Indian Foreign Policy prior to the Establishment of SAARC

Shaping of India’s foreign policy began much earlier than 15th August 1947. India prior to 15th August 1947 was a British Colony and therefore at that time India’s foreign policy was treated a policy of British subjects and as such it could not influence world politics. On 7th September 1946 Jawaharlal Nehru made a statement for India’s foreign policy addressed to the nation as well as to the world as Prime Minister of Home Rule Government and clarified India’s state of affairs besides giving hint about future regional cooperation in South Asia and South East Asia. Hints related to India’s foreign policy can be seen in the following statement of Jawaharlal Nehru “We shall take full part in international conferences as a free nation with our own policy and not merely as a satellite of another nation ... to develop close and direct contracts with other nations and to co-operate with them in the furtherance of world peace and freedom... to keep away from the power politics of groups.

We are of the Asia and the peoples of Asia are nearer and closer to us than others... Those contacts are being renewed and the future is bound to see a closer union between India and South-East Asia on the one side and Afghanistan, Iran and the Arab world on the other”.1

South Asia was and is treated as a most important region by the Indian foreign ministry. South Asian region has a distinctive and unmistakable identity and as such the states in this region are subject matter of India’s foreign policy as well.

as its internal policy. Since historical period Indian civilization absorbed all the invading civilizations and therefore it has become a "Master Civilization" and in turn India along with its civilization has acquired the status of Big Brother in this region. This 'big brother's ' role was one of the feature of India's Foreign Policy towards her immediate neighbors prior to the establishment of SAARC.

Since 2nd Sep. 1946 Interim Government led by Jawaharlal Nehru applied the policy of non-alignment in relationship with the community of states and therefore India did not enter into treaty with either Communist Bloc or Non-Communist Bloc. This policy of Non-Alignment was applied energetically after India's independence and India established Non-Aligned Bloc as an international organisation of "Third-World". This experience enriched India in forming various international organisations which ultimately led in successful establishment of SAARC.

i) Foreign Policy and the Indian Constitution:

India's participation in world politics started along with the Imperial Government in 1914. The Imperial Government had committed the entire empire to war in 1914 without any formal consultation with the dominions of India, nor was any such prior discussion regarded as necessary by the Government of the Empire. During the war, which demonstrated the need and the reality of close collaboration and common loyalty among the component parts of the empire, the steps were taken to establish formal political consultation between the Imperial Government and the dominions on matters of defence and foreign affairs. The Imperial War Cabinet provided the forum for
the acknowledgement that the dominions and India should have an important influence in the foreign relations of the empire.¹

In 1915 the Indian Legislative Council and Governor General Hardinge urged Britain to invite India to the next meeting of the major governments of the empire, from which India had been excluded by a resolution of 1907. Lloyd George’s Government welcomed the request. Indian representatives attended the 1917 war conference and were assured a place in the Imperial Cabinet whenever it met. Dominion delegates to the conference, some of whom were expressing for the first time their governments claims to autonomy within the empire, India, whose people were of a different race but whose government was and would predictably remain within the imperial system. India’s new status in the empire made almost automatic the sending of a separate delegation of India to the Paris peace conference and its charter membership in the League of Nations. In 1920 a High Commissioner for India in London was appointed.² The war-time and post-war emergence of India into the international arena was thus premised on its association with the British empire. India lacked symbol of true sovereignty, but in a practical sense on certain subjects, comparable to the “transferred subjects” of the India Constitution, the authority had been delegated to its representatives to promote interests in International affairs.³

In the Draft Declaration of Crips Mission 1942 it is clearly mentioned that British Government will not impose any restriction on the power of the Indian Union to decide in future its relationship to other member states of the British Commonwealth.⁴ Then in the King’s speech at the opening of the new Parliament (1945)

¹ Heimsath C.R. & M. Surjit: A Diplomatic History of Modern India, P.P. 5
² Ibid, P.P. 5
³ Ibid, P.P. 6-7
⁴ Mahajan V.D.: Constitutional History of India, P.P. 178
contained this passage: “In accordance with the promises already made to my Indian people, my government will do their utmost to promote in conjunction with leaders of Indian opinion early realization of full self-government in India.” Lord Wavel invited Nehru, the President of the Congress, to form the Interim Government. The government formed by Nehru took office on Sept. 2, 1946. Elections to the constituent Assembly took place in July, 1946 and the Constituent Assembly met for the first time in New Delhi on Dec. 9, 1946. Dr. Rajendra Prasad was elected its permanent President on Dec. 11, 1946. On December 13, 1946 Nehru moved the “Objectives Resolution”. This resolution was passed on January 22, 1947. What will be foreign policy of India was theoretically given in it.

