CHAPTER - IV

INDIA AND OTHER MEMBER STATE’S RESPONSE TO THE ‘COOPERATION’

One of the striking and peculiar features of South Asian states is the disparity in their size and their political, economic and military strengths and capabilities. There are tiny and sparsely populated states like Maldives and Bhutan and very large one like Bangladesh, Pakistan and India. But when comparison is made between South Asian states, India beats all other states. It is because India is the largest and the strongest one in terms of its area, political stability, economic viability and military capabilities. Thus India is termed as the core state while the other states are called the periphery of the South Asian regional system.¹

The size and strength of India is not only the source of embarrassment for India but also a cause of centrifugal tendencies in South Asia. The unenviable position of India emanates from the fact that India is the only state which shares territorial or maritime boundaries with almost all the States except Maldives in the region.²

The British exit in 1947 did two major developments for South Asia. First, the British Raj withdrew from South Asia very haphazardly. They left the things indecisive specially territorial demarcation. India Pak, India China boundaries were not historically defined. This fact, lately, triggered off

1 E. Sudhakar, SAARC - Origin, Growth and Future, Gyan Publishing House, Delhi, 1994, p. 87
2 Ibid., p. 87.
territorial tensions. Secondly, the power status of India in 1947 made the South Asia balance of power revolve round it. The other countries of the region like Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Sri Lanka had individually and separately move in common with India than with each other. Conversely there is bit of India in every other country of South Asia. There was hardly anything which was significant and common between India’s neighbours. It was only India which was common between them.

The South Asian region had become Indo-centric both geographically and in terms of socio cultural continuities and in economic infrastructure. Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India also pointed out the Indo centric character of the South Asia. He said that India is so placed in South Asian region that whenever any problem arises whether it is a problem of defence or trade or industry or economic policy. India always comes into the picture and can not be ignored at all.

**INDIA’S GEOGRAPHICAL POSITION**

India is a subcontinent stretching from the Himalayas to the Indian ocean. It has the second largest population and the seventh largest territory in the world. India constitutes about 75 percent of South Asia in terms of demography territory and natural resources. It is the only state in the region whose boundaries touched by land or water by all the other six states of South Asia.

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5 S.D. Muni, op.cit.
Asia. Four States touched India’s boundaries by common land borders for e.g.: Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh. And the rest of two i.e. Sri Lanka and Maldives touched India by common Maritime borders.7

India’s geographical position also make it a powerful country among South Asian countries. Another reason of India’s powerful status highlighted in the hierarchical power structure of South Asian region. India and Pakistan were the powerful states of South Asian region but the break up of Pakistan enhanced India’s position within the region and made the system more hierarchical in terms of relative levels of power.8 Cohen park wrote, “A state such as India, by virtue of its size, resources and geographical location, finds itself a great power in regional terms, whether it seek or not that label.9

INDIA’S RELATIONS WITH ITS NEIGHBOURS

The relationship is marked by suspicion, unfriendly postures and at times conflict. The actions and the attitudes of all South Asian states except India were determined by India’s actions and attitude and small state tendency. The South Asian relations are, thus, fitted into an action and reaction scenario one may find and clear lack of coordination and cooperation among these states in any meaningful sense. The Indo-centric nature of the region is also responsible for inter-state rivalry. Sri Lanka holds India responsible for Tamil militancy (now somehow ended) Pakistan desires Kashmir and India questions its claim. Bangladesh harps upon the

8 Ibid.
overwhelming size of India and holds it responsible for Chakma problems and water dispute. Nepal blames for Maoist insurgency and takes side of China. Bhutan is worried about Nepal’s demographic domination in its Southern part. Besides all this, India also has a sense of loosing its territory because of China’s claims.10

South Asia is dominated by the actions and reactions by and against India. There is no denying the fact that India is more than twice the other SAARC countries put together in size and nearly four times larger demographically than all the other South Asian Countries (SAARC Members) put together. Modern States enjoy political, economic and defence capabilities based on their size and resources. This strength indeed enjoys such status and power, but not to the disadvantage of any other state in its neighbourhood or in any other part of the globe. India’s foreign policy objectives and postures also indicate this fact.11

It can not be denied that India to some extent inherited the security perceptions of the previous British rulers. But the foreign policy of India, inspired and cherished by the ideals and traditions of Indian political and cultural heritage and shaped by mature vision of its first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, who aimed at evolving friendly relations with its neighbours based on peace, mutual trust and cooperation. In this direction. It tried to lead the newly independent states of Asia and Africa, with a fair measure of success.12 Inspite of this, unfortunately, the attention drawn by

10 Ibid., p. 87
11 Ibid., p. 87
India is various international forums and the important place it occupies in the united Nations, coupled with some of its actions in response to the regional crises in the past.\textsuperscript{13}

**INDIA’S INITIATIVES TOWARDS REGIONAL COOPERATION**

**Pre-independence initiatives** : The idea of transnational/regional/Asian identity in search for a meaningful role in international affairs has been an important ingredients of Indian mindset during struggle for independence from the British Empire. Infact, the Indian National Congress kept its focus on India’s possible role in Asia during freedom struggle. It was as early as in 1920 that Gandhiji wrote of the growing solidarity of the Asian countries. In 1922, C.R. Das President of Indian National Congress urged India’s participation in an Asian Federation which he regarded as inevitable.\textsuperscript{14} A resolution to this effect was adopted by the Congress in 1928. In 1945 Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru declared that the small states of the world would have no future and that they were sure to be reduced to the status of satellite states, and, therefore, he advocated creation of South Asian Federation of India, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan and Burma.\textsuperscript{15}

Even before India’s formal independence from the British rule, the leaders of the Indian National Movement convened and Asian Relations Conference.

