

# Dr. Abhishek Pratap Singh

## India's Foreign Policy in a Globalising World, BA (H)-VI Sem

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### 1. Introduction

Increasing globalization and interdependence between nations across the globe has enhanced the need for healthy diplomatic relations amongst all countries. Today, a sound and strategic foreign policy is crucial for having a voice in international platforms, for effective trade and investments, and for achieving consistent domestic progress.

India's foreign policy has developed greatly since independence. Policies for forming global interactions progressed from being principled to goal-driven and objective orientated.

Post-independence, India's agenda revolved primarily around fostering new relationships with colonial and ex-colonial nations to encourage peace and cooperation in light of international disputes such as the Cold War.

Significant conflicts with neighbours like China and Pakistan led to necessary changes in India's foreign policy, with the country no longer remaining neutral in its relations. Ties with the USA, Soviet Union, and several other countries were in constant flux due to the allegiances formed during both the Sino-Indian and the Indo-Pakistani wars. It was this shift that led to greater military preparedness and development of more agenda-driven foreign policies.

The 1991 industrial policy saw India turning to a mixed economy, thereby transforming its economic and trade policies with the outside world. This greatly opened up opportunities for employment and manufacturing in the country, and created a new avenue for cooperation and interaction with several countries of the world.

### 2. Current Development in India's Foreign Policy

The recent government has been making active efforts to expand India's diplomatic footprint, foster strong international ties, and use these global relationships for mutual advantage and progress. This method of 'fast track diplomacy'<sup>i</sup> brought in by the Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP) government involves a much more concentrated and proactive approach to building close ties than was witnessed in earlier times<sup>ii</sup>. This is achieved through an increased number of personal visits by the Hon'ble Prime Minister, Mr. Narendra Modi to neighbouring and other countries, as well as increased participation in regional and international conferences and summits.

This dynamic approach involves targeted outreach and interactions in order to achieve specific goals that have been set for the nation. These objectives include –

## 2.1 Improved relations with neighbouring countries

India shares its boundaries with nations including Afghanistan, Bhutan, Bangladesh, China, Maldives, Myanmar, Pakistan, Nepal and Sri Lanka. Currently, the Central Government has greatly emphasized the need to prioritize ties with its immediate neighbours. This prioritisation is being implemented through two core approaches namely, the '**Neighbourhood First**<sup>iii</sup>' and '**Act East**' policies.

### 'Neighbourhood First' Policy

This policy of the government aims to improve interactions with its immediate neighbours and the Indian Ocean island states. It achieves various goals through a holistic approach to regional foreign policy.



**Connectivity** is a big facet of this policy, with India entering into Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) with members of the **South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)** for cooperation in areas of trade, infrastructure, commercial linkages and transit facilities. These agreements ensure a free flow of resources, energy, goods, labour, and information across borders.



**Resource support** by India to its neighbours is another vital component of this approach in terms of financial aid, equipment, human resource training and diplomatic alliances. For example, India provided immense assistance, in the form of over 1,700 tonnes of relief material and medical assistance, to its neighbour Nepal in the aftermath of the 2016 earthquake.



**Regional Institutions** are an important mechanism for India to emerge as a regional leader in South Asia. In furtherance of this, India has participated and invested in SAARC as a vehicle for development in the region. However, it has also begun to initiate issue-specific groups that can achieve faster and more effective progress, without being held back due to lack of consensus. One such example is the **Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal (BBIN)** grouping for energy development i.e. motor vehicles, waterpower management and inter-grid connectivity.

### 'Act East' Policy

The PM Narasimha Rao government launched a '**Look East**' Policy in 1992. Due to changes in geopolitical and economic circumstances, the present government has renamed it as '**Act East**', to represent their pro-active role in increased integration of India into the **Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)** and East Asian countries. In furtherance of this, the Prime Minister attends the annual ASEAN Summits, and engages in high-level exchanges with member nations. India's recent involvement in the **Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation**

(BIMSTEC) is a representative of its commitment to this policy. It has three primary objectives, namely –

CONNECTIVITY	CULTURE	COMMERCE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infrastructure investments (bridges/highways)</li> <li>• Improved access to gateway ports</li> <li>• Technology transfer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promotion of tourism in famous cultural and religious sites</li> <li>• Preservation of ancient manuscripts, heritage sites and artifacts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong Production Networks</li> <li>• Regional Value Chains</li> <li>• Bilateral Trade Agreements</li> </ul>

Under the Act East Policy, the least-developed nations of **Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Vietnam (CLMV)** have been a special focus area for India. Through such strategic partnerships, India can develop new global value chains – a crucial requirement in light of manufacturing campaigns such as ‘**Make in India**’. In furtherance of this, a **Project Development Fund of INR 500 crores** has been set up to facilitate India’s manufacturing foothold in these nations.

The policy also focuses on implementation of projects for stronger regional integration, security and defence. A recent objective under this policy is to improve border infrastructure for greater overland connectivity to Southeast Asia.

## 2.2 Institution Building

One important aim for India in the present foreign policy regime is to participate and take the lead in several international governance platforms. The government aims to increase India’s influence in the existing associations. India is already a member of the **G20**, the **East Asia Summit**, and the **BRICS coalition**, and aims to increase its authority at these forums. The government also aspires for permanent membership on the UN Security Council.

India’s foreign policy involves creating institutional leadership by undertaking its own initiatives. The **International Solar Alliance** was started by India and has membership of more than **120 countries**

committed to creating solar technology and supporting the use of solar power. Other examples of India's efforts are the **Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)** and the **BBIN**, discussed above.

India needs to continue to evolve and engage with current global subjects, and clearly articulate its international policies, in order to gain a higher place at the table, and make its presence felt in on a global scale.

### 2.3 Advancement of Domestic Development

India's foreign policy is increasingly geared towards forging international relationships to advance its domestic targets. India has made partnerships in a variety of fields, such as technology, sourcing or capital, natural resources and securing market access, which has greatly boosted its domestic industries<sup>iv</sup>. Results of this are clear in the fact that India's **Foreign Direct Investments (FDI)** has seen a great boost (**5 billion USD**) compared to the previous fiscal year<sup>v</sup>, due to an increase in international collaboration.

Given India's objectives on an international platform, and its emphasis on improving relations with neighbouring countries, it is important to analyse recent developments of India's diplomatic actions and policies within the surrounding region.

## 3. Recent Evolution of India's Relations with its Neighbouring Countries

In order to play a vital role in the emerging multi-polar world politics, India has been developing enduring linkages between its domestic priorities and its foreign policy objectives. The current government has taken initiatives to strengthen neighbourhood relations and forge a concrete neighbourhood policy that will also benefit the region. Hon'ble Prime Minister has pursued dynamic regional diplomacy by engaging with the neighbours and augmenting political connectivity through dialogue. His effort to make cordial relations was evident when he invited the heads of the SAARC nations for his oath taking ceremony in 2014. It was a clear sign of his desire to strengthen India's ties with its immediate neighbours. The recent progress in relations with the neighbouring nations highlights the growing efforts of this government to build and strengthen its relationships with these nations.



**India and Bhutan:** Diplomatic relations between India and Bhutan were established in 1968 with the appointments of a resident representative of India in Thimphu. A landlocked nation, Bhutan is highly dependent on India for access to sea, trade and development aid. Around **79 percent** of Bhutan's total imports are from India, which provides a market for **90 percent** of its export<sup>vi</sup>. During his first foreign visit to Bhutan in 2014, the Hon'ble Prime Minister declared the expansion of bilateral ties and termed the relationship between

the two countries as “Bharat to Bhutan” (B2B) relations. His discussion also revolved around doubling the scholarships provided to Bhutanese students in India and offered help in setting up a digital library of two million books and periodicals in the Himalayan nation.

India is Bhutan’s largest trading partner, with bilateral trade between the nations growing at **7.3 percent** in 2015. India accounted for **79 percent** of Bhutan’s total imports (INR 5374 crores), and **90.3 percent** of the total exports of Bhutan (INR 3180 crores)<sup>vii</sup>. To build the expansion of bilateral ties, Commerce and Industry Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and Tengye Lyonpo Lekey Dorji, Minister for Economic Affairs, Royal Government of Bhutan signed the **Agreement on Trade, Commerce and Transit between India and Royal Govt. of Bhutan** on 12<sup>th</sup> November, 2016 with an aim to enhance trade between the two nations through trade facilitation by improving procedures, cutting down on documentation and adding exit/entry points for Bhutan’s trade with other nations.

