Responses:

(1) Madhukar SJB Rana,
Professor South Asian Institute of Management and Former Finance Minister (2005)
Former Executive Director, Centre For Economic Development and Administration, Tribhuvan University

(2) Dr. Daniel S. Markey
Senior research professor at Johns Hopkins University’s School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS). He is also the academic director for the SAIS Master of Arts in Global Policy Program and an adjunct senior fellow for India, Pakistan, and South Asia at the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR).

(3) Michael Kugelman
Senior Associate for South and Southeast Asia
Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars
One Woodrow Wilson Plaza, 1300 Pennsylvania Ave, NW
Washington, DC

(4) Nilanthi Samaranayake
Senior Associate for South and Southeast Asia
Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars
One Woodrow Wilson Plaza, 1300 Pennsylvania Ave, NW
Washington, DC

(5) N. Sathiyamoorthy
Director - Chennai Chapter, Observer Research Foundation
Journalist and Political Analyst

(6) Zafar Sobhan
Editor, Dhaka Tribune

(7) Rajeev Sharma
Strategic Affairs Analyst at New Delhi

(8) Shahmahmood Miakhel
Country Director, Afghanistan
United States Institute of Peace (USIP), Kabul

(9) Chris Ogden
Lecturer in International Relations (Asian Security)
School of International Relations, University of St Andrews, KY16 9AX, UK
Articles:

1. Dr. Manas Chakrabarty
   Professor of Political Science, University of North Bengal, &
   Sumita Saha
   Project Fellow (UGC), Department of Political Science
   University of North Bengal, Darjeeling, W.B

2. David Scott
   has been a lecturer at Brunel University from 1992-2015

3. Balaji Chandramohan
   Visiting Fellow with Future Directions International, a policy think tank based in Perth

4. Rajeev Ranjan Chaturvedy
   Research Associate
   Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS), National University of Singapore

5. Shabbir H. Kazmi
   Economic/geopolitical analyst, Pakistan

6. Dr Salvin Paul
   Faculty of Peace and Conflict Studies and Management in Sikkim University
   &
   Nitya Iyer
   Executive Officer with Learning Resource Centre, a collaborative Project of Govt. of India with UNDP, India in New Delhi

7. Dr. Arunodav Baiuai
   Associate Professor and Head, Department of Political Science, Agra College Agra

8. Amrita Jash
   Doctoral Candidate at the Centre for East Asian Studies (Chinese Division), School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

Foreign Policy (Generalia):

1. SATHEESAN KUMARASAMY
   Publisher & Editor-In-Chief of the journal, Voice of Voiceless
   Founder-Chairman & CEO of SARCO (South Asia Research and Charitable Organization)
   Member of the Law Society of Upper Canada

2. Ms. Saloni Salil
   Geopolitics and Security Analyst.
   Researcher with South Asia Desk at Wikistrat, US and
is also a designated Visiting Fellow in the Indian Ocean Research Program at Future Directions International, Australia

3. Shahnawaz Ahmad Mantoo  
PhD Student  
Department of Political Science  
University of Kashmir, Srinagar, 190006, Jammu and Kashmir, India

4. Arjun Chawla  
Studies at Ramjas College, Delhi University

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Responses: (pp. 4-38)

(1) Madhukar SJB Rana,

Professor South Asian Institute of Management and Former Finance Minister (2005)

Former Executive Director, Centre For Economic Development and Administration, Tribhubhan University

‘I believe we need think out of the box where Modi’s vision for SAARC must be complemented by Indian Business Conglomerates for India to be the natural leader of SAARC as a bloc.’

Response

Question 1: Neighbourhood First Policy

For any nation that aspires to be a major regional power in global affairs it must, first and foremost, win the confidence and trust of its neighbours.

In India's case, this is particularly vital since it aspires to gain entry into the UN Security Council and seek to act as a balancing force in the emerging new multi polar geo politics.

I feel that PM Modi’s ‘neighbourhood first policy’ is neither ‘bold’ nor ‘old wine in a new bottle’ since it, yet, lacks strategic clarity. What was bold was the Gujral Doctrine of 1996 which, in 1997, ushered in the concept of sub regional cooperation in the form of the South Asian Growth Quadrangle (SAGQ) later adopted up by the ADB as its SASEC programme for South Asian Sub regional economic cooperation. Modi’s policy is different from the past to the extent of the formal recognition of sub regional integration as a legitimate SAARC process to be bolstered by the new stress on road and rail connectivity through India. In the past, India resolutely avoided its landmass as transit and transhipment...
corridors: without which regional or subregional cooperation is reduced to mere rhetoric.

**Question 2:**

(a) Big brother bullying syndrome was real-- and not merely perceptive -- in the days when Indira Gandhi ruled India. This was manifest when it refused to sign two separate treaties for trade and transit in 1975 primarily because Nepal, like Sri Lanka, opted for more liberal, market driven economic policies that appealed to most of the Indian business community.

(b) Invariably, there are political parties that play the anti India game to garner votes and seek to appear as nationalistic and patriotic entities. Living proof of this are the Maoists, who envision India as an expansionist regional power.

(c) The trust deficit exists in the state to state domain and not in the people to people arena. This deficit has widened considerably, after 2006, owing to the manner in which the Indian embassy conducts its diplomacy in Nepal; increased presence of RAW, and blatant patronage of the broad spectrum of political leadership in republican Nepal which is hugely abhorred by the intelligentsia in Nepal.

(d) Nepalese people do not consider India's pride as neighbours' envy. In fact, we share in India's pride for the renewed hope and aspiration for the entire region.

**Question 3 :**

Domestic compulsions arising mainly from the absence of a majority government in India have impacted Nepal India relations. The best illustration of this is the role played by the Communist Party of India during and after the civil war. However, the past role played by the mandarins in the MOEA should also be underscored which was, until the rise of Narendra Modi as PM, hostile to closer relations between neighbouring West Bengal, Bihar and UP with Nepal.
Question 4:

Until the announcement by PM Gujral on India's new neighbourhood policy in 1996-- also called the Gujral Doctrine-- India was never seen by any of its neighbours, except Bhutan, as any thing more than a peripheral opportunity.

Consider the case of Sri Lanka in the late 1970s which wished to join ASEAN; although was turned down since ASEAN had a security dimension too in which Sri Lanka was not a fit.

In fact, with the abolition of monarchy and (an unconstitutional) annexation of Sikkim as the 22nd state of the Indian Republic, Nepal thenceforth has viewed India as a real threat.

This psychology has deepened with the declaration of Nepal as a secular nation in 2007 --from what was a Hindu state. Furthermore, again in 2007, after the CA promulgated the Interim Constitution, India pushed the cause of federalism, with rights to self determination, by instigating the Terai Madesh to demand a separate state. With this move, India as a threat perception has widened preceded by the fact that India has been pushing Nepal to grant citizenship to the 4 million Biharis who came as migrant labour into Nepal since the 1950s.

Then, in 2008, it supported the abolition of Nepal's monarchy. Thus abandoning India's twin pillar Nepal policy of constitutional monarchy and multiparty parliamentary democracy.

Foremost, to alleviate fears a new treaty of peace and friendship must be signed that, in letter and spirit, recognizes Nepal's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity with full and unhindered rights to its own defence and foreign policies.

There needs to be deeper institutionalised interface and cooperation between each of the national security agencies of both countries, including at the sub national levels to deal with cross border issues. Issues unresolved in these structured interfaces should be taken up by
the respective National Security Councils and resolved, at the policy level, through semi annual summit meetings between the National Security Advisors.

The transformational bilateral foreign policy enunciated by PM Narendra Modi has set the right environment towards more cordial Nepal India relations in the future. Speedy execution of all the commitments will go a very long way towards removing, to a very large extent, the lingering fears and threats at the state to state level.

The announcement to have twin city relations between Varanasi and Kathmandu and Ayodhya and Janakpur will, without doubt, boost the existing people to people cordiality and understanding to even greater heights.

India should upgrade and convert all its N S roads into national highways and extend it as transport corridors to link by rail and road with Nepal's industrial cities such as these: West Bengal to Biratnagar; Bihar to Birgunj; UP to Bhairawa, Nepalgunj and Mahendranagar. This will help integrate, to mutual benefit, the neighbourhood economies subregionally; as well as help boost the manufacturing sector without which Nepal can not hope to create full employment for the 28 million inhabitants growing annually by close to 2 percent.

India should, as part of its BIMSTEC initiative, extend the proposed BCIM Economic Corridor to Bhutan, Sikkim and further into Nepal. This will help integrate the Eastern Region of Nepal with the North East States of India as well as permit land locked Nepal and Bhutan with access to the Silk Route to Europe via Yunnan.

Given Nepal's Mid Hill East West Highway under construction that will link Uttarkahnd to Sikkim, India's Nitti Ayog together with the Indian Himalayan states should consider how they, with Bhutan and Nepal in partnership, may create South Asia's own Himalayan Economic Belt in the wake of climate change and global warming. There is ICIMOD already in existence since 1985. It is doing invaluable research work on mountain development and sustainability with mountain specificities
policies uppermost in mind. Not just natural causes make the mountain ecology fragile but so does development interventions.

Far more intensified multi institutional and diversified cooperation is a must towards making the Himalayan Belt a Green Economy. It is best achieved through sub regional cooperation since the complexities of water, glacial, energy, forest, watershed, soil, solid waste and transport management, for example, are immense in: and handled best with shared knowledge and through standardisation of scientific and technical practices.

It calls for huge investments in economic and social infrastructure by engaging people public private partnerships at all levels-- community, national and sub regional. PM Modi’s innovation to have a dedicated SAARC satellite offers unimagined opportunities for cooperation and integration for a common strategy for the Himalayan region’s human capital development and specialization.

For deepening SAARC regional integration, it would be beneficial if the proposed Transport Corridors stretching from Amritsar to Mumbai or Mumbai to Chennai or the revival of the Grand Trunk Road linking Punjab to Kolkata could be extended into their respective neighbourhoods of the adjacent SAARC nations.

This way the Indian initiative to allow its territory for overland transportation, transhipment and transit will lead to the desired deeper integration of the South Asian economy.

It is significant that the 18th SAARC Summit held in Kathmandu declared that the aim of SAARC is to, move in a phased and planned manner towards a Free Trade Area, Customs Union, Common Market, Economic Union and Monetary Union. It would be highly advisable if the Heads of State/Government now invite the South Asian Business Leaders to collectively come forth with the SAARC Economic Charter in tune with the economic goals of SAARC as now officially adopted.

While taking lessons from Europe, it may be worth keeping in mind that
Europe as an economic bloc was started with the European Steel and Coal Community and the creation of a supranational organization that actually crafted a common market for steel and coal without having FTAs.

As free trade under SAFTA is going to be a long drawn process, it may be worth considering, by the SAARC Business Leaders collectively, but led by Indian Conglomerates, whether SAARC should not also opt for the SAFTA process to identify a few sectors (not just products) where mutually beneficial integration is possible even without FTAs through mutually agreed trade, investment, credit, payment, monetary and fiscal policies in an integrated manner to promote sector integration.

This author has written on this subject as to how it may be achieved by South Asia's private sector, especially those Business Leaders listed in the Forbes list of billionaires. They are the ones with the power and wherewithal to be able to take concrete planned actions for the selected sectors' integration in a win-win manner. Such sector integration is best if it can be agreed to on a regional basis and if not possible then on a sub-regional basis for production sharing and complementarities. Refer http://www.thesapri.org/2012/12/13/madhukar-sib-rana-south-asian-regional-economic-cooperation-from-sarc-to-saarc-and-whither-next/

Last, but not least, it is recommended here that a person like Mr Ratan Tata should lead the process for the private sector to come forth with the desired SAARC Economic Vision. He should be duly supported by the SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Islamabad (SAARC CCI) serving as the Secretariat. In this manner all national federations will be involved in a grand process led by the private sector since all are members of the SAARC CCI, Islamabad.

**Question 5:**

Yes, indeed, it is China which holds India's peace of mind in South Asia. Beyond the long standing Sino Pakistan strategic partnership—much more akin to an alliance—the fact that China is moving ahead as a global power growing day by day in its ability to balance US' Super Power...
hegemony is an undeniable fact. This fact, by itself, is not a cause for India’s headache, so to speak. Why? Because it will help create a multipolar world which is something India would prefer as the 21st century new world order.

What really holds India’s piece of mind is the change in China’s foreign policy from Deng Xiaoping’s ‘strategic patience’ to President XI Jinping’s ‘peaceful rise’ as a new Chinese strategic intent.

The formal announcement of the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Route, by President Xi at the inaugural ceremony of the Boao Conference recently, are ground breaking initiatives that India will have to strategically reckon with as it impacts South Asia as a whole.

Not to be ignored is the other strategic initiative, namely The Himalayan Economic Belt whose details, from the Chinese perspective, are eagerly awaited. It was noticeable that it went unmentioned at the Boao Conference by President Xi as this component is, I believe, a major pillar of his policy of ‘peaceful rise’ in quest for a new Asian security architecture. After all, the Himalayas are Asia’s water tower and is the core factor and force with which to deal with Asia’s lingering water, food and energy security in the wake of global warming and climate change.

These initiatives do not only impact the geo politics and geo economic of South Asia but, so too, the geo psychology of all South Asians: who will begin to perceive that China’s new strategic intent will add rapid momentum to the emergence of Asia, after 300 years of humiliation and domination, to its rightful place in international affairs.

(2) Dr. Daniel S. Markey

Daniel S. Markey is senior research professor at Johns Hopkins University’s School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS). He is also the academic director for the SAIS Master of Arts in Global Policy Program and an adjunct senior fellow for India, Pakistan, and South Asia at the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR).
From 2007-2015, Daniel Markey was senior fellow for India, Pakistan, and South Asia at CFR. While there, he wrote a book on the future of the U.S.-Pakistan relationship, No Exit from Pakistan: America’s Tortured Relationship with Islamabad (Cambridge University Press, 2013).

From 2003 to 2007, Dr. Markey held the South Asia portfolio on the Secretary’s Policy Planning Staff at the U.S. Department of State. Prior to government service, he taught in the Department of Politics at Princeton University, where he served as executive director of Princeton’s Research Program in International Security. Earlier, he was a postdoctoral fellow at Harvard’s Olin Institute for Strategic Studies.

Dr. Markey is the author of numerous reports, articles, book chapters, and opinion pieces. In 2010, he served as project director of the CFR-sponsored Independent Task Force on U.S. strategy in Pakistan and Afghanistan. His commentary has been featured widely in U.S. and international media.

Dr. Markey earned a bachelor’s degree in international studies from The Johns Hopkins University and a doctorate in politics from Princeton University.

Response to Questionnaire

1. “Neighbourhood First Policy” made by the Narendra Modi government is dubbed as a bold initiative; a proactive change that offers a fresh opportunity to approach things differently as India needs peace around the region to get more of the world on board. To some, it is “old wine packaged in new bottle” that lacks vision.

How do you assess India’s re-focus on neighbourhood?

The “neighbourhood first policy” is a perfectly reasonable idea, but neither especially new nor an adequate characterization of the Modi foreign policy to date. Other recent Indian governments have stressed the need to improve diplomatic relationships with nearby states as an essential step in securing India and advancing its development agenda. I recall, for instance, that was one of the claims of the Manmohan Singh government when it was newly installed. This does not undermine
the sound strategic underpinnings of such an approach, and it should not detract from the energetic diplomacy that Prime Minister Modi brought from his first day on the job when he invited SAARC leaders to his inaugural ceremonies. However, I think we should also be careful not to overlook the diplomacy that Modi has also pursued with other states outside the neighborhood, including China, Japan, and the United States. Few analysts, myself included, would have expected Modi to take quite this active a role on the global stage, at least not right away. By hosting President Obama for the Republic Day parade, for instance, Modi made an important diplomatic statement that is not at all captured by a "neighborhood first policy."

2. Do you share the view that perceptions from India’s neighbours has been clouded
   a) by the misunderstanding of ‘Big Brother bullying the smaller neighbour’.
   b) there are vested interests and lobbies for whom being anti-Indian is synonymous with being patriot and nationalist.
   c) unjustified explanation for the “trust deficit”?
   d) in the regional context,” India’s pride is also ‘neighbour’s envy”?

It is common for the neighbors of a large state to fear its dominance; India is hardly unusual in this respect. Look at the long history of U.S. relations with the states of Latin America and the Caribbean, or Russia and the states of Eastern Europe. Modern India has fought wars in or with several of its neighbors, so their concerns do have some grounding in experience, even if it is also reasonable to say that for the most part India tends to pursue a "status quo" foreign policy. In Pakistan, of course, the sense of insecurity is most acute, but as is the case in other neighboring states, you also see anti-Indian sentiments exacerbated by politicians and other activists who see value in playing the nationalist card. India's economic growth simultaneously makes it an appealing regional partner and a more daunting competitor, so while it should encourage cross-border commerce, it can also feed existing insecurities.
3. Do you agree with the view that domestic compulsions arising out of regional and coalition politics at times distort India’s relations with neighbours?

Yes, it is correct to view at least some of India’s relationships with smaller neighbors as the consequence of localized interests and coalition politics. At times this is beneficial; Indian historical, ethnic, and linguistic ties with its neighbors have the potential to encourage positive commercial and diplomatic ties. Too often, however, India’s relations with neighbors (especially Sri Lanka and Bangladesh) have taken on a domestic political dimension in negative ways, distorting national policies or holding other initiatives hostage to local dramas.

4. The biggest challenge for India’s South Asia diplomacy will be to convince neighbours that India is an opportunity, not a threat. What should India do to ameliorate debilitating political and security differences, stimulate cooperation in various fields to trend towards a more harmonious region?

The greatest "opportunity" that India offers to its neighbors comes in the form of trade and commercial ties. The more that the business communities in nearby states benefit from their activities in India, the less prone they will be to support (or even to tolerate) anti-India policies by their own leaders. In my research on the Indo-Pakistani relationship, I have found that Pakistanis are correct when they complain of non-tariff barriers to trade with India. The logistics of sending goods across the border are complicated by poor infrastructure and bureaucratic hold ups, even when the trade is permitted under bilateral agreements. At the same time, India correctly fears the potential that increased commercial ties could enable greater flows of other less desirable things, such as narcotics or terrorists. Part of the solution thus lies in greater Indian investment in technologies and border security to enhance the flow of desirable commerce and to clamp down on potential threats.

5. Look any which way, it is China that holds the key to India’s peace of mind with its South Asian neighbours. Do you share this viewpoint?
China already casts a long shadow in South Asia that clearly worries many Indian strategists. In some cases, like Pakistan, this is not new; New Delhi has had to factor the Sino-Pakistani relationship into its dealings with Islamabad for decades. China’s support to Pakistan’s nuclear program continues to be a top concern for India. In other cases throughout South Asia, China’s greater influence has been more noteworthy over the past decade, as India’s smaller neighbors have perceived benefits from China’s capital investment, especially in transit infrastructure. The implications are most immediately felt in the economic sphere, but quickly translate into greater Chinese diplomatic influence, and over time, such investments in ports or roads offer Beijing the opportunity to extend its military reach into and beyond the region in ways that would diminish India’s role and challenge New Delhi’s aspirations of great power status. Yet the Chinese role is not entirely menacing to India, as demonstrated by Prime Minister Modi’s own recognition that Chinese investments and trade could provide a significant spur to India’s economic development. As in nearly every other part of the world, India’s leaders will thus need to balance their concerns about Chinese political and military influence against their desire to profit from China’s tremendous capital and harness its remarkable capacity for civil engineering. Success will require patience and a long-term perspective.

(3) Michael Kugelman

Senior Associate for South and Southeast Asia
Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars
One Woodrow Wilson Plaza
1300 Pennsylvania Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20004-3027
Phone: (202) 691-4059
Fax: (202) 691-4001
http://www.wilsoncenter.org/staff/michael-kugelman
Facebook: www.facebook.com/asiaprogram
Twitter: @MichaelKugelman
Skype: michaelkugelman

(MICHAEL KUGELMAN is the senior associate for South Asia at the Wilson Center. His main specialty countries are Pakistan, India, and Afghanistan, and his current research and writing projects focus on post-2014 Afghanistan and the energy crisis in Pakistan. Mr. Kugelman is a monthly columnist for Foreign Policy’s South Asia Channel and for War on the Rocks, a website devoted to national security analysis. Additionally, he is a regular contributor to the Wall Street Journal’s Think Tank blog.)

Response to Questionnaire

1. “Neighbourhood First Policy” made by the Narendra Modi government is dubbed as a bold initiative; a proactive change that offers a fresh opportunity to approach things differently as India needs peace around the region to get more of the world on board. To some, it is “old wine packaged in new bottle” that lacks vision.

How do you assess India’s re-focus on neighbourhood?

I think it represents the proverbial real deal. It marks a genuine effort to cultivate a better relationship with the broader region. This can be seen from the heavy travel Modi has made within Asia during his first few months in office; he has travelled to more Asian countries than to countries anywhere else. He has also sought various agreements—most of them energy and economic—across the broader region.

This is a strategy that I believe plays into Modi’s desire to increase India’s regional and global clout through the pursuit of deeper diplomacy—and particularly commercial diplomacy. This is a model that he would even ideally want to follow in Pakistan: Pursue opportunities for deeper trade relations with Islamabad in order to reduce tensions on the volatile Subcontinent. However, whether Pakistan’s security establishment is on board with this idea is another matter.
2. Do you share the view that perceptions from India’s neighbours has been clouded
a) by the misunderstanding of ‘Big Brother bullying the smaller neighbour’.
b) there are vested interests and lobbies for whom being anti-Indian is synonymous with being patriot and nationalist.
c) unjustified explanation for the “trust deficit”?
d) in the regional context,” India’s pride is also ‘neighbour’s envy”?

To be sure, South Asia-focused policies will meet with resistance in the region. Simply by virtue of its size and relative wealth, it will attract suspicion and concern. And certainly in countries like Pakistan, resistance and opposition to India is ingrained. The only way for Modi to get around these obstacles is for him to continue what he is already doing—making visits, offering assurances of peaceful intentions, and proposing economic deals.

The situation with Pakistan is particularly difficult—for sure, more than soothing words will be needed on that front. There’s no reason to believe Pakistan and India will experience a rapprochement anytime soon—and especially with the Pakistani military once again in the driver’s seat of India policy. Unfortunately, it may be hard for Modi to separate his efforts to promote greater cooperation with South Asia from the Pakistan conundrum. For instance, any efforts by Modi to boost Indian leadership in regional forums such as SAARC, and to promote greater regional cooperation through SAARC, will be hard to pull off, because the membership of both Pakistan and India in SAARC make it hard to get anything done on substantive levels.

For this reason, Modi’s best bet is to pursue his South Asia diplomatic policies bilaterally—he will need to reach out to all of the SAARC countries separately. That may prove to be his most realistic path to success.
3. Do you agree with the view that domestic compulsions arising out of regional and coalition politics at times distort India’s relations with neighbours?

Yes, for sure. Given the increasing prominence of regional political parties that control some state governments, there is reason to fear that Modi’s diplomatic efforts could face competition from similar efforts from the regional parties. There is reason to believe, for example, that the dynamics of the relationship that Mamata Banarjee has with various players in Bangladesh could pose a challenge to Modi’s own efforts to patch up relations with that country.

That said, since Modi won his election with such a large mandate and did not need to form a governing coalition at the Center, there won’t be as much of a reason to fear these challenges from the political periphery as there would have been during previous governments, when coalitions were omnipresent and fractious. Also, with his large mandate, Modi will not be as vulnerable to pressure from regional parties ruling on state levels as he would be if he were a weak leader ruling in a coalition.

4. The biggest challenge for India’s South Asia diplomacy will be to convince neighbours that India is an opportunity, not a threat. What should India do to ameliorate debilitating political and security differences, stimulate cooperation in various fields to trend towards a more harmonious region?

This is a very tough challenge, and nowhere more so than in Pakistan. The best thing Modi could do is offer to visit Pakistan—though I’m not sure Pakistan’s military would want him to visit, and I’m not even sure Modi himself would be ready to visit, given the backlash he could face from more hardline figures in the BJP. There are structural reasons why India will have trouble persuading Pakistan that India is an opportunity, not a threat. This is because Pakistan’s military—the most powerful
institution in the country—has long justified its prominent role in politics and the state on the idea of India being an existential threat. If Pakistan agrees to see India as an opportunity more than a threat, then Pakistan’s military could suddenly face an identity crisis and threat to its self-declared role as Pakistan’s protector.

In terms of how India tries to convince other neighbors, it simply should do more of what it’s already been doing—focus on trade and diplomacy. Modi should try to parlay his diplomatic outreach and commercial diplomacy into confidence-building measures and other trust-generating mechanisms. Only when there is sufficient trust can India expect to receive a friendlier response from neighbors that have long been suspicious.

5. Look any which way, it is China that holds the key to India’s peace of mind with its South Asian neighbours. Do you share this viewpoint?
   It’s actually Pakistan that holds the key. So long as Pakistan and India don’t reconcile, there will never be peace of mind. And sadly there are no plans for reconciliation anytime soon.

   China, however, does play a critical role in this story. And on this front there could be a moment of opportunity—one that can enable China and India to strengthen a complex and troubled relationship that in recent years has seen an increase in Chinese activities throughout the Indian Ocean region that has prompted considerable concern in New Delhi.

   The opportunity for China-India relations comes out of a realization that both countries’ interests in the region are increasingly convergent. China has finally come around to India’s long-standing concerns about militancy in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region. China now worries about how instability in Afghanistan imperils its investments there, and it worries how Uighur militants use the Afghan-Pakistan border as a
staging ground for attacks in China. China and India can build on these shared interests to launch some broader discussions on how they can cooperate across the broader region—not just in South Asia but also in Central Asia, where both seek energy assets.

(4) Nilanthi Samaranayake

Strategic Studies Analyst at CNA Corporation, Arlington, VA, USA

(Nilanthi Samaranayake is an analyst at CNA Corporation, a non-profit research and analysis organization in the Washington, D.C., area. Her research focuses on South Asia—especially the smaller countries of South Asia and their relations with India and China—and Indian Ocean security issues. Samaranayake’s analysis has been featured in Outlook, Pragati, FPRC Journal, The Diplomat, South Asia Journal, World Politics Review, and The National Interest (U.S.) among other outlets. She has given presentations in Chennai and Kochi for the Observer Research Foundation and Stimson Center; in Bengaluru for the German Marshall Fund; at the Galle Dialogue in Sri Lanka; as well as at the Brookings Institution, Carnegie Endowment, and National Defense University in Washington, D.C. She has appeared in media such as Al Jazeera, South China Morning Post, Daily Star (Bangladesh), Sunday Times (Sri Lanka), Minivan News (Maldives), and Myanmar Times.

Before joining CNA Corporation, Samaranayake completed a fellowship at the National Bureau of Asian Research (NBR) in Seattle, where she examined Sri Lanka’s deepening economic, military, and diplomatic ties with China—the findings of which were published in the peer-reviewed journal Asian Security. In 2014, she published a book chapter on the smaller countries of South Asia (Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, and Maldives) and their relations with China in China and International Security: History, Strategy, and 21st Century Policy, edited by Donovan C. Chau and Thomas M. Kane (Praeger). Samaranayake analyzed public opinion for a decade at Pew Research Center in Washington, D.C. She holds an MSc in International Relations from the London School of Economics and Political Science.)

* Note: The views expressed are solely those of the author and not of any organization with which she is affiliated.

Questionnaire responses:
1. “Neighbourhood First Policy” made by the Narendra Modi government is dubbed as a bold initiative; a proactive change that offers a fresh opportunity to approach things differently as India needs peace around the region to get more of the world on board. To some, it is “old wine packaged in new bottle” that lacks vision. How do you assess India’s re-focus on neighbourhood?

I think Prime Minister Modi’s “Neighbourhood First Policy” has mostly been a success. He began his administration by signaling his intent to refocus India’s attention on its neighborhood. Inviting SAARC heads of state to attend his inaugural ceremony was an effective gesture. Observers may see a return to the “Gujral doctrine” of Indian foreign policy. Although the UPA government pursued efforts to strengthen relations with India’s neighbors, its foreign policy was hindered by the fact that it rarely impinged on coalition interests. Within a few months of taking office, Modi made his first bilateral foreign visits to two neighborhood countries: Bhutan and Nepal. After working to improve bilateral cooperation with countries in the Ministry of External Affairs’ Northern Division early in his term, he subsequently traveled to Sri Lanka, Seychelles, and Mauritius in 2015—all countries in the Indian Ocean Division that was created toward the end of the UPA government and illustrates the broader vision of India’s neighborhood as encompassing the wider Indian Ocean. Maldives is also part of this division, and Modi reportedly had planned to visit the country before deciding that the harsh treatment of former president Mohamed Nasheed warranted omitting Maldives from his tour. Modi’s visit to the other Indian Ocean island states was well received by the local populations, and he offered each country specific proposals for expanding cooperation in a variety of areas. More importantly, the fact that Modi made the trek to these countries is significant considering the many years that passed without an official visit by an Indian prime minister for bilateral purposes (e.g., Sri Lanka at 28 years; Nepal at 17 years; Seychelles at 34 years; Mauritius at 10 years). Whereas Modi has systematically attended to countries in the Northern and Indian Ocean divisions, carrying out visits to the other neighbors will be difficult given greater policy challenges. Minister of External Affairs Sushma Swaraj and Foreign Secretary S. Jaishankar are doing the legwork on Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh. Previous prime ministers have asserted the importance of India’s relations with its smaller neighbors; by actually visiting them, Modi is demonstrating the importance that India places on these countries, which sometimes feel taken for granted.
2. Do you share the view that perceptions from India's neighbours has been clouded
a) by the misunderstanding of 'Big Brother bullying the smaller neighbour'.
b) there are vested interests and lobbies for whom being anti-Indian is synonymous with being patriot and nationalist.
c) unjustified explanation for the ‘trust deficit’?
d) in the regional context, "India's pride is also 'neighbour's envy'"?

Smaller neighbors remember actions taken by the central Indian government or individual states in recent history that were seen as destabilizing to their countries. For example, Bangladeshi analysts discuss how guerrilla fighters once operated in and received sanctuary from India's Tripura and Meghalaya states, allegedly with the backing of New Delhi. Ashok Behuria of the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA), John Garver of the Georgia Institute of Technology, and Robert Boggs of the U.S. National Defense University have examined India's previous policy of supporting opposition constituencies in Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka and the resulting negative perceptions of India in neighboring capitals. However, I don't think it's accurate to say that these states envy India. In fact, smaller neighbors such as Sri Lanka depend heavily on the success of the Indian economy, with Colombo port transshipping most Indian maritime cargo. Therefore, they generally want India to succeed and hope the benefits of economic interdependence will filter down. Moreover, smaller countries depend on India's military capability in times of crisis. The recent hostilities in Yemen illustrate the ongoing demand for India's assistance with non-combatant evacuations of South Asian nationals working in the Middle East. In addition to its own citizens, India is evacuating Bangladeshi, Nepali, Sri Lankan, and Maldivian nationals, much to the appreciation of neighboring capitals.

3. Do you agree with the view that domestic compulsions arising out of regional and coalition politics at times distort India’s relations with neighbours?

Yes, this is an unavoidable situation given the local politics of Indian states that border neighboring countries. It is exacerbated when electoral considerations factor into New Delhi's thinking. Recent prominent examples include the UPA government's policies toward Bangladesh and Sri Lanka to accommodate the regional interests of chief ministers Mamata Banerjee and J. Jayalalithaa over water-sharing and fishing disputes, respectively. At least for now, Modi's sizable majority has
obviated the need for the coalition politics that influenced many decisions by the former administration. Regardless of this factor, the key is for New Delhi to weigh the considerations from internal states appropriately and understand the implications for India’s national interests if its policies are not well received by neighbors.

4. The biggest challenge for India’s South Asia diplomacy will be to convince neighbours that India is an opportunity, not a threat. What should India do to ameliorate debilitating political and security differences, stimulate cooperation in various fields to trend towards a more harmonious region?