\textsuperscript{13} SAARC, Origin Growth and Future, op.cit., p. 87.
\textsuperscript{15} J.S. Bright (ed.), Before and after Independence, (Collection of Nehru’s Speeches 1922-50), New Delhi, 1950, p. 279.
Asian Relations Conference (ARC) : On the eve of Indian independence inspired by Nehru, the Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA) convened an Asian Relations Conference (ARC) in New Delhi in March 1947. The Conference was attended by 28 countries including the then Soviet Asian Republics and Egypt. There were observers from the UNO, Arab League and several institutions from Sydney, London, Moscow and New York. Eight different subjects by five groups were discussed in the Conference. These were as follows:

i) National movements for freedom

ii) Racial problems and Inter-Asian Migrations

iii) Transition from colonial to National Economy; Agricultural Reconstruction and Industrial Development; Labour Problems and Social services;

iv) Cultural problems

v) Status of women and women’s movement.  

However, there was a lurking distrust among the small Asian Countries towards their powerful neighbours despite this general agreement. An attempt was made to create an Asian Relations Organization

(ARO) which continued as a non-official organization for about a decade
before being wound up in 1957.¹⁹

Jawaharlal Nehru was the President of the provisional General Council
of the ARO. But the distrust, suspicion and rivalry of Asian nations must have
come as a rude shock to the intellectual idealism and honesty of purpose of
Jawaharlal Nehru. “Faced within the hostility of Arabs, India had no bricks
with which to build any kind of Asian structure”.²⁰

India’s approach in ARC was that the Conference was not directed
against any race or region, that it ought not to deal with bilateral internal
disputes and that there were no leader and no followers among the
participants. This approach was to continue in future in all Afro-Asian
Conferences held during the decade and a half after Indian independence, viz.,
the New Delhi Conference on Indonesia (1949), the Baguio (Philippines)
conference (May 1950), the Colombo powers Conference (April 1954), the
Bogor Conference (Dec. 1954), the Afro-Asian Conference (April 1954), the
Brioni Conference, July 1956 and the Belgrade Conference, 1961.²¹ Dutch
police action is Indonesia in December 1948. The Conference attended by
India, Afghanistan, Australia, Burma, Ceylon, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Iraq,
Lebanon, Pakistan, the Philippines, Saudi Arabia and Yemen, and observers
from Kumitang China, Nepal, New Zealand and Thailand condemned the
Dutch aggression and called for the realize of the arrested members of the

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²⁰ Jansen, op.cit., p. 73.
²¹ Pohekar G.S., India’s Relations with Asia and Africa, Harold Laski Institute of Political
Government of the Indonesia Republic, withdrawal of Dutch troops from the capital Jog Jakarta and from Indonesia at large with a view to transfer power by January 1, 1950 to the United States of Indonesia.²²

The objective of the Conference was to discuss the Indonesian struggle for freedom. This conference unlike earlier ones, was official in character and political in nature. Jawaharlal Nehru the then prime Minister of India while strongly criticizing the Dutch action against Indonesia, also made a fervent appeal for greater interaction among Asian Countries. But he was criticized by The New York Times for the growth of regionalism and racialism. Soviet newspaper Pravada also attacked Nehru for being anti Soviet and interpreted the Asian Conference on Indonesia as an attempt to establish an anti-Soviet bloc.²³

The victory of communist movement in China in 1949 changed the political context of Asia. The cold war ambience with its impact on all regions of the world was taking a firm shape. India had declared its firm commitment to stay apart from East-West antagonism.

It was during this phase that An Afro-Asian group was formed in the United Nations in December 1950 to hold consultations and coordinate their actions in the UN on matters of war and peace in the wake of Korean-war. The non-aligned India, Burma and Indonesia came together within the Afro-Asian group.

²³ Jansen, op.cit., p. 95.
Nehru’s belief in India’s responsibility to bring Asian countries together was firmly entrenched in India’s foreign policy approach.\textsuperscript{24} India’s attitude to the question of regional cooperation took distinct shape after 1951, when the President of the Philippines announced his intention of convening an international conference to consider formation of anti–communist association of South-East Asia on the pattern of North Atlantic Treaty. This marked the beginning of differences in approach and perceptions of regional Cooperation among Asian states. India was not in favour of such politically oriented groupings and felt that an anti-communist bloc was no answer to Asia’s problem.\textsuperscript{25}

India’s approach to regional cooperation took a different turn when the United States agreed to give military aid to Pakistan in 1954, thus upsetting the entire balance of power in the region, and brought the superpower rivalry at the doorsteps of South Asia. Nehru strongly criticized the formation of military pacts like SEATO and Baghdad Pact.\textsuperscript{26} However, the attempts for regional cooperation continued at various levels. The Bandung conference is regarded as the highest point of attempt.\textsuperscript{27}

**Bandung Conference (1955)**: The Bandung Conference was considered as the high point of Afro-Asian attempt to develop common policies and approach to their problems. It was convened by the five Colombo Conference participants, i.e. Burma, Ceylon, India, Indonesia and Pakistan in April 1955.

