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Asia

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Regional Integration and Trade Costs in South Asia¹

Nilanjan Banik and John Gilbert²

Abstract

Until now, amount of inter-country trade within South Asian nations have been low. While similarities in exports profile can be seen as a reason for this low value of trade it might not be a valid one, especially in presence of growing South Asian income. Intra-industry trade theory suggests that complementarity might actually increase trade in presence of a rising income. There can be other important factors, such as, trade costs. Using an augmented gravity model in a panel framework we try to identify the components of trade costs that might have resulted in lower inter-country South Asian trade.

Keywords: Regional Integration, Trade Cost, South Asia, Gravity model.

JEL Classification: C32, F02, F15.

¹ First draft, not to be quoted without authors' permission.

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1. Introduction

The beneficial effect of free and fair trade is well known.³ Trade affects growth in three primary ways. First, trade encourages flow of resources from low productive sectors to the high productive sectors, leading to an overall increase in output. Export growth may affect total productivity growth through dynamic spillover effects on the rest of the economy (Feder, 1983). The possible sources of this positive dynamic spillover include more efficient management styles, better forms of organization, labor training, and knowledge about technology and international markets (Chuang, 1998). Second, with unemployed resources, an increase in export sales lead to an overall expansion in production and a fall in unemployment rate. As production increases, firms because of increase in scale of operation (economies of scale) become more efficient (Helpman and Krugman, 1985). Third, international trade also allows for the purchase of capital goods from foreign countries and exposes an economy to technological advances of the developed countries. Recent theoretical work suggests that capital goods import from technologically advanced countries may increase productivity and thereby growth, since knowledge and technology is embodied in equipment and machinery and therefore transferred through international trade (Chuang 1998). In other words, trade plays an important role for economic growth of a region.

Despite these positive aspects, free trade is opposed mainly because workers and producers associated with the inefficient industries stand to lose out. There are considerable amount of lobbying pressure by the inefficient producers demanding more protection. As raising tariff barriers is not allowed under World Trade Organization (WTO) framework, individual governments try to protect their respective economies by imposing non-tariff barriers (NTBs), like, antidumping measures, import license, sanitary standards, etc.

Besides these policy induced reasons, trade flow can also get affected because of other reasons such as, transportation costs - both freight costs and time costs (Baier and

³ In the static sense we think of benefit accruing to countries trading on the basis of comparative advantage (Ricardian theory), or on the basis of different factor endowments (Hecksher-Ohlin-Vanek model). The dynamic effects of trade on growth depend crucially on the extent of technology transfers or knowledge spillovers through foreign direct investment (FDI) across countries (endogenous growth models and Helpman-Grossman models).

Bergstrand, 1997; Rose and van Wincoop, 1991); information costs (Rauch and Trindade, 2002); contract enforcement costs (Evans, 2001); use of different currencies (Rose and van Wincoop, 2001); lack of trade facilitation measures, such as, inadequate logistics of moving goods through ports, inefficient handling of custom documentation, lack of harmonization of regulation standards, etc. (Wilson, et al., 2004); language barriers (Eaton and Kortum, 2002); and local distribution costs - wholesale and retail (Feenstra, 1998). In fact, these other factors can be more important than price factors, like tariffs and exchange rates, in affecting trade flows. Anderson and van Wincoop (2004) observe that direct policy instruments such as tariffs and quotas are less important compared to barriers such as lack of infrastructure, informational institutions, law enforcement and local distribution costs.

Hence, success of trade liberalization can be fully realized if trading partners can control for these above mentioned 'non price factors of trade' which are also known as trade costs.⁴ Researchers can form an idea about trade costs by trying to account for all other additional costs incurred in moving a good to the final consumer other than the marginal cost of producing the good. For example, of the \$2 export value for the Barbie dolls, when they leave Hong Kong for the United States, about 35 cents covers Chinese labor, 65 cents covers the cost of materials, and the remainder covers transportation and overhead, including profits earned in Hong Kong.⁵ The dolls sell for about \$10 in the United States, of which Mattel (the retailer of Barbie dolls in the US) earns at least \$1, and the rest covers transportation, marketing, wholesaling and retailing in the United States (Feenstra, 1998).

According to Anderson and van Wincoop (2004) trade costs for industrialized countries is 170 percent. This number breaks down as follows - 21 percent transportation costs, 44 percent border-related trade barriers, and 55 percent retail and wholesale distribution costs ($2.7 = 1.21 \times 1.44 \times 1.55$) (pp. 692). On further commenting on the breakdown of 44 percent border-related trade barriers – an 8 percent is because of policy barriers; a 7 percent because of language barrier; a 14 percent because of currency barrier (from the

⁴ In literature, trade liberalization is also known as external sector liberalization. It means reduction in tariff barriers, phasing out of NTBs, like quotas, import license, etc., export promotion, and a move towards a market determined exchange rates.

⁵ If not otherwise specified, henceforth, \$, will stand for US dollar.

use of different currencies); a 6 percent because of information barriers and 3 percent because of security barriers.

Given the importance of trade costs in affecting trade flow among nations, it makes sense to understand and to the extent possible identify trade costs, in South Asia. Such an exercise will have important policy relevance in the context of South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC).⁶ In 1995, SAARC Preferential Trading Arrangement (SAPTA) was formed with an idea of hastening trade flow in the region. In a 1999 report (SAARC, 1999), following a call for “greater coordination of monetary and exchange rate policy”, a tentative roadmap suggested goals of forming a South Asian Custom Union (SACU) as early as 2015, followed by a South Asian Economic Union as early as 2020.⁷ Hence, at least at the political level, there seem to be some willingness to increase trade flow in the region.

Against this backdrop the present paper tries to examine whether: (a) whether SAARC nations actually share economic characteristics favorable for a deeper economic integration; (b) identifying trade costs that are coming in way of deeper integration of South Asian trade; (c) quantifying the sources of trade costs using an augmented gravity panel framework; and finally; (d) policy recommendations.

2. SAPTA, SAFTA and the Story So Far

SAFTA is one of the many regional trading agreements (RTAs) that have been formed over the last two decades. Repeated failures of multilateral negotiations, especially at various ministerial meet of WTO, has lead to an increase in the number of RTAs.⁸ Also, increased internationalization of markets (i.e. globalization), and the fear of losing out to

⁶ SAARC was formed in 1985, with Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, as its member. Initially SAARC focused on areas such as health, population activities and child welfare, culture and sports. However, with each passing year, the member countries started working on greater economic cooperation.

⁷ Some initial steps were taken in this direction with the establishment of Saarcfinance, a network of SAARC central bank governors and finance secretaries and its subsequent formal recognition as a SAARC body at the 11th SAARC summit held in Kathmandu, Nepal in 2002. Beginning on 1 January 2006, the South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) came into effect. SAFTA strengthens the relationships defined under SAPTA and is envisaged as the next step towards formation of the SACU.

⁸ Around 205 RTAs notified under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and the WTO are in force today (http://www.wto.org/English/tratop_e/region_e/regfac_e.htm (Accessed: 5/23/2008)).

other inefficient producers have put pressure on individual country to become part of any RTA. The answer to a successful RTA therefore lies in controlling the factors that act against RTA, and nurturing the factors which helps forming and sustaining a RTA. Some of the factors that affect formation of a RTA are considered below.

Extent of Trade: Countries trading more among themselves are likely to form a RTA. In fact, RTA is more likely to happen when trade happens in similar commodities, that is, intra-industry trade. The likelihood that industry association will demand more protection is less in case of intra-industry trade. In presence of intra-industry trade (for example, India exporting TATA Indica cars to the US and at the same time importing FORD Fiesta cars from the US), adjustment cost associated with removing trade barriers are lower. In this case jobs lost due to customers shifting to more efficient foreign suppliers may to a large extent be offset by the job enhancing expansion in foreign demand for similar, differentiated good produced domestically. The political opposition to liberalizing and expanding intra-industry trade tends to be far less when compared to trade involving in dissimilar items, that is, inter-industry trade.