In addition to this, the **Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal Motor Vehicles Agreements (BBIN MVA)** initiated through as part of India’s “**eastern strategy**”, which would help build stronger links with northern states and countries like Bhutan and Bangladesh, was passed in the lower house of Bhutan’s National Assembly with certain amendments including regulated cross border movement of vehicles.



**India and Nepal:** Diplomatic relations between India and Nepal, established on June 13<sup>th</sup> 1947, encourages democracy, pluralism, stability and socio-economic progress of both the nations. To sustain the momentum of this relationship, India announced a **soft credit line of \$1 billion** for infrastructure, irrigation and energy projects. Indian firms have been big investors in Nepal, accounting for about 40 percent of the total approved FDI. Alongside, the current government recently took up the work of starting the **5,600 MW**

**Pancheshwar project**, which had remained stalled for 18 years after the agreement. Deliberations and discussions are presently being carried out to agree upon the major issues such as the sharing of water and its benefits between Nepal and India and putting a value to the benefits in the project’s **Detailed Project Report (DPR)**. Energy from the project that is to be developed jointly by India and Nepal will be divided equally as per bilateral treaties. However, sharing of the benefits and water from the reservoir — like irrigation and flood control — are yet to be agreed upon, in terms of price and quantity.

Govt. of India’s support and aid after the Nepal earthquake has significantly strengthen the relations. Recently, Nepal’s Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal visited India from September 15-18, 2016 and held a detailed discussion with the Prime Minister and sealed three significant deals. The 66-year-old **India-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship of 1950** was renewed. India and Nepal now plan to construct **Integrated Check Posts (ICPs)** on their respective sides at ports of entry in Birgunj, Biratnagar, Bhairahwa and Nepalgunj.



**India and Bangladesh:** India was the first nation to acknowledge Bangladesh as a separate and independent state and instituted the diplomatic relation in December 1971. This relationship reached new heights when Hon'ble Prime Minister of India marked the settlement and ratification of the 41-year-old boundary dispute (**Land Boundary Agreement**) and announced a **fresh line of credit of \$2 billion** to the neighbouring country in 2014. His actions were widely appreciated and helped in bridging the gaps and the mistrust that has crept in the Indo-Bangladesh relationship over decades.

In January 2016, India entered a preliminary agreement to supply **100 MW of electricity** daily to Bangladesh from the gas-based **ONGC Tripura Power Company (OTPC)** at **INR 5.50 a unit** more or less identical to the weighted average generation tariff (Taka 6.50) in Bangladesh<sup>viii</sup>. The Bangladeshi government responded by initiating the process to allow access to the Chittagong port. Meanwhile, India initiated the development of Payra Port. India also has plans to implement the proposed rail connectivity between Agartala and Akhaura junction in Bangladesh. Upon implementation, it will be a major fillip to ensure movement of passengers and goods between the two nations. Bangladesh has granted India road transit facility through its territories to Agartala under the **BBIN MVA**. This will reduce the road travel distance by over half i.e. 1,500 km. In April 2017, **22 agreements** were signed between the two governments in areas of defense, nuclear energy, cyber security and media. India agreed to support Bangladesh with a **\$500 million line of credit specifically for defense purchases**. With respect to bilateral ties, with the **new \$4.5 billion offer**, India has thrice extended lines of credits with Bangladesh and has already identified **17 projects** to utilize this amount.

However, leaders of both nations have failed to come to a consensus with **Teesta River Water Sharing Agreement**. India has been benefiting from **54 rivers** which flow into the Bay of Bengal through Bangladesh. At present, there is only one treaty between India and Bangladesh on the sharing of water from River Ganges. With the political pressure from both the nations, the leaders are unable to bring the Teesta Treaty into agreement, creating tension in their otherwise peaceful ties<sup>ix</sup>.



**India and Sri Lanka:** India and Sri Lanka share a 2500 years old relationship, built upon a foundation of intellectual, cultural, religious and linguistic interaction. Sri Lanka is India's largest trade partner in South Asia. According to Sri Lankan Customs, bilateral trade in 2015 amounted to **US \$ 4.7 billion**. Exports from India to Sri Lanka in 2015 were **US\$ 4.1 billion (up by 2.1 percent)**, while exports from Sri Lanka to India were **US\$ 645 million (up by 3.2 percent)**. From January-September 2016, the bilateral trade between India-Sri Lanka was **US \$ 3.22 billion**; exports from India to Sri

Lanka were **US \$ 2.809 billion** while exports from Sri Lanka to India were **US \$ 414 million<sup>x</sup>**.

Hon'ble Prime Minister Mr. Narendra Modi, during his visit to Sri Lanka in 2015, pitched an expansion of the **India-Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement (FTA)** and came out in favor of balancing bilateral trade, which currently favors India. Trade between the two countries grew rapidly after the entry into force of the India-Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement in March 2000. Until recently, the two nations were negotiating to finalise the **Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA)** but failed to come to a conclusion. To extend the negotiation, the **Economic and Technical Cooperation Agreement (ECTA)** is being negotiated, over and above the current FTA<sup>xi</sup>. It will encompass India's "**five fastest growing southern states**", which have a population of 250 million and a combined **GDP of \$400 billion**, and Sri Lanka's **22 million population with an US \$80 billion economy**. In addition to this, Export-Import Bank of India (EXIM Bank) on 8 March 2016 signed **Buyer's Credit Agreements**, under National Export Insurance Account (BC-NEIA), amounting to **US\$ 403.01 million** with National Water Supply and Drainage Board (NWSDB) of Sri Lanka in Colombo, for financing three water supply projects. Under the Buyer's Credit portfolio, EXIM Bank has already extended credit amounting to nearly **US\$ 185 million** to Sri Lanka for water supply and other projects.

Recently, India and Sri Lanka are in talks to jointly operate oil tanks at the strategic Trincomalee port. **73 out of 99 storage tanks** in the port will be managed under a new equity arrangement between India and Sri Lanka. Apart from an agreement on civil nuclear cooperation for peaceful use, Govt. of India has been pushing for a coal-based power project and over-and-under-sea transmission line projects connecting India and Sri Lanka.



**India and Maldives:** India's policy with Maldives has been based on support for stability, political pluralism and development. Diplomatic relations with Maldives were established in 1972. India and Maldives have consistently supported each other in multilateral fora such as the United Nations, the Commonwealth, the Non-Aligned Movement and the SAARC. Indian aid to the Maldives surged from **\$4 million in 2014 to \$30 million in 2015 and 2016**. This cooperation has further improved under Prime Minister's "**Neighborhood First**" policy, which prioritizes

close ties to proximate countries. This was one of the six agreements signed between the two countries, after leaders of the two nations held talks, which continued over a working lunch. The pacts signed were in the field of tourism, taxation, conservation, SAARC satellite. However, the relations between the nations were in trouble when Maldives in 2012 decided to terminate a \$ 511 million project with the Indian Infrastructure Company GMR Infrastructure Limited (GIL).

Currently, India has provided **US \$ 100 million Stand-by Credit facility (SCF)** to Maldives, including long-term loans and revolving credit for trade. Under new Line of Credit worth **US\$40 million** offered by the Government of India to Maldives, the **Overseas Infrastructure Alliance (OIA)** of India has been given a contract to construct **485 housing units** in Maldives. India-Maldives bilateral trade now stands at **Rs.700 crores**. Under the bilateral agreement, India provides essential food items like rice, wheat flour, sugar,

dal, onion, potato and eggs and construction material such as sand and stone aggregates to Maldives on favourable terms.

**Table 1: Bilateral Trade with Maldives (in million USD)**

Period	Indian Exports	Indian Imports	Total
2010	125.5	2.5	127.5
2011	147.8	2.6	150.4
2012	147.7	2.8	150.5
2013	154.0	2.3	156.3
2014	170.6	2.9	173.5
<b>Upto Nov 2015</b>	<b>205.0</b>	<b>1.6</b>	<b>206.6</b>

Source: Brief Note on Myanmar, Ministry of External Affairs, 2016



**India and China:** Diplomatic relations between India and China were established on 01<sup>st</sup> April 1950. In 1988, the nations entered the phase of improving the bilateral relations, and in 1993 leaders of the nations signed an **Agreement on the Maintenance of Peace and Tranquility** along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) on the India-China Border Areas. Since then, trade and economic relations with China have witnessed immense progress. India- China bilateral trade, which was as low as **US\$ 2.92 billion** in 2000 reached **US\$ 70.4 billion** by 2015. India's exports to China touched **US\$ 8.86 billion** whereas China's exports

were **US\$ 61.54 billion**<sup>xii</sup>. Besides trade, India is one of the largest markets for project exports from China. To enhance the education relation, India and China signed **Education Exchange Programme (EEP)** in 2006, which was revised in May 2016. EEP focuses to enhance cooperation between institutions in the fields of vocational education, collaboration between Institutes of higher learning etc.

