

FOREIGN RELATIONS OF INDIA AND ITS NEIGHBOURHOOD

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Abstract: *India's growing economy, strategic location, mix of friendly and diplomatic foreign policy and large and vibrant diaspora has won it more allies than enemies. India has friendly relations with several countries in the developing world. Though India is not a part of any major military alliance, it has close strategic and military relationship with most of the fellow major powers. The foreign policy of the government concerns the policy initiatives made towards other states. The Ministry of External Affairs is responsible for carrying out the foreign policy of India. India is a vast country and is connected to lots of countries for economy, the world's most-populous democracy and the fastest growing major economy. India is a newly industrialised country, has a history of collaboration with several countries, and is a component of the BRICS and a major part of developing world. India was one of the founding members of several international organisations—the United Nations, the Asian Development Bank, New Development BRICS Bank, and G-20—and the founder of the Non-Aligned Movement.*

Keywords: *Asian Development Bank, Foreign policy, Development, United Nations, BRICS, G-20, Economy.*

Introduction

As many as 22 million people of Indian origin live and work abroad and constitute an important link with the mother country. An important role of India's foreign policy has been to ensure their welfare and wellbeing within the framework of the laws of the country where they live. India attracted the world attention towards the Pakistan-backed terrorism in Kashmir. The Kargil War resulted in a major diplomatic victory for India. Even before independence, the Government of India maintained semi-autonomous diplomatic relations. After India gained independence from the United Kingdom in 1947, it soon joined the Commonwealth of Nations and strongly supported independence movements in other colonies, like the Indonesian National Revolution. India's foreign policy has always regarded the concept of neighbourhood as one of widening concentric circles, around a central axis of historical and cultural commonalities. Although the prestige stemmed from India's nonaligned stance, the nation was unable to prevent Cold War politics from becoming intertwined with interstate relations in South Asia.

Look East Policy of India

During the cold war, India's relations with its South East Asian neighbours were not very strong. After the end of the cold war, the government of India particularly realised the importance of redressing this imbalance in India's foreign policy. Consequently, the Narsimha Rao government in the early nineties of the last century unveiled the look east policy. Look-east policy was launched in 1992 just after the end of the cold war, following the dissolution of the Soviet Union. After the start of liberalisation, it was a very strategic policy decision taken by the government in the foreign policy. India's international influence varied over the years after independence. At present, under the Look East Policy, the Government of India is giving special emphasis on the economic development of backward north eastern region of India taking advantage of huge market of ASEAN as well as of the energy resources available in some of the member countries of ASEAN like Burma. Since the beginning of this century, India has given a big push to this policy by becoming a summit level partner of ASEAN (2002) and getting involved in some regional initiatives such as the BIMSTEC and the Ganga-Mekong Cooperation and now becoming a member of the East Asia Summit (EAS) in December 2005.

India and its neighbourhood

SAARC

SAARC has intentionally stressed these "core issues" and avoided more divisive political issues, although political dialogue is often conducted on the margins of SAARC meetings. In 1993, India and its SAARC partners signed an agreement to gradually lower tariffs within the region. Forward movement in SAARC has come to a standstill because of the tension between India and Pakistan, and the SAARC Summit originally scheduled for, but not held in, November 1999 has not been rescheduled. Certain aspects of India's relations within the subcontinent are conducted through the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). Other than India, its members are Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Established in 1985, SAARC encourages co-operation in agriculture, rural development, science and technology, culture, health, population control, narcotics control and anti-terrorism.

Afghanistan

The new democratically elected Afghan government strengthened its ties with India in wake of persisting tensions and problems with Pakistan, which is continuing to shelter and support the Taliban. India pursues a policy of close co-operation to bolster its standing as a regional power and contain its rival Pakistan, which it maintains is supporting Islamic militants in Kashmir and other parts of India.

Bangladesh

Indo-Bangladesh relations have been somewhat less friendly since the fall of Mujib government in August 1975. Over the years over issues such as South Talpatti Island, the Tin Bigha Corridor and access to Nepal, the Farakka Barrage and water sharing, border conflicts near Tripura and the construction of a fence along most of the border which India explains as security provision against migrants, insurgents and terrorists. Many Bangladeshis feel India likes to play "big brother" to smaller neighbours, including Bangladesh.

Bhutan

Historically, there have been close ties with India. Both countries signed a friendship treaty in 1949, where India would assist Bhutan in foreign relations. On 8 February 2007, the Indo-Bhutan Friendship Treaty was substantially revised under the Bhutanese King, Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck. Whereas in the Treaty of 1949 Article 2 read as "The Government of India undertakes to exercise no interference in the internal administration of Bhutan. On its part the Government of Bhutan agrees to be guided by the advice of the Government of India in regard to its external relations. The First Five Year Plan (FYP) of Bhutan was launched in 1961. Since then, India has been extending financial assistance to Bhutan's FYPs. The 10th FYP ended in June 2013. India's overall assistance to the 10th FYP was a little over Rs. 5000 crores, excluding grants for hydropower projects. India has committed Rs. 4500 crores for Bhutan's 11th FYP along with Rs. 500 crores as an Economic Stimulus Package

Burma/Myanmar

Burma is situated to the south of the states of Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh in Northeast India. and the proximity of the People's Republic of China gives strategic importance to Indo-Burmese relations. India is a major customer of Burmese oil and gas. In 2007, Indian exports to Burma totalled US\$185 million, while its imports from Burma were valued at around US\$810 million, consisting mostly of oil and gas.

