

India's Neighbourhood Policy in the Promotion of Democracy: The Study of Pakistan and Myanmar (2000-2021)

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Certified that the Thesis Entitled

‘India’s Neighbourhood Policy in the Promotion of Democracy: The Study of Pakistan and Myanmar (2000-2021)’, submitted by me for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Arts at Jadavpur University is based upon my work carried out under the supervision of Dr. Kamaran MK Mondal, Professor, Department of International Relations, Jadavpur University. And that neither this thesis nor any part of it has been submitted before for any such degree or diploma anywhere/elsewhere.

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PREFACE

In the post-cold war period with multipolar tendencies, 'Democracy' has emerged as the new buzzword. As political consciousness grew in the new millennium, emphasis on democracy related priorities such as human rights, and security gained global ascendance. Similarly, the strategic interests are being pursued as ruthlessly as ever, but the articulation and legitimisation of these interests are done through normative idiom and discourse. While it is undeniable that the stable democracies of the world are concentrated in the rich, industrialised Northern countries endowed by liberal cultures and capitalist economic system. But concurrently, it is difficult to overlook the fact that India, arguably the largest democracy in the world by far is an ex-colony and a developing country located in the South Asia; and this region is one such part of the world where the countries are in a relentless quest for consolidating democracy and had undergone varied multifaceted experiment for the purpose. Like any other region, the 'fourth wave of democracy' also swept over South Asia in the 21st century, which raised hope that ultimately democracy will be consolidated and will prevail, but consequently the reverse democracy followed. Thus, as Charles Tilly reminded us "Democratisation remained a dynamic process, perpetually incomplete and always running the risk of reversal or de-democratisation". Countries in Indian Sub-continent perennially has been the victim of this de-democratisation. At the backdrop of the existing milieu, it becomes an imperative that democratisation might be assisted by some external, but at the same time intra-regional actor. So as democracy, promotion of democracy also became the new norm in the conduct of international politics. It has secured the position of highest priority in western foreign policy and development agenda for the furtherance of its own political and economic interest; and with the onset of new millennium that has had acquired an organizational force. However, this hasn't been the norm in Indian sub-continent. Now with the twist and turns of the event, situated has been evolved that demands much involvement.

Debate over India's role in her neighbourhood have been a persistent feature of India's strategic milieu. Over the last seven decades India's role has undoubtedly evolved from reactive to proactive, even some times offensive and not defensive, in line with the wider regional and global requirement. Even though, New Delhi's global footprint has expanded in tandem with its rising ambitions, doubts have continued to persist about its ability to take the leadership role in its immediate neighbourhood. Therefore, this research work is an attempt to examine and analyses the challenges and possibilities of India to play a more decisive role in the context of recent changes.

INTRODUCTION

Each of the country in India's neighbourhood is besieged with creating a stable political environment. Broadly, each nation in the region is confronting five critical areas of political development i.e. nation-state building, political participation, all-inclusive economic advancement and equitable dispersal of wealth and social benefits. Regrettably, the countries in the region are struggling to establish a robust institutional framework that safeguards peace and nurtures a culture of trust and confidence. The change in mindset and consolidating democratic norms across each country is an imperative in order to address the issue of disunity and mistrust both at intra and interstate level. This region is struck by a dichotomy where the redressing the threats and challenges to democratic norms outweighs the consolidation of democracy itself. This emphasizes the need for intensive efforts to reinforce democratic institutions in the face of mounting challenges. India being the foremost regional power and considering its potential in shaping the dynamics of neighbouring countries it is expected that New Delhi would play a pivotal role in redefining the geopolitical calculus within this region.

As the world transitioned into the 21st century, India's foreign policy calculus experienced a paradigm shift, driven by the imperatives of regional stability and in pursuit of perpetuation of democratic values. Since its inception India has been a democracy and is perceived as the world's largest democracy. But her foreign policy framework had not been crafted as an instrument to promote democracy rather, it preferred to play a peripheral role. Though secularism and democracy are the cherished ideals, India's political approach essentially have been tolerant to either of democratic, semi-democratic or undemocratic regimes, in her quest for preserving the ideals of peaceful co-existence and peaceful resolution of conflict with her neighbours. Nevertheless, India has always preferred democratic order over any other political system but had stayed away from joining any international effort aimed at endorsing or importing and implanting democracy as a political system in any country. India did avoid from joining the 'free world' of western democracies in abusing the ideological smoke screen of freedom and democracy for promoting their respective strategic goals. However, in reality, India's foreign policy has shown far more sensitivity towards the safeguarding and enhancing democratic ethos and other such related issues, in tandem with furthering its own national interest. India is often seen as a reluctant player when it comes to actively promoting democracy. Only after the extensive dialogue with the USA initiated after the 1998 nuclear tests, India started taking small but decisive steps towards an agenda of

consolidating democracy, in consistent with India's "desire to improve and enhance its [India's] status as an evolving power" (Manmohan Singh 2004).

Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India has continued to pursue a foreign policy that placed significant emphasis on strengthening relations with her neighboring countries with the overarching goal of upholding democratic values in the region. This approach is further backed by several other key principles such as 'Neighborhood First Policy', Security and Counterterrorism Cooperation; 'Economic Diplomacy'; Developmental Assistance and Capacity Building; revival of Cultural and People-to-People Ties; and Peaceful Conflict Resolution through Diplomatic Engagement. Recognising that a secure and stable neighborhood is conducive for democratic as well as all-inclusive progress, India under PM Modi has engaged in security cooperation with neighbors to counter terrorism and transnational threats; in concurrence with providing developmental assistance for furthering capacity-building programs and strengthening technical expertise, with the purpose of strengthening constitutional framework, civil society and democratic institutions. Alongside, had articulated its willingness to engage in diplomatic efforts for peaceful resolution of the outstanding disputes with neighboring countries and fostering an atmosphere of peace and stability, which is essential for democratic progress. A distinctive hallmark of the Modi era has been the predisposition to establish India as a beacon of pluralist democratic model and a preacher of the same. By presenting itself as an exemplar, India aims to inspire and encourage other nations on their journey of consolidation of democracy. In essence, India's foreign policy under Prime Minister Narendra Modi towards her neighbors with regards to upholding democracy is characterized by a multifaceted approach that seeks to foster an environment of trust, mutual respect and economic cooperation, in analogous with active engagement and addressing security concerns at the regional forums. These initiatives collectively contribute to the promotion and consolidation of democratic values in the region.