Unfortunately, the current relations have soured due to recent tensions between the nations. The formal warning to India from China earlier this year, to restrict Dalai Lama's visit, was the first step in creating this rift. The bitterness heightened when India agree to sign '**U.S-India Joint Strategic Vision for the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean Region**' on January 2017, whose only operative clause was to prevent the assertion of Chinese hegemony in the South China Sea<sup>xiii</sup>. In return, China ignored India's objections to the building of a transit corridor to Gwadar through Gilgit and restricted India's petition for being a member of the **Nuclear Suppliers' Group**. It also repudiated the UN Security Council to brand Masood Azhar and Hafez Sayeed as international terrorists and accelerate the frequency of infiltration of Chinese submarines into Bay of Bengal. Recently, Indian and Chinese soldiers became locked in a standoff at Doklam for more than 50 days in the Sikkim region. The confrontation was triggered when a team of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) was prevented by Indian army from extending a class-5 track in the Dolam Plateau area, which falls under Bhutan's territory<sup>xiv</sup>.





**India and Pakistan:** Since Independence in 1947, relations between India and Pakistan have been tense, with talks around economic integration, cooperation and peace running parallel to a constant threat of war. The nations have fought wars in 1947-48, 1965, 1971 and 1999. However, these tensions did not deter the nations from working towards initiating peaceful, friendly and cooperative relations. Cross-LoC travel and trade across J&K, initiated in 2005 and 2008 respectively, was an important step in this direction. To build confidence

within the business community of both nations, three agreements - **Customs Cooperation Agreement**, **Mutual Recognition Agreement** and **Redressal of Trade Grievances Agreement** were signed during the Commerce Secretaries' talks in September 2012.

This situation seemed to have improved when Hon'ble Prime Minister invited leaders of all the SAARC nations, including Pakistan, to his oath taking ceremony. The initiative was highly appreciated. However, tensions rose again when Pakistani terrorists attacked the Indian air force base in Pathankot on January 2016. This incident derailed resumption of the **Comprehensive Bilateral Dialogue** (CBD), which was a key agenda of foreign secretary-level talks. The tension escalated when Pakistan accused India of human rights violations committed in Kashmir. Further, both nations recalled their diplomatic staff after accusing each other of espionage. Due to constant firing across the LoC, the 2003 Ceasefire Agreement between the nations collapsed. After the attacks on Uri army base by Pakistan-backed terrorist, a retaliatory "**surgical strike**" by India dissolved possibilities of any discussion between the nations. Due to this constant tension, Mr. Modi did not attend the SAARC meeting in Pakistan, which was then eventually cancelled. Meanwhile, Pakistan recently opposed the construction of the Kishanganga (Jhelum River) and Ratle (Chenab River) hydroelectric power plants to be built by India in Jammu & Kashmir under the 1960 **Indus Water Treaty** (IWT).



**India and Afghanistan:** The two nations have developed a deep relationship through historical and cultural links. Indo-Afghan relations have been further strengthened by the **Strategic Partnership Agreement** (SPA) signed between the two countries in 2011. SPA provides assistance to re-build indigenous Afghan capacity in different areas, and encouraging investment in Afghanistan's natural resource. It also providing duty free access to the Indian market for Afghanistan's export support for an Afghan-led, Afghan-owned,

broad-based and inclusive process of peace and reconciliation, and advocating the need for a sustained and long term commitment to Afghanistan by the international community.

Despite the lack of direct land access, India is the second-largest destination for Afghan exports. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Afghan President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani on December 25 2016 inaugurated the newly built Afghan Parliament building. In addition to this, Mr. Modi announced 500 scholarships for the children of the martyrs of Afghan Security Forces in School and Colleges both in

Afghanistan and in India. India has constructed the new building at a cost of about \$90 million, as a sign of friendship. India has so far given **financial assistance worth over \$2 billion** to Afghanistan and has been involved in massive developmental efforts in the war-torn country. Currently, India's bilateral trade with Afghanistan stood at **\$684.47 million** in 2014-15, an increase of **0.20 per cent** and **20.41 per cent** higher than in 2010-11. India's exports to Afghanistan in 2014-15 stood at **\$ 422.56 million**, while its imports from that country were worth **\$261.91 million**. In the context of continued bilateral development cooperation, the Govt. of India decided to approve the 3rd phase of **Small Development Projects** comprising of **92 projects** in Afghanistan.



**India and Myanmar:** India's second longest border of over 1609.34 kilometres - both land and maritime together - is shared with Myanmar. Four Northeastern States - Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram too share their borders with Myanmar. Myanmar is India's gateway to South East Asia and ASEAN, with whom India is aiming for greater economic collaboration through India's '**Act East Policy**'<sup>xv</sup>. In 2014, Hon'ble Prime Minister took the opportunity to unveil this 'Act East' Policy at the ASEAN summit in Myanmar's

capital Naypyidaw. This policy has been playing an important role to strengthen improved relations with Myanmar. The **India-Myanmar Joint Consultative Commission** meeting, held in July 2015, established an umbrella mechanism to facilitate interaction and strengthen the entire expanse of their relationships.

With the advent of political and economic transformation in Myanmar, India has been gauging the implication of its foreign policy on Myanmar<sup>xvi</sup>. To enter into a bilateral agreement, India and Myanmar agreed to sign their first trade agreement in 1970. With time, Myanmar's bilateral engagement with India in trade gained momentum. India-Myanmar trade has more than doubled in the last seven years and has crossed **\$2 billion** in 2013-14. However, much remains to be done, as India is Myanmar's distant 11th trade partner. Myanmar exports **25 percent** and imports **15 percent** of its total trade through the border from India. Border trade with India comprises of only **1 percent** of Myanmar's total border trade. India is 12th on the list of investors in Myanmar with a cumulative investment of **\$ 1.89 billion** from 1989 to 2012. Foreign direct investment in Myanmar hit **\$6 billion** in the first 9 months of the current fiscal year 2014-15. Further, Govt. of India has offered **INR 1,600 crore** contract for consulting 109 km road connecting Paletwa river terminal to Zorinpui in Mizoram border as a part of the \$484 million **Kaladan Multi-Modal Transport (KMTT)** projects in Myanmar, which offer connectivity to Mizoram. KMTT was the first major undertaken by the Indian government in Myanmar.

#### **4. Opinions from Experts and Media**

When commenting on India's foreign policy with its neighbours, a major emphasis is on the new approach taken by Narendra Modi, and involves commentary on his various visits to neighbouring states,

and the implications of the same. Further, critiques are largely centered on India's relations with neighbours China and Pakistan, and the alliances formed around existing and emerging conflicts with these nations. The following section highlights a few articles<sup>xvii</sup>, to explore the thoughts and views of prominent media houses and foreign policy analysts.

**First Post, April 2017: S.L. Narasimhan, Former Commandant and Member, National Security Advisory Board**

China's relations with neighbouring nations have had a significant impact on India's foreign policy in the region. Till recently, India has considered itself a regional leader, in terms of the resource support and diplomatic backing that it has provided to its neighbours. However, this support has decreased over time due to India's own financial requirements, the lack of implementation by Indian leaders, as well as a growing suspicion of India's ultimate agenda in the minds of smaller nations. In this context, China has now started forming strong ties with South Asian countries, putting India, as well as its neighbours, in an unfamiliar situation.

China has sent a consignment of weapons and equipment to Afghanistan in July 2016. Its relations with Nepal have seen tremendous growth, with Chinese investments in Nepal's roads, ports and airports. China has also investing heavily in connectivity in Sri Lanka, as well as provided weapons at a discounted rate during the Sri Lanka's war against the LTTE. For the first time in history, in 2014, Chinese investments in Nepal were more than that of India. China has become Myanmar's largest trading partner, and also assists the nation in handling internal conflicts. Bangladesh also has the most trade with China, with establishments of economic and industrial zones worth approximately **\$25 billion**, and **80 percent** of Bangladesh's armed forces equipment coming from China.

