and regional levels. This is because the non-governing elites' are capable of politicizing issues, which may pose serious threat to the political survival of the governing elites in weak governments.

All the countries in South Asia have weak governments. The political elites of all the countries in South Asia face various levels of domestic dissent, either in terms of cultural and ethnic demands for political decentralization, or in terms of broad-based secessionist movements. Maldives and Bhutan, the two smallest countries in South Asia, have authoritarian political regimes. Despite a centralized decision-making system, the governments in these two countries are weak because of their absolutely narrow social base of support. Nepal, until recently under a monarchical system, has just started its democratic experiments. The Nepalese government, not surprisingly, demonstrates all the attributes of a weak government: it suffers from divided decision-making capacity (as witnessed in the conflict between the King and the Parliament), inter-party strife, division within Parliament and is led by not so popular political leaders. Sri Lankan government, despite a Presidential system, suffers from considerable weakness because of the constitutional provision of division of power between the President and the Prime Minister and continuous struggle between the two

to demonstrate their control on two crucial institutions, that is bureaucracy and military, recent ineffective and unpopular heads of the state, division in the ruling party and a narrow majority in the legislature. Both Bangladesh and Pakistan are said to have developed a "viceregal system of rule,"<sup>35</sup> which rests upon the coercive powers of the military, the police, and civil administration. Often, there is tension at the decision-making level between bureaucrats, military and elected politicians. Besides, the ruling party's lack of a comfortable majority in the Parliament in both the countries, and ineffective political leaders without a broad political base of support in both Pakistan and Bangladesh have contributed to further weakening of their respective government's strength. In case of India, the decline of Congress party and its reduced strength in Parliament in recent years leading to the formation of a minority government at the center (which seeks out to opposition parties to pass legislation), lack of unity among the party members, unpopular and corrupt political leaders and their lack of wide public support, burgeoning political parties at the regional and national levels with diverse agendas, inter-party strife (Congress and other dominant parties suffer from this), constitutional constraints limiting the power of the head of the state, existence of a semi-centralized decision-making system and various powerful associations have contributed to the government's weakness.

From this brief account of the nature of governments in South Asian countries, it is clear that all the governments in South Asia are weak and are likely to be penetrated by dominant societal groups. It follows that for important political and

economic policies at the domestic and regional levels the South Asian governments are dependent upon the support of non-governing elites. Lack of negotiation and agreements among South Asian countries on several crucial issues - such as Indo-Bangladesh Ganges water sharing issues, Indo-Pakistan nuclear and other defence related issues, Kashmir issues, ethnic issues in Sri Lanka, and issues relating to economic cooperation - can be partly attributed to the ruling elites' sensitivity to unfavorable domestic reactions. In light of this understanding, the following hypothesis is examined in this study:

Regional cooperation is an intergovernmental process, where governing elites engage in bargaining and negotiation to promote their respective states' multiple national interests. But domestic support, i.e., support or positive feedback from non-governing elites and attentive publics, is necessary for expansion of regional cooperation. Alternatively, negative or hostile attitudes of the non-governing elites and the attentive publics for regional cooperation will have a dampening effect on the decision makers, and may lead them to postpone or even abandon regional cooperation policies.

Given this assumption, this study has sought to explore the nature of domestic support for regional cooperation in South Asia - is domestic opinion favorable or unfavorable toward regional cooperation in South Asia? In exploring this question I have sought to examine the following five questions: (1) Do South Asians believe that

their country's national interest will be promoted through regional cooperation? (2) What are the major impediments to regional cooperation in South Asia? (3) Do South Asians perceive any concrete benefits from SAARC? (4) To what extent South Asians believe that SAARC can adequately address the economic, political, security, and ethnic problems of the region? (5) What kind of national images South Asians have about the neighboring countries?

In exploring the nature of domestic support toward regional cooperation in South Asia, the present study has focused on non-governing elites and the "attentive public" (Almond, 1950; Rosenau, 1961; Devine, 1970), or what Inglehart (1970) calls "public at the center". For clarity of discussion, I will use the term "non-governing elites" to refer to dominant socio-economic groups who enjoy regular and continuous access to the policy-making process and influence to some extent the general contours of public policy without necessarily occupying state offices themselves.<sup>36</sup> Non-governing elites are distinguishable from governing elites, who do occupy office. Leaders in the fields of mass communication, academics, business and other professions are identified as non-governing elites in this study. Following Inglehart (1970), the attentive public has been defined in this study as literate people, who are sufficiently informed and "cognitively mobilized" and who not only take a continuous interest in political, economic, social and cultural affairs of the country but also possess enough skills to articulate their opinion on these matters (768-69). In contrast, the "peripheral public" is indifferent and unmobilized, normally unaware of the

decisions being made. Unlike the attentive public, the peripheral public tends to pay more attention to what Stanley Hoffmann has called issues of "low politics". Journalists, academicians, business executives and other professionals qualify to be the attentive public.

### **Structure of the Project**

The succeeding chapters will focus on the evolution, growth, and prospects of SAARC. In the second chapter, the methodology of this study will be described. The third chapter will discuss the socio-economic, political and cultural dynamics of the origins of SAARC and critically evaluate the six summit meetings of SAARC from 1985 to 1991. The fourth chapter will analyze the growth of SAARC in terms of various institutional developments since 1985. Findings from interviews and content analysis of the press will be examined in fifth and sixth chapter. On the basis of the evidence from the press and interviews, some general conclusions regarding the nature of domestic support for SAARC in South Asia will be drawn in chapter seven. This chapter will also discuss some implications of the findings of the present study for South Asian countries' foreign policies and focus on some issues and areas for the future development of SAARC. Finally, chapter eight will discuss some major challenges and prospects of SAARC for the future.

**Endnotes:**

1. Jagdish Bhagwati (1993), for instance, has predicted a fragmented world of four blocs: an augmented EC; NAFTA extended into the Americas; a Japan-centered Asian bloc; and a fourth bloc of marginalized nations such as those of South Asia and Africa. See, "The Diminished Giant Syndrome: How Declinism Drives Trade Policy," *Foreign Affairs*, Spring 1993, vol.72, no.2, p.26.
2. Ernst Haas (1990) has constructed five world-order ideologies - *classical liberalism*, *managed liberalism*, *structural antidependency*, *pragmatic antidependency*, and *ecoholism* - to explain various purposes and forms of collaboration among the nation-states. For an explanation of these five types of ideologies and examples of regional organizations based on these ideologies see his *When Knowledge Is Power: Three Models of Change in International Organizations*, Ch. 4 and pp. 225-226.
3. Bjorn Hettne (1989, 1992) and Norman Palmer (1991) have used the term "New Regionalism" to describe the resurgence of regional cooperative activities among the nation-states in the 1980s. But, the term new regionalism has not been defined by these two authors and thus remains conceptually undeveloped. Jagdish Bhagwati (1992) has described the growth of regionalism in the 1950s and 1960s as "first regionalism" and the growth of regionalism in the post-1980 period as "second regionalism" without explicating any distinguishing features between these two types of regionalism. For a detailed discussion of these concepts see, Bjorn Hettne, "Global Crisis: European Options," *World Futures*, v. 26, 1989, pp. 65-100; "Peace and Development in the Post-Cold War Era," In Katharine and Majid Tehranian, eds., *Restructuring for World Peace: On the Threshold of the Twenty-First Century*, New Jersey: Hampton Press, 1992; Norman Palmer, *The New Regionalism in Asia and the Pacific*, Mass.: D.C. Heath Company, 1991; Jagdish Bhagwati, "Regionalism versus Multilateralism," *The World Economy* v. 15, no. 5, pp. 535-555, 1992.
4. Seiji Naya, W. E. James and Michael Plummer, *Pacific Economic Cooperation in the Global Context*, pp. 52-53, 1989; Norman Palmer, *The New Regionalism...*, chapter 6 and 8.
5. The first Tumen project initiative was made by UNDP in July 1991. In October same year a management committee of the Tumen River Area Development Programme was set up by an agreement between the six participating countries - China (Northeast), Japan, North Korea, South Korea, Mongolia and Russia. The project aims at developing the Tumen delta region into a vibrant economic unit. There are indications that all these countries are willing to cooperate along the UNDP directives and may very soon form a "trading bloc". See, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, January 16, 1992, pp.16-20.

6. For a detailed discussion on NAFTA, see Clyde V. Prestowitz Jr., Robert B. Cohen, Perter Morici and Alan Tonelson, *The New North American Order: A Win-Win Strategy for US-Mexico Trade*, 1991.

7. ECO was formed in February 1992. Its members are: Pakistan, Iran Turkey, and the former Muslim Soviet republics of Azarbaijan, Kazakhstan, Turkemenistan, Uzbekestan, Tajikestan and Kirghistan.

8. Bhagwati argues that the recent decision of the United States to embrace regionalism will provide the main driving force for the growth and success of "second regionalism". Commenting on the future prospect of regionalism he observes: "resurrection of regionalism in the 1980s suggests that regionalism is likely to endure this time." See, Jagdish Bhagwati, "Regionalism versus Multilateralism," in *The World Economy*, vol.15, no.5, September 1992, pp. 535-555.

9. See Cal Clark's review of 1987 reprint of Joseph S. Nye's *Peace in Parts: Integration and Conflict in Regional Organization*, in *The American Political Science Review* 82, no. 4, December 1988:1424-25.

10. Arend Lijphart, "Karl Deutsch and the New Paradigm in International Relations" in Richard L. Merritt and Bruce M. Russett ed., *From National Development to Global Community: Essays in Honor of Karl W. Deutsch*, (London, George Allen & Unwin),1981, p.236.

11. See Hedley Bull, "The Grotian Conception of International Society," in *Diplomatic Investigations: Essays in the Theory of International Politics*, ed., Herbert Butterfield and Martin Wight (London: Allen and Unwin, 1966), pp.51-73

12. The twelve background conditions are: (1) mutual compatibility of the main values relevant for political behavior; (2) a distinctive and attractive way of life; (3) expectations of stronger and rewarding economic ties or joint rewards; (4) a marked increase in the political and administrative capabilities of at least some of the participating units; (5) superior economic growth of at least some participating units (as compared to neighboring territories outside the area of prospective integration); (6) some substantial unbroken links of social communication across the mutual boundaries of the territories to be integrated, and across the barriers of some of the major social strata within them; (7) a broadening of the political elite within at least some political units, and for the emerging larger community as a whole; (8) relatively high geographic and social mobility of persons, at least among the politically relevant strata; (9) multiplicity of the scope of the flow of mutual communications and transactions; (10) some overall compensation of rewards in the flows of communications and transactions among the units to be integrated; (11) a significant frequency of some interchange in group roles (such as being in a majority or a minority) among the political units; (12) considerable mutual predictability of behavior.

13. See for this remarks, Carl J. Friedrich, *Europe: An Emergent Nation?*, New York: Harper and Row, 1969, pp. 196-215, 35-46. See also William Fisher, "An Analysis of the Deutsch Sociocausal Paradigm of Political Organization," *International Organization*, 23, Spring, 1969, p.285.; Edward L. Morse, "The Politics of Interdependence," *International Organization*, 23, Spring, 1969, p.318.
14. For a detailed discussion, see Richard W. Chadwick and Karl W. Deutsch, "International Trade and Economic Integration: Further Developments in Trade Matrix Analysis," *Comparative Political Studies*, vol 6, no. 1, April 1973, pp. 84-109.
15. See Karl W. Deutsch, *Nationalism and Social Communication: An Inquiry into the Foundations of Nationality*, New York, Wiley, 1953, Chapters 2 and 4.
16. See for an interesting discussion, Andrei S. Markovits and Warren W. Oliver III, "The Political Sociology of Integration and Social Development: A Comparative Analysis of Emille Durkheim and Karl W. Deutsch," in Merritt and Russett ed., *From National Development...*, ch.7.
17. Although the concept of "spill-over" is central to the neo-functional thought, the term is used in the functional theory through such euphemistic phrases as "ever-widening circles."
18. See the analysis of Charles A. Duffy and Werner J. Feld, "Whither Regional Integration Theory?," In Werner J. Feld and Gavin Boyd, eds. (1980), *Comparative Regional Systems*, p.499.
19. For a discussion of Hansen's explanations see, M.Haas, *Polity and Society*, Chapter 8.
20. Lynn K. Mytelka, "The Saliency of Gains in Third World Integrative Systems," *World Politics*, 25, January, 1973, pp.236-50.
21. For an excellent informative discussion of the South Pacific Forum see M. Haas (1989b), *The Pacific Way: Regional Cooperation in the South Pacific*.
22. However, it should be borne in mind that unlike some regional arrangements in the Asia-Pacific region, many regional arrangements in Africa, Latin America and Central America have not achieved the desired success. Ernst Haas continues to argue that regional cooperation efforts in the Third World are unlikely to succeed because members of regional arrangements in the Third World have very little to offer one another. Remedies for Third World problems can be provided, he argues, only by the wealthy North, not by "regional partners in poverty." Ernst Haas seems to have ignored the fact that most Third World countries have pursued development strategies based on aid and trade with the developed world for more than four decades. Yet, very few of these countries have actually been significantly successful in alleviating poverty. The export

performance of many Third World countries have been sluggish in the face of the protectionist policies of their main trading partners in the developed world. The stalemate in the North-South dialogue, the worsening terms of trade in the global markets, the growing dependence on external assistance and mounting debt has turned the vision of the New International Economic Order into an illusion. With the end of the Cold War and end of the European schism, most Third World countries are faced with the ever-increasing prospect of being marginalized in the international economy. Today, regional cooperation is no longer just an option but a necessity for most of the Third World countries. As a result of global changes it is likely that more and more Third World countries will engage in regional arrangements for trade and technology transactions. Of course, as discussed in subsequent pages in this chapter, these regional arrangements will be more outward looking and will have more external linkages than in the past. For a discussion of Ernst Haas' arguments see his *The Obsolescence of Regional Integration Theory*, Berkeley: Institute of International Studies, University of California, Research series no. 25, 1975; and *When Knowledge Is Power: Three Models of Change in International Organizations*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990, chapter 8 and pp. 247-248.

23. Max Weber's theory of social change seems to have influenced the central perspectives of *Communications Theory* of Karl Deutsch, *functionalism* of David Mitrany and *neo-functionalism* of Ernst Haas. Weber had shown how capitalism's demand for rational calculations was responsible for certainty and stability in the society. Stability was created, according to Weber, by the emergence of rational-bureaucratic nation-states and society's recognition and dependence on legitimate central authority. The integration theorists presumed that transformation of anarchic international order was possible by the creation of legitimate supranational authorities over states. For an overview of this literature see Stephen Genco, "Integration Theory and System Change in Western Europe: The Neglected Role of Systems Transformation Episodes," in Oli R. Holsti, Randolph M. Siverson, and Alexander L. George, *Change in the International System*, Boulder, Colo: Westview, 1980, pp. 55-80.; Beverly Crawford, "Toward a Theory of Progress in International Relations," in Emanuel Adler and Beverly Crawford ed. *Progress in Postwar International Relations*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1991, pp. 438-468.

24. For excellent and detailed summaries of the vast literature on this issue see Kinder (1983), and Kinder and Sears (1985).

25. Rosenau has acknowledged that in an authoritarian system, the patterns of interaction in the domestic policies can be hierarchical or "executive." Rosenau's discussion of executive and legislative process of policy-making is based on Huntington's earlier formulation. Huntington (1961:146) has argued that the "legislative and executive processes of policy-making do not necessarily correspond to the legislative and executive branches of government." Instead, he has clarified that "a policy-making process is legislative in character to the extent that: (1) the units participating in the process are

relatively equal in power (and consequently must bargain with each other); (2) important disagreements exist concerning the goals of policy; and (3) there are many possible alternatives. A process is executive in character to the extent that: (1) the participating units differ in power (i.e., are hierarchically arranged); (2) fundamental goals and values are not at issue; and (3) the range of possible choices is limited." See Samuel P. Huntington, *The Common Defense: Strategic Programs in National Politics*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1961, Chapter 3, p. 146.

26. Explaining the linkage between domestic and international politics, Putnam (1988) has argued that decision-makers are, more or less, involved in two interlinked sets of negotiations or games, one domestic and the other international. In the domestic game, decision-makers attempt to build ruling coalitions by bargaining with domestic groups, which in turn seek to protect and enhance their interests. In the international game (to achieve international cooperation), decision-makers are more inclined to negotiate international agreements "that satisfy domestic pressure, while minimizing the adverse consequences of foreign developments." See Robert D. Putnam, "Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-level games," *International Organization* 42, Summer 1988, pp. 427-60; and Peter Evans, Harold Jacobson, and Robert Putnam, eds., *Double-edged Diplomacy: International Bargaining and Domestic Politics*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.

27. Some scholars are preconditionists, i.e., they seek to determine factors/conditions necessary for regional cooperation to move from stage I to stage II, from stage II to III, and so forth. By plotting the rise and fall of trends in exchanges of mail, trade, and other forms of international traffic over time or over space, transactionalists seek to determine the dense patterns of interaction and level of regional integration. Developmentalists focus on the nurturing of cooperative process, i.e., they seek to study how institutional growth and cooperative negotiations lead to increased economic integration or social transactions. Scholars with a hegemonistic focus seek to explain how through regional organization one or more member states seek to exercise hegemony over inner/outer peripheral countries. Scholars with an evolutionary epistemology focus seek to examine the extent of the impact of actor's learning and knowledge on the growth of regional organizations. For a detailed explanation of these foci see, M. Haas (1992b:290:291); Galtung (1992:29-35); and Adler (1991:46-50).

28. David Easton, *A System Analysis of Political Life*, Wiley, 1967. M.Haas (1992a) argues, although both the authors claimed to employ David Easton's system analysis, they actually applied the Bentleyite group pressure paradigm. See M.Haas' *Polity and Society*, p.230.

29. For a discussion on this subject see, Stanley Hoffmann, "Discord in Community: The North Atlantic Area as a Partial International System," *International Organization*, 17, summer 1963.

30. Quoted in Inglehart (1970:768).

31. See Wayne Sandholtz and John Zysman, "1992: Recasting the European Bargain," *World Politics* 42 (October), 1989, pp. 1-30; Richard C. Eichenberg and Russel J. Dalton, "Europeans and the European Community: The Dynamic of Public Support for European Integration," *International Organization* 47 (Autumn) 1993, pp. 507-534.

32. At least eight different hypotheses are found in the recent literature on cooperation among nations: (1) States' motivation for absolute gains drive them to cooperate with each other (Axelrod, 1984). (2) States' concern for relative gains is likely to impede cooperation (Grieco, 1990; Snidal 1991). (3) Cooperative behavior may be more likely when states pursue a strategy of reciprocity (Axelrod, and Keohane, 1985). Reciprocity strategy involves the exchange of roughly equivalent values of goods. Lack of equivalence is likely to result in misunderstanding between nations and may lead to conflicts rather than cooperation. (4) The prospects for cooperation diminish as the number of players increases (Oye, 1986). (5) Player's belief that they will continue to interact indefinitely may influence their willingness to cooperate. The more the players get involved in repeated play (iteration) the more cooperative they tend to become (Axelrod, 1984; Snidal, 1991). (6) International regimes promote maximization of absolute gains and thus facilitate cooperation (Keohane, 1984; Krasner, 1983; Lipson, 1984). (7) Epistemic communities (i.e., community of transnational actors who share beliefs and epistemologies) may promote cooperation (Haas, 1990) among nations. (8) Asymmetries in power are conducive to cooperation (Conybeare, 1986; Eichengreen, 1990). The last hypothesis resembles hegemonic stability theory. For an excellent review of literature on these hypotheses see Helen Milner, "International Theories of Cooperation Among Nations: Strengths and Weaknesses," *World Politics*, 44, April 1992, pp. 466-96.

33. For a different interpretation of "strong-weak" state, see Suzanne and Lloyd Rudolph, *In Pursuit of Lakshmi: The Political Economy of the Indian State*, Delhi: Orient Longman, 1987. For various usages of the term "state" in the non-Western context - such as "hard state," "administrative state," "soft state," "bureaucratic polity," "repressive-developmental state," etc. - see the review of statist literature by Donald Crone, "State, Social Elites, And Government Capacity in Southeast Asia," *World Politics* 1988, pp. 252-268. For an excellent discussion of states as "quasi states" see Robert H. Jackson, *Quasi-States: Sovereignty, International Relations, and the Third World*, Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

34. This argument relies on the burgeoning literature concerned with such issues as the development and form of state structures, their capacity and autonomy in particular contexts, and the interaction of the state with various societal groups and organizations. Among the many studies in this area, see the following major works: Peter Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol, eds., *Bringing the State Back In*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985; Fernando Cardoso and Enzo Faletto, *Dependency and Development in Latin America*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979; Bill Warren, *Imperialism*, London: New Left Books, 1980; Eric Nordlinger, *On the Autonomy of the Democratic State*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981; Ralph Miliband, *The*

*State in Capitalist Society*, New York: Basic Books, 1969; Stephen Krasner, *Defending the National Interest*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978; Stephen Krasner, "Approaches to the State," *Comparative Politics*, 16, January 1984, pp. 223-46; Also see the review by Donald Crone, "State, Social Elites, And Government Capacity in Southeast Asia," *World Politics*, 22, January 1988, pp. 252-268.

35. This phrase is used by Myron Weiner, who has argued that the British left two kinds of institutional legacies in South Asia: One Westminster Parliamentary model (inherited by India), and the other a Viceregal system (inherited by both Pakistan and Bangladesh). A Viceregal system of authority is based upon a patrimonial process of decision making. The viceroys and governors-general, appointed directly by the British Crown, were not democratic rulers and their authorities rested upon the coercive powers of the military, the police, and civil administration. The commander-in-chief of the military shared authority with civilian administrators, reporting directly to the British government. Both military and civilian authorities enjoyed substantial amount of autonomy and were not held accountable to elected officials for their actions. Although there was a division of powers between the executive and judicial branches of government at the center, and state levels, there was no such division at the district levels. Senior officers at the district levels used to exercise both judicial and administrative powers. These administrators had a paternalistic view of their own authority and had little regard for the elected politicians, whom the British had given some authority to exercise at the local and provincial level.

36. This definition is drawn from Nicos Poulantzas' (1980:127) discussion of "power bloc." Karl Deutsch's (1967:4-5) discussion of "functional elites" and "informal decision-makers," and Donald Crone's (1988:255) reference to "socioeconomic elites" may serve as useful alternatives to this term of non-governing elites, as discussed in this study.

## CHAPTER II METHODOLOGY

The data used in this study are derived from open-ended interviews with 408 elites and attentive publics in South Asia, carried out between May 1991 and December 1992, content analysis of 490 editorials and center-page articles in six prestige newspapers in South Asia (from January 1985 to December 1991), and document analysis which includes communications among heads of states and foreign policy officials, their speeches during the conferences at different levels, Parliamentary Proceedings on SAARC and SAARC related issues and other official reports released by foreign affairs ministries of South Asian countries (from 1980 to 1992), and SAARC Secretariat.

### The Questionnaires For the Interview

My initial task was to prepare a questionnaire that would enable me to secure maximum amount of information on the manifest attitudes of the respondents toward the issue of regional cooperation in South Asia in general and SAARC in particular. In order to accomplish this objective, I decided to design a questionnaire (see appendix for the questionnaire) with a list of fourteen major questions to elicit manifest attitudes of the respondents on the following five aspects: (1) national interest and regional cooperation, (2) achievements and failures of SAARC and major

impediments to regional cooperation in South Asia, (3) utilitarian and affective support for SAARC, (4) perception of inequity, and (5) national images. The logic of these questions are discussed in some detail in chapter five.

All items in this questionnaire were open-ended, and follow-up and clarifying questions were asked where necessary. Although some questions were treated more intensively on which respondents seemed particularly more knowledgeable and in which they were interested, I was successful in getting the respondent's views on almost all the major questions.

Since it was imperative to have some idea about the social background of the respondents, I also prepared a Biographical Data Questionnaire to collect information on the following items: (i) age, (ii) occupation, (iii) sex, (iv) education. Most of the Biographical Data Questionnaires were filled out by the respondents themselves and in some cases (8 percent) by a clerical staff.

#### Nature of Sample

Originally, a sample of 610 respondents from five groups - mass media, civil service, intellectual, business and other professional groups, including religious leaders, trade union leaders and lawyers - was selected from India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal and Sri Lanka by combining the methods of position and reputation

as outlined by Deutsch and his associates in their elite study in France and West Germany in 1964.<sup>1</sup> The respondents were not selected through a random sampling method. In stead, following Deutsch and his associates (1967: 12-13), a "self-selection" method was employed to select the respondents for the interview.<sup>2</sup> It must be borne in mind that since my intention was to interview only the elites and attentive publics in South Asia, the samples in this study are not representative of the general population of the five countries, i.e, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka.

Given the budgetary constraint, limitations of time, difficulty in scheduling a mutually convenient time for the interview and sometimes cancellation of the interview by a respondent at the last minute, I was able to interview 408 respondents - 32 civil servants (11 in-service and 21 retired), 130 journalists, 148 scholars, 73 businessmen, and 25 other professional groups - as shown in table 2.1. Most of the interviewees were males (80%) and were in the age bracket of 35-55 (87%). All the respondents, except for one businessman in India, have university degrees and their socio-economic status is much higher than the general population (Table 2.2)

**Table 2.1. Interviewees\* According to Occupational Categories**

Category	Bangladesh	India	Nepal	Pakistan	Sri Lanka
Ambassadors/ Foreign Secretaries	2	3	2	2	2
Journalists	27	34	20	23	26
Scholars	29	41	26	25	27
Business	11	23	11	14	14
Retired Civil Servants	3	12	2	1	3
Others**	6	11	2	3	3
<b>Total (408)</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>75</b>

\* Interviewees include two Secretary-Generals of SAARC.

\*\* Others include religious leaders, trade union leaders and lawyers.

**Table 2.2 Characteristics of National Samples**

	Bangladesh	India	Nepal	Pakistan	Sri Lanka
Age: (35-55 years)	68	107	55	59	65
Sex:					
Male	62	99	50	54	60
Female	16	25	13	14	15
Education:					
University degree	78	123	63	68	75
College degree	0	1	0	0	0
Sample Size:	78	124	63	68	75

### The Interviews

Most of the in-person interviews were conducted during my field research in Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka from January 1992 to December 1992. Some of the interviews were conducted at the East-West Center in May and June 1991 and at the Indian and Pakistan embassy in Washington D.C. in June and July 1991. Interviews averaged about one hour, ranging from forty-five to ninety minutes. While most of the interviews were conducted in the respondent's office, some (73 interviews) were held at the respondent's residence on their request. The choice of whether or not to tape was left with the interviewees. When taping was declined, interviews were recorded both by contemporaneous note-taking and by further reconstruction of responses immediately after each session.

In general, more than 90 percent of the respondents were cooperative and expressed their views candidly. Less than 10 percent of the respondents (mostly in-service bureaucrats and some media persons) were evasive and gave ambiguous answers.

The order of questions often varied if the respondent embarked on a logical course of argument contrary to that set down in the list of questions. The decision to conduct interviews in this way was taken consciously and deliberately in order to maintain the interest of the respondent, minimize the formality of the situation, and thereby enhance the quality of information gained.

The respondents in South Asia were extremely articulate, and, in most cases, very well informed. One question was often answered in terms that connected it with others. It was not always easy to interrupt the respondent's thought, since in its generality it revealed much more than what specific answers alone might have indicated. Although such interview procedures can result in increased errors in the coding and analysis of data and perhaps even bias (Powlick, 1991:640), they undoubtedly provided me a greater volume and richness of information, which was extremely valuable for my study.

#### Content Analysis of Newspapers

Content analysis has been described as "a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication" (Berelson, 1952:18). The major strength of the technique lies in its systematic identification of characteristics of communication messages in terms of various specified categories (Holsti, 1969:14; Krippendorff, 1980). Over the last

decade, content analysis of mass media has been most extensively used to identify trends in public opinion (Price, 1992:87)). Given this logic, a content analysis of six prestige newspapers in South Asia has been made in this study to explain the nature of public opinion in South Asia toward SAARC.

### Procedure

Six English-language newspapers from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka were selected for this study. Newspapers from Bhutan and Maldives were not consulted because Bhutan has no daily newspaper (it has only one weekly newspaper) and Maldives newspapers are published mostly in Male language with a very short section in English language. The six newspapers, *The Times of India* (Bombay), *The Statesman* (New Delhi), *The Pakistan Times* (Lahore), *The Bangladesh Observer* (Dhaka), *The Rising Nepal* (Kathmandu) and *Daily News* (Colombo), were selected on the basis of the following criteria: (i) they are "prestige newspapers" in terms of ruling elite attention (Haque, 1988; Yadava 1991; Mujahid, 1991), (ii) they are widely read among the educated and articulate segments of the population throughout the country and (iii) they are national newspapers with large circulation (Lent, 1982; Kibriya, 1985; Rana, 1982; Gunaratne, 1982; Mujahid, 1991; Chen and Chaudhary, 1991; Merrill 1991).

In these six newspapers, all editorials and center-page articles on SAARC and SAARC countries that appeared between 1985 and 1991 were identified and listed on a coding sheet. (See Table 1.3). The period of this study, i.e., from 1985 to 1991, was chosen to cover the message of six newspapers regarding SAARC and SAARC countries from the first summit conference at Dhaka (1985) to the sixth summit at Colombo (1991). The decision to include the center-page articles in this study was made because these articles are mostly written by the editorial members of the newspapers and, sometimes, by the editors themselves. Articles by outsiders, which contradict the editorial policy of the newspapers, are generally not published. Moreover, these articles, along with the editorials, are most widely read for their background information and in-depth analysis (Raju, Jagadeswari and Dissanayake, 1984:130).

**Table 2.3. Number of Editorials and Center-page Articles on SAARC in Six Newspapers (January 1985 - December 1991)**

Newspaper	Number of Editorials/Center-page Articles on SAARC
<i>The Statesman</i>	35
<i>The Times of India</i>	26
<i>The Pakistan Times</i>	82
<i>The Bangladesh Observer</i>	79
<i>The Rising Nepal</i>	197
<i>Daily News</i>	71

### Method of Analysis

A thematic content analysis<sup>3</sup> was made on information items on SAARC in 490 editorials and center-page articles of six above mentioned newspapers. Originally, fifty randomly selected items on SAARC were analyzed by me and four other coders from Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka to explore possible categories and their defining attributes. Finally, it was decided to construct a set of four broad subject-matter categories (Holsti, 1969:104), with well defined criteria for inclusion, for the purpose of meaningful cross-national comparisons. The four subject-matter categories and their defining attributes are as follows:

#### **1. Community Cooperation**

- a) Cultural, technical and scientific cooperation
- b) Freedom of travel
- c) South Asian unity/identity
- d) Mutual help
- e) Mutual trust/confidence building

#### **2. War and Peace**

- a) War and border conflicts
- b) Communal, ethnic and linguistic conflicts
- c) Peace and stability in South Asia

- d) Terrorism
- e) Nuclear threat and security

### **3. Economic Activity**

- a) Economic cooperation
- b) Free trade/reduction or dismantling quotas and tariffs
- c) Common fund/financial institutions
- d) Natural resources
- e) Monetary policy
- f) Production and supply of goods, expansion of markets

### **4. International Affairs**

- a) South Asian foreign policy
- b) Collective self-reliance
- c) Greater recognition and global role for South Asia

The items, that dealt with such themes as cultural, technical and scientific cooperation among South Asian countries, freedom of travel and visa relaxation, South Asian unity and identity, need for mutual help, and mutual trust and confidence building among South Asian countries, were categorized as *community cooperation*. Such themes as war and border conflicts, communal, ethnic and linguistic conflicts, need for peace and stability in South Asia, cross border terrorism and drug

trafficking, and nuclear threat and security were classified under *war and peace* category. The items, dealing with economic cooperation, trade, development of common fund or financial institutions, natural resources, monetary policy, and production and supply of goods and expansion of markets in South Asia, were put under the category of *economic activity*. Finally, the items, focusing on such themes as foreign policies in South Asian countries, need for collective self-reliance and need for greater recognition and global role for South Asia, were categorized as *international affairs*.

After classifying the items in terms of the above four broad categories, the items were more carefully read and a judgment was made regarding the implications of the message of these items toward SAARC, that is, whether the message was favorably or unfavorably disposed toward SAARC. The judgments were rated on a three-point nominal scale (Holsti, 1969:107). If the message of an item was extremely favorable toward SAARC, it was rated +3; if the message was extremely unfavorable, it was rated -3. If the message was neutral, a score of 0 was assigned. Other scores between +3 and -3 represented the range of message disposition.

### Reliability of Measures

For the items on SAARC, I did most of the coding, but four other coders from Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka helped me to code a sample of fifty randomly selected items. The percentage of agreement among the coders on subject-matter categories was 88 percent. The percentage of inter-coder agreement on the ratings of the posture of the message, was 85 percent. The high level of inter-coder agreement has added some measure of confidence on the reliability scores for the category system and definitions devised for this study (Holsti, 1969:141).

**Endnotes:**

1. For the logic and a detailed description of this sampling method see Karl Deutsch, Lewis J. Edinger, Roy C. Macridis and Richard L. Merritt (1967), *France, Germany and the Western Alliance: A Study of Elite Attitudes on European Integration and World Politics*, pp. 10-18.
2. For a detailed description of the "self-selection" method see *Ibid.*, pp. 10-18. I also interviewed some of the new persons, who were not in my original list, but were recommended by some respondents.
3. For the methodology of content analysis in this dissertation, I have relied heavily on Holsti's (1969) and Krippendorff's (1980) discussion of content analysis.

**CHAPTER III  
REGIONAL COOPERATION IN SOUTH ASIA: HISTORY, ORIGIN  
AND EVOLUTION**

*Every divided country or partitioned people is unhappy.*

- Leo Tolstoy

**Introduction**

Geographically, South Asia is easily demarcated. It is bounded on the north, northwest and the northeast by the Himalayas and its sub-ranges. The vast expanse of the Indian Ocean, with the Arabian Sea to its west and the Bay of Bengal to its east, marks off the region from the rest of the world. The region has one of the largest alluvial soil systems of the world formed by three great rivers, the Indus, the Ganga and the Brahmaputra. The seven countries of this region, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, share common rivers, mountain systems, oceans and common ecological cycles. Except for narrow water corridors between the subcontinent and Sri Lanka and Maldives, the whole region is a contiguous land mass without any natural barriers between the countries. In addition to geographic contiguity, the seven countries in South Asia share a uniform political, administrative, legal and economic structure because of their common colonial past. Moreover, the peoples in South Asia are bound together by common bonds of

historical ties, religious and cultural traditions, linguistic affinities and common values and social norms.

Despite these commonalities, regionalism in a formal sense did not grow in South Asia until the 1980s. A discussion of the cultural, economic and political dynamics of South Asian societies can shed some light on the lack of growth of regionalism in South Asia. In this chapter, I will discuss these dynamics and their impact on the origin and evolution of SAARC. A critical evaluation of six SAARC summit meetings (from 1985 to 1991) will also be made in this chapter to provide some understanding as to how far SAARC has progressed since its origin in 1985.

### **South Asian Community in a Historical and Cultural Setting**

From the beginning of the Second millennium B.C., periodic migrations of tribal communities from Afghanistan and Central Asia to the fertile plains of the northern part of the Indian subcontinent contributed significantly to the region's socio-economic structure. The South Asian societies grew constantly with the absorption of new kinds of social organizations and methods of economic production introduced by the migrants. Along with the migration from outside, the South Asian societies also witnessed internal migration. The constant movement of peoples, ideas, values and technologies of production created enormous tensions in the society, but at the same time, led to the formation of a larger sense of community in South Asia.

Gradually, with the settling down of the agrarian communities across the plains of the Indus, the Ganges and other places in South Asia, different types of local *polities* emerged in the region. The local polities were governed by clans of warrior elites who controlled rights over land and appropriated the agricultural surplus. Subsequently, social conflicts and warfare between the local polities led to the formation of regional *states* by the middle of the First millennium B.C.. Either a chieftain or a dominant kinship group controlled the power structure of the local polities and the regional states. Both monarchical and republican systems of administration were prevalent during this period. However, with the passage of time, the monarchical system became dominant form of macro-political organization. By the Third century B.C. a subcontinental polity was established for the first time in South Asia under the Hindu king Chandragupta Maurya who, later expanded his empire beyond Southeast Asia. At the micro level, however, different communities and tribal groups continued to exercise a substantial measure of self-rule through village Panchayats and Tribal Councils. Perhaps, this deep-rooted tradition of self-rule provided the moral basis for the demand of *Swaraj* by the Indians against the British rule and explains the widespread popular preference for democratic governance in the region.