The geopolitical landscape surrounding India is marked by the strategic presence of fledgling democracies at both the frontiers i.e. Pakistan in the west and Myanmar in the east respectively. While sharing a contentious history with India, Pakistan, continued to maintain an overarching military and political presence along the western front. Recent developments in Pakistan, including political shifts and security concerns have direct implications for India's national security. Characterized by a history of geopolitical rivalry and territorial disputes the India-Pakistan dynamic has been marked by a delicate interplay of less cooperation and more of contention. The predominant understanding of the experts on the region had been that

attaining stability and peace in the region of Indian sub-continent remains an elusive dream because the enduring tension between the born adversaries overshadow any forward movement. The historical enmity between these intrinsic adversaries, coupled with the strained security environment stemming from their protracted hostility, has profoundly shaped the political narrative of the region. The presence of contested territories and shared borders has formed a volatile concoction that has frequently taken the form of armed conflict and covert trans-border interventions (Chadda 2000: 24). Since their inception, India and Pakistan have harbored fundamentally opposing perceptions and expectations, which had significantly influenced their respective foreign policy paradigms. Factors such as the unstable political landscape in Pakistan, the prevalence of leadership dichotomy, the entrenched influence of the bureaucracy and military, a checkered political process, an intricate interplay between the military and militant groups, the Kashmir issue; and more recent elements like Afghanistan and the nuclear programme, have all played its share of role in exacerbating the regional tension (Gehlot and Satsangi 2004: 26-28). Throughout the history, these multidimensional aspects had perennially been the epicenter and determinant of regional stability. With the intensification of terrorism and military backed Pakistan being the harbinger of it, had been profoundly influencing the foreign policies and bilateral relations of both nations as well as the stability of the region. Simultaneously, at India's eastern front, the continuous political upheavals, conflict over ethnic fault lines and the persistent struggle of pro-democratic forces for consolidation of democracy had marred the geo-political and geo-strategic environment of the region. Myanmar's internal political dynamics, especially in the context of the Rohingya crisis and the reinstatement of the military junta posed serious challenges to India's greater foreign policy agenda as well as to the stability of the region. This has compelled India to re-strategies its engagement with Myanmar with an approach of engaging with whoever in the helm of affairs. India's this approach towards Myanmar, has been the reflection of its nuanced diplomacy, marked by a blend of constructive engagement and simultaneously the articulation of democratic ideals.

India's shift in policy attitude towards her immediate neighbors, where fostering democratic governance became one of the central tenets of its engagement strategy, had become profoundly evident in post-cold-war political dynamics. The prevailing understanding has been that in the intriguing backdrop of global politics, the promotion of democracy has emerged as a powerful foreign policy mechanism enabling nations seeking to foster stability, regional cooperation, and shared values. As a foreign policy mechanism, it provides nations with a

multifaceted tool to advance their ‘interests’ in consonance with cherished ‘values’ at the regional as well as at the global stage. At the same time this enables the countries to nurture a stable, accountable and transparent structures within political ethos of their diplomatic partners, which ultimately contribute in ushering regional stability and prosperity. Additionally, advocating for democratic principles creates avenues for shared values, mutual understanding, and stronger alliances, which helps in establishing the foundation of a cooperative and peaceful equation. The promotion of democratic principles not only resonated with India's philosophy as the world's largest democracy but also served as a means to forge closer ties with her neighbours based on conviction, poise and shared aspirations.

Every democratisation follows a different course, so as ‘Democracy Promotion’. Its means and mechanism will be different in different cultures and contexts. The model and mechanism may and will vary depending on the context and the region. India embarked on this path of democracy assistance without garnering a robust consensus among its foreign policy-making elites and analysts. The prevailing sentiment of a significant portion of intellectuals, foreign policy analysts, diplomats and politicians still harbour deep scepticism towards ‘Promotion of Democracy’, particularly in regard to the practices as advocated by the United States, viewing it as inherently inconsistent and cannot be accommodated within India's strategic objectives and broader foreign policy framework.

Even though the Indian Ministry of External Affairs may not have formulated anything like official programmatic documents explicitly outlining New Delhi’s foreign policy objective of supporting democracy, but these can be inferred very well through a qualitative content analysis of “key” speeches and statements made at various occasions by the significant representatives of the Indian foreign policy- that supporting democracy is in the agenda but it will be materialised enroute development and by other means and mechanism, not the way generally as it is perceived.

Nonetheless, it becomes evident that despite reservations outside of the government, Indian policymakers started recognizing the potential benefits of forging a stronger partnership based on the edifice of assisting democracy at its neighbourhood. In retrospect, India's shift in stance signified a deeper transformation in how New Delhi perceived its international interests, most prominently manifested in its evolving attitudes towards democratic struggles of her neighbouring country. However, a shift occurred as India began to seriously consider the notion that democratic governments might be more conducive to advancing its economic and security

interests compared to non-democratic counterparts. While it is true that India's fervour for defending democracy in South Asia was partly motivated by a desire to exert pressure on Pakistan. It is equally true that New Delhi's newfound sympathy for democracy was influenced by apprehensions regarding China's presence and to deter its ever-expanding influence in its immediate neighbourhood. This perspective/ assumption has been rooted in the belief that democratic governments might possess greater resilience against Beijing's overtures.

In occasion of India's G20 presidency, the External Affairs Minister's vociferously acclaimed that it is the responsibility entrusted upon India to be the unorthodox voice for the societies and countries that has otherwise been left behind and not have somebody else to speak for them. S. Jaishankar in his recent book titled "The Indian way: Strategies for uncertain World" (2020) warns that "indifference to global developments is no longer affordable; In fact, it is downright dangerous". India's seeming apathy towards the authoritarian shifts in Myanmar is at odds with its ambition to emerge as a democratic world leader, and may turn into detrimental in the foreseeable future.

After being the Prime Minister, Narendra Modi had aspired to be a normative power and proclaimed to take up the role as 'Viswa Guru' or the world teacher. It reflects India's historical role as a cultural and spiritual leader, providing guidance and wisdom to the world. As a normative power, India envisions itself not only as a political or economic force, but also as a source of moral and ethical leadership. This aligns with India's age-old tradition of sharing its wisdom and philosophical insights with the world and consequently furthering its normative agenda. Supporting, upholding and assisting democracy can be avowed as potential platform to realize and for furthering India's normative agenda. By assisting nations in accommodating plurality and democracy, India can serve as an exemplar of a successful democracy. Through active engagement and sustained efforts, India can contribute significantly to shaping global norms and fostering a more democratic and inclusive international order.

Consolidating democratic traditions in the realm of foreign policy is not without its challenges. One of the primary hurdles lies in striking the delicate balance between 'respect for national sovereignty' 'non-interference' and consequently advocating for high-ended value laden democratic principles. Success in this effort requires a subtle understanding of regional dynamics; along with long-term commitment of engagement even at the point of setbacks; and an ability to steer along the intricacies of international politics. This necessitates diplomatic finesse and a subtle understanding of local contexts because unswerving interventions has the

tendency of being perceived as heavy-handed or intrusive and can often turn to be counterproductive. Additionally, promoting democracy can be a complex process, particularly in regions like Indian sub-continent, where historical animosities, entrenched power structures, and socio-political divisions had shaped the trajectories. Circumnavigating these complexities demands a comprehensive understanding of the socio-political landscape and the ability to engage with a wide array of stakeholders, including the civil society, political elites, and marginalized communities; and if needed with the army as well. Therefore, it's important to assert that the scope of endorsing or assisting democracy cannot be uniform and must be tailor made in accordance with the unique contexts of each nation. This involves recognizing the diverse political- cultural milieu and historical dynamics at play in different regions; and subsequently adopting strategies that resonate with local sensibilities and uniqueness. Moreover, in order to yield meaningful and lasting results democracy promotion initiatives requires an assured and enduring engagement that would often extend beyond the immediate political sphere.