This situation has created an instability with regards to India's position in the region. The small nations of the region are also unsure as to how to react to this changing situation. In order to retaliate, and preserve its relations with its neighbours, the Indian government has sought to increase its support and investments in these countries. In the meantime, China continues to stand in the way of India's foreign policy goals, such as securing permanent membership in the United Nations. India will have to develop a strategic policy with regards China, in order to overcome this frosty relationship, without which global progress will be difficult for the nation.

**The Indian Express, August 2017: C. Raja Mohan, Director of Carnegie India;  
Leading foreign policy analyst; Leading South-Asia security expert**

Recently, Bhutan and China have been in conflict over the **disputed territory of Doklam**. However, the conflict has a larger impact on Indian security, with New Delhi expressing concern that if China is allowed to build a road in the area, it will allow Chinese troops access to India's northeastern states.

Mr. Mohan writes extensively on India's relations with its neighbouring countries. He has recently analyzed India's relations with China in the context of the Doklam conflict. Unlike other commentators, he believes that **India is underestimating China's rise**, and is insufficiently prepared for the change in relations that its assertive foreign policy will bring about.

This is largely due to the present economic and military power of China, as well as the fact that China may now start questioning India's primacy in the sub-continental region. At the crux of the argument, if India decides to pushback on China's territorial claims, it may **face a backlash**. Such a situation would require a strong regional centrality and the assistance of its neighbouring allies, a situation that India must be prepared for if it commits to its present stance on the Doklam issue, and other such conflicts.

**Livemint, May 2017: Harsh V. Pant, a Fellow at the Observer Research  
Foundation**

A starkly different view of the risk-taking nature of the new government's foreign policies is presented. In his recent article, he examines how the new and dynamic nature of India's policies may work to its advantage.

He compares the new approach to the previous one of tacit and stealthy responses to the developments in global politics. Mr. Modi has adopted a system of **confronting foreign policy in a public and direct manner**. It is due to this change that India is now asserting itself with China, and doing away with its previous attitude of non-alignment. The present policy is **now based purely on reciprocity**, and India is **using global powers like USA, Australia and Japan** to stabilize its position in the East. Due to this shift in stance, **India is no longer the predictable global player** that it used to be. According to Pant, this could work in its favour and be used as a **strategic tool** to achieve its regional and international objectives. It is India that is now testing the boundaries and capabilities of its neighbours, a phenomenon faced by India throughout its history.

Thus, though some criticize India's new robust and self-assured approach to diplomacy, many believe that it will help the country gain a greater foothold and progress much faster. The challenges that an aggressive foreign policy poses should be able to be overcome as long as India manages its military and finances, and brings in a strong defense policy.

### Outlook, July 2017: Ashok Swain – Professor, Peace and Conflict Studies

In an analysis of the approach of the new government, termed the 'Modi Doctrine', the article discusses the tangible achievements made in the past 38 months. It concludes that India's diplomatic relations with its neighbours have deteriorated since the Modi government has come into power. Its relationship with Pakistan is referred to as being at its lowest point, and the government's 'hard stance' compared to that of the previous regime seems to have 'fallen flat' with Kashmir drifting further away from Indian control.

Meanwhile, India's border disputes with China have led to the first real threat of full-scale war in the recent past. This conflict has led to China not only threatening military action, but also hinting support to Pakistan with regards the Kashmir issue. The article terms Mr. Modi's foreign policy as one that has turned China into an 'open adversary', and points out the glaring problems with such an approach. Such a policy puts India at risk of becoming isolated, not only in South Asia, but also the world.

In such a situation, recommendations point towards the present government taking a more diplomatic and less aggressive stance towards continuing foreign policy issues, in order to ensure space to maneuver and be able to choose next steps carefully.

### The New York Times, January 2016: 'India and Pakistan Try Again'

Regarding its foreign policy towards Pakistan, the current government has taken a much stronger stance on security issues than its predecessor. According to the New York Times, a leading international media house, this approach has resulted in a tumultuous relationship, with domestic pressures marring a potential alliance between the two nations.

The Indian Prime Minister visited Pakistan in a historic meeting in December 2015. However, post this, high-level talks with Pakistani president Mr. Sharif were cancelled, and diplomatic relations fell sour. While Modi has recognized and publicised that a positive relationship with Pakistan is essential in order for India to achieve its domestic goals, and become an economic superpower. However, actions and statements of members of the Indian bureaucracy and political parties against Pakistan have made this task considerably harder.

The article states that continued conflict with Pakistan would have an adverse effect on India's progress and international trade. To overcome this, Mr. Modi must create a personal dialogue with Pakistani leaders, in order to bridge the trust deficit and ensure peace between nations.

From the above analyses, it is clear that there is a common thread of apprehension regarding the forceful stance taken by India in its new foreign policy regime. So far, the intensified conflicts between India and both Pakistan and China have both journalists and analysts believing that India is currently ill prepared for the impacts that its existing policy would have, on both an economic and a military front. It is believed that China's growing alliances and investments in neighbouring nations of Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Myanmar have put India on edge, and increased its desire to establish itself as a regional power. However, opinions are still divided, with several critics lauding the new approach, claiming that an objective and goal-oriented foreign policy has the potential to achieve improved relations and accelerated growth.

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### **Link references for further reading:**

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## **India's Engagement with China: An Overview**

On April 1, 2020, China and India usher in the important moment of the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations. Looking around the world, China and India, as the only two emerging countries with a population of more than 1 billion, shoulder the historical mission of national rejuvenation, play a key role in the process of the collective rise of developing countries, and inject strong momentum into the profound changes unseen in a century. At this moment, it is particularly important to revisit the original aspiration of establishing diplomatic relations 70 years ago and carry forward the spirit of good neighborliness and friendship, unity and cooperation.

Looking back at the past 70 years, China-India relations have moved ahead despite wind and rain and gone through an extraordinary development path. In the 1950s, the leaders of the older generation of the two countries made the historical decision to establish diplomatic relations between China and India, and jointly advocated the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. "Hindi Chini Bhai Bhai" (Indians and Chinese are brothers) resounded throughout our two countries. From the 1980s, the two sides agreed to solve the boundary question through peaceful and friendly consultation, established strategic and cooperative partnership for peace and prosperity, and achieved all-round development of bilateral relations. After 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi initiated the "hometown diplomacy", held two informal summits in Wuhan and Chennai respectively, carried out strategic communication on overarching, long-term and strategic issues of global and regional importance, and agreed to strengthen the closer partnership for development between the two countries.

Today's achievements of China-India relations embodied the great efforts of several generations of our two peoples. We can draw some inspirations and experiences from the past. First, adhere to the strategic guidance of the leaders. Second, grasp the general trend of friendly cooperation. Third, expand the momentum of mutually beneficial cooperation.

Fourth, enhance the coordination on international and regional affairs. Fifth, properly manage differences.

At present, China-India relations stand at a new starting point and usher in new opportunities. We should draw wisdom from our thousands of years of civilizations and explore a way for neighboring and emerging major countries to get along with each other in accordance with "enhancing mutual trust, focusing on cooperation, managing differences and seeking common development". We also need to master the four keys of "leading, transmitting, shaping and integrating". "Leading" means to reach consensus and guide the direction of the development of bilateral relations under the guidance of our two leaders. "Transmitting" means to transmit the leaders' consensus to all levels and translate it into tangible cooperation and outcomes. "Shaping" means to go beyond the mode of managing differences, shape bilateral relations actively and accumulate positive momentum. "Integrating" means to strengthen exchanges and cooperation, promote convergence of interests and achieve common development.

Indian President Ram Nath Kovind and Prime Minister Narendra Modi have both said that the whole world is a family, which strike a chord with Chinese philosophy concept of "universal peace" and "universal love". The ancient oriental wisdom is still full of vitality today. I believe that China and India have enough foresight and ability to join hands to realize "Dragon-Elephant Tango", create brilliant future in the next 70 years and write together a new chapter in building a community with a shared future for mankind!

On April 1, 1950, China and India established diplomatic relations. India was the first non-socialist country to establish relations with the People's Republic of China. "Hindi Chini Bhai Bhai" has become a catchphrase from that time and a much-told story in the history of bilateral exchanges.



In 1954, Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai visited India. China and India signed the Joint Statement and jointly advocated the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence . In the same year, Indian Prime Minister Nehru visited China. He was the first head of government of a non-socialist country who visited China since the founding of the People's Republic of China.