Given its own pressing internal needs, India does not have a robust history of investment in its neighborhood compared with Japan or China, for example. The Modi administration is working to signal a change in its approach to the region. To show its neighbors that India is an opportunity, New Delhi could cultivate government-to-government and private investment opportunities for the economies and infrastructure of neighboring countries; expedite commercial and military assistance projects that are lagging in meeting deadlines, such as the installation of coastal radars in Maldives; and facilitate countries’ access to offered lines of credit.

5. Look any which way, it is China that holds the key to India’s peace of mind with its South Asian neighbours. Do you share this viewpoint?

The unresolved border disputes between India and China have certainly prevented bilateral relations from reaching their potential, and the China-Pakistan relationship understandably concerns India and influences its threat perceptions. However, I don’t think “China holds the key to India’s peace of mind with its South Asian neighbors.” China is a factor of course, but India’s apprehension about China’s engagement with smaller South Asian countries is perhaps more a symptom of India’s deeper insecurities about its standing in the region. When the China factor did not loom as large as it does now, the United States was seen as the extraregional country that prevented such peace of mind in the 1980s. The fact remains that India is solidly on top in its neighborhood in terms of political and military influence, despite concerns about China’s activities with smaller South Asian countries. In the area of economic development, however, India could improve outreach to its neighbors through a creative approach that draws on the strength of the Indian private sector. Regardless of the role of China, India is ultimately in control of its backyard. The Modi administration has indicated from
the beginning that it will take a new path in its neighborhood policy, but Modi will need to back up this course with lasting actions that are of mutual benefit to both India and its neighbors. Furthermore, smaller South Asian states hold a reciprocal responsibility of assuring India that they are not colluding with extraregional powers to the detriment of India. Cooperative actions from all sides will contribute to the peace of mind sought by regional stakeholders.

(5) N. Sathiya Moorthy

Director - Chennai Chapter, Observer Research Foundation

(A veteran journalist and political analyst, N Sathiya Moorthy is at present the Director of the Chennai Chapter of the Observer Research Foundation, the multidisciplinary Indian public-policy think-tank, headquartered in New Delhi.

A long-time student of Sri Lanka and Maldives, the two closest of India’s southern, Indian Ocean neighbours, Sathiya Moorthy has been visiting these countries frequently and writing on their domestic politics, India relations and international equations, constantly.

An advocate of greater South Asia cooperation, particularly India’s Indian Ocean neighbourhood, Sathiya Moorthy has been writing for long, how India as the largest nation in every which way, has to realise that its basis for claiming a greater international role and participation can flow only from its acceptance as the leader in the immediate neighbourhood.

Given the complexities of India’s Pakistan relations and China’s presence in the neighbourhood Indian Ocean, the interviewee has always argued that it will be easier and more pertinent for India to create and consolidate a ‘security network’ in the southern waters, along with effecting greater and constant cooperation among the sub-region’s nations, all-round.

For a variety of reasons, he says, the initiative and responsibility for the same rests on India.

Sathiya Moorthy has been writing on bilateral and sub-regional and regional issues for long. He has been writing on these issues in Sri Lankan publications for over a decade – weekly columns in Colombo-based ‘Daily Mirror’ first, and ‘The Sunday Leader’.

He can be contacted at: sathiyam54@gmail.com

Response to Questionnaire

1. “Neighbourhood First Policy” made by the Narendra Modi government is dubbed as a bold initiative; a proactive change that offers a fresh opportunity to approach things differently as India needs peace around the region to get more of the world on board. To some, it is “old wine packaged in new bottle” that lacks vision.

How do you assess India’s re-focus on neighbourhood?
The initiative had commenced earlier, with predecessor Prime Minister Manmohan Singh coining the phrase of India’s ability to become the ‘net-provider’ of security in the region. To Modi should go the credit for giving the right mix of push and visibility. He became the first Indian PM in 25 years (after Rajiv Gandhi, 1984-89, to have an absolute majority in the Lok Sabha. A change of government in neighbouring Sri Lanka earlier this year also helped, as the domestic ethnic issue, which has been a part of India’s neighbourhood diplomatic inheritance, found a way for a newer expression and fresher approach in both nations.

Yet, to Modi should go the credit of giving an imaginative personal touch to the inherited yet timid, below-the-radar initiative, by inviting SAARC Heads of Government and that of Mauritius for his Inauguration, when the whole world was watching. Just now it cannot be dismissed as ‘old wine in a new bottle’ but if we do not pause to study individual nations with their distinct domestic diversity as they should be understood – and not as how India wants to understand – it could even become ‘old wine in an older bottle’. Thankfully, there is nothing by way of wine, old or new, or bottle, old or new, for India just now to bother in a larger regional context, though at the bilateral level we have had it with almost every one of the countries, both in the distant and medium past or even more recently (as with Maldives and the GMR row).

2. Do you share the view that perceptions from India’s neighbours has been clouded

a) by the misunderstanding of ‘Big Brother bullying the smaller neighbour’.

The very question is what our neighbours often term as India being a ‘big brother’ and a ‘big bully’. While they may have their own angularities and also have only sovereignty and hyper-patriotism to hedge, many in India, particularly uninformed sections of the strategic community, have refused to spend as much time and effort of their own to study, learn and understand our neighbours, from a stand-point that is either not supplied or supported by western academic sources, which incidentally is not steeped in the sub-continental culture of whatever kind is required. It’s also this ‘value-judgment’ by Indians and India that our neighbours resent, and we do not even know what they resent, or why. It’s a two-way street, learning and earning mutual respect, and India and Indians need to do more, both bilaterally and regionally, given our sizes and diversities.

b) there are vested interests and lobbies for whom being anti-Indian is synonymous with being patriot and nationalist.

To an extent, it is true that there is competitive anti-India political/electoral patriotism in those countries. But there is also competitive anti-X nation, neighbour or not, even in India. We often end up using a wrong yardstick to measure ourselves and the rest. If we
accept that there is ‘competitive patriotism’ or ‘competitive nationalism’, the phrases defined differently by different parties and leaders in India, then it is half the battle won, as then we can transpose our own peripheral issues of the kind to individual nations and the region as a whole, and try and understand that their problems with India are not much different from our problems at times with ourselves. It may not help find solutions straightaway, but at least it will help us understand and appreciate the problem better and in the right perception.

c) unjustified explanation for the ‘trust deficit’?

There is ‘trust deficit’ as much in these countries viz India, as there is in India against individual nations. The Government of India has no problems with a democratically-elected new government in Bhutan, which is our best friend and best bet in the neighbourhood. But there were/are those outside of the Government, who have their views, often culled from interpretative views of ground realities with which they do not have direct/personal knowledge.

In a way, ‘trust deficit’ in the neighbourhood had commenced, unfortunately, with the princely Sikkim voluntarily merging with India, and in India’s role in the ‘Bangladesh War’ and later, the induction of the IPKF in Sri Lanka, at the invitation of the elected government of the day in that country, and to protect those that felt affected by the State apparatus in that country. There was politico-ethnic consensus of a kind in Sri Lanka at the time about a role for India when it was happening (though there was visible and demonstrated Opposition, too). Again, we did not do our homework properly. Like the West does often and gets caught, we did not think about or plan for ‘the day after’.

More recently, on the non-military, non-diplomatic side, over the ‘GMR row’ in Maldives, which involved only the Indian private sector, bilateral relations soured. After his maiden visit to India after assuming office, current President Abdulla Yameen said that “GMR did not do due diligence” before entering the scene. There may be some truth in it, too.

From the Indian side, we have problems with neighbours, when they are seen as playing India against the US during the Cold War, and against China, post-Cold War. Today, neighbours’ ‘trust deficit’ with Pakistan is more than with India, or so it would seem. Despite projections and projects, their own discomfort with engaging with China is growing, and becoming increasingly visible, too. It’s a window of opportunity for India to re-work with and on, but not against it.

We have been talking about our neighbours aligning with our ‘adversaries’ of a given era, without their giving any serious consideration to our own threat-perceptions and views on the subject. None in India seems to have paused even once to ask himself if we had taken our smaller neighbours into confidence when we first aligned with the
erstwhile Soviet Union during the Cold War years, or with the US, now, post-Cold War – depending on India’s very own nation-specific ‘threat perception’ that might not affect our neighbours, any which way.

Already, there is a feeble or concealed effort to portray PM Modi’s IOR initiative (when he visited Seychelles, Mauritius and Sri Lanka – he could not visit Maldives this first time owing to the existing domestic situation there), as a part/extension of the Asia-Pacific/India-Pacific American Initiative. Other neighbourhood nations do not have much to choose between the US, the sole super-power, and China, acknowledged as an/the ‘emerging super-power’. Rather, some of them have better comfort zones and levels with China – which is a P-5 veto-power unlike India and does not ask inconvenient questions on eternally extended/extendable western definitions of ‘human rights’ and the like, and also get the investments that they badly want, which only a future generation and its leadership are expected to pay back.

The PM’s current initiative that way should be directed correctly, to create a consultative and cooperative mechanism, where the trust-deficit of the past is replaced by sustainable confidence, for them to discuss cooperative political, economic and strategic issues and take common and commonly-applicable decisions, like the EU and ASEAN do. South Asia could not achieve it in and with SAARC owing to India-Pakistan ‘trust-deficit’ and problems bordering on antagonism and adversity at the same time.

d) in the regional context,” India’s pride is also ‘neighbour’s envy”?

Barring Pakistan, and at times China (if we accept China also as a neighbour in a larger sense of the term), other nations in the neighbourhood do not envy India. They would like to partner with India and share India’s prosperity, both as nations and peoples. At least at the government and political levels, there is a general acceptance that they could do business with India better than any other non-regional power, and that greater prosperity of India would ultimately translate into greater prosperity for their own nations and peoples, if only they work with India, in bilateral and regional contexts. But there are issues, old and new, which we need to trash out.

3. Do you agree with the view that domestic compulsions arising out of regional and coalition politics at times distort India’s relations with neighbours?

To an extent, yes, but that is only a part of the problem. The temptation will be to cite Tamil Nadu in the Sri Lankan context or post-communist West Bengal in the context of Bangladesh. ‘Jammu & Kashmir, and Pakistan’, is a different set of issues. But even without ‘domestic constituencies’ and domestic issues within India, there are such constituencies, interests and interest groups in those countries that
cause problems for India’s bilateral policies. India was not the cause for the creation of Bangladesh, or the ethnic issue in Sri Lanka. But when they evolved out of domestic politics and compulsions in those countries, owing exclusively to domestic constituency interests there, India got caught. The evolution of domestic constituencies in India was/is a subsequent or follow-up phenomenon. Even today, domestic politics in Bangladesh, for instance, is the cause for problems for India’s policy, not otherwise, it would seem. Even the post-war Sri Lanka issue flowed from domestic constituency interests and politics in that country. Nepal is a typical case in this regard, and so is Maldives, about which not many in India even today have heard of. Unfortunately, many in Indian strategic community seemed to be looking at other neighbours only while discussing either China or Pakistan – it used to be the US and the erstwhile Soviet Union during the ‘Cold War’ years.

4. The biggest challenge for India’s South Asia diplomacy will be to convince neighbours that India is an opportunity, not a threat. What should India do to ameliorate debilitating political and security differences, stimulate cooperation in various fields to trend towards a more harmonious region?

Successive governments in Delhi seem to have been frustrated early on, purportedly by our neighbours, for India to turn elsewhere for ‘productive and meaningful diplomacy’. India-Pakistan, India-Soviet, India-US and India-China relations have been the problem area from time to time. We have no problem riding the roller-coaster in our relations with the US, or even China or Pakistan, but do not have the same kind and amount of patience for the rest in the neighbourhood. It may also owe to the customary and at times casual Indian belief that we know the sub-continent the best. Maybe, in relation to our non-sub-continental interlocutors, yes, but not necessarily when it comes to individual nations, which have a civilisational life as long, if not as diverse, as ours. We need to begin at the beginning – and should have the patience to do it, and also the confidence to take the rest into confidence, as they do not have either the time or the patience to wait for India to ‘arrive’ to take them with it. So, they turn to whichever extra-regional power that is ready to meet their immediate needs, and address their immediate concerns, of which India ends up being the primary one, more often than not and most often than not for wrong reasons.

5. Look any which way, it is China that holds the key to India’s peace of mind with its South Asian neighbours. Do you share this viewpoint?

Just now it is China, earlier it was the US during the Cold War era, it has also been Pakistan from time to time, Iran, if you still look at an ‘Islamic bomb’ as different from a ‘Pakistan bomb’, or any other. – though the more recent progress in the ‘Iran nuclear deal’ should make us feel at ease. India is also often concerned about the over-reach of some of our friendly nations trying to gain an independent foothold in what is
conceded by everyone otherwise as ‘India’s traditional sphere of influence’. It is how it is, and it will continue to be so. But egged on by external perceptions, and without evaluating them all by ourselves, some of us end up eating off the ‘canned stuff’, whatever the reason, political or otherwise.

We need to go back to the drawing board, and re-educate and rededicate ourselves to prioritizing “India’s self-interest” and prioritise our preferences accordingly. Often, given the perceived perceptions of the policy-maker from outside, there is this unacknowledged gap between reality and imagery, which overlap at times, including on the media space, and thus seek to unduly influence the policy-maker, one way or the other. We need to reset our clock and begin afresh. Then and then alone can we independently evaluate how far, or how far less, we should be worried about China, or whoever, now or ever.

(6) Zafar Sobhan
Editor,
Dhaka Tribune

(Zafar Sobhan is the editor of Dhaka Tribune, a daily newspaper. He also writes a weekly column for the Sunday Guardian, and has to his name numerous articles, features, interviews, book chapters, and essays in publications such as TIME, the Guardian, Himal, EPW, Outlook, Vice, the New York Times, and others. Previously, he served as editor of Forum magazine and opinions editor of The Daily Star.

Zafar is also a licensed New York City public school teacher and a member of the New York State Bar. Zafar has a B.A. and M.A. in English literature and a J.D. in law. He was a 2009 World Fellow at Yale University. In addition to his work in media, he is also involved with a number of organizations aimed at engaging young people on social and civic issues, and helping them find a voice. Zafar was selected as a Young Global Leader by the World Economic Forum in 2005 and was a delegate to the Asia21 Young Leaders Summit in Tokyo in 2008.)

Email interview

1. I think the focus is a welcome one and long overdue. It recognizes the fact that many, if not most, of the problems we face in the region, can only be resolved at the regional level. It also recognizes the fact that of all regional groupings, SAARC is the most ineffective, and this has greatly contributed to our lack of development and advancement as a region. The levels of intra-SAARC trade, for instance, remains a joke.
However, what remains to be seen is whether the commitment is for real, and, especially, whether Modi is willing to expend the political capital inside India to make the changes necessary to bring this vision to fruition. It is unclear how much support there is inside India for better regional ties, once the actual terms of what this would entail become apparent.

2. I am afraid that I would say that the perception of India's neighbours is rather accurate.

a) India is by far the dominant player in the region, and therefore it has a great deal of bargaining power and clout, which it is not shy of using, for instance in trade negotiations. It also continues to have a very protectionist outlook in terms of defending its own domestic markets, with all kind of non-tariff and para-tariff barriers keeping others out and ensuring a non-level playing field. If it is serious about greater regional co-operation, it will have to start with itself:

b) This too remains a problem, certainly in Bangladesh. However, I feel that India can counter-act this tendency by opening up and making concessions so that the nationalist or anti-card loses its sting. If playing the anti-India card has served some groups well, it is because India has made it so easy for them. A change of stance would leave the anti-Indian nationalists out in the cold and isolated.

c) I do not believe the trust deficit is unjustified. India needs to do more to bridge the gap. In the Bangladesh context, it is attitudes as much as policies that people object too, and it can scarcely be denied that on the whole India has a very negative view of Bangladeshis and Bangladesh. In this context, railing against "illegal immigrants" from Bangladesh, etc does not help.

d) I don't think it is a question of envy so much as it is a question of feeling disrespected and dismissed. India is also viewed as arrogant, which does not help. But this is not the same thing as envy.

3. I actually think this is the biggest problem successive Indian central governments have faced, and that this is not sufficiently appreciated outside India. I feel that successive Indian governments have very much wanted better regional ties, certainly with Bangladesh, but their hands
are often tied, not only by regional politics, but also by various interest groups, and not the least, by the civil administration, which remains powerful and conservative, and a serious impediment to needed reform.

4. India will need to take unilateral steps to build confidence. It will need to reach out and take two steps for every one its neighbours take. If there is not political will inside India for this, then Modi's initiative will go nowhere. The other thing which is necessary is to stimulate track 2 diplomacy and person to person contact. India needs to open itself up to outsiders more. In the context of Bangladesh, if India can win over the business community, with concessions and opportunities to access its markets, the overall cost to India would be minuscule, but the benefits would be extraordinary. It is a tough sell in India, I understand, which is why what is needed is really bold and visionary leadership, not just words.

5. Not at all. India's regional destiny is in its own hands. Now, there is no question that China is a rival and that India needs to take it into consideration when planning its regional strategy. China will become more and more relevant, and a more and more influential player in the region. That is unavoidable. But India has advantages of proximity and propinquity, and historical and cultural ties which will always give it an edge. It needs to capitalize on these. One thing that China does offer, however, is an alternative. So India must understand that it is no longer the only game in town for its neighbours, and if it does not succeed in transforming the landscape of regional cooperation, and make no mistake, what we need is a totally transformational policy outlook, then China is waiting patiently in the wings to reap full benefit and take full advantage.

(7) Rajeev Sharma
Strategic Affairs Analyst at New Delhi

(Rajeev Sharma is a New Delhi-based journalist-author who has been writing on international relations, foreign policy, strategic affairs, security and terrorism for over two decades.
He has published seven books so far, five of them non-fiction, two fiction.)
1. “Neighbourhood First Policy” made by the Narendra Modi government is dubbed as a bold initiative; a proactive change that offers a fresh opportunity to approach things differently as India needs peace around the region to get more of the world on board. To some, it is “old wine packaged in new bottle” that lacks vision. How do you assess India’s re-focus on neighbourhood?

A: This is the right focus. Nothing is more important for India than its immediate and contiguous neighborhood. The previous governments too followed the same policy. The only difference is that PM Modi has succeeded in projecting an impression that he is taking up this part of crucial Indian foreign policy in a much more vigorous manner. His choice of Bhutan as the first destination of his foreign visit set his neighborhood policy in the right focus. Modi has been far more successful on the foreign policy front than he has been on the domestic one; partly because, in foreign policy one does not have to bother about immediate concrete deliverables. Foreign policy, after all, is not a 100-meter race.

2. Do you share the view that perceptions from India’s neighbours has been clouded a) by the misunderstanding of ‘Big Brother bullying the smaller neighbour’. b) there are vested interests and lobbies for whom being anti-Indian is synonymous with being patriot and nationalist. c) unjustified explanation for the “trust deficit”? d) in the regional context,” India’s pride is also ‘neighbour’s envy’?

A: No. This is what PM Modi has strived to do in his reach out to the neighbors and he has succeeded by and large. He has told the smaller neighbors that India is there to help them, not bully them. An apt example is his push for helping the smaller neighbors under the SAARC framework with SAARC satellite, education, medicine etc themes. In this endeavor he has succeeded in bridging the trust deficit. Successful examples are Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Bhutan, though Bangladesh is the only country from the above-mentioned four neighbors that he has not visited thus far.

3. Do you agree with the view that domestic compulsions arising out of regional and coalition politics at times distort India’s relations with neighbours?
A: That has indeed been so during the UPA’s decade in power. But it is not so in the Modi set up, primarily because he is not beholden to regional parties. An example is his Sri Lanka visit. Manmohan Singh could not even summon the courage to visit the island nation in 2013 entirely because of the regional Tamil parties in India.

4. The biggest challenge for India’s South Asia diplomacy will be to convince neighbours that India is an opportunity, not a threat. What should India do to ameliorate debilitating political and security differences, stimulate cooperation in various fields to trend towards a more harmonious region?

A: That’s right. India needs to just focus on the developmental part of the diplomacy and rise above the local political considerations as Modi did during his Sri Lanka visit. The key here is to project India’s soft power. That would automatically set it apart from China as the Chinese involvement comes with a lot of baggage as one has seen in Myanmar where the local population was up in arms against the Chinese on environmental and cultural considerations, to name a few.

5. Look any which way, it is China that holds the key to India’s peace of mind with its South Asian neighbours. Do you share this viewpoint?

A: No, I don’t share that view. Indeed China is a formidable rival for India in the region, but not an insurmountable one. The key is keep on engaging with every neighbor by respecting its culture, ethos, local political dynamics and, above all, by keeping the host country’s politico-strategic interests supreme. China has not been able to do that. This is China’s Achilles Heel which India needs to exploit.

(8) Shahmahmood Miakhel
Country Director, Afghanistan
United States Institute of Peace (USIP), Kabul
smiakhel@usip.org or smiakhel@gmail.com
Tel: +93-708-369-369

(Shahmahmood Miakhel is the Country Director for Afghanistan programs of United States Institute of Peace since 2009. Prior to joining USIP, Miakhel worked as a governance adviser/deputy head of governance unit for the U.N. Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (2005-2009) and served as Senior Advisor/Deputy Minister of interior of Afghanistan (2003-2005). Miakhel also worked as a reporter for Pashto and Dari Services of Voice of America (1985-1990) and as the deputy...
director of SOS/Belgium, an international organization assisting Afghan refugees in Pakistan. Mr. Miakhel worked for UNDP/UNOPS program in Afghanistan as Senior Liaison Officer to establish District Rehabilitation Shuras (DRS) in Eastern and South-Eastern provinces of Afghanistan. He also consulted on the Williams-Afghan Media Project at Williams College to preserve war footage of Afghanistan in the 1980s.


Mr. Miakhel attended many international conferences on Afghanistan, participated in track two dialogues between Afghanistan, Pakistan, India and Bangladesh and published many articles in English on governance and security situation of Afghanistan.

Miakhel has an executive M.B.A. from Preston University in Pakistan, and completed a fellowship program on Democracy, Development and Rule of Law at Stanford University in 2006. Mr. Miakhel also completed fellowship on Executive Leadership Program in Harvard, Kennedy School of Government and NDU (National Defense University) in the US in 2011.

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Response to Questionnaire

1. “Neighbourhood First Policy” made by the Narendra Modi government is dubbed as a bold initiative; a proactive change that offers a fresh opportunity to approach things differently as India needs peace around the region to get more of the world on board. To some, it is “old wine packaged in new bottle” that lacks vision. How do you assess India’s re-focus on neighbourhood?

You cannot chose neighbors by choice. By default, most of the countries in South Asia are connected and have common culture, history and interest but unfortunately despite many common shared of interest, the economic connectivity between countries of this region is much less developed than many other regions of the world. As we cannot chose our neighbors, the countries of this region has no other alternative in global competition to have better relationship, new vision for economic development to uplift the life of their citizens and bring enduring peace to the region to live side by side. As far as I see, in each country and also in the region, much of the resources and energy are wasted in negative competition in rather than for positive competition. If this region collectively changed their mind set of 19th and 20th centuries and look to necessities and realities of the 21st century, they have no option, not working together. If the countries of this region work together, I strongly believe that this region have much bigger potential for economic development because of geo-political location and geo-economic and human resources. If you drink old wine in the right time and not during working hours, I believe the new package might work. As a bigger country in this region, India’s responsibility is much more than any other country to work with their neighbors, demonstrate flexibility and leadership especially to close neighbors to reach common understanding and find new ways of cooperation. Otherwise, this region might stay much behind than other part of the world. I believe, economic development and enduring peace in the region is not possible without regional cooperation. Therefore, Prime Minister Modi realized the necessity of region cooperation to have new vision and it now depends on how to develop practical ways to work together.
2. Do you share the view that perceptions from India’s neighbours has been clouded

The main obstacle of lack cooperation in this region is negative perception, trust deficit and conspiracy theories. The politicians and citizens of South Asia, always blames outsiders for their own failures and this is major serious problem to overcome. As long as we are suspicious about the intention of each other, there is no room for cooperation, enduring peace and development in the region.

a) by the misunderstanding of ‘Big Brother bullying the smaller neighbour’.

The policy of bullying doesn’t work for collective prosperity within the country and also with the region and in the world. Bullying is tactical issue and not a strategic approach. Afghanistan is a small, poor and less developed country in this region but the bullying, occupation, intervention and tactics of proxy wars have not achieved the objectives of super powers or regional actors. Therefore, as I mentioned above, we need new vision for the region with new mind set to work together.

b) there are vested interests and lobbies for whom being anti-Indian is synonymous with being patriot and nationalist.

We all should be proud of our culture and heritage and to be patriotic. But I believe that the good patriotism is to prevent conflict between countries, provide opportunities for development to their people and help our people to live in harmony and have prosperous living. It is not patriotic to pull our countries into war, conflict or negative competition. I believe, if politicians of any country drag their country to conflict and war, they are not good patriots because the cost of conflict and war is much higher than the cost of finding political solution to the problems. There is no doubt that small minorities favor war for self-interest or use patriotism, nationalism or religion as tools to achieve their vested interest. I believe that politician of this region should not come under the influence of minority groups to use old cards for their vested interests.

c) unjustified explanation for the “trust deficit’?

It depends. Sometimes, the reason are justifiable and sometimes it is not. I believe, legitimate concerns should be addressed and create environment for reducing trust deficit.

d) in the regional context,” India’s pride is also ‘neighbour’s envy’?

Always, misinterpretation and misperception contribute to trust deficit and envy.
3. Do you agree with the view that domestic compulsions arising out of regional and coalition politics at times distort India’s relations with neighbours?

Most politicians are trying to stay in power and present a good image of their activities to their countrymen. They adjust their policies to internal and external pressure. It is up to the politicians how to present their policies for internal and external consumption to achieve their strategic goals. India, as a large and diverse country, it will be always very challenging for politicians to balance domestic interest of different groups and also find ways to work with their neighbours. As I mentioned above, elites and politicians of all countries should educate their countrymen that without regional cooperation and especially with neighbours not possible to bring prosperity and stability to them.

4. The biggest challenge for India’s South Asia diplomacy will be to convince neighbours that India is an opportunity, not a threat. What should India do to ameliorate debilitating political and security differences, stimulate cooperation in various fields to trend towards a more harmonious region?

Physical security is important to have human security but the aim of politicians of the regional countries should not be to provide only physical security to their citizens but the end state should be human security. Physical security should be used as a means for achieving human security. Without having human security, in the long run, the countries of this region will not have physical security as well. Therefore, India as a big nation should take lead to work with all neighbors and working with neighbours should be translated as opportunity not threat. I believe, it will boost prestige of India in the region as well as in the world to show flexibility, find practical ways of cooperation with all neighbors. It won’t be translated as sign of weakness for India as well but will be strength of India to work with all neighbors.

5. Look any which way, it is China that holds the key to India’s peace of mind with its South Asian neighbours. Do you share this viewpoint?

I don’t believe that only big country can hold key’s of cooperation. No country in the region should undermine their small or even weak neighbours. If each country respects other country’s legitimate rights and interest, it will create window of opportunity. If we look to Europe, there are small and big countries but they need each other and they work with each other. Therefore, I strongly believe that we need each other and the responsibilities of big countries are more than the small and weak countries.
Chris Ogden is Lecturer in Asian Security in the School of International Relations, at the University of St Andrews. His research interests concern the interplay between domestic and foreign policy influences in South Asia (primarily India) and East Asia (primarily China). Chris has most recently written a monograph entitled Hindu Nationalism and the Evolution of Contemporary Indian Security (Delhi: Oxford UP, 2014), and completed a textbook on Indian Foreign Policy (Cambridge: Polity, 2014). He is currently finishing a new forthcoming edited volume entitled New South Asian Security: Six Core Relations (Delhi: Orient BlackSwan, 2015). Chris has published various articles on both Indian and Chinese foreign / security policy in Pacific Focus, Strategic Analysis, India Quarterly, Journal of Contemporary Asia, The Round Table, Asian Journal of Political Science and Politics. (March 2015)

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RESPONSE:

1) There have been myriad attempts by generations of Indian leaders to harness better relations with South Asia. Certainly Mr Modi’s approach is aimed at a fresh start for India’s links with the sub-continent and, if successful, can have clear benefits in terms of regional trade, security and stability. In the current era, and with the current rhetoric of India becoming a great power, there is mounting concern that India will only become a global power if she can successfully lead / control her neighbourhood. Modi’s central hope is that high Indian economic growth can trickle down to her region and that South Asia can collectively rise to prominence on India’s rising trajectory. Whilst laudable, I think that these aims are intrinsically held back by issues raised in point 2) below.

2) The asymmetries between India and her neighbours are numerous; New Delhi has the lion’s share of regional GDP, population and landmass and naturally dominates her neighbours (at least materially, if not perceptually). On this basis, India is the “Big Brother” whether she or her neighbours like it or not, and its a reality which is not going to realistically change any time soon. In turn, she is a democratic success story in a region where her neighbours are plagued by insecurities and authoritarianism, making it hard for her policy-makers to find much
political common ground. From this dual basis, India's neighbours do feel innately threatened and their is a tangible trust deficit, which India's leaders can only manage by trying to be as conciliatory (and not pushy) as possible. The only envy would really come from Pakistan, which is the only state in the past (and definitely not today) that had any hope of surmounting India's status.

3) Yes, primarily because so many of India's ethnic groups overspill into her neighbour's territory, making them very deeply inter-connected. Where this precisely impacts, of course depends upon which regional political parties we are analysing.

4) The more that positive relations can be sustained over time, the better the chances of regional stability. This can happen in many ways simultaneously - trade relations, military exchanges, counter-terrorism co-operation - but must persist and show tangible benefits to bear fruit and mitigate against distrust. Shared economic growth and prosperity is the key form of engagement here, primarily as it is the most visible and life-changing to the most amount of people. Overall though it will take time, and negative / toxic histories will be very hard to overturn in the short term.

5) China can trade with India and this can trickle down to South Asia but ultimately South Asia is India's domain, so she must lead the change. It is also inconceivable that New Delhi would allow an outside power overt influence in its neighbourhood, as this would go against decades of her foreign policy behaviour.

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(1) INDIA’S NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY:
AN INSIGHT ANALYSIS

Dr. Manas Chakrabarty
Professor of Political Science
University of North Bengal,
Darjeeling, W.B., India 734013

Chakrabarty.manas@gmail.com

Sumita Saha
Project Fellow (UGC),
Dept. of Political Science
University of North Bengal,
Darjeeling, W.B. 734013

1. Dr. Manas Chakrabarty, M.A. Ph.D., is currently Professor of Political Science, University of North Bengal, Darjeeling, in West Bengal.

Dr. Chakrabarty has carried out extensive research and he has to his credit three books, ninety four published research articles in leading professional national and international journals including some chapters in different books.

Dr. Chakrabarty has by now completed four Major Research Projects, one on "Judicial Behaviour and Judicial Decision Making of the Indian Supreme Court" sponsored by the Indian Council of Social Science Research and the other two on "Women and Politics: A Study of Women Parliamentarians" and "Indian Railway Trade Unions", sponsored by the University Grants Commission. One on “Women Empowerment at the Grass Roots: A Study of Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling Districts sponsored by the University of North Bengal. Currently, he is pursuing another Major Research project entitled, “Self Help Groups: A Tool of Women Empowerment”, sponsored by the U.G.C.
His areas of interest are: Indian Government and Politics, Judicial Behaviour and Judicial Decision Making, Trade Unionism, International Politics and Comparative Politics.

He is also the Director of Centre for Nehru Studies and Gandhian Studies (sponsored by the UGC), Coordinator of SAP(DRS Phase-III) sponsored by the UGC, Programme Coordinator, National Service Scheme at the University, Chairperson in Political Science, Directorate of Distance Education, North Bengal University, and Chairman, Sports Board, North Bengal University.

