

A HISTORY OF INDIA'S NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY

India's neighbourhood policy has revolved around national security issues and economic development encouraged by its historical strategic culture and furthered by the desire to become a global power. The country's geopolitical and geostrategic location has also prompted New Delhi to pursue unique relations with neighbours. Important turning points in the history of relations have been India's nuclear tests of 1998, the Kargil War of 1999 and the 2001 terrorist attacks in the US and on the Indian parliament. With the background of Gujarat's development model and inspiration from the Gujral Doctrine, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has embarked on a pragmatic and proactive policy of putting the "neighbourhood first". Nonetheless, India needs a new approach to deal with its versatile neighbours and become a regional economic and political powerhouse.

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INTRODUCTION

The story of India and its neighbourhood is a unique narrative in the annals of world history. Indian strategic culture tells the tale of the country's historical relations with neighbours and the outside world. New Delhi's neighbourhood policy has revolved around its national security and economic development encouraged by its historical strategic culture, prompted by its geopolitical location and furthered by the desire to become a global power. The dream has become a reality through the policies of globalisation, the liberalisation

of trade and economic integration as well as interdependence across national borders. The strategy has been dominated by the politics of left, right or centralist ideologies and evaluated through both hard and soft power and the controversies between them. In the history of India's neighbourhood policy there have been many successes and failures. In a broad sense, due to domestic politics and internal turmoil, India has never succeeded fully in formulating an effective neighbourhood policy and national security strategy. From Kautilya's *Arthashastra* to the Gujral Doctrine, India's active participation in regional and international affairs and close relationships with great powers have constituted its foreign policy. The desire for major power status along with its geopolitical location, strategic vision, the meddling of extra-regional powers that threatens national security and interests have all compelled India to rethink its neighbourhood policies. Its geostrategic and geopolitical location encourages New Delhi to pursue unique diplomatic relations with neighbours.

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India's Neighbourhood: A Bunch of Versatile Countries

"Neighbourhood" whether immediate or extended is a complex term difficult to define. India's neighbourhood consists of seven South Asian countries—Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, the Maldives, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Pakistan—along with China and Myanmar with whom it shares borders. Some scholars include Southeast Asia, the Middle East and Central Asia in India's extended neighbourhood due to their histories and strategic relations (SD Muni, "Nehru's India in Asia: Anatomy of a Blurred Vision" in Surjit Mansingh (Ed), *Nehru's Foreign Policy Fifty Years On*, New Delhi: Mosaic Books

2003). This paper however only discusses the immediate vicinity. India's policy elucidates its close economic, political and sociocultural relations as well as threats to national security. Continued nuclear and missile tests with political upheavals, underdeveloped economies, crossborder illegal migrations, growing subversive movements (insurgencies, fundamentalism, left wing extremism, terrorism), the trafficking of animals, humans and narcotics, the proliferation of arms, border disputes, ecological and sociocultural problems as well as the unscientific management of borders in the region have prompted India to re-examine, reinvestigate and rethink its neighbourhood policy.

INDIA'S NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY: FROM THE MAHABHARATA TO KAUTILYA AND THE BRITISH

It is a commonly held belief that India lacks a tradition of strategic culture and its intellectuals have not consistently and rigorously formulated strategies of national security and foreign policy. In the *Shanti Parva* of the Mahabharata, the king-priest Bhishma while teaching *rajadharma* (law of the king) and *dandaniti* (art of punishment) to the Pandavs says there are no permanent friends or foes of a king, only circumstances make them so. In the Bhagwad Gita, Lord Krishna tells Arjun the same thing on the battlefield at Kurushketra (GD Bakshi, *The Indian Art of War: The Mahabharata Paradigm (Quest for an Indian Strategic Culture)*, New Delhi: Sharada, 2002). Except for Kautilya's ancient classic the *Arthashastra*, Indians have not recorded strategic thinking in written texts, at least not in those that have survived (Kanti Bajpai, "Indian Strategic Culture" in Michael R Chambers (Ed), *South Asia in 2020: Future Strategic Balances and Alliances*, Stanford: Shorenstein Asia-Pacific Research Centre, 2002, p246). This treatise is perhaps the first comprehensive study of India's neighbourhood policy and strategies for safeguarding frontiers and national security (TN Ramaswamy, *Essentials of Indian Statecraft: Kautilya's Arthashastra for Contemporary Readers*, New Delhi: Asia Publishing House, 1962). Kautilya was prime minister to Emperor Chandragupta Maurya and the *Arthashastra* was meant only for that particular kingdom. He suggested building forts around the empire and establishing a hierarchical military officialdom as well as diplomatic relations with neighbouring states. Kautilya elucidated three important approaches to defend the empire—when you are strong you must lead, when you are weak you must make alliances

