

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

**SYNOPSIS SUBMITTED TO THE JADAVPUR UNIVERSITY FOR THE
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SYNOPSIS

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 STUDY & ITS OBJECTIVES

The subject of aid and its provision has been present in the study of foreign policy for a long time. However, this policy is gaining ground in recent times. This is because of the wide-ranging changes that are taking place in the policies of aid provision by the traditional donors of aid as well as the incoming non-traditional aid providers in the international political scenario. Traditionally aid provision has been mostly associated with the developed countries. International institutions like the OECD-DAC (Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development – Development Assistance Committee) and USAID (United States Agency for International Development), have existed and operated since the middle of the 20th century. One of the major topics of study in the present thesis is the Indian foreign aid/assistance policy, which it refers to as Development Partnership Administration or DPA (launched in 2011). India, a non-traditional aid donor has provided aid and assistance since the early days of its independence. Its policies and resources have expanded and developed over the years giving definition to its foreign aid structure. Furthermore, there is a distinction in the nature and characteristics of aid provision between the traditional donors and India's policy of development partnership. This is pertinent especially since the term development has received a boost of meaning and urgency with the turn of the century. Against this backdrop, the present thesis seeks to study and analyze India's foreign aid/assistance policy.

The other major variable that this thesis studies is India's bilateral relations with the countries of South Asia. India regards the region of South Asia, politically as its own sphere of influence. Apart from global political ambitions, Indian leaders have visualized India as a champion of

the developing world, starting from South Asia. This aspect has been prevalent from the speeches of the first Prime Minister of our country, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, to the present Indian goals of inclusivity and development, as espoused by its leaders in the current G20 summit. Having established that India is also well aware of the complications and conflicts involved in its bilateral relations with the countries of South Asia (Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, and, the Maldives). India's foreign policy orientation toward South Asia has also been vague and lacking for a very long time. It has only found shape since the 1990s, with the Gujral doctrine. India's foreign aid/assistance was operative among the countries of South Asia ever since its independence in 1947. However, it has grown leaps and bounds both in resources and magnitude today. Indian DPA is highly prevalent in the countries of South Asia (apart from Pakistan) and has played a major role in the completion of developmental works and significant infrastructures in these countries. Thus, considering the regional and global political scenario and existing complexities, this thesis has attempted to study India's foreign aid/assistance policy with reference to its South Asian neighbors. As a non-traditional donor, it will be interesting to study how far India's DPA has been successful in making an impact in its neighboring countries. Additionally, a robust foreign aid provision structure lends support to the willingness of a responsible power, which further gives credence to India's global power ambitions.

The objective of the present study has been to establish whether India is able to address and improve its strained bilateral relations in the subcontinent using its foreign policy. While the situation is not completely dire with respect to all of India's bilateral relations in South Asia, nevertheless, it will not be incorrect to say that India requires a well-structured and well-defined foreign policy orientation towards its South Asian neighbors. The motives behind this understanding have been extensively mentioned in the thesis. Hence, in order to address this, the study has focused on India's foreign aid/assistance policy in South Asia, as part of its wider foreign policy framework. This topic of India's foreign aid/assistance provision in South Asia against the background of its bilateral relations, along with a constructivist interpretation and analysis has been a humble attempt to add on to existing scholarly literature on Indian foreign policy in South Asia. In the present regional and international political framework (taking into consideration India's global political ambitions) the analysis of India's foreign policy in the region which it believes to be its sphere of influence, as well as perceiving itself as a champion of the developing world, has been found to be a highly relevant topic of study.

The theoretical dimension of this thesis is provided by the use of constructivism as a framework to study India's bilateral relations with its South Asian neighbors and how DPA as a foreign policy tool is helping India in developing its relationship. Constructivism bases its analysis on the study of underlying ideas, existing norms, and values, in order to understand the motivations in foreign policy decision-making. Since social and political actors are deeply embedded in the social and political environment in which they operate, their behavior and actions will be informed by the core ideas, values, belief systems, and most importantly, their perceptions. The significance of the use of constructivism in the study of foreign policy analysis has been well-established in scholarly circles. Thus, this thesis will attempt to study India's bilateral relations with South Asia and the impact of DPA within the framework of constructivism.