He has successfully supervised Twenty Ph.D. scholars and another Eight are in the pipeline.

Dr. Chakrabarty is a Life Member of the Indian Political Science Association, Indian Institute of Public Administration and the American Studies Research Center.

2. MISS SUMITA SAHA

Sumita Saha is currently UGC Project Fellow working in a UGC sponsored Major Research Project entitled ‘Self Help Groups and Women Empowerment: A Tool of Women Empowerment’

She has a wide research experience for working under several research projects in the Department of Political Science, University of North Bengal. She has worked under Special Assistance Programme (SAP DRS Phase-II) sponsored by the UGC and one Research Project sponsored by the University of North Bengal.

She has a large number of publications to her credit in journals of national repute.

INTRODUCTION

Relationship with foreign countries is a very intricate and difficult business dealing with the psychology of human beings, the psychology of nations, involving consideration of their background and culture, language and so on. So far as international politics is concerned, neighbour is always important and significant. Just as in personal life of a human being, the neighbour’s role is crucial; similarly, in international
politics also, the neighbouring countries play a crucial role. The pattern of relationship with the neighbours is therefore of paramount importance. The relationship between the two neighbouring countries is always significant not only from the regional politics but also from the point of view of world politics at large. It is very natural to state that if the relationship of the countries, particularly, the neighbouring countries, is friendly, the atmosphere of the region remains filled with good oxygen which produces peace but if it is reverse, the entire environment becomes smoky and poisonous. (Chakrabarty, 2014)

There is no denying the fact that the immediate threat to any country arises from its neighbourhood. Naturally, the maintenance of peace, stability and friendship with neighbouring states are considered basic to a nation's foreign policy. India’s relations with its neighbours therefore constitute a critical component of its foreign policy. (Chakrabarty, 2014)

In this connection it should be stated that the neighbourhood policy not only shapes the foreign policy of a nation but also exerts a tremendous influence on world politics also. On the part of a nation, the neighbourhood policy is largely determined by the security aspect, or in other words, the security is the main concern of foreign policy, particularly with the neighbours of a nation. This principle is significant and important with regard to India also. In the true sense, security has been a major driving force of India’s neighbourhood policy. It is pertinent to note that India’s focus on security related issues is both natural and necessary as this happens to be a core concern and it can be avoided only with greatest amount of risk.

There is no denying the fact that a peaceful neighbourhood is sine qua non for the realization of its growth ambitions. While the increased attention to our neighbourhood policy is to be welcomed, it is too much to suggest that a stable neighbourhood is absolutely mandatory for India’s progress. There are countries, like for example China or South Korea, which despite a fractious relationship with some of their
neighbours, have nevertheless done remarkably well. Accordingly, there is no reason why India cannot do likewise even if it has one or more unfriendly neighbours given good governance and sagacious leadership. While it should certainly strive for a harmonious relationship with all its neighbours, this should not be at the cost of its core national interests and national security as well.

In its exchanges with each of its neighbours, India must not hesitate in spelling out its expectations and laying down red lines that should never be crossed in relation to its core interests. In this context, while India should be relatively relaxed about the linkages developed by its neighbours with other regional or extra regional powers. It is therefore pertinent that proactive steps must be taken to resolve at the earliest the long standing political and economic disputes with the neighbours who would definitely help to minimize misperceptions about India and promote mutual trust amongst the neighbouring countries.

It is very significant to note that the new emphasis in the country's foreign policy is 'Neighbourhood First'. There is no denying the fact that India's neighbourhood policy which would affect the neighbouring countries would contribute significantly to improve the quality of the country's governance and take measures to deal with internal security situation effectively. In view of the prevailing situation and in order to deal with the emerging challenges, the most important aspect that should be given greater focus on the building of a domestic consensus on key issues is definitely India’s neighbourhood policy.

**INDIA SRI LANKA**

Sri Lanka is India’s closest neighbor. It is separated from it at its narrowest point by 22 miles of the sea called the Palk Strait. The implication of such a close proximity is that developments in each country have affected the other. Sri Lanka’s strategic location caused concern to Indian security, particularly because of the possibility of the
involvement of external powers in the ethnic conflict. The presence of external powers therefore can possibly pose a serious threat to the security and unity and integrity of India as well as to regional stability. History bears a clear testimony of the fact that India-Sri Lanka relations are based on a deep and abiding friendship. It is based on shared historical experience and common civilisation and cultural values which are sustained by geographical proximity and ethnic affinity which has contributed greatly for close bilateral relationship.

Despite few strains from time-to-time, it may be said that traditionally, bilateral relations between India and Sri Lanka have by-and-large been a cordial one. It should be pointed out that India has always stood by Sri Lanka’s difficult times and has always tried to extend her helping hand and strived to remove those irritants that stood in the way of maintaining friendly relations. It is really significant to note that no two countries in the world enjoy bilateral relations as unique as India and Sri Lanka, of course with differing characteristics. India is not only Sri Lanka’s closest, but also an important and a powerful neighbour. Relations between the two neighbours stretch to more than two millennia in wide-ranging areas – political, economic, socio-cultural and military. It is discernible that the India-Sri Lanka relations in the post-1990 period have undergone a radical change along with changes in India’s foreign policy perceptions and understandings. It is seen that after the end of the Cold War and the emergence of the US as the sole superpower in the world power structure, India’s foreign policy perceptions have also changed to a great and significant manner. It is also seen that with the fast changing global economic and trade scenario, India’s strategic priorities in the Indian Ocean region have also undergone a radical change during the last two decades. India’s national security perceptions have now been enlarged to include economic security, free trade and commerce, energy security, and social security of the population in addition to territorial integrity and solidarity.
So far as historical facts are concerned, it would be wrong to say that India and Sri Lanka has always maintained good relationship with each other. Rather, as in all cases, the stages of relationship have passed through several bumps. Sri Lanka has a recorded history of more than 2500 years. It is known to us that Emperor Ashoka is one of the most prominent historical landmarks for the majority of Sri Lankans. It was he who brought about a significant metamorphosis in the society with the introduction of Buddhism which could take a very strong root in Sri Lanka. Sri Lankans have been comfortable with the large geographical area of India that was once ruled by their beloved Emperor Ashoka who largely influenced the modern civilization of Sri Lanka to a great extent. In 1980s, the relationship between India and Sri Lanka, reached rock bottom. Except for that phase, the relationship has been congenial with Sri Lanka benefiting from India’s history, culture and values and sharing a common link with respect to democracy, way of life and thinking. Sri Lanka is comfortable with what India is today. It recognizes India as a regional power and an aspiring global power.

Indo- Sri Lankan relationship should be viewed from the perspective of ethnic dimension. It may be stated that Sri Lanka has three major communities which include Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims. The Muslims in Sri Lanka prefer to identify with their religion more than ethnicity. The paradox lies in the fact that Sinhalese are a majority with a minority complex and Tamils are a minority with a majority complex. So far as Tamils are concerned, they constitute only 18 percent of the total population in Sri Lanka. They maintain an ongoing common active link and brotherhood with Tamils in Tamil Nadu. Sinhalese, in comparison to Tamils, feel that they do not have any other place to live in the world. They are heir to a well-preserved Buddhist civilization that seems to have vanished from the sub-continent. As a result, a complex behaviour is discernible among the Sinhalese. The Sinhalese feel isolated and this is one critical tool in understanding the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka.
In the year 2009, efforts on the part of the Sri Lankan government to bring the LTTE to the mainstream and accommodate their grievances within a united Sri Lanka failed. The LTTE used violence to assert their demand for a separate state for Tamils. When terrorism became unbearable and uncompromising, the government of Sri Lanka had no other option but to resort to stringent actions. Presently, Sri Lanka is in the process of consolidating peace through reconciliation and re-democratization of the North and the East.

India is Sri Lanka's closest neighbour. So far as the historical records are concerned, it is seen that the relationship between the two countries is more than 2,500 years old. The records carry the evidence that both the countries have built upon a legacy of intellectual, cultural, religious and linguistic relationship from a long period of time and with the passage of time, relationship between the two countries have also been matured and diversified with the passage of time. So far as the current status of bilateral relationship between India and Sri Lanka is concerned, the relationship has been marked by close political connections, trade relationship which is growing fast and close relationship with regard to the development issues. We also find broad understanding on major issues of international interests. Due to all these factors, the Indo-Sri Lankan bilateral relationship has been founded on a strong base and is leading towards a solid economic development and prosperity.

**INDIA – NEPAL**

From time immemorial, the relations between Nepal and India have been very close and intimate. (Ramakant. 1968). In fact, Indo-Nepal relations have a chequered history. As close neighbours, the countries of India and Nepal share a unique, special and sui generis type of relationship of friendship and cooperation which is characterized by open borders and deep-rooted people-to-people contacts of kinship and culture. As per record, Nepal has an area of 147,181 Sq. Kms. Out of its geographical boundary, it shares a border of over 1850 Kms to the south with as
many as five Indian States, viz, Sikkim, West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and that of Uttarakhand. In view of the fact of the open-border system between Nepal and India, the people-to-people relations among the border inhabitants of both the countries could be established. Specially, the social, cultural, economic and a diversity of other fields have remained unparallel in world history. Since time immemorial, Nepal has been maintaining an open border system with India, which ensures the free-flow of people from one country to another. The country enjoyed open transit even at a time when it was cut off from the rest of the world until the end of the Rana regime in 1951. People of one country can cross over the border without any restriction from any point, although 22 checkpoints which are located at different places along the border area. It is pertinent to note that the arrangement of an open border system with India has been greatly rewarding. It greatly helped to foster friendly relations, mutual understanding and cultural ties among the border inhabitants of the two countries.

So far as geographical position is concerned, Nepal is geographically a landlocked country, located between the world’s two most populous countries i.e. India and the People’s Republic of China. Nepal holds an important place in the region not only due to its size and population but for its strategic location and for the reason that it is a buffer state between the two countries. Nepal borders with India to the east, south and west; what is called India’s “Chicken’s Neck” of Siliguri, this corridor divides Nepal with Bangladesh. It is pertinent to note that the geography compels the country to seek best of relations with immediate neighbours-India and China. The geographical setting, historical and cultural legacy have made relations with India more close and immediate. Similarities in religion and ways of life have made these relations ‘natural’ Relations between the two countries have come to be broad based from the pre-historic time. (Bhattarai, Dinesh & Pradip Khatiwade. 1993).
A close survey reveals the fact that relations between India and Nepal have traditionally been very close since ancient times. It has been possible perhaps due to geographical contiguity and proximity and common religious, linguistic and cultural identities between the two countries. The relations are woven into a fabric by religio-cultural, linguistic and racial threads and really have been unique. In no two countries one can find so much similarity between the peoples and the traditional interaction between them as in India and Nepal. (Upadhyaya S.K., 1995)

It is so because of the geographical location of Nepal and because of the fact of common religious and cultural factors which the two countries share to a very significant extent. A close survey and scrutiny has been pertinent in view of the fact that the factors governing the India Nepal relations have undergone substantial changes over the years. Today, this relationship stands at a cross road searching for a new direction. The dramatic change in the political system of Nepal, the emergence of a new economic thinking involving speedy economic liberalisation and the end of cold war on the international front have together brought about fundamental changes in the parameters that have so far governed the Indo-Nepal relations.

**INDIA AND BANGLADESH**

India has always played a crucial role with regard to Bangladesh. Right from the time of its struggle for independence, India has played a key role. In fact, it seeks to build a new future with Bangladesh. With occasional upheavals, it is now a time to chart a new path of relationship between India and Bangladesh.

To be precise, India does not have a well-defined neighbourhood policy. It is discernible that in recent years, India’s approach has changed considerably. So far as India’s neighbourhood policy is concerned, India must effectively communicate its vision of regional integration to its neighbours. It should enable them to participate profitably in its growing
economy, spell out its ‘non-negotiables’ in matters concerning its security and national interest, maintain linkages at the highest political level, open multiple tracks of communication and take a leadership position in multilateral forums like SAARC and BIMSTEC to bring peace and prosperity to the region through greater cooperation in diverse areas. This will prove effective in improving its relations with its neighbours. India confronts the most critical security challenge of territorial disputes in its neighbourhood.

For India, creating the structures for regional cooperation is also exceptionally challenging. In fact, as one of the main pillars of the SAARC, India has a major role to play and her neighbourhood policy is largely shaped by this factor. So far as the security front is concerned, India maintains a policy which seeks to work with its neighbours, as well as major powers in the world, to defeat terrorism and violent extremism. India has given a significant push to foster connectivity and promoted mutual confidence in multiple areas, including trade and investment.

**CONCLUSION**

At the conclusion it should be stated that the most significant initiative made by the [Narendra Modi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Narendra_Modi) government is the focus on [neighbouring countries](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_adjacent_to_India) and major Asian powers coupled with emphasizing on the two decades old [Look East policy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Look_East_policy). Asia being the major focus area of his foreign policy, Modi and his Foreign Minister, [Sushma Swaraj](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sushma_Swaraj) chose several Asian countries for their initial bilateral visits. He has made state visits to Bhutan and Nepal within the first 100 days of his government, Swaraj too kept Thimpu, Bhutan, Dhaka, Bangladesh, Kathmandu, Nepal among top of her travel itineraries as Foreign Minister. It is therefore clear that India is on a new track regarding her neighbourhood policy and it is expected that with this attitude peace and tranquility would prevail in this region.
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China’s 'Maritime Silk Road’ Initiative and its Implications for India and its Neighbourhood

David Scott

(David Scott has been a lecturer at Brunel University from 1992-2015, where his interests and teaching focussed on various aspects of Asia-Pacific international relations and the impact of China and India in the international system. He is recently retired from teaching, but is still actively researching and undertaking consultancy. A prolific author, Scott has written three books on China’s international relations, edited one book on India’s international relations, and has written many articles on Chinese and Indian foreign policy, and also on the geopolitics of the Pacific Ocean and the Indian Ocean.)

Introduction
An irony has emerged in the Indian Ocean during 2013-2015, cooperative schemes for the Indian Ocean that reveal inter-state competition between two states. The three schemes emerging for Indian Ocean cooperation are on the one side China’s Maritime Silk Road and on the other side India’s Mausam and Spice Route projects. Each of these projects evoke old economic and cultural links that flourished in historical times, but have now been rediscovered. They have become official state-supported projects, designed to be implemented through policies and structures. International Relations (IR) theory in the shape of neo-liberalism would expect to see state cooperation in play with such proposed regional schemes; whereas neo-realism would indicate inter-state power rivalries manifesting itself in such proposed regional structures. The high politics involved in these three schemes shows a process of region formation in which Katzenstein’s constructivist perspective would argue that regions are ‘socially constructed and
politically contested and are thus open to change’. The contestation is change through whose schemes?

This article has a two-fold structure. First, it draws out China’s *Maritime Silk Road* proposal, with regard to its context, purposes and its enunciation in the Indian Ocean region around India. Secondly, it draws out India’s response to it with regard to the ignoement, criticisms and counter-proposals (the *Mausam* and *Spice Route* proposals) by India. It then concludes with evaluating the likely outcome of such Chinese proposals and Indian counter-proposals. Both proposals involve strategic debates in both countries over the respective roles of China and India in the Indian Ocean, a debate which is followed in this article through extended deployment and close analysis of the positions taken in such strategic debates.

**China’s Proposal**

China’s ‘Maritime Silk Road’ (*haishang sichou zhi lu*) concept has become a frequently mooted theme in foreign policy initiatives being pursued by the People’s Republic of China (PRC), ‘it is China’s mission to understand the importance of building a Maritime Silk Road and take effective actions at present and for a certain period to come’. Past historical links, and voyages by Zheng He through the South China Sea and across the Indian Ocean in the Ming period, formed a popular historical context for Chinese scholars. Subsequently, since autumn 2013, this historical framework has become a frequently repeated
mantra at the Foreign Ministry, at *Xinhua* the official state press agency, and among Chinese political analysts.

China’s *Maritime Silk Road* concept was first unveiled by the Chinese leadership in the autumn of 2013. In September, the Chinese Prime Minister Li Keqiang mused that ‘as early as over 2,000 years ago, China and Southeast Asia opened the maritime Silk Road. Today we are adding a new chapter to this historical splendour’.5 The following month, in October 2013, the Chinese President Xi Jinping gave the highest seal of official approval to the concept in a widely profiled speech to the Indonesia Parliament where he stressed China’s “effort to build the Maritime Silk Road of the 21st century”.6 In turn, the following week Li Keqiang reiterated this current phase of Chinese diplomacy at the 16th ASEAN-China Summit held in Brunei, with his hope that ASEAN and China ‘join hands building the ‘Maritime Silk Road’ in the 21st century, and to focus on implementing cooperation on maritime economy, maritime connectivity, environmental protection, scientific research, search and rescue as well as fishery’.7 This was reiterated in March 2014 in Li Keqiang’s official *Report on the Work of the Government* and his pledge there that ‘we will intensify the planning and building of ... a 21st century maritime Silk Road’.8 The Prime Minister repeated this pledge in his speech to the Boao Forum for Asia annual conference in April 2014, ‘China will continue to promote the important projects of ... the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road this year’.9 *Xinhua* followed Li’s speech with headlines of ‘China Accelerates Planning to Re-connect Maritime Silk
Road’ detailed how this would be involving ‘infrastructure construction of countries along the route, including ports of Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh’, in which China would ‘coordinate customs, quality supervision, e-commerce and other agencies to facilitate the scheme, which is also likely to contain attempts to build free trade zones’. From a geographic, but also geopolitical, point of view these were countries surrounding India.

Although the Maritime Silk Road project was first floated with application to South China Sea and South-east China, it has been unraveled right across the Indian Ocean. With regard to audiences in the Eastern Indian Ocean, Xi Jinping’s important presentation of it in Indonesia in October 2013 has already been mentioned, with Wang Yi arguing that ‘we see Indonesia as a key partner in the construction of a 21st century Maritime Silk Road’. The project went on during 2014 to receive positive responses from officials from Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Myanmar, and ASEAN. Elsewhere in the Bay of Bengal, Bangladesh was similarly wooed in June 2014, ‘Bangladesh is an important country along the Maritime Silk Road and China welcomes the participation of [the] Bangladeshi side in the construction of the cooperation initiatives of ... the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road’.

The Western Indian Ocean was also brought into China’s Maritime Silk Road project. Pakistan’s support for the project was no surprise given its close strategic relationship with China, which included the building up of Gwadar as a deep water port. Arab countries in the
Middle East were flattered by Xi Jinping’s invocation of the Maritime Silk Route benefits at the sixth ministerial conference of the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum in June 2014. Oman, by the choke point of the Strait of Hormuz, was sought out by Chinese diplomats; as was Yemen, by the choke point of the Bab-el-Mandeb. Egypt also gave its public support for the route coming up through the Red Sea and Suez. By the middle of 2014, Kenya’s port of Mombassa was included in maps of the envisaged maritime route, with China’s project attracting positive Kenyan responses.

Within the Indian Ocean, the Maritime Silk Road proposal was top of the agenda on President Xi’s trip to the Maldives in September 2014. Before the President’s visit, the Maldives had already been an envisaged partner for China in the implementation of project during the summer. In his initial call at the Maldives, Xi Jinping took to the local press to extol the proposal:

China and Maldives should intensify practical cooperation. China calls for the creation of a 21st century maritime silk road. Strategically located in the Indian Ocean, Maldives was an important stop of the ancient maritime silk road. China welcomes Maldives to get actively involved in building the 21st century maritime silk road by leveraging its own strength. China looks forward to working with Maldives to speedily translate this cooperation initiative into reality.
Maldivian support for the concept was indicated by the *Joint Statement* point 6 that ‘the Maldives welcomes and supports the proposal put forward by China to build the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road’ and ‘is prepared to actively participate in relevant cooperation. The two sides agreed to enhance cooperation in other areas, such as marine, economy, and security’.

Interestingly, even as the Maldives government embraced China’s proposal, Maldives’s opposition leader denounced the government’s identification with China’s *Maritime Silk Road* proposal as being too pro-Chinese and being too anti-Indian a decision.

As a follow on, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the Maldives to officially join China’s Maritime Silk Road policy was signed after the first ever Joint Committee on Trade and Economic Cooperation, held in Beijing in December 2014.

China also actively pursued Sri Lanka as a *Maritime Silk Road* partner throughout 2014. When Gamini Lakshman, Sri Lanka’s Minister of External Affairs, visited China in February 2014; according to China’s Foreign Ministry, the leaders agreed to ‘fully expand maritime cooperation and jointly build the maritime silk road of the 21st century’.

Later on, when Sri Lanka’s President Mahinda Rajapaksa visited China in May 2014 there was further positive references to the Maritime Silk Road initiative in their *Joint Communiqué*.

This cooperative language reached a crescendo in September 2014, when President Xi arrived straight from extolling the *Maritime Silk Road*
concept two days earlier in the Maldives. In Sri Lanka, China’s President again took to the local press to push the concept:

Sri Lanka has envisaged itself becoming a five-fold hub: maritime, aviation, commerce, energy and knowledge, which coincides with China’s proposal to build the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road ... China and Sri Lanka need to turn our wishes into a driving force and enhance exchanges and cooperation between us in maritime, business, infrastructure, defense, tourism and other areas so as to accelerate the renewal of the Maritime Silk Road for the benefit of our two countries and two peoples ... I believe that the ship of China-Sri Lanka friendship and cooperation is bound to brave the wind and waves along the magnificent 21st Century Maritime Silk Road to pursue the dream of national development.30

China found a ready recipient in Sri Lanka. Consequently the joint Plan of Action clause 12, signed by China and Sri Lanka, recorded that ‘Sri Lanka welcomes and supports the proposal put forward by China to build the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, and will actively participate and cooperate in this initiative’,31 Practical details were fleshed out whereby ‘the two sides agreed to further promote investment in the Magampura/ Hambantota Port Project. The two sides agreed to enhance maritime cooperation and proceed with the construction of the Colombo Port City Project’; and also announced ‘the establishment of a Joint Committee on Coastal and Marine Cooperation to explore the feasibility
of areas for cooperation which would include ocean observation, ecosystem protection, marine and coastal zone management, search'. This Action Plan went on in its following clause that ‘the two sides agreed to strengthen defence cooperation’. However, Rajapaksa’s unexpected loss of power in the January 2015 Sri Lankan elections brought into question this marked pro-China tilt by Sri Lanka.

This *Maritime Silk Road* is envisaged as an East-West thoroughfare across the South China Sea and Indian Ocean, in which the concept ‘represents the common concerns, interests and expectations of all countries’ in the region. One common interest stressed in the concept by China is cooperation to avert terrorist-piracy disruption to the choke points of the Indian Ocean, the Gulf of Aden and Strait of Malacca. Although the obvious purpose of China’s concept is mutual trade flows and economic cooperation, it also draws China into a wider presence. In part, the concept operates along the ocean paths; ‘sea lane safety is the key to sustaining the development of the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road’. In part, the concept also involves land infrastructure around the maritime rim: ‘ports along the new Maritime Silk Road will act as “posts on sea” that handle cargo and resupply ships and people’, and so ‘China needs to work with countries along the road to build marine infrastructure ... China needs to support the construction of ports, wharves’. Threats to the sea lanes like piracy and maritime terrorism imply potential security commitments, ‘naturally,
fighting against non-traditional security challenges will become an important part of the Maritime Silk Road.\textsuperscript{38}

China’s \textit{Maritime Silk Road} initiative reflects a wider dual Silk Roads diplomacy across land and sea routes, ‘long term systemic engineering’ as one Chinese scholar described them.\textsuperscript{39} The Assistant Foreign Minister Liu Jianchao gave weighting to both elements at the \textit{Asia Cooperation Dialogue Forum} on Silk Road Cooperation in May 2014 ‘two major initiatives of building an Economic Belt along the Silk Road and a 21st Century Maritime Silk Road (‘one Belt and one Road’).’\textsuperscript{40} He stressed the positive intentions and reception behind these approaches ‘to carry forward the spirit embodied by the ancient Silk Road’ to achieve ‘mutual benefit and win-win progress, further promote mutual understanding and trust between Asian countries, advance Asia’s economic integration, and contribute to peace, stability and common development in Asia’.\textsuperscript{41}

In part, the concept is couched as a positive alternative to the security-focussed partnerships embedded in Indian, Australian, Japanese and US adoption of ‘Indo-Pacific’ terminology. As such, it represents a ‘charm offensive’ by China.\textsuperscript{42} In part, the concept is an attempt to counterbalance the negative imagery caused in Southeast Asia by assertive Chinese claims in the South China Sea. In part, the concept is an attempt to counterbalance the negative imagery caused by Indian perceptions of a (‘string of pearls’) encirclement policy from China towards India.\textsuperscript{43} In part, the concept is an exercise in recovering the
history of the old maritime Silk Route of pre-colonial times. However, such a recovery of history has lessons for the present, with the concept operating as very much a political tool now for expanding China’s soft power, and indeed also spreading China’s maritime-naval power.\textsuperscript{44} Hence the \textit{Xinhua} report in August 2014 on how ‘a dance drama dedicated to the glorious days of expanding Chinese influence titled “The Dream of the Silk Road on the Sea”’ was staged at the National Center for the Performing Arts in Beijing.\textsuperscript{45}

When initially broached it was unclear what the Maritime Silk Road actually would be in physical or economic terms; i.e. what infrastructure or economic activities would it involve and where and what would the economic justification for those activities? Would it be a series of unrelated infrastructure projects, between China and recipient countries; and if not, in what way would such bilateral projects would be related – in economic or other terms? Or would the project relate to a series of production zone? Thus ‘while much of the public discussion to date has focused on ports and infrastructure, probably of greater significance is the development of new production and distribution chains across the region, with China at its centre’.\textsuperscript{46} The comparisons drawn were ‘akin to Japan’s “flying geese” strategy of the 1970s when Japanese companies outsourced component production to successive tiers of lower-cost states in Southeast Asia’, a process whereby ‘if implemented, the initiative would bind countries in the Bay of Bengal and the northern Indian Ocean much closer to the Chinese economy’.\textsuperscript{47}
By the end of 2014 there had been some clarification, and financial underpinning. In November 2014, China announced of a new US$ 40 billion infrastructure-and-trade financing mechanism called the Silk Road Fund. The State Council would underpin about 65 percent through tapping foreign currency reserves, with 15 percent from the China Investment Corp, 15 percent from the Export-Import Bank of China and 5 percent from the China Development Bank Capital Co. Future injections may be ordered if investment demand warranted such injections.

India’s Response

With regards to India, Chinese rhetoric has sought to bring India into the scheme. The Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi visited India in June 2014, complete with assertions from the Foreign Ministry official spokespersons that ‘the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road ... will enable China and India to link up their development strategies, complement and reinforce each other and achieve common development’. 48

China reiterated this invitation for India to participate in the Maritime Silk Road initiative when President Xi visited India in September 2014, immediately following his trips to the Maldives and to Sri Lanka. Xi’s message to his Indian audience was to push economic cooperation; ‘we need to ... discuss the initiatives of the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road’. 49 The Chinese media was clear on its potential, ‘the Maritime Silk Road is another
important field of China-India cooperation' and 'can open an Indo-Asia-Pacific era'.

However, simultaneously in an extended analysis by Zhao Minghao, there were more unsettled undertones. She admitted that although the Maritime Silk Road 'initiative is welcomed and supported by most countries, some are still suspicious of Beijing's long-term policy intentions'. The word 'some' was pointed; 'some India strategists claim that the ports Beijing helps build in South Asia will become its overseas military bases and that China is engaged in assembling a 'string of pearls' to encircle India'. However, her conclusion was not particularly reassuring for India. She recognised that 'as China is becoming a maritime power and conducting activities more frequently in the Indian Ocean, India inevitably feels worried'; yet still she welcomed how 'with the gradual implementation ... of a 21st century maritime Silk Road ... China will further expand its footprint in South Asia and the Indian Ocean'.

Such an expanding Chinese footprint immediately arises Indian disquiet; hence Shashi Tharoor's sense that 'the Silk Road initiative has aroused significant geopolitical apprehension" in which "these fears have a strong historical basis'. Indian commentators lament how 'several countries are willing to accept these distorted historical narratives for economic reasons'. Thus, on the one hand, Beijing invokes Zheng He's voyages across the Indian Ocean in the fifteenth century as an 'envoy of friendship and knowledge'. On the other hand, Tharoor interprets them
as missions ‘to install friendly rulers and control strategic chokepoints in the Indian Ocean’. Consequently, ‘reminding them [Indian Ocean states] of this painful past may not be entirely in China’s interest’.  

Indian responses to China’s Maritime Silk Road proposal have been three-fold, ignoring it, criticising it, and counter-proposing with its own (Mausam, Spice Route) proposals.

With regard to ignoring China’s Maritime Silk Road initiative, the Chinese Special Representative Yang Jiechi seemingly invited India to officially participate in the initiative during discussions with the then Indian National Security Adviser Shivshankar Menon during the 17th round of border talks held in February 2014. However, no clear or public response ensued from the Indian side to the Chinese initiative. During the rest of the Singh administration’s period in office, from November 2013 (when the initiative was launched by President Xi in his speech to the Indonesian Parliament) to losing office in May 2014 (when the Singh administration lost the Indian general election), India remained pretty silent on the Chinese initiative. Shivshankar Menon referred to China’s push the following month, ‘she [China] is also keen to involve us in connectivity projects, such as .... the New Economic Silk Road’, but gave no comments on the merits or not of the project. In part, this official Indian silence was because of the imminence of their general election, with neither the incumbent Congress administration of Manmohan Singh, correctly seen as facing imminent electoral defeat, nor the then
opposition BJP leadership under Narendra Modi, being in a position to commit India in any definite sense to new foreign policy initiatives.

The incoming Modi administration made little difference to this official Indian ignorement of China’s *Maritime Silk Road* proposal. When India’s Vice-President, Mohammad Ansari, visited China in June 2014, the Chinese government raised the issue of India’s participation in (i.e. support for) China’s *Maritime Silk Road* initiative. The Indian response was in effect no response, ‘in the discussions in the last two days the subject has been mentioned. We have asked for more details to be able to study the proposal in all its fullness’.\(^6^0\) In contrast to the joint statements drawn up in Xi’s preceding visits to the Maldives and Sri Lanka, and despite Xi’s own calls in the Indian media for similar China-India Maritime Silk Road cooperation, it was significant that in the *Joint Statement* drawn up between Modi and Xi there was general talk of economic cooperation, but no mention of the Maritime Silk Road, or indeed of the Indian Ocean.\(^6^1\) In short, India remained studiously and deliberately ‘silent’ on this Chinese proposal under Modi as it had been under Singh.\(^6^2\)

Chinese sources in effect admitted this Indian avoidance of giving a response. In an official Press Briefing on September 18th 2014, Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hong Lei was asked ‘do you think India will second and join China’s proposal of building the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road’, a question that he did not answer.\(^6^3\) The following day, September 19th, it became clearer what India was ready to second
and join, and what it was not. On the one hand, Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hong Lei stated how 'Xi proposed that the two countries speed up the building of the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor, carry out cooperation under frameworks such as the [overland] Silk Road Economic Belt, the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road and the Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank'. On the other hand, Hong followed this by giving the Indian response; which was that 'Modi stated that the Indian side will deliberate and join China's proposals considering the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor and the Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank'. In effect, two of the four proposals made there by Xi, namely the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor, and the Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank, were welcomed by India as ones they wanted to participate in, whereas the overland and maritime Silk Road projects being mooted by Xi received no response.

A similar situation was witnessed when India's External Affairs Minister, Sushma Swaraj visited China in February 2015. Her Chinese hosts explicitly advocated the merits of the Maritime Silk Road, but amid other points of economic cooperation the Indian minister refused to include the Maritime Silk Road in her points of economic cooperation for the future.

