

The background of the page features a large, light grey watermark of the Open University logo. The logo consists of a stylized 'U' and 'O' forming a circle, with the text 'Open University' and 'THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY' integrated into the design.

BLOCK-III

INDIA'S SOUTH ASIA POLICY

Introduction

India's South Asia Policy (Units – 8 to 9)

Block – III has two Units – 8 to 9; Modi's 'Neighbourhood First' locates Geography created South Asia, history defines it and politics divides it. South Asia has historical and cultural commonalities but the same history and culture have produced animosities among neighbours. Then there are disputes over borders, water sharing and treatment of ethnic groups and minorities. Politics in South Asia is divisive and conflict-prone. Dealing with neighbours has never been easy for India. And there are reasons which India cannot help. India is the biggest and most powerful country in South Asia in terms of territory, population, size of the economy and scientific-technological and military capabilities. This makes India the dominant power in the region; and neighbours challenge this. It is not only an asymmetrical region South Asia is also prone to wars where disputes from the past remain unresolved. Neighbours harbour deep distrust of India and define their national identity in anti-India terms. Economic globalization has not worked; South Asia remains world's least integrated region in economic and infrastructural terms.

It is said that India always has had two sets of foreign policy: one for South Asia; the other for rest of the world. The first one is premised on Realism as border disputes, conflicts and security is involved. For rest of the world, India had the policy framework of Non-alignment, which involved lots of rhetoric and moral grandstanding.

A stable and friendly neighbourhood is essential for India's rise as a 'leading' power. On becoming Prime Minister, Modi made 'neighbourhood first' the cornerstone of his foreign policy. He invited heads of governments and states of all the neighbouring South Asian countries, including Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif of Pakistan, to his swearing in ceremony on 26 May 2014. The focus was on SAARC countries. For his second swearing ceremony on 30 May 2019, he chose to invite leaders of the BIMSTEC countries. Leaders from Bangladesh, Bhutan, Mauritius, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand, besides Kyrgyzstan, were attending the ceremony. What did change in the neighbourhood policy of India within five years?

An Assertive Security Policy and Relations with Pakistan: Prime Minister Modi began his first term with a determination to turn a new page in India-Pakistan relations. Modi made an unannounced 2-hour stopover in Lahore on his return journey from Afghanistan and Russia on 24 December 2015. Earlier, Modi and Nawaz Sharif had in Paris agreed to launch what they described as the 'Comprehensive Dialogue'. Relations with Pakistan however soured after the terrorists, belonging to the Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), attacked the Pathankot air force station on 2 January 2016. JeM

terrorists carried out another attack in September at military base in Uri. India cancelled its participation in the SAARC summit which was scheduled to be held in Islamabad in November 2016 citing “increasing cross-border terrorist attacks in the region and growing interference in the internal affairs of Member States by one country.”

On 28 September 2016, Indian army carried out "surgical strikes" against the terrorist "launch-pads" by crossing the LOC into the POK. There was an attack on Indian military convoy in Pulwama on 14 February 2019 which resulted in the death of 40 Indian paramilitary troops. On 26 February 2019, Indian Air Force warplanes crossed the LOC and destroyed the terrorist camps in Balakot in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK). Tension increased as Pakistani air force targeted Indian positions in retaliation. Following the 2019 Pulwama attack, the Indian government revoked Pakistan's most favoured nation trade status. India also increased the custom duty to 200 per cent on imports from Pakistan which affected the apparel and cement from Pakistan. Pakistan closed its airspace for India-bound flights. India's policy is to diplomatically and politically isolate Pakistan in the international community and take necessary steps to induce change in its behaviour towards India. There is a strong public opinion not to have any dialogue with Pakistan. India's position is clear: 'talks and terror cannot go together'. Terrorist attacks, frequent violation of ceasefire by Pakistani army and anti-India statements by Pakistani leaders have resulted in the collapse of bilateral relations since 2016. Domestic policies and measures have external implications and fall-outs. India abrogated Article 370 of its Constitution ending the special status of J&K. In response, Pakistan recalled its ambassador and expelled Indian High Commissioner and cut off bilateral and trade relations.

India's South Asian Conundrums: In South Asia, domestic intersects the external; and Pakistan is a good example. Domestic political, ethnic and economic developments immediately impact bilateral relations; this is true of all of India's neighbours. India is the most important factor in the foreign policy calculations of Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Maldives and Sri Lanka. An election in a country may produce governments friendly or unfriendly towards India. A foreign policy challenge for India is to reconcile the long-term goals with immediate political gains or losses in a country. Secondly, a task, therefore, for Indian foreign policy also is to remain engaged with different stakeholders without getting involved in internal affairs of these countries. India has its 'favourite' and 'unfavourite' actors and parties in the region but cannot be seen interfering in the internal affairs. Thirdly, China has emerged a strategic partner of all the countries. It is a major trade partners and investor. All neighbouring countries have close defence and military ties with China. All these countries perceive that now they have an option to counter balance ties with India. In the past, they all complained of India's big brotherly attitude; now they all feel like challenging it. All South Asian countries are signed up on China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). All this mean that India's stakes have risen further in these countries. Fourthly, under Modi, there is a discerned shift towards Bay of Bengal. SAARC has become defunct under Modi. The shift towards BIMSTEC is on account of

Indo-Pacific gathering a centrality in India's overall strategic thinking and planning. The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) has a different 'mindset' which fits with India's vision of regional economic cooperation. BIMSTEC has five of the eight SAARC members plus Thailand and Myanmar. BIMSTEC integrates the South Asian members with the economically dynamic South East Asian region besides holds huge potential for cooperation in the context of Indo-Pacific region.

The two island nations of South Asia viz. Maldives and Sri Lanka have gained new importance in view of India's greater strategic focus on Indian Ocean. Modi's first visit to Sri Lanka in 2015 was the first by an Indian Prime Minister in 28 years. Maldives and Sri Lanka again were the first countries Modi visited after the election of 2019. India-Sri Lanka ties have suffered in the last five years, no less because of Sri Lanka's decision to lease the Hambantota port to China – effectively allowing a 99-year Chinese presence on the island. China is the major trading partner of Sri Lanka and has developed close defence relations. Newly elected President Gotabaya Rajapaksa is avowedly pro-China. Change and development in Sri Lanka are of strategic concerns to India.

Nepal believes that it can successfully balance relations with India and China – and to its advantage. Relations with India have not improved following the new federal constitution and the economic blockade of 2015. Like Sri Lanka, Nepal also has moved into China's orbit of influence. The government of former President Abdulla Yameen had taken Maldives into China's strategic embrace. The new government headed by President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih is pledged to 'India First' policy. However, China is deeply invested in the infrastructure development and military collaboration. Maldives oversees two major sea lanes of communication that traverse through its waters in the Indian Ocean. Bhutan symbolizes a 'model' relationship with India. Bhutan has however left the Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal (BBIN) Motor Vehicle Agreement. An avowedly temporary withdrawal, it has nevertheless given a setback to the idea of seamless sub-regional transport connectivity in northeastern part of the South Asia. Bhutan's new Prime Minister's Tshering Tobgay has only warm words to say for China. India would need to watch its 'ideal' friend in the Himalayas. No matter who wins the Afghan presidential election held in September 2019, the country is sliding towards more intense wars and bloodshed, particularly as the spectre of American military withdrawal looms large. A resurgent Taliban control more than half of the country; the elected government is confined to Kabul and few major cities; elections held have little credibility and limited participation; and economic woes of ordinary Afghans are beyond description. Having spent US\$800 billion on a futile war, Americans want to get out of Afghanistan. For India, the scenario is dreadful. India does not control events in Afghanistan; but whatever happens there has serious and immediate consequences for India's security especially in Jammu & Kashmir.

UNIT – 8 INDIA’S POLICY TOWARDS PAKISTAN

Structure

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8.2.1 Divergent Concepts of Nationhood

8.2.2 Princely States

8.2.3 Accession of Jammu & Kashmir and the First India-Pakistan War of 1948

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8.0 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit, you will be reading about India's policy towards Pakistan and about, in general, Indo-Pak relations. After going through this Unit, you should be able to:

- Understand the historical background to the present day Indo-Pak relations;
- the various issues and subjects that are cause of conflict and animosity between the two countries;
- accession of Jammu and Kashmir and the India-Pakistan conflict;
- Indo-Pak wars of 1947-48; 1965, 1971 and 1999;
- Indus Water Treaty of 1960;
- peace process and CBMs since the 1990s; and
- Threat of cross-border terrorism.

8.1 INTRODUCTION

How to sum up India-Pakistan relations? Some say it is a 'love-hate' relationship. Others describe the two neighbours as estranged brothers who love each other but are quarrelling over distribution of family wealth. Some look at India-Pakistan relationship in adversarial terms: India and Pakistan are involved in a mortal battle. This enmity will end only with the destruction of Pakistan. A less extreme view is that Pakistan stands against everything that India champions – pluralism, secularism, democracy, development and peace. Emotions run high and take over reason. One hears heart-warming stories too: in Lahore, restaurant owners refuse to charge Indian visitors for food. In Delhi, taxi drivers refuse to charge fare from Pakistani visitors. Two points bear significance here: One thing is certain: not one single dominant view can capture the complexity and nuances of Indo-Pak relations. Secondly, relations with Pakistan have dynamics which are very different from India's relations with other neighbours. It is the most enduring rivalry between any two nations since the end of the Second World War. Ironically, the number of issues that divides them continues to increase then decrease. But the number of issues that unite them also has a fairly long list. Peace and harmony is not in sight; conflict and hostility is the reality of today – as it was of yesterday and, one fears, of tomorrow as well.

There is a historical background; and there are political experiences and memories. Indian and Pakistan elites – political, business, civil services and armed forces – had lived and worked together

prior to 1947. There were personal equations and rivalries too among the elite classes. Then there are cultural legacies – not one but several. Partition gravely disturbed the economic production system. Further, the making of Pakistan did not follow logic of geography. Borders were drawn arbitrarily; they left behind lots of disputes. Sociologically, it turned neighbours, who had lived side by side for generations, into enemies. Culturally, the syncretic culture was rejected by Pakistan. Evolving an alternative identity has proved an artificial effort.

British India was first partitioned and a separate state of Pakistan was created on 14 August 1947. India was granted independence a day later on 15 August 1947. The Muslim dominated regions became Pakistan and came to be called West Pakistan and East Pakistan – the two regions were separated by hundreds of kilometers of Indian territory. Soon after their independence, India and Pakistan established diplomatic relations. But partition proved a very violent process with millions dead and displaced. Further, numerous territorial claims overshadow their relationship. Since their Independence, the two countries have fought three major wars and one undeclared localized war. The 1972 war led to the birth of Bangladesh (erstwhile East Pakistan). There have been numerous armed skirmishes and military standoffs; Pakistani border forces periodically violate the ceasefire line in Jammu and Kashmir. There are two centre-points of conflict. Kashmir dispute is the centre-point of all of these conflicts. Cross-border terrorism which is a strategic tool in the hands of Pakistan state is another point of contention. There have been numerous terrorist incidents in last three decades or so, including attack on the Indian Parliament which are traced back to Pakistan-based terrorist organizations and their close links with the sections in Pakistan establishment.

8. 2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: ROOTS OF THE CONFLICT

Relations between India and Pakistan are complex and largely hostile; yet the relationship, at times, shows the dimension of a strong emotional and cultural bond. Some say, it is a love-hate relationship. But there is more to Indo-Pak relationship. There are historical, cultural and political reasons underlying this hostility and mutual antipathy. As stated earlier, India was first partitioned and only thereafter granted independence.

There was lot of mutual acrimony and political one-upmanship between Indian National Congress and the Muslim League prior to 1947. Communal divide had reached high pitch and there were incidents of communal violence. When independence was granted to both India and Pakistan, partition could not remain a peaceful orderly process. Partition resulted in massive displacement and migration of populations along communal lines across the borders of the two independent states which resulted in very large scale violence, destruction and death of innocents. In all, about 12.5

million people were displaced. The number of dead in the communal violence that followed is estimated to be from several hundred thousand to one million; some estimate the number of those killed at 2 million. In short, freedom came to India at a heavy price. The centuries' old social cohesion and communal harmony was damaged; and India was laid up with a hostile neighbour.

Muslim League had demanded and got Pakistan as the 'homeland' for Muslims. Its *raison detre* as an independent nation was hostility towards India. Pakistani leadership saw their nation in an adversarial relationship with India. They were keen to project the new country as distinct and different from India. For decades, the leadership has fed the Pakistani population of the 'un-Indianness' of their country – in terms of history, culture and society. Bilateral relations have strong domestic national dimension: Pakistan stands as a negation of all that India stands for and aspires for.

8.2.1 Divergent Concepts of Nationhood

India is a plural country with many languages, castes, religions and sects and ethnic identities. Indian Constitution guarantees right to equality to all. Secularism is enshrined in the Constitution. Indian state is expected to embrace all religions as equal and follow the precept of *sarva dharma sama bhav* ("all religions are the same"). India emerged as a secular nation with a Hindu majority population and a large Muslim minority besides several more religious minorities. Important to note, Pakistan also emerged as a secular nation with a Muslim majority population and a large Hindu minority and sizeable Sikh community. Pakistan's two stalwarts died in quick succession. Pakistan's founder Mohammed Ali Jinnah and its first Governor-General died in September 1948 and Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan was assassinated in 1951. It caused a political vacuum: there was no political leader acceptable at a national level. The vacuum eventually got filled by army officers and senior bureaucrats – whose favourite tool was martial law and governor's rule as response to all political problems. The drift towards political chaos and economic decline continued for over two decades with Bengali-speaking region seeking more autonomy from federal rule. In West Pakistan too, provinces sought to assert their own linguistic and ethnic identity.

There was a constituent assembly but which could not resolve competing regional, linguistic and religious and sectarian demands. The religious heads, the *Ulemas*, were very influential; they had had wanted the constitution based on Islamic laws. It took Pakistan nine years and two constituent assemblies to finally have a constitution; until 1956, Pakistan was governed under the British India Act of 1935.

However, under the 1956 constitution and its directive principle of state policy, Pakistan declared for itself the ideal of an Islamic Republic; though the constitution guaranteed freedom of religion to

people of all faiths. In later years, emigration of its large Hindu population continued from the Sindh province on the West and Bengali-speaking Hindus from the then East Pakistan. With the secession of East Pakistan and birth of an independent state of Bangladesh, Pakistan lost its sizeable Hindu minority population. In very brief, such were the circumstances that continue to weigh heavily on the relation between the two countries.

8.2.2 Princely States

Another source of conflict between the two countries had been former princely states. The departing British colonial rulers gave freedom to all the 680 princely states to decide which of the two dominions they wished to join. Most of the Muslim-majority princely states joined Pakistan and most of the Hindu-majority states acceded to India. But there were several exceptions to this. Some of the princely states had different political ambitions or some peculiar geographical predilections. Their decisions and predilections cast a long shadow on the future of India and Pakistan relation.