At the societal level, a hierarchical class structure emerged with a distinctive functional division of labor. The warrior elite controlled political power and property in land. But they came to depend on the priestly class to legitimize their

rule. The priestly class, in turn, supported the ruling elites through various moral and ritual activities. Thus, these two mutually interdependent classes enjoyed a dominant status in the society. The mercantile, artisanal and peasantry classes remained below them. At the bottom of the hierarchy, there was a class that performed lowly jobs and was denied any formal position in the society.

Subsequently, with the growth of agriculture, the productive base of South Asian society widened, providing a comfortable life style for the upper class of the society. The brahmanical elite played a crucial role in legitimizing the power of the ruling classes and perpetuating the exploitative social system based on rigid class and caste divisions. In the Sixth century B.C. a *Sramanic* doctrine,<sup>1</sup> preached and popularized by Mahavira (the Jain preceptor) and Buddha (the founder of Buddhism), emerged to challenge the dominant brahmanical worldview. The Buddha's worldview opposed fundamentally the prevailing social inequalities and injustice, emphasized tolerance and compassion in human dealings, and proposed a caring and sharing society based on universal human brotherhood. The Buddha's teachings of community living with humanitarian concerns, which exercised enormous influence on the South Asian communities during this period, continues to provide moral sustenance to large sections of the populations within and beyond the region to this day.

In the medieval period, which began in the Second millennium A.D., South Asian societies experienced further political, social, cultural and economic transformation. Fresh migrations from West and Central Asia led to the development of new technologies of warfare, political organization, economic production and, above all, a new faith, Islam, which had a far-reaching impact on the region. The new Islamic moral order, as popularized by the Sufis, emphasized equality of status for all. Such a worldview had a tremendous appeal to the lower orders of the Hindu society, that is, cultivating and artisanal communities, which were drawn into Islam's embrace within a span of few centuries.

Within Hinduism, a new cult, Bhakti, developed to spread the message of love and compassion. Since both the Sufi Pir and the Bhakti Sant preached the same message, they were constantly involved in a dialogue, which led to the establishment of a special bond between them. The medieval miniatures sensitively captured this bond by portraying conversations between saintly men drawn from Hinduism and Islam. As a study by the Independent Group on South Asian Co-operation (IGSAC) comments:

the dialogue generated mutual tolerance, which sentiment reached out to the lay followers of the two religions. This liberal interplay of different moral systems in a plural spiritual milieu further strengthened the base of the region's existing cultural ethos marked by a simple, almost austere life style, a certain spiritual leaning, tolerance and compassion and the acceptance of diversity as a necessary and enriching attribute of unity (1991:5).

## **Fragmentation and Subordination of South Asian Society under the Colonial Rule**

Despite tensions and social conflicts which led to the decline of the Mughal Empire, 18th century Indian society achieved substantial economic growth. Agricultural productivity was relatively high. A rich peasantry class had emerged. A flourishing mercantile economy, based on craft industries and well operated-markets with credit transfers and money flows, had come into existence (IGSAC, 1991:5). In fact, as the authors of IGSAC (1991) have observed, the Indian society "had certainly approached the stage of *proto-industrialization*, a stage of development prior to industrialization that may or may not actually lead to industrialization" (p.5). However, not the whole society had reached this stage. Only a few regional economies, such as Gujarat and Bengal, reached the stage of *proto-industrialization* and probably would have undergone a full fledged capitalist transformation over a period of time. But the process was arrested by the establishment of British colonial rule.

Under British rule, the South Asian economy was transformed into a peripheral economy.<sup>2</sup> The social engineering of the British rule led to the emergence of new classes, such as landed aristocrats, rich peasants, and plantation owners, who provided substantial support to the colonial regime. Both the industrial and agricultural policies introduced by the British government further impoverished the South Asian economy. The British policy destroyed both the rural economy and

handicraft industry, impeding the *proto-industrialization* process in some parts of South Asia. More importantly, the vertical economic transaction between South Asia and England prevented intraregional trade, which was formerly quite lucrative in South Asia. The legacy continues till today.

Colonial rule had some positive effects, unifying the region for the first time. Common political, legal and administrative institutions were developed. The British educational system created a new, English-speaking middle class,<sup>3</sup> who shared common world view, based on English liberalism. South Asia's nationalist leaders, drawn from this class, developed common social, economic and political programs. However, the British policy of *divide and rule* fragmented the societal structure of South Asia at the political and cultural levels. The community struggle for independence, which was witnessed at the beginning of the freedom struggle, gradually gave way to separatist and communalist movements. Under the impact of the British rule, the South Asian community was divided into seemingly irreconcilable entities, resulting in the partition of the subcontinent.

Today, South Asia has several independent and sovereign states. But it is difficult to distinguish these countries from one another because of their geographical contiguity and compactness, similar kinds of administrative and legal institutions, and overlapping religions and languages. Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, Sikhism and Christianity are shared by all the countries of the region. There is a considerable

amount of ethnic overlapping in the region: Aryan, Dravidian and Mongoloid races are mixed, blurring ethnic grouping in South Asia. Urdu, Hindi, Bengali, Tamil, Nepali and English are spoken and understood widely across the region. The national anthems of two neighboring countries, Bangladesh and India, have one common author, Rabindranath Tagore. Iqbal's famous Urdu songs, which glorifies the tradition of that Indian subcontinent and which once formed as the common backbone to India's struggle against the British rule, are immensely popular and widely sung in India and Pakistan today.

### **Common Ordeals of Post-Colonial South Asia**

#### Poverty

Poverty is common among all the countries in South Asia. More than half of the world's poor live in this region. The average per capita income of South Asian countries was a mere \$152 in 1978, which was 13.24 percent of ASEAN countries' and 1.58 percent of the US per capita income in that year (IGSAC, 1991:10). In South Asia, the incomes and consumption levels are highly skewed, with the rich enjoying a disproportionate amount of resources. In 1980s, around 40 percent of the total population in India and Pakistan lived below the "poverty line". In Bangladesh the "line" was even deeper, around 65 per cent

(IGSAC, 1991:10). Other social statistics such as literacy rates, infant mortality, availability of doctors and medicines, nutrition, drinking water and other sanitary levels, also indicate the widespread existence of poverty in South Asia.

### Population Explosion

All South Asian countries have experienced high rates of population growth during the past four decades. While the population density at the global level is about 39 persons per square kilometer, it is 750 in Bangladesh, 264 in Sri Lanka and 256 in India (*World Bank World Development Report 1992*). With an annual average growth rate of 2.2 percent, the population in the region will probably account for almost a quarter of the world's population by 2010. The rapid increase in population during the past decades has led to an adverse dependency ratio in the South Asian countries. The ratio of population in the dependent age group (between 0-15 and 60 years and above) is 95.4 per cent in Bangladesh, 90.1 per cent in Pakistan and 82.7 percent in Nepal, in comparison with 64.7 percent globally and only 11.7 percent in the USA (IGSAC, 1991:13).

### Slow Economic Growth

While the economies of the East Asian NICs (Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan) grew annually at an average of 9.0 per cent and the ASEAN-4 (Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines and Thailand) at 7.0 per cent, the South Asian countries achieved a modest annual growth rate of 4.6 percent during the past three decades (*World Development Report*, 1991:39). Both the industrial growth rates and agricultural production of the South Asian countries remained low during the 1980s, in comparison with East Asia and ASEAN countries (*World Development Report*, 1991:38;41). The slow growth rate in South Asian economy may be attributed to the import-substitution development strategy of these countries during the 1970s and 1980s. The increasing debt-burden of all the countries, which has further contributed to the slow growth of economy, certainly is a serious obstacle to human development in the region.

### Uneven Economic Development

Dualism has been the dominant feature of South Asian economies. Vast disparities exist between different regions and different strata of population in the same region in South Asia. The metropolises of South Asia have more economic, cultural and social linkages with the industrialized world than with their own

hinterlands. "Enclaves" of modern industries and urban living are found in all countries of South Asia.

Regional imbalances are also common features of South Asian countries. The western states of India are more developed than the eastern states of Bihar, Bengal and Orissa. The per capita incomes in Punjab, Maharashtra and Gujarat are much higher than in the three eastern states. The northeastern states of Assam, Manipur, Tripura, Nagaland, and Meghalaya have almost no industries, and their per capita incomes are far below the national average. In Pakistan, Punjab is far more prosperous than Sind, Baluchistan and North West Frontier Province. While Karachi and Lahore have been extensively industrialized and commercialized, the rest of the country suffers from lack of industrialization. The capital cities of Dhaka in Bangladesh and Kathmandu in Nepal are qualitatively different from the rest of the country. The regional imbalances have led to social and political tensions and conflicts in South Asia.

#### Environmental Disasters

Frequent natural disasters, such as cyclones and floods, have brought untold miseries to the eastern part of India and the whole of Bangladesh for the past several years. The failure of monsoon rains has affected the crops all over the region. Recently, Maldives has suffered from extensive sea erosion. The increase in the

frequency of natural disasters are due to the break down of the Himalayan eco-system caused by extensive deforestation. The rapid increase in population has put enormous pressure on the eco-system of South Asia. Unless all the countries in South Asia make collective efforts to protect the eco-system, such environmental disasters are likely to continue.

### Social Polarization and Conflicts

In recent decades, there has been an increase in the polarization and social conflicts in South Asia. The Tamil militancy and Sinhalese violence in Sri Lanka, terrorist activities in Kashmir and Punjab in India, anti-mohajir violence in Karachi, tensions in Sind and Baluchistan and, above all, communal violence in India, with a ferocious spillover effect in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, have affected the development processes in the entire region. Three factors explain the increasing violence in South Asia: (i) large-scale unemployment resulting from the slow growth of economy; (ii) uneven development in each country, which has led some ethnic and cultural groups to believe that they have been marginalized from the process of development and denied the benefits of economic growth; and (iii) gradual erosion of credibility of the state and other political and legal institutions. The post-colonial states in South Asia, born from a liberation struggle, initially enjoyed high degree of relative autonomy and credibility to mediate between groups and social formations. But over the years, the states have lost these advantages due to populism in such

countries as India, or authoritarianism and repressive actions in other countries in South Asia. A combination of populist and repressive actions of South Asian states alienated some social groups with conflicting interests, who felt that without resorting to violent methods they would not be able to receive their fair share (IGSAC, 1991:15-16). The current trend toward widespread violence in South Asian societies may be attributed to the relative deprivation of some social groups.

The common heritage of history, culture and tradition, geographical contiguity, common eco-systems and environmental problems, and other common ordeals, as discussed above were some of the compelling reasons for the growth of regionalism in South Asia. Yet, South Asia remained, as Palmer (1991:75), quoting Peter Lyon (1969), has observed, "a region without regionalism" for long. Some of the reasons for the lack of growth of regionalism in South Asia are discussed below.

### **Impediments to Regionalism in South Asia**

Three obstacles seem to be militating most against the growth of regionalism in South Asia. These obstacles are: (a) Indo-centric structure of South Asian regional system and India's enormity in size, population and economic development, (b) divergent political and socio-economic structures in South Asian countries and (c) ethnic factors.

#### **Indo-centric Structure of South Asian Regional System**

That South Asia is Indo-centric seems to be the cause of all kinds of regional tensions. In no other region in the Third World does one nation occupy such a preeminent position as India does in South Asia. India accounts for 73 percent of the total geography of the region, and its population is more than double the size of the combined population of all South Asian countries. India accounts for 76 percent of the GDP, 79 percent of value added in manufactures, 80 percent of the total exports and 60 percent of the imports of South Asia (Sobhan, 1989:24). It is also estimated that India has 100 percent of the total resources in the region in respect of uranium, iron ore, bauxite, copper, gold, lead, silver, zinc, asbestos, and diamonds and more than 80 percent of the resources in coal, crude oil and salt (Ahamad, 1985:44).

India has a common maritime and land frontier with all South Asian countries. While South Asian countries have a common border with India, none of them has a border with another. Such a geographic factor complicates the security problem in South Asia. For India, the whole of South Asia constitutes a strategic entity and not surprisingly, India tends to define its security concern in terms of the region's security.<sup>4</sup> Such moves, however, are seen as India's hegemonistic design by its neighbors and almost all the ruling elites in South Asia, with possible exception of Bhutan and Maldives, have sought external assistance to counterbalance India's power. Pakistan's alliance with the USA, Sri Lanka's efforts to involve external powers in the sponsorship of a UN resolution to make the Indian Ocean a nuclear-free zone, Nepal's desire for a "zone of peace," and Bangladesh's close links with Pakistan, the Islamic states, the USA and China are designed to limit Indian influence and escape from alleged Indian hegemony.<sup>5</sup> Because of the power asymmetry and India's overwhelmingly superior position vis-a-vis other South Asian countries, Indophobia seems to be all pervasive in the region (Chopra, 1986). Not surprisingly, some analysts (Ayoob, 1985:66-86; Tow, 1990:8) have argued that regional cooperation efforts in South Asia are not likely to succeed as the leaders of South Asian countries, unlike the Western European countries and the ASEAN countries, do not perceive any threat from external sources. Rather, these leaders perceive threat only from India.

**Table 3.1. Comparative Background Information on SAARC Countries, 1990**

	Bangladesh	Bhutan	India	Maldives	Nepal	Pakistan	Sri Lanka
Area (Thousand sq.km.)	144	47	3,288	0.3	141	796	66
Total 1992 population (m)	112.1	0.6	875.2	0.2	18.9	117.3	17.2
% average annual population growth rate 1984-91	2.0	2.5	2.3	3.3	2.1	3.1	1.4
Population density (per sq km)	750	29.6	256.8	706	125.4	140.7	264
% aged under 15 years	46.6	40.3	35.4	46.9	27.7	44.5	35.2
Literacy rate (%)	31.0	32.0	52.1	98.0	40.0	34.0	88.6
GNP per capita (US \$)	210	190	350	450	170	380	470
% average annual GDP growth rate (1980-1990)	4.3	7.5	5.3	..	4.6	6.3	4.0
Defence expenditure as % of total expenditure	10.1	0.0	17.0	..	6.0	30.9	7.4
Total external debt (US million \$)	12245	83	70115	..	1621	20683	5851
Total debt service as % of export of goods & services	25.4	6.8	28.8	..	18.2	22.8	13.8

Source: *The World Bank World Development Report 1992. Asia Yearbook 1993; The Far East and Australasia 1993.*

**Table 3.2. Political, Economic and Social Features of SAARC Countries**

Countries	Politics	Economy	Society
Bangladesh	Quasi democracy; military-bureaucratic control	Feudal+ a weak dependent manufacturing sector	Islamic (more than 86% Muslims, 12% Hindus, remainder Buddhists, Christians and Tribals), Bengali dominated
Bhutan	Traditional Monarchy	Pre-feudal and feudal+ infant dependent trading class	Buddhist 70 to 80%, Hindus, 20 to 30%, Drukpas as dominant ethnic group
India	Parliamentary democracy; federalism	Elements of feudal+ capitalist with national and dependent manufacturing sector	Constitutionally secular (more than 80% Hindus, 11% Muslims, 1.91% Sikhs, remainder Buddhists, Jainists, Parsis and Christians
Maldives	Presidential quasi democracy with strong central control	Pre-feudal + feudal+ infant commercial sector (marginal and dependent)	Islamic, mostly Sunni Muslims
Nepal	Quasi democracy; constitutional monarchy	Pre-feudal+ feudal+ a marginal dependent commercial sector	Hindu Kingdom (89.5% Hindus, 5.3% Buddhists, 2.7% Muslims, remainder christians
Pakistan	Quasi democracy; military-bureaucratic control	Feudal + capitalist sector with dependent monopolies	Islamic (95% Muslims, 1.6% Hindus, 1.3% Christians), Punjabi dominated
Sri Lanka	Presidential democracy; strong control of the center	Plantation + small dependent capitalist manufacturing and commercial sectors	Buddhist 70%, Hindus 16%, Christians 7.6%, Muslims 7.3%, Sinhalese dominated

Source: *The Far East and Australasia 1993*; S.D. Muni (1989), "Political Imperatives," in Bimal Prasad ed. *Regional Cooperation in South Asia: Problems and Prospects*, P.54

### Divergent Political and Socio-economic Structure

Besides disparities in size, population and development, the character of South Asian states and the nature of their support base are responsible for stunting the growth of regionalism. The lack of democratic character of most of the South Asian political regimes until recently and the enormous influence of military in policy-making inhibited the ruling elites to pursue any policy with a regional thrust. Instead, South Asian ruling elites have devoted most of their time and energy to addressing domestic issues. Often, a militant anti-Indian posture served to provide a scapegoat for other countries in the region.

Three South Asian countries - Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal - have very weak manufacturing sectors. While Sri Lanka has a strong commercial sector, its manufacturing sector is very weak. Only India and Pakistan can claim to have relatively stronger manufacturing and commercial sectors. South Asian countries, especially Pakistan, are reluctant to pursue favorable intraregional trade policies because they fear that Indian goods will dominate their markets. All South Asian countries depend, to varying degrees, on external aid for their development and thus, are influenced by the directives of the donor countries in pursuing particular kinds of foreign policies not conducive to regional cooperation. Feudal elements still dominate the South Asian societies. South Asia has an essentially pre-bourgeois subsistence level economy, and a small business group dominates. Because the

dominant business interests thrive on overseas trade, with state patronage in South Asia, the monopoly business groups are opposed to any regional trading policy (Muni, 1989:54-55). For historical reasons, South Asian economies are vertically linked with Western countries. But the linkage seems to be perpetuated by a nexus between the military, bureaucracy, monopoly business groups, feudal lords and the intellectual elites, since they happen to be the chief beneficiaries of this linkage. Needless to say, these elites oppose more liberal regional trading policy. Moreover, since independence, Pakistan's dominant economic, political and intellectual ideology has been to move away from India. Regional cooperation of any kind would entail at least a partial aligning of Pakistan's economy with that of India. Such a prospect seems to be unacceptable to the ruling and intellectual elites of Pakistan.<sup>6</sup>

### Ethnic Factor

South Asia is a multi-ethnic region. Of all the states in South Asia, India happens to be the most heterogeneous ethnically. Since India's ethnic groups are found in neighboring states, it is perceived to be involved in all ethnic conflicts in South Asia. One important aspects of the ethnic factor in South Asia is that the majority groups of small South Asian states suffers from a minority complex because the minorities in these countries have a sizeable number of co-ethnics in neighboring India (Ghosh, 1991:38). The Indian Nepalese of the Terai region,

together with their co-ethnics in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, outnumber the Nepalese of Nepal. Sri Lankan Tamils together with Tamils of Tamil Nadu outnumber the Sinhalese; and the Nepalese of Bhutan, together with the Nepalese Indians, outnumber the majority Drukpas. Although Pakistan and Bangladesh do not suffer from such a minority complex, the activities of Sindhis in India and Bengali Hindu refugees in West Bengal do sometimes worry them.<sup>7</sup> The emergence of ethnic subnationalism and the consequent proliferation of terrorist and separatist movements have aroused the fear of irredentism and further contributed to the deterioration of relationship among the South Asian countries. Each country blames the other for abetting a separatist movement on its soil. Consequently, an atmosphere of mutual distrust and acrimony prevails in South Asia.<sup>8</sup>

A glance at the ethnic conflicts in South Asia reveals that South Asian countries have preferred a bilateral approach to resolving conflicts. Adoption of such an approach may be due to India's insistence, for India happens to be involved in all ethnic conflicts because of its heterogeneous ethnic character. Not always successful, bilateralism has further strengthened mutual acrimony and distrust and seems to have prevented the growth of regionalism in South Asia during 1960s and 1970s. It was only in the late 1970s that some concrete initiatives were taken for regional cooperation in South Asia.

## **The Origins of SAARC**

Although the initiatives of the late President of Bangladesh, General Ziaur Rahman, launched between 1977 and 1981 are responsible for the immediate origins of SAARC, the idea of regional cooperation in South Asia can be traced to April 1947, when the semi-autonomous Indian Council of World Affairs convened the Asian Relations Conference in New Delhi. Attended by delegates from twenty-five Asian countries and presided by Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, the Asian Relations Conference devoted much time to the question of national integration and economic development of the newly independent post-colonial states in Asia. However, the two Asian giants, India and China, made their differences open on two issues at this conference. First, both India and China were in contention about their respective desires to assume the leadership role in Asia. Second, the Chinese objected to a map which showed Tibet as a separate state (Gupta, 1964:36; Ganguly, 1993:274). The conference ended without any concrete proposals for regional cooperation. The next meeting, scheduled for China in 1949, did not take place because of the civil war and the Chinese Revolution. By 1957 the Asian Relations Organization was quietly dissolved.

But the idea of regional cooperation did not die. India, Pakistan, Australia, Indonesia, Thailand and Ceylon attended the Baguio Conference of May 1950, held in the Philippines, to carry out discussion about the possibilities of regional

cooperation. Although this conference exhorted its members to promote greater cultural cooperation, in substantive terms the conference achieved little (Gupta, 1964:47). The Cold War division was very much evident in this conference. While Australia and the Philippines were distinctly pro-West and anti-Communist, India, Pakistan, Indonesia, Thailand and Ceylon were neutral to varying degrees.

With the intensification of the Cold War tensions, the idea of regional cooperation underwent a shift at this point. Instead of exploring the possibilities of regional cooperation, the focus now turned to the possibilities of keeping Asia free from superpower competition. Jawaharlal Nehru played a major role in stressing this idea. His main concern was that involvement with the superpower conflicts would not only lead to the militarization of Asian societies, thereby jeopardizing the prospect of peace in Asia, but also would divert the leaders' attention from the urgent task of economic development. Nehru's ideas, though detested by the superpowers, found favor with some Asian leaders. Influenced by Nehru's ideas, the Prime Minister of Ceylon, John Kotelawala, invited the leaders from Asia to Colombo in April 1954 to exchange views and discuss problems of common interest. This conference, known subsequently as the Colombo Powers Conference, was attended by Burma, Ceylon, India, Indonesia and Pakistan. The leaders at this conference discussed such diverse issues as events in Indochina, atomic bomb tests, representation of China in the United Nations, problems of Tunisia and Morocco, difficulties of Arab refugees in Palestine and considered proposals relating to

economic cooperation and mutual aid. The bilateral differences, particularly Pakistan's efforts to bring up the unresolved question of Kashmir, and divergent views about the Cold War limited the scope of discussion regarding regional cooperation in this conference (Ganguly, 1993:276). The conference participants, however, agreed to convene a meeting of African-Asian nations to explore areas for cooperation among these countries. After the first Afro-Asian conference convened in Bandung in April 1955, the Colombo Powers never met again, believing perhaps that the task of building Third-World solidarity was on its way.

Although the Bandung conference of 1955 enumerated a long agenda of cooperative ventures, no machinery or institutional means for achieving such cooperation were specified. The leaders' divergent perception about the world politics and acute shortage of funds to implement any cooperative venture may have contributed to the lack of agreement on specific proposals. Despite the lack of progress of the Bandung conference in the area of regional cooperation, the conference provided the basis for a larger Third World movement, known as the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

After 1955, the idea of a South Asian regional forum was discussed from time to time among the leaders of South Asian countries. But, no concrete initiatives were taken until 1980. In his letter to the Heads of State or Government of seven South Asian countries on May 2 1980, President Ziaur Rahman of Bangladesh made

his first concrete proposal for establishing a framework for regional cooperation in South Asia (Huq, 1985:xxiii). However, the Bangladesh President seemed to have been working on the idea of an ASEAN-like organization in South Asia for at least three years before giving it a concrete shape and presenting it to the South Asian leaders in 1980.<sup>9</sup> During his visit to India in December 1977, the President discussed the issue of regional cooperation with the new Indian Prime Minister Morarji Desai (Muni & Muni, 1984:30). In the inaugural speech to the Colombo Plan Consultative Committee, which met in Kathmandu in December 1977, King Birendra of Nepal gave a call for close regional cooperation among the South Asian countries in sharing river waters. The King's call was welcomed by President Ziaur Rahman during the former's visit to Bangladesh in January 1978 (Muni & Muni, 1984:31). President Ziaur Rahman had also informally discussed the idea of regional cooperation with the leaders of South Asian countries during the Commonwealth Summit in Lusaka (1979) and the Non-Aligned Summit in Havana (1979) (Huq, 1986:67). Finally, the Bangladesh President seemed to have given a concrete shape to the proposal after his visit to Sri Lanka and discussion with the Sri Lankan President J.R. Jayawardene in November 1979 (Muni & Muni, 1984:31).

### Domestic and International Factors

Both domestic and international factors seemed to have influenced President Ziaur Rahman's thinking about establishing a regional organization in South Asia.<sup>10</sup> (1) General Ziaur Rahman came to power in a military coup in 1975 after overthrowing the civilian regime of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who was supported by India both during the freedom struggle and post-independence era of Bangladesh. His overthrow was a major setback to Indian foreign policy. The Congress leadership, headed by Indira Gandhi, during this time came to believe that the new military regime in Bangladesh might seek external assistance more to legitimize its rule. Such a move of the new regime in Bangladesh would not be congruent with India's strategic security thinking in the region. In order to allay Indian misgivings about the intentions of the new military regime, General Ziaur Rahman thought of establishing a regional organization to promote regional cooperation.

(2) Ziaur Rahman believed that Bangladesh's bilateral problems with India could be better addressed in a multilateral forum than through bilateral approach.

(3) India's annexation of Sikkim as a full-fledged state in 1975 generated fear among the small neighboring countries. President Ziaur Rahman's initiative for a regional cooperation scheme, as some observers believe (Datta Ray, 1992), was a shrewd move to neutralize India's potential expansionism.

(4) In 1977, most of the countries in South Asia witnessed changes in their political regimes. Morarji Desai of the Janata Party became the new Prime Minister of India after defeating Mrs Indira Gandhi and her Congress Party in the election of 1977. In Pakistan, Ziaul Haq captured power from Bhutto through a military coup in 1977. In Sri Lanka, Mrs. Bandarnaike's government was replaced by the United National Party (UNP), led by J.R. Jayawardene, in the same year. After a series of coups and counter coups that followed the violent overthrow of the Mujib government in August 1975, Ziaur Rahman finally established himself as the President of Bangladesh in 1977. All these new leaders displayed a distinctive style of accommodative leadership and put first priority on improving relations with the neighboring countries. Moreover, the new regimes, which came to power in South Asian countries after a prolonged power struggle, had not yet consolidated their positions in relation to their powerful domestic opponents. They, therefore, as Muni (1984) has observed, "needed each other's help, support and understanding in securing their respective internal legitimacy and credibility (p.22).

(5) During the second half of the 1970s, almost all the countries in South Asia were suffering from an acute balance of payment crisis, which was further aggravated by the second oil crisis in 1979. In 1974-75, South Asia's economic situation deteriorated, with the growth rate reaching an all time low at 2.2 percent, while populations increased at 2.4 percent (Muni & Muni, 1984:23). With North-South negotiations not yielding any result and the protectionism of the developed countries increasing, "South Asian countries had enough compulsions to look inward the region and toward each other to seek new options for preparing themselves to meet the then prevailing challenges" (Ibid, 1984:23).

(6) During 1977-1978, a group of intellectuals in the South Asian countries started exchanging ideas in various seminars on possible lines of regional cooperation, with a focus on social and economic development. In September 1978, these group of scholars formed a Committee on Studies for Cooperation in Development in South Asia (CSCD) to carry out studies on various projects concerning South Asian society. Various findings of this Committee provided useful and encouraging background analysis and information to the officials involved in working out the details of the new organization (Rostow,1986:131; M. Haas, 1989:277; Saksena, 1989:82).

(7) Such international developments as New International Economic Order (1974), the support for South-South Cooperation, and other action programs for collective self-reliance adopted at the successive Non-Aligned Summits in Colombo (1976) and Havana (1979), the United Nations conference on technical cooperation in 1978, and the Arusha program of collective self-reliance adopted by the Group of 77 in February 1979 may have influenced President Ziaur Rahman's thinking on regionalism (Mohanani, 1992:2; Z.Khan, 1991:35).

(8) After regime changes in South Asia, US President Jimmy Carter and British Prime Minister James Callaghan visited India, Pakistan and Bangladesh in January 1978. These leaders urged the new South Asian regimes to make special efforts to establish peace, amity and cooperation in the region. They also assured the South Asian leaders of economic assistance for multilateral cooperative projects on sharing water resources of Ganga and Brahmaputra (Muni & Muni, 1984:26).

(9) The Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan in late December 1979 and differing positions taken by India and Pakistan on that conflict contributed further to the rapid deterioration of South Asian security situation and provided a new urgency to President Ziaur Rahman's proposal for a regional organization in the region (Muni, 1984:31; Palmer, 1991:81).

The Bangladesh proposal was promptly endorsed by Nepal, Sri Lanka, Maldives and Bhutan. But both India and Pakistan were skeptical initially. India's policy-makers, particularly Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, feared that Ziaur Rahman's proposal for regional cooperation might provide an opportunity for the small neighbors to regionalise all bilateral issues and to join with each other to "gang up" against India. Pakistan assumed that it might be an Indian ploy to gather the subcontinent against Pakistan and ensure a regional market for Indian products thereby consolidating and further strengthening India's economic dominance in the region (Wriggins, 1992:132-133; Thornton, 1991:136). However, after initial reservations regarding the proposal's reference to security consideration and lack of clarity about the theme of economic and social development, India and Pakistan expressed their willingness to discuss the Bangladesh proposal.<sup>11</sup> What followed was a series of quiet diplomatic consultations between the South Asian foreign ministers at the UN Headquarters in New York from August to September 1980 (Muni & Muni, 1984:34). Finally, it was agreed that Bangladesh would prepare the draft of a working paper for discussion among the foreign secretaries. Bangladesh prepared and circulated the draft, which was basically a reformulation of President Ziaur Rahman's proposal, to all South Asian countries in November 1980 (Muni & Muni, 1984:35). While endorsing the idea of a regional organization, the draft paper dropped all references to security matters and suggested that the areas of cooperation should be confined to "non-political" and "non-controversial" items (Palmer, 1991:80).<sup>12</sup>

## **Evolution of SAARC**

### First Phase: Foreign Secretary Meetings

The Bangladesh draft paper became the basis for discussion among the foreign secretaries of seven South Asian countries, who met at Colombo from April 21-23, 1981. The Colombo meeting identified five areas for cooperation: agriculture, rural development, telecommunications, meteorology, health and population. The Colombo meeting also decided to establish a Committee of the Whole, with Sri Lanka as its Chairman, to prepare an Integrated Programme of Action (IPA) in the agreed areas of cooperation. At second meeting of the foreign secretaries, held at Kathmandu on November 2-4, 1981, three more areas were identified for cooperation: transport, postal services, science and technology. At the third meeting of the foreign secretaries, held at Islamabad on August 7-8, 1982, one new area, that is, sports, arts and culture, was added. The Committee of the Whole then met at Colombo from January 10-13 to draw up the Integrated Programme of Action. At their fourth meeting, held at Dhaka from March 28-30, 1983, the foreign secretaries approved the Integrated Programme of Action (IPA) prepared by the Committee of the Whole. However, it was decided to launch the IPA at a meeting of Foreign Ministers to be held at New Delhi. In these four meetings, the foreign secretaries

were able to prepare considerable groundwork on two major aspects of regional cooperation: (1) organizational aspects and (2) identification of the areas for cooperation, including an Integrated Programme of Action (Muni & Muni, 1984:37).

### Second Phase: Ministerial Meetings

The second phase witnessed discussions at the political level. The foreign ministers' conference first met at New Delhi from August 1-3, 1983. At the completion of the meeting, the foreign ministers launched the Integrated Programme of Action (IPA) and adopted a Declaration on Regional Cooperation, formally beginning an organization known as the South Asian Regional Cooperation (SARC). Following the New Delhi meeting, three more meetings of the foreign ministers were held at Male (July 10-11, 1984), Thimpu (May 13-14, 1985), and Dhaka (December 5, 1985) to determine a date and place for the first meeting of South Asian heads of state. The Male foreign ministers meeting decided to hold the first summit meeting of SARC at Dhaka in the last quarter of 1985. At the Dhaka foreign ministers' meeting in 1985, a decision was taken to change the name of the organization from South Asian Regional Cooperation (SARC) to South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). The change in the acronym was based on the thinking that while SARC refers to the process of South Asian Regional Cooperation, SAARC marks the establishment of an Association (organization) to promote and develop such cooperation (Kanesalingam, 1991a:1).

Third Phase: Annual Summits and Formal Launching of SAARC at Dhaka Summit

The first Summit meeting of the Heads of State or Government of the South Asian countries was held at Dhaka from December 7-8, 1985. The Summit meeting formally launched the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation by adopting its Charter. The Charter lists eight objectives of SAARC:

- a) to promote the welfare of the peoples of South Asia and to improve their quality of life; b) to accelerate economic growth, social progress and cultural development in the region and to provide all individuals the opportunity to live in dignity and to realize their full potentials; c) to promote and strengthen collective self-reliance among the countries of South Asia; d) to contribute to mutual trust, understanding and appreciation of one another's problems; e) to promote active collaboration and mutual assistance in the economic, social, cultural, technical and scientific fields; f) to strengthen cooperation with other developing countries; g) to strengthen cooperation among themselves in international forums on matters of common interests; and h) to cooperate with international and regional organizations with similar aims and purposes (Article I).

The Dhaka Summit Declaration stated that cooperation should be "based on respect for the principles of sovereign equality, territorial integrity, political independence, non-interference in the internal affairs of other states and mutual benefit." These principles are in line with the famous *Panchsheel* or "Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence" enunciated by Jawaharlal Nehru. The Declaration also mentioned that regional cooperation should "not be a substitute for bilateral and multilateral cooperation but shall complement them" and that cooperation should not be "inconsistent with bilateral and multilateral obligations" (Article II of the

Charter). The Declaration further stipulated that decisions at all levels in SAARC "shall be taken on the basis of unanimity" and that "bilateral and contentious issues shall be excluded from the deliberations" (Article X of the Charter). The last two principles were meant to ensure that every member is equal, has a "veto power" and that discussions in the forum would not be contentious. The Summit also delineated the organizational structure of SAARC. However, the organizational structure is not static and has undergone some changes since 1985, as discussed in the next chapter.

The Dhaka Summit brought out the central issues on which regional cooperation in South Asia is considered absolutely necessary. As the Heads of State or Government at the Summit (1985) acknowledged:

the countries of South Asia, constituting one-fifth of humanity, were faced with the formidable challenges posed by poverty, underdevelopment, low levels of production, unemployment and pressure of population compounded by exploitation of the past and other adverse legacies. They felt that, bound as their countries were by many common values rooted in their social, ethnic, cultural and historical traditions, regional cooperation provided a logical response to these problems.<sup>13</sup>

Recognizing the differences between the member countries, the Summit settled for a slow and steady growth of SAARC, which, the leaders felt, would facilitate mutual confidence building more than impatient plunges and impracticable undertakings. Accordingly, rather than adding anything new, the leaders reaffirmed their commitment to the implementation of the Integrated Program of Action (IPA) in nine mutually agreed areas, as suggested at the New Delhi foreign ministers

meeting in 1983. These seemingly non-controversial, but important, areas are as follows: agriculture, rural development, telecommunications, meteorology, health and population control, transport, sports, arts and culture, postal services, and scientific and technical cooperation.

At this first Summit, almost all the leaders of South Asia preferred to highlight the commonalities among the South Asian countries and their countries' readiness to make this endeavor fruitful, an accomplishment thus far largely unrecognized.<sup>14</sup> Probably, the greatest success of the first Summit was the opportunity for the leaders to meet in a non-SAARC context to discuss their bilateral problems and reach some kind of unofficial agreement. For example, General Ziaul Haq of Pakistan and President Jayawardene of Sri Lanka met informally and agreed to intensify trade and other transactions between the two countries. India's Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi and General Ziaul Haq of Pakistan also met informally and agreed on several issues. After the meeting, General Zia accepted Rajiv Gandhi's invitation to visit India on December 17, 1985, which generated great optimism about future Indo-Pakistan relations. A sentimental irritant between India and Pakistan was also removed when General Ziaul Haq agreed to allow Khan Abdul Ghafar Khan, a towering figure of India's liberation struggle, to visit the Congress centenary celebrations at Bombay in late December 1985 (Mohan, 1992:67).

