UNOFFICIAL DIPLOMACY AT WORK: A SAARC PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract: When one thing stops working, we shop around for alternatives. In the realm of regionalism, initially only state was lent credibility, while non-state actors remained underrated. But now, with the achievements of this burgeoning group, this viewpoint has got the chuck. The literature is jam-packed with success stories of this heterogeneous group. Many proven studies on hand show that the official actors in SAARC diplomacy have been snowed under with certain questions/disputes/conflicts they are not well versed in handling and solving. As true of many other such organizations, the SAARC officials have not succeeded much in sowing the seeds of peace and prosperity for the people. The onus of completing the unfinished task of enabling SAARC reach the crescendo of performance now lies also with unofficial SAARC. For almost two decades now i.e. since 1990s, unofficial dialogues have got a sporting chance of proving and sustaining themselves. To what extent have they remained insulated from the ‘wheels within wheels’ situation characterizing SAARC and whether its (Unofficial SAARC’s) staggering achievement (Or the absence of it) has made a difference? With this question, this paper intends to analyze unofficial diplomacy in SAARC and concludes that the way these non-state actors have stood by the cause of regional cooperation and beyond that i.e. their contribution in spawning a general support for one ‘South Asia’ speak well for themselves, given that it was not of yore that the first unofficial dialogue got itself recognized.

I. Introduction

When one thing stops working, we shop around for alternatives. In the realm of regionalism, initially only state was lent credibility, while non-state actors remained underrated. But now, with the achievements of this burgeoning group, this viewpoint has got the chuck. The literature is jam-packed with success stories of this heterogeneous group. As true of many other such organizations, the SAARC officials have not succeeded much in sowing the seeds of peace and prosperity for the people. The onus of completing the unfinished task of enabling SAARC reach the crescendo of performance now lies also with unofficial SAARC. For almost two decades now i.e. since 1990s, unofficial dialogues have got a sporting chance of proving and sustaining themselves. To what extent have they remained insulated from the ‘wheels within wheels’ situation characterizing SAARC and whether its (Unofficial SAARC’s) staggering achievement (Or the absence of it) has made a difference? For answering this question begging description, I intend to dig as much evidence out of the ground of well established studies, as my digger (my ability to analyse, time constraint, relevance etc.) allows. With this background, this paper assesses unofficial diplomacy in SAARC. To understand the contribution of different tracks to regional cooperation, Institute of Multitrack Diplomacy’s (IMTD’s) Multi Track Diplomacy (MTD) model has been relied upon.

II. Multi Track Diplomacy: The System

In order to understand the system by which international peacemaking occurs the parable of the blind man and the elephant might be considered (Diamond and McDonald, 1996: 1)¹: Like the blind man, if we feel only the trunk or the tusk or the tail of the peace pachyderm, we will misperceive the true nature of this lively creature. Likewise, if we consider the animal as a whole but don’t know the parts and how they each contribute, we lose the value of acquaintance with a richly complex being. Multi-Track Diplomacy is a conceptual way to view the process of peacemaking as a complete elephant, a living system which needs the combination of all its body

¹ Cited in Siver 2006.
parts to function. Diamond and McDonald (1996), Chigas (2003), Montville and Davidson (1981), and Nan (2003) all support the theory that different levels of Track diplomacy exist as the ‘body parts’ which, when combined, can function most effectively as the complete elephant. So as to fully capture the complexity of Track II diplomacy, one must understand that it is comprised of separate sub-tracks. The Multi-Track theory reflects the values of the different Tracks, which, when combined, contribute most effectively to a peace process. Multi-Track theory recognizes that in modern, complex society peacemaking cannot be left solely to either governmental interaction or the responsibility of the state. (Carvalho 2010)

**These nine sub-tracks are:**
- Government or Peacemaking through Diplomacy,
- Nongovernmental / Professional or Peacemaking through Conflict Resolution,
- Business or Peacemaking through Commerce,
- Private Citizen or Peacemaking through Personal Involvement,
- Research/ Training and Education or Peacemaking through Learning,
- Activism or Peacemaking through Advocacy,
- Religion or Peacemaking through Faith in Action,
- Funding or Peacemaking through Providing Resources, and
- Communications and the Media, or Peacemaking through Information.

Each sub-track contains a system within itself with regards to membership, activities, philosophy, and purpose, which often overlap. They mostly complement each other’s values and activities when combined as the living system of modern peacemaking. Therefore, the Multi-Track approach is the interrelatedness and coordination of these nine sub-tracks. ² ²

**Compass Interaction Model.**
The compass Interaction model best describes the Multi-Track approach and in theory proves the most appropriate model because it demonstrates the correlation of all the sub-tracks as having equal value but different functions. ³

![Figure: Multi-Track Diplomacy (Compass interaction model)](image)

**Overview of non-state actors in South Asia (SAARC)**

2 Carvalho 2010
3 Ibid
4 Siver 2005
There is an urgent need to expand South Asian cooperation and connectivity beyond the realm of the state. There has been increased activity and cooperation among South Asia’s non-state actors – the corporate sector, professional associations, civil society, media, cultural groups, and Track II processes.5 The forces of globalization, increasing economic interdependence, and especially post-September 2001 terrorism have all triggered new common efforts among states in South Asia as elsewhere.6 The post-cold war order has made governance polycentric. With the transfer of sovereignty from the mono-centric governance of the past to disparate groups of citizens, the responsibilities of socializing tendency of heterogeneous civil societies have increased in policy making, advocacy, mediation of power and the management of distributional conflicts. Presently, the state no longer monopolizes the security function.7

