

In the earlier chapter we have seen India's relations with Pakistan and China. In the regional state system of South Asia, Pakistan was described as a 'Partner' or a 'Bargainer' country. This is because Pakistan was not a big enough power to dominate the region of South Asia and at the same time it was not a 'small power'. In this chapter we will look at the small powers of South Asia. These include Afghanistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Maldives. In the context of the regional state system these have been described as powers that have 'nuisance value' for the great power.

India's greater neighbourhood consists of countries of the West Asia and East Asia. India's security policies toward West Asia include India's relations with Palestine, the close defence ties that India is now having with Israel, the relations with Iran and the interactions with the Arab world. One of the important aspects of these relations is the factor of oil. In case of East Asia, India is a member of the ASEAN Regional Forum and BIMSTEC, it has close defence ties with Vietnam and has now developing security linkages with Japan and Australia.

Let us look at India's security relations with these powers.



South Asia

South Asia

Historical Background

Indian security thinking about the small powers has been influenced by the British thinking on security prior to India's independence. The security policies of the British were based on their perception about threats to India. The British were concerned about threats from the North West region from the Czarist Russia and later on the Soviet Union; from the North from China and from the East from the French from French Indo- China. To tackle these threats the British evolved the concept of the 'extended frontier'.

What is meant by the extended frontier? This policy meant that the threat to the border was to be met as far away from the border as possible. Thus, the North Western frontier for the British India was along the Iran-Afghanistan border. The British finalised the boundary between Afghanistan and India. This was the Durand Line. Afghanistan became a buffer state between Russia and India. In the north, the British had treaties with Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim. They also looked at Tibet as an autonomous region and it became a buffer between India and China. In the east, the British took control of Burma and Thailand became a buffer state between the French Indochinese empire and India. In case of the Indian Ocean the British had control over the Suez Canal in the West; Cape of Good Hope and Mauritius in the South, and Singapore, Malaya and Java in the East.

The British control over these areas meant two things: One, it would be the British Indian responsibility to look at the security needs of these areas. This

responsibility also meant that in case these areas were threatened by outside powers the British would protect them. Two, the British would not interfere in the internal affairs of these countries unless they posed a security threat to India.

This British influence is seen in the approach of India towards the small powers of the region. India also looked at Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim as 'extended frontier' of India. Therefore, India considered its responsibility to take interest in the security of these countries. The creation of the state of Pakistan (East and West) meant that Afghanistan would not be part of India's extended frontier.

Let us look at India's security policies towards each of these countries.

Nepal



Parliament Building, Kathmandu

Do you know?

In the late 18th-early 19th centuries, the principality of Gorkha united many of the other principalities and states of the sub-Himalayan region into a Nepali Kingdom. The Anglo-Nepalese War of 1814-16 and the subsequent peace treaty laid the foundations for normal relations between Britain and Nepal. In 1951, the Nepali monarch instituted a cabinet system that brought political

parties into the government. An insurgency led by Maoists broke out in 1996. In 2001 the crown prince massacred the royal family. A new constitution was created in 2007 and Nepal became a federal democratic republic, by abolishing monarchy and elected the country's first President.

India and Nepal share a unique relationship of friendship and cooperation characterized by open borders and deep-rooted people-to-people contacts of culture. There has been a long tradition of free movement of people across the borders. Nepal shares a border of over 1850 Kms to the south with five Indian States - Sikkim, West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand and in the north with the Tibet region of China.

India's policies towards Nepal are determined by the following considerations:

- (i) The geopolitics of Nepal makes it a landlocked country sandwiched between two major powers, India and China. The main trade routes to Nepal are from the Indian side. The flow of the Himalayan rivers is also from North to South, from Nepal into India.
- (ii) Historically, both countries have shared common historical and cultural perceptions. There exists a great deal of cultural affinity between the two countries.