Country characteristics: Economies that are similar in terms of size are better candidates for forming a RTA. Similarities are measured in terms of economic development and geographical proximities. The more similar are the economies, the more is the likelihood of intra-industry trade. Similarity is often measured in terms of per capita gross domestic product (GDP). This is because geographically near economies with similar level of economic development have access to similar kind of technology. Consequently they tend to produce more or less similar items and tend to trade in similar commodities (closely differentiated products as in the monopolistic competition type market structure). As the literature on gravity model on trade demonstrates, similarities in economic structure and geographical distance between respective economies are powerful determinant of trade (Tinbergen, 1962; Linneman, 1966; and Frankel, 1997).⁹ Trade increases with economic size and proximity of the trading partners.

Prices: Low technology intensive items, like, leather footwear, garments, gems and jewellery, textile products, etc., which are typical of any developing country's exports

⁹ Another major relevance of gravity model is that it provides the main linkage between trade barriers and trade flow – something we have used for this paper.

profile are very much sensitive to movement in prices, i.e. are price elastic. When it comes to form a RTA, countries analyze whether such an arrangement will enable them to realize a greater demand for their exports. From the demand-side perspective, it can be argued that sustained demand growth cannot be maintained in a small domestic market, since any economic impulse based on expansion of domestic demand is bound to be exhausted. However, export markets do not exhaust quickly. RTA not only provides a platform for a greater market share but also enable countries to produce efficiently. As the literatures on monopolistic competition suggest, a way to produce exports competitively is to take advantage of economies of scale in production which can be realized from a greater market share resulting from a RTA (Helpman and Krugman, 1985; Leamer, 1984).

Government Policies and Symmetric Economic Activities: A more liberal government policies is likely to be beneficial for a RTA. There is a general consensus in the literature that trade volume, both exports and imports, increase following external sector liberalization (Agosin, 1991; Bertola and Faini, 1991; Kohli, 1991; Clarke and Kirkpatrick, 1992; Joshi and Little, 1996). Both the imports and exports of a country tend to increase with external sector liberalization. Under small country assumption a fall in tariff barriers reduces the price of imports and cause imports to rise. Exports also increase and this is true whether the economy has a fixed, or, flexible exchange rate regimes. Under flexible exchange rate regimes when the economy opens up, first its imports rise. An increase in imports causes a relative increase in the supply of domestic currencies vis-à-vis the foreign currencies. This happens because foreign currencies are used to finance imports. With flexible exchange rates the value of domestic currency is market determined; an excess supply causes its values to depreciate. This means the price of exports for this economy falls; causing exports to rise. Under fixed exchange rate regimes, increase in exports happen in a different way. First, because of liberalization imports increase. However, market price of domestic currency does not fall as it is fixed now. An increase in imports release resources from the import competing sectors. A considerable portion of these resources find their use in the export sectors. As a result production of exports increases. Exports price falls, partly because of increase production and partly because inputs prices are cheaper with more coming from the import

competing sectors. Exports increase. Higher trade volume, resulting from external sector liberalization, is expected to increase the likelihood of a RTA formation.

Similarly, symmetric economic activities among member nations also have complementary effect towards forging for deeper economic integration, like, custom and economic union. Symmetric economic activity implies that long-run movements in real output are synchronized. Such co-movements of outputs may be due to dependence of common factors such as geographical proximity and countries sharing similar industrial profile. When countries share a similar industrial profile and are located closely, then the demand shocks in one country may affect other countries in the region. This could also arise if these economies all share a common trade linkage with major import markets. For example, if all of these countries engage in trade with the European Union, then changes in the European Union's economic performance would have a similar effect on all the countries concerned and cause them to behave synchronously. In this case, economic trends would become more similar because all the sectors and therefore all the countries would be affected in a similar way. Symmetry in economic activity implies that there is a lesser contradiction in terms of formulating internal and external macroeconomic policies – something which is prerequisite for forming an economic union.

Against this background, we analyze how well SAARC member nations fulfill these desirable criteria for forming an RTA.

Extent of Trade: Trade in the SAFTA region is currently low (see, Table 1 and Table 2). According to Newfarmer and Pierola (2006) South Asia's intra-regional trade as a percentage of its total trade volume has barely changed from around 2 percent in 1980 to 3 percent in 2004. Exports from South Asia have only increased from \$17 billion since 1980 to \$120 billion in 2004, in contrast to exports in East Asia growing from \$80 billion to nearly \$1 trillion within the same period (Newfarmer and Pierola, 2006). Considering factors other than trade costs (something we will be dealing latter), lower intra-SAFTA trade is because of number of reasons.

(Insert Table 1 and Table 2)

First is because of low purchasing power resulting in a smaller regional market. Although one of the fastest growing region in the world (GDP growth rate averaging around 7

percent over the last two years), measured in terms of per capita GDP (read, purchasing power) these economies are quite small. For instance, until 2001, South Asia house one-fifth of the world's population but contributes to less than one twentieth of the world income in terms of the GDP (Panagariya, 2003). There might not be enough demand for major Indian exports, like, transport and machinery, gems and jewellery, leather products, garments, etc., because of lower purchasing power of other SAARC nations. On the other hand, from a supply side perspective some of the economies, like, Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh, are small, and suffer from supply constraint to meet demand generated by big economies, like, India.

Second reason for low trade can be attributed to presence of high tariff barriers. A reflection of high tariff barriers is lower trade-GDP ratio in many of these SAFTA member countries. In terms of their *openness* criteria – measured in terms of trade as a percentage of GDP - Maldives and Sri Lanka are more *open* compared to India and Pakistan (Table 3). On the whole, after the Middle East and North Africa, South Asia as a region is least integrated with the world economy. This is particularly true in case of agricultural products, where tariffs levied on developing-country exports were frequently twice as high as that by the industrial countries. The simple average of the applied duties in non-agricultural goods ranges from 10 percent in Sri Lanka to 21 percent in Bangladesh. In India, this tariff is approximately 20 percent. In agriculture, the level of protection is even higher and ranges from 25 percent in Pakistan to 100 percent in India (Panagariya, 2003).¹⁰ Higher tariffs within the region has neutralized the benefit of common cultural affinity, common geography and the advantage of common borders that India share with other SAARC nations.

(Insert Table 3)

Third is because of low technology intensive type tradable items (Table 4). Considering these products, like textiles, animals, leather, etc. - not too much of disintegration in

¹⁰ Sometimes policy makers find it difficult to reduce tariffs because of domestic reason. A good example will be that of India. The average land holdings size for Indian farmer is around 1.4 hectare or 10,000 square meters (Brummer, 2006). These marginal farmers work in the land of big farmers. Under condition of lower tariffs big farmers make a loss and might stop production. Then marginal farmers are jobless – further worsening already unequal income distribution. Recognizing the need to lower tariff barriers, presently Indian policy makers are putting emphasis in educating rural population so to enable smooth transition (in terms of contribution to national income) from agriculture to manufacturing and services sector.

production is possible. Disintegration of production itself leads to more trade, as intermediate inputs cross borders several times during the manufacturing process (Feenstra, 1998). For example, automobile parts and finished autos are both included in trade between the United States and Canada – something clearly missing in the present context.