Wagner, 2006:110 5....New issues such as ecology... have broadened the concept of security.... Modern politics is couched in the language of rights (Tuck, 1999:1).8 Participation rules have also marked a shift from top-down elite to a bottom-up stakeholders' participatory process. The inability of the governments led the civil society in South Asia to take the lead during the second phase in the 1990s. This period spawned a wide range of non-official dialogues.9, 10

It has been talked about non-state actors in Asia that cooperation and inclusiveness is leading to “interregional regime-building”(FES 2007). A revealing facet of this new phenomenon is the induction of a novel bottom up forms of regionalism initiated by the civil society (Lama). Here, the concept of alternative regionalism fits well.8

History of unofficial dialogues in SAARC
According to a senior State Department official the idea of a non-official Indo-Pak dialogue was under consideration during the last years of the Reagan Administration, but it materialized in the aftermath of the 1990 crisis when the Gates Mission was dispatched to Islamabad and New Delhi (Shah 1997).

Different tracks of unofficial diplomacy in SAARC
Let us now discuss the unofficial tracks (2-9) in accordance with the multitrack diplomacy. This paper includes the unofficial steps taken in a multilateral framework i.e. under the aegis of SAARC. The bilateral dialogues have been excluded.

Track 2
Track 2, according to Santos and Esq. refers to unofficial, informal peacemaking by conflict resolution professionals and NGOs, usually nongovernmental and unofficial groups and individuals, often parallel to and in support of Track 1. In literature on multi-track or multi-actor diplomacy, Track 2 is delimitated for government officials operating unofficially. The activities of Track Two peace workers vary from organizing problem-solving workshops, acting as messengers and go-betweens to organizing seminars and conferences and private one-on-one diplomacy behind the scenes. Track Two Diplomacy can make a difference. In Somaliland, for instance, the so-called Boroma process culminated in a meeting of elders of all clans of Somaliland who in a remarkable display of participatory democracy elected a government and a president.9 Kaye (2007:8) defines track two as unofficial policy dialogues, focused on problem solving, in which the participants have some form of access to official policymaking circles. Evans refers to those Track 2 activities which involves meetings of academics, journalists, politicians and also…govt. officials ….attending in their private capacities as ‘blended dialogues’ (1994c:125)10

Professional (conflict resolution) in SAARC
It has been estimated that in 1998-99 alone there were over 38 track-II channels working in South Asia (Naik 2001), which is indicative of the involvement of civil society actors. Thus, unofficial SAARC is fast emerging in domestic and regional peace constituencies.11

Some track two activities in SAARC

5 Cited in Dahal
6 Ibid
7 The concept is discussed in Keet 2007 and Chandra 2009
8 Cited in Introduction to People Building Peace
9 Cited in Acharya 2011
11 Cited in Ahmed and Bhatnagar 2008
12 Sources for PSCR, IRS, MCPR, ICPI &SFG, IPCS, WISCOMP: Elbinger 2007
The Program on Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution (PSCR) at the University of Karachi, The Institute of Regional Studies (IRS) in Islamabad, Pakistan, The Malaviya Centre for Peace Research (MCPR) at Banaras Hindu University, The International Centre for Peace Initiatives (ICPI) and Strategic Foresight Group (SFG) (twin think tanks based in Mumbai; While SFG engages in research on future security issues, ICPI is involved in conflict resolution in South Asia), The Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies (IPCS) and Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace (WISCOMP) are some institutes having efficiently fretted the rope of mistrust and distrust with the saw of papers, books, seminars, workshops, dialogues etc. Since 1994, Harvard University’s Program on International Conflict Analysis and Resolution (PICAR) has been working to foster problem-solving dialogue in an unofficial effort to contribute to peace in Sri Lanka. (Hicks and Weisberg). Some other track two initiatives include Neemrana process 13, Balusa Group, 14 Kashmir Study Group (KSG), Shanghai Process 15, Stimson Center Dialogues, 16 16CSIS Meetings on Nuclear Risk Reduction Centres (NRRCs), 17 17.18 Cooperative Monitoring Center, Sandia National Laboratories, 18 19 20 Maritime Activities: The Confidence and Cooperation in South Asian Waters Project, 21 22 Worldnet dialogues 23 and IGSAC 24. These are some gems, the shining example of which stud them well into the crown of SAARC’s multitrack diplomacy. The achievements are too many to be discussed in one paper. In the next paragraph, they have been touched upon.

While discussing the Track Two dialogues in South Asia with a focus on policy-oriented and problem-solving activities, Faiz argues that track two dialogues in South Asia are mostly semi-official in nature, dominated by a few retired government officials. “This leads to a ‘lack of cross-fertilization of ideas’ as new and innovative approaches to problems are not generated.”

Despite the criticism faced by some of these, in particular, Neemrana for engaging the same people year after year, these track two initiatives have a lot to show. They have been able to keep the negativity of the Political Economy in check or at least neutralise it. They have granted flexibility to the not so supple mind of the official actors. For example, relaxation in travel restrictions between India and Pakistan by the two governments has been partly attributed to the efforts of the Neemrana process. One of the proposals made by the Balusa Group was the establishment of effective military-to-military hotlines between India and Pakistan, increasing interaction between the intelligence agencies of India and Pakistan, nuclear confidence building and greater education of Indian and Pakistan leaders concerning the responsibility of leading nuclear weapon states. According to two South Asia observers, the KSG “has achieved a reputation for nonpartisan objectivity that has earned it a hearing in New Delhi and Islamabad, and a measure of confidence among Kashmiri leaders” (Schaffer and Schaffer, 2005, p. 313). 25 Stimson organizers also believe that their workshops and publications on nuclear terrorism have raised considerable consciousness of this problem in official circles, particularly since the September 11, 2001, attacks on the United States. The CSIS group recommended the creation of NRRCs in India and Pakistan to improve communications and reduce the risks for miscalculations leading to nuclear conflict. IGSAC recommended the establishment of a Poverty Alleviation Commission 26.