but if you are neither powerful nor weak you must remain neutral.

The lack of a nationalistic spirit kept India divided for a long time and prevented it from becoming one nation (Barbara N Ramusack, *The Indian Princes and their States*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). This drawback was exploited and furthered first by the Mughals and then the British. While the Mughals faced challenges from external powers from all the sides of their empire, the British were able to defeat them and other kingdoms of Medieval India, bringing them under a single power (Jos Gommans, *Mughal Warfare: Indian Frontiers and Highroads to Empire 1500–1700*, New York: Routledge, 2002). The British then formulated a policy of using neighbouring countries as buffer states to resist the West Asians, Russians and Chinese (Sneh Mahajan, *British Foreign Policy 1874–1914: The Role of India*, London: Routledge, 2001). Although the British exploited India before granting independence in 1947, they did devise several strategies that reflected in economic, political and sociocultural life as well as in foreign policy and national security strategies. To rule, the British not only united the scattered, unorganised small and big political units but developed communication and transportation networks as well. They also built-up the educational system and reformed or abolished some harmful traditional political and sociocultural laws and superstitions. Nonetheless they drained India's natural resources and coffers for their own industries (Paul R Brass, *The Politics of India since Independence*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, pp35–66).

Giving the immediate vicinity priority, Modi has urged SAARC countries to forget bilateral differences and join hands in the battle against regional problems such as poverty, underdevelopment and unemployment. His effective and proactive welfare policies are evident not only in his speeches but also in the way he deals with political leaders within and outside the region.

INDIA'S NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY: 1947 TO 1998

India was liberated from external dominance on 15 August 1947, a critical juncture in Cold War politics, when the whole world was polarised and

divided into two military zones led by the United States of America (US) and the Soviet Union respectively (Mient Jan Faber, “Cold Wars and Frozen Conflict: The European Experience” in Mary Kaldor (Ed), *Global Insecurity: Restructuring the Global Sector Volume Three*, New York: Pinter, 2000, pp53–94). Leaders especially Jawaharlal Nehru independent India’s first prime minister, took the strategic decision of not becoming a part of either group (Mushirul Hasan (Ed), “Introduction”, *Nehru’s India: Select Speeches*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2007). His vision for India was expounded in his historical parliamentary speeches and included strategic positions, destinies, future plans and important roles to be played in world affairs (SD Muni, “South Asia as a Region”, *South Asian Journal*, vol1, no1, August–September 2003). As Nehru asserted, “one of the notable consequences of the European domination of Asia has been the isolation of the countries of Asia from one another. Before the British ... India always had contact and intercourse with neighbouring countries but for the last two centuries it has been almost completely isolated from the rest of Asia” (Nicholas Mansergh, “The Asian Conference”, *International Affairs*, vol23, no3, July 1947, pp295–306).