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{25} Sharma Suman, *India and SARC*, Gyan Publishing House, New Delhi, p. 19
  \item \textsuperscript{26} Ibid., p. 19
  \item \textsuperscript{27} *The Times of India*, November 16, 1953.
\end{itemize}
The Conference was attended by 29 Asian and African nations included almost all nations which had gained freedom from colonial rule. The objectives of the Bandung Conference were:

a) to promote goodwill and cooperation between the nations of Asia and Africa to explore and advance their mutual as well as common interests and to establish and further friendliness and neighbourly relations; and

b) to view the position of Asia and Africa and their peoples in the world of today and the contribution they can make to the promotion of world peace and cooperation.  

In this conference differences emerged between Nehru and other Asian leaders regarding the general tone of the Conference. Indian attempts failed both to prevent ideological cleavages simmering at the plenary sessions and also in discussion on specific bilateral issues. Consequently, the Indian approach to regional cooperation took a different shape. The kind of regionalism that India looked forward to in Asia received a further setback.

Though the Afro-Asian movement was failed. But India emerged as the leader of the non-aligned Movement (NAM) in the post-colonial world. Nehru’s pursuit of economic development through industrialization and his mission for world peace sought to be achieved by the ideology of non-alignment gave India’s foreign policy an international status. The Indian

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policy of non-alignment in respect of South Asia was intended to limit the penetration of cold war politics into the region.\textsuperscript{30}

**India and SAARC**

When the idea of regional cooperation was first floated India had some apprehensions in mind and showed slight reluctance. India feared that sooner or later SAARC might also meet the fate as SEATO and CENTO in which extra regional powers were involved. Besides, India’s relations with its neighbours had not been very good. If India would have shown any enthusiasm toward it, it might be perceived as hegemonic attitude of India by its neighbours.

On the other hand India observed an economic gains also through the cooperation which was very essential at that time. It also felt that for basic economic activities in the region the member countries come closer to each other. In beginning the proposal was confined to economic, scientific, cultural and technical fields. With all this, in mind India accepted the SAARC proposal in principle with low profile. This was first experiment of regional cooperation which strongly needed India as major partner. Eventually India accepted with approach to collective self reliance and eradication of poverty.\textsuperscript{31}

Indian policy makers are aware of the fact that any bold initiatives or a greater role by India in SAARC will strengthen the South Asian neighbour’s perception of Indian hegemonism, and thereby jeopardize prospects for


further regional cooperation. On the other hand India’s lack of initiatives may be interpreted as a lack of sincerity for SAARC. As India’s support is crucial for the growth of SAARC, India needs to take moderate policy initiatives with respect to SAARC activities and pursue accommodative diplomacy more vigorously to inspire confidence in its neighbours.

Adoption of such a policy by India is more likely in the changing economic and political environment at both the regional and global levels in the post-cold war era. The earlier thinking of New Delhi that India is unlikely to get any substantial benefits from any SAARC economic arrangements appears to be changing. India’s policy makers have now realized that it is in India’s interest to promote intraregional trade. The success of India’s economic liberalization will largely depend on its ability to increase exports to new markets both in the developed and developing countries. It brings change to India and now it shows renewed interest in promoting trade through the intraregional trade through the framework of SAPTA.

At the political level, Indian policy makers are not only concerned with the loss of the Soviet Union as an ally, but are also sensitive to the declining relevance of the non-Aligned Movement and a gradual slipping of leadership from India’s hands to Indonesia in G-15 meetings. India’s ambition of global leadership role has received a setback by these developments. Indian leaders know well that the smooth operation of SAARC will provide them the opportunity to convince the world about their ability to pull the South Asian countries together. By demonstrating such leadership in SAARC they want to
recapture some of India’s lost prestige in the international arena. Moreover, the Indian political leaders perceive that the existence of SAARC ensure the status quo in South Asia, leading to political stability in the region and future improvements of India’s bilateral relations with its neighbours. Indeed India’s decision not to react negatively to Pakistan’s reference to the contentions issue of the demolition of Babri Mosque in Ayodhya at the seventh SAARC summit in Dhaka and the Kashmir issue at the eight SAARC summit in New Delhi indicates India’s growing interest in regional cooperation in South Asia.

**Proposal for Regional Cooperation by Bangladesh**

The Soviet Union had already intervened in Afghanistan. This act had opened a door for entries of superpowers to capture the South Asia. This was quite detrimental for South Asian security. A solid cooperation was very necessary at this time. The idea of a South Asian Regional Corporation (SARC) was mooted by President Zia-ur-Rahman of Bangladesh in 1980. President Zia-ur-Rahman of Bangladesh discussed the possibility to organize regional cooperation for the common good of the people of South Asia during his visits to Nepal India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka in late 70s and in 1980.\(^{32}\) It got the positive response from South Asian capitals. In November 1980 a proposal for Regional Cooperation was circulated in the south Asia by the Ministry of Affairs of Bangladesh. The proposal argued for an arrangement of regional cooperation in the spirit of mutual trust, understanding and sympathetic appreciation of the political aspirations existing among the

countries of the region, as well as based on respect for the principles of sovereign equality, territorial integrity, non-interference in internal affairs of other nations and mutual benefits.  