Liberal political theorists posit that states often rationalize their quest for establishing democracy and their policy of democracy promotion, on the basis of the principle of a 'federation of republics' rooted in the concept of democratic peace theory. The proponents of democracy promotion contend that it is a moral imperative for advancing and safeguarding the democratic principles and ideologies; and to spread universally accepted values to ensure that all individuals attain political rights and representation (Sorensen 2007: 254). However, it will be erroneous to ascertain that it is the normative prerogative of the democracy promoters to establish democracies, rather it would be worth mentioning that genuine strategic interests are involved in disseminating democracy globally (Stuenkel 2013: 340) because worldwide community of democracies is likely to foster an atmosphere which is more conducive to trade and investment. Hence by mitigating the security dilemma, democracies facilitate the optimization of economic well-being through extensive interdependence among the federation of democracies (Stuenkel 2013: 340).

Nevertheless, the Realists deem that international norm such as 'Endorsing Democracy,' primarily, is a tool used by powerful nations to exert their influence and further their own interests. Simultaneously, they had acknowledged that the promotion of democracy may have righteous intentions, but they also decisively asserted that countries will only provide funding and advance democracy endeavour if such progression aligns with their strategic or economic objectives. The realist asserted that USA promotes democracy because they are more

inclined to engage in trade thereby reducing the likelihood of causing instability and conversely creating environment conducive for free market economy. But whenever democracy promotion clashes with economic or geopolitical interests, it tends to take a back seat. As in case of USA's engagement with Pakistan during Cold-war period. USA preferred to remain indifferent in instances of struggle for self-determination in 1971 and stayed away from endorsing democracy. They never intended to offset the authoritarian regime be it in 1980's or during Musharaff's period. On the contrary, continued to exercise relations with Pakistan. Hence by this logic of the realists 'Promotion of Democracy' has been merely a tool employed by the US to legitimize its dominance and expansionist attitude. Following this rationale, democracies, whether longstanding or recently established, they themselves advocate for promoting democracy, if it aligns with her overall strategic and economic imperatives; and will practice it as a tool to legitimise their growing influence. This can validate India's varied degree of engagement with her neighbours. Against this backdrop, India, a significant actor in Indian Sub-continent has skillfully sailed through the diplomatic course with a nuanced approach towards its neighbors. Hence the period from 2000 to 2021 witnessed a dynamic evolution of India's foreign policy approach in regard to 'Promotion of Democracy', which is characterized as a perfect blend of pragmatic engagement and principled advocacy.

As of now from here we can ponder particularly over the political situation of Indian sub-continent as a region. The region has experienced a hard time to strike a balance between consolidating democracy along with sustaining development and stability. As already pointed out that the journey of democracy in the region is not at all impressive rather disheartening and consequently security scenario is baffled by the perennial enmity between two neighbours empowered by nuclear capabilities. India being the sole regional power and comparatively a successful democracy, it's expected that it is the responsibility on the part of India to extend its assistance to retrieve the nations from the quandaries they are mired in. Always a vigorous dialectic between idealism and pragmatism has existed in Indian foreign policy and the issue of promoting democracy is just one such area. Apparently, neither the promotion of democracy was in the priority list of the foreign policy agenda nor did the India's foreign policy framework was designed with the explicit purpose of advancing democracy on either at the regional or at the global scale. Rather, it played only a marginal role, which is determined by national interests, namely 'security considerations' in respect to Pakistan, China, terrorism and influx of immigrants from neighbouring countries.

In the recent past, the democratic consolidation and liberal institutionalism in Pakistan has been undertaken in a chequered manner. The democratic principles have made significant strides, as well as, there are moments where progress has been hindered by political instability and institutional challenges. Over the period of time countries in the region experienced the emergence of a unique kind of regime i.e. hybrid governance (Civilian government with military predominance where army has initiated democratisation). Considering the importance of strengthening democratic institutions it is a pre-requisite to reduce military interference for fostering an environment conducive to genuine democratisation. Subsequently, it's worth elucidating the pivotal role played by the military in Pakistan as ultra-political actors, their continued dominance and capacity to influence the policy outcomes, and in shaping the trajectories of bilateral relations. Despite civilian governance, the omnipresent influence of the military placed the democratic government at the mercy of the Pakistani army, resulting in limited progress towards stability in the region. The implications of this hybrid democracy on regional stability and the prospects for improved India-Pakistan ties is immense. Therefore, it can be best described as hybrid democracy where civilian governance coexists with a persistent military influence, and genuine democratisation has failed to take hold. The military exerts control, thereby limiting the autonomy of the democratic government. While acknowledging the challenges posed by the hybrid democracy, India has been compelled to re-strategise her equations to deal with these changing dynamics.

While tracing the historical trajectory of India-Pakistan relations, from the aftermath of partition in 1947 to contemporary times it can be posited that a democratic Pakistan would be more inclined towards normalization of relations with India, and fostering an environment of stability and cooperation. The bilateral dynamic had been fluctuating in nature of relations in response to shifts in leadership and governance. There exists a perennial ideological dichotomy between democratic forces with a liberal orientation- advocating for democratic consolidation and furtherance of relations with India; and hardliners resistant to any form of engagement with India and vehemently opposing for even the maintenance of working relations. It argues that the persistent influence of the military exacerbates regional tensions and impedes the prospects for constructive dialogue between India and Pakistan. Therefore, an intriguing facet of India's democratic promotion strategy lies in its stance towards Pakistan. Nonetheless, opportunities were palpable and occasional covert support had been extended to democratic forces within Pakistan. But India's response has predominantly been characterized by being reserve and caution. This stance persisted even in the face of democratic movements striving to reinstate

democratic governance in Pakistan. Typically, India had been refraining from assuming either a reactive or proactive role in the process of consolidation of democracy. Therefore, it is vital to look through the historical instances and geopolitical considerations for an explicate understanding of the underlying rationale for this deliberate choice.

Contrary to Pakistan, if the contours of the India-Myanmar relations are being explored then an oppositeness will be glaring. India initiated by extending significant assistance to pro-democratic forces in Myanmar, with an intention of helping them to retain their political presence, concurrently with an intention to carve out a political space within the complex framework of Myanmar's politics. India's strategic imperatives driven by security concerns and economic interests necessitated a shift in policy and prompted India to supplement engagement even with the military regime of Myanmar. This shift in approach led to garnering a working relationship with the military junta, all the while India continued to advocate for upholding democratic principles and constitutional reforms. Being influenced by a multitude of factors, India's approach towards Myanmar has been culminated by a dynamic policy stance that oscillates between endorsing democracy parallel to engaging with the military regime.

This caution yet proactive approach reflected India's commitment to democratic values and its desire to foster stability and democratic governance in its neighbouring country. In the face of severe criticism and advice to recalibrate its stance, both from the domestic and international front, New Delhi continued with her unique approach and compelled the military regime to move towards transition. This marked a pragmatic departure from its earlier approach, reflecting India's recognition of the changing geopolitical landscape in the region. Despite engaging with the military junta, India continued to fervently advocating for the release of pro-democratic activists and initiating the process of transition at earliest. This dual approach, characterized by pragmatic engagement and vocal support for democracy, showcased India's commitment to democratic values even amidst strategic compulsions. There is an array of the empirical evidence of proactive diplomatic and developmental efforts to impart democratic values, which would capacitate institution to function more adeptly. The landmark victory of 2010 election marked that such foreign policy practices yielded partial success though it proved to be short-lived. Within a span of less than a decade, the military regime reasserted its control by thwarting the deeper consolidation of democracy.