The two most important policies and strategies Nehru gave India for defence and prosperity were nonalignment and *panchsheel* (Norman D Palmer and Howard C Perkins, “India’s Policy of Peace and Nonalignment”, *International Relations: The World Community in Transition*, London: Stevens and Sons, 1954, pp717–37 and Surjit Mansingh, *India’s Search for Power: Indira Gandhi’s Foreign Policy 1966–1982*, New Delhi: Sage, 1984, pp13–25). At the Asian Conference of 1947 and the Afro–Asian Conference of 1955, Nehru argued for newly independent countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America to keep out of Cold War politics and not permit foreign powers to set up bases on their soil. Although India’s leadership was often questioned, it succeeded in not becoming a part of the Cold War (AW Stargardt, “The Emergence of the Asian System of Powers”, *Modern Asian Studies*, vol23, no3, 1989, pp561–95). Nonalignment however does not mean maintaining a distance from the big powers or practicing isolation but rather bargaining for best self-interests without militarily participation. Further, in 1952 Nehru signed an agreement with China based on India’s *Vedic* tradition and culture. The five principles of *panchsheel* are:

1. Mutual respect for each other’s territorial integrity and sovereignty
2. Mutual nonaggression

3. Mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs
4. Equality and cooperation for mutual benefit
5. Peaceful coexistence

Panchsheel has been one of the major principles of India's neighbourhood policy (Swaran Singh, "Three Agreements and Five Principles between India and China" in Tan Chung (Ed), *Across the Himalayan Gap: An Indian Quest for Understanding China*, New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House, 1998). It was extended by Indira Gandhi and popularly came to be known as India's "Monroe Doctrine". It defined India's place in the region and the world. Indira Gandhi believed that India's vicinity was its exclusive zone of supremacy and dominance and no foreign power would be allowed to interfere (C Raja Mohan, "Beyond India's 'Monroe Doctrine'", *The Hindu*, 2 January 2003. Although Indira Gandhi made India militarily and politically stronger, she dithered about economic development.

India also made important breakthroughs in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries during the administrations of Rajiv Gandhi, PV Narasimha Rao and later Manmohan Singh. It adopted a Look East policy as well as liberal policies in trade and commerce and opened up its economy. Aid was taken from the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and other international financial institutions under structural adjustment programmes (R Nagaraj, "What has Happened since 1991: An Assessment of India's Economic Reforms", *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol32, nos44 and 45, November 1998, pp2869–79). Although in those years India neglected and underestimated its neighbours, a breakthrough was made in 1997, by a policy formulated by Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral. The Gujral Doctrine was an assistance package exclusively for smaller neighbours (Inder Kumar Gujral, "The Gujral Doctrine", *Continuity and Change: India's Foreign Policy*, New Delhi: Macmillan, 2003). It argued for free trade facilities,

People in border zones at times do not accept the limitations of political lines and continue to interact with people across borders even in matters of trade. In the absence of better access to bigger markets they usually sell their products to locals on either side for their livelihood. The development of border zones could address local economic needs.

cooperation in fighting regional problems such as deadly diseases, insurgencies, terrorism and trafficking as well as the distribution of natural resources, the free movement of ideas, people, techniques, technologies and thoughts, intelligence sharing, regional development and so on (Padmaja Murthy, “The Gujral Doctrine and Beyond”, *Strategic Analysis*, vol23, no4, July 1999).

INDIA'S NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY: 1998 TO 2014

India's foreign policy was advanced by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee who opened borders, started a bus service from New Delhi to Lahore and made efforts to enhance relations with all neighbouring countries (“Bus Diplomacy”, *The Hindu*, 25 July 2004). Important events of the time were India's nuclear tests of May 1998 in Pokhran, which according to Defence Minister George Fernandes were conducted for security reasons taking into consideration Pakistan and China with whom India had already fought five wars (Sumit Ganguly, “India's Pathway to Pokhran-II: The Prospects and Sources of New Delhi's Nuclear Weapons Programme”, *International Security*, vol23, no4, Spring 1999, pp148–77). Moreover India deserved and needed nuclear weapons as a major international player. Although there were criticisms against the tests and sanctions were imposed by the major powers, India did not bow down but rather became stronger, united and self-reliant in the national and international field through a spirit of patriotism and expanding channels of diplomacy both at home and abroad (Brahma Chellaney, “After the Tests: India's Options”, *Survival*, vol40, no4, Winter 1998–99, pp93–111). However, neighbouring countries were wary of the nuclear tests and assumed India was trying to gain regional hegemony. This prompted them to invite regional and extra-regional powers into the area to counter India (George Perkovich, “Is India a Major Power”, *The Washington Quarterly*, vol27, no1, Winter 2004, pp129–44). Other important events of the time were the Kargil War of 1999 and the 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States of America and on the Indian parliament.

