

India's South Asia Policy: Historical Heritage & Current Trends

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ABSTRACT

South Asia's history has provided the independent India with a special South Asia policy legacy that has deeply affected the independent India's national interests in South Asia. There are also gaps between the means and strategy inherited and produced new political parties in India's South Asia politics, but it wasn't until the BJP government. Modi's government first gives a clear definition of neighborhood policy and the neighbors of South Asia by adopting a combination of reality and pragmatic diplomacy from Lord constructivism. In South Asia, it wasn't until 1985 that India began implementing multilateralism, but bilateralism has been the central theme throughout. India strongly rejected the entry of non-regional powers into South Asia, and has not changed its commitment to leading South Asia and transcending neighboring regions. But India's behavior toward the presence of America and China in South Asia has changed as well. It has allowed the US to step in and recognize the presence of China in the region.

KEY WORDS: India, South Asia, Neighborhood, Policy, Regionalism

Date of Submission: 15-08-2020

Date of Acceptance: 01-09-2020

India is a large nation and a dominant power in South Asia surrounded by small neighbors, with China being excluded. Recognizing that small states have a natural fear complex about their big neighbors — historically this has been one of the facts of international arena — and with peaceful coexistence as its guiding policy, India has sought to instill trust among its neighbors. Numerous Indian governments have repeatedly made policy pronouncements to the effect that while India is a big country, it does not behave like a big brother; it believes in friendly relations, peaceful conflict resolution and good friendship.

After 1996, Gujral's doctrine¹, India's South Asia policy changed from hardline to relatively benign, and in 2005, it agreed to allow China to become an observer state within the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). In 2016, the "Neighborhood First"² policy of Modi government made the "One Belt One Road" cooperation projects signed in South Asia by China reversals one after the other. India's South Asia policy has fluctuated during the last two decades. To implement the China initiative in South Asia and handle the relationship between India and South Asia properly, it is exploring the evolution law of India's South Asia policy and grasping its realistic tendency. However, an in-depth analysis on the topic suggests that there are no major doctrinal changes in Indian foreign policy; the present government is acting mostly within the guidelines defined by previous Indian prime ministers, especially with regard to South Asia policy in India.

I. INDIA'S SOUTH ASIA DIPLOMACY HAS A LONG LEGACY

The "South Asia" definition was not in use until the mid-1960s. Thus, South Asia's past has endowed independent India with a special South Asia policy legacy, which after independence has profoundly influenced India's political, economic, security, social and cultural policy decisions toward South Asia.

The countries of South Asia are not the same as neighboring India. As a general geography, South Asian countries include India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan, all of which are SAARC Members. There is a special situation of Afghanistan. Afghanistan is new member of SAARC and it is not India's neighbor. It lies on the South-Central Asian frontier and joined the SAARC in 2005, until its membership, it belongs to the Middle East and Central Asia post-Cold Wars. Now it is a joint analysis of South Asia and Central Asia; Maldives and Sri Lanka are island countries in the Indian Ocean; Nepal and Bhutan are mountainous countries and landlocked with bordering India and China; Pakistan and Bangladesh were both aquatic countries prior to India's partition. Bordering the Himalayas with Myanmar, India's neighbor and once

¹ "Gujral Doctrine", "International Relations, Drishti", 24 Dec 2019, <https://www.drishtias.com/daily-updates/daily-news-editorials/gujral-doctrine>

² "India, Modi and the Neighbourhood". Gateway House. 25 August 2014. Retrieved 3 November 2014. <https://www.gatewayhouse.in/india-modi-and-the-neighbourhood/>

part of the colonial empire of Britain and India, but now part of Southeast Asia. As a result, Myanmar has become a common object of cross-regional research just like Afghanistan. China is also in East Asia, next door to India. Therefore, the countries of South Asia cannot be compared.

The legacy of the Anglo-Indian colonial empire was the historical legacy that had the greatest impact on India's post-independence South Asia policy³. Next, find the Indian Ocean Southern Asian subcontinent. It was from the sea that the colonizers of Europe, embodied by Britain, conquered India. Additionally, Britisher united the subcontinent of South Asia. Britain has built a large strategic arc from the Gulf to the Far East, including Iran, Afghanistan, Southeast Asia, and the Indian Ocean, with the South Asian subcontinent as the center.

