CHAPTER II

INDIA AND IT'S NEIGHBOURS: THE POLICY AND PROBLEMS.
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The nature and extent of India’s relations with its neighbours was largely determined by the fact of India’s larger size compared to its South Asian neighbours; India comprises 72 percent of the Indian sub-continent in area and 77 percent of the population. And not only the physical size; India’s larger military and economic strength and capabilities also constitute a critical factor in its relations with other neighbours. India has also land-boarders with Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh (and Burma too), and close maritime boarder with Sri Lanka and Maldives. India has also close historical religious, economic, ethnic and linguistic relationship with all the other states.

For one thing, it imposed on India and the other states too, friendship as a “geographical imperative”. As in the case of any other part of the world, South Asia too have been affected by the global changes around the world, during the last few years. The end of cold war the erasing of the Soviet State, its splintering into 15 nation-states, the collapse of communism in Europe; the dismantling of the Warsaw Pact

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1 This phrase was used by President Ershad of Bangladesh in a Newsweek (New York) Interview on December 7, 1986 in which he had said friendship with India was a “geographical imperative”.

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Organisation, the further economic and political integration of the European Union, the emergence of the North American Free Trade Area; the birth of the concept of the Asia Pacific Economic Community; the re-unification of Germany, the incurring of Japan towards all facets of acquiring world-power status; the economic resurgence and ideological calming of China after the Tienanmen holocaust; the gathering momentum of the Middle East peace process; have all combined to bring to its close one era in world history, facilitating due birth of a new era which is taking sometime before it can define itself with a greater clarity.

The close, complex and dovetailing with each other in the South Asian sub-continent naturally posed a many sided, constant, interaction between India and the other neighbours. For one thing, it imposed on India and the other states too, friendship as a "geographical imperative". In a sense, the neighbours' wavering attitude towards the "geographical imperative" is understandable. It is not always possible for them to make a distinction between the fact of India's size and strengthen on the one hand and India's intentions (and lack of them) to make its weight felt on these neighbours. Living in such close geopolitical nexus, the effect of each other's politics, action, even if unintended was unavoidable. This was also, and reciprocally, true of the impact of developments in the neighbouring countries of India - although not always are readily, acknowledge by the
former. For example, the infringement of human rights (and on influx of refugees into India), the establishment of a non- or undemocratic political system, the likelihood of offering of military facilities to external powers, and so on by the smaller neighbours - all these have had considerable impact on India’s policies and attitude.

On its part India has tried to maintain cordial and close relations with these countries ever since independence. But India has found formidable difficulties in dealing, with these neighbouring countries and often they have been adopted hostile posture towards India, presumably at the instigation of certain foreign powers. Another factor which has greatly hampered development of cordial relations with neighbour countries has been the size, strength and population of India which has given rise to suspicions in the minds of other countries. In short India’s efforts to develop friendly relations with her neighbours were greatly thwarted by internal and external pressure. India has insisted on solving all its problems with its neighbours through bilateral negotiations and not by internationalising them outside the region.

It is true that India did not show the same "generosity" towards its neighbours all the time on setting all the bilateral issues. India too had its national interest - no more, no less than those of its neighbours. It must be

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2 M.S. Rajan, *Recent Essays on India’s Foreign Policy* (Delhi: Kalinga Publications), 1997, pp. 131-149
noted that the nature of neighbours’ attitude towards India played a significant role in shaping India’s stand on these bilateral issues.

India’s policy towards its neighbours was also dictated by India’s considerations for stability, peace and order among the neighbours. Any disturbances among the latter (especially having security implications) would tend to distract Indian attention from its overwhelming preoccupation with internal political and economic progress.

Respect for the “sovereign equality” of all nations including close neighbours is a major determinant of India’s foreign policy. Said Indira Gandhi in a speech at Kathmandu early in 1973: “The nations of our region can prosper only by treating one another as sovereign equals and by making possible efforts to convert distrust into trust.” She reiterated on the occasion that “friendship does not mean a total identity of approach, friendship is a basic framework of regard, based on equality and trust, in which there is sympathy for each other’s difficulties and which enables difference, should they rise, to be settled through discussion and negotiation.”