On 29th Aug. 1947, a Drafting Committee of 7 Members was set up with Dr. B.R. Ambedkar as Chairman. Other important members of the Committee were K.M. Munshi, T.T. Krishnamachari, Gopalswami Ayyangar and Alladi Krishnaswami Iyer. The draft on which the work of the Drafting Committee was based was prepared by Sir. B.N. Rao. The final draft was prepared by S.N. Mukherji.

The Draft Constitution was published in Jan. 1948. The people of India, were given 8 months to discuss the Draft Constitution and make their suggestions. It was on 4th November, 1948, that the general discussion on the Draft Constitution started in the Constituent Assembly and the same continued till 9th November, 1948. Between 15 November 1948 and 17th Oct. 1949 the draft was thoroughly discussed. While talking of Asia, Nehru reminded the Constituent Assembly in 1949, remember that India, not because of any ambition of hers, but because of history and because of so many other things inevitably has to play a very important part in Asia, and not only that

1. Op-Cit. P.P. 197
2. Ibid P.P. 207
3. Ibid., P.P. 230
India becomes a kind of a meeting ground for various trends and forces and a meeting ground between what may be roughly called the East and the West. As many as 7,635 amendments were proposed and 2,473 amendments were actually discussed by the Constituent Assembly. The draft was given the third reading from 14th November to 26th November. The new constitution of India was adopted on 26th Nov. 1949 and the same was signed by Dr. Rajendra Prasad as the President of the constituent Assembly. The Constitution came into force on 26th January, 1950.

Article 51, the Indian Constitution is devoted to the India's Foreign Policy. The title of Article 51 is Promotion of International peace and security. It is clearly mentioned in it that the state shall endeavor of:

a) Promote international peace and security;
b) Maintain just and honourable relation between nations;
c) Foster respect for international law and treaty obligations in the dealings of organized peoples with one another; and
d) Encourage settlement of international disputes by arbitration.

This Article 51 of the Indian Constitution is guiding force for the implementation of the foreign policy.

ii) Applications of the Indian Foreign Policy:

Formation of Interim government on 2nd September 1946 is a first day of application of the Indian Foreign Policy in the community of Nations. At this time

1. Op.-Cit, P.P. 231
2. Dutt V.P. : India's Foreign Policy, P.P. 3
there were only seven Indian diplomats serving abroad.¹ British Government neglected diplomatic services and as such it became essential for Interim Government to establish Indian foreign Service. To establish Indian Foreign Ministry Department of Common Wealth relations and Foreign Departments were merged in each other after 15 August 1947. Foreign Ministry was given final shape in March 1949 and thereafter all the responsibility of implementation of Indian foreign policy was bestowed upon it and hereafter Indian foreign policy was applied through it.² To recruit the staff Indian foreign services examinations were conducted by UPSC. In the initial stages ‘age-bar’ was not hard and fast.

Many elderly persons were selected to carry out diplomatic work of India in the community of nation. Slowly and steadily India’s foreign ministry and Indian foreign services expanded its area of operation and also improved its functioning by establishing various departments, Embassies and High Commissions etc. etc. The development of the External Affairs Ministry of India was due to its participation in bilateral relationship with the neighboring states.

Accordingly to the constitution of India, the responsibilities for the conduct of India’s foreign policy rests with the President of India but as the President is a nominal head of the Government, the Foreign Minister and ultimately the Prime Minister and Cabinet as a whole are responsible for the shaping and application of foreign policy. The officials of the external affairs ministry provided the necessary and important information, analysing and evaluating the available data and recommending specific measures. Fundamentally the Prime Minister is the most important decision maker and implementer of the Indian foreign Policy.