SAARC’s Track 1.5 (Track one and a half)

Mapendere has elaborated on the concept of track one and a half diplomacy, which was originally brought forward by Susan A. Naan, describing a mode in between track one, comprised of official actors, and track two diplomacy. He defines track 1.5 diplomacy as “peace making activities undertaken by non-political third parties between high political representatives of warring groups, or governments” (Mapendere 2000: 66). 24 Track 1.5 diplomacy is supposed to combine the positive aspects which both track one and track two diplomacy have to touch upon.

13 For details of Neemrana, see Faiz, Waslekar (1995), Kaye (2007)
14 Balusa group has been discussed by Faiz, Kaye, Dixit (2005), Durrani (2001).
15 Kaye 2007
16 Ibid
17 Ibid
18 Ibid
19 Ibid
20 Faiz
21 Waslekar 1995
22 Cited in Kaye 2007
23 Supra No. 21
24 Cited in Heiling 2007
offer. …However, beside Mapendre’s definition, others see track1.5 diplomacy as a process that distinguishes itself from track one diplomacy merely by its informal character, not by the type of mediator (Berghof Foundation for Peace Support2007). 25 26 … Track two is thus a form of semiofficial interaction; the degree of official involvement and influence here is far greater here than in epistemic communities. ….. (Acharaya 2011 )

Bulk of the literature on SAARC counts the apex bodies as track 1.5. But in some studies all the professional bodies (including recognized) form track 1.5. There is a rapid growth in the number of the SAARC apex bodies that specialize in different spheres. These include South Asia Chambers of Commerce and Industry (SCCI), South Asia Free Media Association (SAFMA), SAARC Law, South Asian Federation of Accountants (SAFA) and Foundation of SAARC Writers and Literature (FOSWAL). Characterized as Track One-and-Half, these are autonomous organisations and some also receive financial support from the SAARC Secretariat and directly service the official SAARC process. 26 27 The three apex bodies of SAARC, SAFA, SAARC Law and CCI, actively promote the objectives and development goals including the UN Millennium Development Goals of the South Asian region. (Perera 2008) …The affiliation provides them information, visibility, linkage, access and recognition…. complement the official willingness to foster people-to-people relations and build regionalism from bottom-up (Behera, 2008:2). 27 2728 Apart from these professional bodies of track 1.5, SAARC also recognizes ISACPA (Independent South Asian Commission for poverty alleviation), SAARC Research Network, SAARC FINANCE etc., where there is considerable degree of autonomy from the official SAARC process but the SAARC secretariat gets involved in feeding the final output to the official process. These professional bodies (apex and recognized) have certainly facilitated professional interactions but have not contributed much towards improving economic connectivity (Kelegama: 3913).

SAARC has seen some recent developments in this regard. Suba Chandran has suggested the establishment of an Indo-Pak Nuclear Commission on the model of the Indus Water Commission (IWC) between the two countries. “……The technical aspect of the Nuclear Commission could work alongside a track-1.5 initiative, to avoid a major shortcoming of the Indus Water Commission.” (Chandran 2010). Saman Kelegama, while speaking at the 4th SAARC business leaders concil on key issues of SAARC, stated among other things … that the link between track 1 and 2 should be made more formal. In this regard, he appreciated the formation of SAF. (Kelegama 2011). Touted as a Track 1.5 initiative, the South Asia Forum brings together government functionaries businessmen, media and academics to generate "out of box ideas" for facilitating greater regional economic integration and people-to-people contact in the region……… (IANS, 2011)

Private sector (Business organizations): Track 3

Although Diamond and McDonald assert that most businesses do not view themselves as having anything to do with peace, the fact is that negotiations concerning money, resources, and labor always require diplomacy, and so the diplomatic efforts of international businesses as they open new ventures are de facto peace negotiations.(Cuthbert 2005) The Private Sector……encompasses a wide range of actors, mainly involved in for-profit pursuits in commercial, trading, contracting, farming, mining, and other areas. ….. (Ulimwengu).

Private sector in SAARC

The private sector is emerging as an important stakeholder for regional economic integration. …..SAARC is increasingly facing pressure from the private sector to remove barriers to allow market integration. 28 29 In an issue paper, prepared by Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), useful insight has been given for improving the business environment for private sector led integration in South Asia. The paper was the result of a conference convened in New Delhi on 17-18 November 2009 …..In the concluding Technical Session: “Building Brand ‘SAARC’, participants discussed ways to make the SAARC “brand” more visible …..Participants agreed that strengthening the SAARC “brand” is critical to boosting regional integration in South Asia. (ADB and FICCI, 2010)

In a Regional Conference on SAARC (2006), in his paper ”Private Sector and Conflict Management” Gautam Ghosh highlighted the role of the private sector in the national economies and their ability to deal with issues more efficiently. (Ghosh 2006). The Punjab, Haryana and Delhi (PHD) Chamber of Commerce and Industry and other business organizations have played significant role in the regional cooperation in SAARC. PHD India-Pakistan Desk have attempted to promote bilateral trade between the two countries since its inception in 1982….. An extremely important initiative… is the formation of the India–Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry …in May 2005. This joint forum …intends to bring the two countries closer by enhancing the level of trade…. … Other such initiatives include … formation of Joint Business Councils (JBC) composed of