(Insert Table 4)

Hence, going by the metric of extent of trade, South Asian nations might not qualify for a successful RTA. In fact because of this low intra-region trade factor, Panagariya (2003) commented that forming an RTA in South Asia would result in more trade diversion than trade creation. Trade creation happens when more efficient producer of one country displace the less efficient producers of another member country within Free Trade Area (FTA). On the other hand trade diversion results in displacement of more efficient producers outside FTA - losing market share to less efficient producers within FTA. For example, when Bangladesh allows Indian cement to be imported duty-free and this leads to more efficient Indian cement industry to out compete the less efficient Bangladesh cement industry, it results in trade creation. On the other hand, duty free access to Indian television manufacturers to Bangladesh resulting in displacement of more efficient Japanese television manufacturers who remain subject to duty, it results in trade diversion. As earlier these economies in South Asia were having a relatively high tariff structure the extent of trade diversion was expected to be high. However, with falling tariffs there is a lesser chance of trade diversion.

Country (economic) characteristics: When comparing in terms of economic structure, namely, savings as a percentage of GDP, demographic profile and labor mobility, SAFTA member countries have many similarities (Table 5). The industrial sector constitutes roughly a fourth of GDP in all countries, while the share of agriculture varies from 16 percent in Sri Lanka to almost 34 percent in Nepal. Although a majority of the population still lives in rural areas, all of these countries are becoming increasingly urbanized. Except for the Maldives, saving as a proportion of GDP is also similar across these countries. These countries also share a similar demographic profile: in all these nations, age 65 and above is a small percentage of the population (varying between 4 percent in Bangladesh to 7 percent in Sri Lanka), that is, these economies have a much

younger group of working population. The more similar are the economies, the more similar is their export profile. Greater economic cooperation among SAFTA members holds important implications in the form of larger market and economies of scale in production. These factors might act as further incentives for a successful RTA.

(Insert Table 5)

Government Policies and Symmetric Economic Activity: The encouraging point is that most of the SAARC economies have started to open up and have also registered healthy GDP growth. During the period 2006-2007, all SAFTA countries, except for Nepal, have witnessed strong economic growth in the range of 7-9 percent (Table 5).¹¹ Similarly, despite low intra-regional SAARC trade - accounting for less than 5 percent of the region's overall foreign trade - it is rising. The upward trend in trade is likely to continue with SAARC economies further reducing tariffs because of their commitment at WTO; and per capita GDP in the region continues to grow. Presently, because of restrictions on legitimate trade, there exists a considerable amount of extra-legal trade. For example, Taneja (2004) estimates that the magnitudes of legal and extra-legal trade between Bangladesh and India are roughly the same, while extra-legal trade is estimated to be nearly one third of the value of legal trade between India and Sri Lanka. Sarvanathan (1994) put the estimate of India's informal exports to Sri Lanka at \$142 million while that India's informal exports from Sri Lanka at \$121 million. Estimates of the magnitude of extra-legal trade between India and Pakistan vary from \$100 million to \$1 billion per year (South Asia Development and Cooperation Report, 2001/2; Nabi and Nasim, 2001). As McCombie and Thirlwall (1997); and Paulino and Thirlwall (2004) have pointed out, robust economic growth encourages a more liberalized trade regime. In their study covering OECD countries between 1958 until 1988, Baier and Bergstrand (2001), have observed that the average level of bilateral trade grew twice as fast as a country's GDP. About two-fifths of the growth of trade relative to income is explained by the combined effect of falling tariffs and transport costs. Of these, falling tariffs were twice as important as falling transportation costs. More open economy in the South Asian region is going to lessen trade diversion – a concern raised by Panagariya (2003).

¹¹ Nepal witnessed a political turmoil during the period aftermath takeover of power by King Gyanendra on 1st February, 2005.

More importantly, South Asian countries exhibit symmetric economic activity. There is evidence of long term co-movement in supply side components of output in the SAARC region (Banik, Biswas and Saunders, 2006). This means that an economic boom (recession) in one of these nations is likely to reverberate throughout the region. In fact, this aforementioned economic characteristic of South Asian countries will enable them to go beyond the FTA framework and work for deeper economic integration, such as forming a common market and economic union.

Intra-SAARC trade can flourish taking advantage of their geographical proximity, rising income and falling tariffs. As shown by McCallum (1995) in presence of borderless trade (that is, with minimal trade related disruption) Ontario and Quebec provinces in Canada is expected to exports about ten times as much to California as to British Columbia.

3. Trade Costs

Having ended the last section with a positive note, it makes sense to reflect on key areas of concern hurting trade flow in the South Asian region. As is evident from the literature (discussed in pp.2-3), success of trade liberalization (read, controlling for the policy variables, like, tariffs and non-tariffs barriers) can be attained only when countries can control for trade costs. In the context of in South Asia, in its 2005 report, the U.S. Trade and Development Agency has identified major components of trade cost. Much of the sources of trade costs result from lack of trade facilitation and lack of availability of physical infrastructure in South Asia. For instance, logistics costs in India are among the highest in the world (at 13 percent of GDP), and inadequate infrastructure is responsible for holding back GDP growth by roughly 2 percent, or an annual hit of approximately \$20 billion to economic progress (Economic Times, 2008).

Issues regarding trade facilitation have been discussed in length by Wilson and Ostuki (2007). They pointed out South Asian region needs to build upon four areas of trade facilitation – port efficiency, customs environment, regulatory environment and service sector infrastructures (like electronic documentation, harmonizing regulations, etc.). For instance, port congestion because of inefficient handling of goods or lack of adequate capacity, affects turnaround time of feeder vessels. Then there are environmental (read,

hygiene) related issue. For instance, Indian exporters of edible items like rice, tea etc., find it difficult to ship their product from the nearest port of exit. Exporters in eastern India are forced to transport edible items by road to Kakinada - a port in Andhra Pradesh which offers mid water loading facilities - to avoid contamination. The congested Kolkata port handles export of iron ore and other metals scraps, items which cause pollution (read, dust particles) and thereby expose edible items to the risk of contamination (Banik, 2008). The loss in time adds on cost for the exporters. As Hummels (2001) points out, for each day saved in shipping time it is equivalent to saving 0.5 percent on ad-valorem tariff.

Coming back to another key element of trade facilitation, complex and nontransparent administrative requirements (often pertaining to documentation) creates space for corruption. Some of these administrative requirements can also be qualified as non-tariff barriers (Box 1). At India-Bangladesh border a consignment needs at least 22 documentations, more than 55 signatures and a minimum 116 copies for the final approval (RIS, 2004). Paying bribes is a common phenomenon. Across South Asia the size of bribe was reported to be between 2.2 percent and 2.5 percent of firm sales (Ahmed and Ghani, 2007). In the context of South Asia, size of bribe payments are relatively less in India, Sri Lanka and Bhutan in comparison to Bangladesh, Pakistan and Nepal. According to Wilson and Ostuki (2007), if countries in South Asia raise capacity building in trade facilitation halfway to that of East Asia's capacity, average trade is estimated to increase by \$2.6 billion. This is approximately 60 percent of the regional trade in South Asia. The areas that will provide the greatest gains are service-sector infrastructure and efficiency in airtime and maritime ports (Table 6).

(Insert Table 6 and Box 1)

On availability of physical infrastructure, South Asia is facing a major problem. Lack of proper infrastructure facilities indirectly raises the costs of exports. Some studies have already commented on the importance of infrastructure in explaining variations in income and export growth among countries (Hall and Jones, 1999; Stiglitz, 1989). Deteriorating infrastructure due to poor physical conditions (e.g. periodic flooding, soil erosion, poor soil conditions) has resulted in higher transport cost in South Asia (De, 2008). For example, the average transport costs on the India (Kolkata) - Bangladesh (Petrapole)

route is 2543 Indian Rupees – which is about 40 percent higher than other highways in the East Asian region (Das and Pohit, 2004). A carpet manufacture in Kathmandu reported that because of poor roads condition he has to shell out around 100,000 Nepalese Rupees on account of vehicle maintenance (Biggs et al., 2000). Transport cost is larger for landlocked countries like, Nepal and least for Sri Lanka (De, 2008). The trade-weighted ad-valorem transportation costs are listed in Box 2. Higher transport cost is bad. As pointed out by Limao and Venables (2001), doubling of transport costs can lead to a drop in country's trade by about 80 percent.