¹ Dr. Sharma H. and Jain S.K. : Rajnay ke Sidhant, P.P. 439
² Ibid, P.P. 439
Each and every Prime Minister of India has given importance to its neighbours because Indian security interest are involved in it. Furthermore as a geopolitical entity South Asia is one unit and the State in it have common heritage, cultural affinity and common problems. Therefore, there interaction acquired prominent place in bi-lateral and multi-lateral relationship of India.

iii) Changes in the Implementation of Foreign Policy:

The Prime Minister of Interim Govt. of India Jawaharlal Nehru became Prime Minister of Independent and sovereign Govt. of India on 15th August 1947. This Govt. was temporarily constituted to carry out the work of the Govt. of India till the Govt. of India is not constituted as per the Constitution. First General Elections as per the constitution were held in 1952 and Indian National Congress become the majority party in the Lok Sabha. Nehru was elected as the leader of Indian National Congress in Lok Sabha and therefore he was called to constitute First Constitutional Govt. of India.

Jawaharlal Nehru is man who led interim Govt. prior to the independence of India, led temporary Govt. of Independent and Sovereign India and became first Prime Minister of Constitutionally Elected Govt. of India and continuously remained in the post of Prime Minister till his death in 1964.

a) Nehru

Jawaharlal Nehru, who had vast experience of International situation through his world wide travels and contacts became the spokesman of Indian National Congress and had twenty years experience of spokemanship for Congress on
foreign relationship was chosen as Prime Minister of Interim Govt. and then temporary Govt. contributed his intellect and experiences in shaping India’s foreign policy and therefore he is termed as an architect of Indian Foreign Policy.

Indian National Congress had clear majority in legislature Assembly of Interim Govt., temporary Govt. and later on in the Lok Sabha. The strong position of Indian National Congress led Nehru to frame Indian Foreign Policy as per the outlines given in the Indian Constitution.

The seeds of SAARC can be seen in the objectives of the Indian Foreign Policy, which were implemented in reality by Jawaharlal Nehru. He has given priority to the Asian and African States and made use of Non-Aligned Policy to establish cordial relationship with them. He tried to keep India, African and Asian states aloof from the bipolarity as it existed at that time. He opposed colonialism, imperialism, racism and supported international peace and security and implemented ‘Panchasheel’ to establish cordial relationship with Asian States.

He has given maximum importance to Pakistan and China. He created independent department in Indian Foreign Ministry for handling relationship with Pakistan.

Nehru made treaty with Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim and made these states dependent on India for their security through bilateral treaty. India influenced Sri Lanka to such an extent that Sri Lanka became one of the important State of Non-alignment Movement and played important role in developing and expanding it. Nehru signed ‘Panchasheel Treaty’ with China. Nehru could not establish harmonious relationship with Burma and Afghanistan. Till his death Bangladesh was East Pakistan
and Sikkim was independent state. Nehru had established India’s relationship with its neighboring states i.e. Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim and Sri Lanka. Maldives at that time was a colony.

Nehru through the statesmanship and diplomatic skills acquired world status. He gave more importance to international organizations than regional organization and therefore as a member of the UN, the Common Wealth of Nations he choose to play important role in international organizations as a leader of a “Third World”. To be a leader of a “Third World”, he had to think globally. He established international organization in the form of Non-Aligned bloc, and Indo-Arab bloc. He played dominant role in the politics of Common Wealth of Nations.¹ He was considered to be the bridge between Communist and Non-Communist bloc.

Ali his efforts to establish cordial relations with neighbouring Pakistan could not materialize and his “Panchasheel” efforts to establish friendly relationship with Communist China were shattered in 1962. These two set backs lowered his and India’s international image in the community of Nations. This had tremendous impact on his personality and he succumbed to these pressures and died in 1964.

During Prime Ministerships tenure he faced turbulent relationship with immediate neighbour Pakistan and later on with China. His involvement in the community of Nations as a spokesman of Asia and later on leader of Non-alignment did not give him time to think about regional cooperation of South Asian States. He was deeply involved in restructuring of British Common Wealth of Nations into Common-

¹ Mahajan V.D.: Constitutional History of India, P.P. 179
Wealth of Nations, establishing and expanding Non Aligned Movement, safeguarding the interest of Indo Arab bloc in the community of Nations and dedicating his efforts in establishing international peace and security through his contributions in the UN and other international organisations. Further more his devotional involvement in restructuring Indian traditional society into Socialistic Pattern of Society and converting poor, backward, weak and purely agricultural state into strong, developing industrial and important state in the Community of Nations. He led its foundation and demonstrated unique intellectual ability in laying foundation of industrialised, developed, agriculturally self sufficient, scientifically and technologically advance and nuclear weapon state in the community of Nations therefore he is termed as a architect of modern India. He might not have taken any initiative in establishing regional organisation in South Asia but his work of building close relationship among them ultimately led the way for the formation of SARC.