INDIA'S NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY UNDER NARENDRA MODI

With the background of Gujarat's development model and inspiration from the Gujral Doctrine, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has embarked

on a pragmatic and proactive neighbourhood policy. A country's neighbourhood must enjoy unquestioned primacy in its foreign policy and this is evident in Modi's "neighbourhood first" strategy (C Raja, Mohan, *Modi's World: Expanding India's Sphere of Influence*, New Delhi: HarperCollins, 2015). Giving the immediate vicinity priority, Modi has urged South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) countries to forget bilateral differences and join hands in the battle against regional problems such as poverty, underdevelopment and unemployment. His effective and proactive welfare policies are evident not only in his speeches but also in the way he deals with political leaders within and outside the region. According to Modi, while India's foreign policy has many facets, he wants to focus on relations with neighbours. Thus his "neighbourhood first" policy began with official visits to smaller neighbours like Bhutan and Nepal. The initiative was furthered by External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj's visit to Bangladesh and Nepal. The leaders agree that regional cooperation and development should be a priority. On the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) session, Modi held bilateral talks with leaders of neighbouring countries regarding regional issues.

Another important principle of Narendra Modi's foreign policy is federalism. Previously, India's external policy had been "Delhi-centred" and managed by a few individuals. Modi however has declared that he will take provincial governments on board in foreign policy matters. He has promised to work with all chief ministers in the spirit of cooperative federalism. The government will evolve a model of a national development team where chief ministers will have a greater say and all issues including external affairs will be dealt with. In this context, states bordering other countries are important (Prakash Nanda, "Indian Foreign Policy under Modi", *Indian Defence Review*, 7 May 2014, online at <http://www.indiandefencereview.com>). For forging close and better relations, India needs to improve people-to-people contact across borders. Most border-states share culturally contiguous spaces with neighbouring countries. West Bengal and

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Tripura have strong cultural and linguistic contiguity with Bangladesh while Bihar, Sikkim, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal share cultural and language traits with Nepal. Pakistan abuts three Indian states Gujarat, Kashmir and Punjab while Bhutan shares borders with several northeast states. There are strong cultural links between the Tamils of Sri Lanka and Tamil Nadu as well. Border trade between local people on both sides is a potential channel for building good bilateral relations. Due to the arbitrary creation of South Asian borders people often depend upon the other side for daily commodities especially in the Indian northeast. People in border zones at times do not accept the limitations of political lines and continue to interact with people across borders even in matters of trade. In the absence of better access to bigger markets they usually sell their products to locals on either side for their livelihood. The development of border zones could address local economic needs (Smruti S Pattanaik, "Federalising India's Neighbourhood Policy: Making the States Stakeholders", *Strategic Analysis*, vol38, no1, January 2014, pp31–48).

Bilateral Issues and India's Neighbourhood Policy

India is a main party in most interstate disputes within the South Asian region. It has several bilateral disagreements with neighbouring countries on issues of borders, illegal migrations, security, trade, transit and water sharing. With Pakistan, the Kashmir dispute and terrorism are the most important bilateral issues affecting regional peace and prosperity. Afghanistan is also a major source of friction between the two. With Bangladesh bilateral problems include border confrontations, illegal migrations, terrorist organisations, transit and water sharing. Although Nepal has been a friend of India's for long, certain issues like border disputes, trade, transit and water sharing have created misunderstandings. While Sri Lanka has always had an amicable attitude towards India, disputes over fishing grounds, maritime boundaries and Tamil issues have led to a certain level of suspicion. Except for a small boundary disagreement, Bhutan has no disputes with India. However, its recently enhanced relations with China have become a matter of concern for India. Finally, growing Islamic fundamentalism and the influence of Pakistan-based terrorist organisations in the Maldives presently concern New Delhi and it has been carefully watching the growing Chinese influence over the islands as well. As most neighbouring countries are much smaller in size, they have an entrenched

fear of India (Achal Malhotra, “India’s Relationship with its Neighbours: Conflict and Cooperation”, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 6 March 2014, online at <http://www.mea.gov.in>).