An underlying reason for this relative silence during Indian administrations was because China's Maritime Silk Road proposal remained, and remains, an ambiguous 'chalice'. Rajeev Chaturvedy's
analysis of the proposal in April 2014 illustrated the difficulties for India. The significance of the *Maritime Silk Road* (MSR) proposal was noted as ‘the thrust on reviving the ancient maritime route is the first global strategy for enhancing trade and fostering peace, proposed by the new Chinese leaders’. However, having noted its economic purpose, he went on that ‘more importantly, it aspires to improve China’s geo-strategic position ... The MSR places China in the “middle” of the “Middle Kingdom” and is an effort in initiating a “grand strategy”’. He then went on note that for China:

The MSR will also be helpful in promoting certain strategic objectives — for example, in supporting friends and clients, neutralising similar activities by other naval powers, or merely by showcasing one’s maritime power. Indeed, naval power has certain advantages as an instrument of diplomacy. Naval forces are more resilient, and they have greater visibility.

While he concluded that ‘the hope is that the MSR, which served more for trade and establishing friendly relations would continue to do so in the revived form, rather than create new naval rivalries or power displays’, in many ways his preceding comments pointed the other way, heightened India-China naval rivalry in the Indian Ocean surrounding the *Maritime Silk Road* proposal from China.
This is not to say that Indians have not used the *Maritime Silk Road* term themselves. Cooperative usage predates Xi’s official usage by a decade. In 2004 Gurpreet Khurana was arguing that ‘the sea-route extending from the North Arabian Sea to the Sea of Japan through the Indian Ocean is akin to the “New Silk Route” and its protection becomes a convergent strategic priority for many states’.\(^7\) Two years later, his formulation was of a ‘Maritime Silk Route’ going across the Indian Ocean, in which there were India-China shared interests between India and China with regards to sea lane stability and economic trade to foster cooperation in the future.\(^7\)

However, when faced with Chinese proposal in 2013 for shaping a *Maritime Silk Road*, neo-realism interpretations now make such a proposal problematic for many Indian analysts. Indian analysts openly questioned China’s motives when the initiative was first announced in autumn 2013, arguing that ‘maritime history illustrates that states have relied on maritime power for a full realisation of their power potential. Thus it is no surprise that China is pushing the MSR as a soft power projection in the region’.\(^7\) The Chinese proposal was positively couched and stressed cooperation, so was difficult for India to openly reject. Indeed, the Chinese proposal was well within the orbit of general Indian government rhetoric on the desirability of closer economic cooperation with China. However, the ‘dilemma’ for India is that China’s proposal explicitly envisages a greater Chinese presence in the Indian Ocean.\(^7\) This remains something that India is uneasy about. India may not be
able to keep China out of the Indian Ocean, but that is different from actively welcoming it in. As Raja Mohan noted, an Indian government ‘might have a hard time selling the idea to the Indian strategic establishment that has long been wary of Chinese navy’s rising naval profile in the Indian Ocean’, and which had already ‘viewed with much suspicion Chinese construction of port infrastructure in Pakistan (Gwadar) and Sri Lanka (Hambantota)’.76

Consequently, both the Singh and Modi governments faced a quandary over the Chinese initiative throughout 2014. Without Indian participation, China’s Maritime Silk Road initiative threatens to economically bypass India and reduce India’s influence in the Indian Ocean. Indian participation offers the ‘opportunity’ and prospect of India helping to shape the initiative’s operation in the Indian Ocean, yet such Indian participation will legitimise further and deeper Chinese involvement in Indian Ocean affairs.77 China’s initiative could also overshadow the Mekong-India Economic Corridor (MIEC) proposal being pushed by India, as part of a wider Mekong-Ganga Cooperation (MGC) framework which link Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam with India, and does not involve China. Chinese commentary on India’s silence is pointed; ‘instead of taking an explicit stance on Beijing’s initiatives such as the “One Belt and One Road” [Silk Road] initiative’, India in contrast ‘welcomes Washington’s Indo-Pacific Economic Corridor project in exchange of US and Japan’s support for its Mekong-Ganga Cooperation project’.78 The reason for the Chinese commentator was
simple and accurate; India's different attitudes toward China in strategy and economy show its mentality over the bilateral relations: It views China as its competitor in Indo-Pacific geopolitics.79

The second Indian response was to criticise China's Maritime Silk Road proposal. As already noted, the Indian government remained silent over the Chinese proposal, which were difficult to officially criticise given their positive cooperative tenor. However, a battery of Indian commentators, unrestrained by not having to be diplomatic in their language, continued to show scepticism over the Chinese motives and purposes behind the proposal. In that vein, the former Foreign Secretary Kanwal Sibal noted, in an article reprinted on the Ministry of External Affairs website, that:

China's proposition of a maritime silk route connecting the Pacific and Indian oceans is part of its propaganda drive to convince the world about its peaceful rise. Its actions do not match its protestations ... The cynicism behind China's proposal is glaring ... India has been invited to join the Chinese proposal in what is clearly a bid to unsettle it diplomatically ... China's maritime silk route proposal is too self-serving to receive our support.80

At the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, Abhijit Singh voiced 'suspicions of geopolitical game play by China' in China's Maritime Silk Road concept.81 Retired military figures were blunt. Arun Sahgal felt that
underpinning this concept ‘the core of this thinking is based in the ruling Chinese elite’s belief to dominate the peripheral and regional discourse through economic, cultural and political influence’. 82

Chinese commentators may have explained the Chinese proposal as a non-threatening antidote to the String of Pearls encirclement theory, but some Indian commentators equated it as such. For example, Chand argued that ‘the “Maritime Silk Road” will also be linked with the existing “String of Pearls”’, that ‘both “String of Pearls” and “Maritime Silk Road” will provide China with naval bases in the Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean’; and so would thereby ‘reinforce China’s deepening economic presence in the Indian Ocean region and in India’s neighbourhood’.83 At the National Maritime Foundation, N. Manoharan warned about dependency on China arising from Sri Lankan (and others’) embrace of the Chinese concept.84

The third Indian response to China’s Maritime Silk Road project was to push cooperative initiatives for the Indian Ocean which did not involve China. Both IORA and the IONS remain Indian Ocean structures where India can continue to pursue economic cooperation and maritime cooperation with other Indian Ocean states without having China as a member. Even more directly, India’s Mausam and Spice Route projects has been set up on Indian terms for explicit Indian Ocean application.

The Mausam (‘Seasons’) Project is set up to run from 2014 to 2019.85 India’s intention to carry out the Mausam project was
announced on June 20 2014 at the 38th session of the World Heritage Committee at Doha, Qatar. Its title derives from the regular seasonal monsoon trade winds that knitted the Indian Ocean together in a regular pattern of trade throughout the year. Such a historical pattern of Indian Ocean cultural-economic linkages in which India played a pivotal role was profiled in Kirti Chaudhuri’s magisterial 1985 survey *Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750*. If Western colonialism disrupted that Indo-centric Indian Ocean, a post-colonial rising India is now seeking to recover that setting of Indian Ocean pre-eminence. Its mission entwines the (culturally) past and (politically) present:

At the macro level it aims to re-connect and re-establish communications between countries of the Indian Ocean world ... Project ‘Mausam’ seeks to transcend present-day national and ethnic boundaries, documenting and celebrating the common cultural values and economic ties of the Indian Ocean ‘world’. This will not only strengthen current ties between countries across the Ocean, but also set a precedent for new bridges of co-operation and continued relations and interactions ... Project ‘Mausam’ is an exciting, multi-disciplinary project that rekindles long-lost ties across nations of the Indian Ocean ‘world’ and forges new avenues of cooperation and exchange. \(^87\)
Because it is being handled by the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, at first sight the Mausam Project would seem to be just a non-governmental, educative project.

However, the Mausam Project defines itself in more official ways; ‘the project, launched by India ... is a Ministry of Culture project’ and that ‘as an initial idea, the project was proposed by Mr. Ravindra Singh, Secretary, Ministry of Culture’, with the ‘Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA), New Delhi as the nodal coordinating agency’. The involvement of the Culture Secretary already gives this project some domestic political linkage, while its appearance on the Ministry of External Affairs website gives it further external political linkage. There, the Mausam Project was explained in July 2014 in mixed cultural and communication terms:

Project Mausam ... would reconnect and re-establish communications between countries of the Indian Ocean, leading to an enhanced understanding of cultural values and concerns ... Project Mausam would link cultural route and maritime landscape across the Indian Ocean ... It would thus contribute to the dissemination of culture and civilisation across the Indian Ocean. It was seen as very much India’s initiative, ‘Project Mausam is an exciting, multi disciplinary trans-national project’ that looks backwards “to rekindle long lost ties across the Indian Ocean Littoral’ and looks
forward to forge ‘new avenues of cooperation and exchange between India and states of the Indian Ocean’.\textsuperscript{90}

In effect, this cultural-historical project was re-announced in September 2014, when Foreign Secretary Sujatha Singh held a meeting with culture secretary Ravindra Singh ‘to discuss how to give shape to the [Mausam] project’.\textsuperscript{91} The fact that this politicisation of the \textit{Mausam} Project was carried out during President’s Xi’s trip to India, when India was fending off Chinese attempts to have the Maritime Silk Road initiative welcomed by India, indicates its nature as something of a PR exercise. Such meetings have led commentators to see the \textit{Mausam} project as ‘garbed in India’s cultural linkages but with a serious strategic dimension, in light of the Chinese emphasis on the maritime silk route’.\textsuperscript{92} This is why Indian commentators have reckoned that the \textit{Mausam} project ‘is Narendra Modi Government’s most significant foreign policy initiative to counter-balance the maritime silk route of China’.\textsuperscript{93}

Nevertheless, though re-presented by the India’s Ministry of External Affairs during Xi’s trip to India in September, at the start of 2015, this proposal has little serious further economic or political elaboration from India.

The \textit{Spice Route Project} is a sub-national initiative from the Kerala state government launched in late 2013. It has trans-national aims for the Indian Ocean. On the Ministry of External Affairs website, it has official status as ‘an important initiative of the State Government of Kerala, supported by the Government of India is the ongoing effort to
revive the two millennia Spice Route’. It has a mixed socio-economic purpose in which ‘besides re-establishing Kerala’s maritime trade relations with 31 countries associated with the ancient spice route’, the project ‘seeks to rekindle interest among modern travellers to this ancient maritime route which was responsible for bringing travellers across the world in ancient times to India’. Tourism has been the most obvious feature of it to date, as shown in the support of the United Nations World Tourism Organisation, with the Spice Route’s evocation of cultural heritage gaining it support from UNESCO. However, like the Mausam proposal, the Spice Route project has little practical economic or political underpinnings. Unlike China’s Maritime Silk Road initiative, Kerala’s Spice Route project has played no part in India’s diplomatic relations with other Indian Ocean nations.

Conclusions

Where does this leave these three cooperative schemes? In some ways, China’s Maritime Silk Road initiative though packaged in 2013 as a new framework has already been operating for several years through infrastructure port projects around the Indian Ocean, at places like Sittwe, Chittagong, Hambantota, Gwadar and Mombassa. These infrastructure port projects were precisely what were already being dubbed a string of pearls encirclement by worried Indian analysts. The difference this time is that such bilateral projects are now being knitted together by China into a wider regional narrative, as seen under the reassuring title of the Maritime Silk Road for the 21st Century. As India’s
Minster for external Affairs Sushma Swaraj flew into Beijing in February 2015, China admitted after over a year canvassing the Maritime Silk Road that ‘nevertheless there remains mistrust in China’s strategic motivation behind the Silk Road proposals’ on the part of some countries, most notably India.98

India’s ‘reticence’ reflects ongoing hesitation and palpable unease over Chinese motives and consequences of the Maritime Silk Road proposal.99 This explains Indian silence, criticisms and counter-proposals. However, it is unlikely that any of these responses will work as effective enough options for India. Remaining silent merely allows China to develop links with other Indian Ocean countries without India’s countervailing presence. India’s Mausam counter-proposal remains more of a theoretic academic-led exercise set up to run from 2014 to 2019, and which could languish in a rather vague abstract fashion. In contrast, China’s Maritime Silk Road proposal has been running since 2013 and is already operating at the level of government to government interaction and action. The cultural historical study of the past which is prominent in the Mausam project, and the heritage-tourism emphasis of the Spice Route proposal perhaps give India less of a cutting edge with proposals when faced with the more overt official adoption, political pushing and economic rationale of the Maritime Silk Road initiative by the Chinese leadership.

Remaining critical may reflect accurate analysis by sceptical Indian commentators of Chinese motives, but such a response by the
government might nonetheless be irrelevant if other Indian Ocean states gravitate regardless of India towards China’s proposed *Maritime Silk Road* route. As one Indian analyst admitted, ‘placing these [Chinese] proposals in the ice pail is not good idea, however. India must realise that these [Maritime Silk Road] routes will come up irrespective of its participation’.

India’s non-participation is not likely to stop other Indian Ocean actors from participating in it, ‘countries across the region are drooling at the prospect of big infrastructure and cheap Chinese finance’ exemplified in how ‘Sri Lanka and the Maldives have lapped up Mr. Xi’s plans for a “maritime silk road”’. India may then have to join in China’s proposal.

Despite questionable Chinese motives in proposing the *Maritime Silk Road* initiative, the initiative might anyhow contribute towards international socialization of China and weave in levels of economic interdependence that IR neo-liberalism and neo-functionalism would argue will soften antagonisms, and change Chinese normative values over the longer term. Indeed, Srinath Raghavan argued that despite Chinese motivations to increase its presence and soft power, India, too, could benefit much from joining these [Maritime Silk Road] ventures. For instance, the upgradation of our coastal infrastructure would considerably aid our emergence as a serious maritime — not just naval — power’. Here, India’s basic geopolitical advantages of location will surely continue to give her central place in the feasibility of any working cooperative scheme in the Indian Ocean, whether it is being initially pushed by China, India or indeed others? Furthermore, even as China
continues to push further west into India’s backyard of the Indian Ocean, India can respond not by fruitlessly and unavailingly trying to block China’s presence in the Indian Ocean, but by going further east back along the mooted *Maritime Silk Road* into China’s backyard of the South China Sea. Such an ongoing strengthening by India of strategic partnerships along the maritime silk route with China-concerned actors like Australia, Vietnam, Japan and the US return us to a logic of classical geopolitics and IR realism.

**2015 updates:**

February 1: During her trip to China, Sushma Swaraj says China’s Maritime Silk Road initiative needs to be *synergy based* for India to consider getting involved.

March 4: Chinese ambassador Lu Yucheng claims that China’s Maritime Silk Road initiative could be *linked* to India’s Mausam and Spice Route projects as a “new starting point and a new bright spot” in China-India cooperation.

March 22-22: India’s *Cotton Route* alternative highlighted at the “India and Indian Ocean” conference at Bhubaneshwar.

March 26: The new President Maithripala Sirisena reaffirms Sri Lanka’s participation in China’s Maritime Silk Road initiative in his trip to China.

May: China pushes its Maritime Silk Road initiative for Modi trip to China.

**Notes**


10. ‘China accelerates planning to re-connect Maritime Silk Road’, Xinhua, April 16 2014. Also A. Krishnan, ‘China’s “maritime Silk Road” to focus on infrastructure’, The Hindu, April 20 2014.
15. ‘China, Myanmar vow to well implement cooperation agreements’, Xinhua, June 28 2014.
19. ‘Xi Jinping attends opening ceremony of Sixth Ministerial Conference of China-Arab States Cooperation Forum and delivers important speech stressing to promote Silk Road spirit and deepen China-Arab


32. Ibid.
33. Ibid.
34. Liu, ‘Reflections on maritime partnership: Building the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road’.
35. ‘Along “Southern Silk Road”, deeper anti-terror cooperation needed’. Xinhua, June 7 2014.
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid.
41. Liu, ‘Speech by Assistant Foreign Minister Liu Jianchao at the opening ceremony of the Asia Cooperation Dialogue Forum on Silk Road Cooperation’.

45. ‘The Dream of the Silk Road on the Sea’ performance dazzles Beijing audience, Xinhua, August 27 2014.
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86. P. Shasstri and P. John, ‘Mausam to link 10 Gujjarat Sites to Indian Ocean World’, *Times of India*, July 24 2014


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89. B. Mukherjee, ‘International recognition of India’s world heritage - New, exciting projects on anvil’, *In Focus (MEA)*, July 10, at http://www.mea.gov.in/in-focus-article.htm?23601

90. Ibid.

91. Narendra Modi’s ‘Mausam’ manoeuvre to check China’s maritime might’, *Times of India*, September 16 2014.

92. Ibid.


94. Mukherjee, ‘International recognition of India’s world heritage - New, exciting projects on anvil’.

95. Ibid.


101. Ibid.

102. Ibid.
India’s neighbourhood policy post-2014

Balaji Chandramohan

(He is a Visiting Fellow with Future Directions International, a policy think tank based in Perth. He alternates his life between New Zealand and India.)

As with any emerging Great Power in International Arena, India too has both an ambitious but complicated relationship among its neighbouring countries. The Indian government which assumed charge after the general elections in May 2014, has rightly understood that for if India to play a major role in Global Politics, first it needs to be able to have a consensus among its neighbours.

The above understanding was reflected when the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi took oath office in May 2014 when he decided to invite the Head of States of South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation for the oath taking ceremony heralding a new chapter in diplomatic initiative coming from the largest country in the South Asia.

If in the past since Independence in 1947, India had oscillated playing a praetorian role among its neighbours (as and when asked by the host government and when India felt the role as a part of its national security objective) and had followed a distant cold mode as exhibited to Sri Lanka after the Indian Peace Keeping Operation, in Bangladesh after its Independence in 1971 and Myanmar for most part of the military rule, the new government has understood in an effort to shed its so called “Big Brother” policy it needs to involve the neighbouring countries in luring through soft diplomacy tools such as trade and accelerating development therefore heralding the need if required in the future to push India’s military presence in the accommodating countries.

India’s Neighbourhood First Policy

Being the largest country in South Asia and an influential player in the wider Asia-Pacific region, it is no doubt that India is looked for a mentoring role by the smaller countries in the South Asian region.

Though India tried to solve the above issue multi-laterally through the initiative of the South Asian Association in the 1980’s and bi-laterally whenever the occasion needed, there is no doubt that a lot was left behind for India to catch up especially when India’s northern neighbour
in China has started to expand its range and horizon particularly since 1980's.

Therefore, one of the important tasks for the government that got elected in 2014 is to refocus on its neighbourhood policy by announcing the Neighbourhood as a first area of India's responsibility. This policy though not spelt out could be understood as India's Neighbourhood Policy.

As a part of the policy was to make India's presence first felt through state visits which were much wanted. So, the Indian Prime Minister by making his first state visit to Bhutan has sent a signal that New Delhi is serious in taking its neighbours on board for its overall image maker over and extending its influence in the wider area of the Asia Pacific region. The positive signal given by the Indian government to Bhutan is felt as after nearly a decade both India and Bhutan have stepped their counter-insurgency operations in both the countries.

Further, the Indian Prime Narendra Modi also took the initiative to visit Nepal for bi-lateral and multi-lateral reasons.

Second, the importance of having the regional multi-lateral forum such as South Asian Association for Regional Co-Operation is much wanted. Though India was considered to be the brain behind the regional multi-lateral organization, it's true that India's initiative in expanding the scope of diplomatic economic and even military orientation of the SAARC was much wanted in the last two decades.

Third, one of the important strategic aspect it seems internalized by the Narendra Modi government is that despite South Asia at present is fragmented in boundaries with Line of Control, Durrand Line and the respective boundaries that India shares with Bangladesh and Myanmar, it's true that in terms of pure geo-strategic entity all the countries could be clubbed in one theatre.

Therefore, for if India has to expand its geo-strategic vision it will be in India's interest if countries such as Bangladesh, Myanmar, Maldives, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan are willing to allow India's military presence if it's required.

Though at present there is any doubt that New Delhi will bargain for such initiative it's true that the strategic elements of the bi-lateral relationship with India has been worked upon which in long-term will work in India's benefit.
For example, India has signed the nuclear deal with Sri Lanka which will help to push both New Delhi and Colombo strategically closer.

Similar such initiatives are warranted in especially in India’s western atoll neighbours such as in Maldives, Mauritius and Seychelles (India will try bring the latter two countries also within the fold of SAARC) where to India’s much discomfort China has expanded itself in terms of its economic and diplomatic reach.

Further, in terms of geo-political imperative it’s true that India wishes to aspire for its role depending upon countries to which it deal with either in the Indo-Pacific or the wider Asia-Pacific region.

In similar terms the wider Asia-Pacific region which includes both the continental and the mostly the wider maritime domain of Asia doesn’t include the western area of the Indian Ocean region. Therefore an additional care has been taken to include India’s neighbourhood within the ambit of India’s overall maritime strategic architectural thinking including the western Indian Ocean within the Indo-Pacific region.

Therefore, the maritime security co-operation between India, Maldives and Sri Lanka was created keeping in view of the extended logistical needs that the Indian navy needs to play in the years in the arch starting from the Arabian Sea extending further than湾 of Bengal.

The hard part of the bargain of the new government neighbourhood policy is to get a consensual approach within India and so among its neighbours. The earlier Indian government which were mostly coalition failed to get such a consensus within and therefore failed to convey a much more positive impact that it could have on its neighbours thereby creating a room for such friction.

Similar such approach is wanted in other neighbouring countries such as in Bangladesh and Myanmar though the Indian presence is felt both in terms of economy and diplomacy. Also, the new government has given much vigour to the Look East policy and by including Bangladesh into the fold of the policy the Indian government is all set to give a new fillip to the policy which will enable India to connect with not only Myanmar and Bangladesh but also to the wider South-East Asian countries and connecting it within the seven North-Eastern states of India.

**India’s Extended Neighbourhood Policy with Afghanistan and Iran**

India at present technically doesn’t share borders with either
Afghanistan or Iran in its neighbourhood policy and any mention of relations with New Delhi with Iran and Afghanistan is equated to its problematic relations with Pakistan.

Though the present Indian government has understood that Pakistan has to engaged as and when the situation arises and that at times India doesn't need to engage Islamabad at the higher political level but through military and diplomatic tools means that India's wider strategic interest with Iran and Afghanistan doesn't need to be seen through the prism of Islamabad.

India understands that Afghanistan required sustained India presence at least in terms of the diplomatic and economic foot print if not the military foot print and that India's presence in Afghanistan doesn't necessarily imply a military methodological Second Front towards Pakistan.

Apart from the historical and at times cultural ties that India shares with Afghanistan, it's true that New Delhi understands that the Game in Kabul especially after the withdrawal of the International Security Assistance Force is a wider Great Game in which it will bring Great Powers China, Russia and the United States to the fore.

India till now has played a benign role ever since the International Security Assistance Force set its foot on Afghanistan in October 2001, it's has restricted itself to providing economic assistance for the war-torn country and had used at times Afghanistan as a base for it's extended presence in Central Asia.

Under Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi there is no doubt that the situation in Afghanistan is closely being viewed with the security of India. Therefore, the efforts on to bring Afghanistan as much as possible to within the fold of the SAARC including increasing Indo-Afghanistan trade relations thereby increasing India’s influence in Afghanistan.

Also, the past 15 years the Indian Soft Power in Afghanistan has been welcomed by the host government and so at times reluctantly by both the United States and Russia much to the discomfort of both Pakistan and China.

The consensus on the situation in Afghanistan requires India skilfully manipulating it's diplomatic leverage with Russia, the United States and of course Iran which brings to the equation of Indo-Iranian relations.
The Indian government post 2014 has played the wait and watch policy towards Tehran as it understands that it’s complicated. The first effort will be to make Iranian and the United States to come to negotiating table with their existing nuclear deal being discussed. India can play the role of interlocutor in the Iranian-US relations if wanted.

Further, as with the Indian government is vigorous in its efforts on counter-terrorism mechanism and co-operation, Iran offers perfect partner for such initiatives which help establish closer Indo-Iranian relations.

Also, Iran is expanding wants to expand it’s presence in South Asia, it finds an able partner in India for such an initiative. On the other hand, India has facilitated Iran’s presence in the SAARC country as an observer nation and the process to include Tehran as a full-fledged nation courtesy New Delhi means that it will have profound effect on linking Central Asia to South Asia with whatever energy projects which are in place.

**India’s Monroe Doctrine in South Asia**

India at present especially in its capability to reach out to the world as a Regional-Great Power resembles the United States in the late 19th century. United States’ reach out in the wider Eurasia was possible because the Monroe Doctrine proclaimed in the 1820’s firmly confirmed the hegemony of Washington in the Western Hemisphere.

Such an initiative is that wanted in India’s proclaimed policy in South Asia which will help it keep the outside powers including China not to meddle in to the South Asian affairs. If South Asia is included in India’s core security-strategic interest then it’s no surprise that as an aspiring Great Power, India should be competitive in it’s influence in the region.

**In conclusion,**

Irrespective of the merit of the new government’s policy initiative, there is no doubt that the Indian government post May 2014 has invigorated it’s policy approach to the South Asian countries through bi-laterally and multi-laterally. The merits of the approach and how far it can push it’s diplomatic and strategic leverage is to be seen in the upcoming months and years.

**Notes**

India’s Neighbourhood Policy Under Modi

Rajeev Ranjan Chaturvedy
Research Associate
Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS)
National University of Singapore

(Prior to joining ISAS, Rajeev was heading Foreign Policy Division at the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) in New Delhi. His focus area of work has been Indian foreign policy, India’s national security, China-South Asia Strategic Access, South Asian Regional Security, and international relations.

He was also a Global Emerging Voices (GEV) fellow in 2013. The Global Emerging Voices (GEV) program is a new initiative that the Torino World Affairs Institute (T.wai) established in 2011 to advance dialogue between Europe and the Asia Pacific on re-emerging China and global governance. Organized by T.wai, the Mercator Stiftung, the German Marshall Fund of the United States, and the Australian National University, GEV facilitates the gathering of leading young European and Asia Pacific scholars, policy analysts and professionals who are committed to the deepening of mutual understanding and the forging of forward-looking ties between Europe and the Asia Pacific.

Rajeev was one of the fifteen participants (an accomplished group of Asians, Europeans, and Americans that included government officials, military officers, scholars, and business and media professionals) in the inaugural Young Strategists Forum (YSF), a new initiative of the German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMF), in March 2012 in Japan. He was a Professional Development Award recipient in 2009 at the Canadian International Development Research Centre (IDRC) in Ottawa.

Before going to Ottawa, Rajeev worked with the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER), the Indian Pugwash Society, and the National Maritime Foundation. He was also part of the ‘Nuclear Cluster’ at the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA), and a member of the “Young India Roundtable Initiative” of Delhi Policy Group.

Rajeev has done his M. Phil from Jawaharlal Nehru University. He is qualified with the National Eligibility Test (NET) for Lectureship and Higher Research from the University Grant Commission (UGC). He also achieved NCC (National Cadet Corps) “C” certificate from Naval Wing, and got “Sea Training” with the Indian Navy.

A country’s neighbourhood must enjoy unquestioned primacy in its foreign policy making. This is distinctly evident in India’s recent foreign policy initiatives. The current Indian government under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi has transformed the atmospherics by enabling political level discourse between India and its South Asian...
neighbours. Modi’s foreign policy framework seems geared towards cultivating positivity and hope in its relations with its neighbours.

Speaking at the general debate of the 69th session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), Narendra Modi aptly remarked, “A nation’s destiny is linked to its neighbourhood. That is why my government has placed the highest priority on advancing friendship and cooperation with her neighbours.” Indeed, for India, achieving the objective of becoming one of the key powers in Asia depends crucially on India’s ability to manage its immediate neighbourhood. India can become a credible power on the global stage only after attaining enduring primacy in its own neighbourhood.

Modi government desires a peaceful and stable environment for India’s development, and the government has clearly indicated its priority for building stronger ties with its South Asian neighbours. An account of Modi government’s foreign policy activism in its first few months in office provides ample evidence of this. For example, the India-Nepal Joint Commission which had remained frozen for 23 years got into action, and reviewed “the entire gamut of bilateral relations” between India and Nepal. Similarly, inviting the President of Sri Lanka for a meaningful engagement, despite opposition from some regional Indian political parties, is another case in point.

Further, Delhi’s neighbourhood priorities were manifested in the first presidential address to parliament, which underlined Indian government’s “determination to work towards building a peaceful, stable and economically inter-linked neighbourhood which is essential for the collective development and prosperity of the South Asian Region.” Certainly, the “neighbourhood first” policy was also evident in the exceptional invitation to South Asian leaders to attend Modi’s swearing-in ceremony. Also, both the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister illustrated their commitment to “neighbourhood first”, making their first
foreign visits to South Asian neighbours. In this context, what are the salient features of India's policy towards its neighbours under the current government?

The first feature of India's neighbourhood policy under Modi is to build a political connectivity through dialogue and engagement. Modi has shown his zeal and vigour in engaging neighbours at the highest political level. In the previous government, Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh was unable to put forward an overarching political framework to engage India's South Asian neighbours. Under domestic political compulsions, Singh tried to woo all political allies, which hampered rare strategic opportunities that came his way. Indeed, he compromised the central government's role in the definition and execution of foreign policy initiatives. Institutional deficits apart, UPA government's 'cautious approach' and 'delivery deficit' held back India’s natural progress. Self-doubt, fears about losing strategic autonomy, and domestic political concerns significantly limited New Delhi's capacity to transform its relations with South Asian neighbours. Modi understands that political relations are as equally important as economic initiatives. Keeping in view this fact, he is making conscious efforts to maintain personal contacts with SAARC leaders. Modi's persuasive leadership style and his political rendezvous could be a valuable diplomatic tool.

The second important feature is to follow through announcements and tracking progress. In the first couple of months, it is evident that Modi always looked for tangible outcome. The BJP government is remembered for its noteworthy achievements in the past (including India's nuclear test). With respect to South Asia, meaningful action has more than pacified the negative impact of its predecessor's years of inaction and neglect. The Modi government is not only prioritising neighbours first, but is also tracking development. For example, in his statement on 25 November 2014, prior to his departure for Nepal, Modi said, "This will be my second visit to Nepal within four months... There has been significant
progress in the implementation of the decisions taken during my visit to Nepal in August 2014... We also hope to conclude some concrete agreements in the areas of connectivity and development cooperation”.

Indisputably, mutual partnership could herald a new level of positivity, and more importantly, soften the mistrust and mute the so called “China threat”. Should such policies prove to be successful, cooperation on more divisive and sensitive issues such as terrorism, separatism, insurgency, religious fundamentalism, and ethnic strife, could be attempted with greater chances of success.

The third important feature is India’s renewed emphasis on seamless connectivity - economic, physical, and digital. Modi’s emphasis is on five Ts – trade, tourism, talent, technology, and tradition. The idea is to build and strengthen a peaceful, stable, democratic, and economically interlinked neighbourhood. Implementing infrastructure projects to enhance connectivity and enable freer flow of commerce and energy in the region seems among top priorities of Indian government. Modi’s intent is noticeable in India’s efforts which resulted into an agreement on electricity sharing among SAARC countries through a common grid.

Further, in the past six months, Modi’s government has focussed on strengthening infrastructure connectivity, creating a business friendly environment in India by easing restrictions, reducing non-tariff barriers, boosting regional cooperation, and integrating common markets. For instance, articulating his idea on trans-Himalayan regionalism during his visit to Bhutan and Nepal, Modi emphasised that the trans-Himalayas holds the keystone for Asian cultural, environmental, political and regional security.

Nonetheless, the challenge for Indian diplomacy lies in convincing its neighbours that India is an opportunity, not a threat. Far from beingbesieged by India, they can gain access to a vast market and to a
productive hinterland that could provide their economies far greater opportunities for growth than if they were to rely on their domestic markets alone. Intra-South Asian trade remains limited and its growth is unsteady and slow. Economic cooperation represents the easiest “sell” to various constituencies within the countries of the region. Modi has signalled on several occasions that “a strong economy is the driver of an effective foreign policy”. Therefore, economic diplomacy is likely to be in the driver’s seat to facilitate India’s economic revival.

