

India's Foreign Policy toward its South Asian Neighbors: Retrospect and Prospect

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Abstract : India's foreign policy towards all of her neighbor countries is determinate on the basis of multi-dimensional factors. India's relations with its South Asian neighbor can be classified into three categories. In the first category, there are four countries -Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Afghanistan- whose bilateral relationships have encompassed cooperation, irritants, problems and crisis at different points in time. With Pakistan, the relationship has been perpetually adversarial. The third category includes Bhutan and Maldives whose relations are marked by friendship and cooperation, free of any bilateral problems. It is needless to say that Jawaharlal Nehru emphasized on friendly relations with the neighboring countries. The subsequent Prime Ministers of India especially I.K. Gujral had advocated in making of peaceful and friendly relations with the subcontinental countries. He had given a unique idea to foster bilateral relations with the neighbors. His idea is known as 'Gujral Doctrine'. A dramatical change has been witnessed in Indian foreign policy since 1991. In the post-Cold War period, India's national security has been vehemently threatened by terrorism, which originated from Pakistan-Afghanistan and partly Bangladesh. India has required a cooperative security, which can be made by mutual understanding among the South Asian countries. Additionally, the countries of South Asia need to evolve the concept of 'Cooperative Security' to explain the underlying logic of regional cooperation. According to C. Rajamohan, 'cooperative security could be understood, as policies of governments, which see themselves as former adversaries or potential adversaries to shift from or avoid confrontationist policies.' A cooperative security essentially reflects a policy of dealing peacefully with conflicts, not merely by abstention from violence or threats but by active engagement in negotiation, a search for practical solutions and with a commitment to preventive measures. Cooperative assumes the existence of a condition in which the two sides possess the military capabilities to harm each other. Establishing cooperative security runs into a complex process building confidence. South Asian nations often engaged with hostility to each other. Extra-regional powers have been influencing their powers in this region since a long time. South Asian nations are busy to purchase military equipment. In spite of weakened economic systems, these states are spending a huge amount of money for their security. India is the big power in this region in every aspect. The big states- small states syndrome is a negative factor in this respect. However, India will have to an initiative to extended 'track II diplomacy' or soft diplomacy for its security as well as the security of this region. Confidence building measures could help rejuvenate not only SAARC but also build trust and mutual confidence between India and its neighbors in South Asia. In this paper, I will focus on different aspects of India's policy towards it, South-Asian neighbors. It will also be searched that how India is dealing with these countries by using a mixed type of diplomacy - both idealistic and realistic points of view. Security and cooperation are two major determinants of India's foreign policy towards its South Asian neighbors.

Keywords : bilateral, diplomacy, infiltration, terrorism

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