The Dhaka Summit also got some moral-boosting recognition from international leaders. Mr. Zhao Ziyang, the Chinese Premier, hailed the Summit as "an event of great significance in the South Asian Region."<sup>15</sup> US President Ronald Reagan, congratulating the South Asian leaders, described SAARC as a "significant new venture in international cooperation" (*Tribune*, October 20, 1986). The UN Secretary-General, Mr. Javier Perez de Cuellar, expressed the hope that the Summit would open "a new era of progress and help reduce the tension in the region" (*The Hindustan Times*, December 8, 1985; *Indian Express*, December 8, 1985). Mr. Jacques Delors, President of the Commission of the European Community, and the Commonwealth Heads of State Summit at Vancouver congratulated the leaders of South Asia for launching SAARC and hoped that the Association would contribute to the region's peace, stability and progress (*The Statesman*, New Delhi, October 19, 1987).

### Bangalore Summit

The second Summit, held at Bangalore<sup>16</sup> from November 16-17, 1986, reaffirmed the principles of cooperation, as enunciated in the first Summit meeting at Dhaka, and urged the member countries to intensify cooperation among themselves. However, the cordial atmosphere of the Dhaka Summit was lacking at Bangalore. India showed its dismay about Pakistan for continued support for terrorism in Punjab and Kashmir, nuclear weapons development, and drug trafficking. While denying

India's accusations, Pakistan blamed India for increasing up tension in the region by marching Indian troops along the Indo-Pakistan border (Operation Brasstacks) and by refusing to consider Nepal's proposal for a nuclear-free zone in South Asia.<sup>17</sup> On the other hand, both Rajiv Gandhi and President Jayawardene were able to establish a personal relationship and to carry out intensive consultations regarding the Tamil problem in Sri Lanka. Such consultation was possible because of the arrest of several militant leaders including Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) leaders V. Prabhakaran and Balasigham by Tamil Nadu police in India, on the eve of the Summit meeting. Despite the tensions, the Bangalore Summit agreed on policies in a number of crucial areas, including terrorism and drug trafficking. Such agreements suggested political pragmatism and determination among the South Asian leaders to carry SAARC forward. As the late Prime Minister of India, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, aptly summed up: "Bilateral relations have their difficult moments. SAARC reminds us that at such moments we should seek what unites us and not what divides. We have consciously decided not to burden SAARC with our bilateral concerns."<sup>18</sup>

The Bangalore Summit added women in development and the prevention of drug trafficking and drug abuse to IPA list of agreed-upon activities for regional cooperation. The Summit endorsed the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding on the establishment of the SAARC Secretariat by the Council of

Foreign Ministers and their decision to set up the Secretariat in Kathmandu. The Summit also endorsed the Declaration of the SAARC Ministerial Meeting on international economic issues held at Islamabad in April 1986. The leaders agreed to consult and cooperate with one another in international economic conferences and institutions in order to push priority issues identified at the Islamabad Ministerial Meeting, namely, enlarged concessional assistance; the doubling in three years of the financial flows for the development of developing countries; amelioration of official debts; trade liberalization, especially in textiles and agriculture; commodity price stabilization; transfer of technology and special treatment for the least developed SAARC countries.

Agreeing with UN Resolution 2625, the Bangalore Summit made a formal declaration to condemn all acts of terrorism and support for terrorism. Such a declaration was significant for regional cooperation, given a tendency for India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka to blame each other for abetting terrorist activities on their home soil and the territory of a neighboring country. The Summit also identified five new areas for cooperation: (1) promotion of tourism, including facilities for limited convertibility of national currencies for tourists from SAARC countries; (2) setting up of a South Asian broadcasting program, covering both television and radio; (3) establishment of a SAARC Documentation Center; (4) institution of SAARC scholarships, SAARC fellowships and SAARC academic chairs; (5) launching of a SAARC Youth Volunteers Program.

### Kathmandu Summit

During the inter-Summit period (from the Bangalore to the Kathmandu Summit), SAARC witnessed some grave challenges to its growth and survival. In June 1987, Indian Air Force jets dropped off relief materials in the Jaffna Peninsula against the wishes of Colombo. The Indian action was a violation of Sri Lankan airspace and was widely condemned by all the South Asian countries as an attack on the sovereignty of Sri Lanka. As a protest to such action, Sri Lanka refused to attend the SAARC foreign ministers' conference scheduled for New Delhi from June 18-19, 1987, to finalize the draft for the Kathmandu Summit. It is significant that while all the neighboring South Asian countries condemned India's action in the strongest possible terms, none of them tried to cash in on India's possible discomfiture at the Sri Lankan boycott of the SAARC meeting. On the contrary, they seemed anxious to stave off any such embarrassment (*The Hindu*, June 13, 1987). Determined to keep SAARC alive, the foreign ministers of Pakistan, Bangladesh, Maldives and Nepal wrote personal letters to Sri Lanka's president and foreign minister, urging them to participate fully in the SAARC session at New Delhi (*The Hindu*, June 17, 1987). Pakistan took an important initiative to diffuse the crisis. In his letter to the foreign minister of Sri Lanka, Mr. A.C. Shahul Hameed, the Pakistani foreign minister, Mr. Yakub Khan, wrote: "Unfortunate differences have arisen on the eve of a highly important meeting of SAARC which has made noteworthy progress. It is of the utmost importance that nothing should happen that

should constitute a setback to the consolidation of SAARC" (Mohanani, 1992:70). Finally, the Sri Lankan government agreed to participate in the forthcoming SAARC foreign ministers meeting in New Delhi. Two aspects of this crisis can be noted here: (1) No country wanted the premature demise of SAARC and (2) In the absence of SAARC, each country would have dismissed the crisis as bilateral concerns and a collective regional initiative to defuse the crisis would not have occurred.

At the SAARC Council of Ministers meeting, held from June 18 -19, 1987, the foreign ministers of all the South Asian countries finalized the draft for acceptance at the Kathmandu Summit. Although the Sri Lankan foreign minister had informal discussions with his counterparts from Bangladesh, Maldives and Pakistan regarding the airdropping issues and devising some mechanisms to address such issues, no reference was made to these issues in the official declaration (Mohanani, 1992:73).

The third Summit meeting of South Asian Heads of States or Government was held at Kathmandu from November 2-4, 1987. There were clearly two agendas discussed in this Summit: (1) the private agenda, which dealt with such hard issues as security of South Asian countries, border issues, membership of Afghanistan in SAARC, South Asia as a nuclear free-zone, and bilateral problems

between the South Asian countries; (2) the official agenda, which discussed the soft, apparently non-controversial, issues that resulted in a common declaration. Hard issues of the private agenda were discussed in behind-the-scene meetings between the Heads of States or Government and foreign ministers. For instance, the Indian Prime Minister, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, met with Sri Lankan President Jayawardene for two hours after dinner on the first night of the Summit and again for the same duration on the second night; they discussed a wide range of issues, including a defence pact between the two countries. Similarly, India's External Affairs Minister, Mr. Natwar Singh, met with his counterpart in Sri Lanka, Mr. Hameed, to discuss the Tamil issues in Jaffna. The meeting between the Indian Prime Minister and the Sri Lankan President led to what could be considered the most notable achievement of the Summit, the signing of Indo-Sri Lankan Peace Accord (*The Hindustan Times*, November 4, 1987).

Mr. Rajiv Gandhi had also informal breakfast meetings with King Birendra of Nepal and the King of Bhutan, Jigme Singye Wangchuk, to review bilateral issues (*Dawn*, November 5, 1987). Indian Prime Minister and President Ershad of Bangladesh met on the second day of the Summit. The two leaders agreed to start discussions at the tripartite level with Nepal to augment water flows of the Ganges river. President Ershad was reportedly happy to know from the Indian Prime Minister that the process of administrative and legal formalities for handing over the

Tin Bigha corridors to Bangladesh was in the final stage (*The Hindu*, November 3, 1987).

After informal discussions over a period of three days, Prime Minister Junejo of Pakistan and the Indian Prime Minister agreed to convene an early meeting of their respective secretaries for economic affairs to explore various areas of economic and trade cooperation. Both prime ministers also agreed to convene an early meeting of secretaries for interior and home affairs to take appropriate measure to prevent illegal crossing of borders. The Siachen glacier issue, the second most important irritant after Kashmir in Indo-Pakistan relations, was discussed by the two leaders, and it was decided that a third meeting at the defense secretary level would be held to address this issue as soon as possible. Both leaders also agreed to appoint surveyor generals for the purpose of demarcating international boundaries at Sir Creek, close to the Rann of Kutch. They decided to settle the maritime boundaries in accordance with the international law covering the sea lines (*Bangladesh Observer*, November 4, 1987). As a result of so many unexpected agreements between the two countries, Pakistan withdrew its proposed contentious amendment (that is, to declare South Asia as a nuclear-free zone region) to the draft declaration (Mohanani, 1992:78).

At the Kathmandu Summit, the leaders of the seven South Asian countries signed the Convention on Suppression of Terrorism; approved the establishment of South Asian Food Security Reserve; agreed to commission studies on the causes and consequences of natural disasters and the protection and preservation of the environment as well as on areas of economic cooperation recommended by the planners of South Asian countries; called for the participation of non-governmental organizations including professional bodies in the process of socio-economic and cultural development of South Asia; and authorized the Standing Committee to examine the questions of admission of new members, grant of observer and guest status, and the establishment of relations with similar organizations.

The Kathmandu Summit was a triumph of accommodative diplomacy. It demonstrated that high-level agreements can be reached on difficult bilateral problems through informal, behind-the-scene negotiations. Not all outstanding issues were addressed, much less agreed upon, in the Summit meeting. But, given the tension-ridden atmosphere in which the conference began, the three-day Summit meeting can be considered as a milestone in the growth of SAARC. Reflecting the general sentiment of the South Asian leaders assembled at Kathmandu, the outgoing chairman of SAARC, Rajiv Gandhi commented: "We have succeeded in nurturing South Asian Regional Cooperation because it is firmly grounded in the realities of the region. Ours is a concord for cooperation and not a concourse for controversy" (*Patriot, New Delhi*, November 3, 1987).

### Islamabad Summit

In 1988, President Ziaul Haq died in a plane crash. After eleven years of militarist rule under Zia, Pakistan had a democratic election in 1988 and Benazir Bhutto, winning the election with a comfortable margin, became the new Prime Minister. At this time, the international environment was undergoing drastic changes due to Mikhail Gorbachev's bold initiatives of *perestroika* and *glasnost*. The Soviet Union's decision to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan by the end of 1988 served to ease the tension between India and Pakistan considerably. Moreover, Gorbachev's enunciation of an "Asian Collective Security Doctrine," in which he envisioned important roles for both India and Pakistan to restore peace in the South Asian region, prompted the Indian and Pakistani leadership to break new ground for mutual cooperation.

Against this background, the fourth SAARC Summit was held at Islamabad from December 29-31, 1988. Rajiv Gandhi's visit was considered significant, as he was the first Indian Prime minister to pay an official visit to Pakistan in twenty-eight years. The meeting between Benazir Bhutto and Rajiv Gandhi brought back historical and personal memories of the "Simla spirit" in Indo-Pakistan relations. The slain parents of these two leaders, Indira Gandhi and Zulfikarali Bhutto, had signed the historic Simla Agreement in 1972 to resolve Kashmir issue. As widely expected, the informal meetings between Benazir Bhutto and Rajiv Gandhi - described as the

"representatives of a new generation" in the media of South Asian countries - led to important bilateral agreements at the Islamabad Summit. Both Pakistan and India agreed not to attack each other's nuclear installations and facilities. They also agreed to begin "constructive dialogue" on the Kashmir issue (*Dawn*, December 31, 1988). Benazir Bhutto categorically stated that her country would not use the Sikh card against India any more (Mohan, 1992:80), a daring statement, given Pakistan's constant denial of any such involvement in Punjab. In short, the three most important political irritants in Indo-Pakistan relations, that is, Kashmir, cross-border terrorism and nuclear issues, which the two countries had assiduously avoided discussing at the SAARC forums in the past, were deliberated privately at the Islamabad summit. Such discussions underlined the utility of SAARC as a confidence-building mechanism (Muni, 1988:13-26). As Ross Masood Hussain, Director General of the Institute of Strategic Studies at Islamabad, has perceptively remarked:

But for the association [SAARC], a meeting between the Indian and Pakistani Prime Minister might not have been possible so soon after the revival of representative government in Pakistan. The significance of these confidence building exchanges between SAARC leaders can hardly be exaggerated (1990:4).

The Heads of the State or Government of the seven South Asian countries,

after reviewing the progress of SAARC, made some important decisions at the Islamabad Summit.<sup>19</sup> (1) At the initiative of Pakistan, education was included as the twelfth item in the Integrated Programme of Action (IPA). (2) Pakistan's offer to institute a center for Human Resources Development was accepted. (3) At Pakistan's instance, the leaders decided to declare 1989 as the "SAARC Year for Combating Drug Abuse and Drug Trafficking" and to initiate efforts for concrete cooperation in this area. (4) It was decided to declare the year 1990 as "SAARC Year of the Girl Child," during which specific programs and activities would be drawn up to increase public awareness of the problems of the girl child. (5) At the initiative of Pakistan's Prime Minister, the proposal "SAARC-2000: A Basic Needs Perspective" was adopted. The Proposal called for a regional plan, with specific targets to be met by the end of the century, in such areas of core interest as food, clothing, shelter, education, primary health care, population planning and environmental protection. (6) The Summit decided to make the Supreme Court Judges and members of National Parliaments eligible to acquire special SAARC documents which would exempt them from visa requirements when traveling to the SAARC countries. (7) The SAARC Secretary-General was given a mandate to convene a special meeting of the Group of Coordinators to identify any specific areas of trade, manufactures and services where immediate cooperation was feasible.

The agreement on cooperation on economic areas at Islamabad was

significant, as it marked a departure from Pakistan's earlier stance that any kind of economic cooperation under SAARC would further strengthen India's economic dominance by enabling Indian goods to flood the market. The new leadership in Pakistan appeared to have given some fresh thought to the proposition that economic cooperation could be mutually beneficial. The South Asian countries' willingness to plunge into economic cooperation marked a new beginning of substantive cooperation under the aegis of SAARC.

#### Male' Summit

After the Islamabad Summit, the SAARC movement suffered a setback, as Colombo refused to host the fifth Summit because of New Delhi's failure to completely withdraw the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) from the north-eastern part of Sri Lanka. When the last batch of IPKF left on March 25, 1990, Sri Lanka offered to host the fifth SAARC Summit. It was, however, agreed at the Islamabad meeting that Colombo would host the fifth Summit in 1989, and Maldives would be given the special honor of hosting the sixth Summit in 1990, to coincide with the latter's twenty-fifth anniversary of independence from Britain (Male' Declaration, 1990:14). A diplomatic confrontation ensued between Maldives and Sri Lanka. Finally, Sri Lanka relented in favor of Maldives, where the fifth Summit convened from November 21-23, 1990.

The Male' Summit was held against the background of conflicting international developments. On the one hand, the Cold-War era had come to an end with the disappearance of East-West conflict. On the other, the Gulf crisis brought massive amount of sophisticated weaponry to the doorstep of South Asia. The arms build-up in the Gulf had obvious implications for peace and environment for South Asia. On the home front, new governments came into office in India, Pakistan and Nepal. The Male' Summit, thus, started with new problems and new approaches.

The Male' summit was significant for two reasons. (1) At the persuasion of India's new prime minister, the summit leaders decided to extend economic cooperation to the core areas. India's foreign secretary, Muchukund Dubey, provided the rationale for this kind of cooperation: "SAARC will acquire a self-sustaining momentum only when hard core economic cooperation becomes integral to its activities" (Viswam, 1990:8). (2) Apart from emphasizing the necessity for economic cooperation in core areas, the Indian prime minister appealed for more action-oriented, business-like discussions than some of the ritualistic formalities witnessed at the earlier SAARC forums. He even departed from the earlier stance of India when he urged the member countries to look into the organizational dynamics and mechanisms of other regional organizations, such as ASEAN, EC, and APEC and build up regular contacts with them regarding specific projects (Viswam, 1990:8). India's initiatives seemed to have received enthusiastic response from the leaders of member countries.

Some of the important decisions reached at the Male' Summit were:<sup>20</sup> (1)

The Heads of State or Government signed the Convention to Combat Drug Trafficking in the region, along the lines of the Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism signed earlier in 1987. (2) It was decided to establish joint ventures in the field of cottage industries and handicrafts, and the Secretary-General was directed to explore the modalities and other details of such ventures. (3) The proposal to establish a SAARC Regional Fund to finance regional projects was accepted. (4) It was decided to set up a nucleus Human Resource Development Center at Islamabad, a Regional Tuberculosis Center at Kathmandu and a Regional Documentation Center at New Delhi. (5) Visa exemptions for travel within the region, earlier applicable only to the Supreme Court Judges and Members of Parliaments, were extended to heads of national academic institutions. To develop people-to-people contact program, the leaders decided to increase exchanges among South Asian journalists. The idea of a SAARC tourist exchange program, initially with five hundred tourists a year under relaxed visa regulations, was also proposed. (6) It was decided to hold such programs as seminars, workshops, films and television documentaries to observe the year 1990 as the "SAARC Year of Girl Child," 1991 as the "SAARC Year of Shelter," 1992 as the "SAARC Year of Environment," and 1993 as the "SAARC Year of Disabled Persons." It was hoped that such programs, by highlighting the common problems, would create a collective consciousness in South Asia. (7) The Secretariat was authorized to share information and exchange reports, studies and publications with the European Community and ASEAN in the identified

areas of cooperation. The Male' Summit can be generally considered as a collective effort to consolidate SAARC activities.

#### Colombo Summit

The sixth SAARC Summit, which was scheduled to be held at Colombo from November 7-9, 1991, was postponed following the King of Bhutan's (Jigme Singye Wangchuk) inability to attend the Summit because of the officially stated reason of widespread domestic violence and unrest in the capital city of Thimpu. While the idea of holding the Summit with a representative of the King of Bhutan was agreeable to Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Maldives and Nepal, India opposed it on technical grounds. According to Indian arguments, holding the summit in the absence of one of the heads of state would violate the SAARC charter. The charter stipulates that the Heads of state or Government of all the member-nations must be present for the summit to take place. Moreover, India argued that holding a summit meeting without heads of the state or government would set an unwelcome precedent and undermine the significance of summit meetings. While India might not have played a role in instigating Bhutan to sabotage the conference, as was widely reported in the media in Colombo and Pakistan,<sup>21</sup> the Indian government certainly did not empathize with the beleaguered Sri Lankan President to save the sixth Summit. Several developments can be mentioned to explain India's unhelpful action.

Relations between New Delhi and Colombo began to deteriorate after Ranasinghe Premadasa succeeded Jayawardene as the new President of Sri Lanka in January 1989. The new president's stubborn stance about the immediate withdrawal of IPKF from the island, without taking into consideration the logistical problems, was not appreciated by New Delhi. India's proposal of a phased withdrawal of the IPKF was rejected by the new Sri Lankan president. Even president Premadasa refused to host the SAARC Summit in Colombo in 1989 on this ground. Moreover, he invited the LTTE leaders for direct negotiation and sought the Tamil militants' support to fight against the common enemy, the IPKF. Such actions exposed the hollowness of New Delhi's foreign policy, caused quite a bit of embarrassment in New Delhi's policy-making circles and more importantly, led to an increase in tension between Tamil Nadu and New Delhi.

During 1989-1991, Premadasa's inept handling of the domestic situation in Sri Lanka was criticized by the opposition parties. In October 1991, there was a move to impeach the president. Premadasa was convinced that the impeachment move by the opposition party was inspired by New Delhi in order to discredit him. To save himself from further political humiliation, he blamed India and expelled the local correspondent of All India Radio on the charge of false and malicious reporting. Such symbolically provocative actions further cooled relations between Colombo and New Delhi.

The cancellation of the Summit was widely perceived as the collapse of the SAARC movement. Commenting on the failure of the sixth SAARC Summit, *The Economist* observed, "it [SAARC] looks more than ever like an idea whose time has yet to come."<sup>22</sup> However, as a result of intensive diplomatic consultation, mainly undertaken by the President of Maldives, Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, it was agreed to hold a one-day Summit at Colombo on December 21, 1991. The King of Bhutan's apology for his failure to attend the November SAARC Summit seemed to have worked well for regional cooperation spirit in the Colombo Summit. The holding of the sixth SAARC Summit proved the skeptics wrong and confirmed the fact that South Asian ruling elites were still committed to keep SAARC alive.

Despite the truncated nature of the Colombo summit, some important decisions, with far-reaching implications for the future growth of SAARC, were taken by the Heads of the state of the seven South Asian countries. (1) It was decided to establish an Independent South Asian Commission on Poverty Alleviation, the Inter-Governmental Group (IGG). (2) A SAARC Fund for Regional Projects (SFRP) was approved. (3) On the initiative of Bhutan, a South Asian Development Fund was proposed to be set up as soon as possible. (4) A Committee on Environment was established. (5) The Sri Lankan proposal of establishing SAARC Preferential Trading Arrangement (SAPTA) by 1997 was also approved for consideration. (6) It was decided to recognize non-governmental organizations (NGOs), professional associations and private sector bodies at regional level.

Thus, the two most critical areas in South Asia, poverty and trade, were addressed at the Colombo summit. A common attack on poverty and a pragmatic approach to trade, as the Indian Prime Minister emphasized in the meeting, " will provide SAARC the necessary momentum." <sup>23</sup>

The Summit, more than anything else, demonstrated SAARC's will to survive. It was also clear that despite differences South Asian ruling elites would like to keep SAARC alive because they very well realize that the disappearance of this organization will deprive them of regular annual opportunities to meet and discuss many of their problems at the highest political level. In the next chapter, the organizational structure of SAARC is evaluated to provide some understanding about the structure of SAARC meetings and other institutional frameworks of SAARC, that have evolved so far.

**Endnotes:**

1. According to this doctrine, an individual's status in the society is determined by his profession and nature of his work rather than his birth, which was the basic principle of Hindu *Varna* system.
2. For a detailed discussion of how British rule contributed to the disintegration of Indian economy and how the flow of resources from India to Britain, the "Economic Drain," contributed to Britain's Industrial Revolution and thus became India's "aid" for Britain's industrialization see Hamza Alavi, "Formation of Social Structure of South Asia Under the Impact of Colonialism," in Hamza Alavi and John Harriss eds., *Sociology of Developing Societies: South Asia*, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1989, pp. 5-19.
3. Hamza Alavi has labeled this class as *salarial*, that is, those who sought formal qualifications required to do government jobs at various levels and who either actually occupied or aspired to such jobs. The political role of the *salarial*, according to Alavi, was quite ambivalent. While as individuals they demonstrated their loyalty to the colonial regime, as a class they initiated and backed (in the later part of the nineteenth century) nationalist movement which, after declaring its loyalty to the British crown, would politely petition for a greater measure of "self-government" within the British Empire. This class was described as the moderate nationalist in the Indian freedom struggle against the British Empire. See *Ibid*, 1989:17.
4. Historically, Indian rulers - i.e., the Mauryas, the Guptas, and Harshvardhana in ancient India, Muslim rulers in medieval India and the British in modern India - have shared the one world view that Indian subcontinent is one strategic entity and thus its security can be guaranteed by exercising hegemony over neighboring states and extending Indian empire to other regions. For an insightful discussion of how historical imperatives lead modern India to treat the whole of South Asia as a strategic entity see Maya Chadda, "From an Empire State to a Nation State: The Impact of Ethno-Religious Conflicts on India's Foreign Policy," in Hafeez Malik ed., *Dilemmas of National Security and Cooperation in India and Pakistan*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993.
5. For a detailed discussion of South Asian countries' relationship with each other see Barry Buzan and Gowher Rizvi, *South Asian Insecurity and the Great Powers*, London: Macmillan Press Ltd., chapters 3 and 4, 1986.
6. A number of intellectuals and bureaucrats from Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka seem to share this view. One reason why the Muslim elites supported for an independent state of Pakistan was that they did not want to play a subservient role in a Hindu-dominated India. The Muslim bourgeoisie wanted their own banks, industries and share of international trade and aid without competition from the Hindu

bourgeoisie. Not surprisingly, the ruling elites of independent Pakistan developed and built a rival economy which severed the subcontinent's economic links, but maintained the vertical linkages with the former colonial metropolis. The political problems between India and Pakistan since partition have further contributed to this process of regional economic de-linkage. For the past four decades, the ruling elites of both India and Pakistan have hardly made any serious effort to re-establish the economic linkage between their countries. For a discussion of this theme see Gowher Rizvi, *South Asia in a Changing International Order*, New Delhi: Sage Publications, chapter 5, 1993.

7. See for a discussion, Partha S. Ghosh, "India's relations with its neighbors: The ethnic factor," in K.M. de Silva and R.J. May ed., *Internationalization of Ethnic Conflict*, 1991, p.38.

8. For insightful discussion on ethnic conflicts in South Asia see, Urmila Phadnis, *Ethnicity and Nation-Building in South Asia*, 1989; Partha S. Ghosh, *Cooperation and Conflict in South Asia*, 1989; Bhabani Sen Gupta, *South Asian Perspectives: Seven Nations in Conflict and Cooperation*, 1988; K.M. de Silva and R.J. May eds., *Internationalization of Ethnic Conflict*, 1991.

9. Bajpai (1990) has argued that Bangladesh launched serious initiatives for regional cooperation in South Asia after its approach to ASEAN for membership was turned down. Bajpai's assertion, however, is not based on firm evidence. See for a discussion, the dissertation of Kanti Prasad Bajpai, *The Origins of Association in South Asia: SAARC, 1979-1989*, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1990, pp. 50-53.

10. For an extensive discussion on various external and domestic moves and initiatives concerning the growth of regionalism in South Asia, see Muni & Muni (1984), Chapters 2 and 3; Bajpai (1990) Chapters 1 and 4.

11. For a discussion on India and Pakistan's reservations see, Muni (1984:31-35); Mohanani, (1992:3-5). Muni (1988b) has argued that India at one stage asked its neighbors to go ahead and set up a regional organization without India's participation if that suited the rest. But this was merely a tactical move to persuade the neighbors to keep the bilateral and contentious issues out of the purview of the regional forum. India very well knew that no regional organization would succeed in South Asia without its participation. See Muni's article, "Prospects for SAARC," *Mainstream*, vol. 26, no. 45, p. 8 and 13.

12. For the Bangladesh draft paper and the areas or items suggested for cooperation, see Muni & Muni, (1984:35).

13. *Dhaka and Bangalore Summits Declarations and Joint Press Releases*, p.2.

14. The *Bangladesh Observer*, on December 6, 1985, published an interview with the Pakistan President, Ziaul Haq, who eloquently spoke about the common heritage, culture and necessities of regional cooperation in South Asia. He also mentioned the utility of a regional identity in South Asia and Pakistan's sincere desire to make SAARC a success. Similarly, all the leading newspapers in South Asia carried headline news and editorials quoting statements from their respective leaders about the positive aspects of regional cooperation in South Asia and the readiness of their countries to make this endeavor fruitful.

15. See, *SAARC* (1988) published by Lok Sabha Secretariat, New Delhi, p.53.

16. The venue of retreat for bilateral talks between the leaders, who attended the second SAARC summit, was Nandi Hills, a delightful hill station 4,850 feet above sea level and 36 miles north of Bangalore in the state of Karnataka. The choice of Nandi Hills was highly symbolic. Nandi Hills is believed to derive its name from *Nandi* (Bull), which is described as the vehicle of Lord Siva, the most powerful God in Hindu mythology. Lord Siva is generally identified with *shakti* (cosmic energy) upon which life depends. According to Hindu mythology, the destiny of the Universe depends on Lord Siva. Being the carrier of Lord Siva Nandi (Hills) was supposed to provide cosmic energy to the life of SAARC.

17. See L.K. Sharma's commentary in *The Times of India*, on November 20, 1986.

18. Quoted in Mohanan (1992:68).

19. See *Islamabad Summit Declaration and Joint Press Release*, SAARC document (1988).

20. See Male' Summit Declaration and Joint Press Release, SAARC Document (1990).

21. See particularly, *Daily Observer*, and *Daily News*, November 8-9, 1991. Articles in *Pakistan Times*, November, 14, 1991, also supported the Colombo accusation about India's role in wrecking the Summit. Prominent newspapers in India - that is, *The Times of India* (November 12, 1991), *The Statesman* (November 12, 1991), and *The Hindu* (November 13, 1991) supported India's decision. For the defense of India's position see, G.S. Dhanjal, "SAARC: A 'Summit Fiasco'," *Mainstream*, December 14, 1991, pp. 25-27.

22. See "South Asia: A family row," *The Economist*, November 16, 1991.

23. In this context, the Indian Prime Minister's emphasis on intra-regional commercial and economic exchange seems salutary for the growth of SAARC. See the speech of the Indian Prime Minister, P.V. Narasimha Rao, at the sixth SAARC Summit, Colombo, December 21, 1991, printed and distributed by the Directorate of

Advertizing and Visual Publicity, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting,  
Government of India, December 1991.

## **CHAPTER IV SAARC: ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND EVALUATION**

### **Structure of SAARC Meetings**

This chapter has examined the structure of SAARC meetings and the scope and limitations of various institutions of SAARC that have evolved so far. After indicating several shortcomings of the existing institutions, the chapter has made some suggestions for the institutional improvements necessary for the growth of SAARC.

The present structure of SAARC, as discussed below, is a result of long and arduous process that started in 1980. Discussions about institutional arrangements for SAARC were regularly held in the meetings of the Study/Working groups and Foreign Secretaries during 1981-1983 (Saksena, 1989:87). Finally, prior to the SARC Declaration in August 1983, a two-tier structure emerged with the Study/Working groups as Technical Committees and Foreign Secretary level meetings as Standing Committees. The SARC Declaration of August 1983 provided for regular and highest level interactions for cooperation among foreign secretaries only. The communique issued called for meetings at Foreign Ministers level "as and when deemed appropriate" (SARC Declaration, August 1-2, 1983). However, in practice, as Saksena (1989:88) has observed, each meeting of the Standing Committee has been followed by the seven Foreign Ministers of SAARC countries. The next significant development, as far as the institutional arrangements of SAARC are concerned, took

place in the first summit meeting at Dhaka in December 1985. The ground work for the Dhaka summit was prepared at Thimpu Foreign Ministers meeting in May 1985. The draft charter prepared at Thimpu meeting recommended that summit meeting should be held once in two years. But the leaders at Dhaka summit changed the schedule of the meeting to once in every year. Again, while the Thimpu draft charter had no clear provision for the establishment of a SAARC Secretariat, the Charter adopted at Dhaka (Art. VIII) agreed in principle to set up Secretariat at an "appropriate time." Finally, the Secretariat was established in Kathmandu in January 1987, following the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by the seven Foreign Ministers during the second SAARC summit meeting at Bangalore in November 1986.

The highest organ of SAARC, the *Heads of State or Government Meeting* (also known as the *Summit Meeting*), is supposed to meet at least once a year. *The Council of Ministers*, comprising the foreign ministers of member states, meets twice a year and may meet in extraordinary session as and when necessary to formulate policies, review progress, decide upon new areas of cooperation, and establish additional mechanisms to carry out SAARC's activities. *The Standing Committee*, which consists of the foreign secretaries of the member states, meets as often as deemed necessary, but at least once a year, and submits periodic reports to the Council of Ministers. It is entrusted with the responsibility to monitor and coordinate programs of cooperation, approve projects and modalities of their financing, mobilize regional

and external resources and identify new areas of cooperation based on appropriate studies.

Next in the hierarchy are the *Technical Committees*, which have representatives from all member states. The Technical Committees report to the Standing Committee. At present (by April 1992), there are thirteen Technical Committees, which are responsible for the implementation, coordination and monitoring of programs in their respective areas of cooperation. Chairmanship of the Technical Committees rotates among member states in alphabetical order every two years. The Standing Committee is also authorized to set up *Action Committees*, with representatives from member states. Action Committees are responsible to implement projects involving more than two, but not all, member states. Different ministries in each country designates a Focal Point to coordinate SAARC activities to implement agreed-upon SAARC projects or schemes. Apart from these hierarchical structures, SAARC has also provided for *Ministerial Meetings* on vital areas of cooperation. So far, three Ministerial Meetings have been held on international economic issues, women in development and environment and development.<sup>1</sup>

## **SAARC Secretariat**

Although the Dhaka Summit hinted about establishing a Secretariat, the details were not spelled out. During the second Summit at Bangalore (1986), the foreign ministers signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on the Establishment of the SAARC Secretariat, delineating in some detail the modalities of staffing, funding and functioning of the Secretariat.<sup>2</sup> The Secretariat was inaugurated in Nepal's capital Kathmandu, on January 16, 1987. The role of the Secretariat is to coordinate and monitor the implementation of SAARC activities, provide professional service to various SAARC meetings, and serve as the channel of communication between SAARC and other international organizations.

The Secretariat comprises the Secretary-General, seven Directors (one from each member country) and General Services Staff. The Council of Ministers appoints the Secretary-General upon nomination by a member country. The appointment is based on the principle of rotation in alphabetical order and is made for a non-renewable tenure of two years. The Secretary-General holds the rank and status of an Ambassador.

The seven Directors are appointed by the Secretary-General upon nomination by the member countries for a period of three years. In special circumstances, the Secretary-General can extend a Director's appointment for a period not exceeding three more years in consultation with the concerned member country. A Director, who holds the rank of a Counsellor, is in charge of a functional unit called a division. Frequent inter-divisional meetings, presided over by the Secretary-General, are held to ensure close interaction and coordination among the divisional units. Initially, four directors were appointed by India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The Council of Ministers meeting in Islamabad in November 1989 decided to expand the numbers to seven directors. Thus, Directors from Bhutan, Bangladesh and Maldives joined the Secretariat in 1990 (*SAARC Record*, November 1990:20). The General Services Staff are appointed by the Secretary General from the nationals of the member countries through an open recruitment process.

### **Financial Arrangements of SAARC Activities**

Broadly speaking, there are three levels of financial arrangements for SAARC activities. At the first level, member countries make annual pledges for financing SAARC activities at the national level. As can be expected, allocations increase every year.<sup>3</sup> The allocated funds remain at the disposal of member countries and generally cover the cost of hosting of meetings and organization of SAARC-related events within the country and of sending delegations to meetings, seminars and workshops held in other countries.

The second level of financial arrangements concerns with the budget of the SAARC Secretariat. At the Bangalore Summit (1986), the member countries agreed on a formula according to which each member country is required to contribute a minimum of 3 percent toward the annual budget expenditure of the Secretariat (Table 4.1). The minimum 3 percent payment indicates equality among the seven member states. Besides, 3 percent payment, each country makes an additional contribution assessed on the basis of its per capita income and the economic capability.

**Table 4.1. Contribution of SAARC Countries to Annual Budget Expenditures of the Secretariat**

Member State	Equal Contribution	Assessed Contribution	Total Share
Bangladesh	3%	8.35%	11.35%
Bhutan	3%	2.00%	5.00%
India	3%	29.10%	32.10%
Maldives	3%	2.00%	5.00%
Nepal	3%	8.35%	11.35%
Pakistan	3%	20.85%	23.85%
Sri Lanka	3%	8.35%	11.35%
Total	21%	79%	100.00%

Source: Abul Ahsan (1992), *SAARC: A Perspective*, p.14.

The third level of financial arrangements relates to the expenses of regional institutions. The host country is required to bear 40 percent of the cost of regional institutions. The remaining 60 percent is distributed among all seven countries on the basis of the same formula applied to the budget expenditures of the SAARC Secretariat. Thus, 21 percent of the balance 60 percent (that is, 12.6 percent) is shared equally and the remaining 79 percent of the balance 60 percent (that is, 47.4 percent) is shared by the member countries (Ahsan, 1992:15). The total expenses of the institutional costs for the host and the non-host countries are given in Table 4.2.

#### **Evaluation of the Institutional Arrangements**

Although the SAARC Charter provides for Focal Points, which are patterned after the "contact-man-system" of the Nordic Council, to help implement the schemes or projects agreed upon by the Technical Committees, the system seems to be non-operational. The Focal Point officers of the ministries of the member countries are supposed to follow up the decisions of the Technical Committees and constantly interact among themselves about the progress and difficulties made on particular projects. In reality, the Focal Point officers have not been designated by some member countries despite continuous requests by the Technical Committees. As a result, the status of several projects or schemes are not known even before the eve of Technical Committee's meetings, leading to a waste of time and postponement of several meetings.

Such projects as South Asian Center for Research and Development of Postal Services, and the Regional Software Telecommunication Center (with support from ITU) could not take off because of the lack of coordination among the Focal Points of the member countries (Saksena, 1989:94).