Junagadh: Junagadh was a princely state on the south-western end of Gujarat. Overwhelming number of its population was Hindu under Nawab Mahabat Khan - a Muslim ruler. Mahabat Khan decided to join Pakistan on 15 August 1947. But the princely state had no contiguous borders with Pakistan. With no contiguous borders, Junagadh would have been an enclave of Pakistan surrounded on three sides by Indian territory. It had a coastline so it could have a maritime link with Pakistan. Pakistan accepted the accession on 15 September 1947 while India rejected the accession. There were security dimensions: there was no geographical contiguity with Pakistan; and that 80 per cent of the population was Hindu. The result was a standoff. In a highly charged atmosphere, the Nawab left for Pakistan and the Dewan of Junagadh wrote to Indian authorities to intervene to restore peace. Indian troops occupied Junagadh on 9 November 1947. In February 1948, a plebiscite was held where people almost unanimously voted for accession to India.

Hyderabad: Hyderabad was the richest of the princely states under the rule of Nizams. The Muslim Nizams ruled over a population that was largely Hindu for over 200 years without any major problems. It was a peaceful and somewhat a backward princely state, which also remained almost isolated from the Indian freedom movement. When India became independent, the Nizam of Hyderabad chose to become an independent state rather than join India. On 29 November 1947, a standstill agreement was signed with India for a period of one year. Nizam wanted to remain independent while India insisted that Hyderabad join the Indian Union. This led to the police action when Indian soldiers overwhelmed the feeble resistance by Nizam and thus on 13 September 1948, Hyderabad's accession to India was achieved.

8.2.3 Accession of Jammu & Kashmir and the First India-Pakistan War of 1948

Kashmir was a Muslim-majority princely state, ruled by a Hindu king, Maharaja Hari Singh. The

Maharaja had wanted his state to remain as an independent kingdom – a neutral country recognized by both India and Pakistan. Circumstances were still not clear when Pakistan invaded Kashmir with its irregular forces and the tribal fighters in October 1947. The security forces of Maharaja Hari Singh could not stop the invaders. There were incidents of communal violence in September 1947 which resulted in the killing of Muslims in Jammu. Faced with Pakistan invasion, Maharaja Hari Singh appealed to India for help. He was advised by the Governor-General Lord Mountbatten to first sign the instrument of accession before India could provide any help. He signed the instrument of accession to the Union of India on 26 October 1947. Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, the leader of Kashmir's popular movement, rushed to Delhi and requested Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru to send Indian troops to save Kashmir from the invaders. Governor-General accepted the instrument of accession on 27 October 1947. With this, the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir became part of Dominion of India as per the Indian Independence Act of 1947 passed by the British parliament. Kashmir was later given special status within the Indian Constitution – a status which guaranteed that Kashmir would have independence over everything but communications, foreign affairs, and defence. Indian troops reached Srinagar same day and began the operation to evict the Pakistani invaders from the valley.

This was the first India-Pakistan war, 1947-48. Fighting was intense between Indian and Pakistan armies. With a difficult terrain and weather, this localized conflict continued during 1948. It was noted that the two armed forces had limited capabilities. The two countries agreed to a ceasefire worked out by the United Nations, which took effect in January 1949. They also sought UN arbitration with the promise of a plebiscite. With popular leaders like Sheikh Abdullah in favour of accession with a secular India, India had expected to win the vote. In July 1949, India and Pakistan defined a ceasefire line – the line of control. It was meant as a temporary expedient; but the line of control exists to this day. About two-thirds of the Kashmir remains with India; and the rest is the Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK). In 1957, POK was integrated into Pakistan, becoming the so-called 'Azad Kashmir'.

Pakistan maintains that Kashmiris have right to self-determination through a plebiscite and that the promised plebiscite should be allowed to decide the fate of the Kashmiri people. India on the other hand asserts that with the Maharaja's signing the instrument of accession, Kashmir has become an integral part of India.

8.2.4 Aksai Chin

China had refused to accept the British-negotiated boundary agreements in northeastern Kashmir. After China had established its authority over Tibet and reasserted its authority in Xinjiang, Chinese forces penetrated the northeastern Ladakh. China had built a military road in Aksai China to better

link Xinjiang and the western Tibet without India's knowledge. In 1962, China occupied Aksai Chin, the northeastern region bordering Ladakh. India claims that Aksai Chin is the easternmost part of the erstwhile princely state of Kashmir; while China claims that it is part of Xinjiang. The resulting clashes culminated in the Sino-Indian war of October 1962. In sum, India has claims over its Jammu & Kashmir territories which are under the illegal occupation of both the Pakistan and China.

8.2.5 Siachen Glacier

In 1984, India launched Operation Meghdoot and captured more than 80 per cent of the Siachen Glacier – the Salto Ridge, a strategic location on the southwest side of the Siachen Glacier, which the UN did not demarcate in the 1948 ceasefire agreement.

India took control of around 1,000 square miles of territory during the military operations in Siachen. India and Pakistan had had combat operations launched during the 1980s and the 1990s to take strategic positions at the glacier. A ceasefire was worked out in 2003. India remains in control of the Siachen Glacier and all of its tributary glaciers, as well as all the main passes and ridges of the Salto Ridge. Pakistan holds posts at lower elevations along the spurs of the Salto ridgeline.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the Unit for tips for your answer.

1) Describe the accession of Jammu & Kashmir and the first Indo-Pak war of 1947-48.

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8.3 WARS BETWEEN INDIA AND PAKISTAN

Political differences are deep and seemingly unbridgeable; and territorial claims are unmitigated.

The result has been various wars. India and Pakistan have fought three wars. A brief description of the 1947-48 war has been given earlier. Then there were wars in 1965 and 1971; and an undeclared short war in 1999 at Kargil. At the time of Kargil war, the two countries were nuclear-armed powers. A brief description and analyses of major wars follow.

8.3.1 Indo-Pak War of 1965

India and Pakistan had their second war in 1965. The decade of 1960s was marked by the intensity of Cold War. Pakistan had joined the US-led military alliances of South East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) and Central Treaty Organization (CENTO); and received generous US military aid. India was Non-aligned, which US did not like. The India-China border war had brought China and Pakistan closer. Pakistan was able to convince China that its membership in CENTO and SEATO is not directed against China. Pakistan is a strategically located country; and took full advantage of it during Cold War. As Soviet Union did not want Pakistan to be close to its ideological rival China, it too offered Pakistan trade and economic cooperation agreements in 1965. Thus on the eve of the war, the regional strategic environment was favourable to Pakistan; and its leaders felt emboldened. It was then that Pakistani President Field Marshal Ayub Khan decided to find a military solution to Kashmir issue.

There is a piece of war strategy. The first Kashmir war of 1948 had convinced Pakistani strategists that it can fight only asymmetrical wars with India. The 1948 war had witnessed the use of non-state actors in the form of the tribal invaders. The strategy in 1965 had two parts: first, Pakistani design was to encourage and support sabotage and guerrilla operations into J&K. Pakistan armed forces sent around 30,000 trained infiltrators on 5 August 1965. The plan was to incite popular uprising and sabotage the infrastructure. A guerilla war would be launched to destroy physical infrastructure and supply and communication lines of Indian army. The second part of the Pakistan plan unfolded on 1st September 1965. Pakistani army attacked Indian positions. Indian forces responded by launching operations and occupied Haji Pir, Tithwal and Kargil heights. The war lasted 17 days. Thousands were killed on both sides. The 1965 war saw the largest tank battle and the largest battle involving armoured units anywhere since the end of Second World War. UN brokered ceasefire following the diplomatic initiatives by the Soviet Union and the United States.

Role of the UN: The UN Secretary General U Thant worked hard at the behest of the world body to bring an end to the hostilities. U Thant held Pakistan responsible for crossing the ceasefire line; he also appealed to India to observe restraint as regards retaliation. UN Security Council was seized of the matter and passed as many as three resolutions to bring an end to the war. Resolution 209 was

passed on 4 September 1965. It called for ceasefire and asked the two governments to cooperate fully with the UN Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP) in its task of supervising the observance of the ceasefire. Two days later, the Security Council adopted another Resolution 210. It requested the Secretary-General “to exert every possible effort to give effect to the present resolution and to resolution 209 (1965), to take all measures possible to strengthen the United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan”.

UN Secretary General visited India and Pakistan from 7 to 16 September but failed to convince the two countries to stop the fighting. By then the war had spread across international border. UN Security Council passed its third Resolution 211 which demanded that a ceasefire take effect at seven in the morning of 22 September 1965; and that the two sides should withdraw all armed personnel to the positions held before 5 August.

The Tashkent Declaration: The Soviet Union offered its good offices for a peaceful settlement of the dispute. Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri and President Ayub Khan met in Taskhkent during 4-10 January 1966 to discuss the issues. Prime Minister of India demanded the withdrawal of all Pakistani infiltrators from Kashmir and future assurances that Pakistan would not indulge in such activities. Importantly, he also offered a ‘no war pact’ to Pakistan. President Ayub Khan remained insistent that Kashmir issue be discussed and demanded holding of the plebiscite. Finally, the two sides agreed and signed the Tashkent Declaration on 10 January 1966: the two countries agreed to withdraw forces to 5 August 1965 positions. India agreed to return Haji Pir and other Pakistani territories. The two countries also agreed to exert all efforts to create good neighbourly relations; and reaffirmed not to have recourse to force and to settle their disputes through peaceful means. They also agreed not to encourage propaganda against each other. Tashkent Declaration has been described as a peace agreement. In reality, it was more of an agreement that brought cessation of hostilities. The agreement was signed on 10 January 1966. Incidentally, Prime Minister Shastri passed away in Tashkent that very night.

8.3.2 War of 1971 and Liberation of Bangladesh

Pakistan was created as a geographically divided nation. Its two major parts viz. West Pakistan and East Pakistan were separated from each other by 1600 kilometres of Indian territory. Air travel between the two parts took three hours. East Pakistan, occupied mostly by Bengali-speaking people, accounted for 60 per cent of Pakistan’s population. The economy of East Pakistan was dominated by businessmen from West Pakistan. Pakistan could have been a bilingual country with Urdu and Bengali as the two official languages. But Urdu was declared the official language of Pakistan and the claim of Bengali language was rejected. It was only after large scale protest that Bengali was

accepted as the official language in 1954. The seeds of ethnic discord had been sown. The linguistic and ethnic divide combined with economic factors led to the spread of dissatisfaction in East Pakistan. By 1970s, there were strong grounds of resentment in East Pakistan against the domination by West Pakistan.

In the parliamentary election held in 1970, the Awami League under Sheikh Mujibur Rahman won 169 out of 313 seats in Pakistan, but he was denied the office of prime minister. Pakistan's military dictator General Yahya Khan arrested Mujib and imposed martial law on East Pakistan. Throughout 1970-71, East Pakistan faced a civil war. Its civil and military establishment was controlled by personnel from West Pakistan. A strong ethnic nationalism emerged. People in East Pakistan rose up in revolt and *Mukti Bahini* took up arms to resist the Pakistani regime. Pakistani military responded with repression and genocide of the Bengali-speaking population. Estimates of those who died vary from three lakh to three million. Around nine million refugees poured into India straining its resources and internal security. The clouds of war had been hanging for months as the situation in East Pakistan deteriorated.

Pakistani air force carried out a preemptive strike on the Western front at as many as eight airfields – from Srinagar to Barmer on 3 December 1971. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi told the nation that a “War has been forced on us.” There was an Awami League-led government-in-exile near Calcutta which India had refrained from recognizing. Three days after Pakistan air force attacked Indian positions on the Western front, India recognized Bangladesh as an independent state on 6 December 1971. The war was brief but bloody, and resulted in the liberation of Bangladesh. Indian armed forces also inflicted heavy damage on the Western front. India captured around 15010 kilometres of Pakistan territory; and Indian navy literally destroyed Pakistan navy at Karachi harbour. The war lasted 13 days and some 3800 soldiers from both India and Pakistan died on the battlefield. On 16 December 1971, Pakistan's commander General A.A.K Niazi surrendered Dacca, handing over his service revolver to Indian Lieutenant-General J.S. Aurora. Ninety thousand Pakistani military personnel surrendered to the Indian Army and the *Mukti Bahini* – the largest surrender of armed forces since the end of the Second World War. Pakistan had thus lost 60 per cent of its population; and one third of its army was in captivity. Post victory, India announced ceasefire. Indira Gandhi made it clear to the Pakistani leadership that India's ambitions were not territorial; nor are they revengeful or expansionist. On 2 August 1972, India and Pakistan signed the Shimla Agreement under which the former agreed to release all the 93,000 Pakistani prisoners of war. Shimla agreement has three important principles: (i) mutual commitment to the peaceful resolution of all issues through direct bilateral approaches; (ii) to build the foundation of a cooperative relationship with a focus on people-to-people contacts; and (iii) to uphold the inviolability of LOC in

Jammu and Kashmir.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the Unit for tips for your answer.

1) Describe and discuss the 1971 war and the liberation of Bangladesh

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8.3.3 Kargil War, 1999

After the 1971 war, there was no major war between India and Pakistan except efforts made by the two countries to take control of the Siachen by establishing military presence on the higher mountain ridges in the 1990s. The decade of 1990s was otherwise full of tensions and conflict as Pakistan supported separatist activities in Jammu & Kashmir. In May 1999, the two countries had also gone nuclear which added a new strategic dimension to their bilateral ties. Kargil was the first conventional war between two countries with nuclear weapons. The war was fought between 3 May and 26 July 1999.

In the winter of 1999, infiltrators of Pakistan army surreptitiously occupied about 132 high altitude vantage points in the Kargil region of India overlooking National Highway-1, which links Srinagar with Leh. This brought the highway under range of their artillery fire. India found out of the intrusion on 3 May 1999. 'Operation Vijay' saw a mobilization of around 2 lakh Indian troops. Fighting was carried out in very difficult terrain and extremely harsh weather conditions. Indian air force carried out its operations at very high altitudes without crossing the LOC. After two months of conflict, Indian troops had slowly retaken some 70 to 80 per cent of the ridges that were encroached upon by the infiltrators. The international community held Pakistan responsible for the crisis.

Pakistan's Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif sought American help to deescalate the conflict. However, Bill Clinton, US President asked Pakistani Premier to first withdraw all Pakistani forces from the

Indian side of the LOC. Following the Washington accord of 4 July 1999, most of the fighting came to a gradual halt. Some Pakistani forces and Jihadists remained in positions on the Indian side of the LOC. The Indian army launched its final attacks in the last week of July in coordination with the air force and cleared the Drass subsector of all Pakistani forces. Fighting ceased on 26 July 1999; the day since then is marked as Kargil Vijay Diwas.

By the end of the war, Pakistan had to withdraw under international pressure and due to pressure from continued fighting at battle front. Kargil was a fiasco for Pakistan's armed forces and for its political leaders. The infiltration had come within months of a successful peace process when Indian Prime Minister took a bus to travel to Lahore for a dialogue with his Pakistani counterpart Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. India saw it as the betrayal of the trust Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee had reposed in Pakistani leadership when he took the good will journey to Lahore. Though the Kargil conflict brought Kashmir dispute into international focus; at the same time, everyone also understood the validity of the LOC to maintain peace between the two countries.