If India's South Asian policy's first legacy is about the sea, then the second is about property. Before the European colonizers conquered the subcontinent, the foreigners who reached the subcontinent came mostly from the north and the west, including the Greeks, Huns, Cypriots, Iranian and Muslims. Historically South Asia has been divided⁴.

The third legacy of India's South Asia policy comes from Chanakya, the Mauryan prime minister, and is stated in "Arthashastra," which sets out systemic principles and strategies for India's handling of regional and international relations. He created a Mandala structure of "king's circle," in which there were four types of states: hegemon, rivals, allies and neutrals. The sovereign state is a conqueror, its neighbor is a natural enemy, and a natural friend of its neighbor⁵. A neutral state is far from the three countries listed above, so it can be drawn in briefly, but in the long run it will become a possible enemy, of course not every position in the system is set, in particular the hegemon can change at any time. It is a complex and continuous loop of a system of equilibrium. Of this purpose Cordelier offered "six tactics" for the monarchs, namely peace, battle, neutrality, preparation for war, coalition, and strangulation. Using the six techniques depends on the level of nationality. When the national strength is weak, it is necessary to adopt peace, alliance and strangulation. If a nation is powerful, it should follow the strategy of preparing for war and fighting war; the best approach is neutrality when one's strength is equal to that of the enemy⁶. He claimed a country's true strength involves the power of reason, the ability to compromise, the power of government, the rich treasury, the strong army, the country's most significant capacity for military action⁷.

The rich historical heritage has had a significant impact on the South Asian politics of India after independence. What India hasn't changed in terms of politics from the outset is supporting democracy to its South Asian neighbors and their political stability. India is most worried about Kashmir, on the security front. Socially, India is most concerned about the issue of national autonomy which concerns the country's northeastern region. India is most volatile in terms of history of religious tension and rivalry between Hinduism and Islam. Which make up the main national interests of India in South Asia.

II. THE SOUTH ASIAN POLITICAL TREND OF THE DIFFERENT POLITICAL PARTIES

India has the centrist faction of the Congress, the assorted BJP and the right-wing faction Bharatiya Janata Party. Although the emphasis on India's South Asian neighbors has become the standard in foreign policy, the three kinds of party government's policy priorities vary.

The BJP government is most concerned with its neighbors in South Asia. In 1977, Morar Ji Desai government first put forward the good-neighborly strategy in response to the worsening ties with neighboring countries during the Indira Gandhi period. It increased its policy input to neighboring countries in South Asia, especially Nepal and Bangladesh, which took a fairly significant step in dealing with South Asia's ties with neighboring countries⁸. In 1996, the Gujral Government brought forward in a groundbreaking way the "Gujral doctrine." It said: "There are five basic principles in neighboring countries" foreign policy followed by the United Front Government: firstly, India does not seek reciprocity, but offers as much trust and assistance as possible to its neighbors – Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives and Sri Lanka; secondly, no action should be permitted to be committed within the territory of any South Asian State. Thirdly, non-interference in the internal affairs of each other; fourthly, all South Asian countries value each other's territorial integrity and sovereign

³United Nations, Yearbook of the United Nations, pages 297, Office of Public Information, 1947, United Nations

⁴Ibid., p. 342.

⁵Upinder Singh, A History of Ancient and Early Medieval India: From the Stone Age to the 12th Century, Pearson Longman, 2008, p. 349

⁶Kautilya, Kautilya's Arthashastra, Translated by R. Ramasastry, Bangalore: Bangalore Government Press, 1915, pp. 370-385.

⁷Henry Kissinger. World Order. Penguin press, 2014, pp. 249-254.

⁸Pran Chopra, "India's Foreign policy: Changing context and content," The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs Volume 69, Issue 275, 1979, pp. 227-231.

independence; and finally, all contentious issues should be resolved peacefully through bilateral agreements, which has led to improved relations between India and its South Asian neighbor's⁹.