Most SAARC activities are proposed by the Technical Committees. Some programs are chosen strictly from a technical point of view without any regional focus or even regional purpose. There is clearly a need to reverse the present role of the Technical Committees from being the main progenitor of activities to being instruments for preparing feasibility studies and projects as suggested from time to time by the Standing Committee and the Council of Minister (Ahsan, 1992:12).

**Table 4.2. SAARC Countries' Shares of Expenses of Regional Institutions**

Country	Mini- mum for Host %	Equal Shares (of 60%) %	Assessed Shares (of 60%) %	Total (%)			
				Host	Non-host		
Bangladesh	40	(3)	1.8	(8.35)	5.01	46.81	6.81
Bhutan	40	(3)	1.8	(2.00)	5.00	46.00	6.00
India	40	(3)	1.8	(29.10)	17.46	59.26	19.26
Maldives	40	(3)	1.8	(2.00)	1.20	43.00	3.00
Nepal	40	(3)	1.8	(8.35)	5.01	46.81	6.81
Pakistan	40	(3)	1.8	(20.85)	12.51	54.31	14.31
Sri Lanka	40	(3)	1.8	(8.35)	5.01	46.81	6.81

Source: Abul Ahsan (1992), *SAARC: A Perspective*, p.16.

SAARC's Secretariat seems to be patterned after the ASEAN Secretariat. But while ASEAN took almost nine years to set up its Secretariat, SAARC accomplished this task in less than two years (since the first Summit in 1985). Establishment of the Secretariat within such a short time indicates determination among the policy-makers in South Asia regarding cooperative activities in the region. Moreover, the Secretariat has given a sense of permanence to SAARC.

However, the role of the Secretariat and the Secretary-General remain unclear. Abul Ahsan (1992:21), the first Secretary-General, has pointed out three areas to improve the role and visibility of the Secretariat. First, the Secretariat should be given increased responsibility in the preparation of SAARC meetings and their documentation. Second, the Secretariat should be given the power, as is the case with the European Commission, to propose projects and programs of its own for consideration by the SAARC Summit or the Council of Ministers. Thirdly, the Secretariat should have some mechanism such as the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation (CFTC), so that it can provide assistance to the member state in specific fields. The fund also can help the Secretariat to evolve a system of centralized preparation and administration of projects and programs.

The Secretary-General has not yet been authorized to communicate directly with the ministries of the member countries regarding progress in implementation of a particular project already approved by the Standing Committee. In contrast, the

ASEAN Secretary-General is authorized to do so (Saksena, 1989:93). Moreover, a two year non-renewable appointment is too short a time for the Secretary-General to take any initiative regarding SAARC activities.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, there is a need for suitable extension of both the Secretary-General's and the Directors' tenure. Moreover, there is a consensus that the SAARC Secretary-General, like his Commonwealth counterpart, should have the authority to commission studies on any regional issue.

Each member country contributes voluntarily for funding of projects in local currencies. The inherent limitation in such kind of funding is that it can only be utilized in the country concerned. Moreover, voluntary contributions for such vitally important matters as SAARC projects is not a good idea. Given South Asian countries' enormous needs, member states may put their money on other priority areas, thus jeopardizing prompt implementation of SAARC projects. Recently, a SAARC Fund for Regional Projects (SFRP) has been approved in 1991 to correct this limitation, but no concrete progress has yet been made in this regard.

While the principle of unanimity for any decision is satisfactory on paper, ensuring equality among member states, the result is obstruction on some occasions. For a smooth decision making process, unanimity may be considered as the guiding principle, but at the same time, as practiced in Economic Community of the West African States (ECOWAS), those who remain absent or abstain from the meetings

may not be counted in taking a decision regarding a particular project. In other words, 7-x formula can be applied in case of a stalemate in deciding the fate of a SAARC project.

### **Evaluation of SAARC**

Since its formation in 1985, SAARC has grown in scope and content. The broad areas of cooperation under the Integrated Programme of Action (IPA) have expanded to thirteen. Approximately, 361 SAARC activities had taken place by November 1990.<sup>5</sup> The SAARC Food Security Reserve, which is widely hailed as a positive development given the need of the region, now has a stock of some 241,580 tons (*SAARC Document*, April, 1992). SAARC regional conventions on two crucial areas in the region, that is, terrorism and narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, were signed in November 1987 and November 1990 respectively. While the Regional Convention on Suppression of Terrorism has been ratified by all member states and came into force on August 22, 1988, the SAARC Regional Convention on Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances awaits ratification by the member states.

So far, three Regional Institutions have been established (*SAARC Document*, April 1992). The SAARC Agriculture Information Center (SAIC) has been functioning at Dhaka since December 1988. The SAARC Tuberculosis Center (STC) at Kathmandu became operational in 1992. The SAARC Meteorological Research

Center was established at Dhaka in 1992. Final decisions have been taken by the Heads of the States (1992) to establish SAARC Human Resource Development Center at Islamabad and SAARC Documentation Center at New Delhi. In addition, the SAARC Fund for Regional Projects, which could make available credit on easy terms for the identification and development of regional projects, was established in October 1991. The Fund is managed by a Regional Council of Development Financing Institutions of Member Countries. So far, the Council has held two meetings in 1992, with representatives from Development Financing Institutions (DFIs) of all the SAARC countries, to finalize the modalities of funding and implementation of projects. The South Asian countries are also considering to set up a South Asian Development Fund soon (*SAARC Document*, April 1992).

In order to facilitate cooperation in core economic areas and environment, two important Committees, the Committee on Economic Cooperation (COEC) and Committee on Environment (COE) have been set up. The COEC held two meetings in 1991 and 1992 to identify some feasible areas of cooperation. COEC's assessment of SAPTA proposal as mooted at the Colombo Summit in 1992, was submitted to the Dhaka Summit in 1993. The first meeting of the COE was held at Dhaka in 1992, with representatives from all SAARC countries. Areas identified for immediate actions at this meeting were strengthening the environment management infrastructure, sound land and water use planning, mountain development, coastal zone management, forestry, energy, hazardous waste management, pollution control, and bio-diversity

management (*SAARC Newsletter*, January-March 1992). Following the Colombo Summit decision, an Independent South Asian Commission on Poverty Alleviation consisting of eminent persons from each SAARC member country was established. The Commission held its first meeting at Colombo in April 1992. The final report of the Commission is expected to be published in 1993 (*SAARC Document*, April 1992).

The SAARC Audio Visual Exchange (SAVE), which covers monthly television and radio programs in all SAARC countries, is the most successful and well-known program in the SAARC region. At its ninth meeting at Kathmandu in January 1992 SAVE Committee approved programs for telecast and broadcast in SAARC countries during the year 1992-1993.<sup>6</sup> A modest beginning has been made for the exchange of volunteers in the region under the SAARC Youth Volunteer Program. Special SAARC travel documents are being issued now to the Supreme Court Judges, Members of the Parliaments, and heads of academic institutes to facilitate closer and more frequent contacts among the peoples of the region. At present, fifty SAARC scholarships and thirty fellowships are offered to students and researchers to carry out research on SAARC or SAARC-related activities. By June 1991, only two candidates have actually utilized the SAARC scholarship and five have been awarded fellowships (*SAARC Record*, June 1991). Recently, several non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have sprung up in the SAARC region to help provide input into the activities of the Technical Committees and to disseminate information about SAARC throughout

the region. According to the third Secretary-General of SAARC, Mr. Ibrahim Hussain Zaki, three NGOs are already playing significant roles in the region: the SAARC Friendship Organization, the SAARC Lawyers Organization and the SAARC Women's Organization.<sup>7</sup>

It is obvious that SAARC has evolved and is evolving in the ASEAN way. But, whereas ASEAN progressed slowly and gradually, SAARC has been trying to accomplish too many things in too short a time. As one observer put it, "the South Asian psyche of impatience is putting pressure on SAARC Summit participants to make attempts to accomplish far too many things than the organization could realistically and reasonably achieve within such a short time and within such a difficult region."<sup>8</sup>

It is, however, true that most of the achievements of SAARC exist on paper. They are not yet translated into reality. The most heralded SAARC accomplishment, the SAARC Food Security Reserve, could not be utilized to meet the needs of Bangladesh during its recent natural disaster in 1991. The Convention on Suppression of Terrorism is an eyewash, as both India and Pakistan have failed to curtail the movements of terrorists across their borders.<sup>9</sup> It is also true that most SAARC activities are confined to the holding of seminars, workshops, and short training programs. These activities may be useful, but they do not address priority areas and lack visibility and a regional focus, so essential for evolving a South Asian

identity, particularly at the initial stage of the organization. Most importantly, SAARC suffers from an acute resource crunch. Unless, the organization is successful in mobilizing funds and technical know-how from outside sources, most of its projects can not be implemented and thus, "the relevance of this grouping for the region will long remain limited" (Ahsan, *Dawn*, June 1989).

### **Conclusion**

It seems, SAARC's problems are too many, concrete achievements are too little and popular expectations are too high. Not surprisingly, its growth has been limited. But, as Mr. Abul Ahsan, the first Secretary-General of SAARC has succinctly observed:

Yet the hundreds of activities and programmes concluded under the framework of the organization since the first meeting of the Foreign Ministers held in New Delhi in August 1983 testify to the growing strength of the organization. Equally, it is a measure of the confidence reposed by the member states in SAARC as an instrument of cooperation for economic betterment and social progress in the region. In a broader context, SAARC has initiated a process for gradual re-orientation of *South Asian* attitude and perception about South Asia. It is forging a sense of South Asian consciousness and a regional identity. It has provided an opportunity for the periodic meetings at the highest political level and among policy makers, administrators and experts. Through growing personal contacts, exchange of views and other means it is helping to narrow the information gap that has long separated *South Asians* from one another. No doubt, the organization is still a long way from addressing the deep-rooted suspicions and outstanding problems in the region; but experience has shown that discussions during SAARC meetings, though informal in nature and outside its framework, have helped contain many difficult situations. Indeed, SAARC has opened a new horizon for South Asia.<sup>10</sup>

Concurring with this assessment, Mr. Kant Kishore Bhargava, the second Secretary-General of SAARC comments that since its inception, SAARC's development "has been a journey of faith in the vitality and efficacy of regional cooperation" (*SAARC Record*, 1991:1). He goes on to add that "despite bilateral problems, SAARC is expected to experience a slow and steady growth until the forty years of dissonance in the region is overcome by a process of mutual confidence building, facilitated in the SAARC forums."<sup>11</sup> It is unrealistic to believe that SAARC can solve the complex national and regional problems in South Asia. Like other regional organizations, SAARC can create conditions which may be conducive for South Asian political leaders to meet regularly, to carry on dialogues and negotiation to address their mutual problems. Until now, SAARC has performed this role quite well, and there is no reason to believe why the organization will not continue to play such a role in future. Many observers on South Asian politics, both within and outside the region, share this view.<sup>12</sup>

No regional organization can become viable without a growing realization on the part of its members regarding the need and desirability of collective action on some critical matters of common interest. To what extent the South Asian countries and their people feel or perceive the necessity of collective action is explored in the following two chapters.

**Endnotes:**

1. See, *SAARC: An Introduction*. Kathmandu: SAARC Secretariat, April 1992.

2. The Memorandum of Understanding on the Establishment of the Secretariat was signed on November 17, 1986, at Bangalore, India, by the foreign ministers of the seven member countries of SAARC. The Memorandum contains 16 articles, which spell out various aspects of the Secretariat. My discussion about the features of the Secretariat is based on these articles.

3. SAARC countries made the following pledges for SAARC activities during the Fourteenth Session of the Standing Committee in July 1991:

Bangladesh	Bangladesh Takas 7 million (1991-92)
Bhutan	Bhutan Ngultrum 2 million (1991-92)
India	Indian Rupees 20 million (1991-92)
Maldives	Maldivian Rufiyaa 325,000 (1991)
Nepal	Nepalese Rupees 7 million (1991-92)
Pakistan	Pakistani Rupees 20 million (1991-92)
Sri Lanka	Sri Lankan Rupees 7 million (1991-92)

(See Abul Ahsan, *SAARC: A Perspective*, 1992, p.14.)

4. This was revealed in my Interview with the third Secretary-General Mr. Ibrahim Hussain Zaki (who is from Maldives) and his immediate predecessor Mr. Kant Kishore Bhargava (from India).

5. For a detailed discussion of these activities, see, *The SAARC Record: Retrospect and Prospect, November 1990*. Kathmandu: SAARC Secretariat, June 1991, pp. 23-48.

6. For the schedule of SAVE programs during 1992-1993, see *SAARC Newsletter*, vol.III, No.1, January-March 1992.

7. The third Secretary-General of SAARC, Mr. I.H. Zaki, who is from Maldives, enthusiastically mentioned these three NGOs during my discussion with him in June 1992.

8. This is Muhammad Shamsul Huq's comment during my discussion with him in

May, 1992. Prof. S.D. Muni of Jawaharlal Nehru University also expressed a similar view during my interview with him in May 1992.

9. Prof. Rehman Sobhan of Bangladesh Institute of Strategic Studies, Dhaka, and two other foreign policy officials of New Delhi have expressed this view during my conversation with them in April 1992.

10. The Secretary-General's article, entitled "SAARC - the new horizon," was published in *Dawn*, June 13, 1989.

11. Mr. Bhargava expressed this view during my conversation with him at New Delhi in May 1992. His views are identical with Prof. S.D. Muni, who has expressed this view on numerous occasions.

12. See particularly, the writings of Muni (1989), Rais (1987), Islam Khan (1991), Maass (1991), M. Haas (1989a), Chopra (1986), Bernstorff and Braun (1991), Palmer (1991), Wriggins (1992), Khatri (1992).

**CHAPTER V**  
**DOMESTIC SUPPORT FOR SAARC: THE EVIDENCE OF ELITE AND**  
**ATTENTIVE PUBLIC OPINION**

*In South Asia we seem to be aware of our history more than geography. Until and unless we transcend our history-inspired emotions, it is difficult to achieve peace and cooperation in the region.*

-A Sri Lankan respondent, June 1992

As discussed in chapter II, my assessment of South Asian elite opinion regarding SAARC is based on two streams of mutually independent evidence: (1) extensive open-ended interviews with 408 elites and attentive publics in South Asia, and (2) content analysis of 490 editorials and center-page articles of six prestige newspapers in South Asia. This chapter will examine the data derived from open-ended interviews.

**Logic of Questions**

The main focus of this study is to facilitate an understanding of the nature of elite and attentive public opinion in South Asia toward SAARC. In order to accomplish this objective, I designed a questionnaire with a list of fourteen questions (the list of questions may be found in the appendix) to elicit manifest attitudes of the respondents on the following five SAARC-related issues, which appear to be relevant for the growth of SAARC.

(1) Both domestic and international politics influence the development of regional cooperation process in any region. A conducive international climate toward regionalism will necessarily have a bearing upon the perception of the ruling elites and peoples regarding the scope of regional cooperation in the prevailing international system. National interests, as perceived by the government and the people, greatly influence the evolution of regional cooperation and the degree of national participation. National interests also determine and define the parameters of the regional institutions to be created. Thus, the perception of a congruence between national interest and regionalism will, to a large extent, determine the scope and level of regional cooperation. Indeed, so far, in all regional arrangements this factor has been overriding. Accordingly, the first set of questions were asked to explore the following:

To what extent respondents believe that their country's national interest will be promoted through regional cooperation?

(2) As established by earlier studies (Deutsch, 1963, 1973; Shepherd, 1975, Hewstone, 1986), people's evaluations of achievements and failures of a regional organization provide some understanding about what people expect from a regional organization, and what are the goals and principles that people value most. Such understandings are crucial because they provide policy makers some opportunities to know about issues and areas, where policy of regional cooperation can receive more public support, and some issues and areas, which may need improvement or change of

government policy to strengthen cooperative activities. Given this logic, it was essential to explore the respondents' views on the following points:

(a) What are the respondents' evaluation of achievements and failures of SAARC?

(b) What are the respondents' perception of major impediments to regional cooperation in South Asia?

(3) As Hewstone's work (1986:129-135) in the context of the European Union indicates, people's perceived inequity, that is, people's perception that their country is likely to contribute more than receive from a regional organization, appears to be related to their attitudinal support for a regional organization. Individuals, who believe that their own country will both contribute most and benefit least will have more negative or indifferent attitudes toward a regional organization than those who believe that their own country will either contribute most or benefit least. The attitudes of the latter group will be considerably more negative or indifferent than those of individuals who believe that their country will neither contribute most or benefit least.<sup>1</sup> In light of this logic, the following questions were asked to unravel the degree of perceived inequity among the respondents.

(a) Which member country is likely to benefit most from SAARC?

(b) Which member country is likely to benefit least from SAARC?

(c) Which member country is likely to contribute most to SAARC?

(d) Which member country is likely to contribute least to SAARC?

(4) Utilitarian support refers to perceptions of concrete gains and losses.

Using the reasoning of game theorists, particularly that of prisoner's dilemma, Lindberg and Scheingold (1970) have argued that utilitarian support for European cooperation was based on the perception that involved parties were likely to gain more by cooperation than by an independent or non-cooperative stance. Support for regional cooperation which stems from the perception of mutual economic and political benefits (for example, increased standard of living or a guarantee of peace) is termed, by Lindberg and Scheingold (1970), as cognitive or utilitarian support. Utilitarian support may be assessed by asking simple questions about who gains and contributes what.

Whereas utilitarian support is closely linked to notions of equity (Hewstone, 1986:85), affective support, as argued by Lindberg and Scheingold (1970), is a more emotional response to the idea of integration. It is related to people's shared values, attachment, sympathy, trust, confidence and loyalty to a regional organization or international community. According to functionalists and neo-functionalists, utilitarian support generally precedes affective support (Lindberg and Scheingold, 1970; Shepherd, 1975; Inglehart and Rabier, 1978) because rewards and gains are said to be prerequisites for trust and confidence. Despite the plausibility of these arguments, it is problematic to determine which kind of support emerges first. The functionalists and

neo-functionalists have also argued, in the context of the European Community, that the existence of sufficient levels of utilitarian and/or affective support might result in shifts in public loyalties from national to regional institutions. While shifting of loyalties may facilitate integration, it is not necessary for cooperation. However, the existence of utilitarian and/or affective support makes the prospect of regional cooperation brighter. Accordingly, in this study following questions were asked to explore the respondents' utilitarian and affective support for SAARC.

(a) What are the respondents' perceptions of their country's concrete gain or loss from SAARC membership?

(b) To what extent the respondents believe that SAARC can adequately address the economic, political, security, and ethnic problems of the region?

(5) As argued by Deutsch (1957), Lindberg and Scheingold (1970), and Shepherd (1975), when people in a country perceive other countries positively or favorably, policies supporting regional cooperation are more likely to receive public support. According to Lindberg and Scheingold (1970:45), when people of one country have positive images, or good feelings about another country they tend to develop an "identitive support," which makes the task of policy makers much easier to advance regional cooperation. Alternatively, it can be argued that when people have negative images of other countries, regional cooperation policies are not likely to receive strong public support (Shepherd, 1975:89). For instance, people may be reluctant to cooperate with an aggressively militaristic country. It also seems possible that a country's political

and economic standing may have an impact on one's willingness to enter into or continue regional cooperation (Hewstone, 1986:81). Thus, the last major issue explored in this study was:

What kind of national images respondents have about the neighboring countries?

## **Findings and Discussion<sup>2</sup>**

### National Interest and Regionalism

The great majority of respondents in five South Asian countries agreed that the old bipolar arrangements have broken down and that regionalism is a desirable goal in the current international system (Table 5.1).

Some 92 percent of the respondents from Bangladesh, 77 percent from India, 81 percent from Nepal, 94 percent from Pakistan and 84 percent from Sri Lanka viewed the current trend toward regionalism as encouraging (Table 5.1). While some of the respondents expressed their apprehension about protectionism by the developed countries, others were enthusiastic about the prospect of more dynamic interregional cooperation.

**Table 5.1. Current Trend Toward Regionalism is Encouraging**

Category		Bangladesh	India	Nepal	Pakistan	Sri Lanka
Strongly agree	N	34	50	42	45	43
	%	43.5	40.3	66.6	66.1	57.3
Moderately agree	N	38	46	9	19	20
	%	48.7	37.0	14.2	27.9	26.6
Indifferent/not sure	N	6	20	10	4	10
	%	7.6	16.1	15.8	5.8	13.3
Don't agree	N	0	8	2	0	2
	%	0	6.4	3.1	0	2.6
Sample size	N	78	124	63	68	75

*Notes:*

N denotes total number of responses in a category.

Percentage may not sum up to 100 percent because of rounding errors.

**Table 5.2. Promoting National Interest Through Regional Cooperation**

Category		Bangladesh	India	Nepal	Pakistan	Sri Lanka
Very much in favor	N	20	23	17	17	20
	%	25.6	18.5	26.9	25.0	26.6
Conditionally in favor	N	40	46	30	25	38
	%	51.2	37.0	47.6	36.7	50.6
Indifferent/not sure	N	13	37	16	18	15
	%	16.6	29.8	25.3	26.4	20.0
Very much against	N	5	18	00	8	2
	%	6.4	14.5		11.7	2.6
Total	N	78	124	63	68	75

*Notes:*

N denotes total number of responses in a category.

Percentage may not sum up to 100 percent because of rounding errors.

Regarding the promotion of national interest through regional cooperation, a substantial majority expressed their agreement on conditional terms (Table 5.2). Given South Asia's unequal development and resources, this finding is not surprising. The fear of India's domination in all spheres may have contributed to such reasoning. Moreover, almost all the countries have bilateral problems with India. Thus, resolution of bilateral problems in the SAARC forums found strong support from all the respondents except from those in India. About 44 percent of the respondents from India were not convinced that the policy of regional cooperation would promote their national interests (Table 5.2). These Indian respondents preferred India's linkages with ASEAN countries, Japan, Korea, Gulf region and Europe to the intraregional participation.

Most respondents agreed that their countries' foreign policies toward the neighbors was influenced by the domestic issues. Although most Pakistanis and Indians were apprehensive and critical of each other's nuclear plan, no one from these two countries considered the nuclear issue to be an obstacle to regional cooperation. The same view was expressed by most respondents from Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka.

Among the occupational groups, a somewhat stronger minority of Indian journalists (15%) thought that India's national interest would be promoted through regional cooperation. In contrast with these groups, a good number of Indian scholars (44%) and businessmen (35%) supported the view that India's national interest would be best promoted by regional cooperation. In Pakistan, 44 percent scholars and 30

percent journalists believed that Pakistan's national interest would be best promoted by regional cooperation. While the two Pakistani ambassadors agreed with this view, about 57 percent businessmen did not agree. In Sri Lanka, promotion of national interest through regional cooperation found strong favor among scholars (67%), but little support among journalists (23%) and businessmen (21%). The support for SAARC as the best means to promote national interest is virtually uniform among all groups in Nepal. In Bangladesh, an overwhelming majority of scholars (83%) and Journalists (81%) considered regional cooperation as a means to promote their country's national interest. There was no support from the Bangladeshi business group regarding SAARC. In fact, most businessmen explicitly mentioned that SAARC and any trade liberalization would serve the interest of India more than interest of Bangladesh.

#### Positive Aspects of SAARC

The most widely viewed positive aspect of SAARC was the practice of holding regular meetings among the heads of states or governments, foreign and other ministers and bureaucrats (Table 5.3). Given South Asia's widespread mutual distrust and limited intra-regional interaction, it is not surprising that the majority of respondents viewed the meetings as important. Cultural, technical and scientific cooperation also received lot of support. Much support existed for limited visa relaxation, and there was a general feeling that visa relaxation should be extended to all South Asians. SAARC's Regional Food Security Reserve, SAPTA, and plans for poverty alleviation were mentioned as

positive aspects of SAARC by a good number of respondents. Bangladesh's low appraisal of the SAARC Regional Food Security Reserve (66 percent scholars and 70 percent journalists rejected the Reserve as useless) may be due to its frustration in not getting adequate support from the Reserve during the time of natural disaster in 1991. Pakistan's low evaluation of SAPTA reflects the country's fear of India's economic domination in the region.

#### Negative Aspects of SAARC

The majority of respondents mentioned the Indo-Pakistan conflict, mutual distrust among neighbors, and India's domination as the most negative factors in South Asia (Table 5.4). Although signing of two regional conventions on terrorism (1987) and narcotic drugs (1990) are generally considered to be achievements of SAARC, the majority of respondents in India (56 percent scholars, 79 percent journalists and 80 percent civil servants) and Sri Lanka (80 percent civil servants, 63 percent scholars and 81 percent journalists) considered them to be SAARC's failures. While most respondents from India blamed Pakistan for the failure of two conventions, the respondents in Sri Lanka were almost equally split in blaming India and Pakistan for the failure of these two conventions. Respondents from all countries expressed disappointment with the existing visa regulations, which effectively hinders people-to-people contact and mobility across the borders. Overall, respondents seem to be most concerned with the Indo-Pakistan conflict and mutual distrust among certain SAARC

countries. Although protectionism and import-export restrictions are generally considered as impediments to regional cooperation, the majority of respondents from South Asia did not consider them important.

#### Impediments to Regional Cooperation

The continuing Indo-Pakistan conflict was perceived fairly uniformly as the major impeding factor for regional cooperation in South Asia among all groups. Contrary to a generally-held view, India's position in the region and the nuclear issue were not considered to be major impeding factors for regional cooperation in South Asia. Rather, a majority of Bangladeshi scholars (52%) and journalists (67%) cited India's lack of genuine support as a major impediment to further growth of SAARC. This view was endorsed by 63 percent scholars and 65 percent journalists in Sri Lanka. India's lack of sincerity as a major impeding factor for the growth of SAARC found definite support among a substantial majority of Pakistani scholars (64 percent), journalists (74%) and businessmen (64%). A majority of the respondents from all groups in Bangladesh and Nepal felt that India should make more unilateral sacrifices by making concessions on bilateral issues, such as opening its markets for other small South Asian countries. More than 60 percent Pakistani businessmen agreed with this view.

**Table 5.3. Positive Aspect of SAARC**

Category		Bangla- desh	India	Nepal	Paki- stan	Sri Lanka	Row Total
Cultural, technical & Scientific cooperation	N	12	16	7	10	11	56
	%	16.0	13.1	11.1	15.3	14.8	14.0
Visa relaxation for MPs, Supreme Court Judges and heads of academic institution	N	10	14	6	6	9	45
	%	13.3	11.4	9.5	9.2	12.1	11.2
Peace & stability	N	2	6	4	4	3	19
	%	2.6	4.9	6.3	6.1	4.0	4.7
Regular meetings between Heads of State, foreign and other ministers, secretaries at all levels	N	23	20	12	14	12	81
	%	30.6	16.3	19.0	21.5	16.2	20.3
People to people contact	N	8	12	5	9	7	41
	%	10.6	9.8	7.9	13.8	9.4	10.2
SAARC Chair, fellowship & scholarship program	N	4	6	2	3	4	19
	%	5.3	4.9	3.1	4.6	5.4	4.7
SAARC Regional Food Security Reserve	N	2	20	9	13	7	51
	%	2.6	16.3	14.2	20.0	9.4	12.7
Terrorism & drug trafficking	N	-	-	1	-	1	2
	%			1.5		1.3	0.5
SAARC Preferential Trading Arrangement (SAPTA)	N	6	18	6	2	12	44
	%	8.0	14.7	9.5	3.0	16.2	11.0
Poverty alleviation	N	8	10	11	4	8	41
	%	10.6	8.1	17.4	6.1	10.8	10.2
Sample size		75	122	63	65	74	399

*Notes:* N denotes total number of responses in a category; Percentages given on the basis of sample size; Absence of responses is indicated by a dash.

**Table 5.4. Negative Aspect of SAARC**

Category		Bangla- desh	India	Nepal	Pakist- an	Sri Lanka	Row Total
Few concrete achievement	N	3	9	4	5	3	24
	%	4.0	7.3	6.3	7.6	4.0	6.0
Too much border/passport control	N	5	14	2	7	8	36
	%	6.6	11.4	3.1	10.7	10.8	9.0
Mutual distrust	N	7	16	15	10	12	60
	%	9.3	13.1	23.8	15.3	16.2	15.0
Indo-Pakistan conflict	N	14	25	16	18	21	94
	%	18.6	20.4	25.3	27.6	28.3	23.5
Competition between members	N	2	6	6	-	6	20
	%	2.6	4.9	9.5		8.1	5.0
Too much protectionism/import-export restrictions	N	4	14	-	2	5	25
	%	5.3	11.4		3.0	6.7	6.2
SAARC Food Security Reserve - a non-starter	N	12	2	-	-	-	14
	%	16.0	1.6				3.5
Failure to curb Terrorism & drug trafficking	N	4	26	7	-	11	48
	%	5.3	21.3	11.1		14.8	12.0
Fear of India domination	N	13	6	8	11	8	46
	%	17.3	4.9	12.6	16.9	10.8	11.5
Bilateral disputes not resolved	N	11	4	5	12	-	32
	%	14.6	3.2	7.9	18.4		8.0
Sample size		75	122	63	65	74	399

### Perception of Inequity

Very few respondents thought that their own country would be likely to benefit most from SAARC (Table 5.5). However, an overwhelming majority from Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka considered India as benefiting the most from SAARC. The Indians split their replies fairly evenly between these four countries as the likely chief beneficiaries. A very large majority of respondents from India and Pakistan and a substantial majority from Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka viewed their countries as the least likely beneficiary from SAARC (Table 5.6).

An essential part of the equity equation is the perception that one contributes as much as one gains. A substantial majority of Indians (88 percent journalists, 87 percent businessmen, 87 percent civil servants and 73 percent scholars) felt that their country is likely to contribute most, while a large number of respondents from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka agreed with them (Table 5.7). The Pakistanis were, however, split almost equally into two groups, with a large number (56 percent scholars, 65 percent journalists) also asserting that Pakistan is likely to contribute most.

Very few respondents thought that their own country would contribute least to SAARC. However, as Table 5.8 shows, after Bhutan and Maldives, Pakistan was viewed by large number of respondents from India, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka as likely to contribute least. Most Pakistani respondents disagreed with this assessment. On

the other hand, like most Indians, they felt that Pakistan would contribute more and benefit less from SAARC. Perception of this kind may not lead to the formation of negative attitudes toward SAARC, but they certainly lead to an attitude of indifference that bodes ill for the growth of SAARC, which needs active support of both India and Pakistan. As one respondent from India remarked, "If SAARC succeeds, it is well and good. If it doesn't, well, doesn't matter." A majority of Indians seem to share this indifferent attitude toward SAARC.

**Table 5.5 Which member country is likely to benefit most from SAARC?**

Member Country		Country of respondent					Row Total
		Bangladesh	India	Nepal	Pakistan	Sri Lanka	
Bangladesh	N	6	29	9	8	3	55
	%	7.6	23.3	14.2	11.7	4.0	13.4
Bhutan	N	3	0	2	4	0	9
	%	3.8	0	3.1	5.8	0	2.2
India	N	40	16	27	41	43	167
	%	51.2	12.9	42.8	60.2	57.3	40.9
Maldives	N	2	0	1	2	3	8
	%	2.5	0	1.5	2.9	4.0	1.9
Nepal	N	4	24	4	5	4	41
	%	5.1	19.3	6.3	7.3	5.3	10.0
Pakistan	N	18	30	14	4	19	85
	%	23.0	24.1	22.2	5.8	25.3	20.8
Sri Lanka	N	5	25	6	4	3	43
	%	6.4	20.1	9.5	5.8	4.0	10.5
Sample Size		78	124	63	68	75	408

*Notes:*

N denotes total number of responses.

Percentages given on the basis of total number of responses in a category.

**Table 5.6. Which member country is likely to benefit least from SAARC?**

Member Country	Country of respondent						Row Total
	Bangladesh	India	Nepal	Pakistan	Sri Lanka		
Bangladesh	N	38	8	6	3	4	59
	%	48.7	6.4	9.5	4.4	5.3	14.4
Bhutan	N	2	4	0	2	1	9
	%	2.5	3.2	0	2.9	1.3	2.2
India	N	14	96	17	4	14	145
	%	17.9	77.4	26.9	5.8	18.6	35.5
Maldives	N	3	3	0	1	0	7
	%	3.8	2.4	0	1.4	0	1.7
Nepal	N	9	5	25	3	1	43
	%	11.5	4.0	39.6	4.4	1.3	10.5
Pakistan	N	6	3	9	47	9	74
	%	7.6	2.4	14.2	69.1	12.	18.1
Sri Lanka	N	6	5	6	8	46	71
	%	7.6	4.0	9.5	11.7	61.3	17.4
Sample Size		78	124	63	68	75	408

*Notes:*

N denotes total number of responses.

Percentages given on the basis of total number of responses in a category.

**Table 5.7 Which member country is likely to contribute most to SAARC?**

Member Country		Country of respondent					Row Total
		Bangladesh	India	Nepal	Pakistan	Sri Lanka	
Bangladesh	N	15	0	0	0	0	15
	%	19.2	0	0	0	0	3.6
Bhutan	N	0	0	0	0	0	0
	%	0	0	0	0	0	0
India	N	47	119	45	34	48	293
	%	60.2	95.9	71.4	50.0	64.0	71.8
Maldives	N	0	0	0	0	0	0
	%	0	0	0	0	0	0
Nepal	N	0	0	9	0	0	9
	%	0	0	14.2	0	0	2.2
Pakistan	N	10	4	6	32	6	58
	%	12.8	3.2	9.5	47.0	8.0	14.2
Sri Lanka	N	6	1	3	2	21	33
	%	7.6	0.8	4.7	2.9	28.0	8.0
Sample Size		78	124	63	68	75	408

*Notes:*

N denotes total number of responses.

Percentages given on the basis of total number of responses in a category.

**Table 5.8. Which member country is likely to contribute least to SAARC?**

Member Country		Country of respondent					Row Total
		Bangladesh	India	Nepal	Pakistan	Sri Lanka	
Bangladesh	N	0	7	3	3	2	15
	%	0	5.6	4.7	4.4	2.6	3.6
Bhutan	N	28	47	23	28	30	156
	%	35.8	37.9	36.5	41.1	40.0	38.2
India	N	0	0	0	1	0	1
	%	0	0	0	1.4	0	0.2
Maldives	N	26	41	22	25	26	140
	%	33.3	33.0	34.9	36.7	34.6	34.3
Nepal	N	5	8	3	8	9	33
	%	6.4	6.4	4.7	11.7	12.0	8.0
Pakistan	N	14	14	9	0	7	44
	%	17.9	11.2	14.2	0	9.3	10.7
Sri Lanka	N	5	7	3	3	1	19
	%	6.4	5.6	4.7	4.4	1.3	4.6
Sample Size		78	124	63	68	75	408

*Notes:*

N denotes total number of responses.

Percentages given on the basis of total number of responses in a category.

### Utilitarian And Affective Support For SAARC

In terms of concrete gains, no respondents thought that their own countries have achieved anything from SAARC. The majority of respondents, however, agreed that such issues as poverty alleviation, intra-regional trade, environmental disasters and peace can be better addressed through SAARC than bilaterally, suggesting that utilitarian support for SAARC on these issues exist in South Asia (Table 5.9). Indians and Sri Lankans were the most enthusiastic supporters of intraregional trade, while Pakistanis and Nepalis were least enthusiastic. Pakistan's lack of enthusiasm for increase in intraregional trade through tariff reduction can be attributed to its fear of Indian domination in the region. Nepal's special trade linkage with India and the realization that it has nothing more to gain through intraregional trade might have contributed to its lack of enthusiasm on this issue. However, the majority of respondents' belief that SAARC can play an effective role in poverty alleviation, protection of environmental disasters, and peace in the region, along with some support for South Asian Development Fund and SAARC Regional Food Security Reserve, provide good news for SAARC's future (Table 5.9).

Among the occupational groups, a minority of scholars (39%), journalists (29%) and civil servants (20%) in India expressed the hope that India would gain considerably if peace and stability prevailed in the region because of SAARC's existence. Believers in SAARC's potential to bring peace to the region formed a minority in two Pakistani groups, the scholars and the journalists (24 percent and 22 percent,

respectively). In Bangladesh, 33 percent scholars, 40 percent journalists, and 80 percent civil servants expressed optimism that their country would benefit economically from SAARC membership. But, they did not expect any economic gains within next ten years. Expectation of economic gains was also low among Nepalese scholars (27%), and slightly higher among journalists (32%). Only in Sri Lanka, some 50 percent businessmen and 52 percent scholars thought that their country would gain economically if there is an increase in intraregional trade through tariff reduction. Not surprisingly, since 1990, Sri Lanka has been enthusiastically pushing for implementation of South Asian Preferential Trade Arrangement (SAPTA), which was finally agreed upon by the heads of states or governments of seven SAARC members at Dhaka Summit in April 1993.