(Insert Box 2)

Another area of concern is lack of electricity. For example, manufacturers in India on average face almost 17 significant power outages per month versus 1 in Malaysia and less than 5 in China. Similarly, in Pakistan, the typical business loss 5.6 percent in annual sales revenue because of power shortage (Newbery, 2007). According to data from the World Bank Enterprise Surveys, private businesses in lower and middle income countries worldwide estimate that they lose on average 7.5 percent of their sales due to electricity and telephone outages and insufficient water supply.¹² This is quite high in comparison to losing 3.8 percent average sales figure for high income countries.

Factors like poor institution and government regulation has certainly contributed in South Asian countries not faring well when it comes to ranking countries in terms of, “easiness of doing business”. It also takes time to enforce contract (Table 7a and 7b). The World Bank, in its annual exercise, ranks countries in terms of easiness of doing business. In *Doing Business Report 2008*, the sample size involved 178 countries. Easiness of doing business is measured in terms of procedures (see, Box 3), time, and cost involved in launching a commercial or industrial firm with up to 50 employees and start-up capital of 10 times the economy's per-capita gross national income (GNI).

(Insert Table 7a, 7b and Box 3)

Clearly there is a need for building physical infrastructure and capacity building in terms of trade facilitation. High public debt and shift in focus of development, more towards social sector infrastructure, like, health and education, is leaving government resource crunch. There is a need to tap private sector funds, especially, when there are few

¹² For more on the Enterprise survey visit: <http://www.enterprisesurveys.org/ExploreTopics/?topicid=8> (Accessed: 5/28/2008)

billionaires in corporate India.¹³ Unfortunately, not too much private fund is forthcoming mainly because of regulatory reason (Banik, 2007). The government uses the “force majeure” clause more often and, hence, does not fulfill the promises it made to private providers at the beginning of infrastructure projects.¹⁴ For example, if, upon the completion of a road, the projected number of vehicles is not realized, the government can alter the agreement. Even appealing in the court is a lengthy procedure and may take several years to settle. Some sector specific recommendations are as follows:

In the power sector, there is a need to create a market for power and this is particularly true in the context of India where the power-surplus States can trade with the power-deficient States. Although, private participation is allowed in power generation in India, not many responses have been forthcoming because of lower power tariffs. Private investors are expected to produce electricity for sale to the state electricity boards, which would control transmission and distribution. These boards are however financially very weak, partly because electricity tariffs for many categories of consumers, like farmers, are too low and also because very large amounts of power are lost in the transmission and distribution. There is a need to privatize distribution in the hope that this will overcome the corruption that leads to the enormous distribution losses.

In railways, there is a need to correct the tilted fare structures, in which freight rates have been set excessively high to subsidize passenger fares. There is also a need to increase operational efficiency as there are problems with project execution. For example in India, among the 300 projects in the 1 billion Indian Rupees and above cost category, more than 130 projects are encountering time overruns of up to 160 months. A comprehensive review of 78 such railway projects has revealed that all suffer huge time and cost overruns due to various problems related to land acquisition, litigation, rehabilitation,

¹³ India has the highest numbers of billionaires in Asia.

<http://www.ndtv.com/convergence/ndtv/story.aspx?id=NEWEN20080043243> (Accessed: 5/20/2008)

¹⁴ The “*Force majeure*” clause refers to exceptional matters or events beyond the control of either party, that is, the Government and the providers. For example, while building the Bangalore-Mysore highway in India, the promoter (Nandi Infrastructure Corridor Enterprises) was promised free land alongside the expressway, to recoup its investment cost. This promise was never fulfilled because of political factors. Delays in land acquisition, red tape and a five years legal battle have raised the estimated cost by Rupees 6 billion (KPMG Report, 2005).

contractors and labor (Kumar, 2005). In Bangladesh railways have a serious problem with maintenance especially in those areas frequented by flood.

Like railways, there are problems with project execution in the road sector. National highway development programs in India are progressing slowly, hampered by time overruns and budgetary constraints (Table 8).

(Insert Table 8)

Both civil aviation and ports have problems related to labor issues. Individual governments need to introduce labor market reforms, something that is yet to happen in South Asia. In India, the government also needs to address the problems associated with encroachments, where unutilized ports and aviation authority's lands are gradually being taken over by local settlers.

Addressing these concerns is certainly going to increase cross border trade in South Asia, especially in a period of falling tariffs and rising income. The region will definitely gain through complementary investment in infrastructure and continued regulatory reform.

4. Model

The original application of Newtonian law of gravity in the field of economics goes back to the work of Tinbergen (1962); Poyhonen (1963); and Linnemann (1966), suggesting that bilateral trade between two nations is positively related to their national income and inversely related to the distance between them. Although backed by little economical underpinning these earlier models became popular because of their prognostic nature in explaining trade flow. Later, however, economists have worked on building theoretical (microeconomic) foundation of gravity model (Anderson, 1979; Bergstrand, 1985; Deardorff, 1998).¹⁵

In the context of South Asia, Srinivasan and Canonero (1993) include tariffs and exchange rate in the basic gravity model and conclude under SAFTA potential gains for India's trade with its regional partners would increase by 13 times. Considering time period between 1968 until 1991, and ten composite commodities, the study suggests that the effect of removal of tariffs would lead to an increase in trade that is 3 percent of GNI for India, 7 percent for Pakistan, 21 percent for Bangladesh, 36 percent for Sri Lanka and

¹⁵ For more discussion on the theory of gravity model see, Anderson and van Wincoop (2004).

59 percent for Nepal. This study considered five countries from South Asia and their major trading partners, spanning North America, Europe and Asia. Since the objective of this present paper is to look at trade cost in the context of South Asian region only, we have considered trade flow within South Asia. Besides, working with a more recent data set, we have also incorporated trade costs as an additional variable in our gravity equation.

Methodology and Data: Following, Anderson and van Wincoop (2004), most estimated gravity equations in the literature take the following form:

$$x_{ij} = \alpha_1 y_i + \alpha_2 y_j + \sum_{m=1}^M \beta_m \ln(z_{ij}^m) + \varepsilon_{ij}$$

where, x_{ij} is the log of exports from country i to country j , y_i and y_j are the log of GDP of the exporting and importing country and z_{ij}^m ($m = 1, \dots, M$) is a set of observables to which bilateral trade barriers are related. ε_{ij} is the disturbance term.

For the purpose of our study, following Frankel and Wei (1993), we will estimate a variant of the above equation which takes the following form:

$$x_{ij}^t = \alpha_1 (py_i^t \times py_j^t) + \alpha_2 (I_i^t \times I_j^t) + \alpha_3 T_{ij}^t + \alpha_4 ER_{ij}^t + \alpha_5 TC_{ij}^t + \alpha_6 D_{ij} + e_{ij}^t$$

where, py_i^t and py_j^t are the per capita income (read, per capita GDP) of country i and j ; I_i^t and I_j^t are the state of infrastructure captured through infrastructure index in country i and j ; T_{ij}^t and ER_{ij}^t are the bilateral tariff rates (weighted average) and exchange rates between country i and j ; TC_{ij}^t denotes the transaction cost of trade (measured as a function of difference between weighted average *cif* and *FOB* price); and finally D_{ij} ($j = 1, \dots, 4$) stands for country specific dummy variables. All the variables (except for the dummy variables) are expressed in *log* form with the estimated coefficients interpreted in terms of elasticity.