The Heads of the State/Government of seven South Asian countries – Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka formally established the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) in their first summit meeting held in Dhaka on 7-8 December 1985. They adopted a charter for SAARC in this summit meeting. The basic objectives set forth in the charter were, inter-alia, to promote the welfare of the people of South Asia and to improve their quality of life, to accelerate economic growth, social progress and cultural development in the region, and to promote and strengthen collective self-reliance among countries of South Asia.

Formally committed to the principles of non-alignment India was extremely cautious to avoid any kind of overt political or security overtone to the regional cooperative endeavour in South Asia. This attitude was borne out of past experience of political/security pacts bringing in the influence of extra-regional powers in the region in utter disregard to the objectives of non-alignment. Thus India accepted the Bangladesh proposal for a regional cooperative arrangement as it emphasized economic, scientific technical and

cultural cooperation. India hoped that the cooperation in these fields would ultimately help in resolving political disputes in the region.

India thus becomes the most significant feature of SAARC India’s size, resources and power potential makes it implicitly predominant in the asymmetrical power structure in South Asia.\textsuperscript{36} India accounts for 76 percent of the region’s population, 72 percent of its land area and 76 per cent of the total national income of SAARC member countries in terms of US dollars (79 per cent in terms of purchasing power parity)\textsuperscript{37} India shares a common border with other SAARC Member countries, except the island nations of Sri Lanka and Maldives – Sri Lanka is separated from India by only a few miles of ocean water. Significantly, no other SAARC Member country shares a common border with another country of South Asia. The sub-continent, therefore, is quite rightly considered highly Indo-Centric.

India which shares the mass misery and deprivation of SAARC distinguishes it from others. India has laid down a vast industrial infrastructure; it has a strong military power and ……; its scientific and technological power manpower is spectacular in its achievements in certain areas of science and technology including nuclear and space research can match the best in the world. India has a relatively stable democracy with a vast, politically stabilizing middle class having a significant purchasing power.

\textsuperscript{36} Mohammad Ayoob, op.cit., p. 107-34.
The small states tendency and problem in smooth going of SAARC

The reasons for the pre-occupation of ‘Indophobia’ in the smaller states of South Asia have their origins in the political, demographic, ethnic, economic, geographical and psychological factors that influenced their evolution and existence during the past few decades.\textsuperscript{38}

India’s larger size made India the most striking culprit in the eyes of its smaller neighbours in South Asia. India distinctly outweighs all its neighbours individually and collectively in terms of size, population and economic strength. The very realization of the existence of a giant neighbour next door inspires awe in the minds of the ruling elites of the smaller neighbours of India, especially when their domestic existence is precarious due to various inherent weaknesses.

Secondly, India shares borders with all the countries of South Asia (except Maldives) but no two among them share borders with each other. Naturally, the trade and commerce and demographic movements are more often than not directed towards India. This is a cause of the fear of domination by India without however, appreciating the potential of cooperation based on the comparative industrial and technological progress achieved by India.

Another reason is the economic strength of India, her industrial advancement, scientific and technological development created in the minds of her smaller neighbours suspicion of the (imperialistic) domination by India. Most of the neighbours of India particularly Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan and

\textsuperscript{38} E. Sudhakar, \textit{SAARC – Origin, Growth and Future}, Gyan publishing house, New Delhi, p. 116.
Sri Lanka have been facing balance of payments deficit vis-à-vis India during the last few decades. Nepal and Bangladesh have been particularly worried about their dependence on India both for trade and commerce and economic assistance of rate these two states have been deliberately trying to diversify their links with countries outside south Asia or other than India.³⁹

One of the most important causes of suspicion and vocal denunciation of the hegemonistic designs of India by the smaller states of South Asia is the domestic conflicts that have been plaguing the political, social and economic systems of these countries. Most of the South Asian States except perhaps Sri Lanka have had fragile political systems and the political stability of the regimes has always been open to doubts. In most of the cases, the domestic conflicts, other than ethnic, were due to lack of accountability of political authority, the consequential legitimacy crises followed by frequent changes in the power bases.⁴⁰

Except Maldives no State whether smaller or big in South Asia could boast of monolithic ethnic composition of people. The heterogenic ethnicity varies only in degree in its acuteness. The conflicts arising out of these internal diversities have quite frequently posed problems of national integration in these countries. The smaller states of South Asia, including, Pakistan and Bangladesh always found India the most responsible for their troubles. Historical evidences show that whenever there were turbulences in these states, there were repressions on the minorities and the disgruntled

³⁹ Ibid., p. 117.
⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 117.
people and this naturally led to the demographic flows into India. In order to underplay their own weaknesses and inability to deal with the domestic problems, these countries always accuse India of causing destabilization and hegemonism.\footnote{Ibid. p. 118.}

The cultural and ethnic linkages between the people of the entire region of South Asia poses a peculiar problem particular to India. This is one reason for magnifying the fears of the smaller states of the region. India is the heartland of the Indian sub-continent and historically considered the mother of different ethnic and religious groups. It is borne out by the reality that the different ethnic and religious groups of the neighbours of India except Maldives have connections with India. In most cases the linkages are alive and active. This has created a fear of cultural imperialism by India in these countries.