BRIEF LITERATURE REVIEW

A wide range of literature exists on the topic of foreign aid/assistance provision and reception, both in terms of the international and regional levels. The idea of foreign aid/assistance is not a new addition to international diplomacy. The concept has evolved in terms of its nature and characteristics over the years, in accordance with the political, social, and economic environments. Raymond Cohen in the article "The Great Tradition: The Spread of Diplomacy in the Ancient World" refers to the concept of the 'Great Tradition' as a group of norms, diplomatic practices, functions, and responsibilities that have been practiced for a long time. Here he does not refer exclusively to foreign aid, instead refers to the notion of giving gifts as existing even in primitive societies (Cohen, 2001). The notion of giving gifts in ancient political practices is also found in the ancient text of Indian origin, *Arthashastra*, written by Kautilya and later translated by several scholars (Shamashastry, 1915). Hans J. Morgenthau equates the significance of a foreign aid policy, in a country, with that the importance of a foreign political policy or military policy. He has divided foreign aid administration into six different types: 1) humanitarian foreign aid 2) subsistence foreign aid 3) military foreign aid 4) bribery 5) prestige foreign aid and, 6) foreign aid for economic development (Morgenthau, 1962). In the second half of the twentieth century, foreign aid provision was popularised with the implementation of the Marshall Plan by the United States of America. This heralded the beginning of foreign aid administration in the new world order, in the aftermath of the Second World War. The political motivations surrounding the foreign aid administration have also received significant

attention. Carol Lancaster in her article, *Redesigning Foreign Aid*, reiterates how foreign aid serves as a major tool in the foreign policy process to advance the national interest of a country (Lancaster, 2000).

Aid provision on the part of India is not a new feature but has been a phenomenon since its independence. India has been providing substantial economic and military aid to South Asia since its independence (Chanana, 2009). India's placement of importance to the region of South Asia, and to act as a leader of the developing world, has been evident in Indian foreign policy orientation since its independence (Dutt, 1980). Initially, India did not have a defined policy with respect to foreign aid provision. The Ministry of External Affairs in India even understood foreign aid provision as *Daan* or charity, which has no political connotations or motivations (Kumar & Sharma, 2015). However, this scenario has changed over the years with India's need to develop a well-rounded foreign policy orientation in South Asia. Neighborhood cooperation has been expanded in recent years. India's Approach to Development Cooperation,' edited by Sachin Chaturvedi and Anthea Mulakala presents a detailed picture of India's policy of Development Cooperation. This book has explored the various components of India's development cooperation policy and the importance of South-South cooperation in it (Chaturvedi & Mulakala, 2016). No longer is Indian aid/assistance provision referred to as *Daan*, but rather a tool of cooperation and mutual benefit. Development cooperation has also been directed towards securing energy resources, developing markets for domestic companies, and essentially furthering India's geo-strategic goals (Mullen, 2013).

Thus, India's foreign aid/assistance policy has acquired a well-defined structure, and the present study has focused on the utilization of this policy in the development of India's relations with the countries of South Asia. South Asia, as a region, presents a challenge to India given the complexities surrounding the politics of the region. India's navigation around these complications with the help of its foreign aid/assistance policy, Development Partnership Administration, has been studied in the present thesis.

HYPOTHESIS & RESEARCH QUESTIONS

India's foreign policy orientation with respect to the region of South Asia has solidified since the 1990s and the turn of the century. The conflicts and complexities that determine bilateral relations in the region as a whole have been major factors that prevent meaningful cooperation in the region. For its part, India also has a host of such complications that outline its bilateral relations with the countries of South Asia. India's foreign policy orientation in the region, especially the DPA, has received a boost, as India strives to make South Asia its priority. It is in this context that it is hypothesized that India's foreign aid policy or DPA has enabled it to develop its relations with its South Asian neighbors. It is also acknowledged that a wide range of foreign policy initiatives have been mobilized towards the region of South Asia, for the development of relations, and India's foreign aid/assistance policy is only one of the parts of this wider structure.

Certain research questions have been outlined in this context. They are as follows:

- Is there a connection between the Indian foreign aid/assistance policy and its bilateral relations with its South Asian neighbors (Nepal, Bhutan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and, the Maldives)?
- If yes, then what is the impact of this policy on such relations?
- How do India and its partner country (recipients of development assistance are referred to as partners) benefit from this policy?

Furthermore, in order to test the hypothesis and answer the research questions, the following aspects have been studied in the thesis:

- Performing a trend analysis of India's foreign policy with the countries of South Asia.
- Studying and then determining the impact and outcome of India's development partnership with the countries of South Asia: Nepal, Bhutan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Maldives.
- Conducting a constructivist analysis of India's relations with its South Asian neighbors and the impact of development assistance/cooperation on it, as part of its foreign policy initiatives.