A COMPREHENSIVE “MODI DOCTRINE”

Various developments in the region have challenged India to think about a new regional policy to replace the old Indira and Gujral doctrines. Prime Minister Modi’s coming to power has given new hope to India’s neighbourhood policy as reciprocity not philanthropy is its guiding principle. The Bharatiya Janata Party’s manifesto states that India will engage proactively with neighbouring countries and pursue friendly relations.

Accommodating the Interests of the Big Powers

The growing influence of the big powers in the neighbourhood poses a threat to Indian interests in the region. The decision of the US and China to militarily and financially boost Pakistan has been the biggest threat to India’s national security. While American influence is evident in Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, the Chinese have reached most South Asian countries through their String of Pearls strategy, threatening India’s supremacy in the region. Whereas previously New Delhi had resisted extra-regional influences saying that its vicinity was its exclusive area of influence, today it has learned to accommodate and support the interests of big powers, as far as its own interests are not compromised. As such India has developed good relations with China and the US—its main trading partners. Washington is or at last ought to be a natural ally in the war against terrorism.

India’s own culture, democratic principles, philosophy and secular traditions should form the bedrock of bilateral relations. The basic thrust of its foreign doctrine must be to actively support democratic, friendly, peaceful and secular nations in the region and include civil society organisations as well as political forces and parties that believe in a peaceful and democratic future.

Furthermore, the international community's focus on the region for ending terrorism has been welcomed by New Delhi (David Mitchell, "The Meaning of a Rising India: (Re)-Examining India as Regional Power in South Asia", 2015, online at <http://web.isanet.org>).

Regional Development through SAARC

India is today one of the most dynamic and fast growing economies of the world and constitutes both a vast and growing market with superior technologies and knowledge-based services. India is prepared to do more to open its markets to neighbours and investors are ready to invest in rebuilding and upgrading crossborder infrastructure. India wants to make its neighbours full stakeholders in its economic destiny and through cooperation create a globally competitive South Asian Economic Community. In this respect, Modi has moved in the right direction by dedicating a satellite to the SAARC region. In addition, SAARC countries offer tremendous economic and developmental opportunities for India as well as the region. Commendable progress has taken place towards the full implementation of the South Asian Free Trade Agreement. Intra-SAARC trade touched \$529 million in 2009, amounted to \$1,636.31 million during 2013–14 and until early 2016 had reached \$28 billion. According to some economists trade among SAARC nations could be increased to \$100 billion annually. India's trade with SAARC nations in 2012–13 was \$13,704 million and until November 2014 was \$15 billion. Member states have appreciated India's gesture of duty free access to less developed countries (Ministry of Finance, Government of India, *Annual Reports 2009–2016*, online at <http://finmin.nic.in>). SAARC has also witnessed increasing cooperation in security matters. The SAARC Terrorist and Drug Offences Monitoring Desks based in Sri Lanka enable the exchange of information on terrorist and drug related cases. The infrastructure has been strengthened with financial assistance from India. Further, New Delhi plans to set up an internet based network among police authorities of member states for the exchange of unclassified information (Ashok B Sharma, "India to Play a Proactive Role in SAARC", *The Financial Express*, 20 November 2009). As democracy has been India's abiding conviction, it is important to remain engaged with all types of governments in the region. In fact it is essential for New

Delhi to go beyond governments and engage the peoples of South Asia to create a compact of peace and harmony throughout the region. India believes that the establishment of a peaceful neighbourhood is integrally linked to economic development in neighbouring countries.