25 Ibid
26 Behera 2009
27 Cited in Dahal
28 Supra no.26
representatives of South Asia’s business federations. … By all accounts, South Asia is witnessing the rise of the business community as the vanguard of regional cooperation and interdependence. In fact, it can ultimately prove to be the biggest catalyst for peace in the region.\(^{29}\)\(^{30}\)

As commented by Rosario (2008),\(^{31}\) business forums have reportedly been accorded privileged status in these sub-regional institutional arrangements, where their views and inputs are closely regarded by high-level officials. The same is true in South Asia. SAARC in 1992 granted formal —apex body— status to a South Asian business network—the SAARC Chambers of Commerce and Industry (SAARC-CICI)—and in 2000, chose to extend that status for a further 15 years without the need for a biennial review as initially planned…..(Nesadurai 2010). It is officially recognized by all the governments as well as the SAARC Secretariat.\(^{31}\)\(^{32}\)

The literature supports the fact that private sector could not reach its limits in this region. In SAARC, it has got a cold response from policy makers in important decisions. “While the market is an important driver pushing for regional economic integration, it is not in the driver’s seat. …They were conspicuously absent in the formal negotiations over SAFTA. They are yet to be accorded a seat on the negotiating table.”\(^{32}\)\(^{33}\) One reason for lack of effectiveness of private sector in SAARC can be its nature. Diversity leads to lack of consensus among players in the private sector.

**Track 4: Private Citizen or Peacemaking through Personal Involvement**

‘Citizen diplomacy’ is defined as people-to-people diplomacy undertaken by both individuals and NGOs. …Proponents of citizen diplomacy claim that … these dialogues are based on perspectives which criticize the official policies by questioning the priorities and assumptions of the official decision making circles. …The ultimate objective … is the promotion of social transformation. Indeed, the history of engagement of citizens’ groups … predates the rise of Track 2.\(^{34}\)\(^{35}\) While discussing the appropriateness of this track, Davies and Kaufman stress that it has developed in response to the profound challenges that … complex conflicts present to all those working to build a sustainable and just peace……..citizen diplomacy empowers those most impacted to participate in the search for peace (Davies and Kaufman 2002 :2)

**Citizen diplomacy in SAARC** Many influential citizens have proved that they can make the difference so far as promoting regional cooperation or conflict resolution is concerned. Some track four actors of SAARC \(^{34}\)\(^{35}\) include H.T. Parekh, Dinesh Singh, Dr. Ponna Wignaraja, O.P. Shah, Bose and Hasan , Rajive\(^ {35}\) Ganguli; few names in the list of people known for their supernumerary performance in promoting people to people contacts in South Asia.

**Youth**

The role of younger generation was stressed in Inaugral address of a conference (SAARC 2015 organised by FES) by Sh. I.K. Gujral. “A new generation of the professionals, policy makers and actors and agencies are fast taking over the entire operations in the region. This generation has no baggage of mistrust, suspicions and low confidence. They are what our Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh calls “the people who think out of the box”.\(^ {36}\)\(^ {36}\) Keeping in account the potential hidden in youth for peace building, many dialogues have been aimed at them. Says Faiz, “The Summer school is one such initiative which attempted to engage the younger generation of South Asia in dialogues and communications. Prior to this, unofficial dialogues had a ‘generational vacuum’. … The Regional Center for Strategic Studies (RCSS) also started a parallel process of workshops and dialogues involving the younger generation of South Asian scholars and opinion makers. Outside South Asia, the Henry L. Stimson Center in Washington and the Program in Arms Control, Disarmament and International Security at the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign have also been the venues for young South Asians to engage in dialogue and research on issues relating to regional stability and security….”

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29 Supra no.20
30 Cited in Nesadurai 2010
31 Supra no.28
32 Ibid
33 Supra no 29
34 Sources of Parekh, Singh,Wignaraja, Shah & Bose and Hasan (Waslekar 1995)
35 Elbinger 2007
36 FES 2007
As observed by Manjari Sewak (Sewak 2006) 37 37, third generation Indians and Pakistanis (in the age group of 22-40) are beginning to bridge the divide of deep hostility and distrust that separated their parents and grandparents… Beena Sarwar (1997)38 lists technological advances that break down the barriers between antagonists such as television, the internet and email as important factors in the creation of cultural understanding. ……“Thank God for email,” Sarwar quotes a journalist participating at an Indo-Pak forum held in Lahore in November 1995. …It is precisely the sort of collaboration described by Sewak and the cross-border communication documented by Sarwar that is needed to counteract and heal the wounds of Partition.39 39 Ahmed and Das show the significance of an informed public to change the cold war mind-set in India and Pakistan. (Ahmed and Das 1998 )

That the cross border citizen dialogues between India and Pakistan have succeeded in doing what official and semi-official dialogues couldn’t, finds mention in a detailed analysis of these dialogues by Faiz. It deals with these initiatives since independence. Some of these initiatives are India-Pakistan Friendship Society, Pakistan India People’s Forum for Peace and Democracy (PIPFPD),Expatriate Indians and Pakistanis, The India-Pakistan Soldier’s Initiative for Peace (IPS), Anti-nuclear initiatives: Pakistan Peace Coalition (PPC), Movement Against Nuclear Weapons (MANW), Movement in India for Nuclear Disarmament (MIND),(CNDP), Indian Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW), The Indian Doctors for Peace and Development (IDPD) and the Pakistani Doctors for Peace and Development (PDPD).… Apart from this, some other initiatives include Doon School Old Boys’ Society and The Pakistan-India People's Solidarity Conference.(Behera 2002)