In 1955, Premier Zhou Enlai and Prime Minister Nehru attended the Asian-African Conference in which 29 countries participated in Bandung, Indonesia and jointly advocated the Bandung Spirit of solidarity, friendship and cooperation.

In 1962, the border conflict led to a serious setback in bilateral relations.

In 1976, China and India restored ambassadorial relations and bilateral ties improved gradually.

In 1988, Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi visited China, initiating the process of normalization of bilateral relations. The two sides agreed to "look forward" and develop bilateral relations actively in other fields while seeking a mutually acceptable solution to boundary question. In 1991, Premier Li Peng visited India. The Prime Minister level mutual visits were restored after decades of suspension. In 1992, Indian President R. Venkataraman visited China. He was the first President who visited China since the independence of the Republic of India. In 1993, Indian Prime Minister Narasimha Rao visited China. Agreement between the Government of China and the Government of India on the Maintenance of Peace and Tranquility along the Line of Actual Control in the India-China Border Areas was signed. In 1996, President Jiang Zemin visited India. He was the first head of state from China who visited India since the establishment of bilateral ties. Both sides agreed to build a constructive partnership of cooperation oriented towards the 21st century. Agreement between the Government of China and the Government of India on Confidence Building Measures in the Military Field along the Line of Actual Control in the India-China Border Areas was signed.

In 2000, Indian President K R Narayanan visited China on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between China and India. In 2002, Premier Zhu Rongji visited India. Both sides agreed to enhance mutual understanding and trust and promote exchanges and cooperation in various fields.

In 2003, Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee visited China. The two sides signed The Declaration on the Principles and Comprehensive Cooperation in China-India Relations, and agreed to establish the special representatives meeting mechanism on India-China boundary question. In 2005, Premier Wen Jiabao visited India. China and India signed the Joint Statement and declared the establishment of the strategic and cooperative partnership for peace and prosperity. The two sides welcomed signing of the Agreement on the Political Parameters and Guiding Principles for the Settlement of the India-China Boundary Question.

In 2006, President Hu Jintao visited India. The two sides signed a Joint Declaration to formulate the ten-pronged strategy for deepening the strategic and cooperative partnership. In 2008, Indian Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh visited China. The two governments agreed upon "A Shared Vision for the 21st Century". In 2010, Indian President Patil visited China in May, which coincided with the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between China and India. In December, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao visited India and the two sides issued a Joint Communiqué.

In 2011 was the "China-India Exchange Year". Both sides held a series of people-to-people and cultural exchange activities, and signed a memorandum on joint compilation for the "Encyclopedia of India-China Cultural Contacts". A 500-member Indian youth delegation visited China. In 2012 was the "Year of China-India Friendship and Cooperation". President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao met with Indian Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh respectively on the sidelines of the 4th BRICS Summit and the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. A 500-member Chinese

youth delegation visited India. In 2013, President Xi Jinping met with Indian Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh on the sidelines of the 5th BRICS Summit in Durban, South Africa in March. Premier Li Keqiang visited India in May and the two sides released a Joint Statement. Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh visited China in October.

In 2014 is the "China-India Friendly Exchange Year". In September, President Xi Jinping paid a state visit to India and visited Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's home state of Gujarat. The two sides issued Joint Statement on Building a Closer Developmental Partnership. In the same year, President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Keqiang met with Prime Minister Modi respectively on the sidelines of the 6th BRICS Summit and the Leaders' Meetings on East Asia Cooperation in Myanmar. In 2015, Indian Prime Minister Modi visited China and went to President Xi Jinping's hometown Xi'an. In the same year, President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Keqiang met with Prime Minister Modi respectively on the sidelines of the 7th BRICS Summit in Ufa and the Leaders' Meetings on East Asia Cooperation in Malaysia. China decided to open the Nathu La Pass to Indian official pilgrims to Xizang. India celebrated the India Tourism Year in China.

In 2016, Indian President Mukherjee visited China. Prime Minister Modi visited China to attend the G20 Summit in Hangzhou and met with President Xi Jinping on the sidelines. President Xi Jinping visited India to participate in the 8th BRICS Summit in Goa and met with Prime Minister Modi on the sidelines. China celebrated China Tourism Year in India. In 2017, President Xi Jinping met with Prime Minister Modi on the sidelines of the SCO Summit in Astana. Prime Minister Modi visited China to attend the 9th BRICS Summit in Xiamen and met with President Xi Jinping on the sidelines. In 2018, President Xi Jinping held an informal meeting with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Wuhan. They had in-depth discussions and reached broad consensus on the overarching, long-term and strategic issues of global and bilateral importance and their respective visions for national development as well as domestic and foreign policies. The informal meeting set up a new model of exchanges between two leaders and became a milestone in the history of

bilateral relations. In the same year, Prime Minister Modi visited China to attend the SCO Summit in Qingdao and met with President Xi Jinping on the sidelines. The two leaders met again on the sidelines of the 10th BRICS Summit and the G20 Summit in Buenos Aires later in the year.

In 2019, President Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Modi held the second informal meeting in Chennai, reaffirmed the Wuhan consensus and agreed to build a closer partnership for development, enhance the in-depth strategic communication, promote mutually beneficial cooperation in various fields, and advance exchanges and mutual learning between the two civilizations. In the same year, President Xi Jinping met with Prime Minister Modi on the sidelines of the SCO Summit in Bishkek and the 11th BRICS Summit.

The year 2020 marks the year of the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and India. It is also China-India Year of Cultural and People-to-People Exchanges. The two sides agreed to hold 70 celebratory activities to demonstrate the historic connection between the two civilizations as well as their growing bilateral relationship over the years, and further deepen people-to-people exchanges between the two countries at all levels, including between their respective legislatures, businesses, academics, cultural and youth organizations as well as the defense forces.

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## India Russia: Bilateral Relations over the Decades

### **Key Points-**

- India-Russia diplomatic relations are now 70-years-old.
- A key pillar of India's foreign policy has been the cultivation of relations with Russia.
- The substantive relationship was cemented when the two countries signed the ***Declaration on the India-Russia Strategic Partnership*** in October 2000.
- In December 2010, the Strategic Partnership was elevated to the level of a ***Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership***.
- India-Russia ties in the post-Soviet era have acquired a qualitatively new character with enhanced levels of cooperation in almost all areas of the bilateral relationship including political, security, trade and economy, defense, science and technology, and culture.

### **1. India and the Soviet Union (USSR)**

Trust and mutual interests are at the base of India's relationship with the former Soviet Union/Russian federation. In the years after its independence, India gained industrially from the USSR which provided a base for its future growth. Starting in the 1950s, India received from the Soviet Union generous assistance for its industrialization. Its development in the areas of defense, space and atomic energy had Soviet capital and knowhow. India was short of capital, foreign exchange and technology; Soviet Union filled the gaps in India's development story letting India pay for projects in rupees through a special arrangement.

India got reliable, affordable and good quality military supplies and crucial products like oil and oil products, fertilizers, metals etc. India's emerging Public Sector (PSUs) was scripted with Soviet help. India's relationship with USSR helped India in many ways to become more self-reliant. During the Cold War and non-alignment decades, India was dependent on the USSR on strategic issues such as the Jammu and Kashmir problem. Support of Soviet Union has been behind India's space, technological and nuclear advancement. The Indo-Soviet Friendship Treaty of 1971 (in the wake of 1971 Indo-Pak

war where Russia supported India while the US and China supported Pakistan) supplied the framework to deepen the cooperation. Military-technical cooperation has indeed been at the centre of this bilateral relationship.

## **2. The 1990s: India and Post-Soviet Russia**

In the 1990s, in the wake of USSR's disintegration and rising Atlanticism in Russian foreign policy orientation, Russia looked up to the West and cut its third world engagements. It started on a difficult transition to a market economy to become a 'normal', 'capitalist' nation like the Western countries. The decline of Soviet military-industrial complex, its 'shock therapy' for transition to capitalism forced by the geopolitical developments led to change in content of bilateral relations and the two countries drifted apart for some time. However, the two countries have remained friends during the turbulent decade of 90s and later.

## **3. Post-Soviet India-Russia Relations after Putin: Contours and Interests**

In the Soviet era, political, military and economic policies of the USSR were seen through the overriding Marxist-Leninist framework. But after the de-ideologization of the Russian foreign and security policy framework post 1991, it was Russia's economic interests that superseded ideology which altered the board for countries like India. The bilateral relations had to undergo some pragmatic renewal (also given the liberalization of India in 1991), based on realistic possibilities and the legitimate interests of both sides with an emphasis on economics. Russia, a vast nation of eleven time zones, made a remarkable comeback under President Putin after a turbulent decade of economic and political instability in the wake of the Soviet Union disintegration. Russia, under Putin, has been seeking the lost 'great power status' asserting itself on the regional and global stage. The nationalist surge was particularly emboldened by the rising oil revenues which helped Russia's economic fortunes. Even though a Cold War era hostility has been ruled out,

Russia has been trying to stand up to the West and NATO expansion in its 'near abroad' (independent republics which were once part of Soviet Union).