METHODOLOGY

The nature of the study in this thesis is descriptive and interpretive in nature. Both qualitative and quantitative methods have been utilized in the course of this thesis. The primary method used is the conduct of an extensive review of available literature on the topic. Archival research has been conducted in studying the relationship between India's foreign aid/assistance policy and underlying motivations. Statistical data and empirical records have been sourced from official documents of external affairs ministries. Annual reports of external affairs ministries are other dependable components for official information on government policies. Additionally, a review of existing literature on bilateral relations and India's policies in South Asia has enabled to form an understanding of observable behavior.

CHAPTER DESIGN

The Introduction is the first chapter of this thesis. The Introduction provides a detailed explanation of the study under question, its literature review, the theoretical understanding, and, the various components of the study. The hypothesis and research questions are clearly outlined here, followed by the methodology of the study. The limitations of the study and its relevance are also sketched out in this chapter.

Chapter 1 of the thesis titled, "India in South Asia: Constructivist Ramifications" presents an overview of the South Asian neighborhood. Common experiences that the countries of South Asia have been subjected to, from the second half of the 20th century, have been highlighted to demonstrate the possibilities of cooperation arising out of shared problems and weaknesses. However, the way differences and complications arising out of conflictual relations has defined relations among the South Asian neighbors and especially with respect to India, has been pointed out. India's foreign policy orientation toward the region of South Asia has been studied, since its independence. Perception plays an important role in informing behavior which ultimately results in action. This aspect has been studied throughout the thesis. This is also pertinent, with respect to the theoretical standpoint in this thesis. Thus, this chapter offers a well-rounded description and explanation of South Asian politics, particularly in terms of India's policies toward this region.

Chapter 2 is titled, "A History and Evolution of Foreign Aid", and presents a thorough study and understanding of the concept of foreign aid, as is understood since the mid-20th century,

with the introduction of the Marshall Plan in 1947. Traditional aid providers under the structures of USAID, OECD-DAC, and, JICA have been discussed in detail. This helped in providing a context against which the significance and role of non-traditional donors could be fleshed out. In the latter half of the chapter, India's foreign aid/assistance policy and DPA have been studied in detail. The purpose of this chapter is to establish the concept of foreign aid/assistance. The evolution in the character of aid provision has been consequent to the changing nature of international politics. The upcoming of new foreign aid/assistance donors has acted as an alternative, offering a new manner of aid provision. India's aid/assistance provision has developed over the years and holds significance in the South Asian region. This chapter attempts to establish this idea.

Chapter 3 titled, "India's Development Partnership Administration with South Asian Neighbors: Nepal & Bhutan", studies India's bilateral relations with its two Himalayan neighbors, in two parts, and the role of Indian foreign aid/assistance in it. The bilateral relations have been studied in the form of trend analysis with a special focus on bilateral treaties. Both Nepal and Bhutan are important countries for India, especially in terms of security along its northern border. The role of development partnership as a mode of foreign aid/assistance can play an important role in forging cooperative and collaborative patterns among them. The chapter ends with a constructivist explanation of India's bilateral relations and the role of the policy of foreign aid/assistance in it.

Chapter 4 titled, "India's Development Partnership Administration with South Asian Neighbors: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and, Pakistan", follows a similar structure as the above chapter. A trend analysis of India's bilateral relations with three of its neighbors is done separately, along with the role of Indian foreign aid/assistance in it. Afghanistan is the latest addition among the partner countries in South Asia, in terms of development assistance. Yet, it has grown to become one of the major recipients of Indian aid and assistance. A war-torn, politically unstable country, India does and rightly so must play an important role in its reconstruction process. India is Bangladesh's biggest trading partner in the region. Despite persisting complications, India and Bangladesh have enjoyed stable relations over the decades. Pakistan's experience and relations with India represent a completely different equation, as compared to the other bilateral relations in the region. Here, the reasoning of cooperation for development and prosperity does not hold much importance. Rivalries, animosities, and an overwhelming sense of wariness have frozen in time since the days of partition and have defined their bilateral relations. The purpose of this chapter, like the chapter before and after

this, is to establish the nature of bilateral relations and subsequently, the role of India's foreign aid/assistance in these countries. This enables to make an analysis of how the foreign aid/assistance policy has helped in making or breaking diplomatic relations between India and the neighboring countries of South Asia. This is followed by constructivist explanations for each of the bilateral relations.