b) Shastri

Lal Bahadur Shastri became Prime Minister of India after the death of Jawahar Lal Nehru. He continued the foreign Policy of Nehru. He realised that India’s prime concern is relationship with immediate neighbours. He also realised the realtionship should not be imaginary one and it should be based on reality. He discontinued India’s relationship with China because China deceived India through its propaganda of ‘Hindi-Chini Bhai Bhai’, in 1962. Shastri gave importance to Pakistan as he considered that good will, friendship and mutual cooperation between these countries (India and Pakistan) will be of immense importance for peace and prosperity in Asia.

India’s defeat in Indo-China war of 1962 boosted the moral of Pakistan and therefore to capture the vast northern Indian territory Pakistan attacked India in 1965. India successfully reverted the Pakistani attack and captured large area of
Pakistan's land in Lahor Sector. India could not keep this land because India entered into an agreement with Pakistan. Soviet Union offered its good offices and arranged Tashkant Summit Conference between Prime Minister of India Lal Bahadur Shastri and President of Pakistan General Ayub Khan. The Prime Minister of Soviet Union Mr. Kosigyn was successful in bringing India and Pakistan together at Tashkant and solving their dispute successfully. Shastri died on the same night. His dead body brought back to Delhi. For few days the tension between India and Pakistan reduced to minimum as Ayub Khan was one of the Poll bearer of Shastri's dead body.

Shastri's death has left India in not-realizing the benefits of victory of 1965 Indo-Pakistan war. He was unlucky that even though he gave priority to improve India's relationship with immediate neighbours but he could not materialize it. Due to this situation at time of Shastri's death India was alone in the community of South Asia States. The Tashkant Agreement gave an opportunity to Pakistan to establish cordial relationship with the Soviet Union, which was later on realised in Pak-Soviet relationship in arms-ammunition dealing. Thus, the strong position of Indo-Soviet relationship was nullified due to Pak-Soviet Union relationship. Due to this India lost the strategic advantage over Pakistan in this region. Pak was now supported by both the super powers where as India had only soviet Union at its side in theoretical aspect, only. This has created more problem for India to start its relationship with immediate neighbours with new footings.

c) Indira Gandhi

Indira Gandhi's first term as Prime Minister lasted from 1966 to 1977. At the time of Shastri's death Indira Gandhi was Information and Broadcasting
Minister, Indian National Congress accepted her as its leader in Loksabha and therefore she formed new Cabinet and became Prime Minister of India.

In 1965 USA helped Pakistan in Indo-Pak war and therefore the relationship between India and the USA were strained. India accepted Soviet Union’s proposal for Indo-Pak Summit Conference. This has led to further straining of relationship between India and the USA, this strained relations were reduced to some extent when President Nixon visited India on 3rd July 1969.\(^1\) In reply to it Indira Gandhi visited United States in October 1970. This has reduced the tension between these two states.

Soviet Union supplied arms and ammunition to Pakistan in 1968. Soviet Union's Military intervention in Czechoslovakia was criticised by Indira Gandhi and therefore the advantage of Indo-Soviet treaty of Friendship was reduced to the minimum, thus India lost the advantage of super power’s support in dealing with Pakistan. Ayub Khan, since Feb. 1966 declared that Tashkant Agreement cannot solve Jammu-Kashmir problem and hence Pakistan - India relation remained strained since 1966 onwards. Ayub Khan as a diplomat par excellence took advantage of Tashkant Agreement and regained the lost territory of Pakistan in 1965 Indo - Pak war. The person who signed this agreement died in Tashkant itself and left the burden of it, to be carried out by his successor, Indira Gandhi.

Indira Gandhi was very much cautious in dealing with Pakistan. To overcome the tactical benefit which Pakistan has, she played her diplomatic cards very

\(^1\) Ed. Padgaonkar : The Times of India, 4th July, 1969
tactfully and intelligently. She recovered the lost faith of neighbouring states and made use of it to establish India as prominent state not only in South Asia but also in Asia, too.