There has been a marked improvement in Indo-Russian relations that had suffered setback after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Bilateral high-level visits have been institutionalized and mutual visits by heads of state are a norm than an exception. India (with Pakistan) became a full member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and it also engages with Russia in the BRICS forum. Indian military continues to depend on Russian hardware although the dependence is reinventing itself to one of partnership and joint production than the usual supplier-client relation. Countries like the US aspire to be India's defense supplier as India is one of the world's most lucrative arms market. Of late, Russia has turned to Pakistan for arms sales but nothing serious has materialized yet; Pakistan was also accommodated as a full member of the SCO.

The growing strategic dimensions of India-Russia bilateral relationship is grounded in the foundations of converging security interests at the global and regional levels. India supports Russia's call for multi-polarity, multilateralism and reforms in the UN Security Council. Russia supports India's candidature for a seat in the Security Council (UNSC) as India seeks a greater role for itself in the international system.

#### **4. Russia's Emphasis on a Multipolar world**

Both Russia and India support the concept of a multi-polar world, an idea shared by China and many others. This vision supports the co-existence of multiple powers and possibilities in the international system; a collective security that is inclusive; it supports greater regionalism to foster common regional interest; it supports negotiated settlements and the possibility of independent foreign policy; and also that international decisions be made through bodies like the UN which should be strengthened, democratised and empowered. It suits a rising Russia which sulks its loss of 'great power

status' and a rising India which aspires for a permanent seat at the UNSC and enhanced status in the global arena.

*It is not a coincidence that all Cold war institutions that Russia inherited as the successor state to the Soviet Union, such as the COMECON and the Warsaw Pact, have collapsed. But the US-led Cold War regime remains intact. NATO not only remains but has been strengthened and touches the Russian borders. The US walked out of the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty. The US constantly critiques Russia on its democracy. The US challenges Russian influence in Central Asian republics, its policy on Iran, and most of all, its aspirations with China for a multi-polar world. Anti-Americanism in Russian foreign policy is not a dogma, it is often seen in practice. India has to balance itself between Russia and the US, both of who look up to it for cooperation and engagement.*

Russian and Indian interests converge with respect to global foreign policy landscape where both seek a rise in their profile. Russia's foreign relations are more unstable now than ever (given its support for Syria, a suspected nerve agent attack in the UK, its meddling in the US elections, *continuing US sanctions for annexation of Crimea in 2014*) and it needs a stable partner like India.

## **5. Russia's Domestic Problems, which attract International Criticism**

The post-Soviet surge in the Russian economy was also linked to a power struggle within – redistribution of wealth (centralisation and reprivatisation), especially in the energy sector and even in military industrial complex. Corruption is rife with little transparency in the decision-making system in Russia. Its judicial system is weak and requires reforms. There has been considerable opposition against the leadership for adopting autocratic tendencies, backsliding on democracy, curbing free press, encouraging nationalism and xenophobia while using energy as a powerful weapon of foreign policy. In May 2018, *Putin was sworn in as Russia's president for a fourth term, extending his almost two-decade rule by another six years at a time of high tension with the West.*



## **6. Recent Security Concerns in Russia-India Bilateral Relationship**

There are emerging concerns in India-Russia bilateral relations. The most important of which is Pakistan. Russia, of late, is courting Pakistan as India inches closer to the West. For example, Pakistan was also admitted as a full member of the SCO alongwith India in 2017. Most recently (February, 2018), a Balochistan rebel leader gave an interview in Moscow blaming India for the trouble in the region. Russia has expressed its willingness to help Pakistan augment its 'anti-terror capabilities', a modest phrase for arms sales. India has repeatedly asked Russia not to sell arms to Pakistan. India is also part of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) with US, Japan and Australia seeking a viable balance of power in the Indo-Pacific region which raises some eyebrows in Russia. Russia is also said to be cozying up to China. It has also suggested India to join China's Belt and Road Initiative which India maintains transgresses its sovereignty. Russia has also showed willingness in joining Pakistan and China in giving legitimacy to Afghan Taliban.

India is the biggest market for arms and Russia has been the traditional supplier. Now India is looking up to the West, particularly to the US and Israel, and because of this Russia is finding new allies and markets as it feels slightly alienated. Russia still has substantial military-technical engagements with India which will nevertheless continue. Russia as such, appears to be trying to balance its South Asia relations rather than abandon its traditional strategic partner India even as it cultivates new partners and engagements.

**Enduring Partnership** The fact is that Russia has been a long standing, significant partner of India. The bilateral relationship with Russia forms a cornerstone of India's foreign policy and it is likely to continue so despite occasional concerns. The two countries have a political understanding underpinned by a strong economic and strategic relationship which continues to evolve and endure.

On the trade front, the two countries need to up the ante. India has to concentrate on export of its strength areas (sectors such as IT/ITeS, pharmaceuticals and healthcare) while gaining from Russia's expertise in nuclear technology, defence, energy and hydrocarbons so that efforts like Make in India, Digital India and Smart Cities get aligned with India-Russia bilateral relationship. There are certain concerns that India is looking up to the West and trying to replace Pakistan as US pivot in the South Asian region as it aspires for Western defence equipment (including aircrafts) and Russia is warming up to Pakistan to counter the US in Afghanistan and Central Asia. Despite the concerns, if the two countries keep playing the balancing game the bilateral relations will endure.

Most recently, PM Modi and President Putin had a fruitful informal meeting in Sochi in late May 2018 where the two discussed bilateral and regional issues including BRICS and the International North-South Transport Corridor. These talks have been labelled 'extremely productive'.

## **7. India-Russia Relationship: A Timeline**

### *Pre-Independence Period*

The deep roots of this relationship go back to the early 20th century when India was under British rule and the Czars ruled over Russia. The Russian Revolution of 1905 inspired Indian freedom fighters. Gandhi developed a close connection with Russia and carried on lengthy correspondence with Leo Tolstoy.

Russia's communist leader V.I. Lenin followed with interest and sympathy the rising Indian freedom struggle.

*Nehru visited the Soviet Union in 1927*, on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution, and he came back deeply impressed with the Soviet experiment. He was convinced that a poor developing country like India needed to follow not the capitalist path but a socialistic one.

## ***India-Russia Relations Since 1947: Important Landmarks***

In 1947, the Stalin led Soviet Union became one of the first countries to recognize India's independence.

Even before India became independent, an official announcement was made on 13 April 1947 on the establishment of diplomatic relations between India and the Soviet Union.

The Soviet Union also showed great interest in Pakistan which instead showed more interest in an alliance with the West instead of Soviet Union. Soviets became pro-India since then, evidenced by their coming to more neutral positions on Kashmir and Goa.

After Stalin's death in 1953, *Nikita Khrushchev showed greater interest in aiding countries with a mixed economy*. India also got substantial assistance from USSR during the Khrushchev period.

*Soviet Union used its veto power* for the first time to block anti-India initiatives on Jammu & Kashmir (first in February 1957 and then again in June 1962) and Goa (in December 1961).

IIT Bombay was established in 1958 with assistance from UNESCO and the Soviet Union and was stocked with Soviet equipment.

The Soviets declared their neutrality during the 1962 Sino-Indian War and helped broker a peace agreement during the 1965 India-Pakistani border war.

In 1962, the USSR agreed to transfer the then-cutting edge technology to co-produce the MiG-21 jet fighter in India (something which was denied to China earlier).

The military-technical assistance the USSR was providing to India came with the advantage of *payment in nonconvertible rupees* through a rupee-rouble credit fund set up by the Soviets, thereby saving scarce foreign currency.

*Indian debts to the USSR could be paid back in goods* as per the agreement between the two nations. So, traditional export commodities like *Indian tea, leather, textile goods*, and agricultural products dotted many a Soviet household (apart from the Raj Kapur films popular in the USSR).

In the initial decades, Five-year plans in India coincided with or were preceded by a new loan by USSR.

