



India's relations with neighbouring countries

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Abstract: India is a developing country. India gained independence on August 15, 1947. After that, India gradually took on its present form. India is the largest and most significant country in the South Asia region. Its land borders include Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nepal, China, Bhutan, Myanmar, and Bangladesh, as well as a sea border with Sri Lanka and the Maldives. India's foreign policy, known as the "Neighbourhood First" Policy, proactively focuses on establishing links with India's Relations with Its Neighbours. The policy is designed to improve connections with neighbours while promoting global cooperation and peace. India's Look East Policy has developed greater economic and strategic partnerships with South Asian countries such as South Korea, Japan, and Taiwan. India has friendly relations with Persian Gulf countries and African Union members. To strengthen international relations, each country must focus on its own economy, culture, human resources, industrial development, etc. India's position in international politics is not very old. India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru integrated India into international politics. India is one of the countries that are included in the third world countries. The overall structure of India after independence was not good. The Indian leaders and ministers of that time tried to develop India as a whole. However, India has now emerged as an important country in international politics. India has had to build relationships with different countries at different times to occupy an important place in international politics.

Keywords: India, Neighbourhood, Foreign Policy, Promote Peace, Conflict, Strategic Partnership

Introduction:

Currently, India is one of the leading countries in international relations and international politics. India is an important country among the countries of South Asia. Asian countries generally gained independence in the mid-20th century. As a result, a key challenge for countries was to strengthen their internal structures. Internal structure refers to the development of industries, factories, communication systems, government formation, expansion of trade and commerce, etc. To strengthen internal structures, it is necessary to establish good relations with neighbouring countries. Thus, India's neighbouring countries have established good relations with each other at different times. The Panchsheel Policy was signed in 1954 to strengthen India-China relations. After independence, Pakistan's Prime Ministers Liaquat Ali Khan and Sir Khawaja Nazimuddin signed various agreements with the then Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. After Bangladesh gained independence, Ziaur Rahman tried to maintain relations with India in various ways. Various leaders of Nepal and Bhutan have sought to strengthen their relations with India. Also, the first Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, D.Sena Nayake, tried to establish a relationship with the then Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru.

India's foreign policy has been very diverse since independence. Currently, India is signing agreements with various countries to improve itself. Accelerating India's ongoing economic transformation is the core objective of India's foreign and security policy. The current National Democratic Alliance government headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi is as much attached to this objective as was the previous UPA government. An unsettled periphery is both distracting and bad for business. India cannot grow, its leaders are conscious, without positive interaction with both its South Asian and larger neighbourhood, especially China and Myanmar. For Sir Girija Shankar Bajpai, independent India's first Secretary General of External Affairs, it stretched from the Hindu Kush mountains to the Irrawaddy river, and from Suez to Shanghai. ¹ This corresponds closely with the contemporary understanding of India's periphery. Although the early focus of Indian leaders was on its land frontiers, the relevance of the Indian Ocean region has grown over time. Virtually landlocked on its North West due to denial of overland access through Pakistan, as also on the eastern side due to the absence of connectivity through the North East, India's natural area of interest extends from Iran and Transoxiana in the West to China in the North, Myanmar in the East and the Indian Ocean region all around the subcontinent—from the Gulf of Hormuz to the Straits of Malacca, or more broadly, from Suez to Singapore, encompassing the Persian Gulf and the Andaman Sea, and abutting the East African Seaboard, Mauritius, Indonesia and Thailand. Modi has signalled that his 'neighbourhood first' policy extends also to the island states of the Indian Ocean,

symptomized by his visits to Sri Lanka, Mauritius and Seychelles. India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, and his successors, were never short of envisioning close relationships in India's neighbourhood.

India-China Relation:

India is one of the two most influential countries in contemporary world politics. Both countries are nuclear powers and are among the largest powers in Asia. The bilateral relations between these two large states in the field of Southeast Asian politics are discussed. In 1954, these two countries followed the Five-Point Policy in their bilateral relations. The 1962 border conflict embroiled the Centre in the India-China War. However, in the 1970s, these two countries became interested in resolving the border issue. But in the 1980s, India-China relations deteriorated. From the 1990s to the first decade of the 20th century, India maintained a fundamentally anti-China relationship.

Dr. Manmohan Singh became the Prime Minister for the second time in 2009. He took the initiative to strengthen India's bilateral relations with China. many agreements, including trade agreements, did he sign during his 2011 visit to China. Narendra Modi became the Prime Minister of India in May 2014. In September, Chinese President Jinping visited India and signed 14 bilateral agreements, including trade, with Modi. As a result, relations between the two countries improved.

In 2015, bilateral agreements were signed between the two countries in the fields of trade, culture and economy. India failed to gain NSG membership in 2016. As a result, relations between the two countries eased. Relations between the two countries deteriorated in 2017 over Doklam in Bhutan. Chinese Foreign Minister visited India in December 2018. He signed ten treaties with India. Relations between India and China deteriorated over Rajnath Singh's 2019 visit to Arunachal Pradesh. India and China have a multi-layered diplomatic relationship that has historically been shaped by economic, military, and other perspectives. There are some important aspects to this relationship. In historical context, India and China's relations are thousands of years old. But India recognized the People's Republic of China as a modern state in 1950.

