



ISSN Print: 2394-7500  
ISSN Online: 2394-5869  
Impact Factor (RJIF): 8.4  
IJAR 2024; 10(4): 306-308  
[www.allresearchjournal.com](http://www.allresearchjournal.com)  
Received: 15-02-2023  
Accepted: 22-03-2023

**Yashvardhan Singh**  
Department of Political  
Science (University of  
Allahabad) Prayagraj, Uttar  
Pradesh, India

**Dr. Awdhesh Kumar**  
Assistant Professor,  
Department of Political  
Science, Arya Kanya Degree  
College, Prayagraj, Uttar  
Pradesh, India

## India's neighbourhood first policy

**Yashvardhan Singh and Dr. Awdhesh Kumar**

### Abstract

India is the largest and most important country in the South Asia region. Its land borders include those with Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nepal, China, Bhutan, Myanmar, and Bangladesh, as well as maritime borders with Sri Lanka and the Maldives. India's foreign policy, known as the "Neighbour First" policy, focuses actively on establishing relations with India's neighbours. Since its independence, India's foreign policy has been constantly evolving, and engagement with its neighbors has always been a top objective for the country. The Neighbourhood First Policy, a key component of India's foreign policy, focuses on peaceful relations and cooperative synergy co-development with its South Asian neighbors. India's 'Neighbourhood First' strategy focuses on developing a mutually beneficial, people-centered regional framework for peace and development. India's "Neighbourhood First" policy aims to strengthen ties with its neighbors while advancing international peace and cooperation the ongoing political, economic and social turmoil in South Asia has disrupted the peace and stability of India's neighboring countries and the entire region. The Indian government understands the need to build and maintain relations with its neighbors. Since 2014, the Indian government has emphasized the concept of "Neighbour First" as an essential component of Indian foreign policy. The main objective of India's interaction with its neighbors is to ensure that they benefit from India's economic prosperity and growth.

**Keywords:** Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nepal, China, Bhutan, Myanmar, and Bangladesh

### Introduction

India is the largest and most important country in the South Asia region. Its land borders include those with Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nepal, China, Bhutan, Myanmar, and Bangladesh, as well as maritime borders with Sri Lanka and the Maldives. India's foreign policy, known as the "Neighbour First" policy, focuses actively on establishing relations with India's neighbours. Since its independence, India's foreign policy has been constantly evolving, and engagement with its neighbors has always been a top objective for the country. The Neighbourhood First Policy, a key component of India's foreign policy, focuses on peaceful relations and cooperative synergy co-development with its South Asian neighbors. India's 'Neighbourhood First' strategy focuses on developing a mutually beneficial, people-centered regional framework for peace and development. India's "Neighbourhood First" policy aims to strengthen ties with its neighbors while advancing international peace and cooperation the ongoing political, economic and social turmoil in South Asia has disrupted the peace and stability of India's neighboring countries and the entire region. The Indian government understands the need to build and maintain relations with its neighbors. Since 2014, the Indian government has emphasized the concept of "Neighbour First" as an essential component of Indian foreign policy. The main objective of India's interaction with its neighbors is to ensure that they benefit from India's economic prosperity and growth.

India's Neighbourhood First Policy aims to promote friendly and productive relations with its South Asian neighbours in a range of subjects including connectivity, economy, defence, disaster management, science and technology, research, education, etc. Connectivity The connectivity of India-Bangladesh waterways has helped supply chains especially between Bangladesh and Northeast India. A \$484 million freight transport project called the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project will connect the ports of Sittwe in Rakhine State, Myanmar with Kolkata in eastern India. The Rail Services Agreement (RSA) 2004 governs rail freight movement between India and Nepal. It has also signed Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with members of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). These agreements ensure that resources, energy, products,

**Corresponding Author:**  
**Yashvardhan Singh**  
Department of Political  
Science (University of  
Allahabad) Prayagraj, Uttar  
Pradesh, India

labour and information can move freely across borders.