These perceptions of India’s neighbours probably implies them to make efforts to bring bilateral disputes on the agenda of SAARC. This asymmetry between India and other SAARC Member countries is considered by some observers as the single biggest drawback that is inherent in the groups composition Pakistani academician thus observed.

“The most serious impediment to greater cooperation in South Asia is the lack of consensus about the future shape of the region. The smaller states favour a regional arrangement which guarantees equality to all states and does not restrict their option of conducting relations with the rest of the world. This
framework comes in conflict with India’s perception of South Asian power structure.\textsuperscript{42}

In such an environment of mistrust and suspicion of its role, India’s two important preconditions – no bilateral and contentious issues to be discussed in SAARC and the principle of unanimity for decision making – were incorporated in the SAARC charter as ‘General provisions’. India’s objective in eliminating anti-India political issues from SAARC agenda was to ensure its smooth initial take off.

India is expected to play an important role in the global politics in general and in South Asian politics in particular. The policy makers of India were convinced from the very beginning that India was distinct to play a key role in the international and Asian political system.

**INDIA’S CONTRIBUTION TO SAARC**

During the cold war period South Asia was a conflict torn region. Most of the countries were suffering from domestic violence caused by communalism, ethnic conflict, separation, religious fanaticism and socio-economic deprivation. Cross-border narco-terrorism with India at the receiving end has added a new dimension to the disturbed conditions in the subcontinent.\textsuperscript{43} South Asia this way is considered ‘a unique region from global perspective, with ‘its problems and conflicts having their own dynamics and most, if not all of these created with in the region by its history, 


its geo-politics its economics and ecology. From the very beginning, India’s foreign policy is one of keeping to all countries and not becoming entangled in any alliances, military or others which might drag India into any possible conflict. India’s policy in the sub-continent has been ‘to build a strategically secure, politically stable and harmonious and economically Cooperative neighbourhood’ Thus India has to make significant efforts in the following directions:

a) to keep away foreign intervention particularly major power intrusion from the sub-continent.

b) To resolve disputes with neighbours bilaterally without use of force and third party interference; and

c) to promote regional cooperation in pursuit of collective self-reliance and development of economy.

India occupies a unique position in South Asia – its centrality determines the behaviour of other member states of SAARC. A common history, culture and ethnic links between India and her neighbours makes it difficult to immunize India from the events in the neighbouring countries. The whole region is symbiotically one entity but politically divided into different Nation states. It is almost impossible to separate the politics of one country from that of another-particularly that of India and her neighbours. India thus

44 Iftekharuzzaman, Emergency Strategic Trends in South Asia, in Lok Raj Baral (ed), South Asia: Democracy and the Road Ahead, p. 171.
46 Suman Sharma, op.cit, p. 169.
occupies a unique and peculiar position. Indian neighbours have been extremely sensitive to India’s pre-eminence in the sub-continent.\textsuperscript{47} Infact, one of their objectives, particularly of Pakistan, and Bangladesh, in SAARC was to rein in and counter ‘big India’ by the norms and discipline inherent in a regional forum.\textsuperscript{48}

The sense of insecurity among India’s neighbours has been impelling them to bring in extra-regional powers to countervail India’s influence. But the end of the cold war and reduction of extra-regional powers’ interference in South Asia provided greater leeway to India to push its agenda for a cooperative neighbourhood. The end of the cold war generated a conducive environment for India to resolve its dilemma of ‘how to be strong enough to protect its own interests without provoking the antagonism of its neighbours and how to treat their sensitivities gently without appearing to be too weak to protect its own interests.’\textsuperscript{49} To resolve this dilemma, however, has been a great challenge for the policy makers in India.

A significant development in the wake of the demise of cold war in South Asia has been restoration of democracy in Bangladesh and Pakistan and change of system in Nepal from Monarchy to representative democracy.\textsuperscript{50} Taking advantage of these positive developments India made renewed efforts to normalize relations with her adversial neighbours.

\textsuperscript{48} Suman Sharm, op.cit., p. 169.
\textsuperscript{49} Srikant Pranjpaye, \textit{India and South Asian States since 1971,} New Delhi, 1985, p.3.
\textsuperscript{50} Ayesha Jalal, \textit{Democracy and Authoritarianism in South Asia: A comparative and Historical Perspective,} New Delhi, 1995.
INDO-NEPAL RELATIONS

In 1990 immediately after the installation of an interim govt. in Nepal the prime ministers of Nepal and India met and decided to restore status quo-ante in bilateral relations to April 1987 when the tensions between the two countries had surfaced.