Except for the Indira Gandhi administration, Congress largely ignored South Asia. Nehru takes the posture of disregarding the neighbors of South Asia, he pursued for being "one of the best in the world of colorful forces," "since the small nation is doomed to perish, it may be a place of cultural autonomy and eke out a living, but not an independent political entity," Nehru further believes: even when India and Pakistan are separated, but the two countries share their history¹⁰. Nehru struggled to achieve the aim of a great power with the start of the war between India-Pakistan and India-China, which prompted the Indira government to turn its attention to the South Asian subcontinent and to address the internal problems of South Asia in full. Under the influence of grandfather and mother, Rajiv Gandhi shake the government's pendulum around South Asia's politics, visited Pakistan in 1989, made bilateral relations easier, but did not last long and optimistic¹¹, trying to mediate between the Sri Lankan government and Tamil rebels, Sri Lanka's interior number, the result was his death. 1991 The Congress Party's administration, Narsimha Rao, embarked on economic reforms and initiated the 'East Asia' strategy, with the immediate goal of learning from the economic growth experience and expertise of South-East and East Asian countries and attracting high-tech and infrastructure industries Investment in technology, increased trade flows and eventually India became a welcome economy¹². Manmohan Singh came to power as prime minister in 2004 with an emphasis on strengthening economic relations and alliances with neighboring countries, but "India's foreign policy focuses on a growing neighborhood... Beginning close to home... "A gradual expansion into the distant neighborhood" is basically a continuation of a strategy that emphasizes Southeast and East Asia over South Asia¹³.

Later, Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj of Modi's government officially adopted the "Neighborhood First" policy at the SAARC Council of Ministers for the first time¹⁴. Prime Minister Modi then took the initiative to prioritize visits to his neighbors in South Asia¹⁵, a task that has elbowed past previous governments. But the government of Modi also announced that "it's not just looking east, it's time to Act East¹⁶." In the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' annual report for 2015-2016, Seychelles, Mauritius and the Indian Ocean region are also neighbors to India¹⁷. In addition, the Modi government's foreign policy has slowly moved from the early stage of the "Neighboring countries first" to the later stage of the "smart diplomacy," which seeks to balance the great powers¹⁸. It can be seen that while the BJP government has refocused its foreign policy on South Asia, China's presence in South Asia is still far away from its foreign policy focus and has to offer a new touch.

III. INHERITANCE AND STRATEGY INNOVATION

In view of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the detailed characteristics of the South Asian government's strategy, in particular the Modi strategies, complicated governmental changes through using the hybrid realism and constructivism pragmatism diplomacy¹⁹, as a result, specifically this part will examine the Modi strategic steps taken by the South Asian government, observing through progress.

As for Modi's government, hegemony is enemy, ally, and neutral states under the Mandala structure. After independence Pakistan has been in an open conflict with India. Bhutan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh are allies

⁹HuangZheng, "Gujralism and its impact on Indian diplomacy." *South Asian Studies Quarterly* 4, 2005, pp. 74-87.

¹⁰Jawahar Lal Nehru: *Discovery of India*, Penguin India; New edition, 2008, pp. 475-490.

¹¹Hasan Askari Rizvi, *Pakistanis Foreign Policy: An Overview, 1947-2004* Islamabad: Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency, 2004, p. 23.

¹²Nancy Jetly, *India's Foreign Policy: Challenges and Prospects*, New Delhi: Vikas Pub. House, 1999, p. 12.

¹³Siwei Liu, "India's new neighborhood diplomacy strategy: driving and evaluating", *Quarterly Journal of South Asian Studies*, 2016, Pp. E7-24.

¹⁴"External Affairs Minister's Opening Statement at SAARC Council of Ministers Meeting, November 25, 2014, <http://mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements/24314/external+affairs+ministers+opening+statement+at+saarc+council+of+ministers+meeting>.

¹⁵Ministry of External Affairs (India), "Details of efforts made to improve the relationship," http://mea.gov.in/Images/amb/lul237_1_25_07_2018.pdf.

¹⁶Sushma Swaraj, "Time to Change 'Look East Policy' to 'Act East Policy': Sushma Swaraj," Aug. 25, 2014, <http://www.ndtv.com/article/india/time-to-change-look-east-policy-to-act-east-policy-sushma-swaraj-581060>

¹⁷Ministry of External Affairs (India), *M Annual Report 2015-2016*, <http://www.mea.gov.in/annual-reports/htm?57/AnnualReports>.

¹⁸Satish Kumar and Sohan Lal, "PM Modi's Smart Diplomacy: India From a Balancer to a Lead Power," *World Focus: Indians Foreign Policy*, Series-2, No. 468, December 2018, pp. 26-30.