The Treaty of Peace and Friendship (1950) forms the basis for the special relations that exist between the two countries. The international situation at the time of India's independence was of cold war conflict. China became

communist in 1949 and it started to control Tibet. Speaking about Nepal in the Indian parliament Pandit Nehru argued that India cannot allow anything wrong to happen in Nepal as it would be a risk to India's security. The Peace and Friendship Treaty reflects this concern. The treaty also specified that Nepal could import arms and ammunition through the territory of India and with Indian assistance. It was also agreed that neither government would tolerate any threat to security from a foreign aggressor. Since China was the only other neighbour that Nepal had, it was implied that India would look after Nepal's security.

However, Nepal faced a problem. Geopolitical realities made it dependent upon India for its survival. But it also wanted to establish its own independent identity. Nepal signed a treaty of peace and friendship with China in 1960 creating strains in Indo-Nepal relations. In 1975 Nepal announced the proposal of establishing Nepal as a Zone of Peace. Nepal argued that its relations with India were deep and extensive; but its relations with China were close and friendly. By declaring Nepal as a Zone of Peace it was trying to reduce its dependence on India. The emergence of the Maoists in the rural areas of Nepal and their spread over all parts of Nepal in mid 1990s caused a debacle in Indo-Nepal relations. In the decade of 2000, the Maoist influence increased and they were able to form the government in Nepal. This affected India's relations with Nepal.

However, to deal jointly with each other's security concerns, the two countries have institutionalized Home

Secretary level meetings and established Joint Working Group on Border Management (JWG) and Border District Coordination Committees (BDCCs).

India and Nepal have wide-ranging cooperation in the defence sector. India has been assisting the Nepal Army (NA) in its modernisation by supplying equipment and providing training. Assistance during disasters, joint military exercises, adventure activities and bilateral visits are other aspects of India's defence cooperation with Nepal. A number of defence personnel from Nepal Army attend training courses in various Indian Army training institutions. The 'Indo-Nepal Battalion-level Joint Military Exercise SURYA KIRAN' is conducted twice a year.

Since 1950, India and Nepal have been awarding each other's Army Chief with the honorary rank of General in recognition of the mutual harmonious relationship between the two armies. The Gorkha regiments of the Indian Army are raised partly by recruitment from hill districts of Nepal. Currently, about 32,000 Gorkha Soldiers from Nepal are serving in the Indian Army.

Bhutan



Royal Palace, Thimphu.

Do you know?

Indo-Bhutanese Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation of 1949 defined India's responsibilities in defence and foreign relations. In 2005, King Jigme Singye Wangchuck unveiled the draft of Bhutan's first constitution.

India and Bhutan have a special relationship characterised by mutual trust and understanding. The basic framework of India – Bhutan bilateral relations is the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation of 1949 between the two countries. The Treaty calls for peace between the two nations and non-interference in each other's internal affairs. Bhutan agreed to let India “guide” its foreign policy and both nations would consult each other closely on foreign and defence affairs.

In 2007, India and Bhutan renegotiated their treaty, eliminating the clause that stated that Bhutan would be “guided by” India in conducting its foreign policy, although Thimphu continues to coordinate closely with New Delhi. In 2008, Bhutan held its first parliamentary election in accordance with the constitution.

India and Bhutan share a 699 km-long border, manned by the Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) from the Indian side and by the Royal Bhutanese Army on the Bhutan side. Most of the insurgent camps are located along the Bhutan-Assam border. In 2003, India and Bhutan had conducted a joint operation to flush out North-Eastern insurgent groups operating from inside Bhutan. The Royal Bhutan Army conducted the operation within its territory while the Indian Army ensured

that the insurgents do not cross over to the Indian side.

Indian action against the Chinese in Doklam region is an example of close Indo-Bhutanese security cooperation. The Doklam plateau area is at the trijunction between India, Bhutan and China. This has been an area of dispute between China and Bhutan. It flared up in 2017 when the Chinese were trying to construct a road in the area, and Indian troops, in aid of their Bhutanese counterparts, objected to it, resulting in the stand-off. India, which stood firm sent out a message that it would stand by a friend (Bhutan) in time of crisis.

Bangladesh



Parliament Building, Dhaka, Bangladesh

Do you know?