**Cooperation in the Economic Field:** Commercial relations between Sri Lanka and India are governed by the India-Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement (ISFTA), which was signed on December 28, 1998 and came into force on March 1, 2000. The ASEAN-India Trade Agreement ("The Agreement") is a trade agreement between the 10 member countries of ASEAN (including Myanmar) and India. In April 1993, the seven SAARC member countries of India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka signed the Agreement on SAARC Preferential Trading Arrangement (SAPTA). India is involved in and committed to SAARC as a driver of regional development. India and Bangladesh have agreed to begin discussions on a bilateral Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement in 2022.

**Cooperation in Disaster Management:** The geographical location of this southern part of Asia causes a variety of natural disasters, including volcanoes, earthquakes, cyclones, monsoons and eventually heavy floods. Nearly two billion people in the region are now more vulnerable to longer and more intense monsoon seasons as well as droughts as a result of climate change. India is taking the lead in strengthening cooperation among South Asian countries to mitigate disasters. India is focusing on disaster response, resource management, weather forecasting and communication as well as disaster management capabilities and knowledge for all South Asian populations.

**Military and Defence Cooperation:** India is also focusing on enhancing regional security through military cooperation by conducting and participating in various defence exercises. Joint Exercise Name Exercise Type Among:

- Mitra Shakti
- Joint Military Exercise India-Sri Lanka
- SLINEX Joint Naval Exercise India-Sri Lanka
- Surya Kiran
- Joint Military Exercise India-Nepal
- PANEX-21 Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) Exercise India-BIMSTEC
- Hand to Hand Joint Military Exercise India-China
- Sampreeti Joint Military Exercise India-Bangladesh

India is an industrialized developing country. It has a long history of international cooperation, is a member of SAARC, BIMSTEC and BRICS, and is an indispensable component of the emerging world. India was a founding member of various international organizations, including the United Nations, the Asian Development Bank, the Group of 20 (G20) and the Non-Aligned Movement. India has a separate ministry responsible for international relations. It is known as the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA). India has a land border of 15, 106.7 km and a coastline of 7, 516.6 km. Afghanistan, Pakistan, China, Bhutan, Nepal, Myanmar, Bangladesh, Maldives and Sri Lanka are India's neighbouring countries. However, India has a land border with seven of its nine neighbours.

**India-China relations:** India and China are two of the rising powers in Asia. Apart from being the most populous countries, they are also home to two of the oldest civilisations in the world, the Chinese and the Indus Valley

civilisations. Historically, India and China have had cultural and commerce ties since the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC. India and China formally established diplomatic relations on April 1, 1950. The year 2020 marks the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of China-India diplomatic relations. However, border disputes between India and China dominated the 1950s, eventually leading to war between the two countries in 1962. China first began claiming large parts of Indian territory in the North East Frontier Agency (NEFA, now Arunachal Pradesh) and Ladakh by issuing maps showing these areas as part of China. In 1956-57, China expanded its borders and built a 110-mile-long road through India's Aksai Chin region (Ladakh). Relations between India and China are getting worse at the moment. The two great powers are clashing along their disputed border in the Himalayan region. In June 2017, a military standoff occurred between India and China on the Doklam plateau, which is located at a tri-junction between India, China, and Bhutan.

**Indo-Pakistan relations:** The two nations have a complex and predominantly hostile relationship founded in several historical and political events, most notably the partition of British India in August 1947; the India-Pakistan border is one of the most militarized international borders in the world. Since the partition of British India in 1947, territorial disputes over the Kashmir region have led to two of the three major Indo-Pakistani wars in 1947 and 1965, as well as a limited war in 1999 (Kargil War). However, India seeks cordial relations with Pakistan under its "Neighbourhood First Policy". India's consistent view is that any dispute between India and Pakistan should be addressed bilaterally and peacefully. India will not compromise on matters of national security and will take strong and decisive action to counter all attempts to undermine India's security and territorial integrity.