China is India's largest trading partner. One of the reasons for the trade gap is that India's exports to China are very high. Recently, India has banned Chinese mobile apps and emphasized local production in India. The border conflict between the two countries began over a 1962 border dispute. Where China invades India and advances into Arunachal Pradesh and Ladakh. Relations deteriorated again due to the Doklam standoff(2017) and the Salween Valley conflict(2020). China's trade deficit with India in the fiscal year 2024-25 is several million. One of the reasons for this trade gap is India's export of rice and the increase in imports of serial panel electronics and batteries from China. Tensions continue on the 2020 border after the Gal One clash. The two countries maintain a military presence on their borders. India and China hold talks on resuming direct passenger flight services. The talks are considered an important step in improving relations between the two countries after the Galwan clash in 2020. Chinese Embassy issues over 85,000 visas to Indian citizens between January and April 2025. Which is a strategy to improve relations between India and China.

India-Bangladesh Relation:

Bangladesh is a neighbouring country of India. India and Bangladesh have almost the same food, clothing, and housing. Bangladesh's economy has a major connection with India. It has been seen at various times that when Bangladesh's relations with India have improved, Bangladesh's relations with China have deteriorated. In 1971, when East Pakistan and West Pakistan were at war over language, Indira Gandhi and her military force sent aid to Bangladesh. Bangladesh had good relations with India as long as Mujibur Rahman was in power. The Treaty of Friendship between India and Bangladesh was signed in 1972. Both countries had declared themselves as democratic and secular countries. However, their good relationship did not last long. Some people in Bangladesh believe that India is responsible for Bangladesh's poverty. Various events occurred after Bangabandhu's death in 1975. Many people keep instigating that such incidents happened for India. At that time, various people started instigating against India. Relations with India improved again when Mujibur's daughter Sheikh Hasina came to power in 1996. In 1996, an agreement was signed between the two countries regarding the Ganga Water Port. This resulted in a significant improvement in economic and diplomatic relations between India and Bangladesh. Since 2010, various agreements have been signed between India and Bangladesh, such as border security and the nature of electricity exports between India and Bangladesh. The 2018 Rohingya massacre in Myanmar led to a large influx of people crossing the border into Bangladesh. At this time, India opposed Bangladesh and the relationship was strained. However, currently, under Narendra Modi, Bangladesh does not have good relations with India due to various forms of fundamentalism. Currently, there is an interim government in Bangladesh.

India-Pakistan Relation:

We know that India and Pakistan were part of British India. After independence from British rule in 1947, the two countries were divided. One of the most complex and tense relationships in South Asia is that between India and Pakistan. For decades, these two countries have been embroiled in a historic conflict and geopolitical rivalry. The Kashmir issue is the root cause of the historical, political and regional antagonism between India and Pakistan. National identities have become sharply differentiated since partition. As a result, hostility between them increased. One of the main reasons for the hostility between these two countries is the different perspectives of the two countries. India is a country where it has established itself as a secular state, there, Pakistan emerged as an Islamic country. India has adopted parliamentary democracy. Pakistan has given priority to military rule in this regard. While India has adopted a policy of non-alignment, Pakistan has joined hands with the Western alliance.

In this context, V.P Dutta says in his book “Indian Foreign Policy” that the problems in establishing India-Pakistan relations are very complex, the perspectives are opposite, the mutual distrust is very deep and the goals are contradictory. Shortly after independence, the first war between India and Pakistan broke out over the territory of Kashmir. Several Pakistani military forces invaded Kashmir and claimed Kashmir as their own. However, the part that was occupied by the Pakistani army is still in Pakistani territory. In 1965, Pakistan attacked India, defying UN orders. In 1971, war broke out between India and Pakistan over the liberation war of Bangladesh. When Pakistan lost this war, India recognized Bangladesh as an independent country. In 1996, Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto expressed a positive view on Kashmir to Indian Prime Minister Deve Gowda, leading to subsequent clashes. The Kargil War between India and Pakistan began in May 1999. Apart from Kashmir, the reason for the India-Pakistan conflict is centered on the distribution of water from various rivers. Especially focusing on the Indus River system. In 1960, a dispute arose between the two countries over the Indus-Jhelum-Sudhadra. The 1958 dispute over the the battle of kutch region led to the transfer of responsibility for the Rann of Kutch to an international tribunal through the Taskhand Treaty of 1963. From 2001 to 2005, relations between the two countries improved significantly.

India-Bhutan Relation:

As neighbouring countries in the Eastern Himalayas, India-Bhutan relations are very strong. These two countries consistently support each other at the regional and international levels. These two countries consistently support each other at the regional and international levels. Bhutan has sought to isolate itself from other countries, primarily due to its mountainous geographical location. When there was little interest in establishing bilateral relations, a treaty was drawn up in 1910 to remain a protectorate of British-ruled India. A bilateral treaty of peace and friendship was signed between India and Bhutan on 8 August 1949. The main point of this agreement was to maintain peace between the two countries and not to interfere in each other's internal affairs. This agreement established trade and a protocol, and Bhutan became a protectorate. Because it can still determine its own independent foreign policy. China's incorporation of Tibet deepens India-Nepal-Bhutan relations. Because India considers relations with Nepal and Bhutan as Himalayan lifelines or security protectors. In 1958, Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru traveled to Bhutan and supported Bhutan's independence, declaring that India would not accept any aggression against the electorate.