The two sides decided to respect each other’s security concerns, not to allow activities in the territory of one prejudicial to the security of the other and to have prior consultations with a view to reaching mutual agreement on such defence related matters which, in a view of either country, could pose a threat to its security. There was a further serious move to co-operate in the spheres of industrial and human resource development and for harnessing of the common rivers for the benefit of the peoples of the two countries, and for protection and management of environment.51

The Indian Prime Minister paid a visit to Nepal in 1991 (the last such visit was made 14 years ago) when many significant decisions were taken and work-programmes finalized for intensification of bilateral economic cooperation. The newly elected Prime Minister of Nepal paid a historic visit to New Delhi in December 1991, accompanied by a delegation of Nepalese industrialists and businessman. A high level Task Force was set up for the first time which prepared a comprehensive programme of bilateral cooperation. This was the first time that such an approach was adopted between India and Nepal.52

52 Suman Sharma, op.cit., p. 177.
During this visit five important treaties and agreements were signed: a new trade treaty, a new transit treaty, an agreement for cooperation in controlling unauthorized trade; a memorandum of understanding for cooperation in agriculture, meant to promote rural development and rural employment in Nepal, and another Memorandum of understanding for the establishment of the B.P. Koirala India Nepal Foundation.53

There were tangible gains for Nepal as a result of increased economic cooperation with India in the 90’s – The commissioning of an industrial estate at Rajbiraj and telephone exchange at Rangeli in Nepal., A new trade regime which came into force in April 1993, providing for the customs duty free access to Indian markets for manufactured articles was improved to include articles containing not less than 50 per cent Nepalese material and labour.54

**Indo-Sri Lanka Relations**

Indo-Sri Lankan relations had suffered a serious setback on the issue of the withdrawal of Indian peace keeping Force (IPKF) in 1989.55 IPKF was stationed in Sri Lanka to facilitate a peaceful resolution of the Tamil ethnic problem in Sri Lanka in pursuance of in understanding between the two governments. In fact, the IPKF withdrawal issue even threatened the derailment of SAARC process when Sri Lanka refused to host the Fifth Summit meeting so long as IPKF continued on Sri Lankan soil.” The withdrawal of IPKF in March 1990 brought this controversy to an end and commenced a new phase in Indo-Sri Lankan relations.

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54 Ibid., p. 1.
55 Lalit Mansingh et al (ed.), *Indian Foreign Policy*, pp. 159-95.
In 1991 the two governments, decided to establish an Indo – Sri Lanka joint commission with sub-commissions on Trade, investment and Finance, and Science and Technology. The year, thereafter, (1992) saw significant increase in contacts between the business communities of the two countries. The Indo-Sri Lankan Joint Business Council was convened in New Delhi in March 1991 after a gap of 11 years. Some 100 business delegates from India participated in the Expo’92 held in Colombo in November 1992.\(^{56}\)

The second session of the Indo Sri-Lanka Joint Commission in 1994 resulted in a number of positive decisions. These included restoration of preferential tariff margins on Sri Lanka cloves, reduction in tariffs on selected items of export interest to Sri Lanka such as ceramic tiles, glycerin, graphite and rubber and extension of a new line of dollar denominated credit. The Bank of Ceylon was granted permission to open a branch in Madras. The seat capacity for Airlines were enhanced following a civil aviation dialogue in July 1994.\(^{57}\) Sri Lanka President Chandrika Kumartunga’s visit to India in 1995 further consolidated the gains of cooperation between the two countries. A credit line of US $ 30 million was extended to Sri Lanka and grant of reduction in customs duty on 18 items of export by Sri Lanka was announced.\(^{58}\)

India Sri Lanka relations have undergone a qualitative and quantitative transformation in the recent past. Political relations are close, trade and investments have increased dramatically. Infrastructural linkages are

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\(^{56}\) WIDER study Group series no 8 and 9, Nelsinki, 1993.
\(^{57}\) The Hindu, 2 August, 1994.
\(^{58}\) Annual Reports, op.cit., 1995-96, pp. 6-7.
constantly being augmented, defence collaboration has increased and there is a general broad-based improvement across all sectors of bilateral cooperation.

India was the first country to respond to Sri Lanka’s request for existence after the Tsunami in December 2004. In July 2006, India evacuated 430 Sri Lanka nationals from Lebanon, first to Cyprus by Indian Navy ships and then to Delhi and Colombo by special Air India flights.

India and Sri Lanka’s relations also become friendly has India started developing military interaction with Sri Lanka. It is India and Sri Lanka’s combined efforts which killed Prabhakaran the top leader of LTTE grouping 2009. This also improves India and Sri Lanka’s relation.

**Indo-Bangladesh Relations**

The positive trend of bilateral interaction was revived by India in respect of Bangladesh as well when in 1991 after a gap of seven years Indo-Bangladesh Joint Economic Commission met. India announced a Rs. 30 crores government to government credit to Bangladesh. India also welcomed the restoration of democratic rights of the people of Bangladesh.\(^{59}\) In 1992 the long pending, intractable ‘Tin Bigha’ enclave issue was resolved by its transfer to Bangladesh.\(^{60}\) However, Indo-Bangladesh relations nose-dived due to spill over of the demolition of Babri Masjid structure in India by Hindu zealots, differences due to illegal immigration from Bangladesh, repatriation of refugees from Chakma hill tracts in Bangladesh and Bangladesh’s efforts

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to internationalize the bilateral issue of river waters at the UN General Assembly in 1993 and 1995. In fact, the 1993 SAARC Summit at Dhaka was under cloud when due to Bangladesh - reaction\textsuperscript{61} to the demolition of the mosque structure in India. The Indian PM initially refused to attend the Summit Meeting.