The defeat of Pakistan People’s Party in general elections of Pakistan and thumping majority of Awami League has created direct confrontation between Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman for the Prime Ministerships of the Pakistan. This was the first time when any East Pakistani would have become Prime Minister of Pakistan. But dominant Punjabi Lobby of West Pakistan did not want any Bengali to be Prime Minister of Pakistan. This has led to the internal trouble in East Pakistan and West Pakistan. Punjabi Government led by Yaya Khan suppressed Awami League and imprisoned Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. This led the revolt of Bangali’s against Yaya Khan’s Military Action. Awami League was banned, the people of East Pakistan were successfully led by Bangla Mukti Vahini to fight Pakistani forces to attain independence of Bangladesh.

India which suffered due to internal conflict in east Pakistan and could not withstand the problem of refugees, took the case of East Pakistan refugees problem to the community of nation and clarified India’s position in this regard and created world public opinion in favour of India. Indira Gandhi’s this tactical and diplomatic victory has encouraged her to solve East Pakistani refugees problem through military intervention in East Pakistan. Bangla Mukti Vahini was fighting against Pakistani armed forces. India’s armed forces entered in East Pakistan and fought along with Bangla Mukti Vahini and defeated Pakistani Armed forces. Commandeer of Pakistani Armed Forces General Niyazi surrendered to India’s Armed forces commander Lieutenant Gen. Arora in Dhaka along with 80,000 Pakistani soldiers.1 East Pakistan

1. The Times of India, 7th Dec. 1971
became independent, sovereign state of Bangladesh. India recognised the new state of Bangladesh on Dec. 6, 1971. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi has decided to grant recognition to BanglaDesh”. India was the first state to recognise sovereignty and independence of Bangladesh.

Indo - Pak war started on 3rd Dec. 1971. India’s successful relations with the UK proved beneficial. The UK abstained itself from cease-fire proposals presented in the Security Council and General Assembly. Pakistan was so much upset by the attitude of the UK in this regard that Pakistan withdraw it’s common wealth membership in 1972.

Creation of Bangladesh by India has changed physical structure of the sub-continent which was eventually created by Britishers in 1947. This change in structure called for a radical rethinking and re-formulation of policies by India and Pakistan towards each other. Islam no longer provided a uniting force for uniting people and nationalities. Pakistan’s search for military parity with India also lost its credibility, ultimately Pakistan recognised Bangladesh in 1974.

The creation of Bangladesh has reduced Pakistan’s military might and converted enemy-like character of east Pakistan into friendly and grateful Bangladesh.

Indira Gandhi decided to make India a nuclear power and be a sixth member of nuclear club. Nuclear explosion test was carried out at, Pokhran in Rajasthan on 18th May 19742. Successful nuclear explosion by India has made India’s

1. Ed. Grover Verinder: India’s Neighbours and Foreign Policy, P.P. 133
2. Sharma Gopal Krishna: Bhartiya Videsh Niti ki Badalti Aevdharmayen, P.P. 133
position clear in the community of nations. Third world countries except Pakistan supported India’s Nuclear Policy.

The decision of Allahabad High court regarding Election of Indira Gandhi from Raibareli Lok Sabha Constituency changed total political atmosphere in India. The decision given by Allahabad High Court on 12th June 1975 in favour of Rajnarayan and against Indira Gandhi created turbulence in Indira Gandhi’s cabinet. Legally Indira Gandhi was to vacate Prime Ministerships because her membership of Loksabha was terminated due to Allahabad High Court’s decision. But instead of acting as per Allahabad High Courts decision and vacating Lok Sabha membership of Raibareli Constituency Indira Gandhi declared Emergency and ruled India till March 1977. In the general elections of Lok Sabha in March 1977 “Janata Party” captured power in Delhi and Morarji Desai was elected as leader of Janata Party in Lok Sabha.

d) Morarji Desai

Morarji Desai became Prime Minister of India on 24th March 1977. A.B. Bajpayee was made Foreign Minister Janata Govt. declared its foreign policy and gave priority to its neighbour in it. On 1st April 1977 Foreign Minister of India Bajpayee declared that “it would give top priority to its neighbours and cultivate special relationship” India’s good - will towards neighbouring states was responded favourable by its neighbours, immediately.


1. Paliwal Rejesh Kumar: Janata Party in Indian Politics, P.P. 143
Minister of India Morarji Desai during his visit to Nepal signed Indo - Nepal Treaty and
through it India’s assistance was granted for five developmental projects in Nepal. India
and Nepal accepted the sentiments of one family members.