8.4 INDUS WATER TREATY, 1960

If as sensitive a matter as allocation of water, an issue of life and death for millions on both the sides of the border, can be worked out peacefully and abided by for 60 years, why not other issues that bedevil Indo-Pak relations? Idealists wonder whether the example of the Indus Water Treaty (IWT) can be replicated so as to bring about peace between the countries. IWT is the notable exception to India-Pakistan acrimony and hostility. Brokered by the World Bank, the Indus Water Treaty divides the waters of Indus river system and stipulates the rights and obligations for both the countries.

The Indus River rises in the southwestern Tibet Autonomous Region of China and flows through the Kashmir region and then into Pakistan to drain into the Arabian Sea. It is joined by numerous tributaries, notably those of the eastern Punjab Plain—the Jhelum, Chenab, Ravi, Beas, and Sutlej rivers. The partition of India and creation of Pakistan created a peculiar situation: head works were in India and the canals carrying the water were running through Pakistan. Water sharing could have gone the same way as all other issues – in acrimony and dispute. India withheld flow of water into Pakistan on 1 April 1948. However, the Inter-Dominion Accord of 4 May 1948 required India to provide water to the Pakistani parts of the basin in return for annual payments. It was a stopgap arrangement. When negotiations began for a permanent solution, there was the expected stand still. Neither side was willing to budge from its rigid stand.

Better sense prevailed, thanks to David Lilienthal, former head of the US Atomic Energy

Commission who came to the region in 1951 and suggested that India and Pakistan should work toward an agreement to jointly develop and administer the Indus River System, possibly with advice and financing from the World Bank. The World Bank came forward, its member-countries agreed to finance and thus a win-win solution was worked out. However, the politics between the two countries delayed a final decision for nearly ten years. Indus Water Treaty was finally signed on 19 September 1960 by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and President Ayub Khan.

The treaty gave the waters of the western rivers—the Indus, Jhelum, and Chenab—to Pakistan and those of the eastern rivers—the Ravi, Beas, and Sutlej—to India. It provided for the funding and building of dams, link canals, barrages, and tube wells—notably the Tarbela Dam on the Indus River and the Mangla Dam on the Jhelum River. These helped provide water to Pakistan in the amounts that it had previously received from the rivers now assigned to India's exclusive use. World Bank financed major projects. A Permanent Indus Commission was established which had one commissioner each from India and Pakistan. The commission was to oversee proper implementation of the treaty. A dispute settlement mechanism was also provided for.

IWT has worked for over half a century. But there are new problems now. Technology and national needs for more water and electricity have put pressure on IWT. The year 2019 brought tension and doubts about the viability of the IWT. India wants to build dams along the Chenab – a 900 kilometre long tributary of the Indus that was originally allotted to Pakistan under IWT. This follows several building of other dams on shared rivers including Kishanganga on the Jhelum River, which was also allotted to Pakistan.

Under the IWT, India has a right to “limited hydropower generation” upstream on the western tributaries allotted to Pakistan, including the Chenab and the Jhelum. However, many in Pakistan worry that even though these proposed dams may individually abide by the technical letter of the treaty, their effects will add up downstream. Because the treaty does not provide a definitive solution, the two countries have frequently sought time-consuming and expensive international arbitration. From time to time, Pakistan has raised concerns and asked for intervention on the storage capacity of Indian dams planned on shared rivers allotted to Pakistan under the IWT.

Can India ‘turn off’ the waters flowing into Pakistan from its side? Many strategists say this could be an option. The Indus, and its tributaries are mighty rivers — the annual flow of the Indus is estimated to be upwards of 200 cubic kilometres. How to tap so much of water so as not allow it to flow into Pakistan?

Then, there are other challenges beyond anybody's control. Global warming is making Himalayan glaciers melt faster. Dangerous flooding is expected to become more frequent and more severe both in India and Pakistan. The authors of the Indus Water Treaty can't be blamed for not anticipating

climate change, huge population growth, or modern hydropower issues. The treaty was drawn up in the 1950s. The IWT does have a clause for “future cooperation” which allows the two countries to expand the treaty to address recent challenges like climate-induced water variability or groundwater sharing. But the historical trust deficit between the two countries prevents meaningful dialogue.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the Unit for tips for your answer.

1) Write a note on Indus Water Treaty.

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8.5 PEACE PROCESS AND CBMs IN THE 1990s

Hope springs eternal. Ordinary Indians and Pakistanis really cannot hate each other too much without crying for love which they hold for each other. Similarities are too strong between Pakistan and north Indian states of Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, UP and Delhi. Rural areas are so much identical in terms of living, livelihood and weather; and more importantly every-day customs and culture. Urban areas evoke parallels: in terms of architecture, buildings, food, and crowds in the streets. Lahore looks so much like Delhi; the old parts of Lahore remind one of Chandni Chowk or parts of old Lucknow. The food is amazingly similar; and connoisseurs can identify recipes borrowed from Delhi, Lucknow, Marwar, Peshwar and Lahore. The ‘Frontier’ food is very popular all over India. This bond is shared alike by the elites and masses on both the sides of the border. Pakistani youth love to dance on Bollywood songs. Partition had separated friends and colleagues. Take the example of the ‘Frontier Gandhi’. Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan was a disciple and a close

associate of Mahatma Gandhi and a great leader of Pashtuns who stood for a united India. The *Khudai Khidmatgar* (Servants of God) suffered worst atrocities at the hands of the colonial authorities. When Indian National Congress decided to accept partition with North West Frontier Province (NWFP) allotted to Pakistan, Badshah Khan was crestfallen and told the leaders of the Indian freedom movement: "you have thrown us to the wolves." The 'Frontier Gandhi' remained in jail or in exile for much of the 1960s and 70s and died in 1988 while still under house arrest. Badshah Khan wished not to be buried in Pakistan but in Jalalabad, Afghanistan.

Strong bonds of religious syncretism, faith and beliefs, pilgrimage centres, food, culture and folk and classical music, language and dress emotionally bind the elites and the masses alike in Pakistan and parts of northern India. These emotional ties have not weakened; rather they have withstood all distrusts and wars.

Since the 1990s, as India's economy expanded and its influence at global level increased, the notable change has been a conciliatory approach towards Pakistan – in fact towards all the South Asian neighbours. It is recognised that a peaceful and friendly neighbourhood is necessary for India to occupy its due place in world affairs as a credible emerging power. No nation can ever become a credible power without the neighbourhood recognising its primacy in the region. Taking care of neighbourhood has become even more important in the context of India's high and sustained economic growth rate over the past quarter of a century. Every Prime Minister of India did reach out to Pakistan in the 1990s. In the following, let us briefly recount the peace process and confidence building measures (CBMs), India took towards Pakistan.

8.5.1 Track-II Diplomacy

In the 1990s, India made a number of overtures and took unilateral steps to improve relations. To create a positive atmosphere and enhance trust between the two countries, the government of Prime Minister IK Gujral encouraged people-to-people contacts. The number of visas issued to Pakistani nationals was increased; there was greater interaction between academics and media persons; and efforts were made to enhance cross-border trade. This came to be known as Track-II Diplomacy. High-level contacts were made.

Economic liberalization was in full swing and India had wanted trade and economics to shape relations rather than old hostilities. In his one year tenure as prime minister, Gujral met his Pakistani counterpart four times. Bilateral official dialogue was resumed at the initiative of India. Foreign Secretaries of the two countries had had as many as three meetings. In June 1997, the two countries had identified the subjects to be discussed in a broad-based dialogue and also suggested setting up of a mechanism for conducting talks.

8.5.2 Composite Dialogue

The decade of the 1990s was difficult: Pakistan's intransigence and support for militancy in Kashmir remained unabated. The government of Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee took several bold steps to engage Pakistan with a view to change its hostile behaviour. The two countries had gone nuclear in 1998. Vajpayee decided to revive the dialogue with Pakistan in this changed geostrategic context. The first round of the renewed Composite Dialogue was held in October-November 1998 to discuss eight identified subjects – peace and security including CBMs; J&K; Siachen; Tulbul navigation project; Sir Creek, Trade and Economic Cooperation; Terrorism and Drug Trafficking; and Friendly Exchanges in different fields. The dialogue started but no agreement could be reached on any of the subject.

8.5.3 Lahore Visit

Prime Minister Vajpayee held the view that a country can choose its friends but not its neighbours. Undaunted by the challenges, he decided to travel on the inaugural run of the Lahore-Delhi-Lahore bus service in February 1999. This was the most comprehensive and high profile engagement by India in the past 25 years. He met Nawaz Sharif, the Prime Minister of Pakistan. There was the Lahore Declaration, an MOU on CBMs and a Joint Statement at the end of the visit. The two countries reaffirmed their commitment to work through a bilateral process in the framework of Shimla Agreement to resolve all outstanding issues and to establish durable structure of cooperation. The two prime ministers agreed to combat terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. It was also agreed to have a regular political dialogue at the level of foreign ministers.

'Lahore spirit' was betrayed by Pakistan's military adventure in Kargil in May 1999. A political stand-off ensued. It was India that had initiated the Composite Dialogue. The Lahore bus journey by Prime Minister Vajpayee was meant to transform India-Pakistan relations forever. Kargil brought a stop to all these things. The military coup by General Pervez Musharraf in October 1999 overthrowing the elected government of Nawaz Sharif further had implications for India's security and cross-border intrusions. The hijacking of Indian Airlines Flight IC814 to Kanadhar on 24 December 1999 was an example of the dangers posed to Indian security by Pakistan-based terrorist groups working in tandem with Pakistani army and its Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) agency. The year 2000 continued to have terrorist incidents and violence perpetrated by Pakistan-based jihadist groups. There was attack on the Red Fort in New Delhi on 22 December 2000 carried out by Lashkar-e-Taiba; and, earlier, there were attacks at the airport in Srinagar and an attempt at the life of the Chief Minister of J&K.

8.5.4 Agra Summit

Two years had passed. Notwithstanding the political stand-off and numerous incidents of terrorism,

Prime Minister Vajpayee was still committed to restart the Composite Dialogue – which he had initiated in 1998. Vajpayee invited the Delhi-born Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf to visit New Delhi. In the invitation letter, Vajpayee wrote of poverty being the common enemy of the two countries and agreed to discuss Kashmir issue. He had wanted to revive the Lahore spirit and restart the Composite Dialogue. India took several unilateral steps by way of building confidence: release of Pakistani fishermen; opening of the LOC to facilitate movement of Kashmiri people; offer of fellowships to Pakistani students to study in India; reduction of tariffs on imports from Pakistan; and readiness to send the Director General of military operations to meet his counterparts so as to have regular contacts between two armies.

Vajpayee and Musharraf met in the historic city of Agra for two days on 15-16 July 2001. Meetings lasted two days and two nights: one-to-one between the two heads of government for five hours; and at the level of delegations covering a huge number of issues. Differences however marred the Agra summit; the two countries could not agree on the draft of the Agra Declaration. One more effort failed indicating that the worldviews of the two countries were quite divergent; and how difficult is India's neighbourhood. There were many points of differences: one however stood out. For Pakistan, Kashmir was the 'core' issue; for India, among others, Pakistan should first check the cross-border terrorism.

8.5.5 'Coercive' Diplomacy

Incidents of terrorism remained unabated through the 1990s. There was the dastardly attack on Indian Parliament on 13 December 2001; and earlier on 1st October 2001 an attack on the J&K legislature. India decided to militarily confront Pakistan. It launched its biggest military mobilization, 'Operation Parikarma', since the Kargil conflict and stopped or drastically reduced all contacts with Pakistan. These measures put together came to be described as 'coercive diplomacy'. It is noted that time and again, United States put restraint on both the countries so as not let the situation deteriorate. International diplomatic mediation resulted in October 2002 in the withdrawal of Indian and Pakistani troops from the international border.

Prime Minister Vajpayee was a statesman. He had faith in peace and friendship with Pakistan. He once more extended the hand of friendship while addressing a rally in Srinagar on 18 April 2003; ten days later, Pakistan responded positively. There were immediate developments: full diplomatic relations were restored; bus journey restarted; there were lots of movement of parliamentarians, businessmen and others under Track-II; and release of fishermen and prisoners. This time around, there was the perceptible desire of the people of both India and Pakistan to turn a new chapter in their relations. Visitors could see warmth among people and a great desire to start a new chapter in the bilateral ties.

8.5.6 Vajpayee in Islamabad and Musharraf in Delhi

During the SAARC summit in Islamabad, there was an Indo-Pak Joint Statement on 6 January 2004. Both countries welcomed the positive developments in their bilateral ties. It was agreed to restart the Composite Dialogue in February 2004 to discuss and resolve all outstanding issues including the J&K. After the change of government in May 2004, the UPA government headed by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh continued with the Composite Dialogue.

President Musharraf visited New Delhi from 16 to 18 April 2005. A lot of progress had been made in terms of people-to-people contacts; easing of visa and travel; road, rail and air links; the proposed gas pipelines – one from Iran (IPI) and another from Turkmenistan via Afghanistan and Pakistan (TAPI); confidence building measures in both the conventional and nuclear areas etc. President Musharraf and Prime Minister Singh also discussed Kashmir issue. Indian Prime Minister underscored that while there would be no redrawing of borders and another partition, all measures that could bring the people on both the sides together would be taken to help the process and create an atmosphere of trust and confidence.

This phase of looking for peace and building CBMs did not produce final end results but the efforts made were significant in foreign policy terms. This phase of conciliatory approach came to end with the terrorist violence perpetrated in Mumbai in November 2008 that caused some 200 deaths. India as a nation reacted with anger and total disillusionment over what the Pakistan-based terrorists did in Mumbai. In the wake of the Mumbai terror attacks, India responded with coercive diplomacy. India avoided a muscular response fearing that reprisals might lead to escalation. This policy would change under Modi when a muscular policy would lead to cross-border 'surgical strikes'. Prior to Mumbai attacks, there was the Samjhauta Express bombing in 2007, which killed 68 civilians (most of whom were Pakistani).

Check Your Progress Exercise 4

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the Unit for tips for your answer.

1) Make a summary of various peace initiatives since the 1990s

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8.6 TERRORISM IS THE ‘CORE’ ISSUE

Terrorism remains the core issue in relations with Pakistan. India has nearly always responded with restraint and brought the threat of cross-border terrorism to the attention of the international community. The approach is to build international pressure on Pakistan to change its behaviour on a permanent basis. Anti-India diatribe is the ticket to political success in Pakistan; and governments regularly indulge in India bashing to hide their own inadequacies. The government of Pakistan allows known terrorist organizations and their leaders to operate freely and indulge in anti-India propaganda and activities openly.