Speaking in another occasion in Male (Maldives) Indira Gandhi observed: “we in India do not believe in big and small. We accept the

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3 Foreign Affairs Record (FAR), (New Delhi : Ministry of External Affairs, Vol.9, 1972), p.60.
sovereignty of independent nations, and if we want to strengthen ourselves, it is not to make our power felt, but merely to enable us to stand on our own feet and to look after our own people.”\(^4\) Likewise Vajpayee once told Pakistan’s Agha Shahi - “While India happens to be a big country its approach is not of [a] big brother”.\(^5\)

However, with the assumption of power by the United Front Government in June 1996 a fresh bid was made to improve relations with the neighbouring countries and remove the existing misgivings about India. For this purpose the new government put forth a new principle, which has come to be popularly designated as ‘Gujral Doctrine’.

Since I.K. Gujral became the Foreign Minister under Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda for ten months, and then became Prime Minister himself, India has improved its relations with all the south Asian countries and is on the verge of taking a major turn in bilateral and multilateral ties in the region. Although, progress is still predicted by ifs and buts especially with regard to the most contentious issue of Kashmir and status inconsistency between India and Pakistan, the Gujral Doctrine cannot be viewed merely as a declaratory policy.\(^6\) The traditional fear of “India’s big bullying tactics” has declined in someways in the present atmosphere

\(^4\) Ibid., Vol.21 (1975), pp.8-9.
\(^6\) The Hindu, 27 April, 1998.
generated by the Gujral Doctrine. On a larger scale, the present foreign policy moves notwithstanding differences of perceptions, could be a foundation stone on which India less bothered by neighbour, could aspire its due, to emerge at a major power in the early 21st century.

Based on Prime Minister I.K. Gujral the doctrine seems to contain the following:

(a) Acknowledging its great strength and large 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 high moral ground. (c) India will not allow its territory to be used against the interest of any country of the region (d) India will not interfere in the internal affairs of other countries in the area, and would expect others to observe this principle as well. (e) India respects the territorial and national sovereignty of all the states of the region. (f) India is determined to settle all its disputes through peaceful bilateral negotiations.

Besides this, the doctrine stresses the free flow of information and people-to-people contacts among the South Asian neighbours. Mr. Gujral feels that the making of foreign policy decisions should not be confined to the Ministry of External Affairs, rather, there should be substantive inputs and contributions from academics, intellectuals, journalists and others. He
hopes that the good will generated will create a positive atmosphere and ultimately help to reduce tensions in the sub-continent. In his optimistic predictions he says: "if these principles of inter state relations are assiduously followed by other countries of the region as well, our relationship can be recasted in a friendly mould. This would provide the appropriate environment to useful exploit otherwise wasted resources, and to release the dormant and latent energies of the people of South Asia for their economic and social betterment."

A look at the contents of the idea advocated by Mr. Gujral suggests that a certain "asymmetry" in this country’s relations with its smaller neighbours is inevitable. That India should not only be fair and just, but something more generous. With an eye on the critics, Gujral clarifies, "We do not demand réciprocité. I cannot demand reciprocity from those I do not consider as being as lucky as India”.

Under the Gujral Doctrine India has made unilateral concessions to the neighbouring countries like Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal etc. with regard to trade and travel, without expecting any reciprocity. The Government has also tried to promote free trade among the member countries of SAARC and emphasised the need of converting SAARC into an economic union at the earliest. Another notable feature of the Gujral doctrine has been avoidance of outside intervention in the region. Thus
India turned down the offers of mediation made by USA, Britain and Iran in the Kashmir dispute.

The Gujral doctrine still in the formative stage though, promises to herald a new era of durable peace in South Asia, a region frequently marked by hostility and misperception. India’s policy towards the neighbours has been based upon friendliness, equality, reciprocity and mutuality to the extent that is possible in the relations between the states so very different in geopolitical and capabilities terms.7

Despite India’s comparatively large and strong defence forces they had no relevance to India’s security relations with its neighbours, excepting Pakistan (and China outside the Indian sub-continent). India has consistently insisted on political solutions to all disputes with its neighbours. It is a noteworthy point, that India has not been given by its neighbours adequate credit for the repeated proclaimed percept and example that India has firmly stood by its neighbours’ sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. India has consistently been fair, if not generous, is not coveting the neighbour’s territory, even conquered in war.