China

Despite lingering suspicions remaining from the 1962 Sino-Indian War, the 1967 Nathu La and Cho La incidents, and continuing boundary disputes over Aksai Chin and Arunachal Pradesh, Sino-Indian relations have improved gradually since 1988. Since 2004, the economic rise of both China and India has also helped forge closer relations between the two. Sino-Indian trade reached US\$65.47 billion in 2013–14, making China the single largest trading partner of India. However, China's economic interests have clashed with those of India. Both the countries are the largest Asian investors in Africa and have competed for control over its large natural resources.

Maldives

India enjoys a considerable influence over Maldives' foreign policy and provides extensive security co-operation especially after the Operation Cactus in 1988 during which India repelled Tamil mercenaries who invaded the country. The Maldives has taken the lead in calling for a South Asian Free Trade Agreement, the formulation of a Social Charter, the initiation of informal political consultations in SAARC forums, the lobbying for greater action on environmental issues, the proposal of numerous human rights measures such as the regional convention on child rights and for setting up a SAARC Human Rights Resource Centre. The Maldives is also an advocate of greater international profile for SAARC such as through formulating common positions at the UN.

Nepal

Indian policy towards Nepal is determined by the following considerations: (i) the geopolitics of Nepal make it a landlocked country sandwiched between India and China. Access to Nepal is easier from the Indian side; (ii) historically, both countries have shared a common security perception; (iii) there exists a great deal of cultural affinity between the two countries; Nepal is not only the birth place of Gautam Buddha but is also the only Hindu kingdom in the world.

Sri Lanka

Bilateral relations between the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka and the Republic of India have been generally friendly, but were controversially affected by the Sri Lankan civil war and by the failure of Indian intervention during the war. India is the only neighbour of Sri Lanka, separated by the Palk Strait; both nations occupy a strategic position in South Asia and have sought to build a common security umbrella in the Indian Ocean. Historically and culturally, the two nations have been considerably close, with 70% of Sri Lankans continuing to follow Theravada Buddhism to this day

Relations at the End of the Cold War

Although there was a relaxation in the Cold War since the mid-1980s with the rise of Gorbachev to power in the former Soviet Union, the Cold War practically came to an end with the disintegration of the Soviet Union in December 1991. India's relations with the US had considerably improved during the relaxation of Cold War, but the collapse of the Soviet Union brought in unprecedented uncertainties to international relations, including Indo-US relations. The only strategic comfort for India was that both Pakistan and China had lost their strategic relevance to the US in the aftermath of the Cold War.

India and association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN)

India-ASEAN relations reached a new high on 20-21 December 2012 during the commemorative summit celebrating twenty years of dialogue partnership and ten years of summit partnership. There is growing acknowledgement on the part of ASEAN that India has a much larger responsibility and much greater role to play in Southeast Asia in the second decade of the 21st century. New Delhi cannot shy away from its responsibilities as a regional stakeholder. Perhaps, the most important contribution from India can come in the form of (a) acting as a positive force for regional peace and stability, (b) rallying its strength – material, diplomatic, and normative – behind the ASEAN cooperative architectures, and (c) engaging in capacity-building in the CLMV (Cambodia, Lao PDR, Burma, and Vietnam) countries.

India and the United Nations

India has contributed to UN significantly on disarmament in terms of ideas, resolutions, initiatives and bridging differences through action plans. In 1948, India had proposed limiting the use of atomic energy to peaceful purposes and elimination of nuclear weapons from national arsenals. In 1950, India suggested formation of a UN Peace Fund created through peaceful reduction of arms and directing the amount thus released towards development purposes. In 1964, India took the initiative to place the item 'non-proliferation of weapons' on UN agenda. However, the purpose was defeated by the (1968) carried that a large numbering of counties from going nuclear, without firm restrictions on the few nuclear weapon countries activities Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty Although our country alleged to the oppose to problem.

Conclusion

The Middle East as a region is important for India from several points of view. For one, it is the largest source of energy for India. Around 70% of India's oil imports come from the region. Second, there are around six million Indian workers in the GCC alone, who send back remittances worth around \$71 billion. The Indian policy towards the smaller powers of South Asia has been more explicitly seen since the Indira Gandhi days. India supports and encourages regional democracies and has sought to tie up its regional primacy through series of regional, and bilateral arrangements, covering a wide range of agreements in the areas of defence, trade and science and technology. The commonality of the region leads the small powers to continue to assert their differences so as to regain a sense of identity and

independence. India's relations with the European Union during the Cold War days were largely economic in nature, since that organisation had little role to play in international political issues.

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