**India-Sri Lanka relations:** India and Sri Lanka have a long history of intellectual, cultural, religious and linguistic contact that stretches back more than 2,500 years. Since independence, India and Sri Lanka have established bilateral relations at various levels, and significant progress in the execution of development assistance programmes for internally displaced people (IDPs) and disadvantaged groups of the Sri Lankan population has helped strengthen the two countries' relationship. Political relations between India and Sri Lanka have been characterized by periodic high-level exchange of visits. The India-Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement (ISFTA) was signed in 1998 and has been in effect since March 2000. India and Sri Lanka have a strong defence partnership based on intensive training and service-to-service links. The Cultural Cooperation Agreement, signed in New Delhi on 29 November 1977 by the Governments of India and Sri Lanka, serves as the foundation for periodic cultural exchange programmes between the two countries.

**India-Bhutan Relations:** India and Bhutan have a unique and long-standing bilateral relationship marked by mutual trust, friendship and understanding. The unique relationship has been fostered through a history of regular high-level visits and interactions between the two countries. India and Bhutan established diplomatic relations in 1968 with the establishment of an Indian Special Office in Thimphu. The Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between India and

Bhutan was signed in 1949 and amended in February 2007. In 2018, India and Bhutan celebrated the Golden Jubilee of the beginning of their official diplomatic relations. Since the early 1960s, when Bhutan established its Five Year Plans, India has provided economic assistance to Bhutan's socioeconomic development. The core of bilateral economic cooperation is the mutually beneficial hydropower cooperation with Bhutan. The Government of India has consistently supported Bhutan's socioeconomic development. The cooperation of the two countries in hydropower is an example of win-win cooperation. There are active cultural exchanges between India and Bhutan. Many Bhutanese pilgrims visit sacred Buddhist sites in India. Most Bhutanese students chose India as their preferred study-abroad destination, and the Indian government provides scholarships to almost all of them.

**India-Maldives Relations:** India and the Maldives have ancient ethnic, linguistic, cultural, religious, and commercial ties, and their relations are close, friendly, and multifaceted. In 1965, India was one of the first countries to recognize and establish diplomatic relations with the Maldives after its independence. In 1972, India established a CDA mission and a resident High Commissioner in 1980. In November 2004, the Maldives established a full-fledged High Commission in New Delhi, one of the country's only four diplomatic posts abroad.

**India-Myanmar Relations:** India and Myanmar have close ties with the Maldives. The relations are based on common historical, ethnic, cultural and religious ties. India, being the birthplace of Lord Buddha, is a pilgrimage place for the people of Myanmar. In 1951, India and Myanmar signed a Treaty of Friendship. India and Myanmar share a 1600 km long land border as well as a maritime border in the Bay of Bengal. The physical proximity of the two countries has helped in the development and maintenance of friendly relations as well as facilitating people-to-people interactions. India's neighbourhood policy should be guided by the Gujral Doctrine, a set of five principles for conducting international relations with India's immediate neighbours. The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) has been steadily deteriorating between 2010 and 2020, requiring revitalization.

Despite its "neighbour first" policy, India must do more to build cordial and constructive relations with all its neighbours. India needs a long-term solution to all border disputes. India should focus more on regional connectivity, which needs to be pursued more actively. India should manage security concerns by using cost-effective, efficient and reliable technology methods that are now in use in other regions of the world.

## References

1. Editor: Ramesh Trivedi, 2008: India's Relations with Her Neighbours, Publisher: Isha Books, ISBN: 9788182054387, 8182054389.
2. Jyotindra Nath Dixit, 2001: Indian foreign policy and its neighbours, Publisher:Gyan Publishing House, ISBN: 9788121207263, 8121207266.
3. Sir William Patrick Andrew, 1878: India and Her Neighbours, Publisher: G. Munro, Original from: The New York Public Library.
4. Raj Kumar Singh, 2010: Relations of NDA and UPA with Neighbours, Publisher: Gyan Publishing House, ISBN: 9788121210607, 8121210607.
5. Avtar Bhasin, 2018: India and Pakistan: Neighbours at Odds, Publisher: Bloomsbury Publishing, ISBN: 9789386826213, 9386826216.