During the Cold War, India's stance on promoting democracy was ensnared in the intricacies of global power dynamics. Given the polarized environment, India found it

inconceivable to unilaterally advocate for democracy, as it would have risked itself being entangled in the geopolitical chessboard dominated by the United States and Soviet Union. India's non-alignment along with non-intervention policy sought to maintain autonomy in foreign affairs made active democracy promotion endeavours untenable. The dawn of the 21st century witnessed a discernible shift in India's approach to democracy promotion. Rather than adopting a confrontational stance, India sought to make a meaningful impact through active participation. India's historical experiences with colonialism played a pivotal role in its reluctance to embrace external interventions in regional affairs. Thus, India's approach in regard to 'Promotion of Democracy' is also marked by act of autonomy and bilateralism where 'Assisting Democracy' gained prevalence. This 'Assisting Democracy' is characterized by a top-down methodology where emphasis is on engaging primarily with the sovereign states and their institutions. This is in contrasts with Western models, which often involve a broad range of non-state actors and counter militarisation by uprooting the existing indigenous function political system. This is regarded as a threat to the sovereignty of the concerned nation. On the contrary by prioritizing state-centric interventions, India circumvent the complexities of global democracy promotion while extenuating concerns about encroachment on domestic affairs.

This paradigm shift signifies a departure from mere reactive action to pro-active engagement in cultivating capacity building and developmental assistance. Multilateral and bilateral initiatives, both at the global and regional levels, ascertain that India has strategically employed the tool of 'assisting democracy', when it is aligning with its national and strategic imperatives, especially when such objectives converged with the ideological aims of external actors. This shift from passive advocacy to proactive engagement represents an approach of strategic recalibration influenced by evolving geopolitical realities and India's evolving role as a global stakeholder.

India's delicate balancing act involves managing its relationships with both Pakistan and Myanmar to ensure regional stability while addressing the complex socio-political issues that permeate these nations. Consequently, the evolving political landscapes in Pakistan and Myanmar hold profound implications for India's strategic interests and regional stability. One of the pivotal dimensions of India's democratic propositions has been its complex relationship with Pakistan and Myanmar. In retrospect, India's pursuit for promoting or assisting democracy- as a foreign policy tool at her immediate neighbourhood in between the period of 2000 to 2021 represents a compelling study of diplomatic pragmatism and engagement. The ramifications of India's policies and postures stresses that India has both the scope and potential

of being a catalytic influencer. Therefore, thorough research efforts would be made to judiciously emphasize the analogy between India's promotion of democracy and its core national and strategic imperatives. By leveraging democracy promotion as a diplomatic tool, India tried to foster regional stability, strengthen its diplomatic clout, and advance its strategic standing in the global arena. However, prior to delving deeper into the exploration of efficacy and scope of this foreign policy tool, it is imperative to undertake a concise review of the existing body of literature pertaining to the related aspects.

Review of Literature

It has been done thematically

I. Democracy and Democratisation

The article titled 'Democratisation During the Third Wave', by Stephan Haggard and Robert R. Kaufman (2016) advocated for a more precise examination of the political mechanisms that connect the diverse factors leading to the emergence of democracy. The initial optimism surrounding the 'Third Wave' of democratisation had waned down due to the instability experienced by many new democracies and consequently the rise of competitive authoritarian regimes. These disappointments have led to a renewed focus on structural theories, which highlight the challenges posed by factors like underdevelopment, resource distribution, inequality, and divisions along ethnic and religious lines. This include considering the institutions that are established in new democracies and recognizing the role of civil society that facilitate collective action. Generalizations supported by cross-national statistical analyses often reveal the exceptions. Therefore, they suggested the need for approaches that consider combinations of causal factors, different paths and the possibility of multiple outcomes. The article has primarily been established around the combination of these of causal factors, such as the new structuralism, political and bargaining models of transition and the ever-evolving body of literature on how international influences impact democratisation. The central theme of the article has been the quest for an all-encompassing theory on democracy and democratization because the existing foundational principle may not be the most effective approach. Lastly the article had been concluded with a challenging normative question i.e. if enhancing accountability through democratic processes fails to deliver public goods effectively, should the process of democratisation prioritize strengthening fundamental government institutions first?

In the article “Democracy Support and Development Aid the elusive synthesis”, Thomas Carothers (2010), discussed the evolving relationship between international assistance for democracy and development aid over the past three decades. Initially, these two forms of aid operated separately. In the article T. Carothers had asserted that democracy promoters being skeptical of the methods and values associated with development aid, and developmentalists holding even stronger reservations towards political aid efforts, had created a wide gap. However, Carothers draws attention towards the shift in attitude to bridge the gap between these two communities. This convergence had led to the blurring of distinctions between the two groups, both in terms of organizational boundaries and on-the-ground activities. The text raises important questions about the nature of this evolving relationship. Carothers, posed questions such as whether the growing ties between democracy aid and socio-economic aid constitute a process of integration or synthesis. Looking back at the 1990s, the text identified several factors that contributed to the momentum towards integration, including the belief in simultaneous transitions to market economies and democracy along with the emergence of the concept of ‘market democracy’. There had been also a sense of optimism about the spread of democracy, even in countries without traditional democratic foundations and a reduced sensitivity towards cross-border political assistance. However, the article also notes that recent developments had reversed this trend. The global advancement of towards democratisation had faced setbacks and the risks of democratisation in fragile states had grown manifold because authoritarian models of development had gained momentum. Consequently, there has been a backlash against international democracy assistance. Ultimately, scholars like Carothers suggests that while progress had been made in integrating democracy aid and development aid, the situation remains uncertain. The bridges between the two domains had been transcended leading to be partial and fragile.

“The Democracy Advantage: How Democracies Promote Prosperity and Peace”, presents a compelling argument in favour of the benefits of democratic development in foreign policy. Coauthored by Morton Halperin, Joseph T. Siegle and Michael M. Weinstein (2005), the book advocates for a new perspective on foreign policy that combines American democratic and economic values; challenging the conventional wisdom that democracy and development are incompatible and offering substantial empirical evidence to the contrary. Drawing on four decades of empirical data from diverse countries including China, India, Iraq and Chile, the book convincingly demonstrates that impoverished democracies consistently outperform autocratic regimes on virtually every significant economic metric. The book justified the idea

that democracies tend to be more stable with lower likelihood of armed conflicts compared to countries under authoritarian regimes like Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan who are experiencing humanitarian crises and the breeding ground of international terrorism. The strengths of the book lies in incorporating the dimension of social welfarism of development, including indicators such as life expectancy, infant mortality and girls' education.

'Sustaining New Democracies', (2005) effectively argues that economic stagnation poses a threat to democratization and a substantial number of countries that backtrack from democratisation experience economic stagnation prior to their political reversal. Moreover, those states under the process of transition with prolonged economic recessions are more likely to revert to authoritarianism. Here in this chapter, author had asserted that multitude of varied factors, which may vary by country, contribute to backtracking from democracy in difficult economic times. But at the same time, it had also been identified that a significant percentage of those who reversed back, would eventually return to their democratic trajectory after a period of time. Therefore, the chapter successfully established the causal relationship between economic condition and democratization. Therefore, in the book it had been asserted that sustained attention to economic development in post-democratisation phase is crucial for maintaining democratic momentum and identified the macroeconomic characteristics as crucial distinguishing factors. Therefore, it could be conferred that the book provides a thought-provoking and well-supported argument to establish the causal relationship between democracy, economic development and stability.