Partition of India in 1947 created East and West Pakistan. Calls for greater autonomy by East Pakistan and problems between the eastern and western wings of Pakistan led to a Bengali independence movement. That movement, led by the Awami League and supported by India, won the independence war for Bangladesh in 1971. Bangladesh became independent in 1971. Sheikh Mujibur Rehman, also known as founding father of Bangladesh became it's first President.

India was the first country to recognize Bangladesh as a separate and independent state and establish diplomatic relations with the country immediately after its independence in December 1971. The relationship between India and Bangladesh is anchored in history, shared culture and language. Geopolitics is a strong determinant of India's relationship with Bangladesh. Bangladesh is surrounded by India on three sides, Myanmar in the Southeast and Bay of Bengal in the South. India has maintained that it is vitally interested in the security and integrity of Bangladesh.

The 1972 India - Bangladesh Friendship Treaty was the starting point of India's relations with Bangladesh. The treaty specified that the two countries would not participate in military alliances directed against one another. India also helped Bangladesh in building up its defence forces by providing helicopters, transport aircraft, patrol boats, etc.

Sheikh Mujibur Rehman was assassinated in 1975 and the new government declared Bangladesh as an Islamic Republic.

The post-independence Awami League government faced daunting challenges and in 1975 was overthrown by the military, triggering a series of military coups that resulted in a military-backed government in 1978. Democratic elections occurred in 1991. Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and Awami League have alternated in power since 1991.

Some of the major issues of dispute between India and Bangladesh:

- (i) The construction of the Farakka Barrage by India to increase water

supply in the river Hoogly has been criticised by Bangladesh. It argues that it does not receive a fair share of the Ganges waters during the drier seasons, and gets flooded during the monsoons when India releases excess waters. The first agreement on this matter was signed in 1977. After this agreement lapsed, the Ganga Waters Treaty was signed in 1996 to resolve the problem of sharing of water between the two countries.



Farakka Barrage

- (ii) Part of Bangladesh enclaves were surrounded by the Indian state of West Bengal. In 1992, India leased the Teen Bigha Corridor to Bangladesh to ensure that Bangladesh gets access to its territory. Later, in 2015 the India-Bangladesh Land Boundary Agreement came into force and the enclaves of India and Bangladesh in each other's countries were exchanged and strip maps were signed.
- (iii) India and Bangladesh both claimed the empty New Moore Island in the Sundarbans, which is about two miles long and 1.5 miles wide. Bangladesh referred to the island as South Talpatti. There were no permanent

structures on New Moore, but India sent some paramilitary soldiers to its rocky shores in 1981 to hoist its national flag. In 2014, the United Nations Tribunal resolved this dispute to the satisfaction of both the countries. But today this island has submerged into the sea due to rising sea levels.

- (iv) Illegal migration has been the most problematic issue between these two countries. Since 1971, when war of independence broke out that led to the creation of Bangladesh, millions of Bangladeshi refugees sought refuge in India; these refugees returned to Bangladesh after the war. However (later), a large number of illegal immigrants have been crossing into the neighbouring states in India. The most affected regions are the eastern and north-eastern parts of the country. Illegal immigrants pose a direct threat to the country's internal security. It also affects the social demography of the North East region.
 - (v) China is the only country with which Bangladesh has a formal defence cooperation agreement. Bangladesh's close defence relationship with China is another reason of concern for India.
- During Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's visit to India in 2017, the two countries signed a series of agreements and Memorandum of Understanding in areas of defence cooperation. The signing of these agreements indicated that the two countries aim to develop their defence cooperation.

Sri Lanka



President's Secretariat, Colombo

Do you know?

Ceylon became independent in 1948; its name was changed to Sri Lanka in 1972. Tensions between the Sinhalese majority and Tamil separatists erupted into war in July 1983. Fighting between the government and Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) continued for over a quarter century. Although Norway brokered peace negotiations that led to a ceasefire in 2002, the fighting slowly resumed and was again in full force by 2006. The government defeated the LTTE in May 2009.