Among the items on affective support for SAARC, the majority of respondents from all five countries spoke in favor of further visa relaxation for promoting intra-regional tourism and people-to-people contact (Table 5.10). Given the positive effect of travel and contact on people's attitude toward cooperation (Deutsch, 1961; Inglehart, 1971; Hewstone 1986), this finding seems to be significant. As witnessed in Europe and Southeast Asia, frequent travel and contact have appeared to dispel national stereotypes and to make national images more positive, thus leading to more "identitive support" (Lindberg and Scheingold, 1970) and intense political cooperation. It seems reasonable to argue that people's willingness to travel and to establish contact across the borders in South Asia may contribute to SAARC's survival.

A reasonable number of people from Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka agreed that SAARC has created a South Asian consciousness. The SAARC Audio-Visual Exchange program also received uniform support from all five countries. Many respondents, except from Pakistan, agreed that South Asia must speak with one voice in international forums. That several respondents from three relatively developed South Asian countries, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, supported the idea that their countries should make sacrifices to help out other member states in difficulties should be reassuring for SAARC countries. Significantly, respondents in all five countries argued for the acceleration of SAARC's pace. There was unanimity among a fairly large number of respondents that if SAARC does not speed up and address more issue areas, such as trade and security, it seems likely to become a moribund and largely meaningless institution. While such attitudes may indicate impatience, they also seem to reveal people's desire to see SAARC rise above low politics to high politics. However, it should be noted that very few respondents were enthusiastic about SAARC activities. Such lack of enthusiasm may be attributed to SAARC's failure to address salient issues such as trade and security.

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As a whole, both utilitarian and affective support for SAARC seem to be present in South Asia. The level of support may not be sufficient to ensure SAARC's success. But, given the fragile nature of South Asian political economy, modest support ensures the continuation of SAARC, at least for the time being.

**Table 5.9. Utilitarian Support for SAARC**

Item		Bangladesh	India	Nepal	Paki- stan	Sri Lanka	Row Total
My country has gained from SAARC	N	2	-	2	-	-	4
	%	2.8		3.3			1.0
Regional collective effort necessary for environmental protection and disaster	N	11	18	9	5	5	48
	%	15.7	15.5	15.2	8.0	6.9	12.6
Regional collective effort necessary for poverty alleviation	N	17	18	16	11	19	81
	%	24.2	15.5	27.1	17.7	26.3	22.3
Increase in intraregional trade through tariff reduction will be mutually beneficial	N	9	31	2	2	23	67
	%	12.8	26.7	3.3	3.2	31.9	17.6
South Asian Development Fund will benefit my country	N	8	-	9	-	3	20
	%	11.4		15.2		4.1	5.2
Collaborative Scientific research is mutually beneficial	N	5	6	5	6	5	27
	%	7.1	5.1	8.4	9.6	6.9	7.1
SAARC Regional Food Security Reserve is useful	N	2	14	4	14	4	38
	%	2.8	12.0	6.7	22.5	5.5	10.0
SAARC may bring peace to the region	N	9	29	6	19	9	72
	%	12.8	25.0	10.1	30.6	12.5	18.9
SAARC Fund for regional projects will benefit my country	N	7	-	6	5	4	22
	%	10.0		11.3	8.0	5.5	5.8
Sample size	N	70	116	59	62	72	379

*Notes:*

N denotes total number of responses in a category.

Percentages given on the basis of sample size.

**Table 5.10. Affective Support for SAARC**

Item		Bangladesh	India	Nepal	Pakistan	Sri Lanka	Row Total
SAARC has increased South Asian consciousness	N	9	14	8	14	11	56
	%	12.8	12.0	13.5	22.5	15.2	14.7
SAVE has generated SAARC identity	N	11	11	8	13	9	52
	%	15.7	9.4	13.5	20.9	12.5	13.7
Further visa relaxation necessary to promote intraregional tourism and develop people-to-people contact	N	22	31	15	13	19	100
	%	31.4	26.7	25.4	20.9	26.3	26.3
South Asia must speak with one voice in international fora	N	9	20	11	4	9	53
	%	12.8	17.2	18.6	6.4	12.5	13.9
SAARC's pace should be accelerated	N	13	21	11	11	13	69
	%	18.5	18.1	18.6	17.7	18.0	18.2
My country should make personal sacrifices to help out another member state in difficulties	N	5	17	3	5	9	39
	%	7.1	14.6	5.0	8.0	12.5	10.2
I am enthusiastic about SAARC activities	N	1	2	3	2	2	10
	%	1.4	1.7	5.0	3.2	2.7	2.6
Sample size	N	70	116	59	62	72	379

*Notes:*

N denotes total number of responses in a category.

Percentages given on the basis of sample size. Absence of responses is indicated by a dash.

### National Images

From respondents' descriptions of the five South Asian countries seven recurring characteristics emerged (Table 5.11). Out of seven characteristics, three were positive (that is, politically stable, economically and industrially developed, friendly), three negative (that is, aggressively militaristic, authoritarian, weak and economically dependent) and one neutral (that is, external-oriented). A substantial majority of respondents from Bangladesh (83%), Pakistan (94%), and a majority of respondents from Nepal (51%), and Sri Lanka (59%) viewed India as aggressively militaristic. Pakistan was viewed the same way by a majority of Indians, Sri Lankans and Nepalese. Most respondents from all the countries, with the exception of Indians (39%), considered only their own countries as friendly toward the neighbors. Among the South Asian countries, India was viewed as economically and industrially developed, politically most stable and least authoritarian. While a majority of Bangladeshis (53%), Pakistanis (51%) and Sri Lankans (53%) pointed to India as externally-oriented, about half of Nepalese respondents pointed to their own country as most externally-oriented. Overall, on three detrimental factors for the growth of regionalism, (that is, aggressively militaristic, unfriendly and external orientation) India scored very high. It is evident that the South Asian countries do not consider India very supportive of the idea of regional cooperation.

**Table 5.11. (i) National Images of Five South Asian Countries, 1992 (Figure in Percentages)**

Characteristics	Country of respondent									
	Bangladesh (N= 78)					India (N= 124)				
	Bangla- desh	India	Nepal	Pakistan	Sri Lanka	Bangla- desh	India	Nepal	Paki- stan	Sri Lanka
Aggressively militaristic	0	83.3	0	13.2	3	2	22.3	0	67.1	8.5
Politically stable	3	71.3	4	4	3	1	88	7	4	4
Authoritarian	28	2	21	31	18	21	1	23	32	23
Economically developed	0	56	0	23	21	0	51.6	0	23	25
Weak & economically dependent	52	0	39	4	5	47	3.3	40	5.3	4.1
Friendly	63	1.6	21	5.3	9	19	39	29	1.8	11
External-oriented	0	53	0	31	16	21	26	0	36	17

**Table 5.11. (ii) National Images of Five South Asian Countries, 1992 (Figure in Percentages)**

Characteristics	Country of respondent									
	Nepal (N= 63)					Pakistan (N= 68)				
	Bangla- desh	India	Nepal	Pakistan	Sri Lanka	Bangla- desh	India	Nepal	Paki- stan	Sri Lanka
Aggressively militaristic	0	51	0	45	4	0	94	0	3.1	1
Politically stable	3.4	71	8	8.3	9	4	41	12	32	11
Authoritarian	23	2.8	18	30	26	28	11	21	30	10
Economically developed	0	64	0	21	15	0	53	0	39	8
Weak & economically dependent	29	0	47	13	11	32	0	38	19	11
Friendly	0	5	94	0	1	14	0	13	56	17
External-oriented	6	23	48	17	14	7	51	0	24	18

**Table 5.11. (iii) National Images of Five South Asian Countries, 1992 (Figure in Percentages)**

Characteristics	Country of respondent				
	Bangladesh	India	Nepal	Pakistan	Sri Lanka
	Sri Lanka (N= 75)				
Aggressively militaristic	0	59	0	41	0
Politically stable	7.6	51	11.4	13	17
Authoritarian	21	0	24	30	25
Economically, industrially developed	0	51	0	35	14
Weak & economically dependent	35	0	37	11	17
Friendly	2	5	0	6	87
External-oriented	0	53	0	25	22

## Conclusion

Within India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal, the various elite groups generally are closer in their attitudes to each other than they are to the opinion of their counterparts in the other country. The evidence of the elite survey, as examined in this study, indicates that respondents were dissatisfied with the performance of SAARC, although the goals and objectives of regional cooperation were positively evaluated in all countries. Respondents were also disappointed with India's lack of genuine support for SAARC, the continuing Indo-Pakistan conflict and the high level of mutual distrust among South Asian countries. Contrary to popular perception, India's position in the region and the nuclear issue were not considered as major impeding factors for regional cooperation in South Asia. In fact, a majority of the respondents felt that India should make more unilateral sacrifices by making concessions on bilateral issues, such as opening its markets for other small South Asian countries. The general consensus in South Asia is: "India can make or unmake SAARC."<sup>3</sup>

A high degree of perceived inequity among Indians and Pakistanis regarding SAARC appears to be associated with their relative indifference toward SAARC. Low levels of utilitarian and affective support for SAARC among the South Asian publics do not augur well for the growth of the organization. It appears that the activities of SAARC have not yet captured the imagination or interests of even the region's most enlightened people. The existence of a high degree of conditional support for SAARC reveals the gulf

between rhetoric and reality in South Asia. In brief, SAARC suffers from a credibility gap. Non-implementation of two regional conventions, one on terrorism (1987) and the other on narcotic drugs (1990), by South Asian countries and the lack of timely release of food supplies from the SAARC Food Security Reserve to Bangladesh at the time of its cyclone and flood in 1991 have also contributed to SAARC's credibility gap. It is no wonder that there is so little enthusiasm for SAARC. Paraphrasing Raymond Aron (1964) one can say that SAARC may have appealed to the minds of the South Asian elites and attentive publics, but it has a very feeble echo in their heart. Public indifference toward SAARC was very much in evidence in South Asia.

**Endnotes:**

1. Equity theory, as developed in social psychology and economics, is broadly concerned with how people judge what is just, fair, deserved or equitable, and how these perceptions influence behavior (Hewstone, 1986:82). Without explicating the main propositions of equity theory in detail (see Walster et al., 1976), the present work is primarily concerned with the extent to which individuals' "distress" at perceived inequity may be related to their attitudinal support, or lack of it, for SAARC. Although equity theory has been applied to various issues, the first application of the theory to analyze perceptions of the European Community was made by Hewstone (1986). By employing the formula suggested by Walster et al. (1976), Hewstone determined the level of perceived inequity and the consequent support, or lack of it, of West Germans, French, Italians and British for European Community (1986:129-135). Hewstone's methodology, as a whole, is not employed in the present work. Rather, by just asking separate questions about which member states are likely to contribute and benefit most or least, the present work attempts to unravel the degree of perceived inequity among the member states of SAARC.

2. In preparing this chapter, two types of response percentages are given. (1) Percentages are given on the basis of total number of responses in a category. These are given in tables and reported in the text with the table number in parenthesis. (2) Percentages are calculated on the basis of total number of responses from a particular occupational group in a given category. Only those statistically significant findings are reported in the discussion.

3. This phrase seems to be popular among many South Asians. In fact, a number of Bangladeshis, Sri Lankans and Nepalese mentioned this phrase in course of my discussion with them.

**CHAPTER VI**  
**REGIONAL COOPERATION IN SOUTH ASIA: THE EVIDENCE OF THE**  
**ELITE PRESS**

In this chapter, I have examined the following three questions: (1) What role does press play in the formation and change of public opinion? (2) How does press coverage affect the growth of a regional organization? (3) What is the nature and extent of press coverage of SAARC in South Asia?

**Role of Media in the Formation of Public Opinion**

The apparent success of propaganda during World War I convinced many people of the potential power of the media to manipulate people's opinions and attitudes in a relatively short period of time. Lasswell's influential book, *Propaganda Technique in the World War*, brought out clearly the media's power of mass persuasion. Such powerful media effects came to be articulated through a theory called *hypodermic needle* (Berlo, 1960). The theory is also known by several other names: *bullet theory* (Schramm, 1964) and *stimulus-response theory* (Defleur and Ball-Rokeach, 1975). Inspired by Durkheim's and Freud's insights, and systems models of information and communication as developed by Shannon and Weaver (1959), the theory basically assumed that the individual, in modern industrial society, is atomized and irrational, and hence, is more prone to manipulation by media messages (Berkman & Kitch, 1986:2).

The assumptions of *bullet theory* were later challenged by Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet (1948). According to these authors, media message does not effect the audience directly. Instead, the information from the mass media is first absorbed by "opinion leaders" who then transmit the message to the audience. Thus, a two-step flow of communication occurs unlike the one-step flow concept of *hypodermic needle* theory. The role of "opinion leaders" as mediators became important in this two-step flow hypothesis (Berkman & Kitch, 1986:3). The *diffusion of innovations theory*, as popularized by Rogers (1962), gave further credence to the role of opinion leaders. According to this theory, new ideas and techniques do not spread unless they are effectively validated by the opinion leaders in a relevant field, that is, religious, scientific or technical matters (Tehrani, 1991:23). Klapper's (1960) "reinforcement theory" further undermined the great persuasive power of mass media. The theory suggested that "people will avoid exposure to media messages that conflict with their predispositions and will selectively perceive other messages in order to reinforce their predispositions" (Berkman & Kitch, 1986:4).

These "minimal effects theory" of 1950s and 1960s proved irrelevant in the 1970s. Empirical research in the 1970s and 1980s began to recognize the media's ability in "setting the public agenda" ( McCombs & Shaw, 1972). The agenda-setting potential of the media was first recognized by Walter Lippmann (1922). Almost four decades later, Bernard Cohen (1963) elaborated the concept by stating that "the press may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is

stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about" (p.13). In this statement, Cohen made an important distinction between what we think about (cognition) and what we think (opinions or feelings). The media's ability to effect cognitive change among individuals, to structure their thinking and to mentally order or organize the real world for them can be labeled, according to McCombs & Shaw (1977), as "the agenda-setting function of mass communication" (P.5). As the two authors explained:

the agenda-setting is a process in which the media defines important issues around which the individuals formulate their opinions..... Not only the individuals learn factual information about public affairs and what is happening in the outside world, they also learn how much importance to attach to an issue or topic from the emphasis placed on it by the mass media. (1977:10)

By presenting certain topics, events, issues or persons in a particular way, the media can confer a status, create a stereotype and construct an image and thus, influence public opinion (Berkman & Kitch, 1986:6; Parenti, 1986:23).

Opinions may be *fixed* or *fluid* (McCombs et al., 1991:79). *Fixed opinions* are tied to one's central values and core beliefs. Hence, they may not be easy, but not impossible, to change. *Fluid opinions*, on the other hand, are specific problem-oriented. Once that problem is resolved, opinions can change. Opinions are based on mental images or cognitive structures or what social psychologists call *schemas* (McCombs et al., 1991:80; Lau, 1986). These images or cognitive structures or

*schemas* are not absolutely change proof. The quality of new information provided by the media can bring about a "cognitive dissonance" and thus, change individual's perceptual reality and opinions (Brehm & Cohen, 1962:3-7; Parenti, 1986:22-23; Page & Shapiro, 1992:341-354; Zaller, 1987:821-833). Cognitive dissonance occurs when the individual's previous cognitive structures (images or *schemas*) are challenged by new information or situations.

The media's agenda-setting effects can be enhanced or minimized, depending on the audience needs and interests. The *uses and gratification approach* of Katz, Blumer and Gurevitch (1974) suggests that the extent of media effects will be determined on the basis of what needs of the individuals are being satisfied or what gratifications are being derived through attention to the mass media (p.11-35). The *dependency theory* of Defleur and Ball-Rokeach (1975) argues that the media effects depend on the "degree of audience dependence." The greater the audience dependence on the media for information, the stronger the media effects on the public (pp. 255-280). The dependence on media can be reduced by group affiliation and "involvement in interpersonal communication flows", as found in trade unions, civic organizations, political parties, family, religious and educational institutions (Erbing et al., 1980:29; McCombs et al., 1991:17; Tehranian, 1990:51-52).

The extent of media's agenda-setting effects often depends on the issues. On *obtrusive issues* (McCombs et al., 1991:4) or issues of *low politics*, such as inflation, recession and unemployment, the news media play a minor role in the formation of public opinion. The scope of the media manipulation on *obtrusive issues* is limited because they are largely domestic issues, and members of the public have direct personal experience. On the other hand, on *unobtrusive issues* (McCombs et al., 1991) or issues of *high politics*, such as foreign policy matters, "which are least likely to be directly experienced by citizens" (p. 14), the influence of news media seems to be considerably greater (Protess and McCombs, 1991; Cohen, 1963; Page & Shapiro, 1987; Linsky, 1986; Linsky, More & O'Donnell, 1988; Parenti, 1986; Wittkopf, 1990). In the absence of any alternative source of information, the media definition and explanation of a particular foreign policy issue becomes the prevailing opinion in the society through, what Noelle-Neumann (1974) calls, "a spiralling process" (p.44).

Through sustained coverage, the media can raise the salience or perceived prominence of certain issues (McCombs et al., 1991; Page & Shapiro 1987, 1992; Cook et al., 1983; Mackuen & Coombs, 1981). Once an issue becomes more salient, more and more people come to express opinion on it. Then, it becomes difficult for the policy makers to ignore or postpone action on that issue. In other words, sustained media coverage also increases responsiveness of the policy makers.

On many occasions, the decision makers make use of the media to provide false and misleading information to get public support for their policies. In such cases the decision makers set the agenda for public discussion and the press becomes a mere conduit. As Chomsky (1989) has observed, the press helps the ruling elites in "manufacturing" and "engineering" consent for their policies (p. 10; Herman & Chomsky 1987). Ginsberg (1986) has called this process as "domestication of mass belief" by the media (p.58). Chomsky's "propaganda model" (1988, 1989), which has its roots in Gramsci's (1971) concept of "cultural hegemony", throws light on how public opinion is manipulated by the media to serve the interests of the ruling class. Chomsky's analysis, along with the "opinion-policy linkage model" (Wittkopf, 1990:217), have emphasized that the public opinion is not a completely autonomous force emerging from objective needs and circumstances.

It remains largely true that the media, through its ability to raise the salience of certain issues, can influence the formation and change of public opinion. By using typical language and symbols, the media can play a crucial role in creating a favorable or unfavorable image about a particular issue in the public mind. Language and symbols in the media can be especially influential in the area of foreign affairs "where there is little personal experience to draw from" (McCombs et al., 1991:83; Lippmann, 1925:47).

### **The Role of Press: EC, ASEAN and GCC**

Although not conclusive, there are some evidence available which suggest that extensive favorable press coverage can increase the salience and, hence, contribute to the success of a regional organization, while unfavorable press treatment can prematurely destroy its prospect. Inglehart's (1970) findings reveal that a favorable press coverage of European affairs since 1945 created what Karl Mannheim (1972) calls greater "political cultural consciousness" among the Europeans which fostered a cosmopolitan outlook and pro-European attitude among the European public (pp.45-70). Sharing Inglehart's view, Puchala (1970) has argued that the consistently reasoned information provided by the press in the post-World War II period led to "political maturity" of the Europeans, which substantially contributed to an era of peace and integration in Western Europe in the post-1945 period. Pentland (1973) has observed that the press, propaganda and other information services produced enormous quantities of material, ranging from detailed economic data to passionate rhetoric on the purposes of European unity, to keep the "European idea" salient in the public mind at a time when EC was passing through a difficult time because of DeGaulle's pro-nationalist policies (pp.250-51). Some recent findings have suggested that the European Community's image among the European public has fluctuated depending on the type of press coverage of particular Community related issues (Hewstone, 1986; Dalton & Duval, 1986; Feld, 1981; Handley, 1981).

In case of ASEAN, frequent press stories have projected a favorable image of this organization to the Southeast Asian public and the consequent favorable public opinion rallied behind ASEAN to make it successful (M.Haas, 1989:47; Indorf, 1984:10). Unfavorable press stories hastened the demise of ASPAC and SEATO (M. Haas, 1989).

Extensive press coverage of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and its activities from 1981 helped the organization to grow in stature (Nakheleh 1986). The persistent press coverage of three important issues (Gulf security, GCC meetings and their positive outcomes, and various GCC efforts to mediate in the Iran-Iraq war) created a favorable public opinion toward GCC. As Nakheleh (1986) has observed, almost fifty percent of all newspaper articles since the establishment of GCC in 1981 have dealt with regional security, while over twenty-five percent of all press reports in recent years have dealt with GCC meetings, and a substantial part of press reports have highlighted GCC efforts to settle Iran-Iraq conflicts. One interesting aspect of the press coverage in the Gulf, according to GCC secretary General Abdallah Bishara (1986), is that newspapers have ignored the conflicting aspects of GCC negotiations; by reporting only the positive aspects of these meetings, they have helped create a constructive image about the organization among the Gulf public. But for this role of the press, the organization, according to the Secretary General, would have died a "premature death".<sup>1</sup>

The press in South Asia, despite self-imposed censorship and government control, does seem to play an important role in influencing public opinion on both *obtrusive* or domestic issues, such as inflation, recession and unemployment, and *unobtrusive issues*, such as security and foreign policy matters (Haque, 1988; Yadava, 1991; Mujahid, 1991). On some *obtrusive* issues (McCombs et al., 1991:4), there seems to be a two-layered agenda-setting process in operation in South Asia. First, the government provides selective information to the press. Then the press, depending on its orientation, carries the government-fed or further filtered information to the public. Such a practice, occasionally leads to serious conflict between the press and the government. Sometimes, governments in South Asia seem to be more active in setting the agenda for public discussion, and the press chooses to become a mere conduit. Regardless of who sets the agenda, the press appears to be the most powerful channel to communicate messages to the public in South Asia. It is, thus, at a vantage point to influence the public opinion. In South Asia, the print media seem to be more successful in agenda-setting functions than the electronic media, as the latter is under the complete control of the government and, therefore, lacks credibility (Haque, 1990:112). As J.S. Yadava, the Director of the Indian Institute of Mass Communication, has explained:

In South Asia, printed words in newspapers have tremendous credibility and hence influence even today. As such the press is an important arbiter of reality. It shapes in significant ways the opinion and outlook of its readers and, indirectly, of others as well. (1991:132)

On *unobtrusive* issues (McCombs et al., 1991:4), that is, matters of foreign policy, there appears to be a greater congruence between the government and the press views. Three reasons can be attributed to such a role by the press. First, the government is the sole source of information in foreign affairs. Second, barring a few regional issues, foreign affairs is not a high priority area in South Asian politics because it does not substantially influence national politics. Finally, South Asia's lack of global role also contributes to such indifference by the press in foreign affairs.<sup>2</sup> However, this is not to suggest that the press does not play any role at all in foreign policy issues. By focussing and giving sustained coverage, the South Asian press has raised the salience of some foreign policy issues, particularly those pursued toward the neighboring countries, over the past few years.<sup>3</sup>

Since the English language newspapers carry more foreign news than the vernacular press, they seem to exercise considerable influence among the educated and the articulate segments of the population in South Asia. As some communication studies have indicated, topics, issues, or institutions receiving the most coverage in the prestige press not only have attracted more public attention, but also have been identified as the most important issues by the public in South Asia (Haque, 1988:103, 1990:112; Rampal, 1992:77). Given this role of the press, it is reasonable to assume that extensive press coverage of SAARC and SAARC-related activities is likely to increase the visibility of the organization and thus, generate more public interest regarding the activities of the organization.

In light of this understanding, I have examined two questions in this chapter.

(1) What is the extent of press attention to SAARC and SAARC-related activities in South Asia since the establishment of the organization in 1985? Has the press given adequate coverage to SAARC so as to increase its salience and attract more public attention to various SAARC activities? (2) What is the nature of press coverage on SAARC? Is the press coverage generally favorable or unfavorable to SAARC? A content analysis of six South Asian prestige newspapers was conducted to determine the extent and nature of press coverage of SAARC.

The six newspapers, *The Times of India* (Bombay), *The Statesman* (New Delhi), *The Pakistan Times* (Lahore), *The Bangladesh Observer* (Dhaka), *The Rising Nepal* (Kathmandu), and *Daily News* (Colombo), were selected on the basis of the following criteria: (i) they are "prestige newspapers" in terms of ruling elite attention, (ii) they are widely read among the educated and articulate segments of the population throughout the country, and (iii) they are national newspapers with large circulation (Lent, 1982; Kibriya, 1985; Rana, 1982; Gunaratne, 1982; Mujahid, 1991; Chen and Chaudhary, 1991; Merrill, 1991). In these six newspapers, a total number of 490 editorials and center-page articles on SAARC (Table 2.2 in chapter II) that appeared between January 1985 and December 1991 were identified and then subjected to content analysis.<sup>4</sup>

The procedure of content analysis is described in some detail in chapter II. For the purpose of this chapter, it is pertinent to note that the findings are based on a set of four subject-matter categories, that is, *community cooperation, war and peace, economic activity, and international affairs*. The defining attributes of these four categories are explained in chapter II.

### **Newspaper Treatment of SAARC: Evidence and Discussion**

Results on the posture of messages in the editorials and center-page articles on SAARC are shown in table 6.1. and 6.2.

The Bangladesh Observer published more than 89 percent favorable items on SAARC. It published maximum number of items (24.4%) in 1985, the year Bangladesh hosted the first SAARC summit. During the subsequent two summit meetings (that is, 1986 and 1987) the newspaper's coverage of SAARC declined by half and one fourth respectively as compared to 1985 (Table 6.3). The coverage, however, picked up (17.1%) during Islamabad summit in 1988. The end of the military regime in Islamabad, the new Benazir Bhutto administration's positive appraisal of the SAARC movement, and New Delhi's enthusiastic response toward Islamabad's regime change and new policies may have played a role in the renewed enthusiasm of the Bangladeshi press in SAARC. It is encouraging to note that the press coverage increased further (20.3%) during the crucial year of 1989 when

Colombo refused to host the fifth summit because of New Delhi's failure to withdraw IPKF from Jaffna. Being one of the main proponents of SAARC, Bangladeshi press, perhaps, did not want to aggravate SAARC's setback further. The newspaper's coverage was almost steady (20.8%) in 1990, when Maldives hosted the fifth summit. However, since 1990 the coverage of SAARC has steadily declined (Figure 6.3).

Table 6.1. Editorials\Center-page Articles on SAARC (1985-1991)

	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	TL
<i>Bangladesh Observer</i>								
Favorable	21	10	5	11	10	8	6	71
Not Favorable	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	3
Neutral	1	0	1	1	0	2	0	5
Total	22	10	6	13	12	10	6	79
<i>Daily News</i>								
Favorable	9	10	4	4	10	5	21	63
Not Favorable	0	0	2	0	3	1	2	8
Neutral	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	9	10	6	4	13	6	23	71
<i>Pakistan Times</i>								
Favorable	18	12	11	16	9	6	2	74
Not Favorable	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	3
Neutral	0	1	2	0	0	0	2	5
Total	19	13	14	16	9	7	4	82
<i>Rising Nepal</i>								
Favorable	27	32	51	37	16	16	13	192
Not Favorable	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	3
Neutral	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	2
Total	27	32	51	38	16	18	15	197
<i>Statesman</i>								
Favorable	8	2	2	1	3	1	0	17
Not Favorable	0	5	0	0	4	1	2	12
Neutral	1	0	3	1	0	1	0	6
Total	9	7	5	2	7	3	2	35
<i>Times of India</i>								
Favorable	1	3	1	3	1	2	3	14
Not Favorable	3	0	4	0	1	2	2	12
Neutral	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	4	3	5	3	2	4	5	26

Table 6.2. Posture of Editorials/Center-page Articles on SAARC Based on Categories

	Community Cooperation	War & Peace	Economic Activity	International Affairs
<b><i>Bdesh Observer</i></b>				
Favorable	23	22	23	3
Not Favorable	0	2	1	0
Neutral	2	0	0	3
Total	25	24	24	6
<b><i>Daily News</i></b>				
Favorable	28	17	8	10
Not Favorable	3	3	2	0
Neutral	0	0	0	0
Total	31	20	10	10
<b><i>Pakistan Times</i></b>				
Favorable	28	26	15	5
Not Favorable	1	3	0	0
Neutral	2	1	0	1
Total	31	30	15	6
<b><i>Rising Nepal</i></b>				
Favorable	87	39	55	11
Not Favorable	0	2	0	1
Neutral	0	2	0	0
Total	87	43	55	12
<b><i>Statesman</i></b>				
Favorable	9	5	2	1
Not Favorable	3	9	0	0
Neutral	0	2	2	2
Total	12	16	4	3
<b><i>Times of India</i></b>				
Favorable	7	4	2	1
Not Favorable	3	9	0	0
Neutral	0	0	0	0
Total	10	13	2	1

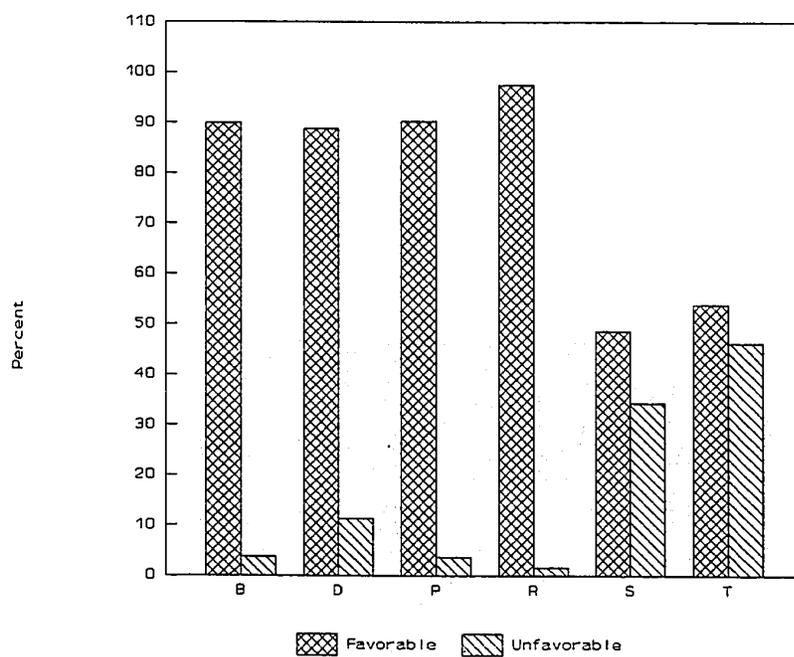
*The Bangladesh Observer's* coverage for the category of *Community Cooperation* was around 32 percent, with no negative posture. In this category, SAARC's role and achievements in building mutual trust/confidence among South Asian countries were most positively (48 percent) evaluated followed by SAARC's cultural, technical and scientific cooperation (16 percent), mutual help (12 percent), freedom of travel (8 percent) and South Asian unity/identity (8 percent). Both *War and Peace* and *Economic Activity* received around 30 percent coverage each with overwhelming positive postures. In the category of *War and Peace*, SAARC's role and potentiality to bring peace and stability in South Asia received most favorable attention (71 percent). Under the category of *Economic Activity*, the item on economic cooperation through joint ventures received maximum favorable coverage (58 percent) followed by cooperation on natural resources (29 percent) and prospects for intraregional trade with reduced tariffs and quotas (8.3 percent). The coverage on SAARC's role in *International Affairs* was 7.5 percent, with no negative posture. SAARC's role in promoting collective self-reliance among South Asian countries was most favorably evaluated (50 percent) in this category.

*The Daily News* published around 89 percent favorable and 11 percent unfavorable items on SAARC. The newspaper's coverage of SAARC was inadequate and sporadic during the study period. Additionally, there appeared to be an intimate link between the coverage of SAARC and Colombo's bilateral relations with India or other South Asian neighbors. Thus, the newspaper's coverage of SAARC was

lowest in 1987 and 1988, when Colombo's bilateral problems with India regarding Tamil problems in Jaffna were most difficult. In 1989, the newspaper's coverage of SAARC and SAARC-related activities was almost one fourth of the total coverage by the six newspapers. Most of the items in this newspaper, however, were critical of New Delhi's policies toward Colombo. In 1990, the coverage again dropped substantially (12.5%), when Colombo lost a diplomatic battle with Maldives to host the fifth SAARC summit (Table 6.3). The maximum coverage of SAARC (41.8%) was found in 1991, when Colombo hosted the sixth summit (Figure 6.3 and Table 6.3).

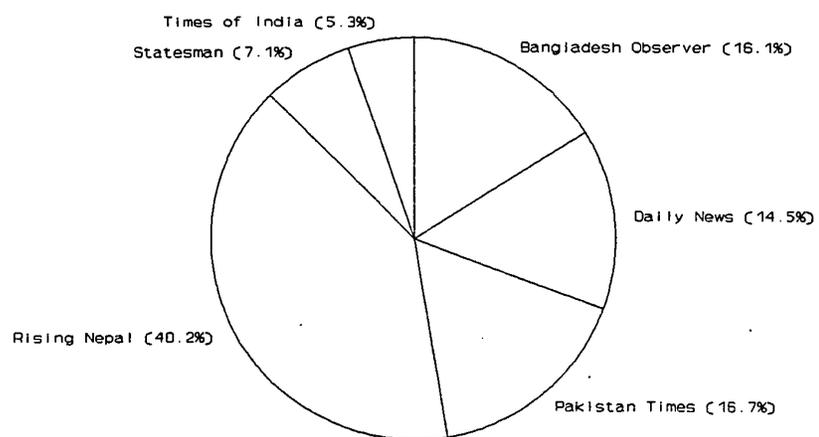
In the category of *Community Cooperation*, SAARC's role and achievements in promoting mutual trust and confidence among South Asian countries received most favorable coverage (39 percent) in *The Daily News*. The newspaper was also positive toward cultural, technical and scientific cooperation (22.5 percent), South Asian unity/identity (13 percent) and increasing people-to-people contact through freedom of travel (9.6 percent). Of all the items in the category of *War and Peace*, SAARC's role in promoting peace and stability was most positively evaluated (55 percent). There was some support for economic cooperation through joint ventures (10 percent positive and 10 percent negative) and promotion of intra-regional trade (15 percent positive) in the category of *Economic Activity*. In the category of *International Affairs*, the item on SAARC's potentiality for promoting collective self-reliance to increase South Asian countries' bargaining power in international

forums received 60 percent favorable coverage. Around 40 percent coverage were favorable regarding the role of SAARC in making South Asia globally more visible. There was also a suggestion for a permanent seat for SAARC in the Security Council.