The expected sign for α_1 and α_2 are assumed to be positive. Trade between countries is expected to increase with a higher per capita income and with a better state of infrastructure. Likewise, inter-country trade is likely to fall with higher tariffs, higher

price of exports, and trade costs. Accordingly, α_3, α_4 and α_5 are expected to be negative.

As we are considering panel framework, the term e_{ij}^t captures both country specific (cross sectional) and temporal effects at time t . A general expression for e_{ij}^t is: $e_{ij}^t = \gamma + \beta_j + \mu_t + \eta_{i,j,t}$, where, $\gamma + \beta_{j-1}$ can be thought of country specific intercept; μ_t capture time effect and $\eta_{i,j,t}$ the over all purely random disturbance term.¹⁶ The combined, time and country specific fixed effect terms, eliminates omitted variables bias arising both from unobserved variables that are constant over time and from unobserved variables that are constant across countries.

If $\gamma + \beta_{j-1}$ is observed for all countries, then the entire model can be treated as an ordinary linear model and fit by least squares. For the purpose of estimation we consider the classic pool, least square dummy variable model (LSDV) and the within transformation model. If $\gamma + \beta_{j-1}$ contains only a constant term, then the ordinary least squares estimation provides consistent and efficient estimates of the common intercept terms and the slope vectors. This is a classic pool model where modeling is done without dummy variables. However, not considering country specific time invariant characteristics seem unscientific and hence use of country specific dummies to capture such effect. This is LSDV model. However, the problem with modeling in this fashion is loss in degrees of freedom arising from estimating dummy coefficients. A more efficient way is to use within transformation model. Here the pooled regression is re-formulated in terms of deviation from the series means leading to disappearance of the intercept terms and the dummies. This model is more efficient than models with dummy variables as it gives n degrees of freedom (corresponding to relevant dummies and the intercept term) back with same parameter estimates. Finally, we consider the random effect model. Unlike, in the fixed effect, where the country specific intercept, $\gamma + \beta_{j-1}$, is assumed to be fix, in random effect model, we assume that it is a random variable with a mean value $\gamma + \beta = \lambda$ (say),

¹⁶ The use of β_{j-1} is to avoid dummy variable trap.

which does not vary across cross section. The intercept value for each cross section can be expressed as $\lambda_{1j} = \lambda_1 + \varepsilon_i$, where ε_i , is a white noise process.

For each one of these variables superscript t stands for the time period 1995-2006. This is the period when considerable amount of reforms process have been undertaken or accomplished in the South Asian region. Country i is India (the base country) and country j stands for India's trading partners in South Asia. The reason for treating India as the base country (denoted by subscript i) is because it is the largest economy in the region, representing 80 percent of the total GDP in South Asia (International Financial Statistics Yearbook, 2007). The dummy variables is expected to capture India's trade relation with partner countries in South Asia

For deriving infrastructure index, we have used Principal Component Analysis (PCA) methodology. PCA involves finding that relationship between the variables that explains the maximum possible variation in the total data. An attempt has been made here to construct a single composite index of infrastructure involving all five subcategories of infrastructure – roads, railways, air, electricity and telephones – at each point in time. In the PCA approach, the first principal component is that linear combination of weighted indicators, which explains the maximum of variance across the observations at a point in time. To the extent one component index of infrastructure has a different variance than another, assigning equal weights, or doing simple average of different component indexes, seem unscientific; and hence the importance of assigning different weights to different component indexes of infrastructure. Each factor is nothing but a linear weighted combination of the various variables used. In all the indices calculated, we used the first factor only. The first factor in all the cases, explained more than 60 percent of the variation. Before multiplying by the respective weights, individual infrastructure variables are converted into 'unit-free' values. This is done by dividing country-wise (that is, column-wise) standard deviation to neutralize the heterogeneity due to varied units. Standardization also eliminates unnecessary weights given to some measures on account of their high unit values.

Therefore, Infrastructure Index (I_{it}) is a linear combination of the unit free values of the individual facilities such that:

$$I_{it} = \sum W_{kt} X_{kit}$$

where, I_{it} = Infrastructure index of the i -th country in t -th time,

W_{kt} = weight of the k -th type infrastructure in t -th time,

and X_{kit} = unit free value of the k -th type infrastructure for the i -th country in t -th time point.

Finally, TC_{ij}^t corresponds to the ratio (*ciffob-1*), which as pointed out by Limao and Venables (2001), contain cross sectional variation in transport costs, and calculating transaction cost in this fashion is quite consistent with those obtained from the shipping cost data.

Now some comments about the methodology issue. The single equation way of estimation might raise some issues relating to endogeneity. However, intra-SAARC trade is low. In addition if one consider bilateral trade flow as a percentage of GDP, it is actually quite less. Endogeneity is therefore ignore and is not expected to results in any biased estimates. Similarly, as is observed in Table 9, robustness of the model have increased moving from classic pool to LSDV and finally to within transformed fixed effect. This is because the consistency problem specific to the time invariant factors do not arise in case of within transformed fixed effect. Almost for the same reason we have not considered dynamic panel. When the number of time periods T is finite and the number of cross section N approaches infinity, LSDV estimators are inconsistent for dynamic panel. Although we have worked with finite N in the present case, but considering applicability of the present model, and more importantly to compare our results with other studies done with respect to other geographical areas, we stick to the static panel framework. As N in our case is small, generalized method of moments (GMM) estimation techniques, which is expected to yield more consistent estimates in presence of infinite N , is also not considered.¹⁷ Accordingly, we have used and report results from classic pool, LSDV, within transformed fixed effect and random effect model.

Data Source: Trade between countries is from United Nations COMTRADE database. Trade figures are reported in current USA dollars for each country and all its trading partners. The data are available annually and is deflated with GDP deflator. Because we

¹⁷ For more on the application of GMM techniques in the context of gravity equation see, Arellano and Bond, (1991); and Blundell and Bond, (1998). It is widely acknowledged use of GMM techniques in presence of less number of N may increase the finite sample bias.

didn't find enough data on respective variables that we have considered for our study, we have dropped Bhutan, Nepal, and Maldives, from our analysis. In total we have 48 observations, where we considered India's exports (in value term) to Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, for the period between 1995 until 2006. Regarding tariffs, the figures are effective tariffs. These are average tariffs and include import and export duties. The data on tariffs come from COMTRADE database.

Exchange rate data are bilateral exchange rates between India and its trading partners. We are measuring exchange rate as foreign currencies per unit of domestic currency. Exchange rates data are collected from International Financial Statistics Yearbook, International Monetary Fund.

For constructing the infrastructure index, we considered railway lines (in kilometer) as a proportion of total surface area; road length (in kilometer) as a proportion of total surface area; air transport, passengers carried (normalized with respect to number of airports with paved runways for each country); fixed line and mobile phone subscribers (per 100 people) and electric power consumption (in kilowatt per capita). Normalizing respective variables in this fashion (that is, in per capita term or with respect to country size) is expected to avoid possible heteroscedasticity in error term. The variables on infrastructure are collected from World Development Indicators Database, World Bank.