What one can say that India and Pakistan made numerous efforts to resolve their differences; at least arrive at some kind of an understanding within limitations on select issues. However, the overall relationship has really never improved. The so-called Composite Dialogue was a grand effort to look at relations comprehensively including the contentious issue of J&K but in truth nothing meaningful ever came of these efforts. Distrust and hostility continues to shape their outlook. ‘Terrorism’ is the core issue for India, ‘Kashmir’ for Pakistan, and ‘nuclear security and stability’ for the international community’. These tectonic plates crash up against each other, but cannot mesh comfortably (Stephen Cohen, 2009).

8.7 INDIA’S POLICY TOWARDS PAKISTAN SINCE 2014

After the electoral victory of the BJP and its NDA allies in the 2014 general election, Prime Minister Narendra Modi invited all the SAARC heads of state and government to his swearing-in ceremony. The new government also announced its ‘Neighbourhood First’ policy in all earnestness. Prime Minister Modi made an unannounced 2-hour stopover in Lahore on his return journey from Afghanistan and Russia on 24 December 2015. Earlier during their meeting in Paris on climate change, Modi and Nawaz Sharif had agreed to launch what they described as the ‘Comprehensive Dialogue’. After a brief thaw following the election of new governments in both nations, bilateral discussions again stalled after the terrorist attacks on 2 January 2016 at the Pathankot Air Force

Station.

The 2016 Pathankot attack was a terrorist attack committed on 2 January 2016 by a heavily armed group which attacked the Pathankot Air Force Station, part of the Western Air Command of the Indian Air Force. The attackers belonged to Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) – an Islamist militant group designated a terrorist organization by India, the US, the UK and the UN. The attack led to a breakdown in India-Pakistan relations. Media reports suggested that the attack was an attempt to derail a fragile peace process meant to stabilize the deteriorated relations between India and Pakistan. On 18 September 2016, there took place the deadliest terrorist attack on the security forces in two decades when JeM terrorists attacked the Indian military camp in Uri in Kashmir, resulting in the death of 19 Indian army soldiers. India cancelled its participation in the 16th SAARC summit which was scheduled to be held in Islamabad in November 2016 citing “increasing cross-border terrorist attacks in the region and growing interference in the internal affairs of Member States by one country.”

On 28 September 2016, Indian army carried out the "surgical strikes" against the terrorist "launch-pads" by crossing the LOC into the POK. Western news media reported the death of some 150 terrorists in India's retaliatory military operation. Since 2016, the ongoing confrontation and continued terrorist attacks have resulted in the collapse of bilateral relations. India's policy is to diplomatically and politically isolate Pakistan in the international community and take necessary steps to induce change in the behaviour of Pakistani establishment towards India. There is a strong public opinion not to have any dialogue with Pakistan. According to a 2017 BBC World Service poll, only 5 per cent of Indians view Pakistan's influence positively, with 85 per cent expressing a negative view; whereas, 11 per cent of Pakistanis view India's influence positively, with 62 per cent expressing a negative view.

Since 2016, the ongoing confrontation and the continued terrorist attacks have resulted in the collapse of bilateral relations, with no hope of an early resumption of any dialogue. Relations deteriorated further in 2019. There was an attack on Indian military convoy in Pulwama on 14 February 2019 which resulted in the death of 40 Indian paramilitary troops. On 26 February 2019, Indian Air Force warplanes crossed the LOC and destroyed the terrorist camps in Balakot in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in Pakistan. It was a preemptive strike on a terrorist training camp and resulted into the deaths of a large number of terrorists who were planning to carry out terrorist activities in India. Tension increased as Pakistani air force sought to target Indian positions in retaliation. Following the 2019 Pulwama attack, the Indian government revoked Pakistan's most favoured nation trade status. India also increased the custom duty to 200 per cent on imports from Pakistan which affected the apparel and cement from Pakistan. Pakistan closed its airspace for India-

bound flights.

Domestic policies and measures have external implications and fall-outs. India has abrogated Article 370 of its Constitution ending the special status of J&K. In response, Pakistan recalled its ambassador and expelled Indian High Commissioner and cut off bilateral and trade relations.

Check Your Progress Exercise 5

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the Unit for tips for your answer.

1) Analyse India's policy towards Pakistan since 2014.

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8.8 LET US SUM UP

Admittedly, it is a difficult relationship. Economic and trade relations with Pakistan are minimal. Political relations remain full of tension and uncertainties; multiple efforts to reach out to Pakistan for peace and understanding have not yielded positive results. Developments in Pakistan are of security concerns to India. Cross-border terrorism has become a major threat over the past many decades; and there are no signs of its abatement. Lots of political, diplomatic and military energy and attention goes into dealing with Pakistan. Issues are getting entwined. Since 2016, there is an effort to expose and isolate Pakistan in the international community and make the international community exert pressure on Pakistan to change its behaviour.

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8.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

- 3) Your answer should be based on sub-Section 8.2.3.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

- 3) Your answer should be based on sub-Section 8.3.2

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

- 3) Write your answer based on Section 8.4.

Check Your Progress Exercise 4

- 3) Write your answer by identifying major points from Section 8.5.

Check Your Progress Exercise 5

- 1) Write your answer based on Section 8.7



UNIT 9: INDIA'S POLICY TOWARDS OTHER NEIGHBOURS

Structure

9.0 Objectives

9.1 Introduction

9.2 Bangladesh: A Geostrategic Overview

9.2.1 Dimensions of Bilateral Relations

9.2.2 Relations since 2008

9.2.3 'China Card'

9.3 Myanmar: A Geostrategic Overview

9.3.1 Dimensions of Bilateral Relations

9.4. Bhutan: A Geostrategic Overview

9.4.1 A 'Model' Neighbour

9.4.2 New Phase in Bilateral Relations

9.5 Bangladesh, Myanmar, Bhutan and Northeastern Region of India

9.6 Nepal: A Geostrategic Overview

9.6.1 Nepal's Democratic Odyssey and India

9.6.2 Treaty of Peace and Friendship, 1950

9.6.3 Dimensions of Bilateral Relations

9.6.4 'China Card'

9.7 Sri Lanka: A Geostrategic Overview

9.7.1 Dimensions of Bilateral Relations

9.8 Maldives: A Geostrategic Overview

9.8.1 Dimensions of Bilateral Relations

9.8.2 India's 'Soft' Diplomatic Footprint

9.9 Afghanistan: A Geostrategic Overview

9.9.1 Dimensions of Bilateral Relations

9.10 Let Us Sum Up

9.11 Some Useful References

9.12 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

9.0 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit, you will be studying about India's relations with its South Asian neighbours except Pakistan which has been covered separately in Unit-8. After going through this Unit, you should be able to:

- Understand the specific dimensions of India's relations with each one of its neighbouring countries;
- Importance of the 'Neighbourhood First' policy; and
- Opportunities and challenges these relations present for India in terms of its security and development.

9.1 INTRODUCTION

India has a large and complex neighbourhood. It shares borders and maritime boundaries with neighbours which are several thousand kilometers long. India's defence and security acquire preeminence. Relations are large and complex covering aspects of security, migration, trade, water sharing, and presence of outside great powers in the neighbourhood. All these issues get closely entwined making it difficult to track and resolve any one of the issues in isolation. Dynamics of these relations change rapidly as issues move up and down the priority list depending upon the exigencies of time. As many as seven of India's immediate neighbouring countries are covered in this Unit. Each one of the bilateral relation is important and has its own specificities.

9.2 BANGLADESH: A GEOSTRATEGIC OVERVIEW

Bangladesh is surrounded by India on its north, east and west; it has a small southeastern border with Myanmar. Bangladesh is a country of rivers. It has the world's largest delta, formed by Ganges, known locally as the Padma, and the Brahmaputra. The two rivers unite with Meghna to drain into the Bay of Bengal. The delta plain covers about 80 per cent of the country's 147,570 square kilometers; rest of the territory is hilly terrain and highlands. The low lying country is prone to floods; climate change makes it even more vulnerable. Bangladesh is classified as among the least

developed countries. However, it may leave the LDC tag in few years time, given its booming economy and improved social and human development indicators. With a population of around 164 million, Bangladesh is a relatively homogeneous country with 98 per cent of the population speaking Bengali. Bangladesh is one of the world's most densely populated countries, and its capital, Dhaka, is among the world's most populous cities. It is a lower riparian state, water sharing with India therefore is one of the most strategically important dimension of the bilateral relationship. Borders are weak, porous and at places heavily populated; and this means people from Bangladesh migrate to India – legally and often illegally. Besides, migration has been older than the borders on account of demography, culture and economic needs. All this means that Bangladeshi migration into West Bengal and India's northeast becomes a source of contention. Similarly, Rohingya migration from neighboring Myanmar into eastern Bangladesh, historically, has been a sore spot between Dhaka and Rangoon.

9.2.1 Dimensions of Bilateral Relations

Bangladesh has a very strong ethnic identity. People take great pride in their Bengali culture and literary traditions. Partition of Bengal in 1905 and sidelining of Bengali-speaking Muslims by the Bengali-speaking landowning and merchant classes of Hindus sowed the seeds of partition and the birth of East Pakistan in 1947. However, the people of East Pakistan felt marginalized. Their language and culture was ignored in the idea of Pakistan. West Pakistan also dominated the economy of East Pakistan. It was the assertion of Bengali ethnic nationalism against the domination of West Pakistan which caused the break-up of Pakistan and birth of Bangladesh in 1972. With the birth of Bangladesh died the 'two-nation' theory.

At the same time, Bangladesh has a very strong religious identity. It is the third most populous Muslim country in the world. Ninety per cent of its people are Sunni Muslim. People are pious and beautifully blend their culture with religious beliefs and practices. Bangladesh has swung between secularism and its Islamic identity since 1972. And this impact India's policy towards the country. Bilateral relations are entwined and impact domestic populations immediately.

A Special Neighbour: The geostrategic importance of Bangladesh cannot be denied. It is a very special neighbour of India. Bangladesh connects the northeastern parts of India with rest of the country. While Bangladesh complains that it is an 'India-locked' country; people in the northeast India say that they are 'Bangladesh-locked'. Transit facility through Bangladesh is important for the development, security and governance of northeastern India. Bangladesh knows this; and uses transit facility as leverage to bargain better with India. It is a point of friction too, as Bangladesh at times obstructs, even cancels the transit facilities. India is vulnerable to pressures from Bangladesh over the narrow Siliguri corridor ('Chicken Neck') – a 22 kilometre long stretch of land that connects

northeast of India with rest of the country. In terms of power capability, forget the asymmetry between India and Bangladesh at national level. Look at the power balance at the sub-regional level. If one takes only the northeastern region into account, Bangladesh matches up strongly with India's capabilities.

Porous Borders: Among all of its neighbours, India shares the longest border with Bangladesh. The 4351 kilometre long land border is the fifth-longest border in the world. It runs through five Indian states of West Bengal (2217kms), Assam (262 kms), Meghalaya (443kms), Tripura (856 kms) and Mizoram (318 kms). The border crosses through 25 districts in the five states. When borders are so permeable, it is not easy to safeguard them. With so many districts along the border, India has its own vulnerabilities. Border management is a problem and a sore point between authorities in the two countries. The porous borders are used for smuggling food items, medicines, cattle, machinery and narcotics on quite a large scale. The Bay of Bengal, located to the south of Bangladesh, is a frontier that is watched over by the Indian Navy. Bangladesh also has a maritime dispute with India in the strategic Bay of Bengal.

Illegal Migration: Movement of people from Bangladesh into India is an intractable challenge. There are those who enter India legally but overstay their visa; their number is estimated to be several thousand every year. Then there are those who entered illegally and have lived here literally for generations. Migrants enter India illegally in search of employment and improving their life conditions. There is a historical pattern in the movement of the people: people from territories, what today constitute Bangladesh, have historically migrated to neighbouring parts – often to return back after few years. In more contemporary periods, it is the 'push' factor. Bangladesh is the most populous of India's neighbours; also it is one of the poorest in the region. Poverty and unemployment drive Bangladeshis into India. Borders are porous and crossings easy and short: at times, one needs to wade through a small stream for few minutes only to arrive into India. Illegal migration is a bone of contention between the two countries; also it is a domestic political issue in northeastern states particularly Assam where people feel that their culture is under threat from the large non-Assamese population. India cannot take unilateral measures. Other issues get entwined. India is dependent on Bangladesh to harness water resources, to stop illegal migration, to check smuggling and to combat terrorism.

Water Dispute: India and Bangladesh share 54 trans-border rivers, varying in sizes. The Ganga water sharing agreement was concluded in 1996 after long delays and negotiations. The dispute over India's plans to construct and operate the Farakka Barrage persists. The construction of Farakka Barrage would increase the flow during lean season of the Bhagirathi-Hooghly branch of river Ganga so as to increase the water depth at the Kolkata port which has been threatened by siltation.

Bangladesh needs that water and in the same period for irrigation of farmlands. The inadequate water during the lean season is unable to meet the needs of the two countries.

Economic Interdependence: Of all of India's South Asian neighbours, Bangladesh and India have close economic interdependence. Bangladesh is India's largest trading partner in South Asia. It imports large quantities of cotton yarn for manufacture of garments which is the major export of Bangladesh. Informal trade far exceeds the formal trade. For northeastern states particularly Tripura, it is cost effective to import things of daily consumption from Bangladesh than, say, from Kolkata. Historically, Bangladesh and the adjoining northeastern regions were an integrated economic, cultural and political space. It was the pioneering region in India's industrialization with Dacca and Kolkata as prosperous business hubs. Politics and partition has not been able to erode the local economic exchanges. The economic realities of the past are only reinforced by modern-day logic of business.

Economic and trade relations are growing though political and bureaucratic factors prevent full realization of the potential. For example, by 2017, India's foreign direct investment proposals exceeded US\$3 billion while actual Indian FDI was only \$88 million in 2015-16. In the past nine years, India has extended 3 lines of credit amounting to \$8 billion, which remain heavily under-utilized. India has a huge favourable trade balance with Bangladesh: its exports stood at \$4.4 billion in 2016-17 and imports from Bangladesh were a modest \$672 million. Bangladesh also imports electricity from India and exports internet bandwidth to Tripura. India is participating in the construction of coal-based power plants in Bangladesh.

Security Concerns: In sum, several issues define India's relations with Bangladesh: border management including illegal migration; water resources; trade including informal trade; transit facilities and economic interdependence. There are strong security concerns too, including apprehensions of terrorism and northeastern insurgency finding safe havens in Bangladesh. Several insurgent groups like the Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), National Liberation of Tripura (NLFT) and National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFM) are major insurgent groups that have found safe places across the border. Close cooperation between the two countries have led to the elimination of these safe havens. Foreign powers also seek to find a foothold to undermine India's security. Pakistan's intelligence agency, ISI is reported to be active to send insurgents and terrorists across the border into India.

9.2.2 Relations since 2008

Bilateral relations were frosty during 2001-06 when Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zea headed a coalition government of Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and Jamaat-e-Islami. The present spurt in bilateral relations started with the electoral victory of the Awami League in the 2008 elections.