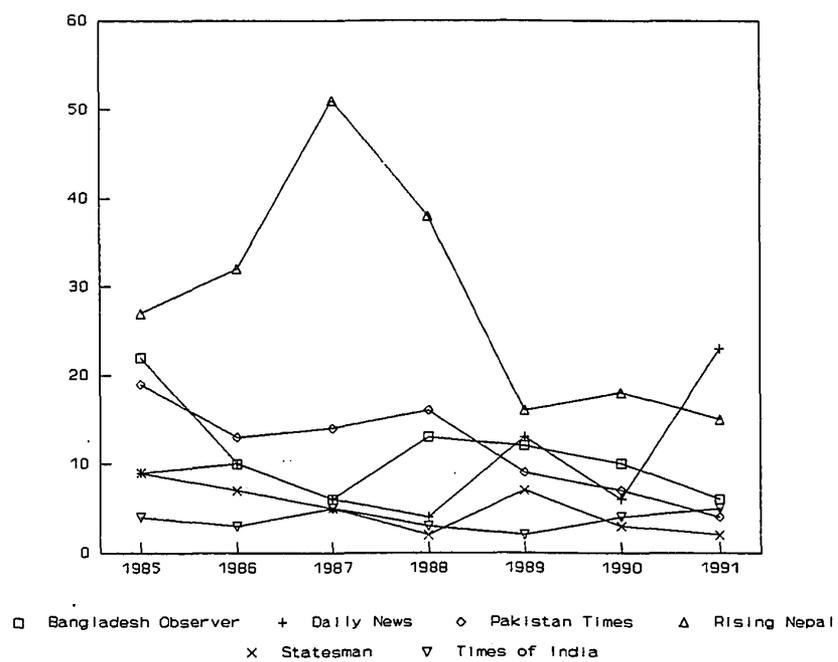


B = Bangladesh Observer; D = Daily News; P = Pakistan Times; R = Rising Nepal;  
S = Statesman; T = Times of India

**Figure 6.1. Direction of Coverage of SAARC in Six Newspapers (1985-1991)**



**Figure 6.2. Coverage of SAARC in Six Newspapers (1985 - 1991)**



**Figure 6.3. Trend In Coverage of SAARC By Six Newspapers, 1985-1991**

*The Pakistan Times* devoted around 90 percent favorable and only 3.65 percent unfavorable items toward SAARC (Figure 6.1). Although not adequate, the newspaper's coverage of SAARC was second highest in South Asia (Figure 6.2). Except for the first summit in 1985 and the fourth summit at Islamabad in 1988, the coverage of SAARC in this newspaper has been low and has steadily declined (Figure 6.3). The newspaper's coverage of SAARC reached a minimum (7.2%) in 1991, when Colombo hosted the sixth summit (Table 6.3). Its coverage in the category of *Community Cooperation* was 38 percent, with an overwhelming 90 percent positive posture. SAARC's role in promoting mutual trust and confidence building among South Asian countries received most favorable coverage (45 percent) followed by cultural, technical and scientific cooperation (19 percent positive) and freedom of travel (16 percent favorable). The *War and Peace* category received 36.5 percent of the total coverage, with 87 percent favorable disposition. While achievement of peace and stability in South Asia through SAARC was widely recognized (53 percent positive), some 27 percent of the items expressed a desire to have the organization prevent war and border conflicts between India and Pakistan. In the category of *Economic Activity* (19.5 percent of the total coverage with 94 percent positive posture) items on economic cooperation through joint ventures (56 percent positive), prospect for intra-regional trade (19 percent positive) and cooperation on natural resources (19 percent positive) were emphasized. SAARC's role in promoting collective self-reliance among South Asian countries was most positively evaluated (60 percent) in the category of *International Affairs*.

*The Rising Nepal* was most enthusiastic in its coverage of SAARC, accounting for 40 percent of total editorials and center-page articles on SAARC and SAARC-related issues among all six newspapers during the study period (Figure 6.2). More than 97 percent of the coverage of SAARC was favorable in this newspaper (Figure 6.1). Its coverage of SAARC reached a maximum (about 59% of the total coverage by six newspapers in that year) during the third summit at Kathmandu in 1987 (Figure 6.3; Table 6.1). The Nepali press seemed to have been excited about the Bangalore summit's (1986) decision to open the SAARC Secretariat at Kathmandu. Besides, the prospect of receiving both regional and international attention for holding the SAARC summit may have inspired such a wide press coverage. During Islamabad summit, coverage was also quite high (50%). But since then the newspaper's coverage of SAARC has declined (figure 6.3; Table 6.1).

In *The Rising Nepal*, the category of *Community Cooperation* constituted more than 44 percent of the total coverage, with a 100 percent positive disposition (Table 6.2). In this category, SAARC's role, achievements and potentiality to promote mutual trust and confidence among South Asian countries were most positively (38 percent) evaluated, followed by cultural, technical and scientific cooperation (25 percent positive), people-to-people contact through freedom of travel (13.7 percent positive), and mutual help (8 percent). The category of *Economic Activity* received wide coverage in *The Rising Nepal* (28 percent of the newspaper's

total coverage with 100 percent positive posture). More than 63 percent of the items were positive about economic cooperation through joint ventures in South Asia. Cooperation on natural resources (18 percent positive) and promotion of intra-regional trade (14.5 percent positive) were also strongly favored. SAARC's potentiality to provide greater international recognition to South Asian countries and promote collective self-reliance among them also received positive comment.

SAARC received the least coverage from the two Indian newspapers (Figure 6.2). In *The Statesman* 48.5 percent items were favorable, 34.2 percent were unfavorable and 17.1 percent were neutral toward SAARC. The newspaper's coverage of SAARC was inadequate and inconsistent. Additionally, its limited coverage of SAARC has shown a further declining trend since 1990. The newspaper's coverage reached a maximum for the category of *War and Peace* (46 percent), followed by *Community Cooperation* (34.2 percent), *Economic Activity* (11.4 percent) and *International Affairs* (8.5 percent). In the category of *War and Peace*, SAARC's role in promoting peace and stability received a 25 percent favorable coverage. Regarding SAARC's ability to prevent war and border conflicts, 25 percent of the items were unfavorable, and SAARC's role in combating communal, ethnic and linguistic conflicts received 31 percent negative coverage. For the categories of *Economic Activity* and *International Affairs*, the coverage was minimal and negative.

The total coverage of *The Times of India* on SAARC was the lowest among six newspapers (Table 6.3 and Figure 6.2). *The Times of India* published 53.8 percent favorable and 46.1 percent unfavorable items on SAARC during the study period (Figure 5.1). At the beginning, the newspaper has shown very little interest in SAARC, but coverage of SAARC rose in 1990 and 1991 (Figure 6.3 and Table 6.1). The slight increase in coverage has more to do with explaining of New Delhi's policy than a genuine interest in SAARC activities. In most of coverage of SAARC-related issues in 1990, *The Times of India* dissected the limitations of Colombo's foreign policy and supported Maldives to host the fifth summit. Again in 1991, the newspaper devoted substantial attention in explaining and defending New Delhi's policy not to attend the initially scheduled sixth SAARC summit meeting in Colombo in November 1991.

*The Times of India* published more items in the category of *War and Peace* with 69 percent unfavorable and 31 percent favorable appraisal of SAARC (Table 6.2). While SAARC's role in promoting peace and stability in South Asia was positively evaluated (15.3 percent) the organization's role and scope in preventing war and border-conflicts (31 percent) and communal, ethnic and linguistic conflicts (31 percent) in the region received negative evaluation. In the category of *Community Cooperation*, SAARC's role in promoting mutual trust and confidence among South Asian countries received most positive attention (50 percent).

In the category of *Economic Activity*, only the items on the prospects for economic cooperation through joint ventures in South Asia received a positive evaluation.

### **Conclusion**

Overall, the coverage of SAARC in the six newspapers has shown a declining trend since 1985 (Figure 6.1). Except for *The Rising Nepal*, the coverage of SAARC in the South Asian newspapers during 1985-1991 was limited. Even the coverage of SAARC in *The Rising Nepal* has declined since 1987 (Figure 6.3). *The Times of India* and *The Statesman* were markedly less zealous in their coverage of SAARC than other South Asian newspapers. For these two Indian newspapers, SAARC appeared to be a less priority area than bilateral issues in South Asia. It is, however, encouraging to note that the coverage in all the six newspapers was more positive than negative toward SAARC. Of course, the Indian press coverage toward SAARC was less favorable than the press coverage in Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

**Table 6.3. Coverage Rank of Various SAARC-related Issues in Six South Asian Newspapers During 1985-1991**

Issue	Number of items	% of total coverage	Coverage rank
Peace and stability in South Asia	88	17.9	1
Mutual trust/confidence building	87	17.7	2
Economic cooperation through joint ventures	68	13.8	3
Cultural, technical & scientific cooperation	43	8.7	4
War & border conflicts	31	6.3	5
Freedom of travel	23	4.6	6
Natural resources	21	4.2	7
South Asian unity/identity	21	4.2	7
Communal, ethnic & linguistic conflicts	17	3.4	8
Collective self-reliance	17	3.4	8
Free trade/reduction or dismantling quotas & tariffs	17	3.4	8
Mutual help	15	3.0	9
Greater recognition & global role for South Asia	13	2.6	10
Terrorism	9	1.8	11
South Asian foreign policy	8	1.6	12
Equality of status	7	1.4	13
Production & supply of goods, expansion of markets	3	0.6	14
Nuclear threat & security	1	0.2	15
Common fund/financial institutions	1	0.2	15
Monetary policy	0	0	0

The coverage of SAARC in all six newspapers was not consistent or uniform throughout the year. The dominant pattern was that the coverage of SAARC increased only during, or immediately before and after the summit meetings. The coverage was utterly inadequate and sporadic during the rest of the year. Another noticeable pattern was that during or immediately before and after the summit meetings, SAARC received strongest attention from host countries, while the attention was either weak or moderate in other countries in the region. SAARC's role in (1) promoting peace and stability in South Asia, (2) building mutual trust and confidence among the South Asian ruling elites, (3) facilitating economic cooperation through joint ventures, and (4) cultural, technical and scientific cooperation in South Asia was considered very useful by the six newspapers in South Asia. In fact, these four items received more than 58 percent of the total press attention in South Asia (Table 6.3).

Overall, the press coverage of SAARC was disappointing. The decline in the coverage of SAARC and SAARC-related issues may indicate that the press in South Asia is fast losing interest in SAARC. It appears that SAARC has lost its salience in the quagmires of bilateral relations between South Asian countries. Inadequate and sporadic press coverage of various SAARC activities have not helped to promote public knowledge about SAARC and thus appears to have contributed to public indifference toward this organization in South Asia.

**End Notes:**

1. Quoted in Nakhleh (1986), *The Gulf Cooperation Council*, pp. 95-97.
2. Ghosh and Panda (1983:272-273) have discussed these three points in the context of India. But they may well be true in case of whole South Asia.
3. Security is a constant theme in the foreign policy of India and Pakistan. Often the press highlights the need to acquire sophisticated weapons to protect the country's sovereignty. By doing so, the press has provided solid public support toward the respective governments' military expenditure for the last so many years. There are also other issues on which the South Asian press has played agenda-setting role.

The constant and vigorous coverage by the Indian press against the Chandra Sekhar government's permission for the American war planes to refuel at Bombay airport during the Gulf Crisis (1991) led to a strong public reaction, resulting in the cancellation of such permission. On such issues as Indo-Pakistan relations, India's trade sanction against Nepal (1988), the Indo-Bangladesh water dispute (1977, 1985), Indo-Sri Lanka relations in the context of the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) operation (1987), nuclear proliferation in South Asia, and the internationalization of the Kashmir problem the Indian press has been able to generate lively public debate. One evidence of how intensely the press sets the agenda for discussion in India is the increasing reference to newspaper articles by elected MPs in Parliamentary debates.

Recently, with the change of authoritarian governments in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal, more lively debates are witnessed in their respective parliaments due to newspaper reporting. Moreover, the role played by the print media in the fall of the monarchy in Nepal (1990), the Ershad regime in Bangladesh (1991), and the Bhutto administration on corruption charges in Pakistan (1991) are striking examples of the agenda-setting functions of the press. In Sri Lanka, the press has played an agenda-setting role on the Tamil problem, the IPKF issue, and economic liberalization issues. The Pakistani press, during the past five years, have played agenda-setting roles on Indo-Pakistan relations, the Kashmir issue, nuclear issues, economic liberalization policies and communal problems in the country and India's militaristic designs. The press in Bangladesh has played an influential role in the government's cancellation of import of contaminated milk from Poland (1987-88). The press is also responsible for providing substantial public support for the Bangladesh government's strong stance on the Chakma Refugee case (1988) and the water dispute with India since 1974. The Nepalese press played a crucial role in mobilizing public opinion and forced the government to take a strong stand against the trade sanctions of Indian government in 1988.

4. The rationale for the period of this study and inclusion of the center-page articles are discussed in chapter II.

## CHAPTER VII FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

*The ship of SAARC took over four years to build and we have to furnish it, fashion it, travel around the world in it and even face turbulent storms and mutiny on board to finally enter friendly portals.*

President Junius Jayewardene at Dhaka Summit, 1985.

I have argued in this dissertation that where domestic opinion is negative or hostile for regional cooperation, leaders may hesitate to take continuous risks to pursue accommodative or cooperative policies toward a neighbor. As discussed in chapter I, both democratic and authoritarian leaders are sensitive to the opinion of non-governing elites and attentive publics when they formulate domestic and foreign policies.<sup>1</sup> In democracies, where governments must stand for election, domestic approval of the leaders' domestic and foreign policy decisions is crucial. Even in authoritarian regimes, leaders need domestic support to pursue their domestic and foreign policies. As recent events in the political landscape of South Asian countries,<sup>2</sup> the former Soviet Union and Eastern European countries suggest, no leader can hope to survive for long in the presence of a continuously hostile or negative public opinion. A supportive public opinion, or at least an absence of negative or hostile public opinion is, therefore, necessary for leaders to pursue any particular foreign policy, including a policy of regional cooperation. Domestic support has acquired added significance in the context of South Asia, where SAARC

is perceived to be a case of "regionalism from below," that is, SAARC emerged more as a response to the domestic needs of the seven South Asian countries than any external threat or security perception.<sup>3</sup> In the following sections I present the findings of this study regarding the nature of domestic support in South Asia toward SAARC and discuss some implications of the findings.

### **Findings: SAARC's Credibility Gap**

From the results of interviews, as examined in chapter V, it is obvious that SAARC activities have not yet captured the imagination or interest of the South Asian citizens. Rajni Kothari's remark sums up a generally- shared view in South Asia: "SAARC may have prospered as an inter-governmental and inter-bureaucratic organization, but as a political process it has not accomplished anything."<sup>4</sup> Not surprisingly, there is a great deal of popular indifference toward SAARC. A high degree of perceived inequity (that is, the respondents' perception that their countries will contribute more than receive from SAARC) among Indians seems to be a major impediment for the growth of SAARC. While most Indians feel that their country is likely to contribute more and benefit less from SAARC, the majority of citizens in Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka believe that India is likely to benefit most from any SAARC arrangement. The success of SAARC as a durable political entity cannot be guaranteed if the arrangement is perceived as benefiting some states at the expense, or to the exclusion, of others. Given South

Asia's deep-rooted political, linguistic and religious divisions, a perception of inequity becomes even a more serious factor impeding the growth of SAARC.

The presence of a low level of utilitarian and affective support for SAARC, as reported in chapter V, does not augur well for the growth of the organization. Besides, SAARC appears to suffer from a "credibility gap." Non-implementation of two already-signed regional conventions by South Asian countries (one on terrorism and the other on narcotic drugs), failure of the timely release of food supplies from the SAARC Food Security Reserve to Bangladesh at the time of the country's worst cyclone and floods in 1990-91, and a lack of seriousness among South Asian countries regarding the implementation of some already-approved SAARC related projects may have contributed to SAARC's credibility gap in South Asia.

The content analysis of six newspapers in chapter VI revealed a relatively low level of publicity of SAARC and SAARC-related affairs. From the reactions of the two Indian newspapers, it appeared clear that SAARC has less priority for the Indian press. The decline in coverage in other South Asian newspapers regarding SAARC and SAARC-related issues from 1985 to 1991 indicates that the press in South Asia is rapidly losing interest in SAARC. It appears that SAARC has lost its salience in the quagmires of bilateral relations between South Asian countries.

The findings of content analysis are consistent with the interview results in some respects. Such issues as mutual trust and confidence building through regular meetings between heads of states, foreign and other ministers, and secretaries at all levels regarding cultural, technical and scientific cooperation, and peace and stability in the region were identified by both the press and majority of the respondents as crucial areas where SAARC could play an important role. The Indo-Pakistan conflict was singled out as the most debilitating factor for the growth of regional cooperation in South Asia. The press was markedly less enthusiastic about SAPTA than some of the respondents.

The overall impression from the results of the content analysis and interviews is that while the idea of regional cooperation is considered favorably in South Asia, there is no strong domestic support for SAARC. There is a concern in some quarters that SAARC is a good thing and that some steps should be taken to maintain and strengthen SAARC. But there seems to be no clear image as to what these steps should be or how far they should go. However, there is a general feeling that unless SAARC speeds up its activities and addresses such areas as trade and bilateral issues it is likely to become a moribund and largely meaningless institution.

Overall, the non-governing elites and attentive publics of South Asia may be indifferent, but they do not seem to be hostile or unduly negative toward SAARC. Over a period of time, this indifference toward SAARC may swing in either

favorable or unfavorable directions, depending on the achievements of the organization and the domestic politics of South Asian countries. As long as South Asians do not turn hostile or negative, the prospect of SAARC's survival and even slow progress is not going to be adversely affected. (In order to grow, SAARC has to be "sold" to a larger public by the sustained and concerted efforts of the statesmen and the press in South Asia. It is reasonable to believe that both the statesmen and the press in South Asia have the ability to "manufacture" (Chomsky, 1989) needs for SAARC. In this early stage of SAARC's growth, it is important to ensure that public opinion in South Asia does not turn hostile toward this organization. Serious attention to certain areas may improve attitudinal basis of support for SAARC. Before discussing those areas, however, it is pertinent to explain some of the dynamics of South Asia's cross-national differences in attitudinal support toward SAARC.

#### **Cross-national Differences: The Indian Problem**

From the results of interviews and the content analysis it is evident that Pakistan and the smaller South Asian countries have greater level of support for SAARC than India. This finding appears to support the argument that weaker members of a region tend to cooperate more readily because of their desire to countervail an overwhelming partner (Etzioni, 1991:316). In fact, India's initial hesitation about joining SAARC and the continuing opposition to include bilateral

issues in the formal SAARC agenda continue to be based on the Indian policy-makers' apprehension that small South Asian countries might "gang up" against India. But this apprehension alone does not explain the relatively low level of Indian support for SAARC. Given South Asia's geo-political realities, it is abundantly clear that SAARC will face a troubled future without Indian support. The low level of Indian support, therefore, remains the most worrisome factor for the future growth of SAARC. There are several explanations for the low level of Indian support. However, given the scope of this research, the discussion below is restricted to a brief analysis of seven factors that appear to have contributed to low levels of Indian support for SAARC.

#### Structure of South Asian Regional System

South Asia's regional system revolves around India. In very few regional systems does one country occupy such a preeminent position as does India in South Asia. India's vast size, population, resources, political system, economic and technological development, and military power are considerably greater than other states in South Asia. India's geographical centrality is another important feature of South Asia. While most South Asian countries lack common borders, almost all of them share common borders with India, either by land or sea. Such realities explain why all the smaller states must deal with India. Indeed, South Asia is largely a

system of bilateral relations, as each state has crucial relationships with India and at the same time few security connections to other states in the region.

In light of the above facts, Indian ruling elites since the time of Nehru have come to believe that India's defence perimeter lies not at the boundaries of India but at the other boundaries of its regional neighbors. Bharat Wariavwalla (1983:282-283) has provided insight in explaining this kind of belief by the Indian ruling elites:

India regards her neighbors, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Pakistan as the cultural expressions of Indian civilizations. The cultural notion is forcefully complemented by the Curzonian imperative that the subcontinent is one strategic unity. The cultural and Curzonian legacies, if assertively claimed, would lead India to assert dominance of the subcontinent.<sup>5</sup>

It is strongly believed by a section of Indians, apparently close to the ruling circles, that regional security will lead to India's security and vice versa (Ghosh 1989:221). This theory of regional preeminence, variously articulated in what can be described as *Delhineation* (that is, Delhi's world view),<sup>6</sup> essentially argues that in order to achieve peace, security and stability in South Asia India must remain strong and maintain superiority in the region. Although a few scholars have contributed to such thinking,<sup>7</sup> K. Subrahmanyam, long-time director of the Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis (IDSA) in New Delhi stands out as the most influential protagonist of this theory.<sup>8</sup> Strongly arguing India's case for regional preeminence, Subrahmanyam (1981) has commented: "It is elementary that the strength of a nation does not consist of only military potential and it is equally elementary that without

that vital component all others will not matter" (p.7). His central thesis is that India's military strength does not necessarily lead to aggressiveness. There is a necessity for India to establish and project its military power in the region. Once India's military superiority is accepted by its neighbors, there is no danger of violation of peace in the subcontinent. Subrahmanyam's *Delhineation* not only reflects the Indian government's views on strategic issues in South Asia over a number of years but also is shared by a large section of the elites in India. It is not surprising that Indian government's effort to maintain a high military profile in the subcontinent's security affairs has always received domestic support. The pattern of a high profile military posture by India is obvious in the following cases : India's Operation Brasstacks (military exercise on the Indo-Pakistan border) in 1986; India's peace-keeping operation in Sri Lanka from 1987 to 1990; and India's quick response to send its troops to Maldives to foil a coup in 1988. India's willingness to flex its military muscle outside its own boundaries has led many scholars, including Johan Galtung (1992), to speculate that India, as the center of South Asia, will continue to exercise hegemonic power over other SAARC countries in the post-Cold War world order.<sup>9</sup>

The only challenge to such a regional system comes from the region's second-ranking state, Pakistan. Since its emergence as an independent state in 1947, Pakistan has been perpetually seeking to maintain some form of parity with India. But its relatively small size, further reduced with the emergence of Bangladesh as an

independent state in 1971, does not seem to put any pressure on India to respond to Pakistan's anxieties and ambitions.<sup>10</sup> Reflecting on Indo-Pakistan relations in South Asia, W.H. Wriggins (1992:135) has perceptively observed:

They are attached to mutually contradictory principles for shaping the desirable public order of South Asia. India seeks a hierarchical arrangement, with itself as the region's security manager. Pakistan, by contrast, holds to the principle of sovereign equality of states. Hegemony and balancing of power are mutually incompatible, and each one's requisites for its conception of autonomy contradict the other's. (p.135)<sup>11</sup>

It is widely believed in India that Pakistan's aspiration to parity remains the root cause of tension in the region. Although the smaller regional states appear to be more reconciled to the preeminent position of India, they nevertheless resent India's hegemonistic aspiration and share Pakistan's sense of frustration in dealing with India. Indian ruling elites and opinion makers are very much aware of such feelings on the part of neighboring countries. Consequently, Indian public has come to share the Indian policy makers' apprehension that SAARC will provide an official forum for India's neighbors to "gang up" against India. It is no wonder that India has opposed in the past, and still continues to oppose, any move by the member countries to include bilateral conflicts in the SAARC agenda for discussion. Some Indians fear that India will not only be isolated but also will lose much respect in the eyes of the international community if issues of bilateral conflicts are discussed because of India's involvement in almost all the bilateral conflicts in South Asia. Thus, the scope of SAARC, as far as India is concerned, is limited. Jasjit Singh

(1992), the present director of the Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis (IDSA) in New Delhi, has very well summed up the dominant Indian public attitude:

SAARC is basically an entity of economic and cultural cooperation. It cannot address sensitive political and security issues in South Asia because of the prevailing ideological dissonance, political and structural differences among South Asian countries.... Security and political issues in South Asia can only be addressed bilaterally or through a wider groupings. The latter strategy, of course, will not negate SAARC.<sup>12</sup>

### History

History is not, as the 18th century English poet and philosopher Coleridge once described, "a lantern in the stern which shines only on the waves behind us."<sup>13</sup> History also influences enormously people's thinking and behavior many years later. South Asia is no exception. Some background of South Asia has already been discussed in chapter II. In this section, the roots of mutual distrust among South Asian countries will be briefly discussed.

There is a consensus in South Asia that without the normal relationship between India and Pakistan, the prospect of a viable South Asian regional cooperation will remain bleak. In other words, removal of mutual distrust remains the most critical element of the growth of South Asian regionalism. The history of the subcontinent's partition has cast a long shadow of distrust and suspicion over the relationship between India and Pakistan. The ruling elites in Pakistan seem to have successfully sold the idea to the general public that "India had never accepted the

partition at heart and would not let any opportunity to undo it [partition] slip by" (Prasad, 1989:14). India's role in the emergence of Bangladesh as an independent state in 1971 has strengthened this impression. On the other hand, the Indian elites appear to be obsessed with the idea that Pakistan might go to any extent to destabilize India. Not surprisingly, Pakistan's hand is strongly suspected in most communal riots and secessionist movements in India. Also any move by Pakistan to modernize its defence with the help of outside powers is perceived to be a serious danger to India's stability.

After the partition, India and Pakistan became committed to mutually incompatible models of nation-building. India opted for secularism, democracy and federalism. Pakistan, on the other hand, settled for an Islamic state, authoritarianism, and a centrally controlled administration. The practice of diametrically opposite principles of political organization in two contiguous countries with no natural frontiers led to enormous tension and anxiety between India and Pakistan. In addition, the territorial disputes over Kashmir intensified bitterness between the two countries. Despite the Simla agreement in 1972 to resolve the Kashmir issue peacefully, conflict between the two countries has continued. The degree of violence in Kashmir and the two countries' intransigence on reaching a peaceful solution have left deep scars on the national psyche of both India and Pakistan.

History has also played a critical role in the evolution of Indo-Bangladesh relations. Despite India's crucial role in the liberation movement of Bangladesh, Indo-Bangladesh relations began to deteriorate soon after Bangladesh's independence principally for two reasons. First, a large section of Bangladeshi elites shared Pakistan's distrust for India because of their involvement in the pre-partition freedom struggle on the subcontinent. Indeed, the people in the eastern wing of Pakistan, which later became Bangladesh, were even more deeply involved in the Muslim League sponsored struggle to partition India than the people in the western wing (Prasad, 1989:14). Second, Bangladeshi elites also shared Pakistan's suspicion of India's hegemonistic ambitions.

There is a perception among the smaller states in South Asia that independent India's foreign policy is more or less based on the same geo-political compulsions and calculations of the British Indian Empire (Prasad, 1989:14). Given the British imperialistic logic, India will continue to maintain its dominance in the South Asian region. The way the princely state of Sikkim, formerly a protectorate, was annexed by India in 1975 as the twenty-second Indian state appears to have strengthened smaller states' perception of India's hegemonistic ambition. Such actions of India have made the smaller states hyperconscious and hypersensitive of their separateness and individuality (Ahsan, 1992:2). The smaller states not only criticize India for practicing *Kautilyan*<sup>14</sup> principles in its foreign policy behavior, but they have also sought assistance on many occasions from outside powers to limit

India's dominance in the region. Many Indians view such actions and the smaller states' criticism of India as a hegemonistic power as hostile and unfriendly to the cause of SAARC spirit.

### Role of Political Leadership

Although domestic and international environments impose limits on the capacity of leaders to act in foreign policy, South Asian leaders enjoy considerable degree of freedom to try alternative policy options, to make independent decisions, and to influence domestic and regional politics.<sup>15</sup> One example is India's "Operation Brasstacks" in the winter of 1987. Pakistanis seem to have genuinely feared that India's largest ever-peacetime military exercises at the Indo-Pakistan border near the Punjab plains could be a prelude to a full-fledged war that would call for massive retaliation. But prompt involvement of political leaders on both sides, including President Zia's "cricket diplomacy," defused the crisis.

The leaders' perceptions,<sup>16</sup> personalities and styles have influenced the course of regional politics in South Asia. Thus, when Morarji Desai became India's Prime Minister in 1977, his restraining style assuaged neighbor's anxieties. The Janata government under Desai's stewardship defined India's national interest differently and followed a friendly neighborly policy. Bilateral relations among South Asian countries, including Indo-Pakistan relations, improved remarkably

during Desai's premiership. Indira Gandhi, on the other hand, during the pre and post-Janata regime, was more concerned to assert India's preeminence and was perhaps less responsive to India's smaller neighbors. Accordingly, she was less trusted by other leaders of South Asia, and the region was filled with tension and anxieties during her stewardship. Rajiv Gandhi's eclectic personality and sometimes his indecisiveness were a source of confusion for the region. Both Rajiv Gandhi and Benazir Bhutto were responsible for creating an improved environment, even though it lasted for a short time (1988-1989), in Indo-Pakistan relations. But Rajiv Gandhi's unresponsive attitude toward Nepal on trade matters during 1988-1990 and toward Bangladesh on water sharing and Chakma refugee issues during 1988-1990 brought enormous tension to their bilateral relationship. Rajiv Gandhi's policy toward Sri Lanka during 1987-1990 was a mixed bag, sometimes appreciated for bold initiatives and sometimes condemned for insensitivity toward a small neighbor.

The role of political leaders acquires added significance because they take important economic and other decisions and thus have the capacity to become "opinion makers *par excellence*" (Hewstone, 1986:194). The Indians have certainly been influenced over the years by such leaders as Nehru, Indira Gandhi, Morarji Desai and Rajiv Gandhi. Except for Morarji Desai, all others have sought to assert India's preeminence in the region. Given the present weak leadership of the Congress Party and the robust emergence of Hindu militant leadership, Indian public support for SAARC is not likely to move upward in immediate future.

Perception of Pakistan's External Linkage and Orientation

Although most South Asian countries have developed external linkages because of their fragile political and economic structure and the dynamics of neocolonialism, Indians seem to be more obsessed with Pakistan's external linkages and orientation. Since its birth as an independent state in 1947 Pakistan has always looked westwards, either through the now-defunct Regional Cooperation for Development (RCD) intergovernmental organization with Turkey and Iran as members, or bilateral ties with the United States and the Arab world (Sobhan, 1989:21). In pursuing such policies, Pakistan's ruling elites may have been guided by their desire to make their country strong and independent vis-a-vis India. But the policy of moving away from India has strengthened the misperception among Indians about Pakistan's hostile intentions and untrustworthiness. While the rest of South Asian countries believe that SAARC's slow progress is primarily due to India's lack of solid support, Indian policy makers and the press have put the blame on Pakistan. India has always considered Pakistan's efforts to raise the issue of Kashmir in such international forums as the Non-alignment Summits, the Commonwealth Summits, the United Nations, and the Organization of Islamic Conferences as serious setbacks to regional peace and stability. Indian policy makers and the press have, on several occasions, cited Pakistan's initiatives and involvement in the Organization of Islamic Conferences and the Economic Cooperation

Organization (with Iran, Turkey and the newly independent Central Asian Muslim republics) as evidence of Pakistan's extra-regional orientation and lack of sincerity regarding SAARC.<sup>17</sup>

Misperception about each other's strength and intentions have played a crucial role in Indo-Pakistan relations. The ruling elites of both the countries, due to insecurity at home, have time and again tried to strengthen this misperception. Pakistan has always justified its policy of external linkages to neutralize India's domination, while India has sought to interpret Pakistan's policy as the primary cause of regional tension. The policy makers in both the countries realize very well that they can gain from regional cooperation. But they seem to suffer from a prisoner's dilemma and thus seek unilateral advantage by pursuing non-cooperational strategies.<sup>18</sup> Over the years, the policy makers have been quite successful in selling their strategies to their publics and thus strengthening the latter's misperceptions and mutual suspicions.

### Ethnopolitical Relations

South Asia is a multi-ethnic region. Ethnic minorities in all states of South Asia have direct links to kinfolks in neighboring states. Almost all the ethnic minorities feel relatively alienated and resort to violent methods to meet their aspirations. Since ethnic affiliations do not recognize national frontiers, members of

an ethnic group often seek help from the fellow members in the neighboring countries without formal approval from the central government and sometimes even without the latter's knowledge. This explains how the domestic unrest of one country affects the internal politics of its neighbor.

Of all the states in South Asia, however, India is the most heterogeneous ethnically. Since India's ethnic groups overlap into all the neighboring states, India appears to be involved in all ethnopolitical disputes.<sup>19</sup> Both India and Pakistan share equally bitter memories of partition. Any ethnic conflict in Pakistan, therefore, draws Indian sympathy immediately and vice versa. A large section of ethnic groups in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh of India shares the frustration and resentment of the Hindi-speaking population of the Tarai region in Southern Nepal. Bhutan has ethnopolitical differences between the Drukpas (Bhotias and Lepchas) and the Nepalese. The latter are said to be more oriented toward India than Bhutan. The ruling Drukpa elites also suspect the loyalty of sizeable Bengali, Assamese, and Marwari minorities in Bhutan toward the monarchy (Sen Gupta, 1988:6). For long, Bangladesh has suspected India's material help to Chakma refugees, while India has resented Bangladesh's support of the terrorist groups in Tripura. The migration of thousands of Bangladeshi citizens each year into India's strategically important state of Assam, which borders on China, and into politically volatile West Bengal and Tripura has created enormous tension in India, adversely affecting Indo-Bangladesh relations. India's involvement in the Sri Lankan civil war between Tamils and

Sinhalese has been an issue of concern domestically, regionally, and internationally. Despite the 1987 Indo-Sri Lanka agreement leading to a rather unsuccessful campaign by Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) for suppressing the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka, India is often criticized by Sri Lanka and Pakistan for supporting Tamils' cause.

Another dimension of South Asia's ethnopolitical configuration is that the majority groups of small South Asian states suffer from a minority complex because the minorities in these countries have a sizeable number of co-ethnics in neighboring India.<sup>20</sup> The Indian Nepalese of the Tarai region together with their co-ethnics in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh outnumber the Nepalese of Nepal. Sri Lankan Tamils together with Tamils of Tamil Nadu outnumber the Sinhalese in Sri Lanka. Nepalese of Bhutan together with the Nepalese Indians outnumber the majority Drukpas in Bhutan. Although Pakistan and Bangladesh do not seem to suffer from such a complex, the activities of Sindhis in India (which appear to influence the Sindhi population of Sindh province in Pakistan) and those of Bengali Hindu refugees in West Bengal do sometimes worry these two neighboring states. Such ethnopolitical configuration has led to a fear psychosis among the neighboring states about India.

The emergence of ethnic subnationalism, or as Amitai Etzioni would prefer to say "micronationalism,"<sup>21</sup> and the consequent proliferation of terrorist and separatist movements has further contributed to the deterioration of interstate

relations in South Asia. Each country blames the other for abetting the separatist movement on its soil. Consequently, an atmosphere of mutual distrust and acrimony prevails in South Asia that affects public thinking both in India and other South Asian countries.

#### Perception of Inequity

As found in chapter IV, a majority of Indians perceive a high degree of inequity (that is, their countries will contribute more than receive from SAARC) from their membership of SAARC. It is common knowledge in South Asia that SAARC suffers from an acute resource crunch; unless this situation is improved, most SAARC projects will not achieve any success. Given South Asia's political and economic conditions, it is widely believed that only India (and to some extent Pakistan) can contribute substantially to improve the resource position of SAARC. This fact has contributed to the widespread Indian perception that their membership in SAARC is disadvantageous and inequitable. Such perceptions have a negative spillover, as Inglehart (1984) has suggested in the context of the European Community, and certainly contribute to the development of negative attitudes and low levels of support toward regional organization. It is clear that economic perceptions have contributed quite substantially to the prevailing low Indian support toward SAARC.

### Role of the Press

As evident from the content analysis of newspapers in chapter VI, the Indian press has attached a low priority to coverage of SAARC. Attention to SAARC and SAARC-related activities in the Indian press is not only sporadic and inadequate but also less favorable than the press coverage in Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The limited and often negative press coverage of SAARC appears to have contributed to public indifference toward this organization in India.

### **Conclusion**

As found in chapter V, a majority of respondents from Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka and even Pakistan are worried about India's lack of genuine support for SAARC. Although India's image was negatively perceived, as evident from the respondents' description, India's support was considered crucial for the growth of SAARC. It is unfortunate that India's image has not improved over the years. Most respondents viewed India as the country which "benefits most" from any SAARC economic arrangement. They also viewed India as "aggressively militaristic," "unfriendly," "most externally oriented," and "hegemonic". These views are worrying at a time when favorable public opinion might be a critical resource for further steps toward South Asian regional cooperation.

The findings of this dissertation suggest that there is little domestic support in India and other South Asian countries for SAARC. It is, therefore, not surprising that SAARC has made only a limited progress since its inception a decade ago. Unless there is a perceptible increase in the domestic support for SAARC, the future of the organization will remain uncertain. Can domestic support for SAARC be improved? One important factor for lack of strong domestic support, as revealed in this study, is the general ignorance of South Asians about SAARC and its various activities. Dissemination of knowledge about SAARC and its various activities through public information campaign may improve the citizen's perception about this organization. It is to this topic of public information that I now turn in order to consider some major implications of the present study.

## **Implications**

### Public Information Campaigns

When asked about the future of SAARC Dr. A.T. Ariyaratne, president and founder of the world renowned *Sarvodaya Sramadan Movement* in Sri Lanka, quipped "Does SAARC exist? Where is it now?"<sup>22</sup> The statement may be ironic, but it is shared by many in South Asia. Rajni Kothari, a staunch supporter of Third World regionalism and regional cooperation in South Asia in mid 70s and 80s, now considers SAARC as a "marginal phenomenon"<sup>23</sup> because of its lack of visibility.

Since the establishment of the organization in 1985 very little widespread interest-stimulating activity about SAARC has been undertaken by either the South Asian governments or the SAARC Secretariat. Not surprisingly, for many of the South Asian citizens SAARC remains today a somewhat remote concept. It is, therefore, urgently necessary to inform and disseminate knowledge through public information campaigns to a wider South Asian public about SAARC and its various activities. As Hewstone (1986:205) has suggested in the context of the European Community, public information campaigns are important in their own right as attempts to not only educate but also "change the views of the adult population." Respective governments and media have particularly significant roles to play in the public information campaigns. As identified in this dissertation at least three variables should be included in any public information campaign: support, active interest, and knowledge about SAARC.