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7 See also Y.B. Chavan’s reiteration of this policy. Ibid., Vol.21 (1975), p.139 and in another speech, Ibid., Vol.22 (1976), p.38.
The subject of Southern Asian Security environment cannot be divorced from the larger question of peace, development and security in the whole Asia-Pacific region, comprising communities in which live more than half of the mankind.\textsuperscript{6} India has always had a vital interest in the independence and sovereignty of its neighbour - both for their sake and its own security, stability and well being anything adversely affecting their status was likely to affect India too.

India is accused by some in the South Asian countries of acting as the hegemon attempting to dominate the smaller neighbours. A close scrutiny of India's policies towards its South Asian neighbours does not bear out of the allegation. There have been problems and disputes between India and other South Asian countries and many have been resolved amicably, but some others have proved intractable and they continue to bedevil the bilateral relations between India and other countries. A look at some of these problems will point to the complexity of these problems, rather than any sinister design on the part of India.

\textbf{Indo-Pak Relations}

Geographically, historically, culturally as well as economically no other two countries of the world have so much in common as India and Pakistan: Pakistan is India's closest but the most difficult neighbour. In fact

the two constituted a single economic and political entity for many centuries before 1947 when Pakistan was born. Since 1947 the relations between the two countries have been full of tensions, conflict and wars.

The reasons for this state of permanent hostility could be divided into three broad categories. The first arose out of the pre-partition controversies between the Indian National Congress and the All India Muslim League, the two nation theory and the demand for Pakistan. The rancour and acrimony left by that era has now been passed to the mindset of the leaders of the two countries and colours their vision while looking at one another. The passage of time has failed to wipe out the scare left by that phase of our sub-continent’s history. The second category of reasons arose out of the way the partition of the subcontinent had evolved into one integrated economic and political unit. The division of such a country on an arbitrary basis could not have been accomplished without leaving imbalances and inequalities and grounds for complaints. The third categories of causes as are related to the original two and are their direct outcome. They led to conflicts and three wars.

The main factors which have contributed to the strained relations between the two countries are dispute over properties, borders, distribution of river waters, the question of Kashmir etc. With the
exception of Kashmir, the two countries have been able to resolve the various issues and arrive at a workable agreement through negotiations.

The most important issue which has continued to strain the relations between the two countries throughout the years is the Kashmir issue. Pakistan’s case over Kashmir is much more of an ideological than a territorial disputes. Pakistan claims that since India was partitions on a communal basis, Kashmir being a Muslim majority state, should have gone to it. The Indian case has been that the people of Kashmir had not supported the Pakistan movement and had willingly linked their fate with a secular democratic India, which had been a popular decision. Pakistan’s current clamour on Kashmir is an attempt to salvage the two-nation theory which had been buried in East Pakistan after it succeeded in forming the independent state of Bangladesh.

Over the last four decades, there has been a series of negotiations between the two countries over the Kashmir issue, but without success. India had a rare opportunity at Simla in 1972 when Pakistan had come to the negotiating table after the defeat and surrender of its armies in East Pakistan. India could have imposed a permanent solution to the Kashmir problem for ever. But India let the opportunity go.


Pakistan has been arguing that Kashmir is the main hindrance to a solution to all other India-Pakistan problems. All the successive rulers of Pakistan have been claiming that once the Kashmir issue is resolved peace and friendship between the two neighbours would be established. Using this plea Pakistani rulers have frozen all economic, social and political relations with India. Many minor issues such as travel and transit, cultural relations, exchange of books, newspaper, etc., are almost blocked.

Rarely have political relations between the two South Asian neighbours been as bad as they were through 1994. Political hostility, intransigence, a virtual shut-out of any dialogue and repeated attempts to internationalise the Kashmir issue characterised bilateral relations in 1994. In a game of political upmanship, both sides appear to be wanting to score propaganda points with the international audience, rather than solve their outstanding problems through patient dialogue.

The return of power of Benazir Bhutto, in late 1993, portended both hope and despair for the general state of Indo-Pak relations. There was hope because it was generally felt that, while Benazir would be expressed to return to rhetoric on Kashmir, she would continue to keep channel of communication open with New Delhi. At the same time, her assumption to power revealed some despair, because like the last time around, she would
have to compromise with the Establishment over the Kashmir issue, not allowing her flexibility in opening a serious dialogue with India.