In the thought-provoking paper titled 'Security studies' Cinderella? Why democratic peace theory should be invited to the King's Ball' presented by Harald Müller and Niklas Schörnig (2005), is an articulation of departure from the prevailing paradigm that considers democracy as the sole determinant of peaceful outcome. They contend that reducing the complex interplay of political systems and their policies to a binary of democracy versus non-democracy oversimplifies the complex dynamics that are at play. By exploring the primary as well as the secondary variables that influences the policy outcomes, the authors through light on the multifaceted nature of democratic governance. This perspective acknowledges that a multitude of factors, beyond the broad classification of democracy, can shape a nation's policies. They asserted that different combinations of variables can lead to the same outcome, thereby, challenging the established notion that a singular causal mechanism can be attributed to democratic peace.

In the subsequent phase of their argument, they had identified the specific lacuna of democratic exceptionalism. They presented a compelling theoretical argument, which asserts that democracies, in contrast to non-democratic states, offer security in a distinct and systematic manner. This assertion is particularly noteworthy given the counterintuitive anecdotal evidence that might suggest otherwise. This recognition of complexity adds a layer of sophistication to the discourse, while acknowledging the fact that a myriad of factors contributes to international relations and peace. Furthermore, the authors' refuse to blindly adhere to the assumptions of democratic peace rather preferred to carried out a critical thinking and advocated for a balanced approach, which acknowledges both the positive and negative aspects of democracy.

The article titled, 'From Democratic Peace to Democratic Distinctiveness. A Critique Of Democratic Exceptionalism In Peace And Conflict Studies' by Anna Geis and Wolfgang Wagner (2008), begin by critiquing the prevailing interpretation of the idea of 'Kantian peace'. Further they shed light on a subtle understanding of democratic politics and their potential for both constructive cooperation and most importantly on the exertion of various forms of violence. This reevaluation challenges the dichotomous treatment of democratic violence as either an encounter to the 'Democratic Peace' proposition or as an undemocratic irregularity. The assertion that 'democratic violence', as a variant within the democratic distinctiveness programme, demands further deeper exploration. This assertion in itself is a compelling argument. By bringing these dynamics to the forefront, Geis and Wagner advocated for a more inclusive examination of democratic systems and their impact on security issues. In their incisive analysis, the authors offered a comprehensive examination of the 'democratic distinctiveness programme' that has emerged from the Democratic Peace debate marked a paradigm shift in peace and conflict research over the last two decades. However, they did not hesitant in addressing the normative pitfalls that is inherent in this research program and had cautioned against inadvertently legitimizing questionable foreign policy practices by Western democracies. Therefore, they had provided a necessary counterbalancing theorisation to the enthusiasm surrounding the democratic turn in peace and conflict studies. The concluding section of the article offers valuable suggestions for a more self-reflective and critically engaged research agenda within the field.

The article 'Rethinking Democracy Promotion' by Beate Jahn (2012) offers a critique of democracy promotion theory within the context of liberal foreign policies. It addresses the conspicuous gap in the field of International Relations where democracy promotion, despite its crucial role as stability enhancer, had been overlooked. This had been identified as the

inadequacy of both the theory and practice of democracy promotion, resulting in the failure to explicate the global evolution of liberal democracy. The argument is based on an exploration of John Locke's foundational contributions to the understanding of liberal democracy, thereby, unravelling two key conceptual weaknesses in contemporary democracy promotion policies. The first pertains to the tension between the political and economic dimensions of liberal democracy, which necessitate for a more integrated approach. The second lies in the theoretical separation between domestic and international aspects that gives rise to potentially conflicting policies. This interrelatedness of the weaknesses elucidates the inherent complexities of democracy promotion. The article convincingly asserted that contemporary models of democracy promotion having roots in Western history can be categorized into political and economic approaches, in accordance with the current disciplinary divisions. The limitations of each of these approaches had been perceptively dissected. Based on Locke's work that acknowledges the fundamental role of the international sphere in the establishment and democratisation of liberalism, Jhan, introduces a compelling alternative conception of democracy promotion. This accentuates the significance of revisiting foundational theories when formulating policies for democracy promotion. The article concludes by advocating for a paradigm shift in how democracy promotion is conceptualised and practiced. By engaging with John Locke's seminal contributions, the author advances a persuasive alternative conception that challenges prevailing models.

Democracy, historically, has been the subject of intricate debates encompassing various 'models of democracy.' Milja Kurki (2010) in his article titled, "Democracy and Conceptual Contestability: Reconsidering Conceptions of Democracy in Democracy Promotion", judiciously contended that the conceptual contestability of democracy had received minimal attention in the post-Cold War era because the focus shifted towards refining policies aimed at promoting a specific model of liberal democracy. This article contends that the 'essential contestability' inherent in the notion of democracy had not received due recognition and scrutiny. Consequently, this had hindered the ability of both scholars and practitioners to get engaged in exploration of democracy promotion theory for the potential repercussions of considering alternative, non- or extra-liberal models of democracy.

This requires a dual approach i.e. the 'pluralisation' and 'contextualisation' of conceptions of democracy. The concluding part of this article meticulously examines the rationale behind such a paradigm shift in framing the study and practice of democracy promotion, while examining the potential risks involved into it. In this article it has been argued

against a narrow focus on mere policy adjustments or the accumulation of further empirical data on specific cases of democratisation or democracy promotion. Instead, there is a pressing need to grapple with the foundational conceptual underpinnings of both the processes. This article advocates for a justifiable and beneficial exploration of conceptual inquiries regarding the meaning of democracy within the realm of democracy promotion.

Fareed Zakaria (1997) introduced the term 'illiberal democracy' in one of his papers titled, "The Rise of Illiberal Democracy", distinguishing it from the traditional concept of liberal democracy. He argued that historically, modern democracies first embraced liberal values like constitutionalism, the rule of law and individual rights before extending the right to vote universally. Zakaria coined 'illiberal democracy' as a term to criticise those countries that transitioned from authoritarianism and adopted free elections, but failed to establish the liberal institutions necessary to safeguard individual rights. However, with the 'third wave' of democratisation starting in the mid-1970s, some countries adopted democratic elections without any prior knowledge of liberal tradition. This led to the emergence of regimes that were democratic in form but lacked liberal values. Thus, hindering them from evolving into genuine liberal democracies. Zakaria's key points were two folded. Firstly, he acknowledged that liberal democracy had been the most preferred political system, but he debated that there had been no specific roadmap to achieve it. Secondly, he asserted that a liberal political order had been inherently positive, while democracy in the sense of free elections, had only been valuable if it is being accompanied and promoted by liberalism. Zakaria's essay reflected a time when liberalism and free markets were gaining prominence globally, especially after the fall of European communism. There was a growing consensus that constitutionalism, the rule of law, protection of individual rights, and market economies were universally desirable, even if they were challenging to be implemented in the countries with long histories of authoritarian rule. What is important to point out that Zakaria's assumptions made nearly three decades earlier still hold true and the most apt to explain the course outcome of latest fourth wave of democratisation that swept across the nations of the South Asia and South East Asia.

'Democracy as a Conflict Resolution Model For Terrorism: A Case Study of India and Pakistan' by Sasmita Tripathy and Saeed Ahmed Rid (2010), discussed the relationship between democracy and terrorism that has gained significant attention in recent times. Western scholars had put forth contrasting views on this matter. Some argued that the absence of democracy in the Arabian Peninsula had played a decisive role in the rise of terrorist groups like Al-Qaeda and religious extremism in the Muslim world. They contend that promoting

democracy, particularly in the Middle East, had the potential of being the most effective means of combating terrorism. Some had even gone as further by endorsing ‘regime change’ and ‘imposed democratisation,’ while advocating for interventions like those in Afghanistan and Iraq during the Bush administration.