Building Trust among Neighbours

Modi has constantly tried to build trust among South Asian nations by creating a favourable environment. He and his colleagues have been constantly pursuing and visiting neighbouring countries (Rajesh Ramachandran, "Narendra Modi's Push for Strong Relations with Neighbours", *The Economic Times*, 3 July 2014). The prime minister invited the heads of governments of all South Asian states to attend his swearing-in ceremony in a gesture of friendship. Speaking about his surprise initiative which got all-round praise he said, "We have never thought beyond the country's frontiers. We are a big country, we are an old country and we are a big power. We should make the world realise it. Once we do, the world will not shy away from giving us the due respect and status". His first foreign tour was to Bhutan followed by Nepal and Bangladesh. To Nepal the spokesman of the Minister of External Affairs Syed Akbaruddin quoted Modi as saying, "You should not think about the party but the country. Nepal needs a constitution at the earliest ... India has committed to supporting you in the path you decide to take towards prosperity". Regarding Bangladesh, Narendra Modi stated that there had been "an excellent beginning in addressing each other's concerns and working together with the spirit of good neighbourliness". During meetings, the Indian External Affairs Minister gave a commitment to address Dhaka's concerns over sharing the waters of the River Teesta and in the implementation of the Land Boundary Agreement in a manner that would improve the welfare and well-being of

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both peoples. The ratification of the agreement has been signed with India's constitutional amendments to allow for territorial exchanges. The agreement signed between Shaikh Hasina and Modi in June 2015 in Dhaka has become an example of India's commitment to regional cooperation (Serajul Quadir, "India, Bangladesh sign Historic Land Boundary Agreement", *Reuters*, 6 June 2015, online at <http://in.reuters.com>).

New Policy Direction

India's policy direction should be towards projecting itself as a leader of the region and not a boss. Smaller neighbours should not feel that their interests would be sacrificed in the name of regional cooperation. Border-states must be incorporated into the foreign policy making process in a constructive way. Extra-regional tie-ups must prove beneficial for the region. There should be a paradigm shift in foreign policy towards neighbouring states and accordingly "neighbours first" must remain the primary principle of the government. India's own culture, democratic principles, philosophy and secular traditions should form the bedrock of bilateral relations. The basic thrust of its foreign doctrine must be to actively support democratic, friendly, peaceful and secular nations in the region and include civil society organisations as well as political forces and parties that believe in a peaceful and democratic future. As foreign policy expert Leslie H Gelb argued in 2010, "The gross domestic product now matters more than force" (online at <https://www.foreignaffairs.com>). Therefore "zones of conflict should be transformed into zones of peace, friendship, prosperity and cooperation" (C Raja Mohan, *Crossing the Rubicon: The Shaping of India's New Foreign Policy*, New Delhi: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

India vis-à-vis its Neighbours

India expects cooperation from neighbouring states and equally that anti-India sentiments should not be allowed to grow. Countries should be careful about Indian concerns while forming ties with other nations and their territories should not be used for activities detrimental to Indian interests. The Modi

government has given assurances to resolve bilateral disputes through constructive dialogues. Trusting each other should be the first condition among countries and there should be overwhelming cooperation in regional developmental initiatives. In South Asia, India accounts for 72 per cent of the total area, 77 per cent of the population and 78 per cent of the regional gross national product. Given its size and centrality, India shares land or maritime boundaries with most SAARC countries, making it the pre-eminent power in the region with the ability to influence the conduct of other member states.