From the very start, however, it seemed explicit that Benazir had decided to have her strategy on Kashmir with the general line that the Establishment had been taking. In keeping with the hard-line stance of putting the resolution of Kashmir before normalising relations with New Delhi, Benazir adopted a very high profile internationally. In fact, through the years, she has been travelling outside Pakistan for at least 10 days every month or so. Whether it was visiting Bosnia in the company of Tansu Ciller, the Turkish Prime Minister or attending the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, on speaking to the captains of world industry in Devos, Switzerland, the common thread in her strategy was Kashmir. Very early on in her second term, she had made her intentions on internationalising Kashmir clear, by making a last minute move at the 48th session of the UN General Assembly in November 1993, to inscribe Kashmir on the human rights agenda. The move did no pay off, but it was generally regarded as an attempt to test the waters in the international lake.

Pakistan has been directly involved in supporting the insurgency in Kashmir. The involvement of Pakistan in proxy war against India is a major obstacle in the Indo-Pak relations. Of course, Pakistan’s task has been
made easier by our own mistakes in Kashmir. Over the years, New Delhi has been unable to appreciate the growing depth of the alienation of the people of the state, because of corruption and heavy handed policies of the successive regimes in Srinagar.

The insurgency is the result of rapid political mobilisation and institutional decay. The growth of literacy, media exposure, and telecommunications produced a new generation of politically conscious and assertive Kashmiris. Unfortunately, New Delhi, perennially fearful of the loss of centralized power, misread Kashmir demands for greater autonomy and federalism as incipient secessionism and systematically tampered with the democratic process in the state. With all avenues of legitimate political dissent effectively blocked this politically assertive generation of Kashmiris turned to violence.11

What is more, Pakistan is violating the Simla Agreement of 1972, under which it agreed to settle all differences with India, including a final settlement of Kashmir, peacefully, bilaterally and without outside intervention. It also agreed to refrain from using force on the threat of force to alter the Line of Actual Control in Kashmir agree upon at that time. Pakistan continues to harp on the UN Security Council resolutions on Kashmir and demands a plebiscite (which was provided for under Part III of

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the main UN resolution) without fulfilling Part II; which requires the removal of all regular and irregular Pakistani troops from the territory of Kashmir occupied by Pakistan (POK).

Kashmir is now routine passage of Kashmir militants across the LOC. Labeled anti-national elements by the Indians and widely regarded in India as no more than terrorist, the militants have long found refuge, arms and other forms of support on the Pakistani side of the LOC. The ranks of Kashmir's homegrown militants are being augmented, moreover, by fighters from Afghanistan, Pakistan, and other Muslim countries rallying to the cry of jihad in Kashmir. Citing intelligence estimates, India's premier newsmagazine, India Today, reported in September 1995 that at least 1,600 foreign Islamic militant had crossed the border into Kashmir during the summer of 1995 to fight on the side of the Kashmiri Muslim insurgents.

The Kashmir issue was dynamically linked to developments in Pakistan's domestic crisis. The ruling parties in Pakistan always used Kashmir problem as the best tactics to divert attention of their people, in the failure of their governance.

In improvement in relations between the two countries has been made more difficult by weak governments, a rapid change in Prime Ministers, domestic political polarisation and the growth of fundamentalism
and the inability to sustain economic development strategies because of the high costs of military expenditure.

Moreover, both governments have suffered from a weak decision-making political process in the realm of foreign policy, which has been constantly held hostage by political and religious extremists who have everything to gain from a continuation of tensions.

Pakistan appears to be on the horns of a dilemma in coming to grips with aspects of realpolitik pervading the post-Cold-War era of international relations and the new alignments which the phenomenon is bring in its trail. When one looks back into half-a-century of India-Pakistan relations there are both feeling of pessimism and optimism for the future. The former is the result of years of confrontation and the latter reflects the changing priorities and the imperative of co-operation in a changing world. The time has come to take stock of the present trends and future direction in India-Pakistan relations.