¹⁹Surupa Gupta, *Indian Foreign Policy under Modi: A New Brand or Just Repackaging?* International Studies Perspectives, Oxford University Press, 2018, p. 6.

of India, among the other six countries, while Nepal, Sri Lanka and the Maldives are independent nations. In three instances this can be shown. First, in 2005, India proposed that Afghanistan should join SAARC, Pakistan proposed that China should join SAARC as an observer, then India proposed that the United States should also become an observer; later, Pakistan, along with Nepal and Sri Lanka, tried to elevate China to membership, but India vetoed them both²⁰. Second, Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Bhutan joined India in boycotting the 19th SAARC-19 summit scheduled for November 2016 in Pakistan, while the Maldives joined Nepal and Sri Lanka in pushing for a postponement rather than cancellation of the summit. Ultimately, in 2018, Nepal declared at the last minute that it would not participate in the joint military exercise conducted from September 10-16 by the Multi-field Technical and Economic Cooperation Initiative (BIMSTEC) around the Bay of Bengal in India, since it would participate in the joint military exercise with China from September 17-28. Nepal, Sri Lanka and Maldives cannot be said to be India's enemies and China's allies, they are shifting countries in behavior²¹. After the new government of Sri Lanka and Maldives elected in 2019 shifting actions and establishing good ties with India. Over the last 70 years the rivalry and war between India and Pakistan has been most visible. The government of Modi has now abandoned war and neutrality, and has embraced other means, but they are creative and established.

First, the Modi government's high-level visits take the initiative of visiting South Asian Neighbors, which is entirely different from previous one-way visits by high-level South Asian neighbors to India²². Modi concentrated more on friendly nations. The first country he visited was Bhutan, whom he called "all-weather friend" of India²³. In 2015 and 2016, Modi's government defense minister visited Bangladesh, the first time an Indian defense minister had visited Bangladesh since 1971. Modi's surprise visit to Pakistan in late 2015, following a visit to Afghanistan, was Pakistan's first by an Indian prime minister in 12 years. India has lengthy ties with Afghanistan, in essence. For neutral, Modi visited the second South Asian countries is Nepal, is the first-visit Nepal over seven years, India's prime minister, as he pointed out in the Nepal congress speech that strengthening ties with Nepal is his first work, hoping India Nepal as a South Asian prosperity partner relationship and the catalyst example. India's President Pranab Mukherjee visited Nepal in 2016²⁴, which was an Indian President's first visit to Nepal in 18 years. After a tumultuous relationship between the two nations, all focused on India's security interests in Nepal, geostrategy, global policy shifts and historical heritage, Modi visited Nepal again in 2018²⁵. Modi successively toured Sri Lanka in 2015 and 2017²⁶. After 28 years, he is the first Indian Prime Minister to have visited Sri Lanka. During his 2014-2015 visits to his South Asian Neighbors, Indian Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj visited Maldives in 2014 and 2015, and his Minister of Health, Jagat Prakash Nadda, attended the 50th anniversary celebrations as the special envoy of the Prime Minister in 2015. All in all, the Modi administration's order and number of high-level visits indicate a particular approach to South Asian neighbors in both categories.

Secondly, they actively engage in cultural diplomacy. Modi's speeches to Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Afghanistan parliaments have highlighted cultural and civilized ties, portraying religion as the glue between India and its neighbors. He also met ordinary people along the way in Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, visited religious sites and raised scholarships to those countries. Cultural and religious beliefs have become the cornerstone of Modi's approach to neighborly relations.

Thirdly, granting aid and loans. After the Bangladesh and Nepal earthquakes, water crises in the Maldives and floods in Sri Lanka, Indian aid workers rushed to the scene and provided loans for infrastructure and small development projects in those countries. India has deliberately proved to be the first respondent to the crisis in its South Asian neighbors and a net regional security provider²⁷. However, to strengthen India's

²⁰Surendra Kumar. China's SAARC membership: The debate, *International Journal of China Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 3, December 2015, pp. 299-311

²¹Sivani Baral and J. K. Baral, "Evolution of India's SAARC Policy," *World Focus: India's Foreign Policy*, Series-2, No. 468, December 2018, pp. 54-62.

²²Ashok K. Behuria, Smruti S. Pattanaik & Arvind Gupta, "Does India Have a Neighbourhood Policy?" *Strategic Analysis*, Vol. 36, No. 2, March 2012, p. 241.

²³Embassy of India, "India-Bhutan Relations," <https://embassyofindia.org.in/>.

²⁴Ministry of External Affairs (India), "India-Nepal Relations," http://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/8_Nepal_November_2017.pdf.