The NDA government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi has given special attention to relations with Bangladesh government headed by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wazed. In the last five years, the two countries have worked to resolve many of the issues pending since 1947.

In 2015, the Modi government ratified the 1974 Land Boundary Treaty under which enclaves were exchanged. This settled a long pending anomaly. Under an international award, India and Bangladesh have been allowed to explore resources in the Bay of Bengal without impinging on each other's national interests. Management of rivers and distribution of water remains unresolved but the two sides continue to discuss it at the highest political level. Pending dispute over the Teesta river shows how challenging it is to resolve water sharing. Other problems persist; for example the three credit lines which have shown very little progress. Less than 10 per cent of the cumulative commitments have been disbursed on the first two credit lines; and almost no money from the third line of credit promising \$4.5 billion has been utilized. National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam has also aroused misgivings in Bangladesh notwithstanding India's assurance that NRC will not affect Bangladesh.

9.2.3 'China Card'

In China, Bangladesh has found a leverage to balance relations with India. It is benefiting from the partnership with China and, at the same time, reaping benefits from India. Furthermore, Bangladesh is using its geostrategic importance on the contested waters of Indian Ocean to draw global attention. As great powers go for competition and cooperation in Indo Pacific, it is advantage Bangladesh. Bangladesh has harboured grievances against India for decades – its alleged hegemonic approach and coercive tactics on matters such as transit facilities and water sharing. On the other hand, many analysts in New Delhi describe Bangladesh as an ungrateful country which is reluctant to acknowledge India's contribution in the liberation of the country. In fact, relations stagnated for a long period during the 1990s and 2000s. All of this is now changing rapidly – seemingly for the good of Bangladesh.

Bangladesh is playing its 'China Card'. It is willingly going into the Chinese orbit – China's soft loans, investment in infrastructure building and promise of non-interference in domestic affairs is pleasing to the Bangladesh government and its people. Bangladesh-China relations have gained a strategic dimension since 2015. China is the top trade partner of Bangladesh – displacing India which had held the position for 40 years. Imports from China represent 34 percent of Bangladesh's total. Bangladesh is signatory to China's Belt and Road Initiative. Chinese President Xi Jinping visited Dacca in 2016. The visit resulted in the signing of as many as 27 agreements for investments and loans worth US\$24 billion. China had earlier pledged to invest \$13.6 billion in joint ventures. Chinese investment in Bangladesh to a total of \$38 billion is the largest investment pledged by any

single country. China and India both see investment in Bangladesh as a way to extend their influence. Bangladesh is taking the advantage of the situation. Bangladesh is a market of several million strong consumers whose real income is growing for several years.

There are security aspects to Bangladesh-China relations which India cannot ignore. China has become Bangladesh's top source for arms imports. From Chinese angle, Bangladesh is China's second-largest arms export destination in the world, behind Pakistan. Bangladesh accounts for 20 percent of all Chinese arms sales. Beijing has provided Dhaka with five maritime patrol vessels, two submarines, 16 fighter jets, and 44 tanks, as well as anti-ship and surface-to-air missiles. In 2017, Bangladesh Navy took delivery of two Chinese submarines at a minimum price. Defence ties with China had increased military capability of the country.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) Describe and discuss India-Bangladesh bilateral relations.

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9.3 MYANMAR: A GEOSTRATEGIC OVERVIEW

The fertile Irrawaddy River valley constitutes the heart of the Myanmar as a nation and a state. It is a long flat area which is relatively easy to consolidate and, equally, vulnerable to invasions from the surrounding mountains. Control of the surrounding mountains thus remains the priority for the governments that sit in the valley. The country of more than 53 million, Myanmar borders Bangladesh and India to the west; here a mountain chain separates and protects it from these two

countries. In the northeast, mountains and jungle work like a bulwark against China. To the east the area is more of a plateau which allows various ethnic groups to move easily across political boundaries. Absence of a geographical barrier has allowed Myanmar's more interaction with Thailand and Laos. Foreign interference, like internal ethnic conflict, is a perennial concern for Myanmar because of its physical geography. Myanmar is the 39th largest country in the world with a total area of around 653,080 square kilometers. Myanmar's location makes it a natural bridge between the Indian Ocean basin, Southeast Asia and southern China. The processes of globalization have enhanced its geostrategic importance. The US\$7 billion economy is rich in natural resources including energy resources.

9.3.1 Dimensions of Bilateral Relations

India and Myanmar (formerly Burma) have a long chequered history. Indian soldiers were the backbone of British India army that fought three Anglo-Burmese wars in the 19th century. After the annexation of Burma in 1886, Indians came to dominate the civil service, business, police and security forces in Burma. Burma was turned into a province of the British India and remained so till 1937. The ethnic Burmese therefore harbour distrust and hostility towards India and the Indians. India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru did a lot to establish cordial relations with independent Burma under its first Prime Minister U Nu. With the military coup of 1962, relations nosedived for a long time to come.

Strategic Importance: In a reassessment of its relations with Myanmar in 1992, India decided to adopt a pragmatic approach and deal with the government in Naypyitaw (Yangon). The change in subsequent years also had an economic rationale. India unveiled its 'Look East' policy in 1994. India began to explore meaning multifaceted relations with Myanmar.

Myanmar's location largely between India and China further endows it with geostrategic importance. India's four northeastern states together share 1,643 kilometre-long borders with Myanmar. Like with Bangladesh, borders are porous with people, animals, insurgents and goods – legal and illegal – moving across literally unhindered. Myanmar can connect China with India's northeast. Myanmar also offers China geographic access to Bangladesh. China plans to build the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM) Economic Corridor connecting the four countries. In short, Myanmar offers itself as central point of connectivity and transit between India, Bangladesh, China and Thailand. It is India's gateway to ASEAN countries through Thailand and Laos – it being the only ASEAN country with whom India has both land and maritime borders. Andaman Islands lie alongside Myanmar's maritime boundaries.

An Underrated Neighbour: Myanmar is an underrated neighbour. Myanmar is geopolitically important for India for several reasons: (i) It is important to maintain peace and security in

northeastern India and to prevent insurgents from having hideouts in Myanmar. Myanmar can help India in regard to transit to the northeast India in the face of a recalcitrant Bangladesh. (ii) Pulses are so often in short supply; India imports pulses and other agricultural produce from Myanmar. (iii) India has invested in infrastructure and energy projects in Myanmar. It is developing Sittwe port in Rakhine state and the implementation of US\$484 million Kaladan transport project which will connect Rakhine state with Mizoram. (iv) In the area of defence, India has agreed to supply a Russian-built submarine to Myanmar. Armies and navies of the two countries have also carried out joint exercises. Various insurgent groups have their hideouts in Myanmar. In June 2015, Indian security forces carried out a 'surgical strike' in Myanmar against Naga rebels.

ASEAN Focus: Myanmar is the gateway for India's 'Act East' policy. Any overland connectivity between India and ASEAN countries would need Myanmar to be on board. India's major economic and connectivity projects with Myanmar have an ASEAN-wide scope. India, Myanmar and Thailand are jointly developing a 1,360km highway which may eventually connect India with Vietnam through Cambodia and Laos. India is also undertaking a US\$77 million rural connectivity project to provide basic internet access to villages in Myanmar, Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos – a scheme that could be replicated in other ASEAN countries. These connectivity projects have gained salience in India's Myanmar policy since India has virtually dropped interest in the China proposed BCIM Economic Corridor as China has made it part of its BRI project.

Rohingya Crisis: India has walked a fine line on the Rohingya crisis. Since September 2017, some seven hundred thousand Rohingya Muslim – an ethnic category that is not recognized by the Myanmar government – have fled the Myanmar armed forces' brutal military operations, causing a major humanitarian crisis in neighbouring Bangladesh. India views the Rohingya crisis from both a humanitarian and security perspective. Modi has said that India shares Myanmar's concern of 'extremist violence' in Rakhine State. And, it has also provided humanitarian assistance to, what India describes as the 'displaced persons from Rakhine State'. India supports the 'safe, speedy and sustainable' return of the Rohingya refugees. India has provided some small developmental aid to restore normalcy in Rakhine state and is also providing prefabricated housing for the refugees returning there.

Chinese Spectre: However, like Bangladesh and Bhutan, the spectre of China is looming over Myanmar too. These three states have interconnected issues – geopolitical, economic and commercial, cultural and geographic. These external issues in the neighbouring countries are intermeshed with the developmental and security needs of northeastern states of India. Those precisely are India's concerns. What if Myanmar gets into China's tight embrace? China's military presence in Rakhine coast and west of the Irrawaddy River has considerably impacted India's

preponderant strategic presence in the Bay of Bengal. China has de facto control over Kachin state bordering Arunachal Pradesh which it claims as its territory. Overtime China could build large military and economic presence in regions of Myanmar bordering India particularly Arunachal Pradesh. China has built a strong military point in Chittagong, Bangladesh. An overland connectivity between Bangladesh and Myanmar would bring China very close to India. These considerations precisely prevent India from endorsing the BCIM Economic Corridor linking Kunming with Kolkata via Myanmar and Bangladesh.

Chinese state-owned firms also hold stakes in the building of a US\$7.3 billion deep-sea port and US\$2.7 billion special economic zone in Rakhine State as part of the BRI. This port project will provide an entry point for a US\$1.5 billion oil and gas pipeline between Kyaukpyu and Kunming in China's Yunnan Province. China and Myanmar have also agreed to develop an economic corridor between Kunming and Kyaukpyu – also as part of the BRI.

Myanmar apprehends China's hegemonic designs and wants to build close relations with India to counter balance China. Prime Minister Modi paid a bilateral visit to Yangon in September 2017 – only the second visit by an Indian Prime Minister after a gap of 30 years. Other ministers and high level delegations have gone thereafter to work out security, political and trade related arrangements.

9.4 BHUTAN: A GEOSTRATEGIC OVERVIEW

Bhutan is a small, landlocked kingdom in South Asia, with an area of around 38,117 square kilometer and a population of about 8 hundred thousand. Historically, it has been an isolated kingdom. Popularly described as the 'hermit kingdom', the Buddhist kingdom was never colonized. A gradual democratization began which culminated in the establishment of a multiparty democracy in 2008. Currently, Bhutan is a constitutional monarchy. Bhutan was an important junction on the ancient Silk Road as it borders Tibet to the north and northwest and India to the southwest, south and east. Bhutan has a diverse topography: grassy and forested Duars plains in the south connect the country with the Indian states of Assam and West Bengal. North of the plains, the terrain begins rising. Paro and Thimphu are fertile valleys. Further north are higher reaches of the Himalayas. Bhutan-China border is poorly demarcated and there are rival claims on Doklam plateau. A small nation, the principal challenge for Bhutan is to safeguard its sovereignty and to ward off China. Bhutan is vital for the defence and security of India. Historically, India has been the main economic and security provider of Bhutan.

9.4.1 A 'Model' Neighbour

The foundation of India's policy towards Bhutan was laid down by the India-Bhutan Friendship

Treaty. The Treaty, signed on 8 August 1949, calls for peace and non-interference. There is a bargain: large Indian assistance in exchange for Bhutanese deference for Indian foreign policy and defence concerns, notably those related to China. India has guided Bhutan's foreign policy choices. Notably, Bhutan does not have diplomatic missions in none of the permanent five (P-5) members of the UN Security Council. For long, its only diplomatic relation was with India; of late Bangladesh and Kuwait are the other countries with embassies in Thimphu. Then there are consulates of several countries including those of some its neighbouring countries. Over the years, Bhutan has developed the scope of its relationship with US and also to an extent with China on the largely undefined border between them. Over the years, India has helped Bhutan become a member of the UN and has not raised objections to Bhutan getting development assistance from multilateral and bilateral aid donors. Bhutan is a member of both SAARC and BIMSTEC. India-Bhutan relationship is often described as a 'model' relationship; and an 'exemplary' friendship. Indian domination is there but it is non-intrusive; India has worked hard to financially and economically take care of Bhutan in return for its security and defence concerns.

Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru had visited Thimphu in 1958 and gave a boost to this strategically important relationship. Bhutan was worried after the Chinese took over Tibet in 1959. It looked towards India. India offered it an extensive programme for its development – financed solely by India for the first ten years. In 2006-08, there was internal political change in Bhutan. King of Bhutan decided to introduce aspects of parliamentary democracy and the political system came to resemble a constitutional monarchy. In 2007, India signed a new treaty of friendship. Under the new treaty, India is no more to guide the foreign policy of Bhutan although India's essential security interests are to be protected.

Indian soldiers remain stationed in strategic parts of northern Bhutan. India looks after Bhutan's defence, with Bhutan undertaking not to do anything that may pose a danger to India. Bhutan conducts its own border dialogue with China but after deep consultations India. Another Indian concern is the northeastern Indian insurgent groups who have their hideouts in Bhutan. In 2003, Royal Bhutan Army cleared the camps of United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) and the Bodoland insurgents. India maintains the Indian Military Training Team (IMTRAT) in Bhutan that has trained the Royal Bhutan Army.

Export of electricity is the major source of revenue for Bhutan. India has built three major hydroelectric dams in Bhutan and it buys all of its surplus electricity at a price good for Bhutan. The three major hydroelectric projects are at Chukha, Kurichhu, and Tala. Bhutan is inviting foreign investment in the development of its hydroelectric potential but the only client could be India. India has also extended preferential trade and transit facilities to Bhutan. India is very generous in aid.

Indian aid accounts for almost 60 per cent of Bhutan's annual budgetary expenditure.

Bhutan enjoys the highest per capita income in South Asia. It has a strong infrastructure to become a knowledge economy. It has a large educated and skilled English-speaking population. The country has come up with the Happiness Quotient Index.

9.4.2 New Phase in Bilateral Relations

Under the 'Neighbourhood First' policy of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Bhutan has been given top priority. Bhutan was the first country Prime Minister Modi visited in 2014. Modi visited Bhutan for the second time on 17-18 August 2019 and signed 10 MOUs. These political engagements and other developments have ushered in a new phase in the bilateral relationship. The economic cooperation is the focus in this new phase. Bilateral trade reached US\$1.2 billion in 2018. Modi launched the RuPay Card to ease financial transactions between the two countries. India also advanced US \$100 million under a stand-by swap arrangement to meet the foreign exchange needs of Bhutan. Bhutan has an estimated capacity to produce 30,000 MW of electricity. In 2009, India had promised to install 10,000 MW of hydropower capacity by 2020, with the undertaking to buy all the surplus electricity. During his visit, Modi inaugurated a 720 MW hydropower project on the Mangdechhu River.

Doklam Stand-off: Change is the essence of international relations. Bilateral relations do not remain same; they respond to changing external balances and internal political and economic dynamics. Bhutanese complain of Indian domination; they also say that India's economic generosity is only to access Bhutan's hydropower and other natural resources. Bhutanese complain of economic dependence on India and its huge trade deficit.