King Jigme Sigmé Wangchuk paid a visit to India in April 1977 and
held talks with Morarji Desai and A.B. Bajpayee. In reply to it A.B. Bajpayee paid three
days visit to Bhutan in November 1977. Both the states declared that they are friends
and will remain friends, hereafter.

J.R. Jayawardane came into power in July 1977, In Sri Lanka At
that time Indo-Sri Lankan relations were strained. Morarji Desai adopted a cool and
restrained attitude towards Sri Lanka. This attitude of Janata Govt. added new
dimension to understanding and friendship between these two countries. This has led Sri
Lankan President Jayawardane to visit India in December 1978. In response to it Prime
Minister Desai visited Sri Lanka in February 1979. Desai’s counter visit to
Jayawardane’s visit reduced the tension between two countries, thus making way for
better understanding and then resuming cordial relationship among them.

Indo-Bangladesh relations were strained due to the question of
sharing of Ganga water and Farakka barrage. On this point, Bangladesh President Zia-
Ur Rahman accused India. Morarji Desai deputed Defence Minister Jagjivan Ram to visit
Dhaka in middle of April 1977 to have talks with Bangladesh Govt. Jagjivan Ram
succeeded in his attempt and both the countries resumed negotiations on Farakka issue.
India and Bangladesh signed agreement on sharing of Ganga water at Farakka on 5th

1 Op-Cit : P.P. 144
2 . Ibid. P.P. 144
Nov. 1977. Morarji Desai's Janata Govt. was considerate towards Bangladeshi demand. This attitude of India created friendly relations between these states.

Zulfikar Ali Bhutte's Govt. of Pakistan was overthrown in a coup on 5th July 1977.\(^1\) India particularly adopted a policy of non-interference in the domestic affairs of the neighbouring states. Indian Foreign Minister A.B. Bajpayee visited Pakistan in February 1978 and held discussions on bilateral relation between India and Pakistan. Morarji Desai and A.B. Bajpayee wanted to establish friendly relationship between these two states. India and Pakistan signed an agreement; for exchange of officials for trade negotiations and to study each other's agricultural system. Morarji Desai's contribution in establishing cordial Indo-Pak relation were recognised by Pakistan by conferring on him the highest Civilian Award of Pakistan i.e. 'Nishan - E- Pakistan' in coming years.

Morarji Desai was successful in establishing cordial relationship of India with its neighbours i.e. Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. His work provided ground for establishing faith of South Asian Nations among themselves. He reduced the suspicious attitude among the member states of South Asia region.

e) Charansingh

In August 1979 Charan Singh became Prime Minister of India. His Govt. declared that it will give priority to its neighbouring countries.

Charan Singh Govt. was 'Care taking Govt.' and therefore, it was empowered to carry on day to day functioning and was not authorised to take any new decision in policy matters. This made Charan Singh Govt. to adopt and follow the foreign

\(^1\) Times of India, 6th July, 1977
policy of Morarji Desai in dealing with the neighbours of India and hence the relations of India with neighbouring states remained intact till Indira Gandhi came into power.

Charan Singh Govt. remained in power from August 1979 to Jan. 1980. Shyam Nandan Singh was foreign Minister of India in the care taking Govt. of Charan Singh. His immaturity and weaker position of 'Care taking Govt.' reduced the importance of India in world politics. This Govt. was bestowed with the responsibility of conducting Lok Sabha elections in January 1980. Likewise Charan Singh Govt. conducted Lok Sabha Elections in 1980, successfully. Indira Congress Captured 358 seats, in this election.¹ The position of Janata Party was pathetic having only 31 seats in Lok Sabha.

f) Indira Gandhi

Indira Gandhi again became Prime Minister of India in Jan. 1980. P.V. Narsinmh Rao was made Foreign Minister. Indira Gandhi's second term as Prime Minister of India has boosted the Indian activity in the community of nations and therefore her relationship with neighbouring states acquired special importance as she supported the call of Bangladesh President to establish South Asian Regional Cooperation. She side tracked the dispute regarding Moor island and improved relationship with Bangladesh President, General Irshad. India cooperated with General Irshad of Bangladesh to organised SAARC, which was formerly inaugurated in April 1981 at Colombo. At the inaugural meeting of Foreign Secretaries, held in Colombo in April, 1981 to launch SAARC the Bangladeshi Spokesman put forward the view that,

¹. Indian Express, Jan, 1980
President Zia-Ur-Rahman has proposed that the leaders of the South Asian countries should meet at the Summit level to explore a framework for required cooperation.¹

Indira Gandhi deputed her Foreign Secretaries to represent India in April, 1981, Colombo; November 1981, Kathmandu; August 1981, Islamabad; March, 1983, Dhaka and July 1983 New Delhi, foreign Secretary’s conference of SAARC. During her Prime Ministerships her Foreign Minister Narsimha Rao represented India in Foreign Minister level meetings held in New Delhi August, 1983 and Male July 1984.