²⁵SD Muni, "Modi's Third Nepal Visit Entails Commitments Wrapped in Culture," *The Quint*, May 13, 2018, <https://www.thequint.com/voices/opinion/modis-third-nepal-visit-commitments-wrapped-in-culture>.

²⁶Lubina Sarwar, "India's Nepal Policy: An Analysis of Impact of 'Modi Doctrine,'" *World Focus: Indian Foreign Policy*, Series-2, No. 468, December 2018, pp. 112-114.

²⁷Constantino Xavier, "Responding First as a Leading Power," <http://www.indembassybem.gov.in/docs/xavier.pdf>.

economic strength, the Modi government has changed the way of aid and gradually reduced the government's aid and subsidies. Paste, a major increase in credit²⁸.

Fourthly, with our South Asian Neighbors, we need to address long-standing issues. This included completing an eight-year road project in Bhutan; meeting Nepal's nearly twenty years demand for opening cross-border air routes; completing an Afghan-Indian friendly dam project that had been delayed for years; settling a territorial dispute with Bangladesh; working with Maldives countries; resumption dialogue with Pakistan, etc.

The Modi Government's strategies toward South Asian countries are both hereditary and innovative, with similarities and differences. The Modi government's "Neighborhood First" policy can be summed up as follows: neighbors are close neighbors and distant neighbors, and South Asian neighbors are the core circle; national security interests' considerations are paramount in neighboring countries' diplomacy; neighboring countries' diplomacy is based on a common cultural heritage. Neighboring countries' diplomacy is outcome-oriented; neighboring countries' diplomacy has priority and strategic importance.

IV. BILATERAL POLICY PREFERENCES AND MULTILATERALISM

In South Asia, India didn't start adopting multilateralism until 1985. Countries like Bangladesh and Bhutan already proposed an organization for regional cooperation in South Asia as early as 1977. But India feared these countries would band against it until Rajiv Gandhi came to power, suggesting a "twin idea" of foreign policy that simultaneously reinforced bilateral ties and regional ties with its neighbors²⁹. Additionally, SAARC developed slowly after its establishment, and it was appropriate that only after the introduction of "Gujralism" did India take an active part in SAARC activities. The South Asian Free Trade Area Agreement entered into force on 10 January 2006. Afghanistan became the member country, and successively China, Japan, the United States, South Korea, the European Union, and Iran acquired observer status. Driven by the "Neighborhood First" policy of the Modi government, South Asian intra-regional trade doubled between 2014 and 2018³⁰.

However, multilateralism is complementary and bilateralism is fundamental from start to finish. Paragraph 10 of the SAARC Charter General Regulation states that SAARC is guided by the consensus principle and that all bilateral and contentious issues are not raised in the SAARC Forum. Thus, SAARC has held only 18 of the 33 summits it was supposed to hold since its establishment in 1985, 11 of which were failures caused by the India-Pakistan conflict³¹. The Modi government proposed to connect ground, water and air between South Asian countries at the Kathmandu Summit in 2014, and tried to move forward the SAARC satellite project, which Modi renamed South Asian Satellite after Pakistan declined to participate in the entire planning procedure³². Nevertheless, with the exception of South Asian University based in Delhi founded in 2010, India has never really led or managed a regional organization in South Asia, the least populated region in the world.

India has turned to subregionalism and transregionalism in South Asia since the end of the cold war. Typical case is the Bay of Bengal in 2004 India product extremely promotes the establishment of the ring more technical and economic cooperation in the field of call discussion groups, including South Asia, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Myanmar, China, Thailand, Sri Lanka and South-East Asian countries. In 2006, Free Trade Area Agreement was formally signed, India hopes to promote in Southeast Asia as well as the Far East, while at the same time resolving the difficulties between India and Pakistan. In 2018, Modi publicly announced that orbiting the Bay of Bengal 's multidisciplinary technical and economic cooperation initiative is "Indian Neighborhood Policy Priorities and East to Intersection Point Operation Strategy," as a result, "India's policymakers agree that orbiting the Bay of Bengal would replace SAARC with a lot of technical and economic cooperation in the field of initiative³³. However, due to domestic objections Nepal and Thailand have not participated in the joint

²⁸Surupa Gupta. "Indian Foreign Policy under Modi: A New Brand or Just Repackaging?" *International Studies Perspectives*, Vol. 20, Issue 1, 2019, <https://academic.oup.com/isp/article/20/1/1/5068035>,

²⁹Harish Kapur, "India's foreign policy under Rajiv Gandhi," *The Round Table: The Commonwealth journal of International Affairs*, Volume 76, Issue 304, 1987, pp. 469-480.