India got assistance in the sector of industrial technology, with the Soviets building dozens of factories throughout India for producing heavy machinery, for manufacturing of steel some of which was also exported to the USSR, for generating power, and for extracting and refining oil.

USSR also played a major role in building India's energy sector by building hydropower stations, developing India's coal industry and finding oil in Indian soil. USSR also helped in setting up India's energy major ONGC.

Estimates say that between 1955 and 1970 Indian imports from the Soviet Union increased more than 100 times, and exports to the Soviet Union more than 50 times. Also, 70,000 skilled workers were trained at joint Indo-Soviet centres in India.

During the *1971 Indo-Pak war*, the Soviet Union cast three vetoes in the UN Security Council to block attempts to stop India from its ongoing military campaign.

Soviet diplomatic backing and material support and the confidence provided by the 1971 Indo-Soviet Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation enabled India to successfully undertake the operations in 1971 that led to the *creation of Bangladesh*.

The 1971 treaty contained a pledge of military assistance; it was a significant departure from India's stance of nonalignment. ISRO built *India's first satellite, Aryabhata*, which was launched by the Soviet Union on 19 April 1975. Rakesh Sharma became the first Indian in space in 1984, when he flew aboard the Soviet spacecraft Soyuz T-11.

*In 1991, about 70% of Indian army's armaments, 80% of its air force systems, and 85% of its naval platforms were of Soviet origin.* In 1991, two watershed moments happened — *economic liberalisation was introduced in India, and the Soviet Union was dissolved.*

Soviet disintegration was met with shock and disbelief in Indian foreign policy circles. In the early 1990s, discussions were about managing India's rupee-rouble debt that had accumulated over the years of the Soviet Union's favourable trade policy.

When Vladimir Putin became Russia's President in 2000, the bilateral ties were put on a solid foundation again after about a decade of post-Soviet confusion and stagnation.

Russia-India defence relationship has begun to move beyond the buyer-seller model to a more cooperative relationship with *joint research, design, and production*.

The manufacture and supply of tanks and missiles (T-90 and BrahMos), ships and submarines (the Talwar-class stealth frigates), the aircraft-carrier Vikramaditya and the nuclear submarine (Arihant), jetfighter and early airborne warning aircraft (Sukhoi 30MKI and IL-76) are all examples of such cooperation.

India and Russia historically enjoyed *ties in the cultural sphere*: long-term scholarly and student exchanges, culture festivals, and art exhibits, observance of Year of Russia in India and vice versa. Indo-Russian energy cooperation has acquired new dimensions particularly in the hydrocarbon and nuclear sector. In August 2017, Russia's largest oil producer, Rosneft acquired Essar Oil refinery and port (Vadinar, Gujarat) in a \$12.9-billion deal.

India-Russia Civil Nuclear Cooperation is an important dimension in the strategic partnership and includes transfer of nuclear power reactors (over twenty reactors to be built in twenty years), fuel supply agreement, fuel supply assurance, agreement to transfer reprocessing technology and enriched technology. This developing Eurasian grid of peaceful Nuclear production and consumption could also be extended to other countries in future deepening the bilateral cooperation. India's investments in Russia's oil and gas industry are presently around \$8 billion. It is likely to reach \$15 billion by 2020, with India set to acquire an almost 50 per cent stake in the Rosneft Siberian oil project.

In October, 2016 (Goa), the two adopted a Joint Statement, "*Partnership for Global Peace and Stability*" which resulted in 19 cooperation agreements in areas including defence, space, trade and investment, hydrocarbons and railways. In 2016, India announced a \$5.5

billion deal with Russia to purchase the S-400 *Triumf air defence system*. Russia could deliver it in 2018.

The weakest link in Indo-Russian cooperation remains the *low volume of trade*. The goal is of boosting bilateral trade to US\$30 billion by 2025.

On 21 May 2018, PM Modi had extremely productive discussions with President Putin in Sochi. The complete range of India-Russia relations was reviewed as well as other global subjects.

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## India in South Asia

### **About South Asian Countries:**

South Asia covers only about **3.5% of the world's land surface area** but hosts a **fourth (25%) of its population**, making it a region of significant importance for international development.

In spite of the **geographic proximity countries** in this region enjoy and their **common socio-cultural bonds**, this is one of the **world's least integrated regions**.

**Intra-regional trade** is a **meagre 5%** of the total trade these countries do globally, while **intra-regional investment is less than 1%** of the region's overall global investment.

South Asia's **average GDP per capita** is **only about 9.64%** of the global average. Accounting for **more than 30% of the world's poor**, the region faces myriad economic and environmental challenges.

### **Sustainable Developmental Goals (SDG's):**

SDGs-a follow-up on Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which expired at the end of 2015-are a **set of 17 goals and 169 targets** covering a broad range of sustainable development issues. These goals have to be achieved **by all UN member states by 2030**.

One of the primary objectives of SDGs is **to end poverty and hunger** from the world.

SDGs also **aim to promote well-being** of all the people, sustainable industrialisation, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, and employment and decent work for all.

Other goals include: reducing inequality; making cities inclusive, safe and resilient; ensuring sustainable consumption and production patterns; and taking urgent actions to combat climate change and its impacts.

In short, **SDGs aim to bridge** all forms of inequality, raise access to basic public services, ensure access to justice and **promote sustainable economic development**.

### **On SDG's, South Asia Performs badly:**

Both **performance and progress** towards these goals appears to have little to do with levels of per capita income or degree of development.

For Instance, in India, which is not only the **largest and most diversified economy** in the region but also prides itself on rapid income growth rates and hopes to emerge as a **potential leader of the world economy**, performs very poorly even in relation to other South Asian countries.

Bhutan and Nepal both landlocked countries at lower levels of development show better ranks and significantly higher scores.

### **Why is South Asia performing so badly on the SDGs?**

The bigger concern is that there is no other goal that South Asian countries are even on track to meet (other than **Sri Lanka for Goals 6 and 8**).

Even for the goals for which the current performance is moderate and shows some improvement, the current rate of progress would be inadequate to meet the goal.

And most countries show very high incidence of **stagnant or no progress for many goals**, and absolute deterioration which implies moving away from the target for others.

Even with these somewhat optimistic assessments for some indicators, for the region as a whole, **14 of the 17 SDGs** will be missed at the current rate of progress, around **three-quarters of the targets will not be met**, and for at least 12 of the targets, the current direction of change is negative.

### **Reducing Inequalities is key to achieve all other SDG's:**

What explains this overall poor performance, as well as the slightly better performance of some countries within this **aggregate picture of South Asia**?

1. It could be that at least some of the answer lies in the goal for which all countries show "insufficient data" to allow for assessment: **that of reducing inequalities**.
2. The **absence of statistical indicators** cannot blind us to the severely constraining role played by **inequalities of income, power, access to services and citizen's entitlements**, which then play out in affecting the other goals in each country.
3. This in turn highlights the significance of **political processes** and the **orientation of governments**: those governments that have been more explicitly concerned with **reducing inequalities in practice** (rather than simply paying lip-service to such a goal) have been **more effective in ensuring better performance** to several other goals and targets.
4. Despite the relatively **low Gini coefficients of consumption inequality** in South Asian countries, the region is actually one of the **most unequal in the world**, because of a complex and intersectional system of **hierarchy and discrimination** in which caste, ethnic and gender distinctions all play roles.
5. Of these, **caste differences** (which interestingly exist across the region, and across different religions as well) may be the **most significant** in terms of how they **influence opportunities** for employment and income, affect access to housing, basic social services of health and education, and amenities like clean water and energy, as well as political voice.
6. In other words, **reduction of inequalities** is not just a separate goal; it is a crucial underlying factor that affects the ability of a country to move towards progress in **achieving sustainable development** in general.

### **Way Forward:**

A **regional strategic approach** to tackle common development challenges can bring enormous benefits to South Asia.



SDGs related to energy, biodiversity, infrastructure, climate resilience and capacity development are transnational, and here policy harmonisation can play a pivotal role in **reducing duplication and increasing efficiency.**

For instance, India has formulated some **pragmatic plans and initiatives** to improve **food and nutrition security** from which many of the neighbouring countries can benefit.

To address institutional and infrastructural deficits, South Asian countries **need deeper regional cooperation.**

On financing the SDGs in South Asia, countries can work towards increasing the **flow of intra-regional FDI**. The private sector too can play a vital role in resource mobilisation.