In 2017, Indian and Chinese soldiers had a face off at Doklam. Bhutan and China have territorial dispute over the border location in Doklam. Indian troops worked in coordination with the Bhutanese government to ask the Chinese not to disturb the status quo by unilaterally building the road in the area claimed by Bhutan. There are apprehensions in India as to what happens in case Bhutan and China agree to improve their relations and resolve their dispute over the Doklam plateau. Any such deal over Doklam will pose serious security challenges for India besides would have implications for India-Bhutan friendship treaty. India does not want Chinese presence on the strategically important Doklam plateau. India fears that it would facilitate Chinese military movement closer to the Siliguri Corridor.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) Bhutan is the 'model' neighbour of India. Comment.

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9.5 BANGLADESH, MYANMAR, BHUTAN AND NORTHEASTERN REGION OF INDIA

Relations with Bangladesh, Myanmar and Bhutan are of critical importance for the development and security of the northeastern India. In the domestic political calculation, India's northeastern states are politically lightweight. Their problems don't get the attention that the problems of western states like Punjab bordering Pakistan get. As northeast is neglected in terms of defence and developmental attention and allocation; it seems so do the Bangladesh, Bhutan and Myanmar in India's strategic and foreign policy calculations. The northeastern region, sandwiched between Bangladesh, Bhutan, Tibetan region of China and Myanmar, has 98 per cent of its borders with these four countries. Developmental imperatives of the backward northeast and the prospects of putting down decade-long insurgencies in this region – all demand a specific sub-regional foreign policy focus towards the three countries. Northeast India depends a lot on transit facility arrangements with Bangladesh. As Bangladesh remains reticent and wants to have its own economic dominance over northeastern states of India, the alternative is to have transit facilities via Myanmar. India needs to built or revive old road networks that linked Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh with Myanmar for trade and developmental works.

India has revived the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC). Northeastern region lies at the centre of BIMSTEC. BIMSTEC brings together countries around the Bay of Bengal – Sri Lanka, India, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Myanmar and Thailand. It is an additional regional framework to bring together especially

Bangladesh, Bhutan and Myanmar and the northeastern India into a developmental –security framework. With Myanmar and Thailand being members of ASEAN, BIMSTEC complements India’s Act East policy.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) Development and security of Northeastern India is linked to relations with neighbouring countries.

Do you agree?

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9.6 NEPAL: A GEOSTRATEGIC OVERVIEW

Nepal is another landlocked Himalayan neighbour of India. The country lies between India and China. Nepal has three geographic sub-regions: a mountainous northern border region, a central hilly area and the Terai which is a fertile, low-lying marshy plain. The Terai is irrigated by tributaries of the Ganges and Brahmaputra rivers and supports over 90 per cent of Nepal's 29.3 million population. Nepal was a kingdom but following a long political strife, became a republic in 2006. Nepal is a diverse society; as many as 125 different castes and ethnic groups were reported in the 2011 census. It is a multi-religious society with Hindus accounting for 81.3 per cent and Buddhists for 9 per cent of the population. People of Nepal are strongly conscious of their distinct national identity; and the main objective of its foreign policy is to maintain independence in relations with its two powerful neighbours – India and China. Historically, the landlocked status often produced a sense of powerless and dependence on India. Nepal depends on Indian ports; it has to also pay attention to

Chinese activities on its northern border with Tibet. Nepal's location along the Tibetan plateau is important: the country could serve as a launch pad for greater Indian influence northward; or, allow expansion of Chinese influence, denying New Delhi inroads into Tibet. Nepal has transitioned from an isolated agrarian society toward greater economic integration with its neighbours, especially India. While agriculture still plays a large role, it is matched by the services sector fueled by foreign tourism to religious sites and Mt. Everest. Its GDP in PPP terms was an estimated US\$78.6 billion and per capital GDP at \$2679 in 2017.

9.6.1 Nepal's Democratic Odyssey and India

India's relations with Nepal are very close yet very complex. There is lots of cooperation and interdependence; yet there is lots of distrust and desire for autonomy in bilateral relations. Relations with Nepal have strong domestic and foreign policy dimensions for India. Since the 1990s Nepal is going through some basic political changes and constitutional developments. Nepal's transition from being a Hindu monarchy to a multiparty federal secular democracy has been long and not without controversies. The process of political and constitutional change there has meanings and implications for India's national security and national interests. Much against any body's wishes, India finds itself embroiled in the internal affairs of the neighbouring country.

Since the mid-nineteenth century, Nepal was a monarchy where the prime ministers, all from the Rana dynasty, exercised absolute control over the state and held exclusive privileges. Until the present Constitution of 2015, Nepal has had constitutions enacted in 1948, 1951, 1959, 1962, 1990, and 2007. Democratic elements and few freedoms were introduced then taken back in this 68 year-long period. The king and royal class never wanted to share power with democratic forces and had wanted to retain all their powers and privileges. The 1948 constitution introduced limited democratic elements. The 1962 constitution reversed these gains and introduced the panchayat system which gave popular representation at the local level but concentrated absolute powers in the hands of the monarchy. The Jana Andolan (popular protest) brought an end to this monarchical authoritarian system; and the new constitution of 1990 abolished the panchayat system, lifted the ban on political parties, and enshrined fundamental rights. There were some democratic gains under the 1990 constitution; and the powers of the monarchy were curtailed. The 1990 constitution was repealed by the interim constitution of 2007 which was formulated in the wake of the democracy movement. The interim constitution provided for a constituent assembly, which was charged with writing Nepal's new constitution – which was to be promulgated by 28 April 2010. However, differences and disagreements persisted, and the constituent assembly postponed the promulgation by a year. Thereafter, the constituent assembly repeatedly extended the interim constitution. On 28 May 2012, the constituent assembly was dissolved after it failed to finish the constitution after the latest

extension, ending four years of constitution drafting and leaving the country in a legal vacuum.

New elections were held on 19 November 2013 to the Second Nepalese Constituent Assembly. This time around, all political leaders pledged to draft a new constitution within a year. The new assembly expressly committed that the new constitution would be promulgated on January 22, 2015. However, due to continued differences on key issues including system of governance, judicial system and federation issues like number, name and areas of the states to be carved, the constitution was promulgated after some delay

The 2015 Constitution declares Nepal an “independent, indivisible, sovereign, secular, inclusive, democratic, socialism-oriented, federal democratic republican state”. The federation has seven provinces. It creates a three-tier federal structure comprising federal, provincial and local levels of governance. It provides for a bicameral parliamentary system at federal level. The lower house is to be elected through a mixed electoral system of first-past-the-post and proportional representation.

Certain provisions of the constitution became controversial. The *Madhesis* complained that the new constitution supports the political domination of the ruling groups. The indigenous communities were upset over their continued marginalization. The demarcation of the seven provinces adversely affected the political representation of the *Madhesis* and the indigenous communities. The constitutional clauses conferring citizenship rights also generated controversy. The new constitution makes it difficult for women to pass on citizenship to their children as compared to men. The new constitution seeks to protect the state from being overwhelmed by Indian immigrants. India also stated that the constitution discriminates against *Madhesis* who are of Indian origins. Be that as it may, the promulgation was immediately followed by blockade by India in all the checkpoints at Nepal-India border.

India's role has not been without blemishes. India supported the institution of monarchy and sabotaged many a democratic movements in the past. India was comfortable with the domination of Ranas; their absolute rule of Ranas took care of India's security interests. India found and feared democratic elements as they were nationalists and assertive. Later, India favoured democratic forces of its choice only when Maoists began gaining political strength. The Nepali Congress had its support; and India did its best to discredit and undermine the Maoists. India suspected links between Nepali Maoists and India's Naxal movement; worst, it suspected Nepali communist party's political inclinations towards China. In the 1980s, India was very hostile towards the Nepali Maoists; India agreed only around 2006 to their participation in the political dialogue leading to the establishment of democracy. In 2008, Maoists formed the government, India accepted it only reluctantly.

Nepal has a broad ethnic divide between the hill people, commonly known as the *Paharis*, and the *Madhesis* who live in the plains adjacent to Indian border. The introduction of electoral democracy

with universal right to vote has added an ethnic dimension to Nepali politics. The *Paharis* were always politically dominant. Under democracy, they have to share power with the *Madhesis*, who are mainly of ethnic Indian origin. Federalism and devolution of power is a contentious issue in domestic politics and impacts Nepal's relations with India. India felt that the new constitution of 2015 discriminates against the *Madhesis* – who share common ethnicity with sections of people in India. In 2015, *Madhesis* laid a trade blockade. Nepal blamed India for sponsoring the trade blockade which caused shortage of oil and essentials for months and made Nepal look up to China for supply of fuel.

9.6.2 Treaty of Peace and Friendship, 1950

India's relations with Nepal are regarded as 'special'. India and Nepal have open borders. There are no natural geographical factors that define the boundaries; thus to regulate or close the border is not an easy thing to do. The bilateral Treaty of Peace and Friendship was signed on 31 July 1950. Under the treaty, it was agreed to have open borders and free circulation of currency. The two countries agreed to grant each other's citizens national treatment in all matters including employment, business and ownership of property. India is economically more developed and a large market; the treaty has helped people of Nepal in terms of finding jobs and business opportunities in India.

The 1950 treaty was signed in the backdrop of China's annexation of Tibet in 1949. India was alarmed at China's takeover of Tibet. Nepal was part of its security perimeter; and thus India sought to safeguard its security interests through the treaty. Under the treaty, Nepal agreed to depend on India for its security. Under the confidential documents exchanged, the two countries agreed that in case of any threat to the security of the other by a foreign aggressor, their governments would consult each other and devise effective countermeasures. Nepal agreed that it would not import arms, ammunition and other military equipments except with India's consent. Under the treaty, the two sides agreed to the follow-up measures: an Indian Military Mission was set up in Nepal; and it was agreed that there would be joint manning of Nepal-Tibet border.

In course of time, relations have developed institutional basis. There are several bilateral institutional dialogue mechanisms, including the India Nepal Joint Commission co-chaired by External Affairs Minister of India and Foreign Minister of Nepal.

9.6.3 Dimensions of Bilateral Relations

India's relations with Nepal are important for a number of reasons – historical, cultural, religious, economic, security, geographical and hydrographical. The two share a long border of over 1850 kilometer which is open. Nepal borders as many as five Indian states – Sikkim, West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand. Around six million Nepali citizens live and work in India; they avail

facilities and opportunities at par with Indian citizens. Around 600,000 Indians live and work in Nepal. Indian currency is freely convertible in Nepal. Currently some 32,000 Nepali citizens are serving in the Indian army. There are 39 battalions in 7 Gorkha regiments. These troops are drawn mainly from ethnic Nepali Gurkhas and ethnic Nepali origin people known as Indian Gorkha.

Security Concerns of India: Open borders raise security concerns. In December 1999, Indian Airlines flight from Kathmandu to Delhi was hijacked to Kandhar. Security becomes a point of friction. New Delhi has to sometimes remind Kathmandu that its security measures are lax. Nepal has become a centre for intelligence agencies of foreign powers in particular China and Pakistan. India feels that these powers use Nepal for espionage and hostile activities against India. It is also known that illicit businesses operate out of Nepal. Crime syndicates involved in forged currency and smuggling of narcotics and arms use Nepal as base or point of transshipment.

Nepal complains of too much dependence on India and its interference in Nepali affairs. The issue of open border is contentious. In 1989, India imposed an economic blockade of the landlocked small state which brought hardship in accessing ordinary consumer goods. A similar blockade in 2015 greatly aroused anti-India sentiments.

Nepal is not happy with the 1950 treaty. India has offered to renegotiate it if Nepal so desires. Political leaders in Nepal belonging to different political parties describe the treaty as unjust and India-centric. They say the treaty allows India domination and interference in Nepal's day-to-day affairs. Many in Nepal want it scrapped altogether. Nepali politicians want to end the open border and recruitment of Nepali Gurkhas in Indian army – ironically the two provisions have hugely benefitted Nepal. However, the resentment is not without bases: the 1950 treaty was meant to safeguard India's security interests. India has expressed its willingness to have a new treaty if this is what the government of Nepal wants.

India-Nepal relations are characterized by mutual dependence albeit between two countries which are hugely unequal. This unequal dependence has produced mutual distrust and prejudices. Nepal complains of Indian hegemony; and Nepali people often describe Indian attitude towards them as arrogant. India has its own security concerns which are accentuated because of open borders. Political stability and social harmony of Nepal are in India's national interest. Indian policy measures are considered as interference in Nepal's internal political and social matters. India on occasions has taken steps to grant more economic concessions so as assuage hurt feelings in Nepal. Nepal considers Indian concessions as patronizing and its security concerns as interferences.

Nepal complains that India prioritizes its security interests and does not care about the developmental needs of Nepal. India exploits the landlocked status of the Himalayan state. Nepal complains that river projects agreed upon favour India. Further India delays work on these river development

projects and uses them to arm-twist Nepal. As a result, Nepal is not keen on working with India on river projects. Nepal complains that agreements on Kosi and Gandak rivers have benefitted India. Nepal has limited arable land; and there is genuine difficulty in creating large water reservoirs. Besides, any large hydroelectric projects would displace lots of people in a resource-scarce country. These handicaps are combined with distrust of Indian goals. In short, there are missed opportunities for both the countries as issues get interlinked in a context of mutual distrust. Common rivers, which are part of Ganges river basin, is one of the most important areas calling for close cooperation. These rivers can become a major source of irrigation and power both for Nepal and India. In 2008, a three-tier bilateral mechanism was created to discuss issues relating to cooperation in water resources, flood management, inundation and hydropower.

Deterioration in Relations: The worst phase in India-Nepal relations came in 2015 with *Madhesi* agitation and trade blockade of Nepal for several months over certain provisions of the new constitution. Nepal suffered a massive earthquake in 2015. India provided immediate relief which totaled to around US\$67 million. India announced a post-earthquake reconstruction package of one billion dollars. But India's aid and assistance also got embroiled in controversy.

In geo-strategic terms, Nepal is one of the most important neighbour of India and building cordial political, diplomatic and economic relations remains always a big challenge. Surrounded on three sides by India, Nepal has played the role of a buffer state with China at least since 1950. A strongly present China in Nepal gets a good view of the Indo-Gangetic plains. The long-term stakes for India in Nepal are huge: open borders continue to pose huge security challenge for India ; and secondly, cooperation of Nepal, which is an upper riparian state, for harnessing the waters of rivers remains critical for electricity generation, irrigation, flood control and environmental conservation. These rivers are a source of life and livelihood for millions in India. Nepal is aware of its own geostrategic history and contemporary importance. People of Nepal are very proud of their country; it is one country which had successfully fought off British colonial rule. Look at Himalayas from Nepalian perspective; and one gets a different view: Nepal has the tradition of war and territorial expansion in the Himalayan region and thinks of itself as the 'superpower' of Himalayas.

9.6.4 'China Card'

What is Nepal's China card? Nepal has geographical contiguity with Tibetan region of China, and it is found leaning more and more towards China in recent times. It has also used its growing relations with China as a tool to draw significant concessions from India. India has offered more generous trade and transit terms to Nepal so as it keep it closer to the 1950 treaty. In practice, there have been changes and movements away from the terms of the 1950 treaty.