Sri Lanka is a small island state strategically set in the Indian Ocean and follows an independent policy for its own security. It is an island off the south-east coast of India. The two neighbours are separated by the Palk Strait and the Gulf of Mannar. Their close proximity in a geo-politically vital arena in the Indian Ocean has fused together their strategic destiny.

The ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka was started by the anti-Tamil riots in 1977, 1981 and 1983. After the riots, the fight between the government and the Tamils intensified. The Tamils protested against

discrimination and demanded some degree of regional autonomy and power sharing. This was ignored by the majority of the Sinhalese and the government. As a result, the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) emerged as the dominant militant groups and fought for a separate state for the Tamils. Later, the LTTE became the most powerful organization and the agitation spread from the northern and eastern provinces to other parts of the country through sporadic attacks against military establishments and the Sinhalese. By 1986, the LTTE were gradually able to control most of the areas of northern Jaffna peninsula. They demanded the Northern and Eastern Provinces of Sri Lanka as an independent Tamil state (Eelam).

In 1986-87 the violence increased and the Sri Lankan armed forces took strong action against the Tamils. India gave shelter, financial support and arms to some of the Tamil groups. Sri Lanka opposed India's involvement as the Tamil issue for Sri Lanka was an internal issue. India believed that in multi-plural societies, neither ethnicity nor religion nor language can be the basis of breaking away from a Nation-State. The Indian Government wanted to bring together Tamil separatists and the Sri Lankan Government. India gave food and other aid to the Tamil population. A series of diplomatic moves between the two countries followed and culminated in the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement signed between the two heads of the Governments on 29 July 1987.

On the basis of a specific request made by the Sri Lankan President, India sent the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) to implement the agreement. During the stay of almost three years the IPKF had to do three things: peace-keeping, fight a war with the LTTE and the peace enforcement entailing counter-insurgency operations.

Some of the other security issues between India and Sri Lanka are as follows:

- (i) **Maritime Security :** India and Sri Lanka demarcated their maritime boundaries. The 1974 agreement has clauses which protect a few activities of the Indian fishermen. India and Sri Lanka had another agreement on the boundary in the Bay of Bengal and the Gulf of Mannar in 1976. This agreement deprived fishing rights of India in the Palk Straits. Thus, the Indian fishermen are legally denied fishing in Sri Lankan waters including Kachchativu.
- (ii) **China :** India and China are two major neighbouring maritime powers. China has assisted in the development of port facilities at Akyab, the Coco Islands, Cheduba and Bassein in Myanmar and Chittagong in Bangladesh. Through these facilities China can control and dominate the sea lanes of communications of the region. Further China was involved in constructing the first phase of Hambantota port in Sri Lanka. Some of the security analysts argue that this port may be used by China to encircle India. It is a crucial link in the “string of pearls” which China is

building in the region through a network of ports to consolidate its economic and military influence in the Indian Ocean region.

Do you know?

‘String of Pearls’ refers to the network of Chinese military and commercial facilities that China has strategically developed in the Indian Ocean region to encircle India. These port facilities include: Gwadar Port in Pakistan; Hambantota Port in Sri Lanka; Chittagong Port in Bangladesh; Kyaukpyu Port in Myanmar and Chinese military base at Coco Island. These ports pose a great threat to Indian security.

Afghanistan



Parliament Building, Kabul

Do you know?

Ahmad Shah Durrani unified the Pashtun tribes and founded Afghanistan in 1747. The country served as a buffer between the British and Russian Empires. Afghanistan continued to be a buffer state even after 1919. A brief experiment in democracy ended in a 1973 coup and a 1978 communist

countercoup. The Soviet Union intervened in 1979 to support the Afghan communist regime. The Soviet Union withdrew in 1989. A series of subsequent civil wars took place and Taliban came to power in 1996. Following the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks, a US, Allied, and anti-Taliban Northern Alliance military action toppled the Taliban government.

A UN-sponsored Conference in 2001 established a process for political reconstruction that included the adoption of a new constitution, a presidential election in 2004, and National Assembly elections in 2005. The Taliban remains a serious challenge for the Afghan Government in almost every province.