In February 1997 the new Prime Minister of Pakistan (Nawaz Sharif) expressed his desire to improve relations with India. India reciprocated promptly. As a result the Foreign Secretaries of two countries held a meeting in March 1997. At this meeting India emphasised the need of normalisation of economic relations, while Pakistan insisted on political normalisation and even tried to rope in the problem of Kashmir. As a
consequence nothing concrete emerged. The only positive outcome of talk was that the two countries agreed to continue the dialogue at Islamabad. India took a positive step to improve relations with Pakistan by announcing certain unilateral concessions like easing of visa restriction of Pakistani nationals; waiving of visa fee for senior Pakistan citizens; increase in the number of religious Shrines which could be visited by Pakistani pilgrims in India. The two countries also agreed to expand cultural contacts by encouraging cultural groups, students, journalists etc. to visit each other’s countries.

The relationship between the two countries could not be revolve around what Pakistan calls the “core” issue of Kashmir. This was not a “very helpful way” of approaching a relationship spelling out India’s approach, the sources stated that when dealing with difficult and simple issues the easy ones were taken first. This way not to say that difficult issues would not be on the agenda.

There is, therefore, a case for a new approach and for evolving a strategy for engagement, with the objective of sorting out such problems as admits of solutions in the first instance. Now both the countries are nuclear powers, it is incumbent on them to invest their conduct with responsibility and maturity. The Hindu may have accepted the bilateral

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\(^{12}\) The Hindu, 5 October, 1998.
dialogue but it continues to work for a third party role. Unless this quality is given up, it will be difficult to optimistic about the future.

India and Nepal

India-Nepal relations have been formed and shaped by their geographical continuity and socio-cultural identities which has influenced their historical part. The historical linkages emanating from the racial, religious and linguistic affinities were possible because of the 1,750 km-long open border which made communication earlier and possible. The crossing of border by the people has not only influenced each others history, culture and tradition but also had an impact on the political, economic and strategic relations between the two countries.

The geo-strategic location of Nepal between India and China has also shaped its relations with its neighbour. The open border between India and Nepal had created ideological and political linkages between the two countries much to the chagrin of the monarch. For instance, the Nepali National Congress, a protagonist of democracy and a socialist society, had links with the Indian National Congress even before the independence of India.

In the context of Nepal, a significant development was the restoration of parliamentary democracy in the beginning of 1990’s. To a considerable extent the change in the domestic politics of Nepal was
encouraged by changes taking place at the global as well as regional levels. The democratisation of the Nepalese politics has, indeed, given a new shape and direction to the political dynamics of the country. It has great significance for Indo-Nepalese relations which had reached the stage of a crisis just before that Nepal’s policy of playing one neighbourhood against another and an attitude of unwarranted assertion and antagonism with India came to an end with the collapse of the Panchayat regime. These developments in the domestic politics of Nepal also encouraged India to recast its diplomatic style and rearrange the priorities of its policy towards Nepal.

Nepal’s geographical situation, particularly its landlocked position, has resulted in her extensive economic relationship with India. Not only that Nepal is dependent on India for transit facilities for her trade with overseas countries but it also imports most of the essential commodities from India. India’s economic policies and programmes have a direct bearing for the Nepalese economy.

The multi-party democracy in Nepal infused new hopes of normalising relations between the two countries who had become aware of the post-cold war world order where emphasis war laid on economic

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The first requirement to forge closer ties was by normalising trade relations which had nose-dived following the expiry of the treaty of trade and transit in 1989 and the subsequent closure of the boarder except for two points at Raxaul and Jogbani.

During K.P. Bhattorai’s visit to India in 1989, the trade relations with India resumed. The trade embargo was removed and the bilateral relations were restored to the situation prevailing on April 1, 1987.

Emphasis was given on developing economic relations between the two countries with areas identified for joint cooperation. The Joint Communique signed on the occasion declared that the countries would cooperate on “Industrial and human resource development, for harnessing of waters of the common rivers, for the benefit of two peoples and for the protection and management of the environment.”