Indira Gandhi’s approach to SAARC was always positive. Her Foreign Ministry shouldered the responsibilities bestowed upon it by the SAARC for example India accepted the responsibility of establishing study group to carry out the meteorological study of the SAARC region. India’s foreign Minister played a key role in foreign ministers meetings held in New Delhi, in August 1983, in deciding the objectives and principles of SAARC. The Delhi Declaration of August 1983 also established standing committee at the level of foreign Secretary for the coordination and monitoring of South Asian Regional Cooperation with term of reference including approval of projects and programmes and the modalities of their founding determination of intersector as priority and over all coordination of programmes of Action mobilization of regional and external resources; and identification of new areas of cooperation, based on appropriate study. In foreign ministers meeting at Delhi in August 1983 the most significant decision was taken to establish technical committees for various activities.

¹ Ed. Bhabani Sen Gupta: Regional Cooperation and development in South Asia Vol. - I, P.P. 35
Indira Gandhi's contribution in realising SAARC were upheld and recognised by the SAARC after her assassination on 31st October 1984. Her son Rajiv Gandhi carried out her remaining work in relation to the SAARC.

India's Foreign Policy is deeply rooted in its history even during British rule. Indian National Congress adopted separate route than the official foreign policy of British India. India became independent on 15th August 1947. British India was divided into two independent sovereign states i.e. India and Pakistan. Thus the tragedy of partition created bitterness in between them which remained bitter until now.

India was weak, poor and underdeveloped at the time of independence and had bitter enemy in the form Pakistan on its land border. India had to shoulder the responsibilities of protecting, Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim Militarily. India had to fight with Pakistan for Jammu and Kashmir since its birth. Uptill 1971-72 India had to fight three wars with Pakistan and one war with China. These wars hindered her overall development but India overcame it and progressed continuously in achieving its predestined aims and objectives. Nehru-Shastri - Indira Gandhi of first Era of Prime Ministers which uplifted India from weak state to powerful state of Asia. Nehru launched developmental activity in almost all fields. Successive prime Ministers followed in the footsteps of Nehru and contributed in realising modern India. Nehru fought first war with Pakistan and then with China; Shastri fought Second war with Pakistan and Indira Gandhi fought third war with Pakistan.

Delayed decision to merge Jammu and Kashmir in India by Raja Harisingh of Jammu and Kashmir resulted in establishing Pakistan controlled 'Azad Kashmir'. Nehru could salvage and retain remaining part of Jammu and Kashmir. Thus India lost 'Azad Kashmir', which is yet ruled by Pakistani influenced and controlled
Govt. Lal Bahadur Shastri won war in 1965 but could not retain the advantage of it and lost the advantage through Tashkant Treaty by giving back the won territory to Pakistan. Only Indira Gandhi successfully won the Third war with Pakistan and established independent, Sovereign Bangladesh in East Pakistan. Indira Gandhi is the first person or statesman who established new, independent, sovereign state after second world war. Her achievement established India as a strong military power in Asia. Further more she carried out 'Pokhran Nuclear test' and established India as a recognised super power of Asia. Indira Gandhi converted India's foreign policy from weak and poor state's foreign policy to militarily strong and prominent developing state's policy and thus acquired the status of one of the most respected state among the community of states.

Each and every Prime Minister of India realised the importance of neighbouring states and whenever it was possible, they tried to establish cordial relationship with them. India had to lessen the tension with Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh while establishing the SAARC. Indira Gandhi took initiative at the Primary state of establishing SAARC. She deputed her foreign Secretary and foreign minister to take active part in formulating structural organisation of the SAARC deciding its objectives and principles. She was unfortunate to be shot dead before the first Summit Conference of Head of states of SAARC took place.