The fourth important feature is an active collaboration and partnership with extra-regional/major powers on issues of mutual interests. Issues of mutual interests include, but are not limited to, information sharing, technological cooperation, and growing cooperation between law enforcement agencies to counter transnational threats such as terrorism, narcotics, trafficking, financial and economic fraud, cybercrime.

The fifth important feature is a greater attention on India’s leadership role into the region. India considers South Asia as its sphere of influence. Concerned with the increasing Chinese influence into South Asia and the Indian Ocean region, Modi’s government’s emphasis is to regain India’s dominance in the region. On the one hand, India is extending various kinds of assistance and is scaling up efforts to deepen partnership with all neighbouring countries. Modi is also trying to connect with people through social media and his impressive digital diplomacy.

Finally, the sixth important feature of Modi’s neighbourhood policy is an argument of power – both hard and soft power. While Modi’s priority is constructive engagement of neighbours, he has also sent a strong message to India’s neighbours that if and when required, India can be uncompromisingly tough. At least, this was crystal clear in the case of Pakistan, when India called off the Foreign Secretary level talks in protest against Pakistan’s continued engagement with the Kashmir Hurriyat leaders, despite India’s warning of negative consequences of such actions.
Further, rebuffing Pakistan for raising the Kashmir issue at the UNGA, Narendra Modi underlined that he was prepared to engage in a serious bilateral dialogue with Pakistan “without the shadow of terrorism” but asked it to create an “appropriate environment” for that. He made it clear to Pakistan that “raising issues in this forum is not the way to make progress towards resolving issues between our two countries.” Nonetheless, it would be challenging for Modi government to constructively engage Pakistan.

Perhaps, a strategy for each neighbouring country (and sometimes cross-cutting ones for several neighbours) may require better coordination among various units of government in Delhi than has been the case to date. Also, a stronger role for the Prime Minister’s office, as has emerged in its formative months and a greater mutual engagement of the foreign and security ministries could yield significant dividends.

Modi’s neighbourly instincts have raised huge expectations for India’s foreign policy. It will call for hard work and coordinated effort by concerned officials and other stakeholders for the timely delivery of promises. Undoubtedly, India needs to devote more diplomatic and political energy towards tending its relationship with immediate neighbours. The Indian economy is growing at a much larger scale than the other South Asian countries, and given the disparity between the size of these economies, India will continue to outpace the others in the years to come. This will give India certain advantages over the other countries but it may also give rise to some difficulties.

Notably, empty symbolism and delayed actions have adversely affected critical relations and denied any major breakthroughs to India’s neighbourhood during previous government. This was clearly evident in the case of Delhi-Dhaka ties. The significance of the developments with Bangladesh was lost, in the region and beyond, amidst the controversy
over the Teesta water sharing that Manmohan Singh could not sign because of West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee’s last minute objections. It remains to be seen how the Modi government addresses some of the key structural bottlenecks constraining India’s foreign policy.

So far, Modi’s government has embarked on a profound political and diplomatic engagement with its neighbours. Indeed, Modi deserves full credit for giving more power to New Delhi’s role in its near-abroad. Nonetheless, India faces a formidable task in transforming its immediate neighbourhood. As an old saying goes, “Sidhir Bhavati Karamja”, which means, “success is born of action”. The onus lies on implementation of Modi’s mantra of “neighbourhood first”. It will all depend on Modi’s ability to ensure that there is no delivery deficit between policy and performance, to turn his vision into reality and to fulfil his promises. More importantly, he needs to make sure that his overly personalised foreign policy moves towards a more institutionalised foreign policy in the coming years.

(Mr Rajeev Ranjan Chaturvedy is Research Associate at the Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS), an autonomous research institute at the National University of Singapore. Opinions expressed in this paper, based on research by the author, do not necessarily reflect the views of ISAS.)

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(5) Indian foreign policy post -2014

Shabbir H. Kazmi

Economic/ geopolitical analyst, Pakistan

(Shabbir H. Kazmi is an economic/ geopolitical analyst from Pakistan. He has been writing for local and foreign publications for more than quarter of a century. He completed his MBA from Institute of Business Administration, Karachi as back as 1977. For his prolific writing he was twice declared runner up for Pan Asia Journalism Award sponsored by Citibank in 16 countries. He also has his own blog shkazmipk.com and he can be contacted at shkazmipk@gmail.com)

A person aged 62, born and lived in Pakistan, having witnessed India and Pakistan involved in a mad race to accumulate the most lethal arms and attaining status of atomic powers at the expense of extreme poverty, having fought three wars, transformation of East Pakistan into Bangladesh and Kargil debacle is forced to draw a few conclusions:

1) There is a growing perception, particularly in Pakistan that India is not a secular country. Over the years its policies have been driven by ‘hawks’ who have not accepted 1947 partition and are not willing to resolve Kashmir issue on the premise ‘we will not accept another division of Hindustan on the basis of religion’,

2) India has been accumulating arms from its friends (changing with the passage of time) with the sole purpose of creation of its hegemony in the region,

3) The US and former USSR supplies arm to India during the cold war era to enable it to fight China,

4) Even today India enjoys full support of the US, which prompted it to desert Iran-Pakistan-India pipeline in exchange for nuclear technology,

5) India continues to be one of the biggest buyers of Iranian oil and the US has not imposed any sanctions on it,

6) And on top of all the US is patronizing India in actively participating in the construction of Chabahar port in Iran and road and rail network to link it to Central Asian countries via Afghanistan.

Discussion about the contours of Indian foreign policy under Narendra Modi is too premature but one point is very clear that it is focused on
creating Indian hegemony in the region that now comprises of South Asia, Middle East and South Africa (MENA). India is fully supported in this endeavor by the US having the eye on oil rich Arabian Peninsula, Iran, Central Asia and Afghanistan. The US has replaced USSR (now symbolized by Russia) as the best friend of India, particularly after the recent imposition of economic sanction on Russia. India joined Chabahar port and allied infrastructure project on the encouragement of the US to construct an alternative route that could undermine importance of Pakistan.

Lately two ports, namely Gawadar and Chabahar, have emerged on Makran coast that are located at a distance of about 70 kilometers. One is located in Baluchistan province of Pakistan and other is situated in Sistan-Baluchistan province of Iran. Both the ports have been constructed with the stated objective of finding efficient and cost effective routes to energy-rich Central Asian countries passing through Afghanistan. The point to be explored is that both the ports have been constructed by two rivals, China and India, one an accepted world super power and the other a self-proclaimed regional super power.

On almost every forum India tries to prove that Chinese involvement in Gwadar is a threat for its (Indian) existence. It also pleads that Indian Ocean should remain ‘arms free’. However, navies of almost all the major powers are present in the area to protect their maritime trade. It may not be wrong to say that in the name of protecting their maritime trade certain countries have deployed their submarines and aircraft carriers in the Indian Ocean, which could become a ground for proxy war.

India has been over reacting about Chinese assistance extended in the construction of Gwadar port in Baluchistan province of Pakistan. It has been creating the hype that Chinese presence in Gwadar is not only a serious threat for India but would also give China extra leverage in the region. India also accuses that China has acquired management control of Gwadar to use the facility as its naval base. This mantra is aimed at seeking support of United States and Russia, who consider China a major threat to their hegemony in the region.

My words can be ignored on the premise of being a Pakistani but Indians and rest of the world must read a few lines from an article published in the journal of Foreign Affairs published in 2013 and titled “India's Feeble Foreign Policy.” It says Indian policies are focused on resisting its own rise, as if political drift had turned the country into its own worst enemy. It also says that India — home to more than a sixth of the human race —
punches far below its weight, internationally, it is a rule-taker, not a rule-maker.

I have also read somewhere, “Since the Berlin Wall fell 25 years ago; the world has witnessed the most profound technological, economic and geopolitical change in the most compressed time frame in the history. Unfortunately for India, despite its impressive economic growth overall, much of its last 25 years has been characterized by political weakness and drift.”

In another article it has been written, “The result of the prolonged leadership crisis has been a sharp erosion in India’s regional and extra-regional clout. The gap in power and stature between China and India has widened significantly. After all, this was the quarter-century in which China took off. More troubling has been India’s shrinking space in its own strategic backyard. Even tiny Maldives had the gall to kick India in the chin and get away with it. It kicked out its Indian airport operator from the capital Male and publicly dressed down the Indian Ambassador without fear of consequences. In Nepal, India found itself competing with China. And in Sri Lanka, India became content to play second fiddle to China.”

Domestic media is trying to create a perception that Modi faces major regional challenges due to failing states around India. The media demands that this tyranny of geography demands India to evolve more dynamic and innovative approaches to diplomacy and national defense. It is also being said that the political rise of Modi — known for his decisiveness — could be a potential game changer as he is focusing on revitalizing the country’s economic and military might.

Modi is being praised for winning over the US support by shaking off US visa-denial humiliation heaped on him over nine years. It is also boasted that the US conducts more military exercises with India than with any other country. And in recent years, the US has quietly overtaken Russia as the largest arms supplier to India.

Whatever Indian media try to portray, Modi’s actions talks louder that include his moves to engineer stronger partnerships with Japan and Israel (countries critical to Indian interests but which also courted him even as the US targeted him) to his mortars-for-bullet response to Pakistani ceasefire violations.

Modi has earned lots of praises for his act at the opening of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Summit coinciding
with the anniversary of the Mumbai terror attacks. He extended a cold shoulder to his Pakistani counterpart, Nawaz Sharif, who had taken all the time to attend Modi’s oath taking ceremony, despite opposition by many Pakistanis.

As a staunch believer that India is no longer a secular country, being ruled by hawks, I read these lines with exception, “Modi faces major regional challenges, exemplified by the arc of failing, revanchist or scofflaw states around India. This tyranny of geography demands that India evolve more dynamic and innovative approaches to diplomacy and national defense. India must actively involve itself regionally to retrieve the lost ground in its backyard.”

SAARC is likely to remain a stunted organization because India being the largest country in terms of population and both economic military might is often alleged for intervening into the affairs of feeble neighbors. According to the stated objectives of Modi’s foreign policy, he wants to develop stronger bilateral linkages with other neighbors by focusing on “Look East” policy. Indian policy makers believe that there is little choice as west is troubled. They believe that the entire belt to Indian west from Pakistan to Syria suffers from instability and extremism.

Modi’s supporters say that his foreign policy is aimed at promoting India as a more competitive, confident and secure country aimed at gaining its rightful place in the world. However, his critics have a contrary view as they believe that India can sustain itself only on the foundation of a strong domestic policy. His war mania and indulgence in arms race can eat up the benefits of those responding to his invitation to make India an ‘economic might’.

To conclude, please allow me to say that Indian foreign policy is greatly influenced by the US foreign policy. A closer look at the ongoing crises in various countries clearly indicate that first the US facilitates creation of rebel groups, supply them funds and arms to fight with the regime and then unilaterally take action against the same rebel groups. A person with average wit fails to understand the motive but the reality is that these crises are created to keep the US arsenal factories operating at full capacity. It may sound too big an allegation but India is following the same policy of supporting rebel groups in the neighboring countries to further them, the sole objective is to prove that it is a regional as well as world super power and others should remain subservient to its grand plan.
(6) Renewed hope of India’s Foreign Policy under Modi Government: a critical appraisal of challenges and opportunities

Dr. Salvin Paul and Nitya Iyer

(\textit{Dr. Salvin Paul} is a faculty of Peace and Conflict Studies and Management in Sikkim University and \textit{Nitya Iyer} is an Executive Officer with Learning Resource Centre, a collaborative Project of Govt. of India with UNDP, India in New Delhi.)

The largest democracy which is evolved out of one of the oldest civilizations has placed a tea vendor’s son Narendra Damodar Modi as the Prime Minister of India to lead the country as a global power when there are favourable factors at domestic and at international level but casting considerable debate on high level frequent diplomatic engagements as a mere symbolism in foreign policy than as projecting sustentative national interests of India in abroad. After three decades of coalition government in India, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has got 282 seats crossing simple majority to form its own stable government to take decisions that are favouring national interests at greater speed when foreign heads want India in their itinerary to find a market in India. But there are questions such as whether Modi government able to grow out of its cultural nationalism called Hindutva to tap the unprecedent edge of young demographic potentials, largest consumer middle class, civilizational heritage of India; how traditional foreign policy instruments of India such as Non-aligned Movement, Panchasheel etc can be sustained to maintain an independent foreign policy as a leader of developing countries; how India’s unique geographical position, its large diaspora etc can be capitalized without antagonizing its old friends who supported India during difficult times; and how India will achieve its growing demand for energy, technology and find global market for its skilled manpower, products and fight terrorism both at national and international level when neo-liberal economic interests of great powers overpower international politics. Modi has succeeded to show a new orientation for pragmatic international engagement at global level with his frequent international visits and his suggestion was approved by UN general assembly within three months to make June 21\textsuperscript{st} International Yoga Day.
Indo-US bilateral relation appeared to achieve a new dimension, when Indian Prime Minister made an extraordinary political show off in America in the last week of September 2014 and hosted Barack Obama as the chief guest of 66th Republic Day in 2015 which showcases India's military might and cultural diversity. During this historic visit of Barack Obama to New Delhi gave opportunity to operationalize nuclear deal that was signed in 2006 but could not proceed further due to differences over liability of suppliers and US demands to tracking the whereabouts of nuclear material supplied to Indian nuclear reactors. Though both countries able to iron out differences over nuclear deal to its full implementation, how Modi's 'make in India' to boost India's national interest at global level can complement with when US view India as a market and counterweight to China in Asia are challenges. In addition to that, growing close proximity among China, Pakistan and Russia pose challenge to India's strategic interests as India's heavy dependency on Russia's military know-how in its military complex, China's growing influence in South Asia and Pakistan's sustained effort to export terrorism to India. The said visit is seen as a major break-through in reinventing the wheel of India-America relationship and deepening trade relationship in defense. Prime Minister Modi re-emphasized the natural global partnership between the two countries which is imperative for the progress and for advancing peace, stability and prosperity in and around the world. A stronger, steadier relation between the U.S. and India could have far reaching implications on energy, sharing of technology, poverty reduction, counter-terrorism efforts etc.

Unlike past, under the Modi-led government, India is able to project itself as a great power and is actively playing a major role in the Asia-Pacific region. Given its strength and strategic location, India can shape Asia's balance of power but at the same time it is wary of China. China is India's largest trading partner and Modi government's priority is to put India into the path of development, therefore, it is imperative to increase India's access to the Chinese market for its IT and pharmaceutical industries, and increase investment of Chinese capital goods in Indian infrastructure. The United States and Japan both want to build strategic, long term relations with India as a part of new Asian architecture that would balance a rising and powerful China. At present, India is in a better position to be able to enjoy the benefits of managing all the relationships without a formal commitment with China, Japan or the United States which are competing for India's friendship. But is the situation same with Russia? Can Modi make in-roads into age-old India-Russia relationship amidst complaints about delay in completing defense
assignments or with stringent rules of technology transfer to India where India is repeatedly mending its regulations for import?

Until now, Russia had been the largest supplier of defense equipment's to India. There is a growing anxiety in Moscow that it could lose out its long term defense relationship with India. Putin's visit to New Delhi in December 2014 came at a time when New Delhi was drawing closer to the United States. Though Russia generally supplied around 75 percent of India's defense needs, it is gradually being overtaken by other suppliers including the United States. Israel is threatening to push Russia even further down anytime soon. This shift has made Russia to approach Pakistan as a result of which it has recently closed a deal to sell Mi-35 helicopters to Islamabad, upsetting Indian friends. However, Russia is aware of the fact that it has very limited friends specially post Crimean annexation time. Due to western sanctions and economic compulsion, Russia is getting closer to and dependent on China which again is not a welcome sign for India. The two countries share a close bilateral relationship, cooperate in various multilateral forums like Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and recently concluded a landmark natural gas deal. Both nations are permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and seek to challenge the established Western orders in all possible ways.

India has not acceded to Western efforts to isolate Russia for its actions in Ukraine. The age-old strategic partners must not allow their bilateral ties to go in vein. Healthy, stable and prosperous Indo-Russian relations were always in the priority list of India. No doubt, considering its strategic importance and recent closeness to China, Modi government should leave no stone unturned to further improvise on the relations. As far as Sino-Indian relations are concerned, China is trying to tweak its foreign policy towards India. To an extent, it has shown positive signs to improve its economic relations with India. China's backing for India's full membership to SCO is a positive development. However, is it easy to change an age-old foe into a trusted partner is challenging question.

**Strategic Triangle:**

There are many issues on which China, Russia and India can cooperate. They share wide ranging interest on many major international issues. After the withdrawal of U.S forces and NATO from Afghanistan this year, the three countries will play a major role in the rebuilding of Afghanistan's future. India understands the strategic needs of Russia in getting friendlier with Pakistan that post NATO drawdown; terrorist
outfits should not make a safe haven in Afghanistan, which in turn would affect Russia’s regional security and instability into the Central Asian Republics. To ensure security in the region and in these countries, it is advantageous for three countries to work more closely with each other. Is it because of the possible proximity between the three countries made Obama to accept the invitation to attend the Republic Day of India-which was never accepted by any US President ever before? With the change in government, is there a change in attitude towards India?

Here, it is worth mentioning that as of today, the BRICS nations are doing well as compared to the U.S. alone. In 2012, China emerged as the world’s biggest trading nation, and emerging economies like India and Brazil continue to do better. The United States is no longer the world’s largest trading nation and the possibilities are high that it may lose the top GDP spot too in the near future.

With the strengthening of BRICS nation’s solidarity, Obama is emphasizing more on a trilateral between India-Japan and the U.S. Through this medium, it would like to curtail the growing influence of China in the region. As far as Modi government’s policy towards China is concerned, it would certainly try to mend its relations so that it can be utilized to benefit India to the maximum. At the same time, it would not lose out on its relationship with the United States. One view of India-US cooperation is their coinciding interest on socio-political and economic issues.

**Short-term/Long-term goals:**

One of the possible reasons for a closer cooperation between India and the United States are their aligned long term and short term interests. The immediate target of the Modi government is to put back economic growth on track in tune with post recession economic recovery of United States. So that India can utilize the benefits of the relationship to its best advantage to attain the following goals:

1. To boost economic growth and create jobs by attracting foreign investment.
3. To force Pakistan to act on Mumbai Terror Attacks of 2008. A strong message has already been given but, Modi needs action, not words.
4. To have a peaceful drawdown of NATO from Afghanistan and restoration of peace thereafter.
5. To get a permanent seat in the UNSC, India requires the support of both Russia and China. If achieved, it would be one of the major achievements of the new government.

6. To attain full membership in SCO, India will get a major boost in its quest for greater access to hydrocarbons in Central Asia.

**India-way ahead:**

In less than a year after coming to power in May 2014, the Modi government has rolled out various measures to boost the overall economic environment. India's growth is projected at 5.5 percent in 2014-2015 and recent growth forecast by the World Bank projected India to edge China in two years, recording 7 percent growth compared with China’s 6.9 percent. Therefore, with the change in leadership, changing environment and positive world projections about India are quite decent motivational factors for the world to look at India and its moves meticulously. The fall of oil price seem to put India in an advantageous position to clear its fiscal deficit as the government have not passed on benefits to people which may help Modi government to initiate such policies to boost the GDP and if India is able to attract FDI to start up green projects with conducive policies in the wake of lowering inflation, it may surpass China as per prediction of World Bank within a couple of years as the Chinese economy has already reached saturation point, suffer from bad loans, excessive spending, investment are drying up, pollution and aged demography.

According to a report published by Forbes Asia September 2014, India could be the world’s fastest growing exporter between 2014 and 2030, moving from the 14th largest exporter of goods by value to the world’s 5th largest. With the change in global perception about India and positive forecast about its economy, India can attract FDI from various countries provided it follows a neutral policy in its diplomatic engagement with the world.

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India and China are not only two largest countries of the world, but also two ancient civilizations. Both are close neighbours, sharing a land border of 3488 Kilometers. There has been friendly intercourse and cultural exchange between their people for more than 2,000 years. There were political, diplomatic and people-to-people contacts, intercourse by land as well as by sea and material as well as spiritual exchange. Both have ‘connected histories’ of exchange of ideas, people and objects for many millennia (Encyclopedia of Indo-China Cultural Contacts: 2014).

India started her journey as an independent nation in 1947 after liberating from British imperialism. China started her journey as a modern nation in 1949 after a successful communist revolution in 1949. Both marched on the path of progress and development as developing countries. While India went for a democratic political order, China consolidated a rigid communist political regime, which continues to survive even today with minor alterations.

Interaction between India and China occurs at three levels: bilateral; regional; and global. The bilateral relations between the two are characterized by many contradictory strands: rising economic, trade and investment links amidst long pending boundary dispute and recurring acrimony at the border; rising strategic competition to gain influence
amidst desire to maintain peace and stability for peaceful rise and growth; and increasing high level engagement (mechanism of regular annual summits and strategic economic Dialogue) amidst delay and hesitation in solving contentious issues like trade deficit, stapled visa issue or boundary issue. At global level, both share some important forums like G-20 and BRICS and hold nearly similar position on a number of global issues like demand for a multilateral global order in place of the one dominated by the western world; reforms of international financial institutions like IMF; climate change issue through mechanism of BASIC grouping (Brazil, South Africa, India and China) and global trade issues.

At regional level, their interaction in South Asia appears to have become more problematic for India, in view of china's rising profile in the region in post-cold war era with network of strategic alliances, expanding infrastructure facilities having strategic overtone, and increasing development partnership with neighbouring countries of India. In the background of unsettled relations with China, India has always been apprehensive of China's increasing role in South Asia. Also, India considers South Asia as her backyard and behaves as regional power in the regions on account of her size and development. However, India's small neighbours have equally been apprehensive of India's dominance in the region and therefore have not failed to play China card against India from time to time. However, if we review the diplomatic history of South Asia in last five decades, neither China's forays in South Asia nor India's sensitivity to it, is new. What is new is the strategic dimension of China's present engagement with South Asia, both with individual countries and with region as a whole.

**The Strategic Dimension:** The Strategic dimension to India-China relations in South Asia became more pronounced in the post-cold war period. This is the result of rising status of the two countries in economic and military terms. China initiated liberal economic reforms in 1978 under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping to march on the road of fast economic growth. Its military might has also increased simultaneously. During last three decades, China has achieved an average growth rate of 10 percent. It has raised 200 million people out of poverty in this period. It is now counted as a rising economic and military power of 21st century. The talk of 'Rise of Asia' (Mahbubani: 2009) is largely centered on the rise of China. China has become the second largest economy after the US in 2010, by replacing Japan to third place. With China's rising global profile her diversifying and expanding interests and ambitions have also assumed global and regional dimensions.
India too moved on a high growth rate path since the implementation of liberal economic reforms in 1991 in the post-cold war period. It is said that India has achieved an average 7-8 percent growth rate in last two decades. India is also counted as an emerging economy. In terms of Purchasing power parity, India has become the fourth largest economy of the world, after the US, China and Japan. Though India is one decade behind the Chinese growth trajectory, her rising economy has also led to the diversification of her strategic interests.

In fact, the rising status of two great neighbours presents multiple opportunities and challenges. If there is a background of strategic symmetry between the two, their development and influence is reinforced and vice-versa. Both tendencies are visible in Indo-China relations. China emerged as the largest trading partner of India in 2010, but the trade deficit is highly aligned against India. Both are the members of many global forums like BRICS and G-20 and hold similar positions on many global issue such as reforms of International financial institutions, promotion of multilateral global order in place of the one dominated by the western world, global trade issues, climate change etc.

The opposite tendency is more visible in bilateral and regional issues. Since both are the rising economies, they need new markets for their trade, new sources of energy sources and other material, and new avenues for capital and technology, and safety of their trade routes. Though China claims that there is ample space in the globe for simultaneous growth of two nations, this has led to the emergence of an undeclared competition between the two in different regions of the world mainly in South-East Asia, South Asia and Africa. In this competition, China has adopted a practical approach to engage with different regions and countries, without any ideological and normative considerations. China considers South-East Asia as its backyard and India’s growing economic and strategic engagement with countries of this region (under Look East or now Act East Policy) is considered as a dent on Chinese influence and interests. But China does not have many options to checkmate India in this region as all ASEN members as well other important regional actors like Japan and South Korea and Non-regional actors the US support India’s greater role in Asia-Pacific region. The US President Obama, during his both visits to India in 2010 and 2015, has encouraged India for such role in Asia-Pacific region. This strategic scenario coupled with recent US moves like ‘Asia Pivot’ or ‘Asia rebalancing’ and growing Indo-US ties have raised concerns in China. These US moves entail a deepening strategic engagement with regional actors and enhancing military profile in the region. As the US has come out of Afghanistan and is keeping away from Middle East crisis, the Asia-
Pacific region is likely to gain more prominence in US foreign policy calculations.

China in South Asia: Bilateral and Regional Strategy

China tries to compensate this strategic disadvantage in Asia-Pacific by making strategic inroads in South Asia. For long time, India failed to understand the strategic linkage between the two regions: South Asia and Asia-Pacific, but China has well understood this linkage in advance. By signing strategic vision document on Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean with the US president in 2015, India has come to realize the significance of strategic link between the two regions.

The region of South Asia includes all the members of SAARC, namely Afghanistan, Pakistan, Maldives, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and India. These eight countries of South Asia cover an area of 5.13 million sq kms, which is 11 percent of Asian land area and 2.5 percent of global land area. Its total population in 2009 was 1.63 billion, which is 16.6 percent of the global Population. As per the estimate of the World Bank (2006), South Asia is also the home 40 percent of the global poor in terms of International Poverty Line ($1.25 per day). There are four Least Developed Countries (LDCs) in South Asia-Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan. These countries have low per capita GDP, poor and non-diversified economic base and lack capabilities to face economic and natural vulnerabilities. The countries of South Asia are resource hungry for their socio-economic development. The region also suffers from political instability, intra-state and inter-state conflicts of complex nature. Democratic institutions have weak roots. All most all conflicts have direct or indirect linkages with India. According to World Bank (2006) 'South Asia is the least integrated region in the world, where integration is measured by intraregional trade in goods, capital, and ideas. Intraregional trade as a share of total trade is the lowest for South Asia.

Strategically South Asia also holds importance for global trade and security. The vital sea lanes of communication and transport pass through the Indian Ocean stretching from Gulf of Aden in the West to Malacca strait in the East. The waters of Indian Ocean surround South Asia from three sides. Both China and India are dependent on these sea lanes for their trade and energy supply. For last few years, due to political instability in Eastern Africa, particularly in Somalia, the Gulf of Aden and adjoining areas of Indian Ocean face the problem of piracy and
both India and China have deployed their Navel ship to counter this menace. Eastern waters of Indian Ocean near Malacca strait also face the challenge.

China has a well planned South Asia policy based on her domestic, regional and global interests and needs. Domestically, China wants the rapid development of her western regions, intends to secure alternative routes for her trade and energy supply through Indian Ocean. In regional terms, it wants to confine India in South Asia and looking for market for its investment and trade. Globally, it would like to undermine India's growing strategic profile by checkmating her in South Asia itself. Andrew Small (2014), a leading American South Asia expert aptly describes the drivers of China's South Asia Policy:

'The main internal factors affecting China’s influence and interests in South Asia are the state of the Chinese economy and the development of China's western regions, principally Xinjiang, but also Tibet and the southwestern province of Yunnan. China's economic capacities and requirements remain the most important internal factor driving its interests in the region. Its strategic interests have not changed significantly since the end of the Cold War, but its economic growth, and its specific economic needs—from natural resources to transit routes—have changed the scale of its influence and the balance of its relationships in South Asia'.

Thus, China's growing economic needs, its search for alternative trade routes, and its desire to play a larger global strategic role by checkmating India in South Asia propel her South Asia policy. Even, before the end of cold war, China has tried to develop close economic and strategic relations with India's neighbours, by exploiting India's differences with these countries. India's relations with her all weather friend Pakistan is well known, but the smaller nations like Nepal and Sri Lanka have not failed to play China card against India from time to time. China has developed special strategic relations with Pakistan since 1960s. China has assisted Pakistan in the development of her nuclear weapon capacity as well as missile technology. China's deepening inroads in South Asia are visible in her bilateral as well as regional engagements with South Asia.

**Bilateral Engagements**

**Pakistan:** Since the Indo-China war 1962, Pakistan continues to hold important position in China's South Asia strategy. China perceives
Pakistan as a second front against India to keep her occupied. China has declared Pakistan as an all weather friend. In 1963 itself, Pakistan ceded 5180 sq Kms of disputed territory in Pak Occupied Kashmir, through which China constructed Karakoram highway directly linking China's Xinjiang region with north Pakistan. The highway was completed in 1986 after 20 years of construction. Since then, China has been one of the major sources of the supply of arms and ammunition to Pakistan. In 1980s and 1990s, China helped with financial resources and technology to enable Pakistan to nuclear and missile capability. It enabled Pakistan to claim nuclear parity with India. Amitabh Mattoo (1999) holds the view that the China-Pak type of nuclear and missile cooperation is unparallel in the history of post-War II international affairs. No other country has armed another country for long time in such a manner as China has armed Pakistan. China has taken keen interest in the up-gradation and repairing of Karakoram Highway and finalized the proposal for the construction of a railway line from Xinjiang to Pakistan through Gilgit-Baltistan. The construction of these roads and railway links will enable China to have direct access to Indian Ocean through Gwader sea port of Pakistan, which is being up-graded with Chinese assistance. This access will facilitate energy supply to India and give strategic advantage to China over India in the Indian Ocean. China's policy towards Kashmir has been vacillating and opportunistic. China's policy towards Pakistan has always been to counterbalance India in South Asia. As India and Pakistan struggle to gain influence in Afghanistan in the after the Withdrawal of US forces in December 2014, China heavily relies on Pakistan to get strategic foothold in Afghanistan, though it has own economic diplomacy designed to that effect. B. Raman (2011) rightly remarks, 'Thus China's strategic interest in protecting Pakistan, strengthening its capabilities and maintaining effectiveness of the threat that it could pose to India in times of need remains as strong as ever. It will remain so even if there is improvement in India's relations with China and Pakistan'.

Nepal: As China enjoys 'special relationship' with Pakistan, India has also enjoyed 'special relationship' with Nepal for long time. However, for some time, China has gained foothold in Nepal also through her military and economic diplomacy. After the incorporation of Tibet in China and acceptance of the same by both Nepal and India, Nepal has emerged as buffer state between two Asian giants. Though during Indo-China war of 1962, Nepal adopted a neutral stance, it became apprehensive of Chinese military designs, particularly due the presence of large number of Tibetan refugees in Nepal. After the Indo-Bangladesh war of 1971, Nepal
reconsidered special relationship with India and began to develop close economic and military ties with China. China developed road and rail links between Lhasa (Tibet) and Kathmandu (Nepal) and made heavy investment in the development of infrastructure in Nepal. It also provided arms and military training to Nepalese defense personnel. Military-Military relationship between Nepal and China has been growing since 1998. In 2007, 21 Nepalese officers of Nepalese army went to China to receive advance training. Chinese officers are also participating in the training organized by Nepal on regular basis since 2002. China factor has been important element in the Indo-Nepal relations. The matter came to head on in 1989 when Nepal purchased advance arms from China without informing India and the latter refusing to renew the trade and transit treaty with Nepal. As there was a change of governments in both countries in 1990, the issue was resolved in 1991 with Nepal promise to take into account India's valid security interests. During democratic movement in Nepal, particularly since 1996, Maoists gained ascendancy in Nepalese politics, which gave much awaited opportunity to China to consolidate her influence in Nepal. Maoists have emerged as the largest political party in the elections to the Constituent Assembly held in 2008. China’s opportunistic strategy is again displayed in Nepal. In 1990s, China provided arms and military help to Nepalese monarchy to fight the violent struggle of Maoists. But as soon as monarchy was abolished and Maoists emerged as the main players in Nepal, China extended them political, Ideological and material support to Maoists. The Maoists led by Pushpa Kamal Dahal, have adopted anti-India stance and demanded review of 1950 Indo-Nepal treaty as they consider it as violation of Nepalese sovereignty. There are apprehensions that Indian Naxalite groups may develop close linkages with China through their linkages with Nepalese Maoists. In an Address to the Nepal Council of World Affairs on August, 2008, the then Chinese ambassador to Nepal, Zheng Xianglin termed Nepal as a ‘passage linking China and South Asia’. In 2007-08, China began construction of a 770-kilometre railway connecting the Tibetan capital of Lhasa with the Nepalese border town of Khasa, connecting Nepal to China’s wider national railway network. In what appears to be a straight competition for influence with India, China has increased its official aid to Nepal by more than five times from the present level of $24 million to $128 million in 2015-16. China has also promised to build electricity infrastructure in Nepal worth $1.6 billion to counter an Indian offer of soft loan for the power sector (TOI: 2014).