India agreed to improve and simplify the rules for export of goods from Nepal during Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao’s visit to Nepal in October 1992. Nepal’s private vehicles were allowed to move from its border to Calcutta and Haldia ports and back provided the vehicles were authorised by the Nepal Transit and Warehousing Company Ltd or Nepal

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15 Refer the Joint Communique signed during Prime Minister K. P. Bhattarai’s visit to India from July 8 to 10, in Rising Nepal, June 11, 1990.
Transport Corporation. Movement of vehicles from Nepal to Nepal via Indian territory was allowed without any bond of cash deposit. Nepal was allowed to import goods from India in convertible currency.\(^{16}\)

Taking the discussion further on cooperation in harnessing of water resources, both the sides agreed on a time-frame for investigations, preparation of project reports on Karnali, Pancheswar, Sapta-Kosi, Budhi Gandaki kamala and Bagmati projects.

In November 1994 with the formation of the first Communist Government in Nepal doubts were expressed in certain quarters that the relation between two countries would suffer a setback on account of the stand of the Communist Party of Nepal on the 1950 Treaty of Peace and Friendship. But these doubts proved ill founded. In a press conference Prime Minister Man Mohan Adhikari said, “I would like to review all aspects of relations as well as changes in the trade and transit agreements with India. This is in view of the changes taking place in international relations as well as South Asia.” He assured India that the Nepalese territory would not be used for anti-India activities. To keep a vigil on the cross-border movement, a technical committee was set up to discuss the issues.

\(^{16}\) Refer the Join Communiqué signed during the Indian Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao’s visit to Nepal, by the Foreign Secretary of India, J.N. Dixit and Narendra Bikram Shahi, Foreign Secretary of Nepal, His Majesty’s Government of Nepal, October 21, 1992, Kathmandu.
In February 1996 the Prime Minister of Nepal (Sher Bahadur Deuba) paid a visit to India and signed a treaty on the Integrated Development of the Mahakali Basin which included construction of the Panchewshwar Power Project. The two countries agreed to share water and electricity of other projects on Mahakali river. Further, under the treaty India agreed to give to Nepal an additional 50 million units of power and an additional 150 cusecs of water from Tanakpur Project. Another agreement was signed on the construction of 22 bridges on the Kohalpur-Mahakali sector of the east-west highway.

There has been an element of "mutual benefit" and "non-reciprocity" in India’s relations with Nepal as envisaged in the Mahakali Treaty. India and Nepal relations hitherto defined in terms of geo-politics had to accord primacy to economic co-operation in the light of changing global economic environment. The main thrust of the economic cooperation has been on four areas: trade and transit relations, sharing of water resources, India aided projects and joint ventures.

One of the important issue which needed special attention of the two countries was the use of the open borders by subversive elements against Indian security interests. The border between India and Nepal is open and the flow of people is allowed without any restriction. However, it is alleged that citizens of other countries also enter Nepal to avail the
opportunities under the guise of Indians. Since the border is open it becomes difficult to check the flow of movement of population and to ascertain whether they are from India or some other South Asian country.

The open border has been misused by the criminals, smugglers and terrorists who take refuge in Nepal after committing crimes in India or vice-versa. Arms and drugs have also been moving from Nepal to India. The open border is used by the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) of Pakistan to facilitate movement of the Kashmiri terrorists to carry out anti-Indian activities. The India and Nepal cannot ignore the geo-political realities. They should cautious of the emerging threat of trans-border movement of criminals and subversive elements.

India-Nepal relations have been responding to the changes taking place in the international arena in the post-Cold War era. The simultaneous political changes taking place in both the countries are also instrumental in shaping their relations. The governments in India have realised the basic thrust in the changing global environment where it has to develop relations with its neighbours based on trust and confidence and non-reciprocity which is an essential element in defining relations between asymmetrical nations. The change in the India policy from the Indira Doctrine to the Gujral Doctrine has been positively received by Nepal which has also been making changes in its foreign policy postulates.
India and Bangladesh

India’s relations with Bangladesh have been quite intimate. In fact, India played a leading role in the creation of the state of Bangladesh. It rendered full support to the Mukti Bahini, the liberation army of East Bengal; in its fight against the oppressive rule of the Pakistan rulers and contributed towards the emergence of independent Bangladesh. India was also one of the first countries to accord recognition to the new state, and established diplomatic and trade relations with it.