India's relations with Afghanistan have improved significantly since the end of the Taliban regime in 2001. The India-Afghanistan relationship is not hindered by territorial disputes or border ambiguity. India had supported the "Northern Alliance" against the Taliban in the 1990s. This has helped India in the post-Taliban period. Afghanistan is of strategic importance for India as it is a gateway to energy-rich Central Asian states such as Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan.

The two countries had signed a Strategic Partnership agreement in 2011 that provided for assistance to help rebuild Afghanistan's infrastructure and institutions; education and technical assistance to re-build indigenous Afghan capacity in different areas; encouraging investment in Afghanistan's natural resources; providing duty free access to the Indian market for Afghanistan's

exports, support for an Afghan-led, Afghan-owned, broad-based and inclusive process of peace and reconciliation and for India's assistance in training, equipping and capacity building programmes for Afghan National Security Forces. India has been using a "soft power" strategy, that is, sticking to civilian rather than military matters, toward Afghanistan.

India has taken several measures to safeguard its interests in Afghanistan:

- (i) India assists Afghanistan in the state-building process. India has helped Afghanistan in several projects. These include the following:
 - (a) The building of Afghanistan's Parliament in Kabul
 - (b) Rebuilding of the Habibia High School in Kabul and providing it with grants-in-aid;
 - (c) Reconstruction of the Salma dam, now known as the Afghan-India Friendship Dam;
 - (d) The establishment of an electricity transmission line from Pul-e-Khumri to Kabul;
 - (e) Financing the establishment of the Afghan National Agriculture Sciences and Technology University (ANASTU) in Kandahar;
 - (f) Constructing the Chimtala power substation in Kabul;
 - (g) Building the cricket stadium in Kandahar;
 - (h) Expanding the national television network; digging tube wells in some of the provinces; etc.

- (ii) In the security related area India has been assisting Afghanistan in these projects:
- (a) The Zaranj-Delaram road is strategically important not only for Afghanistan, but also for India. The construction of the road was financed, completed, and partially protected by Indian institutions. India's participation in the development of the Chabahar Port in Iran will provide India an alternative and reliable access route into Afghanistan utilizing India's earlier investment in Zaranj-Delaram road built in Afghanistan, a reliable and more direct access sea-road route to Central Asia.
 - (b) Afghan-India Friendship Dam (AIFD), formerly Salma Dam, a hydroelectric and irrigation dam project located on the Hari River in Chishti Sharif District of Herat Province in western Afghanistan was funded and constructed by the Government of India as a part of the Indian aid project.
 - (c) India-supported Shahtoot dam project, once completed will stop more Kabul River waters in Afghanistan and reduce the amount flowing downstream to Pakistan.
 - (d) India has provided 285 military vehicles for the Afghan National Army; Mi-25 and Mi-35 choppers for the air force.
- Indian policies towards the small neighbours of South Asia are based on two considerations:
- (i) The maintenance of peace, stability and order in this region is of vital national interest to India. Therefore, India seeks to ensure security linkages with these countries. These linkages are mainly at bilateral levels.
 - (ii) All these countries of South Asia along with India, are members of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). Besides this, Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Nepal and Bhutan are members of Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC). Afghanistan is seeking membership of the Shanghai Cooperation Council. India seeks to work through these regional organisations for stability in this region.



Afghan-India Friendship Dam (AIFD)

West Asia



West Asia

When India became independent, most of the countries of West Asia were under the control and influence of the Western countries. They had been anti-communist and pro-west in their perspectives.

India had supported the Palestinian cause and pan-Arab nationalism and was critical of Israel. However, most of the West Asia countries supported Pakistan and its policies towards Kashmir on the basis of Islamic solidarity. Pakistan also became a member of the Baghdad pact (called Central Treaty Organisation, CENTO) of which Iran, Iraq and Turkey were members.