³⁰Prasanta Sahoo, "Myanmar in India's New Neighbourhood Strategy," *World Focus, India's Foreign Policy, Series-2*, No. 468, December 2018, pp. 93-100.

³¹Sivani Baral and J. K. Baral, "Evolution of India's SAARC Policy," *World Focus: India's Foreign Policy, Series-2*, No. 468, December 2018, pp. 54-62.

³²"FO explains why Pakistan quit SAARC satellite project," *The Dawn*, May 6, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1331412/fb-explains-why-pakistan-quit-saarc-satellite-project>.

³³Prasanta Sahoo, "Myanmar in India's New Neighbourhood Strategy," *World Focus; Indians Foreign Policy, Series-2*, No. 468, December 2018, pp. 93-100

exercises³⁴. In South Asia, Modi's government is aggressively promoting the general planning sub-region, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal's car deal, attempting to move the SAARC motorcycle protocol, realizing SAARC interconnectivity among member states, but in 2016, Bhutan's parliament rejected by motorcycle agreement³⁵.

From all of these it does seem that India's multilateralism policy is ineffective if it is compelled to promote regional multilateralism in South Asia, sub-regionalism or even trans-regionalism, which means that India's South Asia policy must continue to take bilateralism as its main axis.

V. CONCLUSION

The national interest defines the foreign policy for the country. Good neighborhood has been a constant goal of India's foreign policy since 1977; however, before Modi came to power, "the real impact of the term in neighboring countries was that it was only a theoretical prescription³⁶." India's "neighborhood strategy" has become a "high-level strategic effort" with the emergence of "Modiism"³⁷. But there is still no mention of SAARC in the latest non-Aligned 2.0 paper from India. India still has no strategy to have a South Asian structure, which is still a region without laws. This is not only because of the lack of multilateralism, but also because of the heritage and development of India's foreign policy toward Nehru. Nehru's "regionalism" applied to Asia, and he had hoped for an alliance between China and India that would be "Asian"³⁸. After the economic reform, the Indian government was very involved in the countries and regional organizations closely linked to the strategy of "Eastward Motion," which is precisely the continuation of Nehru's regionalism. As Samuel Huntington puts it: "India is an ambition for a global superpower³⁹." "The history of the pendulum" theory, always please in that runs on the past of India in Asia to the conclusion: "swing maybe is conducive to the east at the beginning, and then to the west, it constantly redistributes work, power and political or economic interests. But in all these vicissitudes, India has retained its central position". As a result, towards South Asian Neighbors are likely to become more associate and diplomatic.

³⁴Shubhajit Roy, "Three days before PM announced BIMSTEC exercise 'Thailand said we are out,'" *The Indian Express*, September 19, 2018, <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/bimstec-three-days-pm-modi-announced-military-exercise-thailand-5363593/>.

³⁵The National Council of Bhutan, "Review Report on Motor Vehicles Agreement for the Regulation of Passenger and Cargo Vehicular Traffic between Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal," 2016, [http://www.nationalcouncil.bt/assets/uploads/files/BBIN%20Report%20Final%20Final%20\(1\).pdf](http://www.nationalcouncil.bt/assets/uploads/files/BBIN%20Report%20Final%20Final%20(1).pdf).

³⁶Aryaman Bhatnagar and Ritika Passi eds., *Neighbourhood First: Navigating Ties Under Modi*, Delhi: Observer Research Foundation and Global Policy Series, 2016, p. 37.

³⁷Ministry of External Affairs, "Demands for grants (2018-19)," New Delhi, March, 2018, p. 150, <http://www.mea.gov.in/uploads/publicationdocs/29788/mea-ar-2017-18-03-02-2018.pdf>.

³⁸Sivani Baral and J. K. Baral, "Evolution of India's SAARC Policy," *World Focus: India's Foreign Policy*, Series-2, No. 468, December 2018, pp. 54-62

³⁹Aditi D. Juvekar, "Partners in Conflict-Perceptions and Realities of Indo-US Relations," Himalaya Publishing House, 1997, p. 31.