**Bangladesh:** Like in Nepal, China has also made inroads in Bangladesh
to weaken Indian influence. At present there are two major political parties in Bangladesh politics: Awami League and Bangladesh Nationalist Party, the former is a secular party and recognizes India's important role in the independence of Bangladesh, where the latter is dominated by fundamental elements and more often tries to balance India's influence by cultivating close relations with external actors including China. Bangladesh is one of the four least developed countries of South Asia and fifty percent of its population lives below poverty line. Thus, economic and trade needs of Bangladesh also dictate her to find new avenues. China, by offering unconditional aid and duty free access to her markets to the goods of poor South Asian nations becomes easy choice. While discussing contemporary convergence between China and Bangladesh, Shahidul Islam (2012) remarks, the relationship between China and Bangladesh has been termed as "time tested all weather friendship". There is plethora of bilateral agreements between Dhaka and Beijing including trade, soft loans, social contacts, cultural exchanges, academic interactions, infrastructural development and military sales. At present, China is not only the largest trade partner of Bangladesh but also the largest supplier of military hardware to that country. Trade between the two countries has reached to $7 billion and China has provided duty free access to 4721 Bangladeshi products to offset the trade deficit against Bangladesh. Chinese Vice-President Xi Jinping, while visiting Dhaka in 2010 proposed to develop a deep sea port in Chittagong and launch first space satellite of Bangladesh. China wants to get refueling and other port facilities at Chittagong for its commercial and naval ships. In the field of connectivity China has more ambitious project to link Chittagong with Yunnan province of China through Myanmar via land routes. This is known as Chittagong-Mandalay-Kunming Highway and will give China another reliable access to Indian Ocean.

**Sri Lanka:** Sri Lanka is another South Asian nation where China has gradually strengthened her linkages and influence in recent years. Amidst rising Tamil insurgency in 1980s, external military assistance particularly from Israel and China to Sri Lanka became cause of concern to India. It was in this background that India sent her Peacekeeping forces in Sri Lanka under the Rajiv Gandhi-Jaywardhane Agreement of 1987. Meanwhile, China took the advantage of Tamil violence and boosted her military supply to Sri Lanka in 1990s. It was due to the advanced weaponry supplied by China that Sri Lanka was able to decimate LTTE terrorists in 2009. Later, particularly since the coming in to power of Mahinda Rajapaksa government in 2005 in Sri Lanka, China
strengthened her trade, investment and development engagement with Sri Lanka. At present, China is the largest trading partner of Sri Lanka and is source of more than 50 percent development assistance received by Sri Lanka from external sources. Strategically more important project is the Chinese involvement in the Hambantota port development Zone project, which includes an international container port, a bunkering system, an oil refinery, an international airport and other facilities. The total cost of the project is $1 billion and 85 percent of it will be borne by China. Hambantoata lies in the middle point between Gulf of Aden and Malacca strait, hence it is an ideal location for refueling Chinese commercial ships as well as naval ships engaged in anti-piracy mission in Gulf of Aden region. China is also involved in railway modernization, establishment of two thermal power plants and oil exploration in Sri Lanka. Thus Chinese economic and military profile is far ahead of Indian presence. Chinese submarines have visited Sri Lankan ports in 2014, which raised eyebrows in India. With the defeat of Rajpaksha in 2015 Presidential elections in Jan 2015, the decade log tilt of Sri Lankan foreign policy towards China is likely to be reversed.

**Maldives:** China has also developed interest in strengthening her engagement with Maldives, which has recently emerged as the favorable destination for Chinese tourists. China is involved in modernizing banking facilities, construction activities and other minor development works. The new government of Maldives signed a multi-million dollar deal with China in September 2014 to upgrade Male’s international airport. The previous government of Maldives had earlier contracted Indian firm GMR for up-gradation of Airport but the new government has unilaterally terminated the agreement in 2012. This was a strategic setback to India.

**Myanmar:** Though, technically, Myanmar is not a part of South Asia, its discussion is important to demonstrate China’s opportunistic engagements in the region. Following the pro-democracy protests in 1988, the military Junta faced international isolation including from India. It gave China ample opportunity to develop close military and economic links with Military Junta without scant regard to the fate of democracy. China is involved in Myanmar in the fields of infrastructure development, energy resources, military supply and training. China is developing and expanding Sittwe sea port, communication facilities in the Coco island near India’ Andaman and Nicobar Island, construction of gas 2380 kms long oil pipeline from Arakan province of Myanmar to Yunnan province of China, Oil exploration and production and building
hydropower stations. China has also supplied jet fighters armored vehicles, naval vessels and trained defense personnel of Myanmar. Thus in a brief span of one decade China made deep strategic inroads in Myanmar.

**China’s Regional Strategy**

**String of Pearls:** It refers Chinese policy of encircling India in the Indian Ocean by developing vital military and economic facilities in littoral states of South Asia. China has implemented her "String of Pearls" strategy to gain foothold in Indian Ocean by seeking port and navel facilities in South Asia from Pakistan (Gwader) to Myanmar (Sittwe and Coco Islands) via Sri Lanka (Hambantota) and Bangladesh (Chittagong). China has tried to develop close military and economic ties with Pakistan, Myanmar, Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka to balance the India’s growing military and economic presence in the region. In South Asia, China has gradually expanded its influence much to the chagrin of India. Chinese strategy of "String of Pearls" to encircle India has raised security concerns among Indian policy-makers. The policy started in 1980s with declared objective of giving China increased energy security with refueling stations throughout the world. Raasi Bhatia (2009) quotes Christopher J Pehrson, author of famous book, ‘String of Pearls: Meeting the Challenge of China’s Rising power across Indian Littoral’ to highlight the scope of this strategy: 'the string of pearls describes the manifestation of China's rising geopolitical influence through efforts to increase the access to ports and airfields, develop special diplomatic relationship and modernize military forces that extend from South China Sea through the strait of Malacca, across Indian Ocean and on to the Arabian Gulf.' While declared objective of Chinese strategy is to secure her energy supply and get refueling facilities many observers like Chris Devonshire-Ellis (2009) and Iskandar Rehman (2010) do not rule out the military use of these facilities for Chinese navy in future.

**Maritime Silk Route: A Benign version of 'String of Pearls':**

The new Chinese President Xi Jinping unveiled in 2013 a new strategic proposal of two Silk routs: one land based **Silk Road Economic Belt** and another **Maritime Silk Route.** Both routes will join Asia with Europe with China in the centre. The details of these proposals are kept ambiguous by China. The Silk Road Economic Belt is a land corridor, starting from Xian in China to reach Venice in Europe through Central Asia. The Maritime Silk Route would start from Fujian province in China,
cross Malacca Strait and transit through Indian Ocean via India, Sri Lanka, Maldives, and Nairobi. It would enter Mediterranean Sea through Suez Canal and finally terminate at Venice to merge with the land based Silk route (The Hindu: 2014).

In order to promote his pet project the Maritime Silk Route to bolster strategic ties with India's smaller nations, Chinese President Xi Jingping visited three South Asian capitals in the third week of September 2014. First he visited Maldives and promised to fund a big road bridge and offered to operate a tourist airport. Maldives gave its consent to join the Maritime Silk Route proposed by China. This was the first visit in 40 years by a Chinese President. In the next leg of his tour, Jingping visited Sri Lanka, where he received a grand welcome by Sri Lankan political establishment, including by Jingping's favourite 40 decorated elephants. His measure deal in Colombo was the agreement to build a commercial town by China at the landfill island off Colombo, with the total cost of $1.3 billion. The proposed commercial town lies adjacent to a Chinese built new Sea port. China has already built a big port at Hambantota. The Chinese push for infrastructure development in Sri Lanka is intended to make her a regional trading hub under maritime Silk route project to which Sri Lanka has given her consent during this visit (The Economist: 2014).

In December, 2014, Nepal formally signed a four-point document endorsing the Silk Road Economic Belt for connecting Asia with Europe along a land corridor, with China as its hub. China wants to connect with Nepal and South Asia through an extension of the Qinghai-Tibet railway. The rail line from Lhasa has already been extended to Shigatse, Tibet's second largest city, 253 km away. The Chinese plan to build two lines from Shigatse. One would lead to Kerung, the nearest Chinese town from Nepal, from where it would be extended to Rasuwagadhi in Nepal. The other line would head to Yadong on the India-Bhutan border (The Hindu: 2015). Thus, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Maldives have given consent to join maritime silk route and others may also fall in line. For obvious reason India has objection to this proposal as it perceives this as China's veiled strategy to gain strategic foothold in South Asia.

Indian Constraints: China's deepening footprints in South Asia are the result of two broad factors: India’s failure to successfully lead the efforts of regional integration and development in the region; and second, the prevailing political, economic and strategic conditions in South Asia. Though India is a regional power in South Asia and a global emerging power, its South Asia policy has always failed to achieve desired success. The objective of Indian Policy in South Asia is to ensure a stable,
peaceful and secured neighborhood. With this objective in mind India is pursuing mutually beneficial relations with her neighbors (Annual Report, MEA: 2011) by strengthening development partnerships, promoting political stability, focusing on development of physical connectivity and cultural contacts and so on. Its initiatives like Gujral Doctrine (1998), based on the principle of non-reciprocity or the New Neighbourhood Policy (2005), pleading for enhanced connectivity and cultural links with neighbours, have failed to cut much ice. Failure is attributed to many factors: fear of India's dominance among; bilateral differences and ethnic conflicts with regional actors; lack of consensus among south Asian countries on the core issues of regional security and development; slow progress of economic integration in South Asia; and domestic politics of India and her neighbours. The bipolar alignment of political parties in the democratic political process of neighbouring countries like Bangladesh (Awami League Vs Bangladesh Nationalist Party); Sri Lanka (Sri Lanka Freedom Party Vs opposition Parties); Nepal (Nepali Congress Vs Maoists); Maldives (the Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP) Vs the Dhivehi Raajjithunge Party); and Bhutan (People's Democratic Party Vs Bhutan Peace and Prosperity Party), has generated a situation that if one party supports closer relations with India, the other goes for closer ties with China. Again, on the other hand, China is not handicapped by such factors as bilateral disputes or any ideological or resource constraints in engaging with these countries.

The Strategic Competition: For India, South Asia is crucial not only for her security but also for sustaining her emerging status in the region and beyond. India is the largest country in the region with 76 percent population and 73 percent land area of the region. All most all conflicts have direct or indirect linkages with India. India has vital economic, security and strategic interests in South Asia. Therefore, in spite of all odds, it will not succumb to Chinese strategic inroads in South Asia. This has given scope for strategic competition or rivalry between the two rising nations in South Asia as China's inroads are perceived by India as 'zero sum game', not as 'win-win situation', as propagated by China. Mohan Malik (2004) remarks, 'with their ever-expanding economies and widening geo-political horizons, the bilateral relationship between the rising Asian giants could be characterized more by competition than cooperation.' In fact, both as major neighboring states attempt to expand their influence on the same strategic domain'. In fact, anti-India spirit inherent in Chinese strategic moves in South Asia cannot be missed, in spite of China's claim for peaceful periphery or peaceful rise. D. S. Rajan (2009, 2011) remarks, 'But the PRC's concept of regional peace in South
Asia appears not yet free from anti-India bias. An assertive China seems to persist with its course of promoting Pakistan as an ally with a view to strategically limiting India's rise within the confines of South Asia. Mohan Malik (2001) also upholds the same view, as he remarks, 'A key feature of Beijing's South Asia policy has been its India-centric approach, which, in turn, has seen military links with India's neighbors dominating the policy agenda. The major objective of China's South Asia policy has been to prevent the rise of peer competitor, a real Asian rival to challenge China's status as the Asia-Pacific's sole 'Middle Kingdom'. Another noted scholar Subhash Kapila (2002) goes one step further to remark that China has followed a single point agenda to oppose India in the last 50 years or so. He says, 'Its focus in South Asia, ever since, has been to strategically and politically de-stabilize India and thereby prevent its emergence as a major power.'

David Scott (2008) reviews the nature and scope of rivalry between India and China in the Geo-political perspective and terms it as the 'Great Game' between the two rising powers. He remarks: These powerful neighboring states seek to continue rising, and constrain the other where necessary through mutual encirclement and alliances/proxies. This type of 'Great Game' is evident in the military-security, diplomatic and economic areas. Globalization has not replaced regionalism, nor has Geo-economics has replaced Geo-politics'.

The facts of China's deepening strategic inroads in South Asia and India's rising concerns are evident. It is also clear that, in spite of enjoying a favourable historical and background, India faces many odds to counter China in South Asia in the same manner as China encounters unfavourable strategic conditions to counter India in South-East Asia. The strategic game between India and China in these two regions has further strengthened the strategic linkages between South Asia and South-East Asia. The strategic loss for India in South Asia due to Chinese encroachment is compensated by India's growing influence in South-East Asia, a region which China considers her area of natural influence. Though China's ambitious modernization of armed forces and weapons, notably stealth bombers, aircraft carriers, submarines, anti-ship ballistic missile system, coupled with frequent naval exercises in disputed maritime areas has raised grave concern among ASEAN members, Japan, US and other neighboring countries including India, the need for stability and peace is equally felt by both sides. As far as future of strategic competition is concerned, both India and China would avoid to be engaged in any hot pursuit as both need a peaceful neighborhood to grow and develop. Yet, China's strategic march in South Asia is likely to get further advance in future. India needs fresh thinking.
to avoid its negative consequences. Besides connectivity and people to people contact, India needs to formulate a strategy to strengthen economic and strategic interdependency with her South Asian neighbours.

Notes:

1. The Indo-China Boundary dispute, in the present form dates back to 1950s, when it silently started the policy of territorial expansion. China invaded Tibet in 1950, ignoring India's sensitivity as India recognized Tibet as a buffer region between the two countries. The McMahon Line drawn in 1914, demarcated the boundary between India and China for long time, but China refused to recognize McMahon Line in 1950 on the ground that it is a line, which was drawn arbitrarily by the imperial powers. During 1962 war, China captured 38000 sq kms of Indian Territory in Aksai Chin area of Laddakh region of Jammu and Kashmir. In addition, China now claims 90000 Sq. Kms of Indian territory in Arunachal Pradesh. There have been many attempts to find a political solution to this problem, but efforts have gone in vain. In 2003, both countries decided to establish a mechanism of high level negotiations to find an amicable solution of boundary dispute. By the end of 2014, 17 rounds of negotiations have been conducted between the Special Representatives of both sides, but the problem eludes the solution (NDTV; 2014). It appears that China wants to keep boundary issue in the backburner and improve relations in other areas. However, in Aksai Chin area, the border skirmishes and the incidents of infiltration inside the territory of India by Chinese troops is not uncommon. Both Countries have signed the Border Defence Cooperation Agreement (BDCA) in 2013, which provides a mechanism for the effective management of border and maintaining peace and tranquility in border areas.

2. The Gujral Doctrine was proposed in 1998 to address the post cold war conditions in the neighbourhood. It identifies South Asia as the first circle in India’s foreign policy. This Doctrine is the set of five principles: non-reciprocity, while dealing with her neighbours; not to allow the use of their territory against the other countries of this region; refraining from interference in the internal affairs; Respecting the territorial integrity and sovereignty; and solving their disputes by peaceful means. The principle of non-reciprocity means that India will contribute to the growth of her neighbours without reciprocal returns from them. India announced a New Neighbourhood Policy in 2005, which laid emphasis on developing connectivity in the region to facilitate movement of goods
and people and to encourage cultural contacts and people to people contact among countries of South Asia.

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(8) INDIA’S POLICY TOWARDS CHINA:
FROM DILEMMA TO ENGAGEMENT

Amrita Jash

(Doctoral Candidate at the Centre for East Asian Studies (Chinese Division), School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi)

Introduction:

The twenty-first century is witnessing a change in the global political architecture where the balance of power is shifting from the west to the east. With this systemic change, the two most dominant players that are emerging strong in the international arena are India and China. The two most populous nations and Asian civilizational powers, which are estimated to become the largest economies of the world by 2050 are increasingly rising by asserting their global profiles. In this strategic shift of power, it is in all likelihood that the twenty-first century as mostly debated will be the ‘Asian Century’. Whereby, the contours of this Asian century will be mainly drawn by the behavioural dynamics of India and China. And most importantly, by the bilateral relationship between the two long standing Asian powers which is observed to be the most important relationship of the present times having an impact on the discourse of future global politics. According to the United States National Intelligence Council Report titled “Mapping the Global Future” by 2020, the global architecture will envision “[t]he likely emergence of China and India as new major global players - similar to Germany in the 19th century and the United States in the early 20th century – will transform the geopolitical landscape, with impacts potentially as dramatic as those of the previous two centuries. In the same way as commentators refer to the 1900s as the “American Century,” the early 21st century may be seen as the time when some in the developing world, led by China and India, come into their own”.
With this assessment, it leaves no doubt that emerging India and China will draft the future trajectory of global politics. As rising global powers, both India and China have committed themselves to promote peace, stability and development in the current international system. Having significant implications, the bilateral relationship has captured worldwide attention whereby the global apprehension lies in understanding the manner in which the credible partnership between India and China will nurture and sustain in order to serve mutual benefits and bolster global aspirations. In this view, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao in one of his meetings with the Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, is reported to have remarked: “When we shake hands, the whole world will be watching”.ii

In this context, it becomes imperative to understand the changing dynamics of India’s policy towards its eastern neighbour China. From the dominant perspective, it is clear that India’s foreign policy towards China over the years have lacked coherence in terms of having a definite vision. It has predominantly been shaped by short term goals without any strategic approach and has been implicated by domestic political constraints and a limited lens of mutual distrust which has gravely curtailed the potential of the relationship. Having this view, with the current shifts in the balance of power as complemented by a ‘China Rise’ it becomes imperative for India to diversify its foreign policy objectives towards China in order to maximise the payoffs which is deemed to have significant implications on the relationship as a whole.

In this view, understanding the systemic realities, India’s foreign policy towards China is seen to have changed from conforming to the existing continuities to that of changing the course of diplomatic choices. The change is noted in terms of adopting a political vision over the longstanding factors of bureaucratic expertise and military demands. With a common interest to rebuild the relations, both India and China have succeeded in laying a constructive path of development beyond the
shadow of the past. Premised on an increased high-level interaction and multilateral engagements, India and China have opened new chapter in their relations owing to a common vision of peace and prosperity. Of which, the most important landmark has been set by the ‘Modi-Xi’ cordiale - which has changed the relational dynamics, whereby, engagement has become the command of politics. With this strategic shift, India’s foreign policy towards China has taken a new path as the longstanding dilemmas are now being transformed with a proactive policy framework. In this positive atmospheric, it is important for India to redefine its relationship with China, which will shape the contours of its future foreign policy. Having a proactive approach with a long term measured foreign policy will fetch greater payoffs for the bilateral relations between the two countries, who are the dominant players of the twenty-first century. Therefore, it is imperative for India to shift its China policy from the rubrics of the dogmatic security dilemma to that of pragmatic proactive engagement.

**India’s Foreign Policy: Taking a new path of Proactive Diplomacy**

India’s foreign policy has traditionally been guided by the theorem of “three concentric circles”. The first circle, which encompasses the immediate neighborhood, India has sought primacy and a veto over the actions of outside powers. For example, India’s big brother policy in South Asia, where the balance of power is dominated by India. In the second, which encompasses the so-called extended neighborhood stretching across Asia and the Indian Ocean littoral, India has sought to balance the influence of other powers and prevent them from undercutting its interests. For example, India’s ‘Look East Policy’, which is now mainly aimed at balancing China. In the third concentric, which includes the entire global stage, India has tried to take its place as one of the great powers, a key player in international peace and security. This can be understood in terms of India’s role in various multilateral
institutions such as the United Nations, SAARC, BRICS, BISA, SCO and others.

Following these three thumb rules, India’s grand strategy adopted a restricted approach which historically prevented it from realizing the strategic goals in an absolute manner. Hence, with the end of the Cold War, India’s foreign policy had to undergo a reinvention in order to meet the strategic shifts in the international system as witnessed in making a way to economic liberalization from state socialism, to that of shifting its strategic focus beyond its immediate neighbours and engaging with them and most importantly, facing a rising China. Thereby, India drifted from its isolationist policy of Non-Alinement and took the road of a pragmatic policy of engagement.

Therefore, India’s foreign policy has taken a more proactive posture from its long standing passivity. In acknowledging this significant shift, C. Raja Mohan states that, “After more than a half century of false starts and unrealized potential, India is now emerging as the swing state in the global balance of power. In the coming years, it will have an opportunity to shape outcomes on the most critical issues of the twenty-first century: the construction of Asian stability, the political modernization of the greater Middle East, and the management of globalization”. Hence, what India’s policy needs to adopt is an active posture in order to elevate its global profile as a dominant player in the international stage.

The Changing Pattern of India’s China Policy: Road to an Incremental Engagement

India’s China policy has undergone dramatic changes over the six decades of diplomatic relations. As over the years it has been shaped by the complex interplays of various factors, such as- historical ties, geographical proximity, experiences of the past and present needs, varying perceptions of the political elites and their ideological standpoint. In addition, to these critical factors are the influences from the
international forces in terms of the changing balance of power in the international system as well as the regional power nexus. Thereby, these parameters act as the drivers behind the national interests that frame India’s China Policy. In this view, despite being India’s biggest neighbour, China has predominantly received only episodic attention from the Indian government and its people. India’s China policy has mainly been rooted in suspicion and misperception, unable to adopt a strategic view. That is, India’s China policy lacked a competent and visionary political direction. This can be assessed from the eventual growth of the relationship.

India and China established their diplomatic relations on April 1, 1950. India was the first non-socialist country to recognize the People’s Republic of China (PRC) and since then the relationship has evolved over the years with the periodic ups and downs. In the initial years from 1950-1958, India-China relations is said to have been in the ‘honeymoon phase’, where the relationship was defined by the slogan ‘Hindi-Chini Bhai Bhai’. In 1954, both India and China gave a legal foundation to their new nation-to-nation relations with Panchsheel as the framework for relations between the two countries. Whereby, the Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai exchanged visits and jointly put forth the famous “Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence” to live and prosper together in peace and harmony.

India-China diplomatic relations witnessed a severe low in 1959 with the Tibetan uprising and the flight of Dalai Lama to India. This led to a distrust in the relations resulting into territorial tensions of sovereignty over the McMahon Line. In 1962, the territorial tensions escalated into a border war- in which the two neighbours fought along the eastern and western sectors of their Himalayan border, thereby, culminating into a deadlock in the diplomatic ties. In 1976, the relations were gradually restored with then Indian External Affairs Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee’s path breaking visit to China, which led the foundation for the
renewal of contacts at the highest political level after a gap of two decades. In 1988, Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi’s pragmatic visit to China, marked the landmark in the renewal process of the 26 years of frozen bilateral ties, activated by hostility and armed tension. This event brought a major turning point in India-China relations, as they entered into a “new beginning”- aimed at an overall restoration and development of the relations. In this light of a gradually improved India-China relations, a minor setback in the ties was brought with India’s 1998 nuclear tests- as it was justified by references to the ‘Chinese threat’. With the coming of the twenty-first century, India-China, witnessed a new high with rapid development in the relations and embarking into a “Strategic and Cooperative Partnership” in 2005, thereby, getting the ‘trust factor’ back in the relationship.

With these rise and fall of events, India’s relations with its East Asian neighbour- China has evolved over the years in the continuum of friendship, enmity, rivalry and engagement. With the resurgence of the diplomatic ties, both India and China have crafted a durable framework to manage their border dispute and cooperate in areas of mutual interest within the confines of a cold peace-thereby, building a greater political and economic engagement between the two countries. Thus, evaluating the growth of India-China relations, it can be assessed as Alka Acharya states: “There is little doubt that India and China are moving on the path of normalisation of relations – albeit, not quite with fluidity and ease. At best they have acquired a fair degree of political comfort, at worst, they are merely conflict-free, though suspicion-prone.”vii

In an overall assessment, it can be said that the current phase of India’s China policy is embroiled in the “contradiction of the ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors- .... [which is regulated by the] ‘pulling together’ [of] economic trade and cooperation on the one hand and persisting ‘pushing apart’ by high levels of political mistrust and suspicion on the other”.viii
Modi-Xi Factor in India’s China Policy: Greater Cooperation over Competition

In the current dynamics, India’s foreign policy towards China has paved a new path. This has been oriented by the change of political leadership in India in May 2014. This political transition has given a new dynamism to India’s relations with China, with an added Chinese interest to earnestly engage with the newly formed Narendra Modi Government. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi’s two-day high-level visit to New Delhi on June 8-9 as President Xi Jinping’s special envoy is indicative of China’s proactive engagement with the new government.

India’s proactive diplomacy towards China is witnessed in terms of India’s departure from its erstwhile dogmatic position and reaching out to befriend China, negating the less accommodative posture towards Beijing. Here, India’s China policy focuses on greater engagement than restrictions. The most important landmark to this proactive engagement has been brought by Chinese President Xi Jinping’s maiden visit to India from 17-19 September 2014. The historic Modi-Xi interaction opened a new chapter in the India-China relations of the twenty-first century as witnessed in Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi’s iconic visit to China in 1988- setting the threshold of a new beginning. India’s departure from a reactive foreign policy is visible in the way the diplomatic interaction emerged above the situational complexities of military stand-off at the Chumar and Demchok sectors of Ladakh along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), which failed to pose a deadlock to the bonhomie. Rather politics and economics were met with pragmatism.

The new spirit of reviving the friendship from the vestiges of the past deadlocks is clearly outlined in the Joint Statement as issued by India and China over Xi Jinping’s visit, which strongly stated that: “[A]s two large developing and emerging economies, their developmental goals are interlinked and should be pursued in a mutually supportive manner. Recognising that their respective growth processes are mutually
reinforcing, they agreed to leverage mutual complementarities and build a closer developmental partnership. The leaders agreed to make this developmental partnership a core component of the Strategic and Cooperative Partnership for Peace and Prosperity. This developmental partnership is conducive not only to the common interests of both sides, but also to stability and prosperity of the region and the world.\textsuperscript{ix}

The significance of this high-level interaction can be understood in terms of the greater ‘opening up’ between India and China both economically, politically and socially.\textsuperscript{x} This is clearly reflected in the signing of 16 significant agreements. Of which, the most important is that of China’s investment of 20 billion USD in India over the next five years in infrastructure and manufacturing sectors, setting up of two industrial parks and to upgrade India’s railway system with high-speed links and assigning of “Strategic Economic Dialogue” to further the economic cooperation in areas of energy, environment, urbanization and others. There is also a regional dynamic, where the emphasis have been laid on establishing a provincial partnership between Gujarat and Guangdong Province and Sister-City relationships between Mumbai-Shanghai and Ahmedabad-Guangzhou. While on the border issue, both sides maintained the consensus of upholding the sanctity of the 2005 Agreement on the Political Parameters and Guiding Principles for the Settlement of the Boundary Question. As the Joint Statement posited: “Peace and tranquility on the India-China border areas [is] as an important guarantor for the development and continued growth of bilateral relations. Pending a final resolution of the boundary question, the two sides would continue to make joint efforts to maintain peace and tranquility in the border areas.”\textsuperscript{xi}

In the social sphere, both parties have proposed to widen the engagement of people-to-people contact and art and cultural exchanges (Buddhist Art, language, social media-movies, television and others) and most importantly, opening up a new route to “Kailash Manasarovar
"Yatra" (for pilgrimage from both sides), through the Nathula Pass in the Indian state of Sikkim. And at the global level, the leaders affirmed cooperation on “zero tolerance to terrorism” to that of integration in space technology, cooperation in civil nuclear energy and above all, a shared interest to play vital roles—India in SCO and China in SAARC.

Therefore, from the above reflections it is clear that India’s new China policy focuses on greater engagement with China, exhibiting a departure from the dilemmas of the past. As after a long era of ad hoc, reactive, weak-kneed diplomacy, this new clarity and vision represent a welcome change for India, where pragmatism has become the hallmark of diplomacy. The iconic high-level interaction between the leadership of both sides has opened a new phase where cooperation over tension has taken the command in politics and diplomacy. And that India’s China policy has risen above the proxies of bureaucrats and military, advancing a new line of thinking.

India’s Road Ahead with China:

India’s foreign policy towards China needs to adopt a sustainable and effective framework which goes beyond the issues of physical security and rather takes into perspective the political interests which has a binding on the economic and social growth of the bilateral relationship. This can be done by tapping the potential of commonalities between the two countries. That is, they can converge as—both are growing economies, a large section of their populations have poor living conditions and they are similar in regard to labour standards, issues of food security, migration, energy security, commodity prices, climate change, World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiations and others. Owing to these common interests, the political elites of both India and China would find more grounds for cooperation.

In this regard, in terms of high-level political and economic interaction, India’s China policy should encourage greater engagement in terms of
calibrating the US factor in the relationship, cooperating in sub-regional level and in areas of non-traditional security concerns, developing non-renewable energy resources, and adopting a comprehensive interdependence. Apart from these objectives, India’s China policy should also largely emphasize on people to-people contact by means of scholarly exchanges, cultural exchanges, educational exchanges, funding of academic researches and contributions to joint military exercises. All these factors would act as strong confidence building measures and thereby, narrow down the differences that limit the holistic growth of the bilateral relations.

Conclusion:

Given the strategic shifts in the international domain, it is not pragmatic for India to adopt a confrontational posture towards China in achieving its global aspirations. Rather India needs an institutionalised configuration to deepen its relationship with China in a constructive, credible and sustainable way. The policy towards China should adopt a multidimensional framework rather than perceiving it through the unidirectional lens of competitive rivalry. Thereby, for India the best policy choice towards China needs a proactive diplomacy based on pragmatic engagement rather than disengagement, making it a global partnership of the twenty-first century. That is to say, India’s China policy needs to adopt a comprehensive, long term framework bestowed with a concrete strategic vision.

End Notes:


iv. Ibid.


xi. “Joint Statement”.


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**Foreign Policy (Generalia):**

(1) **Critical examination of the TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION Process in post-conflict SRI LANKA**

**SATHEESAN KUMARASAMY**

BSc, BA (Hons), MA
Member of the Law Society of Upper Canada

(Satheesan Kumarasamy holds B.Sc. (Biology), Honours BA (Political Science), MA with the specialization in Global Studies. He is the Publisher & Editor-In-Chief of the journal, Voice of Voiceless. He is also the Founder-Chairman & CEO of SARCO (South Asia Research and Charitable Organization).

Satheesan Kumarasamy is a paralegal advocate – licensed by the Law Society of Upper Canada. He obtained an Alternate Dispute Resolution Certificate (ADR) making his proficiency in assisting in matters of mediation and conflict resolution. He founded a legal firm in Canada in September 2010 which is a fully licensed firm that offers its clients knowledgeable and qualified legal advice and representation. He specialized in Immigration, SABS (Accident Benefits – Personal Injury Claims), Small Claims, Traffic Tickets, Landlord and Tenant and Criminal Pardon.)