Recently, relations between India and Bangladesh have hit a low patch. But still there are other positive developments as well most notably the progress in the TATA Group’s discussions with the Government of Bangladesh on their $ 2.5 billion investment in Bangladesh in three different plants: steel, fertilizer and power.\textsuperscript{62}

On 22-22 March 2006 Bangladesh Prime Minister Begum Khalida Zia visited India. Both the Prime Ministers discussed on various issues. Two agreements were signed during the visit. These being the Revised Trade Agreement and the Agreement for mutual cooperation between India and Bangladesh for preventing illicit trafficking in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances both sides agreed that the institutionalized bilateral mechanisms such as joint Boundary Working Groups and Home Secretary level talks would meet more frequently to ensure movement in a positive direction and their outcome monitored by the political leadership on a continuous bases.\textsuperscript{63}

\textsuperscript{63} Ibid.
India – Pakistan Relations

India’s relations with Pakistan during early 90’s continued in the mode of dissonance with Pakistan continuing to encourage subversive activities in Kashmir. However, the two Prime Ministers, Narasimha Rao and Nawaz Sharif met six times during 1991 and 1993 to bring down hostilities between the two nations. The Foreign Secretary level talks also continued between the two countries till January 1994\textsuperscript{64} agreed on a number of confidence building Measures (CBMs) to avoid military confrontation. These measures included development of communication links between high military officials in the two countries, adoption of a process of prior notification of military exercises, agreement on the non-attack on each other’s nuclear installations, Border Security Agreement, Joint Declaration on prohibition of chemical weapons etc. Foreign Secretary level talks were discontinued in 1994 when Benazir Bhutto became the Prime Minister of Pakistan.

In 1997, high level talks resumed between India and Pakistan after a three year pause. But the talks broke down over the structure of how to deal with Kashmir issues of Kashmir. Several attempts have been made during 1998 and 1991 but these talks could not save a setback to relations.

Recently after 26/11 case of terrorist attack on hotel Taj of Mumbai and arrestation of terrorist Mohd. Kasav once again brought India-Pakistan relations on the verge of bitterness. In post 26/11 attack again proceedings for

peacemaking have been started. In July 2009 after meeting at Sharm el Sheikh both Prime Ministers – Manmohan Singh and Yusuf Raza Gilani positively agreed to peace negotiations. In February 2010 during secretarial talks no concrete result could be brought out. But in recent SAARC summit at Thimpu April 2010 both countries decided to keep on dialogues with trust and confidence.

‘Gujral Doctrine’ as a catalyst on the road of cooperation

India’s search for a cooperative neighbourhood and a peaceful and secure South Asia continued with a renewed emphasis when during a short period of 1996-97 Inder Kumar Gujral became the Foreign Minister and later Prime Minister of India. He advanced a principle known as ‘Gujral Doctrine’ which envisaged a new approach to resolving disputes and improving relations with neighbouring countries. It has two main elements – (a) India’s non reciprocal relations with its neighbours, (b) Look East policy. Take up entire Asia together. This initiative and push for peace in the region with a history of hostility and mistrust was probably encouraged by a decline in the fear of ‘big India’ among its neighbours in the changed international situation.

The policy prescription of India in terms of Gujral doctrine were :

a) Acknowledging its greater strength and larger size, India will be accommodating and generous towards her neighbours unilaterally to the maximum possible extent without demanding reciprocity;

b) India will react to both internal and external developments in its neighbourhood from a moral high ground’
c) India will not allow its territory to be used against the interest of any country in the region;

d) India will not interfere in the internal affairs of other countries in the area, and would expect the others to observe this principle as well;

e) India respects the territorial integrity and national sovereignty of all the states of the region,

f) India is determined to settle all its disputes through peaceful bilateral negotiations.  

Former Prime Minister, Gujaral maintained that the implementation of these principles would generate a climate of close and mutually benign cooperation in the region where the weight and size of India was regarded positively as an asset by these countries.

The components of Gujaral Doctrine were nothing new except the novelty of the principle of non-reciprocity. This principle, however, was presumably to be confined to the smaller neighbours - Bhutan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Srilanka. The non-reciprocity was also meant that solution to one bilateral problem would not be linked to concessions by the other country for India on issue that the latter considered beneficial.


Other member state’s response to the ‘Cooperation’

The formation of SAARC and its working during two more than two decades show that South Asian countries now sincerely subscribe to the idea of regional cooperation and take it mutually beneficial. Two big members of association – India and Pakistan have come out of their initial hesitation in this regard. There is tremendous potential of regional cooperation in the sphere of economic development.67

Pakistan

In beginning Pakistan determined its objectives towards SAARC by looking to the past history of the sub-continent. The Pakistani regime was afraid of that greater interaction with India might blur their political stance in the regional and global affairs – moreover greater identity with South Asia would hurt its new found image in Islamic world.68 Gradually Pakistan realized economic gain of cooperation. Apart from it ‘idea’ got strong support in the west, specially US appreciated that this cooperation would work as security arrangement in South Asia to counter Soviet moves. This consciousness developed after Soviet expansion in Afghanistan. Thus there was strong US backing and Pakistan also realized it.