**Official steps towards people to people contacts**

Indo-Pakistan ….. dialogues on strategic issues contributed to build confidence among key actors of both the countries. The Indo-Pakistan Bus diplomacy…. has become an emblem of the hope for peace and friendship between two countries …40

Speech by Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh on the launch of Amritsar – Nankana Sahib Bus Service, Amritsar (2006): “I hope this bus service opens yet another chapter in improving the relations between our two countries. …As an ancient saying goes, a road is made by walking. I am happy that we are moving forward and creating a road, one step after another, even though many hurdles have come up along the way……”

In an attempt to remove barriers to people to people interaction,recently (Feb. 2011),SAARC countries approved a proposal to exempt 19 categories of people from visa requirement and agreed on a liberalised scheme ……..(The Hindu, Feb. 2011 )…..If one were to look at connectivity with Pakistan, some of the important steps have been implementing the NDA government’s idea of increasing connectivity between Rajasthan and Sind, the two Kashmiris and the two Punjabs. Connectivity with Bangladesh and Bhutan has also gone up by road.( Yhome and Maini 2011)

**Official obstacles**

Shahid Kardar argues that the biggest factor standing in the way of people-to-people contact in South Asia is the negative perceptions about each other rooted in history…..He categorises these obstacles to people contact as perceptual, legislative and procedural.( Kardar (2000): 87-116 ). A critical evaluation of citizen diplomacy is being done by Navita Behera who argues that the most ironic fact is the inability of people to influence the policy-making agenda. …In this regard, Behera calls for the exploration of a ‘post-modernist agenda’, ‘a bottom-up approach’ in which civil society plays a more significant role…..

In a related study, Timsina argues: “It is unfortunate that the rulers of countries of this region have kept the people apart through the creation of walls of suspicion, hostility, intolerance, dis- and misinformation and the prevention of interaction amongst the people in order to maintain control over their societies”…..(Timsina 2010). These official barriers to people-to-people contact, (in particular visa regime) have been severely criticised. “As a result, succeeding generations of Indians and Pakistanis have little or no first-hand knowledge of each other, which perpetuates images based on hostility and suspicion. ……”

Diaspora

37 Cited in Elbinger 2007
38 Ibid
39 Supra No. 35
40Dahal
41Cited in Salik 2006
42 Cited in Faiz
43 Ahmed and Das 1998
When we talk of citizen diplomacy, the diasporas are not to be ignored. …When we talk about the South Asian diaspora, we mean people of South Asian descent who are not living in their original homeland……( South Asian Concern 2010).The Diaspora could be more constructively engaged, for example, as a Diaspora think tank (Rey whole). The South Asian diasporas are at an important crossroad. They are no longer made up of low skill workers …Some of the newer diasporas from South Asia were formed by professionals …The per capita incomes of these people are much more than that of the local populations. (Burki 2011 ).The South Asian Diasporas and workers have become life-blood for the economic resilience of the region. 44 44

As is now well-documented, the Sikh separatist movement in Punjab has received much institutional and financial support from Sikh militants in the United States……( Lal 1999:42-48). RajaSingam (2011) discusses the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora’s role in Tamil nationalism. Similarly, Kashmiri diaspora has been said to have helped keep the issue alive internationally. (ICG Asia Report N°79 p.27)

Track five: Research, training and education
It is perhaps unique among the tracks of diplomacy that even when states are in deep conflict …exchange of scholars to enable mutual learning often continues. …..Because of this, scholars have had what amounts to a ‘diplomatic immunity’ in carrying out scholarly exchange. (Cuthbert 2005). Think tanks have existed since the early part of the last century when the Brookings Institution, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Chatham House and the Kiel Institute for the World Economy were established to bring knowledge to bear on government decision making.(McGann 2009). To quote Diamond and McDonald: “This is a particularly vibrant component of the Multi-Track Diplomacy community. …from which much of the conflict resolution theory and practice is coming.” 4545

The main think tanks of South Asia 46 include South Asia Network of Economic Research Institutes (SANEI), Regional Centre for Strategic Studies (RCSS), Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies (IPCS) The Centre for South Asian Studies (CSAS), Coalition for Action on South Asian Cooperation (CASAC), CPR, India Bangladesh Dialogue, The South Asia Centre for Policy Studies (SACEPS), South Asian Policy Analysis (SAPANA), The Consortium of South Asian Think Tanks (COSATT), AMDISA and Panos South Asia. Some of these think tanks, through research, advocacy and useful inputs to different summits and other facets of official diplomacy have shouldered their way through the crowd of failures confronting the organisation. The Pugwash conference on Kashmir (Dec. 2004) is creditable to IPCS. SANEI SAPANA’s being the first “virtual” institution is its distinguishing feature. Each such institute has a distinct identity, thus adding credibility to its existence.

Track Six Diplomacy: Activism
Diamond and McDonald relate that “The primary task of the activist community is to change institutions, attitudes, and policies through political action.” 4646

Civil society and peace building
Civil society plays an important role in encouraging the cessation of armed conflict, and constitutes a vital force in post-conflict recovery. The role played by civil society in war and post-war contexts is increasingly acknowledged internationally…. In post-conflict recovery, civil society actors have considerable potential. A main element in Afghanistan’s post-9/11 agenda, for example, is to provide cash grants to traditional village councils (shuras), while insisting - contrary to tradition – that shura members are elected by secret ballot (Berg and Kjellman 2004)….The functional approach to Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) states seven civil society peacebuilding functions. These are : Protection, Monitoring/early warning, Advocacy/ public communication, Socialization, Social cohesion, Intermediation/ facilitation and Service provision (World Bank 2006)

On the other hand, the civil society may sometimes jeopardize the situation instead of improving it.