Results: The results have come out with expected sign (may be, except for the dummy variables) and the significance of the estimates have increased (read, more robust) as we have moved from classic pool, towards more efficient methodology of LSDV and within transformed LSDV (Table 9). Importantly, the trade costs variable, have statistically significant coefficients in three out of four cases. Based on our estimates, we find the income elasticity of India's exports varied between 0.369434 and 0.590614. That is, if we take the income coefficient to be 0.369434, we are saying that for a 100 percent increase in combined per capita GDP, exports from India will increase by 29 percent (that is, $2^{0.369434} - 1 = 29$). Similarly coefficients with respect to trade cost varies between -0.794491 to -0.498930, which is to say, for 100 percent increase in trade cost, exports from Indian to neighboring Asia is expected to fall by 73 percent and 42 percent respectively. Our estimates of income and trade cost are slightly lower than the estimated value by, Baier and Bergstrand (2001), and Anderson and van Wincoop (2004). One

reason is that we dealt with gross exports figure and not commodity specific data. There can be measurement error. As pointed out by Hummels and Lugovskyy (2006), the measure of trade cost can become biased if high transport cost countries systematically import lower transport cost goods (see also, De, 2008). However, the main objective of this present paper was to identify the importance of trade costs, among other factors, like price, infrastructure, income and tariffs, more from a macro perspective. We have already documented various elements of trade costs and through our empirical results it become evident that it is indeed one of the important variables affecting trade flow among South Asian nations. Indian exports are also quite price sensitive. An expected increase in price of Indian exports by 100 percent is going to reduce demand by a whopping 600 percent (see, *within transformed* column). It makes sense, as most export items in the context of South Asia typically comprises of low technology intensive (price sensitive) items, a little increase in price (through exchange rate pass-through) will have a huge impact on demand. However, in general exchange rate data does not come out to be that robust. The dummy variables, capturing country specific trading relation with India has come with negative signs which in some way reflect the no trade pact attitude between India and Pakistan. Finally, one of the coefficients on infrastructure variable has also turned to be significant, reiterating the need for building physical infrastructure in the region.

(Insert Table 9)

5. Policy Recommendations and Conclusion

As is evident from the above analysis, income and trade costs are important factors so far as intra flow of SAARC trade is concerned. Since income in the region is increasing, and SAARC member nations are also depicting symmetric economic activities it makes sense to reduce trade cost. However, unlike tariffs measures which are easy to lower, controlling for trade costs will take time and requires some commitments at policy level. The benefit of falling tariffs, geographical proximity, and similarities in economic factors, can be leveraged more if some steps are taken at the policy level. The following measures need to be considered for enhancing trade flow in the region:

(a) Granting of transit facilities for movement of goods, services, and energy, through their own territories but originating from neighboring countries. At present, Bangladesh

does not allow its territory for transporting goods from North Eastern Indian States to mainland India. Similarly, despite having huge reserves of natural gas, Bangladesh does not trade in energy with India because of lack of adequate infrastructure and political unwillingness. Again, there is no simple way to transfer goods from Kolkata in India, to neighboring Dhaka in Bangladesh. In the border town in Bangladesh, the trains run on metre-gauge, while in India they run on broad-gauge. Similarly, India had an issue with Pakistan to allow shipment of gas from Iran through Afghanistan.

(b) There is a need to liberalize trade and investment measures in services. Because of lack of adequate physical infrastructure services exports in the South Asian region (which are less dependent on infrastructure) are performing well compared to its manufactured exports (which are more dependent on infrastructure). While commenting on the sources of growth, Ahmed and Ghani (2007) found that for the period between 1995-2003 exports of services from South Asia grew at 14 percent per annum compared to less than 8 percent for East Asia. India and Bangladesh have performed well in areas of selling computers and information communication, while, Pakistan has excelled in the area of transport services and Sri Lanka in travel services. These nations can therefore further built on areas of competitive strength by liberalizing investment and trade in services.

(c) Transfer of fund from the economically advance region to economically poor regions, to help the laggard regions modernize and diversify their economies. A reason for European Union (EU) becoming success story is not only the member countries removed tariff and quota restrictions but also transferred fund to less developed countries in the region. For example, Poland has been allocated a sum of \$27 billion over the next three years to modernize and diversify its economy. In this way, India can aid releasing some supply side constraints that currently these smaller economies in South Asia are facing. On a similar note, India also stands to gain by extending unilateral duty free and quota free access to its market for products from least developed countries, like Bangladesh.¹⁸ Ability to sell in the Indian market will give these countries necessary purchasing power which in turn can be spent on purchasing Indian goods.

(d) Reducing the number of negative lists. India's negative list in the context of SAFTA is larger than that in some of its bilateral free trade agreements, and almost four times as

¹⁸ India already has unilateral free trade arrangements with Bhutan and Nepal.

large as its latest offer in the negotiation for a free trade area with Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). For instance, India subjects 15 out of top 20 Sri Lanka's exports to either a tariff rate quota (meaning the tariff preferences applies only up to a pre specified quantity of imports) or negative list (Baysan et al., 2004). Similarly, out of 319 items on which Sri Lanka offered concessions of zero duty to India only three items are actually exported to Sri Lanka (Weerakoon, 2001).

And lastly, (f) further easing of political differences with respect to India and Pakistan. Issue relating to Kashmir always comes into forefront whenever some economic decisions need to be taken. Because of political difference member countries have simply refused to participate in mutually gainful situation, leave alone, trying to give any unilateral concession.

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Table 1: Intra-regional total trade 2004 (In \$thousands)

| | Bangladesh | Bhutan | India | Nepal | Maldives | Pakistan | Sri Lanka |
|---------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------|--|
| Bangladesh | | 229.394 (143.784) | 105,206.068 (127,8712.080) | 66.590 (129.410) | 17.20 (402.80) | 44663.08 (142378.96) | 10212.71 (9567.14) |
| Bhutan [#] | 4,86.870 (6,92.744) | | 109,509.078 (135,943.023) | 596.070 (557.922) | n.a. n.a. | n.a. n.a. | 2.941 (2.364) |
| India | 1,593,313.764 (58,754.536) | 83,880.161 (70,402.860) | | 736,905.688 (342,882.634) | 42,177.575 (573.767) | 505,070.219 (91,952.757) | 1,344,050.0 70 (361,306.62 0) |
| Nepal ¹ | 6,106.596 (4,854.636) | 1,366.282 (568.456) | 341,798.923 (954,908.121) | | n.a. n.a. | 994.245 (3,301.730) | 1,189.394 (1,990.622) |
| Maldives | n.a. (6.193) | n.a. n.a. | 457.965 (65,833.279) | n.a. n.a. | | n.a. (2200.953) | 15,120.671 (68,464.407) |
| Pakistan | 197,650.475 (45,077.822) | 351.615 (379.499) | 158,335.039 (454,408.247) | 3,036.545 (3,710.456) | 1,936.187 (61.079) | | 134,693.623 (45,657.907) |
| Sri Lanka | 13,378.370 (7,704.451) | 11.803 (0.050) | 385,800.500 (1,360,084.49) | 275.269 (78.113) | 60,084.021 (19,838.733) | 39,250.282 (108,059.31) | |

Notes: ¹ Figures are for year 2003; [#] Figures are for year 1999.

Numbers in bracket are net imports whereas those outside brackets are net exports.

Source: Comtrade Database, United Nations Commodity Trade Statistics Database.

Table 2: Total trade (in \$) of South Asian Countries, 2004

| | | |
|---------------------|--------|-----------------|
| Bangladesh | Import | 11,372,744,850 |
| Bangladesh | Export | 8,267,482,023 |
| Bhutan ¹ | Import | 182,077,408 |
| Bhutan | Export | 115,950,052 |
| India | Import | 108,247,954,259 |
| India | Export | 79,834,064,105 |
| Maldives | Import | 641,816,856 |
| Maldives | Export | 169,740,947 |
| Pakistan | Import | 17,948,583,563 |
| Pakistan | Export | 13,379,014,624 |
| Sri Lanka | Import | 7,880,453,497 |
| Sri Lanka | Export | 5,485,135,246 |
| Nepal ¹ | Import | 1,347,482,240 |
| Nepal | Export | 524,294,592 |

Notes: ¹ Figures are for year 1999.