Amongst the West Asian countries India had good relations with Egypt. India had supported Egypt during the Suez crisis of 1956. Egypt's Gamal Abdel Nasser along with Jawaharlal Nehru of India, Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Sukarno of Indonesia and Josip Broz Tito of Yugoslavia were the founding members

of the nonaligned movement. India's relationship with Iraq under Saddam Hussein was close, multidimensional and fruitful. India implemented dozens of projects in Iraq and provided military training, particularly for the Iraqi air force. Iraq was India's leading oil supplier. Both countries were close to the Soviet Union.

The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) was formed in 1969. The OIC regularly passed anti-India recommendations, resolutions and statements on Kashmir and on the supposed plight of Indian Muslims. In 1979 after the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia cooperated with the United States to fight the Soviets in Afghanistan.

Indian policies changed dramatically in the post-cold war era after the disintegration of the Soviet Union. India sought to adjust to the new global geopolitical realities. India's security

policy gave more importance to national interest rather than ideology. India initiated a dialogue with the United States on security issues. It began to reach out to all West Asian countries without picking and choosing between them and on the basis of mutual benefit. India established full diplomatic relations with Israel in 1992. It also sought to establish a dialogue with Iran. Gulf Cooperation Council (G.C.C.) countries have become India's pre-eminent oil and gas supplier and leading trade partner. This Council condemned the November 2008 terrorist attack on Mumbai and since then Saudi Arabia and the U.A.E. have provided excellent cooperation on the issue of anti-terrorism.

Some of the security related agreements with West Asian countries are as follows:

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia has displayed a willingness to cooperate on multiple issues including joint military exercises, intelligence sharing, counterterrorism, anti-money laundering and terror financing this includes :

- (a) **2006** : Groundwork for close and active cooperation towards fighting against terrorism.
- (b) **2010** : 'Strategic partnership' established in the 'Riyadh Declaration'
- (c) **2019** : Under defence and security cooperation both countries would conduct joint naval exercises; joint defence production of spare parts; work together and collaborate with other Indian Ocean Rim Countries for enhancing maritime security; etc.

United Arab Emirates (UAE)

- (a) **2003** : A Joint Defence Cooperation Committee (JDCC) was established. JDCC provides a platform for a regular exchange of dialogue in defence sector.
- (b) **2006** : India-UAE Strategic Dialogue has been institutionalized.
- (c) **2018** : India and UAE agreed on setting up a strategic oil reserve at Padur in Karnataka in India.

Oman

- (a) **2018** : India and Oman on signed a key pact that extends dry docking and other facilities to Indian naval ships in the strategically located Gulf country.
- (b) **2018** : Oman has agreed to allow India to use the Duqm port for its military logistical requirements.

Iran

- (a) Defence ties between India and Iran further evolved post signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on defence cooperation in 2001.
- (b) The development of strategic Chabahar port and the North South Corridor connectivity is perhaps the most significant development in India's outreach to Central Asia and Afghanistan.



Chabahar port

Israel

Israel is the second-largest defence supplier to India after Russia. Israel is a major and reliable security, intelligence and counter-terrorism partner for India. It

is the third largest supplier of high-tech defence equipment and a close partner in India's Cyber Space as well as intelligence cooperation.

East Asia



India's Look East Policy has evolved through the early 1990s. Its primary focus was in the area of economics and trade and was targeted towards South East and East Asia. India had several bilateral agreements with China and Japan. India also became a Sectoral Dialogue Partner (1992) and then a Full Dialogue Partner of ASEAN (1995). In 1996 India joined the ASEAN Regional Forum. Parallel to its ASEAN linkages, the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) was created in 1997 to include countries of South and South East Asia. The Mekong-Ganga Cooperation (MGC) launched in 2000 was the second initiative through which India sought to establish

closer ties with South East Asia. The East-West Corridor project and the Trans-Asian highway are some of the projects undertaken by the six countries to promote transport facilities. When completed the Asian highway project is expected to link up Singapore with New Delhi in South Asia via Kuala Lumpur, Ho Chi Minh city, Phnom Penh, Bangkok, Vientiane, Chiang Mai, Yangon, Mandalay, Kalemmyo, Tamu, Dhaka and Calcutta.