“….The relationship between civil society and peacebuilding is complex, and working with civil society groups in peacetime is quite different than during or following armed conflict….Conflict disrupts the relationship between civil society, the state, and the market…. In many cases, there will develop an economic sector that

44 Supra no.40
45 Cited in Cuthbert 2005
46 (Source: Home pages of different think tanks, accessed March 2011)
47 Baba 2005
48 Alam 2006
49 Supra No. 46
operates parallel to the legal financial market (Strand et al 2003). Notions of civil society thus need to be tempered by the reality that they contain the potential for so-called “spoilers.” Well-meaning policy that does not incorporate an understanding of the roles civil society can play runs the risk of strengthening its uncivil rather than civil components (Maley & Saikal 2002).

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs)
NGOs are a factor in some international negotiations. They attempt to reach government delegates wherever they may be accessible. Some NGO representatives are even occasionally invited to make presentations in the course of the official proceedings. (Feilleux 2009). There are big international NGOs (BINGOs), national NGOs (NNGOs), and local NGOs (LNGOs). GONGOs, or government organized NGOs, often refers to NGOs in the former Soviet bloc or China today but are different from QUANGOS, or the quasi-nongovernmental organizations that describe Canadian or Western European NGOs. DONGOs, or donor organized NGOs, are those established, but not necessarily controlled, by public or private donor organizations (Martens 2005: 31).

NGOs in South Asia
……South Asia has a vibrant civil society movement and large number of active Non-Government Organizations (NGOs), often with a sense of mission and commitment to justice and service to the community. ….. Recently, some NGOs have focused towards conflict resolution. The NGO-government relationship is less confrontational and more complementary. ….. The NGO movement across South Asia has significant difference in characteristics such as numbers of NGOs, their distribution across each country, their coverage in terms of local, national, regional and global issues, their capacity to deliver services, advocacy role and national and international impacts of their activities. The representation of South Asian NGOs is poor at the global level in many respects. ….. There has been beginning of regional or national NGO networks such as Climate Action Network South Asia for Climate Change issues, but the voices are disproportionately small for the need of proper representation. ….. However there are some key research NGOs who are widely respected in the global community. These include BCAS, BRAC, Grameen Bank in Dhaka, Development Alternative (DA), Centre for Science and Environment (CSE), Tata Energy Research Institute (TERI) in Delhi, Cuts in Kolkata, Swaminathan Foundation in Chennai, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) and IUCN in Pakistan, Environmental Law Foundation in Sri Lanka, ICIMOD in Kathmandu, to mention a few. ….. (Rahman 2002)

In some of the conflictual situations, the NGOs have very vital role both in its management and resolution. In other cases, they have acted as major agents in preventive diplomacy. Many of these non-state actors advocate and advance regionalism for varied reasons. They exert a lot of pressure on official institutions at different levels. (Lama)

Advocacy
With Activists beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics (Keck and Sikkink 1998). Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink established a new field of interdisciplinary research on the significance and challenges of principled transnational organizing. …….. The core resource of advocacy networks is information, which is usually collected on the local level, transmitted to allies abroad, and then published in reports and testimonies in order to mobilize moral outrage against human rights violations. ….. Finally, advocacy networks hold governments directly accountable. ….. (Schmitz). They classify and formulate the tactics those groups utilize: “information politics,” “symbolic politics,” “leverage politics,” and “accountability politics.” (Cakmak).

A significant example of advocacy is the pressure by the civil society on their respective governments to evolve legal provisions to curb the menace of trafficking of the girl child and women in South Asia. It was this networking among civil society organizations and activists which resulted in pressurizing the SAARC leaders to sign a Convention to fight this critical problem in the eleventh SAARC summit held in Kathmandu in early 2002 (Ahmed and Bhatnagar 2008).

50 Cited in Berg and Kjellman 2004
51 Ibid
52 Cited in Mc Mahon
53 Cited by Schmitz
Some track six actors in South Asia include SAP-I (known for parallel summity), People’s SAARC, Sangat, Simorgh and Shirkat Gah. The first People’s SAARC meeting had taken place in New Delhi in July of 1995, as a parallel event to the 8th official SAARC summit (Pyakurel 2010). In Pakistan Shirkat Gah was given the task of monitoring the implementation of the SAARC Social Charter (initiated by SACEPS)… (Mumtaz and Abdullah 2006). Much has been done with regard to peace activism in which various labour organisations among others have hit the road to success. The Action Aid Pakistan is making a valuable contribution to the peace movement by sponsoring numerous people-to-people dialogues. Among peace initiatives, recently, a Peace moot was organized by Sindh Sufi Institute. (Nangiana 2011). In human rights activism and lobbying, Forum-Asia(Deuja 2010), SAHR (SAARC people’s forum (Waslekar 1995) and SAHRDC have successfully got rid of some of the ineradicable ills of the society. South Asian Watch on Trade, Economy and Environment (SAWTEE), PANOS-South Asia, Consumer Unity and Trust Society of India (CUTS), Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SPDI), etc continue to organize significant dialogues and publications to raise environmental consciousness.