Until recently, Nepal described itself a country lying between two powerful states – India and China

– ‘like a yam between two rocks’. Such a self-perception produced a sense of national powerlessness. It is no more true. Today, Nepal feels confident to simultaneously build relations with both China and India – all to its advantage. The economic and military rise of China has given Nepal a strong leverage to redefine its relations with India. Relations with China give Nepal a good measure of autonomy in its foreign policy besides allowing it to bargain better with India. China is now a ‘strategic partner of cooperation’ of Nepal. And Nepal has signed on China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). China is the lead investor and trading partner of Nepal. China has committed to invest in infrastructure development including road and rail links between Kathmandu and Tibetan region of China. China has offered to build an ambitious ‘cross-Himalayan connectivity network’ through aviation, trading ports, highways, railways and telecommunications. The proposed 70-kilometre railway shall connect Kerang in Tibet with Kathmandu; it will eliminate Nepal’s dependence on India. Nepal is upbeat on this relationship and wants to play the China Card to lessen its dependence on India. Chinese President Xi Jinping visited Kathmandu in October 2019 and assured that China will transform Nepal from being a ‘landlocked’ to a ‘land-linked’ country – a slogan that is going to resonate in the Himalayan state for decades to come. The ruling communist party of Nepal also sees greater ideological and political affinity with China. Nepal is a key component of India’s ‘neighbourhood first’ policy of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. India’s prime minister has paid as many as three visits to Nepal in the last five years – the last being in May 2018. The government of India is keen to reset ties with Nepal in the changed geostrategic circumstances.

Check Your Progress Exercise 4

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) Identify the features of the 1950 Treaty of Peace and Friendship.

2) Explain Nepal’s ‘China Card’.

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9.7 SRI LANKA: A GEOSTRATEGIC OVERVIEW

Sri Lanka is an island nation; the island lies twenty miles off the southeastern tip of India. India is its only neighbour divided by Palk Straits. The island nation sits at the center of the Indian Ocean, just northeast of the Maldives island chain. Sri Lanka is divided into two geographic zones: the southwest of the island is its core comprising the inland central highlands, flanked to the west by Colombo's seaside lowlands. This area is the agricultural heartland and also contains gem and graphite deposits. Colombo has a deep natural harbour, which receives substantial traffic from nearby shipping lanes. The other geographic zone is the northern part, divided into the inland Vanni region and the Jaffna Peninsula on Palk Bay. The north is dry and agriculture is only possible because of large, ancient water reservoirs. Fishing is the primary economic activity. The north is connected to India by a chain of islands and sandbars known as Adam's Bridge or Rama Setu, which has historically facilitated the movement of goods and people across the straits. Sri Lanka's main geographic challenge is to protect its core around Colombo, while promoting integration with the north. Sri Lankan economy is transitioning from a predominantly rural towards a more urbanized economy – manufacturing and services. Uniting the north with the core will allow Colombo to attract foreign investment in low-end manufacturing, using its underdeveloped north as a source of cheap labour. Sri Lanka is an upper middle income country with a GDP per capita of US\$ 4102. Its population of 21.7 million benefits from social development indicators which are among the highest in South Asia. Sri Lanka is a multi-religious and multiethnic society. According to the 2012 census figures, Buddhists make up 70.1 per cent of the population, while Hindus account for 12.6 per cent and Muslims 9.7 per cent of the population. Most Sinhalese are Buddhists; and most Tamils are Hindus; and the Moors and Malays are mostly Muslims. Sinhalese account for about 75 per cent of the national population; their number is greater than 16.2 million. The 1978 constitution, while assuring freedom of religion, gives "the foremost place" to Buddhism.

9.7.1 Dimensions of Bilateral Relations

India and Sri Lanka occupy a strategic position in South Asia; further, their mutual security cooperation is needed for protection of their maritime interests in the Indian Ocean. India and Sri

Lanka have deep religious, cultural and racial links.

Ethnic Divide and the Issue of Tamils: Relations between the majority Sinhalese and minority Tamil populations have been strained for long; there have been periodic violent incidents since independence in 1948. Discriminated and marginalized, the demand for independence or autonomy has been strong among the Tamils. Sri Lanka went through three decades of civil war, which started in the early 1980s and ended after much bloodletting only in 2009. More than 100,000 were killed and thousands 'disappeared' during the civil war. Violation of human rights was rampant especially in the final months of the civil war in 2009; as many 40,000 civilians were estimated to have been killed by the security forces. Tamils have been militarily defeated but this has not resolved any of the causes which underlie the ethnic divide. Civil war led to a large scale exodus of Tamils; over one third of Sri Lankan Tamils live abroad.

The political repercussion of this ethnic divide impacts India's relations with Sri Lanka and its security concerns. Treatment of Sri Lankan Tamils at the hands of their central government resonates in the politics of Tamil Nadu – which New Delhi cannot ignore. Tamil population in Sri Lanka consists of two groups: a much larger group of Tamils has lived for centuries in the northern and central Sri Lanka. The second is a smaller group of the so-called Indian Tamils who went to as indentured labour in the 19th century to work on the rubber and tea plantations in the highlands of Sri Lanka. When Sri Lanka became independent in 1948, its Citizenship Acts of 1949 declared Indian Tamils as non-citizens and thus stateless. Sri Lanka sought their repatriation to India. A sub-set of Sri Lankan Tamils is the Muslim Tamils who have gradually acquired a separate cultural and political identity.

India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru was cautious and agreed to accept as Indian citizens only those Tamils who qualified under the provisions of the Indian Constitution. India signed agreements with Sri Lankan governments in 1964 and 1974. These agreements stipulated that the Indian Tamils are the joint responsibility of the two countries and provided for repatriation of a fixed number of Indian Tamils to India. India's approach did not help; rather its approach created more problems. On one hand, India's approach reinforced the Sinhala chauvinism that all Tamils – Indian and Sri Lankan both – are India's responsibility. On the other hand, it conveyed to Sri Lankan Tamils that they could always count on popular sentiments in Tamil Nadu to manipulate India's position in their favour. Many Tamils in Sri Lanka held the view that India would come to their rescue and 'liberate' them the way it had liberated Bangladesh. These false hopes strengthened the sentiments for a separate Tamil nation.

Prime Minister Indira Gandhi supported Tamil parties and Tamil militant groups in the 1980s. In 1983, there were anti-Tamil riots which led to the brutal crackdown on Tamils and exodus of a large

number of Tamil refugees into India. The tension and violence between Sinhala majority and Tamil separatists caused a civil war. The government of Rajiv Gandhi put pressure on Sri Lanka to find a solution that would satisfy Sri Lankan Tamils. India took initiative to arrange for talks between Sri Lankan government and various Tamil parties including the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in Thimpu, Bhutan in 1985-86. Talks failed and the civil war in Sri Lanka continued.

Security Concerns: A stable Sri Lanka without the presence of any foreign power is necessary for India's security. Any outside power in Sri Lanka could pose a threat to various nuclear, space and defence establishments located in southern India. India does not want a separate Tamil state in Sri Lanka either. Such a state would be small and vulnerable to outside power plays, besides might encourage separatism in Tamil Nadu. Further, it would be a negation of India's opposition to the 'two nation' theory.

Majoritarianism is pervasive in Sri Lankan politics. Successive governments in Colombo have followed conscious policy to convert Sri Lanka into a Sinhala Buddhist nation. This has not only depressed the living conditions of Tamils but also made them feel like second-class citizens.

Civil war raged in Sri Lanka in the 1980s. India feared growing proximity of Colombo with China and Pakistan. When the talks failed between Sri Lankan authorities and various Tamil parties in Thimphu in 1985-86, the government of Rajiv Gandhi took some strong measures. In July 1987, the India-Sri Lanka accord was signed which led to the deployment of Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) in Sri Lanka to enforce the agreement. At its peak strength, twenty thousand Indian army personnel were under the banner of IPKF. The IPKF was sent to oversee the laying down of arms by the Tamil militants and the devolution of power as agreed under the 13th Amendment. Besides the issue of Tamils and the civil war, there were other considerations behind the deployment of IPKF. India was concerned with the reported presence of foreign military advisors and trainers, the leasing rights granted to foreign companies in the strategically important harbour of Trincomalee, and the launch of the Voice of America radio stations which India suspected to be a cover for electronic surveillance over India. Some of these matters were part of the confidential exchanges that underpinned the 1987 accord. The Sri Lankan government passed the 13th amendment to its Constitution under which it was agreed to provide autonomy to the united Tamil majority northern and eastern province. Except the LTTE, other major Tamil groups accepted the accord. LTTE had wanted its own nominees to head the administration in the united northern and eastern province; India had its own preferred Tamil candidates for the job. The accord fell through; and India's strategy failed. Everyone, be it Sri Lankan government, Indian government or the LTTE, distrusted the other; no one disarmed. It was a curious situation: Sri Lankan armed forces were found supplying arms to the LTTE to fight the IPKF. The military campaign against the LTTE made the

IPKF unpopular among the Tamil population. IPKF lost about one thousand personnel and withdrew unceremoniously in 1990. Sri Lankan Tamils were left to fend for themselves. An enraged LTTE plotted the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi in 1991. IPKF's military campaign against LTTE also incurred the wrath of Sinhala nationalists who viewed it as India's military intervention.

The decade of 1990s saw more bloodshed in the ongoing civil war. Norway entered the scene as a mediator in 2002; it brokered a ceasefire and mediation which did not work. In 2005, Mahinda Rajapaksa became the President and he wanted to go for a military solution for Tamil issues. On its part, LTTE also felt that it could defeat Sri Lankan armed forces and impose its solution of an independent Tamil nation on Sri Lanka. Following the withdrawal of IPKF, India had a sort of hands-off policy. After the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi, LTTE was banned in India and declared a terrorist organization. India also declined to provide military assistance to Sri Lankan armed forces. There was a drift in Indian foreign policy for several years which cost India in the long term. India's approach left the field open for China, Pakistan, EU, Japan, Israel and the US to gain influence in Sri Lanka – offering various ideas for a negotiated settlement or establishing economic linkages. The all-out military campaign by Sri Lankan armed forces resulted in heavy casualties of the civilians and human rights violation. Government forces regained control of the Eastern Province in 2007. LTTE was completely defeated and the death of its leader Velupillai Prabhakaran was announced on 18 May 2009.

India's views on the civil war remained conflicted. On one hand, there was no sympathy for LTTE following the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi. Also, India somehow continued to believe that there could be no military solution to the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. Worrying to many Indian geostrategic experts was also the growing cooperation between Sri Lanka and China. As civil war ended, Mahinda Rajapaksa and successive governments sought to build closer strategic ties with China. India's influence on the course of events in Sri Lanka dwindled after 2009.

Economic Ties: A part of Indian foreign policy towards its neighbours has been to offer them trade concessions and economic incentives. Sri Lanka was the first country to sign a free trade agreement with India in 1998. The free trade agreement benefitted Sri Lanka in terms of rise in exports to India and higher Indian investment in Sri Lanka. Major exports from India to Sri Lanka include motor vehicles, mineral fuels and oils, cotton, pharmaceutical products, plastic articles, iron and steel, chemicals, cement, sugar etc. Major imports from Sri Lanka to India includes processed meat products, poultry feed, insulated wires and cables, bottle coolers, apparel, pneumatic tires, tiles and ceramics products, rubber gloves, electrical panel boards and enclosures, machinery parts, food preparations and spices, furniture, MDF boards, glass bottles, etc. India is also among the leading investors in Sri Lanka. Besides trade, Indian tourists make up around 27 per cent of all tourists

visiting Sri Lanka.

Fishing Disputes: Fishing in the Palk Strait, which separate India from Sri Lanka by 12 nautical miles, is a matter of dispute. There have been incidents of Sri Lankan navy firing on Indian fishermen in the Palk Strait. Indian fishermen use mechanized fishing trawlers which deprives the Sri Lankan, including Sri Lankan Tamil, fishermen of their catch. Sri Lanka had demanded a ban on the use of mechanized boats; India wants a regulated use of the mechanized trawlers rather than their ban. Besides, Sri Lanka also complains of Indian fishermen fishing in the Sri Lankan waters. A Joint Working Group was constituted to deal with the issues related to Indian fishermen straying in Sri Lankan waters, to prevent the use of force, release of confiscated boats, and other related matters

Check Your Progress Exercise 5

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

- 1) There are hardships and challenges in India's relations with Sri Lanka. Do you agree?

9.8 MALDIVES: A GEOSTRATEGIC OVERVIEW

The Maldives is an archipelago located 370 miles southwest of India in the Indian Ocean. The archipelago nation oversees key shipping lanes in the Indian Ocean. Because of geostrategic location, it draws the attention of great powers. The country spread north to south. Near the southern end of this natural coral barricade do open two passages which permit safe ship navigation from one side of the Indian Ocean to the other through the territorial waters of Maldives. Under more peaceful circumstances, the island nation is crucial to check piracy and trafficking. Its 1,192 coral islands are grouped into 26 atolls, which make the total area of the country as 298 square kilometers. Maldives is the world's lowest-lying country in the world; it is just six feet above the sea level. Global warming could really make this nation of 417,000 population submerge into the ocean. Male is the capital city with a population of 417,500 people live. Islam is the state religion, practiced by entire population. Dhivehi is the language spoken by Maldivians – similar as in the Island of Minicoy in Lakshdweep. Maldives gained full independence in 1965 as Sultanate outside the British Commonwealth. The ruling Sultan was deposed in 1968. Authoritarian tendencies and culture of autocratic rule remain strong. President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom ruled for 30 years (1978-2008). Mohamed Nasheed became president in 2008 and introduced democratic norms and institutions. Maldives is a multiparty democracy since 2008. High end tourism is its main foreign exchange earner; the economy is traditionally dominated by fishing.

9.8.1 Dimensions of Bilateral Relations

It is the smallest and least populated country among all of India's immediate neighbours. India and Maldives share ethnic, linguistic, cultural, religious and commercial links steeped in antiquity. Over the decades, India has developed close strategic, military and economic relations with the archipelago nation.

Maldives is a case study of India's policy which is highly sustainable. The country features prominently in India's strategic thinking and planning. It is a policy for the long run: India stands by the aspiration and needs of the people of Maldives; governments may come and go in a democracy. India remains engaged with all the stakeholders; with not an iota of interference in the domestic matters of the country. India remains the first security provider to Maldives: it provided military assistance to Maldivian authorities to defeat the mercenary coup in November 1988. Indian navy came to the rescue of the island country during the Tsunami in 2004. In 2014, India supplied one thousand tones of drinking water to Maldives. Within hours of water crisis, Indian navy and air force delivered tones of water. India maintains regular high level visits and consultations. Maldives is a major recipient of India's developmental aid and assistance.