In the social, cultural and economic fields the two countries tried to strengthen their bonds and concluded a number of agreements. Similarly in the field of science and technology the two countries agreed to cooperate. The two countries also amicably settled certain border issues. This era of cordial relations between the two countries came to an end with the overthrow of Seikh Mujibar Rahaman. Though the subsequent leaders indicated their desire to develop friendly relations with India but certain differences marred these cordial relations.

The main issue which contributed to new tensions in relations between India and Bangladesh, include, clashes over borders, problem of the sharing of the waters of the Ganga, dispute over Moore Island, plight of minorities in Bangladesh and flow of migrants across border.¹⁷ Certain

border incidents continued to mar the relations between the two countries in Garo Hill area.

The highly porous international border is open to smuggling. It has been estimated that smuggling from India into Bangladesh amounts to a drain of 300 million dollars annually, further widening adverse trade gap. As far India, its major concerns are the easy movement of migrants from Bangladesh and the smuggling of arms and drugs and the toing and froing of dissident armed groups. This not only leads to frequent clashes on the border but also contributes to instability in the border region of eastern India and in the whole of country. The presence of Chakma refugees from Bangladesh also caused tension in their relations.

India’s relations with Bangladesh showed an improvement after the United Front Government initiated a policy of unilateralism and extended several trade and other concession to Bangladesh. In December 1996 the Prime Ministers of two countries signed a 30 year water sharing treaty to resolve their long standing dispute over the matter. The treaty contained provision for review every five years on earlier.

The two countries also agreed to co-operate in dealing with problem of insurgency and militancy. They pledged not to permit their territory to be used against each other, yet another which contributed to improve of relations between India and Bangladesh was conclusion of an agreement
by the Bangladesh government and the Chakma refugees leaders which paved the way for the return of Chakma refugees to Bangladesh. This is likely to reduce social and political tension in the north-eastern states of India, specially Tripura. This would also provide some financial relief to India by reducing the burden on the maintenance of the refugees in India.

By and large the two countries showed spirit of complete accommodation towards each other and their relations continued to be peaceful and cordial.

India and Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka is located off the coast of South East India. The country has very close cultural links with India. In the political sphere India and Sri Lanka have maintained very cordial relations from the beginning. Two countries have also maintained close cooperation in the economic field. Both are members of the non-aligned movement and share identical views on most of the international problems. The only irritant in the relations between India and Sri Lanka is the problem of the people of Indian origin in Sri Lanka. This problem has existed right from the time Sri Lanka gained independence in 1949.

India-Sri Lanka relations have also been influenced by the legacy of colonial rule. The two countries have been able to resolve, through patient negotiations, the complex case of the stateless Indians who had gone to
Sri Lanka during British rule to work in the tea gardens of that country. The ongoing Tamil insurgence of Eelam (freedom) had also at one time threatened to jeopardise relations between the two countries. Sri Lankans had some reason to suspect Indian intentions, because Tamil insurgent groups had been receiving shelter and support in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu, which has been ruled by the Tamil regional parties, the DMK or AIADMAK. At one time, India also attempted to bring about some agreement between the Sri Lanka Government and the Tamil insurgent group, LTTE led by Prabhakaran. The Indian policy has been to support the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Sri Lanka and that had been the objective of the India-Sri Lanka Accord and the Indian Peace Keeping Force.\textsuperscript{18}

The crippling ethnic conflict between the Sinhalese majority and the Tamil minority in the island state had not only brought the Indian factor to the forefront but also put intolerable strains on the carefully nurtured harmonious framework of bilateral relations between the two countries. Sri Lanka’s perception of the overbearing image of a huge and powerful India underscores its deeply felt compulsion for the assertion of its national security.

In January 1991 the two countries reached on agreement that the final solution to the vexed ethnic problem of Sri Lanka could be solved only through political settlement. The two countries also agreed to upgrade the existing joint trade committees. Sri Lanka on its part agreed to accept 200,000 Sri Lanka refugees camping in Tamil Nadu. On its part India assured Sri Lanka that she would not be party to any political disintegration of Sri Lanka and would not allow its territory to be used as base for terrorist activities against the Island Republic. This stand of India greatly contributed to earning of tension between two countries.