Source: Comtrade Database, United Nations Commodity Trade Statistics Database

Table3: Trade as a percentage of GDP

| Years | India | Bangladesh | Nepal | Pakistan | Sri Lanka | Maldives | Bhutan |
|-------|----------|------------|----------|----------|-----------|----------|--------|
| 1995 | 23.13165 | 28.20949 | 59.49052 | 36.13276 | 81.63505 | 170 | 79 |
| 1996 | 22.18716 | 29.77754 | 58.45777 | 38.33013 | 78.87396 | 165 | 80 |
| 1997 | 22.888 | 30.01163 | 64.03554 | 36.85226 | 80.13755 | 170 | 81 |
| 1998 | 23.98499 | 31.6062 | 56.7096 | 34.01173 | 78.49499 | 168 | 81 |
| 1999 | 25.27612 | 31.8524 | 52.56698 | 32.31996 | 78.75148 | 170 | 80 |
| 2000 | 27.38089 | 33.20734 | 55.71059 | 28.1296 | 88.63646 | 161 | 76 |
| 2001 | 26.3828 | 36.88216 | 55.8 | 30.37153 | 80.89863 | 157 | 71 |
| 2002 | 29.92318 | 33.32301 | 46.23067 | 30.53763 | 78.89409 | 152 | 62 |
| 2003 | 30.77938 | 34.24911 | 44.24786 | 32.84449 | 78.04928 | 153 | 62 |
| 2004 | 38.22035 | 36.27827 | 46.1473 | 30.30013 | 81.72526 | 178 | 93 |
| 2005 | 43.61438 | 39.62709 | 44.06298 | 35.25329 | 76.27002 | n.a. | 87 |
| 2006 | 48.77868 | 44.21832 | 45.289 | 38.60547 | 74.78382 | n.a. | 77 |

Source: World Development Indicators Online, World Bank.

Table 4: Main tradable in the context of SAARC nations ^a

| | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| Textiles (India) | Textiles (Sri Lanka) | Animals (Bangladesh) |
| Gems and Jewellery (India) | Vegetables (Sri Lanka) | Leather (Bangladesh) |
| Chemicals (India) | Plastics (Sri Lanka) | Textiles (Bangladesh) |
| Textiles (Pakistan) | Animals (Maldives) | Textiles (Nepal) |
| Vegetables (Pakistan) | Textiles (Maldives) | Metal (Nepal) |
| Leather (Pakistan) | Foodstuffs (Maldives) | Chemicals (Nepal) |

Notes: ^a Commodities represent top three exports for the year 2002. Name of respective SAARC member countries are reported in parenthesis.

Source: Industrial Commodity Statistics Yearbook, United Nation, 2004.

Table 5: Socioeconomic characteristics of SAARC member nations, 2006

| Countries | Bangladesh | Bhutan | India | Nepal | Pakistan | Maldives | Sri Lanka |
|---|------------|--------|-------|-------|----------|----------|-----------|
| GDP per capita (constant 2000 US\$) | 419 | 1086 | 634 | 242 | 635 | 3251 | 1070 |
| GDP growth (annual %) | 7 | 8 | 9 | 3 | 7 | 9 | 7 |
| Agriculture, value added (% of GDP) | 20 | 22 | 18 | 34 | 19 | .. | 16 |
| Industry, value added (% of GDP) | 28 | 38 | 28 | 16 | 27 | .. | 27 |
| Fertility rate, total (births per woman) | 3 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 2 |
| Foreign direct investment, net inflows (% of GDP) | 1 | 1 | 2 | -0 | 3 | 1 | 2 |
| Rural population (% of total population) | 74 | 89 | 71 | 84 | 65 | 70 | 85 |
| Gross domestic saving (% of GDP) | 18 | 41 | 31 | 8 | 14 | .. | 17 |
| Services, etc., value added (% of GDP) | 52 | 40 | 55 | 49 | 53 | .. | 56 |
| Mortality rate, infant (per 1,000 live births) | 52 | 63 | 57 | 46 | 78 | 26 | 11 |
| Population ages 0-14 (% of total) | 35 | 32 | 33 | 38 | 36 | 33 | 24 |
| Population ages 15-64 (% of total) | 62 | 64 | 62 | 58 | 60 | 63 | 70 |
| Population ages 65 and above (% of total) | 4 | 5 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 7 |

Source: World Bank (2008).

Table 6: Trade gains (US \$Million) from capacity building by each of South Asian countries and entire South Asia region in trade facilitation

| Countries | Port Efficiency (Air and Maritime) | Customs | Regulation | Service Sector Infrastructure | All |
|------------|------------------------------------|---------|------------|-------------------------------|------|
| Bangladesh | 228 | 144 | 71 | 339 | 782 |
| India | 314 | 193 | 123 | 519 | 1149 |
| Pakistan | 74 | 29 | 42 | 191 | 336 |
| Sri Lanka | 97 | 63 | 41 | 175 | 377 |
| South Asia | 712 | 429 | 278 | 1224 | 2644 |

Source: Wilson and Ostuki (2007), "Cutting Trade Costs and Improved Business Facilitation in South Asia", pp. 257.

Table 7a: Doing Business Report, 2008.

| Year | Countries | Ease of Doing Business Rank | Starting a Business | | | |
|------|------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-------------|-------------------------------|
| | | | Rank | Procedures (number) | Time (days) | Cost (% of income per capita) |
| 2008 | Bangladesh | 107 | 92 | 8 | 74 | 46.2 |
| 2008 | Bhutan | 119 | 52 | 8 | 48 | 10.4 |
| 2008 | India | 120 | 111 | 13 | 33 | 74.6 |
| 2008 | Maldives | 60 | 34 | 5 | 9 | 13.4 |
| 2008 | Nepal | 111 | 60 | 7 | 31 | 73.9 |
| 2008 | Pakistan | 76 | 59 | 11 | 24 | 14 |
| 2008 | Sri Lanka | 101 | 29 | 5 | 39 | 8.5 |

Source: Doing Business 2008, World Bank

Table 7b: Enforcing Contracts

| Region or Economy | Procedures (number) | Duration (days) | Cost (% of claim) |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| East Asia & Pacific | 37.3 | 549.8 | 47.8 |
| Eastern Europe & Central Asia | 35.9 | 443 | 22.7 |
| Latin America & Caribbean | 39.3 | 699.9 | 30.7 |
| Middle East & North Africa | 43.5 | 699 | 24 |
| OECD | 31.3 | 443.3 | 17.7 |
| South Asia | 43.5 | 1,047.10 | 27.2 |
| Sub-Saharan Africa | 39.4 | 643 | 48.7 |
| Bangladesh | 41 | 1,442 | 63.3 |
| Bhutan | 47 | 275 | 0.1 |
| India | 46 | 1,420 | 39.6 |
| Maldives | 41 | 665 | 16.5 |
| Nepal | 39 | 735 | 26.8 |
| Pakistan | 47 | 880 | 23.8 |
| Sri Lanka | 40 | 1,318 | 22.8 |

Source: Doing Business 2008, World Bank

Table 8: Status of India's road infrastructure

| | Length (km) | Already 4 laned (%) | Being Implemented (%) |
|-------------------|-------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| NHDP GQ | 5,846 | 94.1 | 5.9 |
| NS-EW | 7,300 | 12.1 | 73.3 |
| NHDP III A | 4,000 | 0.8 | 32.4 |
| NHDP V | 6,500 | 0.0 | 2.3 |
| Total NHDP | 23,646 | 27.1 | 30.2 |
| Port Connectivity | 380 | 35.5 | 58.9 |
| Others | 945 | 30.4 | 67.5 |
| Total by NHAI | 24971 | 27.4 | 32.0 |

Source: National Highway Authority of India, Government of India.