#### Utilitarian and Affective Support

Existence of low level of utilitarian and affective support, as revealed in chapter V, may not be assuring for the success of SAARC. However, as suggested by Hewstone (1986) in the context of the European Community, the level of utilitarian and affective support may be increased through public information campaigns. In any campaign to increase the level of utilitarian support of the South Asians, central emphasis should be given to the prospect of own country's benefit

from the membership of SAARC in terms of peace and stability in the region, economic development and favorable intra-regional trade prospects, protection against natural disasters, and poverty alleviation. For the increase of affective support for SAARC two items are crucial and need to be constantly emphasized: mutual trust and confidence. Already these two items have become the central theme of SAARC summit meetings. The respective governments of South Asian countries should emphasize these themes more in communications to their citizens.

#### Active Public Interest

One principal reason for limited domestic support for SAARC is that the South Asian publics do not know much about the organization and its various activities. At present, the South Asian public studied here appears to be opinionated, not informed. The public comes to read and know about SAARC only during the SAARC summit meetings when reported in the media. Other important ministerial meetings, Technical Committee meetings and their decisions about SAARC are not adequately reported in the media and hence go largely unnoticed by the public. It appears that SAARC summit meetings have an immediate effect on opinions. But because of the media's lack of consistent coverage of SAARC activities following the summits opinions return to an equilibrium point rather

quickly in South Asia unlike the case of the European Community (Dalton and Duval, 1986) and ASEAN. This might support an abrupt "opinion-decay" model which is not conducive for the growth of SAARC.<sup>24</sup>

SAARC's salience can be increased through advertising campaigns, sports and other competitions. In this context, the five new ideas introduced at the Bangalore summit (1986), (that is, organized tourism, audiovisual exchange, establishment of a SAARC Documentation Center, SAARC scholarship, SAARC Youth Volunteers Program) represented only a modest start. Except for audiovisual exchange program the other programs are not yet well known in South Asia. For such ideas to be implemented and known to a wider public the respective governments, SAARC Secretariat, media, "intellectual community" and business community in South Asia have to play an important role (Khatri, 1992:16). Programs like "SAARC quiz", which was first televised in India in 1989, have great potential and should be more regularly shown in South Asia to help the South Asian publics to know more about each other and SAARC. Films and television soap operas, given their enormous appeal in South Asia, can play constructive role in disseminating message of peace and cooperation to the South Asian publics.<sup>25</sup> Long running soap operas, based on historically contextualized events, have the potentiality to create categories of thought and meaning that can motivate choice, establish rules of conduct and justify action of the South Asian people. Given the

reach and popularity of televisions in South Asia recently such soap operas can easily become a part of public culture and thus, can have important social and political consequences in the region.<sup>26</sup>

Despite the enormous potential of tourism in South Asia and SAARC's recognition of its benefits, tourism programs have not really caught on the popular imagination because of an utterly inadequate information campaign regarding the facilities each country provides to the SAARC tourists. People who travel to another country often develop both a deeper understanding and deeper appreciation for it. People who maintain person-to-person contacts and friendships across borders seem to be less favorably disposed to regional conflicts. Given the substantive benefits of tourism to create a regional awareness, the South Asian governments, with the help of SAARC Secretariat, should improve their propaganda efforts in media to reach out more people. There is also a necessity to make the SAARC scholarship programs more widely known to increase the number of exchange students in the region so that more and more students can learn about the neighboring countries and share their experiences with each other. Such kinds of networking may improve regional sensitivity among the younger generation of the South Asian countries.

It is a positive development that the South Asian countries have agreed to relax visa regulation for members of Parliament, Supreme and High Court judges, senior journalists and academic chairs of the universities for intraregional travel.

However, most respondents favor further visa relaxation to facilitate wide interaction among the general public in South Asia. Sometimes, when heads of state do not see their common interests ordinary citizens try to raise awareness of such mutual interests on both sides. Travel and discussion by private individuals and groups toward this end has been called *citizen diplomacy*, and it occurs fairly regularly (though not very visibly) when conflicting states are stuck in a cycle of hostility. *Citizen diplomacy* has been particularly successful in the context of Sino-American rapprochement in the 70s and U.S. and the former Soviet Union relations in the 80s.<sup>27</sup> It is encouraging to note that *citizen diplomacy*, as evident in the growing number of meetings of journalists from South Asian countries, private visit of prominent citizens both as a group and individually to various South Asian countries, visit of SAARC citizen group, which comprises prominent citizens from the SAARC countries, to supervise elections in the neighboring country and discuss important matters of mutual interests, appear to be gaining popularity in South Asia. Further visa relaxation in South Asia is necessary to facilitate travel of more ordinary citizens and promote *citizen diplomacy*.

It is also encouraging to note that sports competitions among South Asian countries held annually since 1984 under the auspices of South Asian Federation Games (SAF) appears to have captured the imagination of sports enthusiasts in South Asia. This is a good news for SAARC. Sports are often seen as a force for peace. Although sports competition may sometimes stir up animosities between

neighbors, sports also bridge differences, promote friendship and create a sense of participation in a supranational community and bring people from different countries together in shared activities (Allison, 1993). In the context of sports some thoughts can be given to utilize cricket, the most popular game in South Asia, to generate active interest in SAARC activities. Next to war, cricket seems to have the most emotional appeal in South Asia. In fact, some communal riots in India were said to have been triggered in the past by the results of cricket match between India and Pakistan. As discussed earlier, the late President of Pakistan, Ziaul Huq, employed "cricket diplomacy" very effectively to diffuse Indo-Pakistan border tension created by "Operation Brasstacks" in the winter of 1987. Given the enormous popularity of cricket in South Asia, a limited number of matches can be organized annually where a South Asian team can be formed with players from India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh to play against cricket teams from other parts of the world. Such arrangements can perhaps facilitate a South Asian identity. It is not entirely impossible to implement the idea of a "South Asia Eleven" team because such arrangements have worked out in the context of benefit matches.<sup>28</sup> Besides, a "South Asia Eleven" team will have tremendous symbolic appeal for unity and cooperation in South Asia. A cricket camp for South Asian youth can be organized with star players from South Asian countries participating as coaches. Such programs will go a long way to bridge the gap among the younger generations of South Asia.<sup>29</sup>

The transnational connections forged through sports, music, tourism, personal travel, contacts and interaction among "epistemic communities"<sup>30</sup> may deepen regional interdependence and promote peace in South Asia, because a person who knows more about a neighboring country and has developed empathy for its multidimensional problems and culture is likely to act as a "brake" on political conflict with that country and an "accelerator" of positive cooperation with it.

#### Public Knowledge

Socially constructed knowledge, as Ernst Haas (1990:73-75) has so passionately argued, is extremely crucial for the policy making process because it shapes the world view of the decision makers and thus influences their reaction to particular issue areas and determines their modes of interaction at national, regional and international level.<sup>31</sup> Similarly, it is reasonable to believe that people's reaction to a particular decision or institution is based on their level of knowledge. As discussed earlier, even most of the educated citizens of South Asia appear to be ignorant about SAARC and each other. Lack of knowledge about each other has led to misunderstanding and mutual prejudices among South Asian neighbors (Chakravartty, 1989). One of the important goals of SAARC and the South Asian ruling elites, therefore, should be to create an informed public. Without an informed public most of SAARC's goals, including the utterly crucial SAPTA, can not be accomplished. As found out in this dissertation, a high perception of inequity in

India is a major impeding factor for the growth of SAARC. It is also clear that a medium perception of inequity among most of the Pakistanis is not conducive for the growth of SAARC. It is urgently necessary, therefore, for the governments of both India and Pakistan to address this issue. Common-sense perceptions among Indians and Pakistanis may not be in proportion to the "economic reality." In order to rectify this misperception the governments of India and Pakistan should carefully provide information to their citizens as to how these two countries' net budget contribution to SAARC is proportional to the "peace dividend" in South Asia. It will not be a very hard sale to convince the citizens of India and Pakistan that peace and stability in the region can save these two countries substantial amount of revenues which are currently spent on the acquisition of unproductive defence arsenals.

I do not assume that the envisaged public information campaign will have immediate or dramatic effects on the perceptions of South Asian public regarding SAARC. But it surely can be argued that a carefully conceived campaign by the media, governments and the Secretariat can raise the salience of SAARC, thereby generating public interest on the regional cooperation issues in South Asia.

A clear and honest feedback (not in the form of dull, abstract statistics, but in a form consistent with common sense views) should be provided to South Asian peoples on what has so far been achieved. It is important that the SAARC Secretariat and the South Asian governments should avoid making great claims about the organization's goals which have little chance of being accomplished.

**Endnotes:**

1. For an excellent review of literature on the subject of public opinion and foreign policy see, Ole R. Holsti, "Public Opinion and Foreign Policy: Challenges to the Almond-Lippmann Consensus," *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 36, no.4, December 1992, pp.439-466; Miroslav Nincic (1992), "A Sensible Public: New Perspectives on Popular Opinion and Foreign Policy," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 36 (4), pp. 772-89; T. Risse-kappen (1991), "Public Opinion, Domestic Structure, and Foreign Policy in Liberal Democracies," *World Politics*, 43, pp. 479-512; for a useful discussion of the impact of public opinion on foreign policy-making process in authoritarian regimes see Shibley Telhami (1993), "Arab Public Opinion and the Gulf War," *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. 108, no.3, pp.437-452; Chong-Min Park (1991), "Authoritarian Rule in South Korea: Political Support and Governmental Performance," *Asian Survey*, Vol. XXXI, No. 8, August, pp.743-761.
2. These recent events are: the collapse of a decade long authoritarian regime of General Ershad and subsequent democratic election in Bangladesh in 1990-91, establishment of a Parliamentary government after forty years of Monarchical rule in Nepal in 1990, and Pakistan's return to democracy in 1988 after almost a decade long authoritarian rule of General Ziaul Huq.
3. Prof. S.D. Muni of Jawaharlal Nehru University remains the most robust protagonists of such a view. Most scholars, media practitioners, bureaucrats and business executives in South Asia, whom I interviewed, share this view. See, S.D. Muni, "SAARC: Building Regions from Below," *Asian Survey*, 25, no.4, 1985, pp.314-22; Also see, A. Appadorai, *National Interest and India's Foreign Policy*, Delhi: Kalinga Publications, 1992, p. 127; K.P. Saksena, "Political Dimensions of South Asian Cooperation: Some Observations," in V. Kaneslingam ed., *Political Dimensions of South Asian Cooperation*, New Delhi: Macmillan India Ltd., 1991b.
4. Interview with Rajni Kothari at New Delhi, June 13, 1992.
5. See Bharat Wariavwalla (1983), "Indira's India: A National Security State?", *The Round Table*, London, No. 287, 1983, pp. 282-83. For similar kind of arguments see also, Ashis Nandy, "India's Political Culture," *The Times of India*, May 13 and 14, 1977, published in two parts.
6. Originally Edward Lear's phrase of 1873 *Delhineation* has been recently used by Peter Lyon (1992) in his essay, "South Asia and the Geostrategies of the 1990s," *Contemporary South Asia*, vol.1, no.1, 1992, pp. 25-39.
7. See specially the following works, Mohammed Ayoob (1975), *India, Pakistan and Bangladesh: Search for a New Relationship*, ICWA, New Delhi;

Ashok Kapur (1987), *Pakistan's Nuclear Development*, London: Croom Helm; Raju G.C. Thomas (1986), *India's Security Policy*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

8. For characteristic samples of K. Subrahmanyam's extensive writings see, *Nuclear Myths and Realities: India's Dilemma*, New Delhi: ABC Publishing House, 1981; "Dialogue with Pakistan," *Strategic Analysis* 6, no. 10; "Prospects of Regional Stability and Security in South Asia," *Defence Journal*, New Delhi, no.7, July 1984.

9. Johan Galtung (1992:31) has argued that in the post-Cold War world order India, as the Center of a South Asian regional system, will exercise hegemonic power over an inner periphery, that is, other SAARC countries in South Asia, and an outer periphery with a heavy density of Indian nationals, such as the littoral of the Arab Sea, Bengal Bay, and Indian Ocean and also Trinidad and Fiji. In the context of India's ability to exercise hegemonic power over an "outer periphery", Galtung seems to have overstretched his conceptual formulations.

10. For a useful discussion of the power of reciprocity, see Robert Axelrod (1984), *The Evolution of Cooperation*, ch. 9, "The Robustness of Reciprocity," New York: Basic.

11. For Indian ruling elites, the autonomy of India implies that the whole South Asian region remains free of external influences. India's conception of autonomy ensures only India's sphere of influence in South Asia. In contrast, autonomy for Pakistan means India's non-interference in Pakistan's freedom of action. To ensure Pakistan's freedom of action and neutralize India's domination in the region Pakistan's policy makers believe that the country must get support from outside the region. Thus, Pakistan's effort to achieve autonomy runs directly counter to India's conception of autonomy.

12. Air Commodore Jasjit Singh, noted for his study of air-power, expressed this view during my interview with him in New Delhi on June 9, 1992. See his book, *Air Power in Modern Warfare*, New Delhi: Lancer International, 1985.

13. Quoted in Hewstone (1986:192).

14. Kautilyan doctrine is identical with Machiavellian principles. Kautilya alias Chanakya was an adviser to Maurya king Chandragupta who ruled India during the third century B.C.. Kautilya's teachings are found in the book *Arthashastra* which embodies all advice a king would need to be successful. In the art and science of empire building, Kautilya advocated the famous *Matsya Nyaya* principle (the law of the deep) where the big fish swallows smaller ones. Kautilya also taught that the

ambitious prince, who aspires to be the king of kings (*Chakravarthi*) should be an expert in the game of political chess. Foreign alliances and coalitions should be formulated on a pattern of concentric rings of natural enemies and allies. Enemies of enemies should be wooed. The king should seek alliances not with immediate neighbors, who are unreliable and natural enemies, but with neighbors's neighbors who are natural allies.

15. This argument is close to Emanuel Adler's description of "humanist realism" approach in international relations. Humanist realism approach offers a pragmatic middle ground between the realist and idealist view of international politics. The approach "blends power, structures, interests, and pessimism with bounded optimism, a dynamic view of international politics, and the conviction that some choices do exist and that change can, at times, lead to enhancement of human interests across borders." For a detailed explanation of this approach see, Emanuel Adler (1991:75-77), "Cognitive Evolution: A Dynamic Approach for the Study of International Relations and Their Progress," In Emanuel Adler and Beverly Crawford eds., *Progress in Postwar International Relations* (1991).

16. For a detailed discussion on how the leader's perception and misperception influence the decision making-process see, Robert Jervis (1976), *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*; Also see, Robert Axelrod and Robert Keohane, "Achieving Cooperation Under Anarchy: Strategies and Institutions," *World Politics* 38 (October), 1985, pp226-54.

17. A number of journalists and retired civil servants from India and Sri Lanka have particularly mentioned the OIC and the ECO examples to describe Pakistan's shift of interests from SAARC. These people argue that Islamabad is more likely to align its foreign policy and make trading arrangements with the Central Asian republics and Islamic belt than with SAARC countries. See the news feature article and the cartoon in *The Statesman* (Delhi edition), December 2, 1992, where Mr. Nawaz Sharif, the former Prime Minister of Pakistan, was shown to be rushing toward ECO and the Islamic Bloc ignoring SAARC. The same view was expressed in an editorial, entitled "SAARC on Oxygen" in *The Statesman* (Delhi edition), April 10, 1993. Most Pakistani respondents have, however, described such views and portrayal as preposterous.

18. Those familiar with game theory literature will agree that many episodes in Indo-Pakistan relations can be explained in terms of the Prisoner's Dilemma. See also Jervis (1976), *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*; and "Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma," *World Politics*, vol. 30, no.2, January 1978.

19. For a conceptual discussion of ethno-political relations see, Joseph Rothschild(1982), *Ethno-Politics: A Conceptual Framework*, New York, Columbia

University Press; Bhabani Sen Gupta (1988), *South Asian Perspectives: Seven Nations in Conflict and Cooperation*, B.R. Publishing Corporation, Delhi.

20. For a detailed discussion on this perspective see the article by Partha S. Ghosh, "India's Relations with its Neighbors: The Ethnic Factor," in K.M. de Silva and R.J. May ed. (1991), *Internationalization of Ethnic Conflict*. For other insightful discussion on ethnic conflicts in South Asia see, Urmila Phadnis (1989), *Ethnicity and Nation-Building in South Asia*; Partha S. Ghosh (1989), *Cooperation and Conflict in South Asia*; K.M. de Silva and R.J. May ed. (1991) *Internationalization of Ethnic Conflict*; W.Howard Wriggins with F. Gregory Gause, III, Terrence P. Lyons and Evelyn Colbert (1992), *Dynamics of Regional Politics: Four Systems on the Indian Ocean Rim*; and Vernon Marston Hewitt (1992), *The International Politics of South Asia*.

21. For a detailed discussion of "micronationalism" and its negative consequences on community-building process see Amitai Etzioni, "The Evils of Self-Determination," *Foreign Policy*, no. 89, Winter 1992-93, pp. 21-35.

22. Interview with Dr. A.T. Ariyaratne, September 14 1993, Honolulu. The quoted statement of Dr. Ariyaratne, who is very well known his extremely popular and inspiring *Sarvodaya Sramadana Movement*, is significant because of his considerable following not only in Sri Lanka but in other countries in South Asia as well.

23. Interview with Rajni Kothari at New Delhi, June 13, 1992.

24. For an explanation of the "opinion-decay" model in the context of the European Community see, R.J. Dalton and R. Duval, "The Political Environment and Foreign Policy Opinions: British Attitudes Towards European Integration, 1992-1979," unpublished ms., The Florida State University, 1986.

25. Such soap operas as *Buniyaad* which was televised in India for almost a year in 1987 was not only enormously popular in India but also in Pakistan. Many respondents in India and Pakistan specifically mentioned during my interview that the sensitive portrayal of this soap about the emotional turmoil, disillusionment and angst of families during the partition era generally had a favorable impact on both the pre-partition and the post-partition generation in the two countries. Also see, *India Today*, May 31, 1987, pp.152-156. In 1991, *Henna*, a film made in India with a star cast from both India and Pakistan and with its message of love, friendship, sacrifice and cooperation has become immensely popular in the subcontinent. Besides films and soaps, Hindi songs, music and *ghazals* are also extremely popular in the region.

26. For a similar analysis of the impact of the two televised megaserries of India's classic epics - *the Ramayana* and *the Mahabharata* - on Indian public culture see, Lloyd I. Rudolph, "The Media and Cultural Politics," in Harold A. Gould and Sumit Ganguly eds. *India Votes: Alliance Politics and Minority Governments in the Ninth and Tenth General Elections*, Westview Press, Boulder, 1993, pp.169-179.

27. For a useful discussion on this theme of *citizen diplomacy*, see Gale Warner and Michael Schuman (1987), *Citizen Diplomats: Pathfinders in Soviet-American Relations and How You Can Join Them*, New York: Continuum.

28. Benefit matches have been organized regularly, where players from India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka play as a part of the team, to generate funds to help a retiring player or establish a charitable institution. Recent effort of Imran Khan, the most popular and successful captain of Pakistan cricket team, to organize a benefit match in 1993 to generate funds for a cancer institute in Pakistan can be mentioned. In the past, several successful benefit matches have been organized with players from the subcontinent and other parts of the world playing as one team. Several respondents in South Asia have indicated the symbolic importance of a "South Asia Eleven" team. One scenario depicted by a respondent deserves special mention here: "Imran Khan, the most celebrated player from Pakistan, bowling against an English team and Sachin Tendulkar, the most promising player from India, taking a catch in the field. Such a scene will have tremendous symbolic appeal of unity for South Asians, that is, defeat of imperialism and South Asia's destiny in South Asia's hands."

29. In Israel, one of the most successful programs for bridging the gap between Jewish and Arab children is a soccer camp in which Jewish and Arab star players (each admired in both communities) participate together as coaches (Goldstein, 1994:420). The historic process of Sino-American rapprochement of 1971 is said to have begun after the U.S. ping-pong team's first official visit to China.

30. "Epistemic communities" refer to professional groups who share a common conviction that human welfare will be enhanced by the application of their knowledge. Scientists, environmentalists, meteorologists, public health specialists, engineers, economists, political scientists, molecular biologists, sociologists, astrologers, artists, musicians and journalists may constitute epistemic communities. These communities have enormous value for international and regional organizations because their loyalties are more to the production and application of their knowledge than to any particular government. Through networks and "invisible colleges" these communities seek to promote cooperation across national boundaries. Often, the epistemic communities are able to introduce values and visions that can capture the imagination of decision makers who then, on the basis of their new understanding, may redefine strategic and economic interests so as to enhance human interests across national borders. Michel Foucault (1973) seems to have invented this term of "epistemic community" in his *The Order of Things*. However, as Ernst Haas (1990:221) has argued, Foucault's usage is indistinguishable from what might be

called "ideological communities." For the meaning, definition, role, value and examples of who may or may not constitute an epistemic community see, Burkhart Holzner and John H. Marx (1979:108), *Knowledge Application*; Ernst Haas (1990:40-46), *When Knowledge is Power*; Peter M. Haas (1992:1-36), "Introduction: Epistemic Communities and International Policy Coordination," *International Organization*, 46(1).

31. For a useful discussion on how knowledge can transform the decision-makers' interest and improve the prospects for regional and international cooperation see also, Arthur Stein (1993:49), "Coordination and Collaboration: Regimes in an Anarchic World," in David A. Baldwin ed. *Neorealism and Neoliberalism: The Contemporary Debate*, New York:Columbia University Press.

**CHAPTER VIII**  
**SAARC AND THE FUTURE: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS**

In this concluding section, after summarizing the main arguments of my study, I will discuss the challenges and prospects of SAARC for future.

**The Argument Summarized**

I have argued in this dissertation that regional cooperation is an elite-pull phenomenon, that is, that initial initiatives for regional cooperation must come from the governing elites. Nevertheless, a supportive public opinion (i.e., support from non-governing elites and attentive public) is necessary for the growth and success of a regional organization. It is evident from our discussion in chapter I that although most of the major integration theorists have recognized the relevance of public opinion in the regional cooperation process, they, nonetheless, have neglected the role of domestic support and public opinion in their analysis of regional cooperation in different regions. But as argued in this study, regional cooperation policies, being community policies, include both domestic and foreign policy issue-areas. Thus, decision-makers require domestic support to formulate and implement regional cooperation policies. Following Deutsch, I posit in this dissertation that decision makers need positive feedback from the public and other domestic groups to continue regional cooperation policies and initiatives.<sup>1</sup> Negative feedback, or an unfavorable public reaction to government policies on regional cooperation, on the

other hand, will have a dampening effect on the decision makers and may lead them to postpone or even abandon regional cooperation policies or initiatives. If the latter becomes true, a regional organization is likely to experience what Ernst Haas has called "turbulent nongrowth"<sup>2</sup> and eventually decline. In light of these arguments, the present study has sought to examine the nature of domestic support in South Asia toward SAARC.

In order to provide some background understanding of SAARC's origin and what the organization has actually achieved since its birth, I have discussed in chapters III and IV the historical, cultural, political and socio-economic dynamics of South Asian societies and their impact on the evolution of the organization. A realistic appraisal of six summit meetings, various accomplishments, and institutional developments of SAARC from its origin in 1985 has led to the conclusion that SAARC has achieved limited success during the past decade of its existence and is still a long way from addressing the deep-rooted suspicions and outstanding problems in the region. However, by providing an opportunity for periodic meetings of policy makers, administrators, and experts at the highest political level, SAARC has helped contain many difficult situations in South Asia. Thanks to many informal meetings of South Asian leaders at the SAARC forums, a confidence-building process appears to have begun for the first time in South Asia's forty seven years of turbulent history. This is no small achievement, though it is not enough to ensure the survival and further growth of SAARC. In order to grow further, SAARC not only

needs deeper commitments from the South Asian governments but also a broad-based support from the South Asian people for more positive government policies on regional cooperation.

In chapter V and VI, I examined the nature of domestic support on SAARC in some detail. The findings, as discussed in chapter VII, suggest that domestic opinion ( i.e., opinion of non-governing elites and attentive publics) South Asia is not negative toward SAARC, but a great deal of domestic indifference exists toward this organization. Domestic indifference may provide some space to the decision makers in South Asia to continue regional cooperation initiatives or at least to maintain the status quo of SAARC. But, as argued in chapter VII, domestic indifference is a two-edged sword. It may become either hostile/negative or positive. In the case of the former gaining ground, SAARC is likely to experience "turbulent nongrowth" (E.Haas, 1990). As suggested in this dissertation, one of the main reasons for public indifference toward SAARC is the lack of public knowledge about the organization and its various activities. In the preceding chapter, I suggested that an extensive public information campaign on SAARC can be undertaken by the respective national governments of the South Asian countries, with the help of the national media and the SAARC Secretariat, to create public enthusiasm and knowledge about SAARC and its various activities. What is necessary for the growth of SAARC is not only a coalition of interests among the national governments at the interstate level, but also a coalition of interests between the government, and other

domestic groups at the domestic level to ensure the growth of SAARC in South Asia.

### **Challenges**

SAARC is a relatively young organization. It has promise, but it faces many major challenges. Four areas of challenge may be identified in this dissertation: structure, leadership, political ideology, and objectives. In order to endure as a regional organization, SAARC must overcome these challenges. It should, however, be remembered that most of these challenges fall within the purview of the states themselves and are beyond the scope of SAARC. This means that the member states must initiate certain domestic policies in the political and economic fields to address these challenges.

#### First Challenge: Structure

Most of the respondents suggested that the role and scope of the Secretariat and the Secretary-General need to be widened and re-defined in the light of changing needs of the organization and the changing environment of the region. Given the significant agreement by the South Asian leaders on the SAARC Preferential Trading Arrangement (April 11, 1993 at Dhaka), it is imperative that the Secretariat should be assigned a more active role in economic cooperative activities.

As pointed out by Mr. Abul Ahsan and Mr. Kant Kishore Bhargava, two former SAARC Secretary-Generals, the SAARC Secretariat should be given increased responsibility and power in preparing SAARC meetings, providing documentation, and proposing projects and programs for consideration at the SAARC Summit or by the Council of Ministers.<sup>3</sup>

Another aspect of structural challenge applies to the SAARC organizational chart. Article I of the SAARC charter identifies the primary objectives of the organization as economic well-being of the peoples, economic growth and collective self-reliance of the region, yet the Ministerial Council of SAARC consists only of the foreign ministers of the member states. Although SAARC can sponsor Ministerial Meetings on various areas of cooperation,<sup>4</sup> there is no standing SAARC council or structure for the SAARC ministers of planning, industry or finance. To the average person, economic coordination, cooperation, and planning do not fall within the purview of the foreign ministers. Rather, economic issues can be better looked after by the economic ministers in the South Asian countries. If SAARC is serious about its objectives stated in its charter (Article I), then a separate ministerial council consisting of economic ministers should be constituted as in ASEAN. A separate economic ministerial council is urgently necessary in light of the recent drives of the South Asian countries to implement SAPTA agreement.

The current two year non-renewable tenure is too limited a period for the SAARC Secretary-general to grow in the post, to take any initiative regarding SAARC activities, or to make any effective contribution to the organization. There is a consensus that the Secretary-General's tenure should be extended for a suitable period of time. The same is also applicable to the Directors, who are nominated by member states and hold office for a period of three years. Such a short appointment period does not allow for continuity and growth of expertise, both of which are absolutely necessary for the effectiveness of any regional or international organization. Moreover, there is also a consensus that the SAARC Secretary-General, similar to his Commonwealth counterpart, should have the authority to commission studies on relevant regional issues and to communicate directly with the ministers of the member countries regarding problems and progress in implementation of a particular project already approved by the Standing Committee.

In the context of the changing political and economic climate at both regional and global levels, it may be necessary to expand SAARC to include Afghanistan as a new member. Given the willingness of both Pakistan and India, the prospect of Afghanistan's admission as a new SAARC member appears to be good. Moreover, inclusion of a new member would indicate growing strength for SAARC.

Although Article X (2) of the SAARC charter categorically mentions that "bilateral and contentious issues shall be excluded from the deliberations," a majority of the respondents feels that bilateral issues should be addressed in SAARC forums. SAARC leaders must address this crucial issue sometime in the near future despite India's strong opposition.

Finally, there is a need to change the decision-making process. According to Article X (1) of the SAARC charter, "decisions at all level shall be taken on the basis of unanimity." While the principle of unanimity for any decision is satisfactory on paper, ensuring equality among member states, the result may be obstruction on occasions.<sup>5</sup> For a smooth decision-making process, unanimity may be considered as the guiding principle, but at the same time, as practiced in Economic Community of the West African States (ECOWAS), those who remain absent or abstain from the meetings need not be counted in taking a decision regarding a particular issue or project. In other words, a consensus or 7-x formula can be applied in case of a stalemate in deciding the fate of an issue or project.

### Second Challenge: Leadership

Leaders of the South Asian countries enjoy some degree of freedom to try alternative policy options, particularly with their neighbors. But, similar to many other Third World leaders, South Asian leaders are also guided by a concern with their political and physical survival. Most regional and foreign policies of South Asian leaders are based on rational calculations, that is, leaders pursue policies that are most likely to ensure their political survival, to provide legitimacy to their rule and to keep them in power for a maximum length of time.<sup>6</sup> Not surprisingly, South Asian leaders are extremely sensitive and responsive to domestic pressure. One important reason why neither India nor Pakistan has been able to take any bold initiative to resolve the Kashmir dispute is that domestic public opinion on this issue has hardened over the years in both countries. Any further initiative for SAARC's growth would, therefore, depend on the leaders' concerns for their chances of political survival.<sup>7</sup> It is, however, reasonable to believe that until now leaders in South Asia have shown remarkable willingness and resilience to keep the SAARC spirit alive.<sup>8</sup> To what extent they continue to perceive SAARC as a mechanism through which reconciliation of their mutual interests is possible remains a key to SAARC's future growth.

Another aspect of challenge that SAARC faces is the Indian leaders' desire for a greater and more active role, not only at the regional level but also at the global level. Indian leaders believe that India is unlikely to get economic benefits from any SAARC arrangement. In New Delhi's economic equation, SAARC appears to be secondary to Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, ASEAN, Australia, China, Europe, and the United States. Politically, India had always played, and continues to play, a leadership role in such multilateral forums as the Non-Aligned Movement, the Group of 15 (G-15), and Commonwealth meetings. Both political and economic calculations appear to have strengthened the desire of the Indian leaders to play a greater role beyond the SAARC region. India's decision to become a "sectorial dialogue partner" with ASEAN (and its recent efforts to become a full dialogue partner) and its recent role in GATT negotiations may be indicative of its growing desire to play a more active role outside of SAARC. However, it is very unlikely that India would completely ignore SAARC. To the extent that Indian political leaders perceive that membership of SAARC can lead to political stability in the region and to future improvements of India's bilateral relations with neighboring countries, one would expect a validation and strengthening of New Delhi's commitment to SAARC.

South Asian leaders (and public opinion in the region) believe that the creation of SAARC represents a promising initiative to help leaders to improve communications and to build closer personal contacts so that possible solutions can be found to many problems. Of course, everyone agrees that this process will take some time. It can perhaps be argued that through improved communication and closer personal contacts, South Asia's future leaders may be more successful than their predecessors in finding mutually acceptable solutions to many difficult problems in South Asia. It can also be argued that younger post-independence leaders of the subcontinent with no "historical hang ups" - such as the partition trauma and the bitterness of the Bangladesh liberation movement - may be more flexible and willing to pursue a pragmatic regional policy based on shared interests rather than seeking zero-sum objectives.<sup>9</sup>

### Third Challenge: Political Ideology

Regional cooperation in South Asia, as in other Third World regions, may have been guided by what Ernst Haas (1990:65) has described an "ideology of pragmatic antidependency"<sup>10</sup> that seeks to promote regional interdependence among South Asian countries to achieve economic growth without delinking them from the global system. But, as many South Asians believe, the political leaders of SAARC member states sought regional cooperation because they realized that mutual cooperation would greatly enhance their respective chances of political survival and

provide them political legitimacy.<sup>11</sup> From this perspective, it is possible to argue that as long as the political leaders of the member states perceive the continued existence of SAARC as advantageous to them, SAARC will be maintained. If South Asian political leaders' are able to develop mutual respect and appreciation for one another's problems, mutual faith, belief, conviction and trust in negotiated settlement of conflicts, then an "ideology of regional cooperation" (Zillur Khan, 1991:51) may eventually emerge, strengthening the SAARC movement.

But the "ideology of regional cooperation" may be undermined by the development of "transnational ideologies" (Wriggins, 1992:26) by the religious and ethnic minorities of the South Asian countries. India and Pakistan both accuse the other of encouraging ethnic dissidents within the other's borders (in India's Punjab and Kashmir and Pakistan's Sind). Transnational ideologies not only lead to social fragmentation but also provide the leaders an opportunity to intervene in the domestic affairs of their neighbors. Thus, million of refugees fleeing Pakistan's 1971 crackdown in "East Pakistan" and tens of thousands of Tamils fleeing 1983 racial riots in Sri Lanka created opportunities for Indian intervention. The current Kashmir issue, if not resolved through negotiation within a reasonable period of time, may also provide an opportunity for both India and Pakistan to try military intervention. Military intervention, needless to say, will be a serious challenge to SAARC's growth. However, memories of the tremendous costs of past wars and the expectation of even higher costs of future wars (given India's and Pakistan's nuclear

capability and possession of sophisticated conventional military weapons), and the recent efforts to achieve economic growth through liberalization may deter both the Indian and Pakistani leaders from plunging into a full-fledged war. It is, nonetheless, true, that unless Kashmir is amicably settled, as most South Asian believe, SAARC's future will remain uncertain.

#### Fourth Challenge: Objectives

For many citizens of South Asia, who are aware of SAARC's various activities, there is a definite gap between the rhetorical objectives of SAARC Summit declarations and the organization's real accomplishments. As evaluated in chapter III, SAARC's achievements during the past decade are modest, and most of the achievements appear to exist on paper, not yet translated into reality. The most heralded SAARC accomplishment, the SAARC Food Security Reserve, could not be utilized to meet the needs of Bangladesh during its natural disaster in 1991.

Terrorist activities and drug trafficking across the Indo-Pakistan border appear to be on the rise despite SAARC Regional Conventions on Terrorism (1988) and Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (1990). Both India and Pakistan blame each other for this issue, undermining one of the objectives of SAARC as delineated in Article I (d) of the charter, that is, "to contribute to mutual trust, understanding and appreciation of one another's problem."

Cooperation among South Asian countries in international forums on matters of common interests remains an illusive goal. Recently, Pakistan has raised the Kashmir issue in almost all international forums, widening the gap between India and Pakistan. In September 1993, the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Mrs. Khaleda Zia, apparently frustrated with India's procrastination, has raised the Ganges water-sharing issue in the United Nations, much to the dislike of Indian leaders.

Four out of eight objectives, as listed in Article I of the SAARC charter, focus on economic issues. Yet, during the past eight years, SAARC has been very slow to improve or to initiate economic cooperation among SAARC countries. This has led to much of the prevalent cynicism in South Asia regarding SAARC's ability to foster any kind of economic cooperation among South Asian nations. Although agreement on SAPTA at the Dhaka Summit (April 11, 1993) can be considered one of the most important achievements of SAARC, the Summit leaders' failure to agree on a time-table for completion of the schedule of item-wise concessions may push the launching of preferential trade into uncertainty.<sup>12</sup>

Although security concerns are and have been a major element of South Asian countries' foreign policy behavior, there is no reference to security in the original SAARC charter. Many South Asians believe that Bangladesh's initiative for SAARC and the small South Asian countries' immediate and enthusiastic response to the idea of regional cooperation may have been based on security considerations -

that is, to contain an Indian military threat. It is also argued in some quarters that India, after initial hesitation, accepted the SAARC proposal to contain extra-regional security links of small South Asian countries, which might pose a threat to India's security.<sup>13</sup>

It is fair to argue that SAARC has achieved some success in reducing the intensity of conflicts in South Asia by providing a forum for informal discussion among the South Asian leaders regarding bilateral disputes during the past decade. With the end of the Cold War and retrenchment of the superpowers from the region, security issues appear to have acquired added salience for the smaller South Asian countries because all bilateral disputes and security concerns in the region are India-centered and thus need India's participation for the resolution of those conflicts. India's recent economic liberalization also drives India to seek a stable and secure region for its own economic growth. These may be some of the compelling reasons why, for the first time, the leaders of seven South Asian countries at the Dhaka Summit (1993) agreed to closely monitor the security of smaller states of South Asia, and underscored the need to consider special measures of support to preserve their independence and territorial integrity.<sup>14</sup>

Moreover, it is unrealistic to argue about regional cooperation in South Asia without discussing various aspects of security in the subcontinent. South Asia provides a clear example of what Barry Buzan (1983:106, 1986:8) calls middle-level security complex - that is, the primary security concerns of India and Pakistan are so closely linked that their national securities cannot be considered without one another.<sup>15</sup> Also, the region suffers from an acute *security dilemma*<sup>16</sup> which has led to a continuously unhealthy arms competition between India and Pakistan. In the past, India and Pakistan have fought three wars and continue to engage in frequent border skirmishes today. Terrorist infiltration and drug-trafficking across a porous Indo-Pakistan border continue to rise and pose serious challenge to the security concerns of both the countries. The resilience of South Asian states are put to test almost everyday in the wake of widespread ethnic conflicts with potentials for secession. Development of nuclear capabilities by both India and Pakistan has added another serious dimension to the security concerns of the region. In such a scenario, it is not pragmatic to think that SAARC can grow by ignoring security concerns of the region.