Track Seven Diplomacy: Religion

Religious diplomacy, or “faith in action”, is an effort by the worldwide religious community of many denominations to teach (or remind) people of the world that religion and belief systems are founded on peace and love rather than violence and war. Practitioners of religious diplomacy must walk a fine line at times. Track Seven successes are the success stories of person-to-person interaction that brings goodwill and understanding to the parties involved. One could say that religion has always played a significant role in public life. While this is no doubt true, it is also the case that religion has taken a back seat politically ever since the secular values of the European Enlightenment were imposed on Western societies in the eighteenth century. (Masuzawa 2005)

A study of Iraq and Afghanistan demonstrates that military chaplains, as clergy and officers, occupy a unique space that blends a secular status and a religious one, making them well suited to serve as intermediaries between military and religious leaders in areas of conflict and post conflict stabilization.

Religious organizations are a rich source of peace services. Religions contribute to peace-building (Life and Peace Report, 1990). Efforts could be of a traditional diplomatic nature or be categorized as Track II or Field diplomacy (Reychler). ‘Faith-Based Diplomacy’, a seminar for the Kashmir peace process resulted in many fruitful discussions. In a conference ‘Anatomy of Religious Conflict in South and Southeast Asia’ (2005) the religious conflicts of South and South East Asia were widely discussed.

In general, if we sit musing on the history of conflicts anywhere in the world, it has a lot to do with religious fundamentalism. In an essay, using the Punjab conflict as a case study, Thomas provides a theoretical model of dispute resolution and crisis management for conflicts in which one major actor can be described as religiously fundamentalist. (Thomas 1999). A study carried out by Cooperation for Peace and Unity (CPAU) on ‘the role and functions of religious civil society in Afghanistan: case studies from sayedabad & kunduz’, shows: “In Afghanistan, relations between the government and religious actors and religious actors with other civil society players, are complex. Throughout the history, governments have sought its approval, and even existence, from religious authorities. In return religious actors function as advisors to the government. ….” (CPAU 2007). In the South Asian Journal conference “Envisioning South Asia”, in April 2006 in Islamabad, the ‘Group on Religious Extremism and Minorities’ argued that both minority persecution and ghettoisation have to be countered. In this regard, Chandran (2009) while exemplifying Baba Chamliyal Mela along the international border suggests that more such regional festivals and border melas could be organized ... all along the LoC. Inter-religious dialogues and peace movements of civil societies in South Asia have a manifest desire
to end insurgency and counter-insurgency operations in the region. …to turn the region into a peaceful community. …67 One instance of religion having bound relations between two neighbours, India and Pakistan has been the Kartarpur Marg – Peace Corridor of sikh community of the two neighbours.. …(IMTD 2010)

Track Eight Diplomacy: Funding

Track Eight Overview
Track Eight diplomats are the philanthropists of the world. Often these are private individuals or foundations, but also included are such agencies as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the U.S. Agency for International Development, and like chartered organizations. …68

Funding agencies in South Asia
IMTD69, ADB ( e.g. The SASEC Information Highway Project 70, RETA 6417 (SANIE), USIS and some US foundations, 71 66 FES72,73,67 and The Henry L. Stimson Center 74 in Washington, DC. The centre has extensive experience in the promotion of Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) for the purpose of reducing regional tension. 75

So, as the literature suggests, much of the funding of nonofficial dialogues continues to originate outside the region ….Some dialogues have simply died after the foreign funding ceased. South Asia Dialogues is a case in point. A counterexample is that of the Neemrana Dialogue….. 76

Track Nine Diplomacy: Communications and the Media
Overview
Diamond and McDonald state that “The primary task of the communications field is to use print, visual, and electronic media to inform and engage the public on issues relating to peace, conflict resolution, and international relations.” …77 70 The media, as it exists today is a vast and complex organism that means different things to different people…it is looked at as a platform for self-expression.(Muralidharan )

The literature is replete with Television journalism during terror attacks (Mogensen 2008), the agenda-setting role of the mass media in the shaping of public opinion (McCombs ), Media and conflict transformation { (Jager & Link 1993; Van Dijk 1997), 78 711 (Terzis 2000) 79 72. (Botes 1996). 8073: Media broker diplomacy (Gilboa 2005 ) and of late, Social Media as a new Track of MTD (Gamaghelyan 2011 ). The news media’s role in diplomacy has been discussed in Indian context by Rai. (2003). (Joshi 2001 ) deals with the Agra Summit, having got extraordinary media attention. The NGO Search for Common Ground, through its Radio Soap Operas has contributed to tolerance education 81. But media has not been able to gear itself up for meeting the challenges faced by the civil society in South Asia. This has been discussed by Bhasin (2011). Mass Media in South Asia is nation-based and primarily state-linked or state-biased ( Gunasekera 2002 ). The youth have been the major victims of this biased ness of the media. Argues Shah (1997): “…Curricula act as instrumental tools of state policy for shaping the minds of future generations. …Hierarchical decisions take precedence over personal ones. These colonial organizations have an exclusive corporate mind-set that defines the value system of their personnel.” As is generally observed, one of the problems related to this field is that the media has a preference for 'bad news' above 'good news'( IMTD 2011 ). To undo it, radio can prove to be an effective means of communication, when it comes to reaching the hearts of the grass roots..(Islam 2011)

67 Supra no.61
68 Supra no.63
69 Source: IMTD 2008
70 Source: Asian Development Bank 2007 (Cited in Pradhan and Liyanage)
71 Source: Waslekar 1995
72 Waslekar 1995 discusses its role in CASAC
73 Its useful inputs to 14th summit find mention in FES (2007)
74 Krepon and Haider 2004
75 Supra No. 39
76 Behera 2002
77 Cited in Cuthbert 2005
78 Cited in Melone et al, 2002
79 Ibid.
80 Ibid
81 Burgess and Burgess 2010.
Although track nine is the innermost circle, joining all other tracks, it has different roles to play in the different tracks. It is often surrounded by the controversial issue of whether the mumbo-jumbo of official diplomacy should be done with or without media. As Kappereler puts it, “from confidential diplomacy is becoming public.” Whatever approach is taken to the media, everyone involved in a process—including the media—should clearly understand what can be publicized and what cannot, and why. If the media understand the importance of keeping some issues private, they will be more likely …to respect that privacy.  