In early SAARC meetings Pakistan represented in with very cautious approach and later on became somewhat flexible. India Pakistan bilateral issues – Kashmir terrorism etc. affected the operationalization of its aims and

objectives. This was General Zia’s perception that India was hurdle in SAARC’s progress. This ice melted in fourth summit held in Islamabad December 1988. This brought two PM’s together, PM of India and Pakistan since 1972. It was Indian PM’s first visit to Pak since 1964.69

SAARC’s base was to accelerate economic growth, social progress and cultural development. Being agriculture centric-state Pakistan shares trade relation with neighbours and economy is dependent upon foreign trade. Pakistan began to see this forum positively in this regard. Presently things are moving more positively.

**Bangladesh**

SAARC was concept initiated by Zia ur Rehman in 1980. The late President Zia ur Rehman the dreamer of SAAR was a dynamic leader and had faith in working with collective approach. He was encouraged by ASEAN success also.70 He discussed his idea during official visits to India, Pakistan, Nepal and Sri Lanka and put his plan forward in letters to the heads of Governments of each of these countries including Maldives and Bhutan. Despite of having differences on water, refugees and barrage issues with India and political differences with Pakistan – Bangladesh has been playing very active role in all SAARC gatherings. Credit goes to diplomatic prudence of General Zia ur Rehman who brought seven nations together. SAARC offer an excellent opportunity for building mutual confidence understanding.

**Bhutan**

Bhutan has close relations with other SAARC countries. It was a founding member of SAARC and lies been active participant in the organization’s meetings and projects. SAARC has played an important role in reducing Bhutan’s isolation and diversifying its external relationships. Bhutan maintained a neutral stance on India-Pak, India Bangladesh and Sri Lanka differences. Bhutan hosted the India mediated 1985 talks between Sri Lankan government and leaders of LTTE.\(^{71}\) The king of Bhutan and the entire public of Bhutan has been keen to strengthen base of SAARC – promotion of peace and well being in economic infra structure of the members. It is emerging as ‘eastern Geneva’ a venue for peace making effort in South Asia.

**Nepal**

Nepal was among those countries which gave positive response to Dhaka proposal. Nepal’s basic interest in South Asian Regional Cooperation has been to preserve its identity, status and independent economic development. In August 1983 the Nepalese Prime Minister reiterated that “SAARC would be based on the principle of equality, respect of sovereignty and territorial integrity, non interference and mutuality of interest.”\(^{72}\)

This quest of identity is against India and there have been strains between two countries. Nepal got Chinese support and India perceives it as threat in Himalayan ranges. India had concluded a peace treaty with Nepal in

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1950. Besides Nepal founds SAARC as in instrument to minimize India’s pre-eminence in the region.

**Sri Lanka**

Sri Lanka’s attitude towards the SAARC has been rather inconsistent. It has changed time and again according to the development taking place in the region. Though it has always been participating in regional activities it has its own perception and insisted western oriented organizations as ASEAN or SEATO.

SAARC can be of immense help to Sri Lanka in economic sphere. It can regulate the price of tea along with India and Bangladesh. It can cooperate with India in the coconut, coffee and jewel markets. Presently, after the end of LTTE and its leader Prabhakaran, there are chances to improve relations with its neighbours specially with India and this positive development would also prove as catalyst in SAARC’s smooth sailing.  

**Maldives**

Inspite of its limited resources, Maldives have taken membership of SAARC seriously and with positive attitude. It has no acrimonious attributes to other SAARC members. Very actively along with Nepal and Bhutan it helped in keeping alive the cooperation. It consistently raised the question of small state security. Collectively it and cooperative member of the forum. 

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74. Hagerly, Devint, op.cit., p. 104.
India is the biggest country among all the SAARC countries. It commands more than 70 percent of the land area, population and national income of the region. So it does not need any regional cooperation when it has the capacity to act alone independently and any move by India for regional cooperation is understandable. Being a most powerful country among the SAARC members it is expected to play an important role in South Asian cooperation. In fact, it was a widespread opinion that India should be generous towards its neighbour countries. It also understand the need of the time and played an active role in every field whether it is formation of SAARC or bringing the SAARC countries together. It tried her level best in improving its relations with all the SAARC members despite of all the mistrust and suspicion. It respects the objectives and principles of SAARC. But, it has to face many problems as far as the cooperation is concerned. Though it gave assurance to other nations of the sub continent that India will settle bilateral problems through friendly and peaceful negotiation still these problems occurs time to time between India and its neighbours. These bilateral issues are the big hurdles in the progress of SAARC. SAARC will never achieve its goal until and unless these problems and issues are not solved. Thus India has to realize her position and play a liable role in solving these bilateral issues, only then it can be called as ‘Big Brother’ in real terms. The other members of SAARC also may have two senses of responsibility tolerance and accommodation that would lead to reciprocal ties between big brother and younger brothers. And where there is unity, none can break their strength.