In 1959, a rumor spread that the Chinese government wanted to make Bhutan, including Nepal, independent by 1975. In response to this, Prime Minister Nehru declared that it was India's responsibility to protect Bhutan. Hearing this, the Prime Minister of Bhutan was somewhat displeased and said that Bhutan is not a country protected by India. Although India was not given the responsibility of defending Bhutan in 1949. If this happiness did not last long, there would have been no major problem in marking the borders of both the countries. Bhutan, gradually considering establishing relations with a third country, gradually ignoring India, recognized Bangladesh by joining the United Nations in 1971 and signed a new trade agreement in 1972. In 1979, the vote declared itself independent by joining the Non-Aligned Movement in Havana, Cuba, and concluded trade agreements with China and several countries in Southeast Asia. Then in 2003-2004, the Royal Army United Liberation Front of Assam and Bhutan led an anti-India movement and captured the Bhutanese base. Finally, in 2007, India and Bhutan signed a new friendship treaty. Under this agreement, Bhutan is allowed to import weapons without any permission from India as soon as it gains sovereignty. Keeping in mind the friendly and affordable agreement, Narendra Modi is in Bhutan for his first government visit since becoming Prime Minister in 2014. This proves that he values regional cooperation more than international cooperation. In this world, when international relations are complex and unstable, India-Bhutan relations stand in the light of positive diplomacy, regional solidarity and peaceful coexistence.

India-Nepal Relation:

Although the relationship between India and Nepal is centuries old, there is currently a historical and cultural bilateral relationship between the two countries. Despite the border conflict between these two countries, the two countries have managed to maintain peaceful relations between them. In 1950, “Indo-Nepalese Treaty of peace and Friendship Agreement” was signed between India and Nepal. The right of Indians to reside in Nepal is recognized under the Citizenship Act of 1952 of the

Government of Nepal. In this regard, it has been recommended to pursue cooperative initiatives to address important challenges such as cross-border disputes, highlighting respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence between both countries and the principled obligations. There is an open border between India and Nepal. This allows citizens to travel without a passport. Citizens of both countries enjoy various privileges in working and living in each other's countries.

The main aspects of the relationship between these two countries are: (1) Political relations between India and Nepal are current. India has been helping Nepal implement various projects in electricity, roads, health, industry. However, sometimes political tensions have to be faced. Such as border disputes (Kalapani, Limpiyadhura). (2) An important aspect of India-Nepal economic cooperation is trade partnership. In terms of trade, a large portion of Nepal's imports and exports are with India. India invests in Nepal in areas such as hydropower, communication systems, etc. (3) In the military, there is a section of Gorkha leaders in Nepal in the Indian Army. The militaries of the two countries are cooperating in joint exercises and security. India-Nepal relations have gone through ups and downs in recent times. So below are some recent events discussed.

- (A) Border dispute: Border dispute. Where political tension arises in the Kalapani, Limpiyadhara, Lipulekh regions. As a result, these areas are referred to as disputed. India finds this move unacceptable.
- (B) Road construction on the border: India's Defense Minister constructs road to Lipulekh Pass. Nepal protested and renewed tensions over the border arose.
- (C) China-Nepal closeness and India's concerns: Nepal has participated in China's Belt and Road Initiative project. India is facing various concerns as China starts various projects with Nepal.
- (D) Joint venture: Joint committee and high-level commission formed to resolve India-Nepal border dispute. In 1996, both countries signed the Mahakali Agreement. The aim of which was to solve the problem of water distribution of the Mahakali River.
- (E) Development cooperation: India has served as one of Nepal's most important partners. Seven billion rupees allocated for Nepal in the 2024 budget.
- (F) Infrastructure development: Both countries have cooperated in the construction of the Kathmandu-Raxaul, Pancheswar Multipurpose Project and the cross-border petroleum pipeline. Which could be helpful in the future relations between the two countries.

Conclusion:

India is a country that has never shown hostility towards any country. India has tried to maintain relations with various countries. The new Indian government, backed by a majority in the Lok Sabha, will be in a position to take bold initiatives in the domain of foreign policy. An early signal of this was the invitation to SAARC leaders to attend the swearing-in ceremony of Prime Minister Modi. It was an adroit move, with a strong potential to pay future dividends in India's neighbourhood policy. It was also, perhaps, the first step to catapulting Prime Minister Modi from being a charismatic provincial leader to a global statesman. Prime Minister Modi will look towards Asia first, having visited several Asian countries as Chief Minister of Gujarat. Present-day India is considered an important country in international politics. India is a member of several intergovernmental organizations such as the United Nations, Asian Development Bank, BRICS and G-20, which are widely considered to be major economic hubs for emerging and developed countries. India exerts a significant influence as a founding member of the Non-Aligned Movement.

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