The print and electronic media are often the best partners in any good advocacy campaign…. Quality and reliable information is the life-blood of advocacy campaigns.  

Some track nine actors of South Asia having spared no pains (to ensure that the hatred for the ‘other’ is undone root and branch) include: Some one time regional conferences on strategic issues by Time Magazine and the Frontier Post, (Lahore) Aman Ki Asha55, The Centre for Media and Cultural Studies (CMCS), South Asia Free Media Association (SAFMA), South Asia Media Commission (SAMC)57 and The Media South Asia Project. Some unofficial … activities have attempted to bridge the information gap between the independent Pakistani and Indian press media. The information deficit in the region was addressed In the South Asian Journal conference “Envisioning South Asia”, facilitated by SAFMA, on 29-30 April 2006 in Islamabad. Given the rising numbers of South Asian Cyber citizenry, there is an urgent need to upgrade, integrate and facilitate cyber connectivity and accessibility. When it comes to the joint initiatives with regard to media, one of the success stories is SAFMA, having a lot to its credit. Besides, Panos South Asia and Himal Southasian have been bringing together top media editors from India, Pakistan and Afghanistan for an open, informal and informed sharing of experience and information. (Himal 2011).  

Recently the public opinion of the Kashmir peace process was sought in Jammu……Academician Radha Kumar, one of the three interlocutors, told that the "biggest commonality that has been found across the state is that the people want a permanent and irreversible solution to the Kashmir crisis”. (Pargal 2011 )  

**Additional tracks:**

*People Building Peace* recognizes Women, Arts, Sports as additional tracks.

**Women and peacebuilding**

Be it reconciliation, and reconstruction,(Marshall 2000), Bonn negotiations(Governance and Social Development Resource Centre 2009 ), or the issue of being given a voice at the negotiating table (Women & War: Power and Protection in the 21st Century) or supporting networks of women peacebuilders (Marshall et al 2011), women have started being recognized as peacebuilders. South Asia is no exception. …Over the years, irrespective of political upheavals, women have persistently engaged in dialogue and communication across the border. (Faiz). Their role in peace building and post conflict reconstruction in Afghanistan, Sri Lanka and Nepal has been stressed upon by Rita Manchanda(2005).

Women’s Initiative for Peace in South Asia (WIPSA), 79 Women’s Action Forum (WAF), Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace (WISCOMP), Feminist writers, and Foundation of SAARC Writers and Literature (FOSWAL) are some peacebuilders of this track in South Asia.

**Arts and Culture/ cultural diplomacy**

82 Ibid  
83 Rahman 2002  
84 Supra no.71  
85 The News International, Feb. 2010  
86 Home page, accessed April 2011  
87 SAFMA publication  
88 Home page, accessed July 2011  
89 Supra No. 43  
90 Supra No.66  
91 A detailed analysis of its achievements is done by Faiz  
92 Peace bus and other initiatives (Faiz)  
93 Ibid  
94 WISCOMP Update 2005  
95 Supra no.93  
96 Ibid  
97 FOSWAL has a diversified role. Its establishment is creditable to Mrs. Ajeet Kour.
If properly introduced, …culture helps remove the feeling of formality that often blankets diplomatic gatherings…. A growing number of states acknowledge that culture is a high priority in diplomatic relations.” (livemint.com, Aug 15, 2011) Culture is the subliminal third leg of international diplomacy, the first two being politics and economics. (Ghose 2010) “Cultural diplomacy has become important as we seek to strengthen and reinforce people to people contact transcending political barriers,” said Mukherjee. (Express News Service, June 2008).

The artist community of India and Pakistan has been in the vanguard of citizen peace diplomacy. As in other regions of the world, music, dance, the visual and performing arts have been able to reach out across the region…. Through their performances, these groups have emphasized the need to resolve conflicts so as to divert energies towards the welfare of the people.” In this regard, the “First SAARC cultural festival, Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA).” Tehrik-e-Niswan of Pakistan, Ajoka Theatre Group have brought off the tasks left unfinished by the official actors. In recent years, the Peace conferences are success stories in themselves.

Sports
In Sports, the generally talked about issue is that of cricket diplomacy between the two biggest members of SAARC. Comments like ‘cricket-inspired diplomatic thaw’ (The Hindustan Times, The Express Tribune, April 24th, 2011) are quite common. Cricket diplomacy may prove to be an effective tool to lever the crates of friendship and cooperation open. As comments Mehta (2011): “When India and Pakistan can play cricket, why can’t they undertake trade?”

III. Conclusion

This paper was centred on the the eight sub tracks of unofficial diplomacy (as provided by the multitrack diplomacy model) and some additional tracks like track one and a half, women, arts and sports. It has been tried to take a long look at the situation in general and in particular in SAARC. This is a new facet of SAARC, a SAARC by the people (youth, women, artists, writers, citizens, think tanks, NGOs, media, religious bodies and all that jazz). The way these non-state actors have stood by the cause of regional cooperation and beyond that i.e. their contribution in spawning a general support for one ‘South Asia’ speak well for themselves, given that it was not of yore that the first unofficial dialogue got itself recognized.

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98 Supra No. 96
99 SAARC bands festival 2007
100 Suhrawardy
101 Supra No. 98
102 Ibid
103 Sufism for peace, India International Centre, 2006.
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