Crossborder Terrorism

Prime Minister Modi recently stated that he has been “disappointed” in Pakistan making a spectacle of efforts at talks and that no “meaningful” bilateral dialogue could take place in the shadow of terrorism and violence. He also expressed concern at the threats to peace and stability in Afghanistan and stressed that India remains committed to its efforts for that country to become peaceful and prosperous. Terrorism—indigenous and transnational—will be India’s biggest security challenge in the coming years. Ominously, indigenous terrorist groups have established links with crossborder outfits whose threats emanate from both near and distant sources. The proximate threat comes from the terrorists groups nurtured in Pakistan like the Lashkar-e-Taiba, the Hizbul Mujahideen, etc, while the distant threat from al-Qaeda has been now overshadowed by the Islamic State (ISIS). Criticising Pakistan sponsored terrorism, Modi in his United Nations General Assembly speech stated, “There is no good terrorism or bad terrorism. There is only terrorism which kills civilians and destroys property”. While India is ready to talk to Pakistan on the issue, it will not do so with a veil. Moreover, Pakistan must stop its constant Line of Control ceasefire violations and create a positive environment for talks.

Globalisation argues for economic integration and interdependence which lead to open borders and more harmonious crossborder relations. Thus, the positive management of border controls could increase the benefits of open borders and significantly affect further economic, sociocultural and other traditional interactions.

NEW APPROACHES

Just as one can change friends but not neighbours (Barry Bearak, “India Promises, with Pakistan, to Seek Peace”, *The New York Times*, 22 February 1999, online at <http://www.nytimes.com>), one cannot disregard national borders but only gradually make them irrelevant (Luv Puri, “Make LoC a ‘Line of Peace’: Manmohan”, *The Hindu*, 16 July 2007). Globalisation argues for economic integration and interdependence which lead to open borders and more harmonious crossborder relations. Thus, the positive management of border controls could increase the benefits of open borders and significantly affect further economic, sociocultural and other traditional interactions (Peter Andreas, “Border Security in the Age of Globalisation: How can we Protect ourselves without Losing the Benefits of Openness”, *Regional Review*, vol13, no3, July–September 2003, pp3–7). It has been strongly argued that the meaning and significance of state borders as well as their geographical locations should change over space and time (James Anderson and Liam O’Dowd, “Borders, Border Regions and Territoriality: Contradictory Meanings, Changing Significance”, *Regional Studies*, vol33, no7, October 1999, pp593–604). On the other hand, India has fought five wars with two of its nuclear powered neighbours—Pakistan and China (Julian Schofield, “Militarised Decision-Making for War in Pakistan 1947–1971”, *Armed Forces and Society: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, vol27, no1, September 2000, pp131–48). Thus, the best way forward for New Delhi would be to win a war without fighting (JJL Duyvendak, *Sun Tsu’s The Art of War*, London: Wordsworth, 1998, pp13–54).

Hence, India must forge good relations with neighbours in a proactive and asymmetric manner through a win-win and non-zero-sum strategy. It should explore ways to make SAARC successful through bilateral and multilateral arrangements (R Duncan Luce and Howard Raiffa, *Games and Decisions: Introduction and Critical Survey*, New York: Courier Dover 1989, pp88–113). India needs to evolve its “cooperative and integrated neighbourhood policy” (Karen E Smith, “The Outsiders: The European Neighbourhood Policy”, *International Affairs*, vol81, no4, July 2005, pp757–73). By promoting free trade areas, New Delhi should advocate and work for the benefit of smaller countries in trade and economic arrangements. It must give importance to all organisations—regional, sub-regional and extra-regional. India must strengthen

bilateral and multilateral arrangements with individual countries and help make them self-sufficient and well integrated within the region so that they do not invite extra-regional powers to interfere in bilateral issues. All bilateral issues should be solved amicably in a spirit of give and take. "Cultural cooperation" would be another means to achieve ends.

New Delhi has to convince the people of the region that it has no intention to harm or destroy their states. It should take the lead in gradually opening national borders for the easy movement of goods, ideas, people, resources, techniques, technologies and thoughts for regional development. India should adopt an effective and environmentally safe perspective in its nuclear policy based on regional security. India needs to give more weight to regional development through the institutional development of civil society, democracy, free trade, liberalism, multiculturalism, secularism, etc. Last but not least, India must formulate a successful economic policy to make its neighbours feel that their development is complementary to its own. A bunch of carrots will be far more beneficial than nuclear sticks (Joseph S Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, New York: Public Affairs, 2004).¹⁸