NHDP-III: Involves four lanes of about 10,000 km of those stretches of national highways connecting the State capitals. NHDP-IIIA refers to the first phase of this construction where building of 4000 km has been taken up. NHDP-GQ: Connecting four metros, namely, Chennai, Kolkata, Delhi and Mumbai, with four lanes highway. NHDP V: Six lanes of NHDP-GQ. NS-EW: Four lanes highway connecting Srinagar to Kanyakumari, and Silchar in the east to Porbandar in the west.

Table 9: Results from the model

| Variables | Classic Pool | LSDV | Within Transformed | Random Effect |
|-------------------------|--|---------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| Constant | -7.755976** (3.173088) ^a | -7.297177** (3.352789) | -0.050417 (0.095005) | 6.403701* (0.794306) |
| Income | 0.369434* (0.071397) | 0.395761* (0.075602) | 0.590614*** (0.208238) | 0.326190*** (0.181170) |
| Infrastructure | 0.414557 (0.325230) | 0.403931 (0.363619) | 0.786731*** (0.412413) | - |
| Tariffs | 0.003329 (0.057281) | 0.031918 (0.086118) | -0.208075** (0.085632) | -0.480811* (0.065634) |
| Exchange Rates | 0.057627 (0.760277) | -0.062918 (0.770023) | -2.822734** (0.653376) | - |
| Trade Costs | -0.794491*** (0.444075) | -0.714065** (0.331285) | -0.561384 (0.358354) | -0.498930*** (0.276431) |
| Dummy 1 | - | -2.613576* (0.298627) | - | - |
| Dummy 2 | - | -0.272008 (0.449774) | - | - |
| Dummy 3 | - | -2.903105* (0.265469) | - | - |
| Adjusted R ² | 0.870151 | 0.874951 | 0.893442 | 0.825819 |

* Indicates significance at 1 percent level; ** Indicates significance at 5 percent level; *** Indicates significance at 10 percent level.

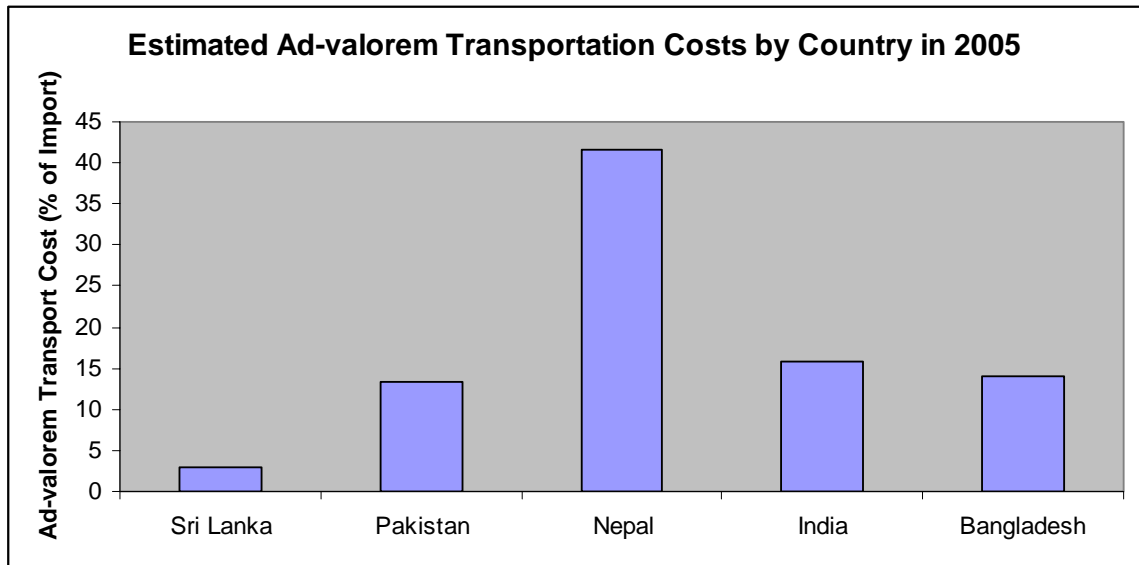
^a Standard error are in parenthesis.

Box1: Constraints for exports.

- In India, each state has its own set of rules with regard to inter state movement of goods. Goods moving across the states are also subject to further inspection and even taxes/fees. For example, the Nepalese Vegetable ghee is subjected to canalization, State-wise quota system and some discriminatory taxes (like, luxury tax, state sales tax, entry tax etc.) in the importing country.
- Prospective exporters are required to obtain license from the Bureau of Indian Standard (BIS) and besides the application/processing charges, which require to pay costs of inspection visits from India to the exporting countries.
- India continues import licensing of about 600 items on the grounds that restrictions are needed to ensure protection for "human", animal or plant life or health". Imports of nearly all livestock, agricultural and food products require some kind of phyto-sanitary certificate. All consignments of imported food products are required to be tested by the Port Health Officer (PHO). At the Custom Clearance Offices where PHOs are not available, various samples are drawn and forwarded for clearance to some other laboratory, which results in loss of valuable time. Furthermore, the warehouses are not equipped to cater for preservations of perishable goods.
- Rule 32 of the Prevention of Food Adulteration Rules (PFA), 1955 deals with packing and labeling of foods. This rule alone has 30 provisos and provisos within provisos. In addition, there is also cross references to other rules.
- The results of the laboratory tests cannot be challenged. In some cases, even certificates by EU accredited labs on this account have been rejected by Indian Customs and such consignments are subjected to repeat tests in India

Source: Compiled by authors' on the basis of various complaints submitted by exporting firms to Ministry of Commerce, Government of India.

Box 2: Higher transport cost in Asia.



Source: P. De, "Trade Transportation Costs in South Asia: An Empirical Investigation", pp.27

Box 3: List of Procedures for Starting up a Company

Screening procedures

- Certify business competence
- Certify a clean criminal record
- Certify marital status
- Check the name of uniqueness
- Notarize company deeds
- Notarize registration certificate
- File with the Statistical Bureau
- File with the Ministry of Industry and Trade, Ministry of the Economy, or the respective ministries by line of business
- Notify the municipality of start-up date
- Obtain certificate of compliance with company law
- Obtain business license (operation permit)
- Obtain permit to play music to the public (irrespective of line of business)
- Open a bank account and deposit start-up capital
- Perform an official audit at start-up
- Publish notice of company foundation
- Register at the Companies Registry
- Sign up for membership in the Chamber of Commerce or Industry or the Regional Trade Association

Tax related requirements

- Arrange automatic withdrawal of the employees' income tax from the company payroll funds
- Designate a bondsman for tax purpose
- File with the Ministry of Finance
- Issue notice of start of activity to the Tax Authorities
- Register for corporate income tax
- Register for VAT
- Register for state tax
- Register the company bylaws with the Tax Authorities
- Seal, validate, rubricate accounting books

Labor/social security-related requirements

- File with the Ministry of Labor
- Issue employment declarations for all employees
- Notarize the labor contract
- Pass inspections by social security officials
- Register for accident and labor risk insurance
- Register with pension funds
- Register with social security
- Register with unemployment insurance
- Register with the housing fund

Safety and health requirements

- Notify the health and safety authorities and obtain authorization to operate from the Health Ministry
- Pass inspections and obtain certificates related to work safety, building, fire, sanitation and hygiene

Environmental-related requirements

- Issue environmental declaration
- Obtain environment certificate
- Obtain sewer approval
- Obtain zoning approval
- Pass inspections from environmental officials
- Register with the water management and water discharge authorities.

Source: Djankov et al. (2002), "The regulation of entry", Quarterly Journal of Economics, pp. 11