### **Conclusion:**

**The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)**, the platform for regional economic cooperation in this region, has **become moribund** and remains unsuccessful in promoting **regional economic cooperation.**

If the countries of South Asia, the fastest growing region of the world, can come to a common understanding on regional integration and cooperation in achieving the SDGs, it can unleash a **powerful synergistic force** that can finally make South Asia converge.

A **stable and effective balance of power** has to be achieved across our eastern shores in South and South-East Asia to meet challenges posed by all types of social, economic and political issues.

A convergence towards achieving a **common socio-economic agenda** gives hope that no one in South Asia will be left behind in the journey towards **eradicating poverty and enduring dignity to all.**

### **India's Strategic Interests in South Asia-**

India's foreign policy has assimilated this aspect that only in a peaceful environment there can be growth when the defence bill is reduced, only then the social and infrastructural bill will increase. For this to happen India has to make a south Asia oriented foreign policy. South Asia comprises of nations coming around India, and India has been an accepted leader among them as well as on the path to become a global super power. India has to be more sensitive to the needs and duties of its regional realm that is south Asia.

There are strategic sea-routes, mineral reserves and natural resources that the growing appetite of India needs. India has trade and economic interest in this region. India needs road links through Bangladesh for their 'look east policy' Bhutan and Nepal for Hydro electricity and minerals' Sri Lanka for developing fishing lines and above all Pakistan for terrorism control, in that case it is also true that all these nations of south Asia should 'ideally' rely on India as their regional security guarantee.

Countering growing dragon power of china makes it unavoidable for India to go for strategic consolidation in the south Asia. To maintain internal security and stability, India requires not only good relation with them but also secure their internal stability. To counter international terrorism also makes it compulsory for India to maintain strategic cooperation with all the nations of this region.

### **About SAARC-**

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### **India's Bilateral Issues With SAARC Countries: A Quick Look**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's invitation of SAARC leaders for his swearing ceremony and bilateral meetings with each of its leaders was unprecedented. The act not only highlighted the importance of SAARC for regional co-operation, but also portrayed India as the Big Brother in the group. Having said that, India is not devoid of bilateral issues with her neighbors. There are matters of conflict and mutual interest between neighbors, and it is essential to know the major areas in bilateral relations. Though the meetings on May 27, 2014 was more or less courtesy meetings after the swearing ceremony, we have certain takeaways from them. Let's have a quick look at the important areas discussed by our PM with the SAARC leaders.

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### **India – Afghanistan : Highlights**

- In his meeting with President Karzai of Afghanistan, PM thanked Afghanistan for the assistance provided by the Afghan National Security Forces in repelling the attack on our Consulate in Herat. He said that the attack only strengthened our resolve to work together with Afghanistan.
- He reiterated India's commitment to the development and reconstruction of Afghanistan and India's interest in seeing a prosperous, independent and sovereign

Afghanistan where the reconciliation process would be Afghan-led, Afghan-owned, and Afghan-controlled.

### **India – Bhutan : Highlights**

- In his meeting with Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay of Bhutan, PM conveyed his warm greetings and respects to His Majesty the King of Bhutan. He noted that India and Bhutan share a unique and special relationship with longstanding historical and cultural linkages.
- He assured PM Tobgay of India's unflinching support for Bhutan's socioeconomic development.
- The two Prime Ministers agreed to commence four new joint venture hydroelectric projects with a generating capacity of 2120 MW in Bhutan.

### **India – Maldives : Highlights**

- Prime Minister conveyed to President Abdulla Yameen of Maldives the high importance attached by India to its relations with the Maldives, and pledged to work towards further enhancing bilateral cooperation.
- Prime Minister noted that the two countries had a shared recognition that the security interests of both countries were interlinked, and agreed that each side would continue to be sensitive to the concerns of the other on the issue, and that their respective territories would not be allowed to be used by any quarter for any activity inimical to the other.
- It was agreed to take measures to further strengthen investment and trade cooperation as well as cooperation in projects that would strengthen regional and sub-regional transport and connectivity to mutual advantage.
- Prime Minister expressed government's support to cooperation in the petroleum and natural gas sector particularly in oil exploration as well as in the tourism and educational sectors.

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## Table of Contents

- [About SAARC](#)
  - [India – Afghanistan : Highlights](#)
  - [India – Bhutan : Highlights](#)
  - [India – Maldives : Highlights](#)
  - [India – Nepal : Highlights](#)
  - [India – Sri Lanka : Highlights](#)
  - [India – Pakistan : Highlights](#)
  - [India – Bangladesh : Highlights](#)
  - [India – Mauritius : Highlights \[Outside SAARC\]](#)
  - [Exercises left out for readers!](#)

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### **India – Nepal : Highlights**

- In his meeting with Prime Minister Sushil Koirala of Nepal, PM noted that Nepal was an old and deeply valued friend with whom India shared history, geography and ancient civilisational ties, and it was his earnest desire to visit Nepal this year.
- Prime Minister expressed his appreciation for the political progress achieved in Nepal and conveyed his sincere hope that the Constitution would be adopted in the one-year timeframe that Nepal had set for itself.
- He expressed his determination to further strengthen connectivity and economic inter-linkages between India and Nepal, including through projects for rail and road connectivity. PM stressed the importance of expediting implementation of these projects and particularly projects in the hydropower and transmission sectors.
- He thanked Nepal for the ongoing security cooperation between law enforcement agencies on both sides which both sides are resolved to strengthen even further.

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## Table of Contents

- [About SAARC](#)
  - [India – Afghanistan : Highlights](#)
  - [India – Bhutan : Highlights](#)
  - [India – Maldives : Highlights](#)
  - [India – Nepal : Highlights](#)
  - [India – Sri Lanka : Highlights](#)
  - [India – Pakistan : Highlights](#)
  - [India – Bangladesh : Highlights](#)
  - [India – Mauritius : Highlights \[Outside SAARC\]](#)
  - [Exercises left out for readers!](#)

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## **India – Sri Lanka: Highlights**

- In his meeting with President Mahinda Rajapaksa of Sri Lanka, PM noted that India valued its relations with Sri Lanka.
- He requested the government of Sri Lanka to expedite the process of national reconciliation in a manner that meets the aspirations of the Tamil community for a life of equality, justice, peace and dignity in a united Sri Lanka. Early and full implementation of the Thirteenth Amendment and going beyond would contribute to this process.
- They also discussed the fishermen's issue, India's development assistance programme, and economic and commercial cooperation.
- In particular, PM expressed interest in early launch of the 500 MW Sampur Coal Power project and greater connectivity between the two countries.
- Both leaders reiterated their desire to further strengthen bilateral relations.

## **India – Pakistan : Highlights**

- In the meeting with Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif of Pakistan, PM underlined our concerns relating to terrorism.
- It was conveyed that Pakistan must abide by its commitment to prevent its territory and territory under its control from being used for terrorism against India.
- We also expect that necessary steps will be taken in the Mumbai terror attack trial underway in Pakistan to ensure speedy progress of the case and the conviction of those responsible.
- The PMs agreed that the Foreign Secretaries will remain in touch and explore how to move forward.
- PM said that the two countries could move immediately towards full trade normalisation on the basis of the September 2012 roadmap.
- PM expressed his hope that India-Pakistan relations would progress in the economic, cultural and political fields in the same manner that India's relations with her other SAARC neighbours have progressed in recent years.
- He shared his vision of a SAARC region built on partnerships for development and mutual prosperity.

## **India – Bangladesh : Highlights**

- Prime Minister requested Speaker of Bangladesh Parliament Dr. Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury to convey his warm greetings and best wishes to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina of Bangladesh, and said that he looked forward to receiving her in India at an early date.
- He recalled our strong relations rooted in shared struggle, history, culture and language.
- He noted that we have shared stakes in each other's progress and prosperity and Bangladesh was India's largest trading partner in SAARC.



- He appreciated the cooperation extended by Bangladesh to work together with India in all areas of mutual interest including security, power, border management, rail and road transport.
- He expressed the commitment of Government of India in maintaining and building upon the momentum that has characterised India-Bangladesh relations in recent years.

### **India – Mauritius : Highlights [Outside SAARC]**

- Prime Minister has called the special and unique relationship between India and Mauritius in his meeting with Prime Minister Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam of Mauritius.
- He noted that the two countries are bound together by history, common ancestry and kinship of their people.
- Both leaders agreed to further strengthen the relationship, especially economic cooperation and interactions in the field of maritime security, renewable energy, and the blue-economy, including development of related infrastructure.
- They also agreed to work together with all other member countries in further strengthening the Indian Ocean Rim Association.

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