**ABSTRACT**

Despite growing pressure from the international community (IC), little has been done by the Sri Lankan government to end one of the world’s oldest ethnic conflicts, even though the bloody civil war ended in 2009 with over 140,000 civilian deaths. The IC has demanded an impartial Truth and Reconciliation Commission (T& R) to investigate abuses committed by both warring parties. A genuine truth and reconciliation with the determination to seek a fair and reasonable justice to the wounded is the fundamental objective of T & R. A restorative framework based on the methodology of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission will scrutinize whether the T & R would be meaningful to examine in Sri Lanka’s ethnic conflict. The restorative approach is a method to transform the hatred and revenge,
and to build community by emphasizing reconciliation and seeking accountability for rights abuses. The question “What is needed for meaningful reconciliation in Sri Lanka?” is to be answered appropriately.

INTRODUCTION

Ever since it gained independence from Britain in 1948, the tiny island nation of Sri Lanka off the southern tip of India has been devastated by ethnic conflict between the majority Sinhalese and minority Tamil populations. From 1948 to 1977, Tamil leaders protested, through constitutional means, against the discriminatory political behavior of the Sinhala rulers. The various acts that came into force during this period were aimed at progressively making the Tamils second-class citizens, under the belief that these steps toward redressing the imbalance created by the British regime were necessary to win favor with extremist elements among the majority Sinhalese.

The unitary arrangement in Sri Lanka led to legislative discrimination against the Tamils by the Sinhalese majority. This resulted in a demand for federation which, in the 1970s, grew into a movement for an autonomous Tamil country. The situation deteriorated into civil war in the early 1980s. The ethnic conflict involved the Sri Lankan Tamils, of whom the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) claimed to be the sole authentic representative until the 2009 defeat by the Sri Lankan State armed forces.

Before the advent of the LTTE, successive Sinhala governments, with the aid of extremists, met the peaceful campaigns of the Tamils with violence, murder, rape, and looting in 1956, 1958, 1977, 1979, 1981, and 1983. When all peaceful engagements failed, the young Tamils decided there was no option but to launch a military campaign for self-determination. Over 20 Tamil militant groups were formed. Eventually, the LTTE became the sole militant group to fight the Sri Lankan State armed forces. All other Tamil militant groups were destroyed by the LTTE in the so-called ‘brotherly’ fight to determine the authentic leadership of the Tamils. The members of other militant groups wiped out by the LTTE either fled the country and/or joined the Sri Lankan government and helped the Sri Lankan government fight the LTTE. These militant groups are currently very active in Tamil areas as paramilitary groups helping the Sri Lankan armed forces.

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2 Ibid, pp. 96-97.
On October 30, 1990, LTTE trucks drove through the streets, ordering Muslim families to assemble at Osmania College in Jaffna in northern Sri Lanka. There, they were told to exit the city within two hours. The entire Muslim population was expelled from Jaffna. In total, over 14,400 Muslim families, roughly 72,000 people, were forcibly evicted from LTTE-controlled areas of the north. This included 38,000 people from Mannar; 20,000 from Jaffna and Kilinochchi; 9,000 from Vavuniya; and 5,000 from Mullaitivu. Most of the Muslims were resettled in Puttalam District. The expulsion still carries bitter memories among Sri Lanka’s Muslims. This was considered LTTE’s gravest mistake.

The LTTE carried out many high-profile attacks during their 30 years of military campaign for an independent state for Tamils, including the assassinations of several high-ranking Sri Lankan and Indian politicians, as well as most senior Sri Lankan ministers and military commanders. LTTE pioneered the use of suicide belts, and used light aircraft in some of their attacks. The LTTE primarily attacked military camps, then progressed to economic targets to weaken the Sri Lankan State, creating a sense of fear among the Sinhalese. The most condemned LTTE attack was on the renowned Buddhist temple in central Kandy in 1998, with 11 people killed and 23 wounded.

The Sri Lankan State armed forces used shelling, bombardment and other forms of military attack against the minority Tamils, who are the majority in their native northern and eastern provinces. The UN said that in 2009, just before the end of the war, 80,000 to 100,000 civilians, mostly Tamils, were killed. A UN statement released in 2012 found that approximately 40,000 Tamil civilians were killed during the last few months of the final stage of the war, which ended in May 2009. Rights abuses during and after the war have been questioned by the international community, since the Sri Lankan government launched military attacks against civilian targets and in no-fire zones where thousands of Tamils, including LTTE political leaders, were shot in broad daylight. International human rights groups have called it a war against humanity. While international pressure was mounting for the UN to intervene to protect the civilians, the UN was claiming the Sri Lankan government was targeting the LTTE soldiers and not the civilians. Immediately after the war ended, the UN statement said that only 7,000

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civilians died in the final phase of the war. After severe criticisms from the international community, including western countries and human rights organizations, the UN appointed a team of experts to investigate the abuses; this team of experts found that 40,000 civilians died. The international community and the rights groups contended that the casualty figure was not accurate, after which the UN appointed an internal review commission that investigated the UN’s own investigations and found that the UN deliberately ignored Sri Lanka’s huge-scale human rights violations. The UN Secretary-General’s internal review panel found that 70,000 Tamil civilians were killed in the final phase of the war.

In this context, the question of T&R comes into play, especially to examine whether the South African TRC could be a model for Sri Lanka, even though the South African context was different from the Sri Lankan situation in that, in South Africa, the majority population was discriminated against by the minority; in Sri Lanka, the majority Sinhalese discriminated against the minority Tamils. However, it is meaningful to find an alternate to conflict through reconciliation, whether it is significant in Sri Lanka to end the three-decades-old military struggle and the latter three decades-old political struggle by the Tamils.

RESEARCH QUESTION

The problems of violations and abuses of human rights and war against humanity have been the central issue over the past two decades. Today, T&R commissions have become a decisive element of the response of states, especially those going through political transition, to serious acts of human rights violations with impunity occasioned by a history of prolonged conflicts and hostility. “What is needed for meaningful reconciliation in Sri Lanka?” is a question embedded in the post-war conflict in Sri Lanka because the leadership of Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa crushed the LTTE in May 2009, but he will remain in power until 2015.

With this in mind, transitional justice won’t work because the regime that should be held accountable for war crimes will not investigate itself. Although the government can investigate the rights abuse issues through impartial investigators, it is reluctant to do so. Within this context, the question of what is needed for meaningful reconciliation is vital because the international community has been

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urging the Sri Lankan government to allow third-party investigators. The UN appointed an investigating team that discovered credible evidence that the warring parties in Sri Lanka during the war committed human rights abuses. Even though the war was won three years ago, there has been no progress in addressing the grievances of the affected people, especially rights abuses. Seeking an alternate and meaningful justice through commissions like that of T & R in South Africa could be a possibility. It can be singled out as one of the best or, as previous commissions, the T & R process in Sri Lanka would be the best-case scenario but not the best healing process. So this question is crucial to study what possible elements would create meaningful reconciliation.

HYPOTHESIS

The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission was a successful one. Peace-building experts argue that, if contemporary conflicts have social ties and relations, then reconciliation is the most suitable response to serious human rights violations. For example, Bishop Tutu argues that reconciliation and forgiveness is the way to achieve peace. He argues that it is crucial to find alternative forms of conflict resolution, such as transitional justice, restorative justice or retroactive justice, that move away from criminal prosecutions towards truth seeking and reconciliation. Tutu claims that restorative justice reflects the African way of healing and nurturing confidence and rebuilding social relationships at the expense of exacting vengeance. His notion is the entire community affected by the crimes must have a say in the delivery of justice.

Restorative justice is a very good theory to support in the case of Sri Lanka because it is an attempt to restore peace by bringing erstwhile antagonists together so society can move forward. Bartley (2002) pointed out that, despite various definitions of restorative justice, all of them contain three principles: “Crime is seen as something that causes injuries to victims, offenders and communities. It is in the spirit of ubuntu that the criminal justice process should seek the healing of breeches, the redressing of imbalances and the restoration of broken relationships; not only government, but victims, offenders and their communities should be actively involved in the criminal justice process at the earliest point and to the maximum extent possible; and, in promoting justice, the government is responsible for preserving order and the community is responsible for establishing peace.”

15 Ibid.
The restorative theoretical framework was successful in South Africa, but the question of what is needed for meaningful reconciliation in Sri Lanka is primary. Since no transitional justice has occurred in Sri Lanka, it is unlikely the present regime would take any meaningful actions. On the other hand, the previous governing party, the United National Party (UNP), also inflicted heavy casualties among the Tamils during their regime. Thus, the present regime would seek justice on the same lines. For example, the two main political parties, the UNP and the SLFP (the current party), have on various occasions come into power and both have the same policy with regard to the Tamil national question.  

The primordialist theory is vital to analyse because it offers one simple explanation of ethno-political conflict. For primordialists, ethnic identity is natural and thus unchallengeable, as both culturally acquired aspects such as language and religion, and genetically determined characteristics such as pigmentation and physiognomy are the key in shaping ethnic identity. A.R.M. Imtiyaz argues in his paper that primordialist theory offers one simple yet powerful explanation of ethno-political conflict. He argues that "primordialism’s socio-biological strand claims that ethnicity, tied to kinship, promotes a convergence of interests between individuals and their kin group’s collective goals. On the other hand, opponents of primordialism such as Misha Glenny argue that ethnic conflict is a product of modern politics in which political leaders exploit the masses for their own political ends." The ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka can be argued both ways. Even before Tamil nationalism emerged in Sri Lanka following laws enacted against the Tamils by the Sri Lankan government, the kinship ties among the Tamils of India were strong. Tamils were propagating through Tamil media outlets and academic journals in countries where Tamils live, such as India, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Singapore, Fiji, etc., that Tamils lost their kingdoms after the occupation of their countries from foreign invaders. Thus, proponent of the primordialist theory on ethnic conflict is valid in Sri Lanka’s ethnic conflict because, in the context of South Africa, blacks saw whites as a threat to their identity and allowed them to marginalize in all sectors of their lives including economics and politics.  

The meaningful case study and the theory applied in South Africa is valid, and is the case in point. Even though Sri Lanka does not allow the international community to intervene in the internal conflict, the growing issue of human rights abuse is crucial. International pressure

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often produces meaningful truth commissions or some other forms of accountability, especially as international human rights norms have developed. As truth commissions have become more common and gained more adherents, they demonstrate alternative, inherent benefits of their own and not simply a second-best option to criminal prosecution.

Despite the fact that the mechanism of redressing past wrongs is relatively new in peace-making and peace-building processes, more than 20 truth commissions were established worldwide in the past 20 years\(^19\). The most prominent was South Africa's TRC, set up in 1995, which ultimately captured the world's attention because of the unique opportunity and challenges associated with this novel initiative being used in a very polarized and fragile situation\(^20\). The restorative framework based on the South African context is relevant to Sri Lanka's situation, and the question of what is needed for meaningful reconciliation primarily relied on the government to take the next step to heal the wounds of the people rather than deepening the wound.

**METHOD**

This research study is based primarily on library and Internet sources, and the case study will be taken from South Africa. Since the South African study was successful, it is pivotal to study this case because the Truth Commission of South Africa was created after years of apartheid rule. This commission attempted to heal the wounds of the victims in order to create a sense of trust among the affected people. The commission in South Africa was aimed at healing the wounds of the minority as the majority 'blacks' targeted the minority 'whites' for what the 'whites' had done to the 'blacks' during the colonial era. It was due to the magnanimity of Mandela and Tutu that the commission was a success. But the case of Sri Lanka was that the majority the 'Sinhalese' targeted minority 'Tamils' for what the minority 'Tamils' enjoyed during the colonial era. It is meaningful to see if such commission as in South Africa would bring permanent healing to the wounds caused among the warring parties in Sri Lanka. It is vital for Sri Lanka because the majority Sinhalese and minority Tamils, as well as Tamil-speaking Muslims, were affected by the war, even though overwhelmingly the Tamil-speaking people were the victims. Little has been done to heal the wounds in Sri Lanka.

**CASE STUDY: SOUTH AFRICA**

After the Britons captured the Cape of Good Hope in 1806\(^21\), the British were dominant, even though they were the minority in the country. The minority ruled the majority with discriminatory policies\(^22\).


\(^{20}\) Ibid.


\(^{22}\) www.southafrica-travel.net/history/eh_apart1.htm.
The policy of consistent racial separation was introduced in 1910 through laws that further curtailed the rights of the black majority. Further discriminatory policies were implemented, and insurgency was not preventable because of the discriminatory policies of the Britons. The African National Congress (ANC) fought for freedom but their struggles were met with violence of the government led by the British Empire that took the lives of thousands of people. Even F.W. de Klerk, president of South Africa in 1989, admitted the failure of apartheid policies.

After South Africa emerged from the long period of totalitarian rule (aka apartheid) into a democracy, there was urgent need for reconciliation. The creation of the TRC in 1995 was crucial because it was aimed at promoting national unity and reconciliation in the soul of understanding and coexistence, to transcend the conflicts and divisions of the past. This commission was a milestone compromise between the ruling National Party and the ANC for sustainable peace in the country.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MAIN OBJECTIVES OF THE TRC</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(A) To generate a detailed record of the nature, extent and causes of human rights violations that occurred in South Africa from 1960-1994, and to document the context in which those violations occurred;</td>
<td>(D) To make recommendations to the government on how to prevent the future commission of gross violations of human rights;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(B) To name the people, institutions, organizations, political parties, etc., responsible for gross violations of human rights;</td>
<td>(E) To make recommendations to the government on the measures to be adopted regarding reparations and the rehabilitation of victims of human rights violations;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(C) To provide the victims of gross human rights violations a public platform to express themselves to allow them to regain their human dignity;</td>
<td>(F) To facilitate the granting of amnesty to individual perpetrators of human rights violations.</td>
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The objectives are soft in nature because they were not meant to punish the perpetrators of the crimes; rather, they were meant to cool down the sentiments of the victims and bring them into society so everyone could live peacefully. The uniqueness of the commission was that it included experts from various political backgrounds, human rights activists and others, including lawyers, theologians, historians, social workers and psychologists.

23 www.southafrica-travel.net/history/eh_cala1.htm.
25 Ibid.
27 Ibid.
The positive thing was that the community engagement created a sense that community members could directly take part in telling their stories so they could get justice. The commission was able to facilitate reconciliation meetings where different elements found common ground, which led to reconciliation between victims and perpetrators, reconciliation at the community level and promoted national unity to some extent. The truth telling often led to people seeing each other in a different light. These gestures, coupled with the restoration of dignity that the public acknowledgement of victims represents, were fundamental to ensuring that people began to own the new culture of democracy and human rights and restore credibility to state structures. People have the tendency to forget, but their pain should be relieved by speaking out, as this is common in normal life. The case of South Africa is a good example.

Restorative justice is a promising theory, so it is important to see how it panned out in South Africa’s crime prevention and criminal justice efforts. Bailey (2002) argues it is necessary to consider the charges against this approach. He argues that “restorative justice does not fit the thinking of legal practitioners” and says that “restorative justice is a soft option that ignores the need for punishment.” Bailey further says that “restorative justice leads to net widening in that more offenders get drawn into the system than would otherwise be the case.” He explains that “restorative justice has generally not been creative and sophisticated enough in its application to address the issues it claims to” and he further says that “many individual victims are not prepared to participate in restorative justice processes but are prepared to settle for compensation directly—victims want retribution, not restoration.” His argument is well taken because he says “the level of anger in South African communities at present is so high that people are not ready for restorative justice processes—they want quick fixes,” so he says “restorative justice is not appropriate for dealing with more serious cases such as rape, murder and domestic violence.” Finally, Bailey says that “restorative justice overlooks and minimizes the seriousness of crime.”

South Africa’s situation was different because the minority ruled the majority, and justice was provided by the successor regime that came to power. This was led by the majority of the people and the ANC did not want to alienate the minority that once ruled the country. Also, the ANC did not want to antagonize the minority by punishing them through the criminal legal system, as that would further deepen conflicts. So the soft method, the restorative method, is a good one and was a great tactical tool to calm down all the communities.

28 Ibid.
The restitution approach is a new phenomenon. As Baitley (2002) points out, the restitution approach has economic and political schools of thought committed to a strong view of the minimalist state, adding that government should intervene as little as possible in society, unlike the restorative approach where the government should be as heavily involved as the public. So Baitley (2002) argues that the restitution approach essentially reduces criminal law to civil law and removes the moral concept of wrong. He argues that “criminal offences are not really wrongs against a victim but simply the cost of doing business in society. However, when dealing with society and handling an issue where taking actions against a particular community, the restorative approach is the best solution, which is proven in the South African context.

ARGUMENT

The restorative framework worked fine within the South African context as the theories have suggested, but the Sri Lankan leadership has not used the same method, even though such theories have produced a great sense of hope that might make T & R a success in Sri Lanka. But three years after the end of the war, the Sri Lankan government has not yet engaged the affected communities in dialogue. Rather, the idea of a unitary system of government in a multi-ethnic country is also seen as critical, because a unitary form of government would not allow for decentralization, and the minorities might feel alienated by the State.

Rather than diffusing the conflict, the Sri Lankan government is grabbing the lands of the Tamils through forceful means. They are building more military establishments in the north and east of Sri Lanka and, even in the absence of a military dynamic, it makes the Tamils feel they are living under the surveillance of the Sri Lankan government. Certain fundamental moral and political actions need to be undertaken by the government. Sharp differences between the South African case and the Sri Lankan case are evident from what the Sri Lankan regime is doing. While in South Africa, it was a privileged minority that systemically practiced racial discrimination against the majority. In Sri Lanka, it is the majority that uses its armed forces to target the minority community to submit politically and economically.

The restorative justice model promoted in South Africa was known for its high-pitched contrast from the Nuremberg trials, which were based on retributive justice to deal with war criminals and charges of genocide, with punishments meted out for those in command responsibility and for those following superior orders. The South African model focused more on reformation of the system and rehabilitation rather than punishment. The restorative justice model of South Africa, while it won applause from promoters of liberal peace, drew strong criticisms from many victims and their families, including the family of prominent black activist Steve Biko, who was killed under the apartheid

regime. Internationally acclaimed intellectuals and writers like John Pilger also criticized the process for giving primacy to a smooth political transition over justice, and for being lenient to those guilty of criminal offenses for this purpose.\(^{31}\)

However, in the context of Sri Lanka, this model means that, under the existing political structure of the unitary state, occupation by Sri Lankan military of Tamil areas, Sinhala colonization of Tamil areas, erecting Buddhist temples in Tamil areas, and vast lands of Tamils being occupied by the Sri Lankan military under the guise of “no-man” areas are grave concerns. All these should be addressed before a meaningful reconciliation process can take place, and only then asking the Tamils and Sinhalese to forgive and forget.

In the aftermath of the war in 2009, there was a growing demand for the international community to investigate the final phase of the war. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon appointed a panel of experts, whose report was rejected by the Sri Lankan government. The UN panel of experts recommended to the UN Secretary-General the need to focus on accountability issues with respect to the final stages of the conflict in Sri Lanka. They reported they had obtained credible reports of war crimes committed by both the government and the LTTE, and called for genuine investigation into the allegations. In response to calls for an independent international inquiry into allegations of war crimes, the government of Sri Lanka established its own eight-member Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC) in May 2010.\(^{32}\)

The Sri Lankan government argued that the LLRC should be given a chance to look into the causes and consequences of events in the period from February 2002 to May 2009 and to find ways of fostering reconciliation. The LLRC held its first meeting on August 11, 2010. In November 2010, the president extended its mandate till May 15, 2011. Finally, 18 months after the LLRC was formed, it handed over its final report to President Rajapaksa on November 20, 2011. The commission had held regular public hearings in Colombo and in the former conflict-affected areas of Vavuniya, Batticaloa, and Kilinochchi. This included field visits to meet people directly affected by the conflict. The commission received over 1,000 oral submissions and over 5,000 written submissions. The LLRC report had been tabled in Parliament and was made public in the second week of December 2011.\(^{33}\)


The LLRC comprised mainly former public servants headed by Mr. C.R. de Silva, PC, a former attorney general\(^{34}\). The hearings took place behind closed doors without the presence of media or general public. Months have gone by; after the LLRC recommendations were tabled in Parliament, nothing has been done to implement the findings of the LLRC.

The U.S.-backed resolution in the Geneva UNHRC session in 2012 called for a speedier implementation of the LLRC, and to conduct an impartial inquiry into the rights abuses, but the Sri Lankan government has not taken any initiatives.

Dr. Alexander Boraine, one of the main architects of South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the co-founder of the International Centre for Transitional Justice said, with regard to reconciliation: “At its best, reconciliation involves commitment and sacrifice; at its worst, it is an excuse for passivity, for siding with the powerful against the weak and dispossessed....”\(^{35}\)

**CONCLUSION**

In the post-conflict era, where war has ceased, the post-conflict reconciliation process has not taken place. A crucial part of the reconciliation process is the dilemma of addressing the past and its state-sponsored abuses while preparing for the future by building a democratic pluralist society based on the rule of law. Perpetrators of past crimes and their sympathizers often continue to occupy positions of power in government, including the judiciary, police and military, making prosecutions difficult, a problem often exacerbated by a lack of evidence.

In response to these unfavorable circumstances for providing justice to victims, a non-judicial approach was adopted in numerous countries undergoing transition. Truth commissions such as the one in South Africa were established to officially investigate and provide an accurate record of the broader pattern of abuses committed during repression and, in the case of Sri Lanka, the civil war. Sri Lanka is a case in point because the Sri Lankan government says it is doing reconciliation. At the same time, the reconciliation is taking place under military occupation. The basic necessity for meaningful reconciliation is to acknowledge, sacrifice, commit, and accept responsibility. These are necessary for any meaningful reconciliation; otherwise, all the time and energy in speaking about T & R is futile.


BIBLIOGRAPHY


Reinforcing India's commitment to its extended neighbourhood, India under the new leadership of Prime Minister elect Mr. Narendra Modi announced a revised and more relevant form of the Look East Policy, now rebranded as “ACT EAST POLICY”. “The term “Act East” was first popularized by U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in a speech during her visit to India in July 2011, where she encouraged New Delhi “not just to Look East, but to engage East and act East.”1 Taking this as a reference point, India stands to clearly reiterate how important this region is for it and politically speaking, it signals India’s intent under the changed guard, of policies that are more Action driven.“The Modi Government looks to pursue a greater role in the Asia-Pacific in line with India’s growing economic and strategic interests, based on practical partnerships with Japan, Vietnam, Australia, and ASEAN”.2

Although in the past two decades India has markedly improved its relations with the friends in the Asia-Pacific and has in actuality been engaging with the East however, it still needs to be augmented further. “The transition from Phase I of India’s “Look East Policy” to Phase II, and seemingly to the “Act East Policy” is apt in this regard. As India is gearing up for the “Act East Policy”, the process of transition will have several manifestations that are both implicit and explicit in nature”3 However, the bigger picture behind this is to not only engage with the ASEAN nations but also the countries of Asia-Pacific region that stand tall. Apart from the geo-economic gains, the main driving force behind this move is the security architecture of the region that is swiftly undergoing reconstruction and the temperaments of the countries intensifying making it plausible for India to not only further but also strengthen its engagements. The US “Pivot to Asia”, and in that Asian region, a rising China that is economically strong, politically stable and militarily aggressive a power disequilibrium has been created in South Asia and
therefore with the backing of US, India, Japan and other Southeast Asian countries are coming closer together to reduce china effect. This has made it only easier for India to create a reputation for itself in the region where the others recognize it as a “Power of Consequence”. 

In the above context, Indo-Japan relations have been seen on a rise with the leaders of the two nations Modi- Abe, both pro economic strengthening as an agenda and sharing a comfortable understanding between each other making the high roads easier for taking this partnership further. “The leaders of India and Japan make a perfect pair to shepherd the multi-faceted India-Japan ties to a higher stratosphere”. As understood by PM Modi’s first visit outside the Indian sub-continent to Japan, alleviating the “strategic partnership” to “special strategic and global partnership.” Some issues that were raised during the meet were related to firstly, Japanese concern over Red-Tapism in India to which PM Modi assured of a “red carpet, not red tape”, and a special track in the Prime Minister’s Office them by appointing two Japanese people to facilitate their investments. Secondly, India made a request to convert Japanese Overseas Development Assistance to India into Foreign Direct Investment to which Japan ceded. Going ahead from this, Japan has decided to set up Industrial townships in India that are the Special Economic Zones (SEZ) to promote manufacturing sector of India. The Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) rated India as the top investment destination. “Japan, the 4th largest FDI contributor to India, accounts for 7.46% of total FDI equity inflows into India. As per the JBIC survey report on overseas business operations by Japanese manufacturing companies, 90% voted “future growth potential of local market” as the top reason for India’s attractiveness over the last decade, the number of Japanese establishments in India have increased reflecting the positive sentiments of Japanese investors for Indian market”.

The Japan plus initiative was created last year October in India to facilitate Japanese investments in India that means investment at the level of infrastructure, manufacturing, Ganga cleaning, transport and construction of smart cities and also address related problems. “Japan Plus team works on a mandate that runs through the entire spectrum of investment promotion – research, outreach, promotion, facilitation and aftercare. The team initiates, attracts, facilitates, fast-tracks, and handholds Japanese investments across sectors. Though initially the Japanese side was hoping to have this cell placed in the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO), eventually, it was placed in Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP)”. It will comprise of official representatives from
Government of India and METI (Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry), Government of Japan. Also under the Japan India Investment Promotion Partnership Japan offered to invest in India approximately 3.5 trillion Yen (US $ 33.5 Billion) through investments channeled through public and private financing over the next five years.

Although on the right track, the condition of bilateral trade looks tardy given the fact that the trade stood at $16.29 billion in 2013-14 that accounted for just 2.13 per cent of India’s total trade and barely 1 per cent of Japan’s. The low-profile trade relationship is especially disappointing considering how much Japan has to offer in terms of investment and technology, and how much India needs both.8 Another issue is regarding the nuclear negotiations between the two, where the “hurdles to this deal emanate from Japan’s insistence that no reprocessing of spent fuel would be done in India, and that in the event of a nuclear test by India, the components supplied would be immediately returned to Japan. On the other hand, India considers it should get the same regime applicable to nuclear weapons states (NWS) under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which it has not signed but has unilaterally undertaken to respect”.9 Japan has also asked the Indian government to scrap a backdated tax bill amounting to a whooping $3-billion raised on Japanese companies Indian subsidiaries claiming that it violates the India-Japan Tax treaty and this could also be detrimental for future investments. Nevertheless, “It takes two to tango. And India and Japan, Asia’s two vibrant democracies and leading economies, are matching their steps perfectly, and are set to take their bilateral ties to new heights”.10 India can provide a platform for a huge potential of human resources to Japanese markets given India’s demographic dividend as against Japan’s ageing population. This would help Japan keep up its economic growth. Also, “Japan, a resource poor country, dependent on imports and India, though also a net energy importer itself, has vast reserves of key resource including the world’s largest coal reserves, proven oil reserves (second only to China in Asia), iron ore (third largest in the world), as well as more valuable resource deposits such as uranium and thorium.”.11 However, to avail this opportunity, India and China will require deeper engagement. However, given the hostility between Japan and China in the recent times over the contested islands in East China Sea, the government of India under PM Modi will have to tread carefully in this region without hurting its relations with the two Asian Giants. Should India be able to achieve this, this could prove to be a defining pursuit for India to find a greater place in the world order while there is a realignment of constellations of nations.
(3) India-Bangladesh Relationship: Areas of Conflict

Shahnawaz Ahmad Mantoo
PhD Student
Department of Political Science
University of Kashmir, Srinagar, 190006
Jammu and Kashmir, India

Abstract
The relationship between the nations cannot always be cooperative and friendly and it is mainly due to the emergence of conflicting interests. The relationship in case of neighbours also follows the same law and sometimes it can be friendly and on other it cannot be. The neighbouring countries always share geographical, cultural, economic, political, and other ties and these connections leads to the conflicting interests and clashes. The case of India and Bangladesh relationship cannot be an exception and the same is true with these two countries as well. Both share relationship of different layers with different interests and both are equally conscious of their interests. There are many issues between the two nations but conflicts are always transitional and can be solved through dialogue process. After Bangladesh independence the two countries started relationship on a good note but immediately after 1975 the conflicting attitudes and interests equally came to the fore which led the two nations towards conflicting claims on different issues and ultimately proved very harmful to bilateral ties. The paper seeks to highlight the issues in their proper perspectives and also tries to highlight their historical backgrounds as well.

Key Words: - Disputes, Water, Interests, Conflicts, Cooperation.

Introduction
Historical links, economic interactions and geostrategic interests make India and Bangladesh vital to each other. As one of the main immediate neighbors surrounding Bangladesh, India naturally occupies a pivotal position in its foreign policy (Sreeradha Datta, 2). The geostrategic conditions, economic interactions, energy supplies, trade links, ethno-cultural proximity and historical linkages provide a plethora of
opportunities for close cordial and cooperative relations between the two countries (Sreeradha Datta, Ibid: 3). India’s contribution towards Bangladesh’s war of liberation in 1971 was critical to the latter’s birth. However, events that followed the liberation of Bangladesh did not result in the continuance of cordial relations between these two countries as expected. There are few fundamental issues between India and Bangladesh such as land and maritime boundary demarcation, the sharing of water from 54 common rivers, informal trade, transnational crime and interference in internal affairs that have adversely affected their relationship. While it may be easy to simply list these issues, overcoming them would be difficult mainly due to the overall geopolitical compulsions, the historical legacy and the mutual mistrust in the region (S. K. Chaturvedi 2008: 24).

India is a big neighbor and is capable of assuming the central position in the region. Rajen Harshe’s evaluation may be pertinent here, “It is, thus, as a result of India’s (whether perceived or not) economic and military might, that India’s smaller neighboring countries regard the South Asian region as an Indo-centric region, with India being the core and other South Asian states as the periphery” (S. K. Chaturvedi 2008: 25). Again, borrowing the idea from Zbigniew Brzezinski, former United States National Security Advisor, and “India may be called a geostrategic player while Bangladesh may be called a geostrategic pivot. A geostrategic player has the capacity and national will to exercise influence beyond its borders in order to alter the existing geopolitical state of affairs, while the significance of a geopolitical pivot is derived from how strategically it is located and the potential consequences it may bring about as a result of the behavior of the geostrategic players” (Mohd Aminul Karim 2009: 2). Nonetheless, it is necessary for India, as a formidable power in the region, to take along its neighbors, especially the smaller nations, in settling any outstanding issues amicably. A relatively smaller country such as Bangladesh has to depend on and share resources like water, energy, maritime, trade and technology with its neighbors (Moonis Ahmar 2003: 187).
**Water Issue**
The hydrology of South Asia will play a critical part in the conflict-cooperation dynamics in the region. In many ways water management will be crucial to conflict management in the region. Water being indispensable is an emotional issue that can become a corner stone for confidence building and a potential entry point for peace. However an appropriate discourse that shifts away from ‘water war’ to ‘water peace’ needs to be developed (Smruti S Pattanaik 2011: 88).

The India and Bangladesh share 54 common rivers and the major dispute originated first on Gang river water sharing. Being a lower riparian, Bangladesh is keen on signing agreements on water sharing on all the common rivers. So far there is only one such agreement the Ganges Water Treaty signed in 1996. It is the sharing of Teesta water which tops the list of water disputes between the two countries and Bangladesh has been insisting on reaching an agreement. The reading of the negotiation process since beginning to the present time suggests that though the technical nature of the problem remains the same, a change in domestic politics facilitates or obstructs the negotiation process.