The changing political and economic environment at both the regional and global levels may force SAARC countries to confront more pragmatically such difficult issues as intra-SAARC economic cooperation and regional security in the post-Cold War era so as to ensure the continued relevance and, hence, maintenance of the association. As Ernst Haas (1990:74-75) has observed no organization can

hope to succeed with "static" objectives. In order to grow, an organization's objectives should be "expanding" - that is, new goals need to be pursued in tune with changing situations.<sup>17</sup> Given the changing environment in the post-Cold War era, SAARC can hardly ignore the need for security cooperation in the South Asian region.

### **Prospects**

#### **Informalism and Inter-Elite Reconciliation**

At present, the SAARC charter excludes any consideration of bilateral political issues. The rationale for this exclusion lies in the fact that bilateral issues in South Asia are always contentious, and any discussion on them will lead to further controversy, thereby jeopardizing the prospect of SAARC. The most important and controversial bilateral issue in South Asia remains security. Security issues mainly arise from two sources: (i) the conflict and tension between India and Pakistan, and (ii) the internal tensions and conflicts between various ethnic groups in South Asia. The ethnic tensions, in which India is found to be invariably involved because of its multi-ethnic character, have serious spillover effects often resulting in mutual acrimony and conflict among the South Asian countries.

Because of the spillover effects of these ethnic and religious conflicts between SouthAsian countries, it is often believed that most of the problems in South Asia are the region's problem and hence, should be addressed regionally rather than bilaterally. Thus, all the member states in SAARC, except for India, favor the inclusion of bilateral issues in the SAARC charter to improve their bargaining power. While the merit of this argument should not be lost sight of, India's insistence on not including bilateral issues in the SAARC charter also is reasonable. There is hardly any bilateral issue which does not involve India, and any formal discussion on such issues will obviously lead to India's isolation. The formal discussion of an issue in such a forum as SAARC may be interpreted in some quarters as "ganging up" by the small nations against India. It is not surprising that India opposes any such move to include bilateral issues in the SAARC charter. Instead, India favors informal discussion on bilateral issues. In fact, both ASEAN and GCC carry out extensive informal discussions at the ministerial, diplomatic, and sometimes head of government levels to address many of their bilateral problems.<sup>18</sup> Such strategies often prove to be more effective than any formal-level discussion, as ASEAN experience attests.

In the case of South Asia, informal talks among the leaders of the region at high-level SAARC meetings appear to have contributed to confidence building process more than any other method. Over the years, such informal or behind-the-scenes talks have led to inter-elite reconciliation, producing some noteworthy results

in South Asia. As S.D. Muni (1987) has observed:

As a result of talks between Indian and Pakistani leaders during the first SAARC Summit, the bilateral normalization process was reactivated and attempts were made to break the stalemate on trade matters. On his way back from Dhaka, President Zia of Pakistan broke his journey in New Delhi to meet Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi on 17 December 1985 and the two leaders agreed not to attack each other's nuclear installations. The Bangalore SAARC Summit in November 1986 helped the Indian and Pakistani Prime Ministers to hold talks on diffusing the tensions resulting from India's military exercise (Brass Tacks) on the Indo-Pak border. During the Bangalore Summit, informal Indo-Sri Lankan talks outside the SAARC forum resulted in the formulation of "19 December" proposals on devolution of power to the proposed Tamil areas. (pp.26-27)

Some other recent examples can be cited regarding the usefulness of these informal talks. During the fourth SAARC summit at Islamabad in December 1988, India's Prime Minister, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, and Pakistan's new Prime Minister, Mrs. Benazir Bhutto, discussed a wide range of issues between the two countries outside the official forum and were able to reach a number of agreements to improve their relations. One such important agreement was to honor the 1972 Simla Agreement to resolve the Kashmir dispute. It is important to note that Mr. Rajiv Gandhi was the first Indian prime minister to pay an official visit to Pakistan in twenty-eight years. It is also true that such high-level official meeting between the Indian and Pakistani prime minister would not have been possible so soon after the revival of representative government in Pakistan without SAARC. The same summit seems to have paved the way for an informal between the Indian prime minister Mr. Rajiv Gandhi and Sri Lankan President Mr. Jayawardene regarding the IPKF withdrawal from Sri

Lanka. Informal diplomacy are said to be primarily responsible for the holding of the fifth SAARC summit at Male in November 1990 and the sixth summit at Colombo in December 1991. Following the sixth SAARC summit, the Indian Prime Minister, Mr. Narasimha Rao, and Pakistan's prime minister, Mr. Nawaz Sharif, met at Davos (Switzerland) and apparently carried out informal discussions regarding bilateral conflicts. The very fact that India and Pakistan have not fought a war over Kashmir recently despite provocative developments in both sides and the Pakistani action to thwart the move of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) to cross the cease-fire line in Kashmir in 1992 and 1993 is a testimony to the usefulness of informal talks and the SAARC spirit. One could cite other examples of such informal talks and their positive impact on bilateral relationship between the South Asian Countries. The basic fact, however, remains that for the time being informal talks at frequently held SAARC meetings between the leaders and diplomats will serve a much greater purpose than other methods for generating mutual goodwill for in South Asia.<sup>19</sup>

Recently, four developments in South Asia appear to have a significant bearing on the growth of SAARC. The four developments are (1) the rise of religious and ethnic fundamentalism, (2) sweeping economic reforms all over South Asia, (3) emergence and strengthening of democratic regimes in Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan, and (4) the end of the Cold War.<sup>20</sup>

### Ethnic Conflict and Regional Cooperation

As argued earlier, ethnic conflicts have a spillover effect in the entire region and hence need a regional solution. Such regional forum as SAARC can provide some hope for resolving ethnic conflicts in South Asia. There are indications that New Delhi may be shunning its earlier opposition to discussing religious and ethnic conflicts at SAARC forums. India's restrained reaction to the Pakistani prime minister's remark on the extremely volatile Ayodhya issue at the recently concluded seventh SAARC summit at Dhaka (1993) bears a testimony to this fact. Moreover, as discussed earlier, almost all important bilateral and ethnic concerns have been addressed at the SAARC forums through informal talks between the leaders of South Asia. The trend is likely to continue in future.

### Liberalization and Regional Cooperation

Most countries in South Asia have embarked upon a program of economic liberalization process, hoping to bring prosperity to their countries. Sweeping economic reforms have hardly any chance of success unless peace and stability are restored in the region. Regional cooperation among South Asian countries is absolutely necessary to achieve this objective. In this context, the Pakistani prime minister Nawaz Sharif's remarks during the Annual Economic Forum meeting at Davos (Switzerland) in January 1992 is illustrative:

Both our countries (India and Pakistan) are introducing economic reforms, but these reforms will be rendered useless if the political relations between us go on deteriorating; if the relations continue to deteriorate, no foreign investor would invest in either of the two countries. Because of this, it is all the more essential that we improve our relations quickly and put our effort to create a peaceful political atmosphere in South Asia.<sup>21</sup>

While most South Asians believe that tension between India and Pakistan is the main obstacle for the growth of SAARC, and only the removal of this tension can ensure further growth of regionalism in South Asia (Naik, 1992:14; Rais 1987:81-83; Kodikara, 1987:23-32), some scholars and highly placed officials have expressed hope that liberalization moves in South Asia is likely to improve economic cooperation among South Asian countries. According to this group, once economic cooperation gathers momentum, mutual confidence among South Asian governments will increase, and political differences may become muted and manageable (Prasad, 1992, Mukherjee, 1992; Wadhva, 1992).<sup>22</sup> However, both groups agree that efforts to improve economic cooperation or to reduce political tension will take time to produce results. Given the complex political and economic situation in South Asia, exclusive focus either on economic cooperation or political cooperation is not likely to succeed. A simultaneous move to continue political dialogues and pursue economic cooperation appears to be the most pragmatic strategy for South Asia. In light of this analysis, it can be argued that SAARC may be able to facilitate elite understanding and to provide a common platform for South Asian leaders to carry out high-level discussions on regional political and economic issues.

### Democratization and Regional Cooperation

The recent formation of democratic governments in Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Nepal, although the military influence in Pakistan and Bangladesh is by no means over, offers the ruling elites an opportunity for the first time to evaluate the problems of South Asia in a spirit of mutual tolerance, accommodation, and compromise rather than seeking solutions through military confrontation. There is, however, no firm evidence that domestic democratization is likely to strengthen regional cooperation. One study by Philippe Schmitter (1991:118) in the context of Latin American regional cooperation has concluded that the transition from authoritarian to democratic rule in Latin America may have led to a decline of interstate violence and increase in the number of agreements among the leaders, but not "permanent cooperation" or "permanent peace" in the region. Similarly, it can be argued that the transition from authoritarian to democratic rule in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal may enhance prospects for more interregional activities (that is, increase in the frequency of meetings between leaders, bureaucrats, and technocrats and other epistemic communities), but it will be premature to argue that "permanent cooperation" or "perpetual peace" in Kantian sense<sup>23</sup> will be attained in South Asia in the near future. Given the present level of mistrust among the South Asian countries, it will be quite some time before these countries can hope to experience what Schmitter (1991:118) has described in the context of Latin America a *virtuous circle*:

wherein democratization decreases the threat of war and increases interdependence between newly liberated private citizens of adjacent countries, which in turn leads to cooperation and integration among these previously sovereign political units, which eventually results in the strengthening of democracy at the national level and the pursuit of human interests at the international level.

It should be remembered that, except for India, all other countries in South Asia experience what Pakistan's Prime Minister Mrs. Benazir Bhutto called in 1990 "quasi democracy."<sup>24</sup> Unlike full-blown democracies in Western Europe and North America, where political leaders can take bold initiative on foreign policy issues with wide public support, leaders in quasi-democracies face competition from the state structure, the military, and the bureaucracy on foreign policy matters. Also, while an authoritarian leadership allows more and more leader-to-leader contact (the frequency of meetings may be limited) quasi-democratic leadership hands over more power to bureaucrats and technocrats, who prefer a "wait and see" approach to any bold or innovative initiative on foreign policy matters. Moreover, it is too early to predict the future of democracy in South Asia. As it happened in the past, Pakistan and Bangladesh may again revert to authoritarian rule. For example, Pakistan after 1977 and Bangladesh after the assassination of Mujibur Rehman in 1975 became authoritarian states after brief periods of democracy. It can, however, be argued, as many citizens in South Asia believe, that regional cooperation in South Asia will not depend on type of regime. Rather, the leaders' perceptions of mutual advantage will determine the future direction of SAARC.<sup>25</sup>

End of the Cold War: Implications for Regional Cooperation

The end of the Cold War and the withdrawal of the superpowers from the region provide South Asian countries an enormous opportunity to sort out their differences by undertaking regional negotiations rather than by seeking external help. The end of the Cold War may also provide an opportunity for both India and Pakistan to reorient their foreign policy behavior from a *Kautilyan-Waltzian*<sup>26</sup> power-balancing model to more accommodative policies toward each other. The increasing collaboration between Russia and the United States was demonstrated in the Gulf crisis of early 1991. Lack of superpower support to India and Pakistan has been exemplified by Russia's cancellation of a long committed rocket deal with India in March 1993 and considerable cutoff of assistance to Pakistan from the United States in 1990. Accordingly, the two regional antagonists may become more willing to accommodate each other and thus to open the way for a reevaluation of the *security complex* and *security dilemma* in South Asia. With a decline in American interest and support, Pakistan would look toward Gulf states and perhaps Central Asia for both economic and diplomatic support. But the intra-regional conflict among Gulf states and yet-to-be stabilized status of Central Asian republics would inevitably narrow Islamabad's options at least for some period of time. With the disintegration of Soviet Union, China may find South Asia of less strategic concern. China's lessened worry about India as a client of Soviet Union may reduce its support for Pakistan (Wriggins, 1992:142) and may enhance prospects for

improved Sino-Indian relations. The signing of a "landmark agreement" between China and India in September 1993 to reduce troop levels in the mountainous borders of two countries and to honor the existing border in the disputed territory of Arunachal Pradesh in northeastern India after three decades of hostility are indications of growing Sino-Indian rapprochement. India's policymakers, no longer assured of reliable support from Moscow but aware of declining support from Washington and Beijing for Pakistan, may become more flexible and accommodative in dealing with their regional rival.

In the light of above developments, it can be asked: what should be India's best regional policy? Some scholars, including Johan Galtung, have argued that India will emerge as one of the "six great powers" along with Russia, China, Japan, the EU, and the USA in the post-Cold War multipolar world order. In its new status as a "great power", India is likely to increase its influence not only in South Asia but also in Southeast Asia. Thus, in the future India is going to play a greater role in maintaining regional order.<sup>27</sup> In the line with this logic, other scholars have argued that India should play a much greater role and make bolder initiatives in order to make SAARC more effective and visible.<sup>28</sup> The difficulty with these arguments is that they do not take into consideration the sensitivity of smaller states in South Asia. Any bold initiative or greater role by India in SAARC will strengthen the South Asian neighbors' perception of Indian "hegemonism" (Panda, 1984:67; Galtung, 1992:31)<sup>29</sup> and thereby jeopardize prospects for the organization. On the

other hand, India's lack of initiatives may be interpreted as a lack of sincerity for SAARC. In view of the changed international environment the most pragmatic regional policy for India seems to support moderate policy initiatives and accommodative diplomacy.

### **SAARC: A Case of Late Regionalism**

"Late regionalism" refers to the development of regionalism through learning or what Etzioni (1991) broadly calls "fashion" (p.317). Regional organizations in one area can learn lessons from the experiences of failed organizations in other areas. Being a case of late regionalism SAARC has the distinctive advantage of avoiding the pitfalls of other regional organizations that led to their decline. At the same time SAARC can incorporate their successful principles. From LAFTA's case it is obvious that embarking on an overambitious project of free trade may not be practical or even desirable for developing countries and South Asia in particular. A slow, cautious, and gradual approach to regionalism, as demonstrated by ASEAN, appears to be the best strategy for South Asian countries.<sup>30</sup> Cooperation at micro-level and then advancement to the macro-level, as the Nordic councils's experience reveals, may be more appropriate for the growth of regionalism in South Asia.

Some principles of "late regionalism" have been articulated by various scholars in various ways. Michael Haas (1992), for instance, has suggested the following six principles: "(1) respect for the equality of cultures (rather than hierarchical, coercive methods of conducting diplomacy), (2) consensus building (rather than value maximization), (3) incrementalism (rather than blueprintish grand designs), (4) attention to principles (rather than technical details), (5) unique solutions (rather than universalistic remedies) and (6) a stress on cooperation (rather than integration)" (P.240). Michael Antolik (1990) has proposed two principles, i.e., (7) self-restraint, as demonstrated by noninterference in other's domestic affairs, and (8) mutual accommodation. To these eight principles two more might be added: (9) adoption of behind-the-scenes or informal conflict resolution mechanisms, and (10) open regional communications to create an awareness among the public about the potential benefits of a regional organization. The last principle is important because a regional organization can be maintained only as long as both the political leaders and the public of the member countries perceive its continued existence as advantageous to them.

While six of the above ten principles of late regionalism are already found in South Asia, the remaining four - i.e., (4) attention to principles (rather than technical details), (7) self-restraint as demonstrated by non-interference in other's domestic affairs, (8) mutual accommodation, and (10) open regional communication - appear to be absent. On the basis of this observation, it can be

reasonably argued that SAARC has a fair chance to grow, but the growth is likely to be incremental and slow.

### **Concluding Remarks**

What South Asia needs today is peace, stability, prosperity, and international recognition, objectives that can best be accomplished through enhanced regional cooperation. Given the nature of the nation-building process in South Asia, SAARC may not be able to provide immediately any molecular attraction that will induce the member states to act in unison. Bilateral differences will persist, and they are likely to be addressed through bilateral negotiations. SAARC may be able to facilitate dialogues among the South Asian ruling elites and to serve as a supplementary method for advancing national development. SAARC may not be an immediate success in near future, but its dissolution seems most unlikely in the post-Cold War world order. What Hans Indorf (1984:94) argued for ASEAN a decade ago seems to be true in case of SAARC:

Once an international organization is in being, it will perpetuate itself regardless of performance, unless dissolved by a deliberate act of its members. Any joint activity will incrementally accelerate the momentum towards further consolidation. Bilateral disagreements can stifle momentum, yet they are unlikely to induce organizational dissolution.

Deliberate dissolution of SAARC is very unlikely. It took eight years of intense initiatives and negotiations to reach a decision to create SAARC.<sup>31</sup> Naturally, decision costs for SAARC are very high. Besides, the ruling elites of South Asia are aware of the fact that short-term bilateral differences might cripple SAARC today, but the peace and prosperity of the region will require the organization again in the future. The cost of reconstructing SAARC may be much higher than which the South Asian countries can afford to pay.<sup>32</sup> The very fact that the fifth, sixth and seventh SAARC summits at Male (1990), Colombo (1991) and Dhaka (1993) could be held at all, despite enormous differences among the South Asian countries, demonstrates the willingness of the South Asian ruling elites to keep SAARC alive.<sup>33</sup>

While the leaders of Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, and Nepal will continue to support SAARC for the purpose of security, international prestige, recognition and perhaps some economic benefits, the leaders of India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka are likely to support SAARC for the purpose of peace and stability at home and in the region. It is reasonable to believe that the ruling elites of South Asian countries have realized that there is no alternative to SAARC. The alternatives to SAARC are economic anarchy, destabilization, social conflicts, and ultimately political tensions that may escalate into war. Thus, SAARC appears to provide a possible path toward a stable South Asian regional order. At this critical moment of history, it seems unlikely that the ruling elites in South Asia will ignore SAARC and thus miss a

splendid opportunity for peace and development. Besides, the South Asian ruling elites appear to be aware of the fact that SAARC's success or even continuation as a forum for discussion to reduce tension among South Asian countries has significant ramifications not only for the region but also for the international community. Continuation of SAARC will demonstrate that regional groupings are possible even among antagonists and thus will provide an important exemplar for countries in other conflict zones.

**Endnotes:**

1. Recently, E. Haas (1990) has acknowledged that incremental growth of regional organizations is dependent, among other things, on "positive feedback" and "learning" as analyzed by Deutsch. See his *When Knowledge is Power*, pp.24-25, pp.187-188 and pp. 191-192. Such changes in Haas' thinking may be attributed to his development of "evolutionary epistemology" (Adler, 1991:46-47) and "reflectivist" focus (Haggard, 1991:431-432) on the understanding of the dynamic nature of cooperation in international relations.

2. According to Ernst Haas (1990), "turbulence" in an organization's life refers to a phase where participating actors are utterly confused about the goal and purpose of the organization, do not have a clear objective, pursue many objectives simultaneously unsure of the trade-offs among them, profess many clashing interests and demonstrate ambiguity and lack of commitment in any discussion and negotiation. "Nongrowth" is characterized by stable or shrinking budgets, the failure to acquire new tasks, low morale, and failure to recruit needed personnel. When nongrowth occurs in a setting of turbulence the organization experiences a "turbulent nongrowth" which over a period of time leads to either demise or reevaluation (replacement) of the organization. Ernst Haas has argued that most of the regional organizations in Latin America and Africa did not succeed because they could not manage to escape "turbulent nongrowth." Taking an "it remains to be seen" approach he has advised caution in any predictions in the cases of ASEAN and SAARC. For a discussion see his *When Knowledge is Power*, ch.6 and pp.247-48.

3. Mr. Abul Ahsan has cited these changes, among others, in his book *SAARC: A Perspective*, pp.20-21; Mr. Kant Kishore Bhargava spoke about these changes in his speech at the international conference on "South Asia as a Dynamic Partner: Prospects for the Future," at New Delhi, May 25-27, 1992.

4. So far, one ministerial-level meeting has been held on international economic issues, two on women in development, and one on environment and development. See, *South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC): An Introduction*, A SAARC Secretariat Publication, April 1992.

5. As noted in chapter II, two instances can be cited where the negative ramification of the unanimity clause became apparent. First, when Sri Lanka decided not to attend the Foreign Ministers meeting at Thimpu (May 1985) and, second, when Sri Lanka again refused to attend the Foreign Ministers meeting at New Delhi, June 18-19, 1987 in protest against India's action of dropping off relief materials in the Jaffna Peninsula against the wishes of Colombo.

6. Zillur R. Khan, a school friend of the late President Ziaur Rahman and known for his numerous personal meetings and discussions with the president during 1977-81 about the future of Bangladesh, has observed that one of the reasons why Ziaur Rahman was so enthusiastic and took so much initiatives for regional cooperation in South Asia was that he wanted to transform his image from a military dictator of a least developed state to the status of a powerful Third World leader, claiming a place in history with Nehru, Jinnah, Gandhi and Sukarno. By becoming the leader of South Asian regional cooperation movement, he hoped to bring prestige, legitimacy, and longevity to his rule. For a discussion see, Zillur R. Khan ed., *SAARC and the Superpowers*, Dhaka: University Press Limited, 1991, pp.34-35.

7. The linkage between leaders' concern for political survival and their policy preferences (i.e., whether or not to cooperate with neighbors or external powers) has been very well explored by Steven R. David in what he called an "omnibalancing theory." For an explanation of this theory and how it is different from balance of power theory see his article, "Explaining Third World Alignment," *World Politics*, 43, January 1991, pp. 233-56.

8. As discussed in chapter II, despite several crises, the Kathmandu Summit (1987), Male' Summit (1990) and Colombo Summit (1991) were held because leaders were able to sort out their differences through negotiations.

9. According to conventional realist thinking, as exemplified in the work of Kenneth Waltz (1979), the quest for power, which is inherently a relative concept, inevitably places states in a zero-sum situation. Under zero-sum conditions it is difficult to achieve cooperation because actors pursue mutually antagonistic objectives. Also see Joseph Grieco (1988).

10. Ernst Haas (1990) has constructed five world-order ideologies - *classical liberalism*, *structural antidependency*, *pragmatic antidependency*, and *ecoholism* - to explain various purposes and forms of collaboration among the nation-states. For an explanation of these five types of ideologies and examples of regional organizations based on these ideologies see his *When Knowledge Is Power: Three Models of Change in International Organizations*, ch. 4 and pp. 225-226.

11. This feeling is particularly predominant in Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bhutan.

12. Although the foreign ministers of seven South Asian countries agreed to complete the schedule of concessions by December 1993 and all formalities for operation of the SAPTA by December 1995, on Pakistan's insistence, the ministers also agreed not to impose any time limit for item-wise concessions and thus full implementation of the accord. The rationale for not setting any time frame to implement the accord, as spelled out by the standing committee, was that "the liberalization of trade should be done in such a manner that all countries in the

region could share the benefits of trade expansion equitably." See, the document, *Agreement on SAARC Preferential Trading Arrangement (SAPTA)*, April 11, 1993, p.1. For a critical analysis of SAPTA see *The Hindu*, April 13, 1993; Editorial in *Mainstream*, New Delhi, April 17, 1993; S. Kamaluddin, *FEER*, April 22, 1993, p. 17.

13. This is one of the central theses of Kanti Bajpai's (1990) dissertation, *The Origins of Association in South Asia: SAARC, 1979-1989*.

14. See, *SAARC: Dhaka Summit & Declaration*, SAARC Secretariat 1993. It should be recalled that security issues, a part of the original draft of Bangladesh's proposal for regional cooperation in South Asia, were dropped at the insistence of India (1980). Pakistan wanted to include a proposal for disarmament in the SAARC charter before the Bangalore Summit (1986). But, again, on India's insistence, this security-related proposal was dropped. At the Male' Summit (1990), President M.A. Gayoom of Maldives, in his opening remarks, described SAARC as a framework of security for small countries and an avenue through which to seek security and environmental protection. The reference to security in Dhaka Summit Declaration (1993) indicates that Indian policy makers have recently recognized the necessity for security cooperation in South Asia in the post-Cold War period.

15. Barry Buzan (1983:106, 1986:8) has defined *security complex* as "a group of states whose primary security concerns link together sufficiently closely that their national securities can not realistically be considered apart from one another." South Asia, according to Buzan (1983:106), provides a clear example of *middle-level security complex*. The heart of this complex is the rivalry between India and Pakistan, two major states whose insecurities are so deeply intertwined that their national securities (in terms of political and military security) cannot be separated. Other much less powerful states, such as Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, and Sri Lanka, are bound into the complex for geographical reasons. Buzan (1986:7) has further added the *amity/enmity axis*, which has been termed as *embedded cleavages* by Wriggins (1992:18 and 279), to explain the pattern of security relationships among South Asian countries. According to this view, security relationships and patterns of alignments among South Asian countries are determined not only by considerations of relative strength of the states or the distribution of power (as balance-of-power theory suggests) but also by the legacy of colonial rule and such domestic issues as religious and ethnic conflicts, border disputes, and other ideological perceptions of individuals and leaders.

16. The concept of *security dilemma* was introduced by John H. Herz in *International Politics in the Atomic Age*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1959, pp. 231-243. More recently, Barry Buzan, (1983:3) in his *People, States and Fear*, has defined the concept as a "structural notion in which the self-help attempts of states to look after their security needs tend automatically (i.e., regardless of intention) to lead to rising insecurity for others as each interprets its own measures

as defensive, and the measures of others as potentially threatening." See also Robert Jervis, "Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma," *World Politics*, 30 (1), January 1978, pp. 167-214. Security dilemma, based on an action-reaction effect within each region, is a prime cause of arms races, in which states waste large sums of money on mutually threatening weapons that do not ultimately provide security. The security dilemma is a negative consequence of anarchy in the international system.

17. According to Ernst Haas (1990), goals of an organization can be either "specific" or "interconnected," "static" or "expanding." "Interconnected" and "expanding" goals are necessary for the growth and success of regional organizations. For an explanation of these four types of goals see his *When Knowledge is Power: Three Models of Change in International Organizations*, pp.74-75.

18. For ASEAN see Michael Haas, *The Asian Way to Peace: A Story of Regional Cooperation*, 1989, Chapter 7 and 14; Michael Antolik, *ASEAN and the Diplomacy of Accommodation*, 1990, Chapter 1,6,7,and 8. For GCC See Emile A. Nakhleh, *The Gulf Cooperation Council: Policies, Problems and Prospects*, 1986.

19. Most South Asian and Western observers (Rostow, 1986; Waterman, 1986; M.Haas 1989; Palmer 1991; Hewitt 1992; Wriggins 1992; Morris-jones 1993) writing on SAARC agree with this scenario.

20. S.D. Muni has discussed some of these issues. See his article "India and the Post-Cold War World: Opportunities and Challenges," *Asian Survey*, vol. xxxi, no.9, September 1991, pp. 870-871.

21. Quoted in *Dawn*, February 3, 1992.

22. Among others, Bimal Prasad, the current Indian ambassador to Nepal and Muchukund Dubey, the former foreign secretary of India strongly support this argument. Interview with Prasad (Kathmandu, June 1992) and Dubey (New Delhi, May 1992). Eric Gonsalves, a former secretary in the External Affairs Ministry of India also strongly supports this view. See his article, "regional Cooperation in South Asia," *Mainstream*, April 17, 1993, pp. 5-7. For a detailed discussion of the problems and prospects of regional economic cooperation among SAARC countries in some of the core areas of immediate relevance see I.N. Mukherji, "Regional Trade, Investment, and Economic Cooperation among South Asian Countries," Paper presented in the International Conference on *South Asia as a Dynamic Partner: Prospects for the Future*, 25-27 May, 1992, New Delhi; Charan D. Wadhva, "Regional Economic Cooperation Between SAARC and ASEAN and Other Countries of the Asia-Pacific Region," Paper presented in the same conference;

See also, A. R. Bhuyan, "Regional Cooperation and Trade Expansion in South Asia," and V.R. Panchamukhi, "Trade and Economic Cooperation in South Asia," Papers presented in ADB/EWC Symposium on Regional Cooperation in South Asia, 9-11 March 1987, Manila.

23. Immanuel Kant, *Perpetual Peace*, L.W. Beck, trans. (Indianapolis:BobbsMerrill, 1957).

24. It is possible to describe the democratic experiments in Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Nepal as "low intensity democracy." Low intensity democracy is a fragile political system where the leaders, despite their election through popular vote, are severely constrained to formulate or implement only those kinds of policies supported by the military and external forces, such as the International Monetary Fund. For a comparative discussion of low intensity democracy in Latin America, Philippines and Africa see, Barry Gills and Joel Rocamora (1992), "Low Intensity Democracy," *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 13, no. 3, pp.501-523.

25. Although generally people in Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Nepal seem to be excited about their new democratic regimes, few believe that the new leaders will do any better than the previous leaders in promoting regional cooperation in South Asia. Indian initiatives and sincerity were cited by many in Bangladesh and Nepal as the main driving force for the future growth of SAARC.

26. I have borrowed this phrase from W.H. Wriggins (1992:296). It would seem that, following Kautilya's principles, both India and Pakistan have sought to offset each other since their independence in 1947 to swing the balance of power in their favor in South Asia. While Pakistan has sought to befriend China to offset India, the latter has consciously pursued a policy of friendship and cooperation with Pakistan's immediate neighbor, the former Soviet Union, to maintain supremacy in the region.

27. See Barry Buzan, "New patterns of global security in the twenty-first century," *International Affairs*, vol.67, no.3, July 1991, pp. 434-435. Johan Galtung made this argument during his Spring lecture series at the department of political science, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Spring, 1990.

28. Shrikant Paranjpe, "India, South Asia and SAARC," *Asian Profile*, February 1987, vol. 15, no.1, p. 71. The same view is expressed by some Japanese scholars. See particularly T. Keisei Tanahasi, "Asian Alternative for Regional Cooperation," 1992.

29. Johan Galtung (1992) has argued that in the post-Cold War world order India, as the center of the South Asian regional system, will exercise hegemonic power over an "inner periphery," that is, other SAARC countries in South Asia, and an "outer

periphery" with a heavy density of Indian nationals, such as the littoral of the Arab Sea, Bengal Bay, and Indian Ocean and also Trinidad and Fiji. In the context of India's ability to exercise hegemonic power over an "outer periphery" Galtung seems to have overstretched his conceptual formulations.

30. In South Asia, while most people in Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka were concerned about the slow progress of SAARC, most Pakistanis and Indians believe that a slow, cautious and gradual approach to regionalism is the best pragmatic strategy for the growth of SAARC. Among others, see Rasul B Rais, "South Asian Regional Cooperation: Problems and Prospects," In Robert H. Bruce ed., *Perspective on International Relations in the Indian Ocean Region*, 1987, pp. 69-89.

31. SAARC initiatives were first launched in 1977 by the Bangladesh President Ziaur Rahman of Bangladesh. It took eight years of negotiation and numerous official meetings to hold the first summit of SAARC at Dhaka in December 1985.

32. For a very persuasive argument explaining why the institutions, once created, are not likely to be abolished and how the national actors' calculation of sunk costs and decision costs prevent them from abandoning institutions for short-term objectives see, Arthur Stein (1993:50-53), "Coordination and Collaboration: Regimes in an Anarchic World," in David A. Baldwin ed. (1993) *Neorealism and Neoliberalism: The Contemporary Debate*.

33. In chapter II I have discussed in some detail the problems and differences among the South Asian ruling elites prior to summit meetings at Male' and Colombo.

**APPENDIX****INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE**

This questionnaire takes the form of an open-ended interview schedule. The main focus of this interview is to probe for attitudes concerning a number of salient points or issues relevant for SAARC. The set of questions are preceded by a list of salient points.

**INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM, NATIONAL INTEREST AND REGIONALISM****Salient Points**

- a. Respondent's perception and evaluation of post-Cold War international system; how does he/she perceive the trend toward regionalism?
- b. Respondent's definition of his/her nation's national interest; how can it be pursued and protected; is regionalism a hindrance to the national interest?
- c. What is respondent's evaluation of the effect of domestic developments on the country's foreign policy?
- d. Does respondent see the acquisition of nuclear capability by India and Pakistan as a threat to the security of the region and his/her country?

**Questions**

1. It is widely believed that with the end of the cold war and disintegration of Soviet Union, bipolar politics has come to an end. In the current multipolar world, regionalism has regained a new vitality and prominence in the international affairs.
  - (i) Do you agree with this view?
  - (ii) Would you favor such a trend toward regionalism in world affairs?
  - (iii) To what extent do you favor policies in this direction?
2. Some people say that, given limited natural resources, it is beyond the ability of South Asian countries to resolve their economic problems without some kind of

cooperation among themselves. Others say that in spite of all this talk about regional cooperation between various countries, when a nation's national interests are at stake, it has to act according to those interests and disregard everything else.

(i) What do you think of these observations?

(ii) What, in your opinion, is the best strategy for this country to protect its national interests in the current situation?

3. Given the recent developments in your domestic politics, do you expect any change in the country's foreign policy, more specifically toward its neighbors?

4. To what extent, do you think, your country's foreign policy is dependent on domestic developments?

5. (i) How do you feel about India and Pakistan becoming nuclear powers? Do you support their rationale?

(ii) (Asked in India) How do you feel about Pakistan's nuclear capability?

(iii) (Asked to respondents from Pakistan) How do you feel about India's nuclear capability?

### **SAARC: ACHIEVEMENT, FAILURE AND PROSPECTS**

#### **Salient Points**

a. Respondent's evaluation of SAARC's achievements; is he/she for or against SAARC; if for, to what extent, and if against, to what extent?

•b. Respondent's utilitarian or affective support for SAARC.

c. What kind of goals respondent values most? Is SAARC committed to those goals or values?

d. What areas of SAARC need improvement according to respondent?

f. Is respondent enthusiastic/optimistic about SAARC's future?

**Questions**

6. Some people say that SAARC, during the past nine years of its existence (since 1983), has not achieved anything substantial. Others say that compared to the initial years of other regional organizations, such as ASEAN and GCC, SAARC's achievement has been good and the organization has made substantial progress.

(i) What do you think?

(ii) What would you like to see: intensification of regional cooperation efforts or continuation of the present pace?

(iii) Given the uncertainties of Summit meetings and other problems among South Asian Countries, some observers believe that SAARC is an idea whose time has yet to come. Do you agree with this?

7. What, in your opinion, is and should be the primary value or purpose of SAARC?

8. (i) Would you like to see any change in the Charter and present structure of SAARC?

(ii) What other countries, do you think, should be included in SAARC?

**UTILITARIAN/AFFECTIVE SUPPORT AND PERCEIVED INEQUITY****Salient Points**

a. Does respondent feel that his/her country has benefitted or will benefit from SAARC?

b. What is his/her sense of inequity?

**Questions**

9. In your opinion, what would be your country's concrete gain or loss from SAARC membership? (Utilitarian)

10. (i) Which country, do you think, will benefit most or least from SAARC activities, in terms of trade, contribution to various projects?

(ii) Which country, do you think, will contribute most or least to SAARC?

11. Are you confident that SAARC can adequately (or in any way) address the economic, political, security and ethnic problems of the region?

## NATIONAL IMAGE

### Salient Points

- a. How does respondent view other countries in the region: favorable or unfavorable?
- b. According to respondent, what are the impediments to SAARC's progress.

### Questions

12. How do you describe the behavior of the neighboring countries toward each other?
13. What are, in your opinion, political and economic strengths or weaknesses of the neighboring countries?
14. What are the impediments to SAARC's growth?

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