Relations with Maldives explain the logic of geography; the country is on the periphery of South Asian waters. At the southern end of the archipelago are located the two open passages permitting safe ship navigation from one side of the Indian Ocean to the other through the territorial waters of Maldives. Besides, it is close to the Indian naval base on the Lakshadweep islands – to the north of Maldives. Just south of Maldives, US maintains a military base in Diego Garcia which provides support for US military operations in Afghanistan and West Asia. India is keen to enhance cooperation between the Indian navy and Maldivian security forces for military and strategic reasons. Cooperation and coordination between intelligence agencies is essential to check the spread of terrorism and radicalism. .

China has made huge forays in the Indian Ocean. The government of President Abdulla Yameen (2013-18) was close and became dependent on China. Yameen government led Maldives into the China-dominated Maritime Silk Road; signed a free trade agreement and took a huge loan of US\$1.5 billion from China. Yameen discarded close security ties with India and took his country out of the Commonwealth. China acquired huge influence after it invested in upgrading the airport and built the 1.4 kilometre long bridge which connects the airport with the Male city. There were reports of Maldives having leased several islands to China to develop tourism; and also to build a joint naval observatory on a northern island. Chinese firms have invested millions of dollars in tourism and infrastructure. And China is now an important economic and strategic partner of Maldives.

9.8.2 India's 'Soft' Diplomatic Footprints

The country went through lots of political turmoil prior to the elections of 2018 but India followed a hands-off policy towards the country. Yameen government had turned authoritarian: it imposed emergency, jailed the opposition leaders, and restricted human rights and civil liberties. Prime Minister Modi had to cancel his visit to Male in March 2015 on account of the worsening domestic situation in that country. India showed lots of patience in dealing with Yameen government

India has a 'soft' diplomatic footprint to handle Maldives. The presidential election held in September 2018 was a straight contest between the incumbent President Abdulla Yameen of the Progressive Party of Maldives (PPM) and the rival Maldives Democratic Party (MDP) led by Ibrahim Mohamed Solih. Most observers viewed it a contest for influence between India and China. Under Yameen, Maldives has been entrapped into an unrepayable Chinese loan of several billion dollars – very much like Sri Lanka which, unable to repay loans, agreed to lease Hambantota port for 99 years to China. Prime Minister Narendra Modi attended the swearing-in ceremony of President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih in Male on 18 November 2018. Within a month, President Solih visited New Delhi on 16 December 2018.

President Solih has complemented India's 'Neighbourhood First' policy with his own 'India First' policy. India has extended US\$ 1.4 billion in assistance for capacity building and other developmental needs of the country. It includes a credit line besides budgetary support. It is a high impact aid package covering several developmental projects, and energy efficiency and renewable energy projects. Besides, the two countries have agreed to restore coordinated naval patrolling and aerial surveillance of the sea lanes. Maldives' strategic and economic relations with China have grown and cannot be reversed but President Solih is determined to rebalance Maldives relations with India and China.

9.9 AFGHANISTAN: A GEOSTRATEGIC OVERVIEW

Afghanistan borders China, Pakistan, Iran, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. The South Asian country is a landlocked country spread over 652,000 square miles. Its geography can be divided into three parts: the highlands, the northern plains and the southwestern plateau. The dominant features of the land are its mountains. Its four major cities are Kabul, its capital city, which is located in the east. Other cities are Kandahar in the south, Herat in the west, and Mazar-i-Sharif in the north. It is mostly a rural society with people living in rugged mountains. Afghanistan is a bridge between the energy-rich Central Asia and energy-poor South Asia. It is located at the crossroads of West Asia, Central Asia and the Indian subcontinent. Historically, the country has attracted diverse

cultures and peoples resulting in diverse languages, cultures and ethnicities. The Muslim majority country comprises diverse populations of Pashtun, Tajiks, Turkmens, Uzbeks and Hazaras. Each of these groups shares populations in a neighboring country, which encourages external involvement. In the 19th century, Afghanistan worked as a buffer between Czarist Russia and British Indian Empire. Durand Line separates Afghanistan and Pakistan.

9.9.1 Dimensions of Bilateral Relations

Psychologically and emotionally, India and Afghanistan think of each other as neighbours and friends. India has strong historical and contemporary relations with Afghanistan. It is from and through Afghanistan that foreign invaders came to India for centuries. Historically, empires in north India tried to exercise control over southern and eastern parts of Afghanistan. India has strong interests in Afghanistan remaining an independent and sovereign state. The antagonism and hostility that characterize India-Pakistan relations make Afghanistan important for India. India would never want Afghanistan to come under Pakistani influence. A narrow band of valleys and mountains, which are presently in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir, separates Afghanistan from India. Absence of land route thus affects India's trade and supply of aid material to Afghanistan. India's security is deeply affected by developments in Afghanistan; the disadvantage however is that India is not involved in Afghanistan's security in a meaningful way. Events in Afghanistan affects Indian security; the presence of outside powers such as the US and its NATO allies – so close to India's borders – is not in India's long term security and defence interests.

Afghans are a very proud people. There may be warring tribes and rival ethnicities but Afghans have a strong national identity especially when it comes to facing foreign invaders. The country has an identity of being a strategic space between India, Iran and Central Asia. Because of its strategic locations, other countries have tried to incorporate Afghanistan territory for the sake of their own security. The present borders of Afghanistan were settled in the nineteenth century by two empires – the Czarist Russia and the British Indian Empire – which feared each other's expansion. Afghanistan is a resource deficient country. Historically, India has nourished it economically. A hostile Pakistan however has delinked and denied that nourishment to Afghanistan. The country has vast undeveloped mineral and hydropower resources. Afghanistan is an important transit point for energy and trade between India and Central Asia, Iran and further to Russia and Turkey. Culturally also, Afghans have been close to India. Many in Afghan's elite class were educated in India.

India has strong security interests in the independence and stability of a sovereign Afghanistan. It has been wary of the influence or presence of foreign powers – Pakistan, Russia, US.

India desires to play a larger role in the reconstruction of Afghanistan but there are constraints. In the summer of 1973, Mohammed Daoud, the former Afghan Prime Minister, launched a successful coup against King Zahir. The pro-Soviet Daoud tried for the next five years to run the country with Soviet military and economic aid and assistance. It was always a challenge to retain the dominance of communist ideology over an intensely tribal Islamic society. In coup staged by rival military faction in 1978, Daoud was killed. Noor Taraki, the leader of the 'khalqis' faction in PDPA became the prime minister. Babrak Karmal of the rival Parchamsits faction and a close associate of Daoud became the deputy prime minister.

Afghanistan was in an ideological and political tumult. The two super powers viz. United States and Soviet Union got involved into the outcome of this internal turmoil. The country became the final battle ground to end the Cold War through a real hot war. While the pro-Soviet army factions headed by Babrak Karmala and Hafizullah Amin jockeyed for power and plotted to overthrow Taraki regime, the US administration of President Jimmy Carter quietly built support among various tribes and encouraged the formation of Islamist Majaheedins to fight the regime. While pro-Soviet communists dominated Kabul, rest of the country slipped into the hands of various tribes and ethnic groups influenced by varied Islamist ideologies. In 1978, Afghan government signed a treaty of friendship and mutual security with Soviet Union which allowed direct Soviet military assistance should the Islamic insurgency threaten the regime. Prospects of a civil war loomed large by 1979: Taraki was unable to keep control as attacks by Majaheedins intensified. By mid-1979 Moscow was searching to replace Taraki and Amin as it dispatched combat troops. This move prompted the Carter administration to begin supplying non-lethal aid to Afghan Majaheedeens. Rival military factions belonging to Taraki and Amin plotted against each other and Taraki was eventually killed by pro Amin faction of the army. On Christmas Eve, Soviet invasion began. Soviet troops killed Amin and installed Babrak Karmal as the Soviet's puppet head of government. US responded by imposing sanctions, boycotted the Moscow Olympics and armed and trained the Majaheedins. It took Soviet Union ten years, at the cost of millions of lives and billions of dollars, to realize the futility of intervention in Afghanistan. Soviet withdrawal left behind a shattered country in which different factions were at war with each. Eventually the Taliban, an Islamic fundamentalist group, seized control, later providing Osama bin Laden with a training base from which to launch terrorist operations worldwide.

Taliban ruled Afghanistan between 1996 and 2001 and promoted and harboured anti-India elements. Civil war continued between the Taliban regime and the opposition Northern Alliance between 1996 and 2001. Taliban regime was overthrown in 2001 in the wake of the Al Qaeda's terrorist attacks on US soil. In 2001, UN Security Council established International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to

oversee military operations against Taliban fighters. Hamid Karzai became president, first at interim president in 2002 and later won the election in 2004. India has provided generous aid to the tune of US\$1.2 billion for the reconstruction of Afghanistan building parliament house building, hospitals, roads and power stations. India also provides assistance in capacity building, and in training Afghan police and military officials.

US and its allies continue to fight the longest war against Taliban and other militant groups in Afghanistan. The fear is that the withdrawal of US forces will facilitate the return of Taliban who control large swathes of the country. While a military solution has not worked; negotiations among outside of powers and domestic actors have also not produced results. US strategic interests are long-term; it could want to retain a military presence in the strategically important country much after the present political turmoil and Taliban insurgency ends. A long-term presence in Afghanistan enables US to keep a watch on developments in the region as a whole and, when necessary, deploy its might at a short notice in Afghanistan's neighbourhood.

Taliban insurgency is on. They now control nearly half of the country. Attacks on the cities including Kabul have become more frequent and intense. Taliban refuse to talk with the government of President Ashraf Ghani, who became president in 2015. US wants to withdraw bulk of its military force. Negotiations have been conducted in Qatar and other places. A draft agreement has been worked out which provides for US military withdrawal in return for Taliban agreeing to not provide bases and support to international Islamist terrorists and radicals. Afghanistan held its fourth presidential election in September 2019. Elections are held regularly but democracy has not yet taken roots. The country is plagued by Taliban insurgency, inter-ethnic and inter-tribal violence, corruption, and absence of institutions of governance including a stable police and armed forces. As and when Americans leave, the country, it is feared, will relapse into prolonged violence and instability.

9.10 LET US SUM UP

The foremost goal of Indian foreign policy since independence has been its own national security in its immediate neighbourhood. Of course, in due course of time, other goals have also risen up in the hierarchy e.g. promotion of trade and economic relations; migration, waters haring etc. There are unresolved borders and boundary related issues with the neighbours. Neighbouring countries have relations with outside great powers; and they try to use those relations to leverage India. The presence of great powers in South Asia raises India's security concerns. Other issues have joined to make the bilateral list longer and more complex; for instance, India's claim as an emerging and, now a 'leading' power. Being a large and rapidly growing economy, India wants access to the resources

and markets of the neighbouring countries. None however is as supreme as security in its neighbourhood.

Give the differential in terms of power and capability, scholars describe India as the dominant or the predominant power in South Asia. It is said that India faces the challenges any regional hegemon would face while engaging its neighbours. But, truth is graver than this. More often, neighbours resent India's dominant position in the region; they even question and contest it and would invite outside great power to leverage their ties with India. In consequence, India's sense insecurity gets accentuated. Almost all neighbouring countries for instance have developed close economic and strategic ties with China. They are ready to play the 'China Card' to balance relations with India and even draw more benefits from India. Chinese investments and technology had made it a virtual stakeholder in the peace and security of South Asia.

India shares land and maritime boundaries with eight countries – Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Because of the Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK) under Pakistan's control, India today is not contiguous to Afghanistan. Significantly, except Afghanistan and Pakistan, no two South countries share borders with each other. Hence, India geographically unites as well divides South Asia.

India has historical, cultural, religious, linguistic, ethnic, economic and trade relations with all its neighbours. In fact, if one goes by history, culture and economics, South Asia could, or should, be a fairly harmonious region. But it is not. Politically and administratively, the whole of South Asia was either part of British India or administered and governed by imperial Britain from its colonial seat in Calcutta/Delhi. All major languages either originated in present day India; or at least continue to be spoken by large linguistic groups – the exception being Sinhala language.

Internal developments impact external relations among South Asian neighbours. And this remains quite a challenge for it. Regional issues, it is felt at times, keep India bogged down to within the South Asian region. Since the 1990s, as India's economy expanded and its influence at global level increased, the notable change has been a conciliatory approach towards the neighbours. It is recognized that a peaceful and friendly neighbourhood is necessary for India to occupy its due place in world affairs as a credible emerging power. It is said that no nation can become a credible power without the neighbourhood recognizing its primacy in the region. Therefore, taking care of neighbourhood has become even more important in the context of India's high and sustained economic growth rate over the past quarter of a century. India's rapid economic growth is despite its poor economic relations with neighbours.

India's neighbourhood is resentful and dangerous. In reality, several of India's neighbours carry weight and capability in their own right. They are large, populous, having military capability and a

strong state apparatus. Hypothetically speaking, had they been located in some other region of the world, countries like Pakistan and Bangladesh – given their size, population and military capability – would have been deemed as regional/ subregional powers in their own right. But here they stand dwarf in comparison to India. No wonder, they challenge India as a hegemonic power. Often, they publicly resent Indian regional initiatives and complain of its ‘big brotherly’ attitude. How to deal with this very peculiar situation is a challenge for India’s neighbourhood policy. Faced with this dilemma, India has been at times active and conciliatory in its approach; on other occasion, its response is marked by a degree of indifference or hostility.

Nehru had wanted to keep foreign powers out of South Asia. He never considered South Asia as India’s sphere of influence but had wanted neighbours to recognize India’s security concerns. Given the context of the Cold War and India’s own limitations in terms of providing economic and security needs of the neighbours, a sphere of influence was never possible. In fact, great powers never left South Asia. Pakistan was a frontline state in the US-led Cold War. It was a member of both CENTO and SEATO military pact. India itself called for American and Soviet support, and received it, in its border war with China in 1962. It concluded the treaty of peace and friendship with Soviet Union in 1971; and thus secured a sort of security umbrella for itself.

The policy of engaging all the great powers on equal footing while maintaining India’s own strategic autonomy is of more recent origin. Another notable change for the past some two decades is India’s readiness to get outside powers involved in regional affairs. For instance, India worked closely with outside powers and also the UN in moving the political crises in Sri Lanka and Nepal towards resolution. India also supported observer status in SAARC for China, Japan and the US; though it is very suspicious of its neighbours when they suggest full membership of China in SAARC. Technology and military capability have changed conventional geopolitics: today, China is strongly present in India’s neighbourhood. India’s immediate neighborhood is a conflict-ridden region. Power dynamics could change rapidly. The region requires foremost attention and allocation of large resources on India’s part.

9.11 SOME USEFUL REFERENCES

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9.12 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1) Your answer should be based on subsection 9.2.2.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1) Your answer should be based on subsection 9.4.2.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

1) Your answer should be based on Section 9.5.

Check Your Progress Exercise 4

1) Your answer should be based on subsections (i) 9.6.2; and (ii) 9.6.4.

Check Your Progress Exercise 5

1) Your answer should be based on subsection 9.7.1.