**GANGES WATER DISPUTE AT FARRAKA**

*Google Maps, International Committee for Campaign against Farakka Barrage (ICCAF) [https://www.google.co.in/search?q=farakka+barrage&biw]*
Few controversial matters of the subcontinent have attracted the attention and concern of the world community as intensely as the longstanding disputes over the sharing of the Ganges water between India and Bangladesh. The construction and operation by India the upper riparian of a barrage across the Ganges at a place named Farakka about 17 kilometers upstream from the western borders of Bangladesh with India. River Ganges flows through China, Nepal, India and Bangladesh (Rafiqul Islam 1987: 1). It receives 80 percent of its rainfall during the June-September monsoon period till the volume of water at Farakka becomes 2.5 million cubic feet. In 1951 India first thought of building a dam at Farakka-18 miles upstream from Bangladesh (then East Pakistan) designed to divert the Ganges flow during the dry season into Baghirathi-Hoogli River to flush out the silt at the port of Calcutta. Concern for the future of East Pakistan’s agriculture was aroused by this planned barrage. As time passed the Farakka Dam became a dispute between India and Pakistan- second in bitterness only to the Kashmir dispute (Rafiqul Islam, Ibid: 2). The Dam was commissioned after the independence of Bangladesh. It was expected that, given the cordial relations between India and the newly created state, the Farakka Dam issue would be dealt with amicably, but it was not. India did not consult Dhaka before operationalizing the barrage. In the years that have followed, Bangladesh has been suffering adverse effects on its agriculture, fishery, navigation and forestry due to the reduced flow in the dry season when it most needs the Ganges water (Ganges, Brahmaputra and Meghna rivers sustain 86 per cent of the total land area in Bangladesh). Anti-India sentiment was fuelled by the dispute over the Farakka Dam. In contrast, when India, as the upper riparian state, interfered with rivers flowing into Pakistan the dispute was resolved through the Indus Water Treaty in 1960 (H R Kulz 1969: 4). India and Bangladesh have failed since 1974 to agree on a strategy of water flows during the dry season. When Bangladesh proposed several storage dams on the tributaries of the Ganges River in the Nepal, India objected to it. Instead it proposed a diversion from Brahmaputra through
a large canal to augment the Ganges waters. This was not acceptable to Bangladesh, which feared ecological damage from the canal. After independence of Bangladesh many short term agreements and Memorandum of Understandings were signed from time to time between the two countries. In 1972 Indo-Bangladesh Joint Rivers Commission was established to study the river flow and develop the river water on a cooperative basis. A short term agreement was signed between the two countries to conduct the 40 day trial test of the barrage during the dry season. Unfortunately the president of Bangladesh Sheikh Mujib was assassinated by elements of the military that found him too cooperative with India. The next dry season India began to divert water at Farakka unilaterally and continued to do so until 1977\(^1\) when a treaty of the Ganges water at Farakka and on augmenting its flows was signed by the two countries and guaranteed a minimum flow level for Bangladesh for a five year period. After the expiration of this treaty in 1982 two more short term agreements were concluded on water sharing until 1988. Thereafter India again began unilateral diversion at will. Moreover domestic political upheavals and the growing polarization caused by rising national religious factions (Hindu India vs. Islamic Bangladesh) contributed to a rising level of animosity between the two countries. The political climate began to change when in 1992 the prime ministers of the two countries met and agreed to renew efforts for a solution. In addition Bangladesh revived its attempts to internationalize the affairs by bringing forth the dispute before the UN General Assembly and the Commonwealth Heads of Governments Meeting in 1993. In addition the issue was also raised in the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) although no definite action was taken.

In 1996 a new atmosphere of regional cooperation was created with a change of government in India and in December of 1996 a Ganges Water Sharing Treaty was signed that is supposed to last for thirty years. In Bangladesh, the Awami League headed by Sheikh Hasina while in India a non-Congress coalition government led by Deve Gowda came to power. One of its important constituent was the Left Front, which was in power
in West Bengal at that time. The Awami League had returned to power after a 20-year long gap and New Delhi was keen to strengthen this regime in Dhaka (Ramaswamy Iyer 2003: 230-254). Both realized the need to overcome the impasse over the Ganges water issue and the urgency to arrive at an agreement before the onset of the next dry season. Farooq Sobhan the then Foreign Secretary of Bangladesh in 1996 shared this assessment and noted that, “Awami League had stronger commitment towards having a treaty. India also reciprocated in the same manner. Traditionally BNP has been less receptive to India” (Punam Pandey 2012: 275-76).

The Bangladesh Foreign Secretary visited India during August 6-10, 1996 to prepare the groundwork. During this visit the Foreign Secretary also held a meeting at the suggestion of the Indian External Affairs Minister I K Gujral with the West Bengal Chief Minister Jyoti Basu to seek his help and support in finding a permanent solution to the problem (Tariq Ahmad Karim: 227).

During September 1996 the Indian External Affairs Minister visited Bangladesh and the two sides agreed to convene a Joint Committee involving members of their respective foreign ministries which were tasked to bring water experts from both sides to work towards the finalization of an agreement on water sharing. The formation of such a committee was another major departure from the past where such committees had always been under the jurisdiction of the Water Resources Ministry. By bringing the technical experts under the supervision of the political leadership, the discussions were moderated in a manner so as to lend flexibility and give pre-eminence to the political agenda over the obfuscation of engineering technicalities (Tariq Ahmad Karim: 228).

During November 9-13, 1996 both sides reaffirmed their commitment of arriving at an agreement on a fair and equitable sharing of the Ganga waters before the onset of the next dry season. The Bangladesh Foreign Secretary also visited Calcutta to get Jyoti Basu actively involved in the negotiation process. In fact Jyoti Basu’s visit to Bangladesh from
November 27 to December 2, 1996 proved to be very crucial because it helped in significantly narrowing the differences between the two sides. He had wide ranging discussions with both the Prime Minister of Bangladesh and Foreign Minister. While the negotiations were underway at the political level the Joint Committee met several times to reexamine the technicalities involved and worked hard towards arriving at an agreed draft agreement to be placed before the two governments (Ramaswamy Iyer: 235-36). This culminated in the last marathon session of the Committee from December 5-10 in New Delhi at the Foreign Secretaries level. It was during this final round of negotiations that the nature of the instrument to be drawn up- Treaty instead of Agreement- and the duration of 30 years was agreed upon. The final product the treaty on the sharing of the Ganges waters entered into by India and Bangladesh on December 12, 1996 was ‘a more significant document than most had considered possible’. The treaty was signed in Indian capital New Delhi between Indian Prime Minister Deve Gowda and Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina (Ramaswamy Iyer: 236).

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<tr>
<th>Availability at Farakka</th>
<th>Share of India</th>
<th>Share of Bangladesh</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>70,000 cusecs or less</td>
<td>50 percent</td>
<td>50 percent</td>
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<tr>
<td>70,000-75,000 cusecs</td>
<td>Balance of flow</td>
<td>35,000 cusecs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75,000 cusecs or more</td>
<td>40,000 cusecs</td>
<td>Balance of flow</td>
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Note: - Subject to condition that India and Bangladesh each shall receive guaranteed 35,000 cusecs of water in alternate three, 10 day periods during the period March 11 to May 10. Source Annexure 1 of the Treaty

Critical Analysis of the Treaty

The 1996 Treaty has three parts: the preamble, the operative part containing 12 Articles and the Annexures. Article I to XI set forth the provisions for sharing of the Ganga flow and related matters. Though the 1977 agreement contained a ‘guarantee clause’ and the 1985 deal had a ‘burden sharing’ formula, the 1996 Treaty did not include any compulsory in-built safeguards for Bangladesh (Ahamed Abukhater
There are however various provisions which provided a modicum of security, for instance, there is a provision of 35,000 cusecs to either side in the alternate 10 day segments in the period from March 11, to May 10. Another important aspect of the treaty is that when the flow goes below 50,000 cusecs, the treaty recognizes an emergency situation and provides for immediate consultations by the two governments. The treaty also provides for a conflict resolution mechanism by prescribing a joint monitoring of flows which should eliminate or minimize the possibility of disagreements over the data (Ahamed Abukhater: 56).

The treaty faced its first test a few months after it came into force because the actual availability of the waters of the Ganges at Farakka turned out to be far less than the average flow of Ganga during the period from 1948 to 1988 as reiterated in the IXth schedule of the Treaty and the flow of water in the Padma River was not according to the treaty, the Indo-Bangladesh Joint Committee (JC) on Ganga water monitoring team held its first Joint Inspection Meeting (JIM) at Bheramara a few kilometers away from the Hardinge Bridge side (Salman M. A. Salman, Kishor Uprety 2002: 177).

The Indo-Bangladesh JRC meeting was held in Dhaka on April 10, 1997 to discuss the reasons behind the low water level flow. The Indian side reiterated that 1997 could be considered as an abnormal year. Even the historical data showed that before the Farakka barrage was built flows had fallen as low as 40,000 and 39,000 cusecs in 1952 and 1953 respectively. Usually the low point in the flow occurs between the second 10 days of March to the first 10 days of April (Salman M. A. Salman, Kishor Uprety: 177).

There was another issue pertaining to the discrepancy between the quantum of water released at Farakka barrage in India and that arriving at the Hardinge Bridge 170 kilometers downstream in Bangladesh which became a major bone of contention between the two countries in 1977. Several explanations have been offered to explain such a discrepancy. At Hardinge Bridge the Ganga channels are very large and have a carrying
capacity of 1.5 million cusecs but bad load movement, sediment distribution and sand bar formation can be peculiar rendering it difficult to measure the flow correctly. B G Varghese explains that since it is not the system where you can switch on or off according to a 10 day period but does not stop on the 10th day. He underlines the importance of dispelling mistaken notions among some Bangladeshi segments which assumes ‘somebody is sitting there whose job is to switch off or switch on the key of water flows’ and that this needs to be understood by the people across the borders (Punam Pandey: 277).

The switching of 10 day flows to guarantee one side or the other 35,000 causes during six alternating 10 days flow periods, Varghese explains, is ‘technically unsafe as the walls of the Farakka feeder canal could collapse with such abrupt changes in levels’ (Assit K Biswas and Juha I Uitto (edt) 2001: 173). Both had realized this due to their experience from the previous negotiations and that is why a stepped pattern was written into the treaty instead of the smoother gradient spread over a few days, whereby the quantum of water delivered would have remained the same though with a different 10 day flow pattern. The Indian side had no option but to stagger the reduction and augmentation of releases over some days, which altered the pattern of scheduled deliveries in a few 10 day periods, with Bangladesh being compensated for any scheduled deficit in supplies in the ensuing period. This was cited as a treaty violation, though in a point of fact the total quantum of water released to Bangladesh over the lean season as a whole was a little more than stipulated in Annexure II (Assit K Biswas and Juha I Uitto: 173).

There is yet another and more complex problem of the Gorai hump. Bangladesh’s grievance about diversions by India from the Ganges at Farakka has revolved around the acute distress said to have been caused in the South-West Khulna region on account of salinity ingress and a shortage of water for agriculture, fisheries, navigation and sustenance of the Sundari mangrove species. This area, because of the Gorai spill which delivers upland fresh water supplies to the region, is left high and dry as the Ganga recedes. While this is so, it would be erroneous to
attribute the problem exclusively or mainly to diversion at Farakka. The entire Ganga system has been shifting east and north as a secular trend over the past century and more. The Bhagirathi, the western-most spill, was the first casualty. Other streams, moving further east have progressively deteriorated as the Ganges has shifted course (Assit K Biswas and Juha I Uitto: 175).

In any case the Treaty is unlikely to solve this problem because even 35,000 cusecs are not enough for this purpose, only a water flow to the order of 70,000 cusecs would help the waters of the Ganga in the Gorai River. The answer to this problem is perhaps partly dredging and partly arrangements to help up the Ganga waters and enable them to enter the Gorai (Ramaswamy Iyer: 242).

In mid-June 1997 an expert level meeting of the Indo-Bangladesh JRC held in Dhaka which recommended the formation of a scientific committee to study the causes of the unusual flow of Ganga during the critical period of the dry season. By early August 1997 the flood information centre in Bangladesh had started warning that the Ganga water flow was above the danger mark and that certain areas could soon be flooded. The 1998 dry season flows helped to ameliorate the concerns raised in the preceding year as the Ganga flow in Bangladesh that year had fulfilled its expectations. The 1999 dry season flow was less voluminous than that of 1998, but was still far more than that was prescribed under the Treaty. Only on one occasion Bangladesh objected that it was not receiving water according to the schedule of the treaty. The JRS stated in a press release issued in Dhaka on April 6, 1999 that in one of the six schedules Bangladesh received more than its share of the Ganga water during the lean period, the latest quantum being 33,892 cusecs at Hardinge Bridge during 21-31 March against 29,688 cusecs as stipulated in the treaty. The flow of the Ganga during the dry season of the year 2000 was similar to that of the previous year though in an important departure, the last 10 day period of April witnessed an
increased flow as compared to that specified in the treaty. At the 36th Indo-Bangladesh JRC meeting held in September 2005 at Dhaka both countries agreed to review the operational implementation of the 1996 treaty as per the provisions of the Article X. Bangladesh also proposed to hold tripartite talks involving Nepal to discuss the construction of water reservoirs in Nepal to augment the dry season Ganga flow and sought water sharing agreements for 53 other common rivers shared with India (Poonam Pandey: 278).

After a gap of five years the JRC met in March 2010. A senior officer in the Ministry of Water Resources described the situation of the last five years as, “there was a demand by Bangladesh for JRC meeting but Indian water Resources Ministry kept telling Bangladeshis that we are preparing for a meeting, the moment it is ready we will meet”. He further added, “For instance, at the technical level meeting in 2003, anti-erosion activity was discussed but no decision was taken because of differences about how to do this. Good political atmosphere really plays an important role. If the brief comes from the political level, the mechanism is found for solution. Again, in August 2007, secretary level meeting took place for taking action against anti-erosion activity but nothing concrete came out because of the difference in the approach of going about it, after three years gap, in February 2010, secretary level meeting took place and 50 points have been identified for anti-erosion activities because of good understanding. Since January 2009 to February 2010, almost every month, technical level meetings have been taking place. You can understand that the political atmosphere plays an important role” (Poonam Pandey: 278).

The very deficient point of the treaty is that in case of the decrease in the water flow there is no guarantee clause or the burden sharing arrangement. The only option for Bangladesh at that time is to enter into immediate consultations. But it is also true that India cannot guarantee flow of the Ganges would always remain as specified in the Schedule to
the treaty because natural causes can any time affect the flow. Although the Preamble to the treaty mentions flood management as one of the areas for cooperation, no provision for flood control are included in main body of the Treaty itself. Another important issue that the treaty did not address is the environmental situation of the Ganges. More than 400 million people live around and depend on the waters of Ganges Basin for irrigation, domestic and municipal uses. This heavy population concentration, the absence of strict environmental rules for the use of the river and the failure to enforce whatever rules that exist have resulted in the Ganges being one of the most polluted rivers in the world today (Salman M. A. Salman, Kishor Uprety (Opcit): 178-179).

It is important to note that the 1996 treaty does not offer an ideal solution. It has been criticized on both technical and political grounds, but the very fact that it became possible to negotiate and sign a long-term treaty in the first place and then to make it work well for more than a decade is a huge breakthrough which in turn materialized precisely because the governments in New Delhi and Dhaka have shown the requisite political resolve to achieve this objective.

Teesta Water Issue

The contemporary scenario represents somewhat the same picture. Present era is marked with various kinds of conflicts where resource sharing between the nations is a big issue of contemplation, which further leads to disagreement. According to Thomas Homer-Dixon, water will be the major source of conflict in the upcoming time. The conflict often arises due to unequal distribution of resources or from a dependency-led need for more resources often at the expense of neighboring states (Mallika Sinha 2012).

The Teesta river issue currently tops the list of water disputes between the two countries and Bangladesh has been insisting on reaching an agreement. Teesta is the most important river in northeast of Bangladesh. It originates in the Sikkim Valley of the Himalayan Range
within India. The entire rainfall runoff of this valley accumulates near Kalimpong of Darjeeling district in Pachimbanga (West Bengal). The river enters Bangladesh near Tin Bigha of Lalmonirhat district and, according to one river expert, the total length is about 315 km (some say 400 km), out of which 129 km (some say 172 km) is in Bangladesh. Its summer flow, according to one estimate, is reportedly about 280,000 cusecs and minimum flow is about 10,000 cusecs. At Kaunia Road Bridge in Rangpur district in Bangladesh, there is a water level and discharge measuring station for the Teesta River. About 21 million Bangladeshis live in the basin of river Teesta while only 8 million live in West Bengal and half a million live in Sikkim state (Haroon Ur Rashid 2012). The population ration is 70 for Bangladesh and 30 for India. India has built a barrage at Gozaldoba from which 85% of water flow is diverted from Teesta River without Bangladesh’s consent. When Bangladesh needs water in dry season it does not get it, but when it does not need water during summer and monsoon it gets enough of it to the point of flooding, destroying houses, roads and riverbanks and embankments. Accordingly, sharing of water of the rivers is necessary in the dry season. Bangladesh has to irrigate 632,000 hectares of farming land with water from the Teesta and during the dry season. Since Sikkim and West Bengal withdraw water from the Teesta, the flow has been drastically reduced to the detriment of the Bangladeshi farmers. Initially, Dhaka proposed equal sharing of Teesta water, keeping 20% for river flow. This means the sharing would be out of 80% and Bangladesh would get 40% and India 40%. But India wanted 55%. Furthermore, India wanted a 15-year agreement on water-sharing of the Teesta River.

After the independence of Bangladesh in 1971 talks on the Teesta water sharing continued in the Indo-Bangladesh Joint Rivers Commission. Bangladesh objected to India’s plan to divert the water of Teesta to the Mahanadi basin area. The talks continued without any result until 1983 when the two parties reached an adhoc allocation agreement, according to which India was to get 39 percent Bangladesh 36 percent and the 25 percent was reserved for reallocation later, after further study. However
even this agreement has not been executed and the amount of dry season water on the Bangladesh side has gradually decreased. The high level committee of JRC in both India and Bangladesh sat for meetings about 33 times for the Teesta water problem but no fruitful decisions could materialize (R Keerthana 2013).

Bangladesh wants to split the water at 50:50 ratios at the Indian barrage to have an ensured supply of half of the water during the dry season. The proposal also considers keeping 20% of the water for environmental flow. In other words the draft proposed by Bangladesh and India each would get 40% water of the Teesta and 20% water would go to Bay of Bengal (via Brahmaputra) for maintaining the channel of the river. On the other side India prefers to keep only 10% for the river. India wants other factors to be taken into account before distributing water of these rivers. In the case of Teesta, 85 percent of agricultural land served by the river was in India and the remaining 15 percent in Bangladesh. So, India wants water to split in that ratio. The ratio of catchment area also another point mentioned in the argument (The New Horizon 2011).

Ever since 1983 there have been several high-level political meetings and discussions, the most being in 2010 during the 37th meeting of the Joint Rivers Commission the ministerial level. In this meeting the two countries decided to sign an agreement on Teesta water sharing by 2011 and for that purpose, a draft agreement was exchanged between the parties. The draft stipulates that India and Bangladesh would each get 40 percent of the actual flow available at Gozaldoba Barrage in West Bengal while twenty percent of the actual flow available at Gozaldoba would be reserved as environmental flow. According to the draft agreement, the Indian share of the Teesta water would be made available at Gozaldoba, while the Bangladesh share will be at Teesta Barrage (Doani in Bangladesh) (Sundeep Waslekar, Ilmas Futehally 2013: 3). A formula sharing the water is given in the agreement in Annexure-I of the Draft Teesta Agreement. The draft agreement deals with the period of
flow between October 1 to April 30 which is commonly referred to as the lean period or the dry season. The sharing arrangement can be reviewed at an interval of five years as required. A party can seek the first review after 2 years, once the interim agreement comes into force. This provision will help towards ensuring that sharing of the water is not at a constant. The agreement also provides for the establishment of a Joint Committee which will help in implementing the provisions of the agreement, as well as act as a forum for dispute resolution. The two countries have an option to ensure that when there are changes in the flow of river due to natural reasons or exigencies such as drought, the governments may work out a mutually beneficial sharing arrangement (Sundeep Waslekar, Ilmas Futehally: 4).

The signing of the agreement on Teesta waters was one of the objectives during Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh’s visit to Bangladesh in September 2011. However, the chief minister of West Bengal opposed the agreement and unexpectedly dropped out of the Prime Minister’s entourage to Bangladesh by stating that water was a State subject under the Indian Constitution, and the state needed to give its consent to the central government prior to any agreement with Bangladesh. Thus the negotiations on the draft Teesta agreement failed to fructify and the treaty has remained unsigned by the parties ever since (Sundeep Waslekar, Ilmas Futehally: 3-4).

In recent years there has been increasing pressure on both sides of the border regarding Teesta and its distribution. The importance of this river is felt most on Northern West Bengal and Northwest Bangladesh, especially to a rural population of about 30 million who are highly dependent on its use for domestic and agricultural consumption (Sundeep Waslekar, Ilmas Futehally: 4).

**Tipaimukh Dam Issue**

Another contentious issue which brought the bitter ties between India and Bangladesh to hinge along with Teesta imbroglio is the Tipaimukh
Dam. Tipaimukh is a proposed embankment dam - a 390 meter long, 162.5-meter high earthen core rock filled dam on the river Barak in the Manipuri state of India. The proposal of Tipaimukh dam was unveiled by India in the first joint river commission meeting in 1972, when the primary purpose envisaged as flood mitigation. The dam is proposed to be located 500 meters downstream from the juncture of the Barak and Tuivai rivers, first proposed by the Assam government (Tridib Chakraborty, Mohor Chakraborty 2002: 7). The government of India handed the project to North-Eastern Electronic Power Co-operation and the Indian President apparently approved it in 2001. Following this action preparatory work on the ground was initiated in 2003, but subsequently obstructed on account of resentment from local population as well as neighbouring country Bangladesh. As a result the proposed initiative came to a standstill. Since the Barak is a part of the Brahmaputra-Barak-Meghna river basin situated in the upper rung of the valley, in case the dam is constructed it would certainly reduce the flow of water in the north eastern region Bangladesh, because the Barak breaks up into the Surma and Kushiyara Rivers that flow through the Sylhet region. Furthermore if this dam is built it will affect the ecology, climate and environment of the north eastern regions of Bangladesh and may even lead to its desertification. Therefore in this entire issue there are three major contending parties: first, the central government of India expressed its willingness towards the proposed dam since energy generation remains the principal motto. Secondly, the population of the Indian state of Manipur and Dhaka are concerned about the negative effects of dam construction from different angles. This ultimately has led to become an issue of internal politics both within India and Bangladesh.

In order to explore the possibilities of reducing tension and thereby determining the way to continue with this project, the Government of India invited a parliamentary delegation from Bangladesh in July 2009 to discuss the project and visit the site. The former Indian Power Minister Sushil Kumar Shinde during this visit assured the Bangladesh
delegation that “no water flow will be diverted and no irrigation project will be constructed upstream or downstream of the project”. After the meeting the Bangladesh Foreign Minister Dipu Moni indicated that “if the Tipaimukh dam goes against the interests of Bangladesh, we will do whatever is necessary to protect national interest” (The Daily Star 2009). Thus this issue became very sensitive and came into prominence after Manmohan Singh paid his official visit to Dhaka in 2011. At the end of this visit in the Joint Statement issued by the leaders of the two countries it was stated that, “India would not take steps on the Tipaimukh project that would adversely impact Bangladesh”. Moreover the statement expressed the need for enhanced cooperation “in sharing of the waters of common rivers and both parties would explore the possibilities of common basin management of common rivers for mutual benefit”.

Interestingly when Sheikh Hasina visited India in 2010, the Tipaimukh dam was not an issue between the two countries. However this issue has been ignited with fire when the Manipur government on October 22, 2011 signed a contract with two Indian companies- NHPC Ltd. and Sutlej Jal Vidyut Nigam Ltd. For the construction of the 1500 MW Tipaimukh Hydroelectric Project on the Barak. This caused serious hue and cry Bangladesh and in spite of political differences between the AL and BNP their leaders expressed a common voice with reference to this issue. In fact Sheikh Hasina while speaking in unison with opposition leader Khaleda Zia asserted, “A unilateral decision by India to build Tipaimukh will not be accepted”. Hasina also informed that she would send a special envoy to look into the details from the Indian government about the latest status of the project. While understanding the concern of the Bangladesh government with reference to this problem, the Minister of External Affairs in a statement issued by its official spokesperson Vishnu Prakash in December 2011 reiterated, “India will not take steps on Tipaimukh Project, which may adversely affect Bangladesh”. Following this statement as well as the commitment made by Dhaka Advisors to
the Bangladesh Prime Minister Mashiur Rehman and Gowher Rizvi made courtesy calls to New Delhi in December 2011. During this visit to India, the Mea once again confirmed that the Government of India “has already conveyed to Dhaka its readiness to hold discussions with the Government of Bangladesh on the Tipaimukh Hydroelectric Project” (The Hindu 2011). Thus it is evident that the sensitivity of this issue has been amplified on account of the inner power struggle which has emerged at the domestic level in Bangladesh politics.

If Bangladesh and India can enter into cooperative arrangements on the Teesta and the Tipaimukh based on resource development and basin management, mutual benefit, invisible security and equitable responsibility, this may lead to greater confidence building on water issue and the acceptance of water as a common security concern in south Asia.

Notes:

1) Sharing period would be from 01 January to 31 May divided into 15 slots each having 10 days. 2) Sharing was on the basis of 75% dependable flow at Farakka between 1948 to 1973. 3) Sharing proportion of Bangladesh and India was 60:40 respectively with a minimum flow of 34,500 for Bangladesh and 20,500 cusec for India. In case of decrease in flow at Farakka under extreme situation Bangladesh was guaranteed with 80% of its share during each of the slots. 4) Regional co-operation for augmenting the flow at Farakka was agreed upon and the augmented flow would be shared proportionately.

It should be noted that the figure ‘70,000’ has been repeated in both the first and second lines of Annexure I above (Table 1) and the figure ‘75,000’ is also repeated in both the second and third lines above. As such if availability at Farakka is exactly 70,000 cusecs, the formula in the first or second line could apply. Similarly if the availability is exactly 75,000 cusecs the formula in the second or third line could apply. Perhaps a better way of drafting could have been for the first line to read ‘less than 70,000 cusecs’ and for the third line to read ‘more than 75,000’.

3 Nilphamari is a district in Northern Bangladesh. It is a part of the Rangpur Division. It is 400 km from the capital Dhaka in north and west side.


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If a curve were to illustrate the relations between India and Pakistan, 2014 would be the point of inflection. While the precarious nature of the relationship remains, the political climate in India and Pakistan in 2014 was like never before. The fragile stilts on which the diplomacy between the two is built saw some of the best and worst incidents in our 67 years old relationship.

The PML(N) swept the elections in Pakistan in 2013. Nawaz Sharif once again became the Prime Minister after he was unceremoniously ousted from the position in 1999. During his pre election campaign trail, he promoted the idea of regional cooperation with neighbors of South Asia. In addition the bilateral talks on trade in 2012 and 2013 were proven to be productive and Pakistan, for the first time, seriously considered granting India the Most Favored Nation (MFN) status. This was to be a symbolic victory for the diplomatic relationship between the countries.

India followed with general elections in 2014. The incumbent UPA government had lost political credibility due to a string of scams, policy paralysis, and rising price levels in its tenure. The BJP was an obvious frontrunner for the elections and they managed to decimate all opposition parties, both national and regional. Narendra Modi was elected as the first prime minister born in independent India.

The Indian general elections of 2014 created utter confusion in Pakistan. The general sentiment in the establishment and the people was one of pessimism and suspicion. Rarely would a right wing ‘Hindutva’ leader be perceived otherwise across the border. The Pakistani media and establishment were monitoring every speech and every rally held by Narendra Modi. He was labeled as an aggressive individual with strong anti Pakistan leanings. Yet, the media and establishment were also quick to predict that it would be the BJP that would emerge victorious in the elections. This put the establishment in Islamabad in a catch 22 situation. They wanted peace and trade relations with India in order to
move forward and create stability but indulging India with Modi as its leader could create internal conflict within Pakistan.

Narendra Modi invited all SAARC leaders to attend his swearing in ceremony as an unprecedented gesture of friendship and cooperation. Nawaz Sharif's visit as expected received bulk of the attention. While this was seen as a positive step on the diplomatic front, there were internal voices within both countries that strongly condemned the act. At home, the Shiv Sena strongly condemned the invitation while in Pakistan there was murmur that the military establishment wasn't very pleased with Sharif for accepting the invitation. Refreshingly, both leaders paid no attention to these voices and engaged in productive and positive dialogue. Sharif returned without meeting the Kashmiri separatists, in what was once again an unprecedented move. In summation, the visit ended in great success and promised the start of a new age in Indo-Pak relations.

Talks were scheduled at the Foreign Secretary level in August to be held in Islamabad. The impression in the Indian establishment was that breakthrough had been achieved as Pakistan agreed to discuss Kashmir as one of several other issues as part of the composite dialogue. This was a departure from the previous policy of discussing Kashmir as a dispute rather than an issue. Increase in trade and investment was something both sides seemed keen on discussing. Thus, there was hope on both sides for a diplomatic breakthrough. However, as seen so often in the relationship between the two countries, a single incident displaces the entire momentum built up on the diplomatic front. Despite the brief from the Ministry of External Affairs, Pakistan's High Commission to India held talks with the Kashmiri Hurriyat leaders. This enraged the Indian establishment, and the Modi government took a decisive step by cancelling the talks to be held with Islamabad. This signaled that the new Indian government was strong and decisive and would not tolerate any interference in its internal affairs. Pakistan on the other hand saw this as an unjustifiable move and stated that the Hurriyat was a legitimate stakeholder in the problem of Kashmir.

This was a major setback for the long running dialogue between India and Pakistan. The Indian and Pakistani delegations to the UN GA in September gave one another the cold shoulder and no talks were held in the sidelines. Modi spoke of the need to remove terror and expressed that terror and talks cannot go hand in hand. This was seen by Pakistan as a deliberate attempt to isolate it at a global forum. Things only got worse from there on.
Interestingly, Afghanistan held elections in September 2014 and Ashraf Ghani was appointed president. Like Karzai, even Ghani was believed to have a pro India stance. He termed India as Afghanistan’s valuable ally. India has invested heavily in infrastructure as well as training of the military establishment of Afghanistan over the last decade. This new era of Indo-Afghan friendship was viewed with considerable angst in Pakistan. Pakistan, which had created and promoted the Taliban in Afghanistan, was seen as the source of all conflict within Afghanistan in recent years. There was mistrust in Pakistan about India’s intentions in Afghanistan. A large number of factions claimed that India was fueling the separatist movements in Balochistan and FATA provinces. This created new mistrust between the countries and Pakistan swiftly re-examined its policy on Afghanistan.

The next occasion for the two heads of state to meet was the SAARC summit in Kathmandu in November. Nothing substantial came out of this meet for any country due the ongoing tension between India and Pakistan. Meanwhile, the situation at the LOC deteriorated in the latter half of 2014 with ceasefire violations reaching unprecedented scales. One remains clueless on whether this a product of the failed attempt to cooperate with each other?

In December, the two recipients of the Nobel Peace Prize were Indian and Pakistani. In the same month, civilian casualties on both sides went up, due to heavy shelling along the LOC and even along parts of the International Border. This came as a poignant irony.

The beginning of 2015 was marked by heavy ceasefire violations along the working boundary in Kashmir. However, in March, The new Foreign Secretary of India, S.Jaishankar commenced on a SAARC Yatra. He visited Pakistan as a part of the Yatra. The Foreign Secretary talks were held on the 3rd of March after about 7 months from their previous cancellation. While both sides insisted on peace and cooperation, Pakistan made it clear that it would once prioritize Kashmir over other issues in the Indo-Pak dialogue. Pakistan also reemphasized its will and effort to abolish terror with the ongoing Zarb-e-Azb campaign on the western frontier. India assured Pakistan of the fact that talks and terror cannot go hand in hand. Apart from the routine diplomatic statements, no substantial progress was made in the recently held meetings. It forces one to ponder upon whether the two sides are in a diplomatic rut in status quo.

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India's neighbourhood policy post 2014