In the article, India and Pakistan had been undertaken as case studies to explore the impact of their respective political trajectories on terrorism. India had maintained uninterrupted parliamentary democracy since its independence, while Pakistan has experienced multiple military interventions that disrupted its democratic process. Therefore, the study intended to answer the questions like, whether India's secular democracy had contributed to lower levels of terrorism at home and abroad! and contrary to it, whether military rule in Pakistan had been a part of the solution or problem in addressing terrorism. It had also examined the potential of liberal democracy to serve as a conflict-resolution model for addressing terrorism in specific regions like Balochistan and Swat. The four primary objectives of the study had been to empirically investigate the relationship between democracy and terrorism; assess democracy's role in counterterrorism efforts; propose democratic approaches in resolving terrorism-related conflicts; and ultimately to provide with policy options based on the experiences of India and Pakistan.

In the post-Cold War era, Maya Chadda (2000) addressed a significant scholarly gap through her book, “Building Democracy in South Asia: India, Nepal, Pakistan”. Her work aimed to provide an alternative framework for understanding the impact of democratisation in South Asia, while trying to examining the role of region's historical and contemporary political experiences in the contouring the discourse on democracy. Regarded as a seminal and systematic effort in this domain, the book primarily proposed to rectify the imbalances and concurrently establish the connections between democratic struggles in South Asia and similar experiences worldwide.

Chadda embarked on an elaborate study of political developments in South Asia during the 1990s. While challenging two dominants yet opposing perspectives, she contended that the democratic spectrum had been undoubtedly extensive and incessantly evolving. She hypothesized that South Asia represented a distinctive third way of integrating democracy with market reforms. In the course of exploration, Chadda posed few crucial questions regarding the intersection of democratic progress with other paramount objectives such as nation-state building and national security. While aiming to provide nuanced answers through her

examination of the course of democratic evolution, she delved into the democratic experiences of three contrasting nations in South Asia: Nepal- a Hindu kingdom; Pakistan- an Islamic state; and India- a predominantly Hindu but committed to secular democracy. These countries under examination were selected for their markedly different starting points and the varying degrees of success they had achieved in the democratisation process up until that point. Chadda's approach diverged from the Western model, as she employed an elite-bargaining perspective to study the democratisation process (spanning from 1988 to 1997) within the broader context of nation-state consolidation in India, Pakistan and Nepal. In the book she had disputed the proposition that regime type determined the state of war and peace; rather democratisation in 1990s had led to quite the opposite outcome. In the post-Cold War context, some of Chadda's conclusions may have lost relevance in light of global political upheavals and unforeseen recent developments thus necessitating the reevaluation of the prevailing understandings.

“Federalism in South Asia” by Mahendra Prasad Singh and Veena Kukreja (2014) is one of the pioneering works that delves into the systemic inquiry of the functioning and operational mechanism of aspiring federations within the dynamic socio-political landscape of India, Pakistan, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. With a robust analytical framework, the authors offer a comprehensive examination of how myriad of factors, including constitutional values, societal intricacies, the configuration of dominant power elites and ruling classes; economic structures; political and cultural fabrics; mass media and information technology; and political systems, shape the federal dynamics of any nation. They at the same time highlights the divergences and similarities; successes and key challenges that each nation faces in its pursuit of federalism and creating a discourse on democracy and governance. By acknowledging the multicultural nature of the societies, the authors made a compelling case for federal political solutions as the most viable way-out for addressing ethnic and regional conflicts, separatist tendencies and underlying military currents.

Ayesha Jalal's (2009) work, ‘Democracy and Authoritarianism in South Asia: A Comparative and Historical Perspective’, challenges the widely-held notion that a shared colonial legacy resulted in divergent political trajectories in South Asia, with democracy thriving in India but facing challenges in Pakistan and Bangladesh. Instead, Jalal contends that all three states have grappled with similar threats arising from ethnic and regional movements. Through a meticulous examination of state structures and political processes, Jalal had reevaluated the fundamental concepts like democracy, citizenship, sovereignty and the nation-state, ultimately advocating for a more decentralised form of governance.

The book addresses a striking paradox in contemporary South Asian politics i.e. the relative success of democracy in India compared to the challenges faced by neighbouring Pakistan and Bangladesh. Despite the common colonial background, the existing literature have seldom delved into the reasons behind this contrasting political outcome. This gap in scholarly exploration is surprising. Many historians are now questioning the validity of claims made by both Indian and Muslim nationalisms, as well as the applicability of the concept of the nation-state in the complex subcontinental context. While acknowledging the arbitrariness of historical divisions, analyses tend to emphasize the differences rather than similarities, leading to a compartmentalization of South Asian historiography. Jalal's work had emphasised the importance of re-establishing a subcontinental perspective, which has been crucially missing in most of the available resources. By doing so, it encourages for a more comprehensive understanding of the shared challenges faced by the nations in the region and the interconnected paths shaping its future.

In the more recent times, a notable contribution to the scholarly examination of democratic progress in South Asia is found in the edited volume entitled “Democracy and Democratization in the 21st Century: The South Asian Experience” (2012). The central theme of the volume is to extend some tentative propositions to address the dilemmas that democracy and democratisation encounters in the contemporary era of globalization. In pursuit of this objective, it conducts a comprehensive survey of the contemporary experiences of South Asian nations. The initial section of the volume concentrates on the Indian context, while the subsequent section categorizes developments in India's neighboring states, encompassing Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Myanmar.

The first section of the volume predominantly deals with the concept of democracy in relation to three distinct dimensions of marginalization i.e. those rooted in regional disparities, caste-based differentiations and gender-based disparities. These dimensions find their origins in the inherent tension between nation-centric and individual/group-centric conceptualization of democracy. Conversely, the second section, which scrutinizes the diverse political aspects of the South Asian region accentuates two distinct scenarios. The experiences of Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal had exhibited a substantial overlapping of factors, insofar as these states were primarily found striving to establish consensus around a formal-institutional democratic framework in the classical national mold. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that while the question of the inter-relationship between local cultural traditions and democracy had emerged within the course of the essays in the book.

The referenced essays, titled “Democratisation in South Asia”, co-authored by Shibashish Chatterjee and Shulagna Maitra (2012), had undertaken a comprehensive examination of the challenges and potentialities associated with the democratisation efforts in contemporary South Asian states at the backdrop of colonial antecedents and vexed national identity. In the article Chatterjee and Maitra had forwarded a compelling argument that impediments towards democratic transition emanate both from internal structural complexities within the socio-economic framework of South Asia. As well as the existing pattern of over interdependencies of the region on global actors is a hindrance for the culmination of robust democratic institutions. Concurrently, the authors expressed their concerns and delineates the challenges that may serve as catalysts for democratisation across the region as a whole. Furthermore, the study specifies the typology of democracy that are likely to take root in the region depending upon its distinctive socio-economic and political dynamics (Basu 2012: 22).