India's diplomatic level efforts in the Indo-Pacific region are equally relevant. India and Japan upgraded their relationship to "Special Strategic and Global Partnership." In November 2017, during the East Asia Summit in Manila, officials from the United States, Japan, India, and Australia met to re-establish and re-conceptualize the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD). Security ties between India and Australia started to improve after the signing of a Framework for Security Cooperation.

The shift from 'Look East' to 'Act East' after 2014 also signified a move from what was predominantly economic and trade related initiative to a security initiative towards the Indo-Pacific region. This policy sought to establish institutional mechanisms for dialogue and cooperation in strategic matters. India upgraded its relations to strategic partnership with Indonesia, Vietnam, Malaysia, Japan, Republic of Korea (ROK), Australia, Singapore and Association of Southeast

Asian Nations (ASEAN). India has also been actively engaged in regional fora such as Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD), Mekong Ganga Cooperation (MGC) and Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA). The Act East Policy provides an interface between North East India including the state of Arunachal Pradesh and the ASEAN region.

India's core interests in this region include the following:

- (i) **Regional Economic Security** : It does not have any territorial ambitions in the region but it seeks a greater economic integration with the region. India has the largest number of Free Trade Agreements or Economic Cooperation agreements with East Asian countries.
- (ii) **Defence Diplomacy** : India wants to expand its strategic contacts in the Indo Pacific region. Indian feels that its naval presence is a stabilizer for peace and stability in the region. The Indian Navy plays a key role in

India's defence diplomacy in this region. Indian naval vessels frequently visit South East Asian ports. In 2010 India conducted exercises in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands with the participation of ASEAN navies. At the bilateral level India has concluded defence arrangements with Singapore and Vietnam and widened its defence contacts with Japan, China and South Korea.

- (iii) **South China Sea** : India has a strong interest in keeping the sea lanes open in the South China Sea as it is a key strategic link between the Indian Ocean and the Pacific. Apart from ensuring secure energy supplies to Japan and Korea, almost half of the Indian trade with the Asia Pacific region transits through this region.

- (iv) **North East India** : India's Look East Policy provides an opportunity for India to use the proximity of India's North East region to South East Asia and expand the economic cooperation for promoting economic development and socio-economic security in this region.

See the following websites for additional details:

1. Briefs of Foreign Relations, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India.
<https://mea.gov.in/foreign-relations.htm>
2. Annual report, Ministry of Defence, Government of India (latest available)
<https://mod.gov.in/sites/default/files/AR1718.pdf>

EXERCISE

Q1 (A) Choose the correct alternative and complete the following statements:

- (i) During the British period, Afghanistan was looked at as a buffer between
 - a. India and Iran
 - b. India and Russia
 - c. India and Tibet
 - d. India and Pakistan

- (ii) The Zaranj-Delaram road is located in
- Pakistan
 - Iran
 - Afghanistan
 - Uzbekistan

(B) Complete the following sentence by using an appropriate reason:

- (i) The problem of maritime boundaries is a source of tension between India and Sri Lanka.

(C) Find the odd word from the given set:

- (i) ASEAN, BIMSTEC, IORA, SEATO

Q.2. State whether the following statements are true or false with reasons:

- (i) The Mekong-Ganga Cooperation (MGC) launched in 2000 was an initiative through which India sought to establish closer ties with South East Asia.
- (ii) 'String of Pearls' refers to the network of Chinese military and commercial facilities that China has developed in the South China Sea.

Q.3. Explain the correlation between the following:

- (i) Hambantota Port in Sri Lanka and 'String of Pearls'.

Q.4. Express your opinion on the following:

- (i) India is trying to do a lot of development work in Afghanistan. How will it benefit India in terms of its security?

Q.5. Answer the following:

- (i) What is meant by the extended frontier? What is its relevance to India?

Activity

Collect information about developments in West Asia (Arab states, Iran, Turkey and Israel) from newspapers, magazines, etc. Make presentations in the classroom.