Chapter 5 titled, "India's Development Partnership Administration with South Asian Neighbors: Sri Lanka and the Maldives", deals with the study of India-Sri Lanka and India-Maldives relations. Both these countries are significant for India's security interests in the south. A similar structure of the study of bilateral relations and the role of Indian foreign aid/assistance policy is conducted, followed by a constructive understanding of the situation. With this chapter, all of India's bilateral relations with its South Asian neighbors are completed.

Chapter 6 is the final chapter of the thesis and is titled, "Conclusion". Here it is attempted to validate the hypothesis and answer the research questions, posed in the introductory chapter of the thesis. The reasonings and analyses made throughout the thesis are considered and then compiled in the manner of answers to the research questions in this concluding chapter of the present thesis.

FINDINGS

It has been reiterated here, the need to study the political environment and bilateral politics of a region in order to understand the impact of a policy. Similarly, in order to understand India's relations with its South Asian neighbors, one needs to grasp the nature and character of the region itself. This is what has been attempted in all the main chapters of the present thesis. India's bilateral relations with the countries of South Asia have not been a smooth experience, marred by conflicts, rivalries, and wariness. The response of the countries of South Asia toward India is a determining factor of how the latter and its policies are perceived in the region. This has been a major factor that has been discussed throughout the thesis.

The hypothesis that India's foreign aid/assistance policy and the DPA have enabled the former to develop its relations with the countries of South Asia, has been validated throughout the thesis, in accordance with the study that has been carried out. India's foreign aid/assistance policy has presented it in a positive and responsible light, which in turn has built an encouraging image of India for its South Asian neighbors. Moreover, the developmental character, demand-

driven approach, and absence of conditionalities in the Indian DPA have further consolidated this image. Numerous examples of India's developmental works in the countries of South Asia have been provided in the major chapters of the thesis, supporting this argument. At the same time, the Indian DPA is one of many foreign policies in the entire gamut of foreign policy orientation toward South Asia. Furthermore, complications continue to exist which threaten India's bilateral relations with its neighbors.

With reference to answering the first question of the thesis, it has been well established in the chapters of the present thesis, that there exists a strong bond between foreign aid/assistance policy and its relations with the countries in South Asia. The second question seeks the type of impact of India's foreign aid/ assistance policy or DPA on its bilateral relations. It has been found that India's development assistance policy has had a positive impact on its bilateral relations with its South Asian neighbors. India's responsible role, initiative, and, welcomed intervention to promote and implement developmental work in these countries has been well received and is a major factor in their improved relations. The third research question seeks the benefits that India and its partner countries accrue from this policy. Over the course of the study, it has been determined that the Indian development partnership policy, or foreign aid/assistance policy has been able to target one of the core concerns of the countries of South Asia, that is, the promotion of development. All the countries of South Asia are in varying stages of development, and India's employment of the development partnership policy has been welcomed and appreciated by its South Asian neighbors. For India, this has in turn boosted its image in the region, given confidence to its global ambitions, and also supports India's role as a developmental leader of the region of South Asia.

Thus, India's development partnership/assistance policy has rightly felt the pulse of the South Asian region. Resulting good relations can be witnessed in the form of the expansion of bilateral trade, and cooperation in political, security, economic, and strategic fields between the countries.

LIMITATIONS/FURTHER SCOPE FOR STUDY

Several aspects are pertinent to the study have been excluded because they were either outside the scope of conducting this study or prevent the thesis from becoming vague. It must be mentioned that India's foreign aid/assistance policy, which it refers to as Development Partnership Administration, is a wide area of study. The topic of foreign aid/assistance itself has wide-ranging explanations and analysis, in terms of international as well as Indian politics. It has several associated factors and a number of actors who are involved in this process. The present study has only focused on India's DPA among its South Asian neighbors and its resulting impact. Apart from South Asia, Africa is another continent in which India's DPA policy has made substantial inroads. However, the same has been excluded from the study of the thesis as it would not have been within the scope of the study at hand. China's development partnership is another aspect that has been excluded from the present study, in order to maintain clarity of the present work. China's role in South Asia has been referred to briefly in this study. The role of private organizations, in the provision of aid and assistance is exempted from this thesis as it is outside the scope of the present study. This leaves a wide scope for further research to be conducted on this topic. Furthermore, the role of major development projects in partner countries and the politics surrounding them can be taken up to understand the nature of bilateral politics and future possibilities.

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