In a similar manner, “Democracy in Pakistan: An Illusive Quest”, by Partha Pratim Basu (2012) concentrates his inquiry on Pakistan's enduring struggle to reconcile with democratic principles and frameworks since its inception. The article principally probes into the factors contributing to the early entrenchment of the Pakistani military and its adverse impact on culmination of the country's democratic aspirations. Simultaneously, the article offers an extensive account of the trajectory of General-turned Head-of-State Musharraf, while elucidating the sequence of ascent and decline. Ultimately, Professor Basu concludes by providing an overview of the contemporary challenges that are impeding the consolidation of democracy in post-Musharraf Pakistan. It is necessary to mention that Chatterjee, Maitra and Basu undertook the task of elucidating the causal factors that set-in motion such eccentric and incongruent democratic evolution.

The edited volume titled “Government and Politics in South Asia” by Robert C Oberst, Yogendra K Malik, Charles Kennedy, Ashok Kapur and Mahendra Lawoti (2019), offers an all-inclusive account of the comparative political analysis of key nations in the region, including India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Nepal. This volume particularly emphasizes on various aspects such as political parties, leadership dynamics, constitutional changes and establishes their correlations in the context of global politics. It provided a vivid account of the political landscape of India, the Zardari administration's impact on Pakistan's constitutional framework, the complex relations between Pakistan and the Obama administration, the evolving situation in Bangladesh, the persistent political tensions in Sri Lanka and the challenges faced by Nepal in its constitution-drafting process. The book has

been organized in a manner that facilitates cross-national comparison, which helps in gaining deeper understanding of the diverse political landscapes in these countries. Each section addresses crucial areas of inquiry, ranging from political culture and heritage to government structure, institutions, parties, conflicts and modernization efforts.

Christian Wagner (2009), a renowned expert on Democracy Promotion provides a wide-ranging explanation of the unique characteristics and challenges faced by South Asian countries in their pursuit of democratic governance. She highlighted several key points. Therefore, Christian Wagner in her paper titled, “Democracy and State in South Asia: Between Fragmentation and Consolidation?”, raised few pertinent questions such as: can established international concepts effectively explain South Asian democratic experiences, or an unique concept of democratisation is needed to explicate the distinctive characteristics of South Asian democracies? Addressing these questions can shed light on the paradoxical nature of political systems in the region.

The article begins by asserting that South Asian nations share certain fundamental features. Wagner, identified the paradoxical nature of political systems in South Asia and highlighted the coexistence of political traditions rooted in liberalism and democratic competition alongside the elements of semi-feudal structures. The article contends that any re-evaluation of democratic transition in South Asian countries should not only account for the ideological and institutional aspects but also integrate the challenges of state- and nation-building. To address these complexities, the article proposes a three-fold approach. First, it applies the commonly used minimalist definition of democracy to South Asia. Second, it examines various concepts of democratic consolidation and their applicability to South Asian experiences. Third, the article contends that the theoretical gaps and conceptual challenges that arise when applying these concepts to South Asia allows for the creation of a distinct subtype termed ‘fragmented democracy’. Therefore, it could be concluded that the article explored the unique characteristics of democracy in South Asia and underscored the need for a different theoretical framework.

II. Democracy in Pakistan and Bilateral Relation with India

“Pakistan: Democracy, Development and Security Issues” edited by Mahendra Prasad Singh and Veena Kukreja (2005) is a collection of eleven well researched and documented papers authored by different scholars. Primarily this volume offers a multifaceted insight of various dimensions of Pakistan's socio-political landscape. The varied aspects into consideration

ranges from democratic evolution, socio-economic quandaries, security concerns, the military's role, defense expenditure, to religious extremism and terrorism. By examining the co-relations between these aspects, the anthology carried out an inclusive exploration of Pakistan's multifaceted challenges and developments. The introductory section, penned by M.P. Singh and Veena Kukreja, while elucidated the overarching theme had labelled 'Pakistan as a nation still in the making', even after seven decades of its inception. Multifaceted issues addressed by the contributors in their respective chapters revolves around the political instability, the fragility of institutional frameworks and recurrent disruptions in the democratic political process cause due to military interventions, exorbitant allocations of public revenue towards defense, the military's influence in fostering a jihadi ethos and the complex interplay of Pakistan's role in the global war on terror, as well as its bilateral relations with India, along with perspectives on regional cooperation within South Asia.

Particularly in the second chapter, Veena Kukreja, had examined the prospects of democratic governance post 1999 coup, contended that the 2002 elections merely constituted a veneer of democratic governance and the future of democracy in Pakistan remained fraught with uncertainty. Kukreja posits that unless the military either autonomously decides to disengage from political affairs or had been compelled to do so by a groundswell of popular mobilization, the establishment of a robust democratic framework in the country remains improbable. However, it is worth mentioning that a diametrically opposite perspectives does exist, both within Pakistan and beyond. Some vociferously advocated for the presence of a functional democratic framework in Pakistan, while others contending that the developments of the past decade augur the potential for a transition towards fuller democratic governance, even under the stewardship of military leadership.

'Perception, Politics and Security in South Asia: The Compound Crisis of 1990' a book by P. R Chari, Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, and Stephen Philip Cohen (2003), delves into the complex crisis between India and Pakistan in early 1990, which brought the region perilously close to a nuclear conflict. It contextualizes this crisis within the backdrop of concurrent global events like the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Furthermore, the book contributed immensely by providing an account of the political quandaries arising from being surrounded by nuclear powers. Consequently, identified the strategies for building confidence and security and the role of ethnicity in modern international relations. Despite some positive developments, the book presented a persuasive account of a region characterised regression rather than progress. In general, the book acknowledges historical regional agreements between India and Pakistan,

observing that they primarily aimed at formally ending hostilities rather than achieving genuine reconciliation and lasting peace.

Sanjeev Kumar H.M. (2010), in his article titled 'Internal Dynamics of Subcontinental Security: Indo-Pak Tensions and the Political Response', provided an inclusive analysis of the security landscape in South Asia following the nuclearisation of both Pakistan and India. He contended that the relationship between nuclearization and the security situation had been characterized by an interplay of multifaceted causation and consequence. This dynamic has introduced a new dimension to India-Pakistan relations while intensifying the level of tension between the two nations. However, it had been evident that the overt acquisition of nuclear capabilities by both India and Pakistan had yielded incongruent outcomes in terms of their respective state behaviors. Regrettably, both nations had consistently articulated their inability to mitigate the inherently conflict-driven nature of subcontinental politics. This challenges the conventional understanding of 'nuclear deterrence', as it proves insufficient in elucidating the Indo-Pakistani situation. The nature of conflict in the subcontinent had become so complicated that it had necessitated external intervention to ease the simmering tensions.

Subsequently, a wave of democratisation had pervaded South and South East Asia. The people in the region, although more informed and ambitious, grapple with the concept of democracy. Notably, the discourses on democracy had, thus far, predominantly bypassed the experiences of a significant number of nations in Asia and Africa, which had embraced democracy as their preferred form of governance. While an array of literature on theories of democracy and the process of democratisation, alongside volumes on the politics and history of South Asia, is readily accessible. It is noteworthy that prior to the year of 2000, scarcely any systematic inquiry was undertaken to scrutinize the political trajectory of South Asian nations in the post-Cold War era with regard to the 'third wave of democracy'.

