

**INDIA'S DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP
ADMINISTRATION: A CONSTRUCTIVIST
ANALYSIS**

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ABSTRACT

The present thesis is a work in pursuance of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.), in the Department of International Relations, Jadavpur University, Kolkata. The present work has been conducted under the able guidance and supervision of Professor Dr. Omprakash Mishra, Department of International Relations, Jadavpur University, between September 2018, and May 2023. To the best of my knowledge, this thesis is an original work, and references have been extensively cited throughout the thesis, wherever sources have been referred to or discussed.

The two main factors in the present thesis that have been the focus of the study are India's Development Partnership Administration (DPA), which is its foreign aid/assistance policy; and India's bilateral relations with the neighboring countries of South Asia. The main reason to take up these two topics and attempt to demonstrate the significant link between the two is due to the relevance of both these topics in the present regional politics of South Asia. India is a non-traditional, emerging donor in international politics. The nature and characteristics of Indian development assistance have been tailor-made to fit the needs of developing countries. Such a policy is not only noteworthy for its ideas but has also proven to be successful among the countries it has sought to target. Moreover, political, and strategic objectives are intricately linked to the wider perception of India being the leader of the developing world. India's foreign aid/assistance policy has enabled it to work towards these objectives. Additionally, the compelling foreign aid/assistance policy has boosted India's image both in the region as well as internationally. It demonstrates India taking up the responsibilities of being a leader through not just rhetoric but concrete policy actions. It is the widespread acceptance of Indian development assistance, its resulting gains, and its consequent impact on bilateral relations, that makes this policy an interesting topic of study.

India's bilateral relations with its South Asian neighbors are defined by the conflicts, persisting tensions, and differences between them. For India, a comprehensive foreign policy orientation toward this region had been lacking for a long time since its independence. Added to this, its massive geographical, economic size, and, political clout of India as compared to the rest of the countries in the region has added to the apprehension that the countries of South Asia have towards this regional behemoth. History has not been kind to these bilateral relations either, and there is a strong memory of Indian intervention and high-handedness here. Thus, it is very

important for India to change this perception in South Asia and instead promote an image of a dependable and development-oriented power in order to improve its diplomatic relations with the neighborhood. The South Asian region stands to gain through all-embracing cooperation, rather than being embroiled in rivalries.

It is against this backdrop that India's foreign aid/ assistance policy, which it refers to as Development Partnership Administration, has been studied and analyzed to the effect that how has it helped India in developing its bilateral relations in the South Asian neighborhood. This study is furthermore pertinent, as the situation now stands when another extra-regional power, possessing overwhelming resources, seeks to garner influence and clout in South Asia. It is attempted to find out whether India's foreign aid/assistance policy holds enough water today or not. Consistent in all these considerations is India's initial vision of viewing fellow developing countries as partners have remained. This is proved in the way India has conducted foreign assistance programs earlier and now as well as verbalized similarly by national leaders and diplomats at different points in time. As a developing country, India is aware of the significant requirements to fulfill the development needs of a country. It can be said that in such a case India can be a more reliable partner for developing countries.

India's identification with the need to consolidate itself in the region has been demonstrated by its foreign policy initiatives during the Nehru era, the Indira Doctrine, the Gujral Doctrine, and now the Neighborhood First policy. Due to the antagonism that India faces in the region and despite the overbearing presence of factors that would make cooperation in the region possible and favorable, cooperation eludes the sub-continent. Ideas and identities take center stage in foreign policy behavior whereas material factors and otherwise favorable conditions take a back seat.

Constructivism has been utilized as a theoretical model to understand the above-mentioned political and strategic equations. As a theoretical tool, constructivism can judiciously explain foreign policy analysis, given its nature of inquiry. Constructivism studies the impact of ideas, value systems, and belief structures as the main sources which shape the social and political orientations of actors, here countries. Norms, ideas, and belief systems take the form of independent variables, manipulating the foreign policy measures that are taken. Thus, an understanding of perceptions created and how to address shortcomings by studying their roots in existing built-up interactions can provide a way out to resolving long-standing apprehensions and conflicts.

This demonstrates India's pragmatism in its foreign policy approach towards South Asia, that she has been able to adapt herself to the changing circumstances in the region. Rivalries and friendships are ever-changing, especially with the looming presence of another big power in the region, which seeks to give competition to India in the latter's own backyard. The liberalization of the region and change to the market economy has provided an ample number of options for cooperation in the region.

It must be kept in mind that although the present thesis places the focus on India's foreign aid/assistance policies in helping it develop its relations with its South Asian neighbors, the DPA is only a part of the wider foreign policy structure. India's foreign policy orientation toward South Asia has transformed, as studied extensively in the thesis. Having established that a study of India's developmental role in the region holds great importance and the present study seeks to add to existing Indian foreign policy literature and the importance of DPA in it.