The visit of President Chandrika Kumaratunga of Sri Lanka to India in 1995, helped in re-establishing friendly and mutually beneficial ties between the two countries. During her visit to India she proposed a free trade and investment agreement to boost the economic co-operation between the tow countries. Both countries continued the dialogue on problems faced by the fishermen of the two countries. It was, agreed that these problems should be addressed in a spirit of compassion and understanding.

India and Bhutan

India has always been a dominant and influential power in the politics of South Asia because of its central position in the sub-continent. Indo-Bhutan relations have always been exceptionally good. Soon after
independence, India concluded a Treaty of Friendship with Bhutan in 1949 where by the latter agreed to be guided in its foreign relations by New Delhi. Bhutan came closer to India after the suppression of Tibetan Revolt by China in 1959 and Sino-India conflict of 1962.

In the economic sector India’s relations with Bhutan have taken from the very beginning the donor-recipient shape. Being the donor country India has got the opportunity of influencing the behaviour of Bhutan in her favour. Bhutan occupies an important position in the security framework of India. But what is a matter of concern for India is Bhutan’s tendency to by pass India by increasing dependence more and more on extra-regional powers such as China and the United States. China also has some definite interests in the Himalayan Kingdoms of Bhutan and Nepal. It has established direct links with Bhutan on the basis of sovereign equality with a view to settle border dispute. In this process China rejects India’s claim to special relations with Bhutan and Nepal. This undoubtedly causes concern for India’s security and integrity.

India and Myanmar (Burma)

Burma form the very beginning tried to maintain friendly relations with India as well as China. Burma tried to keep off from the super power blocs and pursued policy of non-alignment and cooperate with India on

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various issues. However, the relations between the two could not develop along friendly lines and were greatly strained on account of the maltreatment of India’s settled in Burma. There was also differences between the two regarding the delimitation of the maritime boundary in the Bay of Bengal. However, as a result of negotiations an agreement was reached between the two countries in December 1986. According to the agreement the maritime boundary in the Bay of Bengal lies in the vicinity of the Andaman Sea to through the Coco Channel. The agreement was duly ratified by the two countries and on 13 September, 1987 they exchanged Instruments of Ratification of the Indo-Burma Agreement. Relations between India and Burma remained quite Cold during the next years. The military junta openly accused India of adding the funding Daw Aung San Suu Kyi’s movement for restoration of democracy.

The relations between the two countries suffered a set back follow conferment of Nehru Award on Aung San Suu Kyi in May 1995. However, in subsequent month India tried to repair relations with Burma. In March 1996, India’s Minister of External Affairs (Pranab Mukherjee) announced that India was committed to a policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of another country and that India considered the pro-democracy

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movement in Myanmar an internal affairs. India tried to avoid policy of confrontation towards Myanmar on account of security considerations.

However, India had maintained a stable, cooperative relationship with Myanmar. Continuous dialogue was maintained with the Government of Myanmar in areas of vital interest. Historic Cultural links were strengthened through the visit of the Deputy Minister for Religious Affairs of Myanmar to India and his participation in the foundation-laying ceremony of the Grand Vipasana Pagoda on 26 October 1997 at Mumbai.

India has a larger number of problems with its neighbours; some of which have been referred to earlier. With regard to Pakistan, India’s bilateral problems included those arising out of the partition, on territorial adjustments, division of immovable properties, sharing of waters of common rivers and so on. In the case of other neighbours, there have been problems of citizenship rights to emigrants (with Sri Lanka), territorial adjustments and demarcation of boundaries (with Bangladesh and Sri Lanka), Sharing of Ganga Water (with Bangladesh), trade and transit (with Nepal) and fencing of borders to prevent illegal immigration (with Bangladesh).

In recent years, India has insisted on political solution through bilateral negotiations on the basis of equality and mutually benefit i.e, without needlessly complicating them by internationalizing in a multilateral
forum, or inviting third party intervention. India not only tried to maintain cordial relations with its neighbour, but also their development. Besides economic contribution, India embarked on various infrastructure development activities covering modernisation of administrative machinery, and undertook road projects and general development schemes for education, health, agriculture, industry, forest, wildlife and power generation.

One must remember that following the end of the cold war the strategic relations between India and its neighbouring countries as well as extra-regional powers have changed to a large extent. What is needed on the part of India is to give a new look to its policy towards neighbours.