The book, titled 'Indo-Pak Relations: Twist and Turns from Partition to Agra Summit and Beyond', authored by N. S. Gehlot and Anu Satsangi (2004), had provided an account of India- Pakistan relation in the context of the post-Agra summit and the aftermath of 9/11, with the backdrop of the 'war on terror'. This period witnessed increased involvement of extra-regional powers, particularly the United States, in South Asian politics. The primary objective of the book was to determine the evolving nature of Indo-Pak relations and its implications for India's national and security interests. The authors initiated their discussion by examining Pakistan's emergence as a nation from the remnants of colonial history, which is founded on

the contentious premise that "religion constitutes the basis of a nation". They identified political instability, military rule and the tendency towards assuming a protective role for Indian Muslims, as the major source of tension between India and Pakistan. While the authors express their reservations about the intentions of Pakistani leaders, they also advocate for the exploration of Track-II and Track-III diplomacy, as well as utilizing platforms like SAARC for dialogue; and delved into American involvement in the South Asian politics. However, they consistently emphasized the importance of pursuing India's domestic priorities and foreign policy agenda independent of the outcomes of any dialogue with Pakistan.

The book 'The Idea of Pakistan' by Stephen P. Cohen (2004), primarily aims at delving into the fundamental question of 'What is Pakistan?' while moving beyond the simplistic assertion of being characterised as a zone of 'fledgling democracy'. Cohen's objective had been to untangle Pakistan's complex history in order to make informed predictions about its future trajectory. Towards the end, Cohen sketches out five potential scenarios for Pakistan, implying that the nation's future would likely be a blend of these rather than strictly adhering to any single one. These scenarios encompass the emergence of a moderate, democratic state; the potential rise of authoritarianism; the prospect of an Islamist state; the conceivable breakup of Pakistan; and lastly the nation's outlook following the major conflict with India.

Cohen also addressed the historical junctures that have shaped Pakistan's identity. He pointed out that the dissolution of East Pakistan and the creation of Bangladesh in 1971 challenged the initial status of Pakistan, of being a state for South Asian Muslims. Cohen underlined the notion that Pakistan's persistent focus on the Kashmir issue had been more detrimental than any other single concern, and expressed his scepticism about the feasibility of achieving a truly democratic Pakistan, given the dominance of the military with its extensive political agenda and overt tendency of overshadowing its long-term strategic foresight. Additionally, Cohen places a degree of blame on the political leadership, asserting that their inability to establish a state that fulfils basic civic responsibilities had largely influenced the emergence of Pakistan's complex socio-political landscape.

In his article titled "India-Pakistan Relations: Road Map to Nowhere" author Kalim Bahadur (2003) shares similar perspectives and provides a comprehensive analysis of the historical trajectory of India-Pakistan relations. He goes beyond mere providing chronology of events, but delve into the underlying reasons behind the recurring failures of attempts to resolve their differences. Bahadur attributes a significant portion of these challenges to the persisting

effects of colonial legacies. He argues that the historical context has contributed to foster a specific mindset and negative outlook between the two nations. He further identifies two other impediments to the normalization of relations: First, he highlights the resurgence of Islamic fundamentalism, akin to the Taliban, as a factor that complicates efforts towards peace. Second, he emphasizes the predominant influence of the military hardliners and the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) in formulating policies for nuclear program and bilateral relation with India. This dominance in decision-making further complicates diplomatic efforts. Given these complex dynamics, Bahadur concludes his article on a note of scepticism. He believes that achieving a substantial breakthrough in India-Pakistan relations remains a formidable challenge, especially without a fundamental transformation towards true democracy in both nations.

The article “Difficult Neighbourhood: The Key Objectives of Pakistan’s Foreign Policy Towards India in The Twenty-First Century”, By Agnieszka Kuszewska (2016) commences by answering a pertinent question on the pivotal role that India play in Pakistan's international strategy and specifically examining Islamabad's policy towards its democratic neighbouring nation. Within Pakistan's political and military leadership, India is viewed as the primary security concern. This perceived threat has been instrumental in justifying substantial military expenditures and the development of a powerful armed forces in Pakistan. However, this emphasis on military strength has come at the expense of undermining democratic institutions and civilian governments while, consolidating the military's hold on state power. There is a prevailing belief that India's overarching objective has been either to reverse the partition or, at the very least, subordinate Pakistan as a client-state. The enduring conflict-ridden relationship between the two nuclear-armed states is characterized as ‘difficult neighbourhood’. The analysis presented in this article offers a comprehensive exploration of the foundational components of Pakistan's foreign policy vis-à-vis India. Given the intricate nature of regional security challenges, this body of literature constitutes a highly pertinent contribution to the ongoing extensive discourse discussing the future trajectory of India-Pakistan relations and broader security-related developments in South Asia.

Subsequent to these developments, Pakistan has exhibited discernible progress in its pursuit of democratisation. Despite prevailing reservations stemming from limited public engagement and the predominant influence of the military and religious institutions, there exists an apparent silver lining amid the prevailing skepticism surrounding civilian authorities. Scholars such as Zia Mian and Edward Gonzalez assert unequivocally that within the South

Asian context, encompassing both India and Pakistan, civil society and the electorate have unequivocally expressed their preference for ushering both peace and democracy as primary objectives. Edward Gonzalez, having been a member of an international delegation dispatched to Multan for an assessment in the aftermath of severe flooding and subsequent relief efforts in southern Punjab, elucidates his optimism regarding the potential success of a process termed 'deliberative democracy'. This paradigm contends that democracy should encompass a collective problem-solving approach and substantial acceptance to be given to the accumulated wisdom of local communities. In parallel, Zia Mian, in her work titled 'Choosing Peace in South Asia', underscored the findings of 2013 poll conducted in six major Indian cities and eight cities along with 36 villages in Pakistan, where it had been revealed that a significant majority, two-thirds in India and an even greater proportion in Pakistan, expressed their willingness to pursue a harmonious relationship with India and vice-versa. Despite this inclination towards peace, both the Indian and Pakistani governments allocate substantial resources towards military endeavors, yet civil society within both nations persistently strives to construct a foundation for peace. They steadfastly rejected the notion of allowing the past to encumber their future.

In light of this evolving landscape, academicians like Mohar Chakraborty aptly distinguishes and analyze the fragmented and transitional character of Pakistan's political landscape. Chakraborty advocated for a policy of 'flexible containment' on India's part, designating the Sharm-el-Sheikh event as a watershed moment. In the era of globalization and economic interdependence, Chakraborty emphasizes the significance of bilateral economic and commercial cooperation as integral components of the *modus operandi* for normalizing relations and fostering a peaceful and stable regional milieu. She contends that, in the age of globalization, trade and commercial interactions cannot be held hostage to non-economic determinants. It is thus incontrovertible that the historical neighbors of South Asia, India and Pakistan, must collectively strive for nothing less than enduring peace. Consequently, it is incumbent upon both nations to collaboratively remove the multifaceted impediments obstructing the path to clearer waters for their respective populations. However, it is also a universal truth that genuine breakthroughs are contingent upon the establishment of democracy in its truest sense.

III. Democratic Transition in Myanmar and Bilateral Relation with India

The article "Changing Myanmar: International Diplomacy and the Futility of Isolation", by Christopher B. Roberts (2011), examines the evolving international approaches towards

Myanmar in light of changing political dynamics, particularly when the country's increased strategic importance had been driven by its natural resources. The central theme of the paper revolves around the role of economic and strategic partners in sustaining Myanmar's leadership; China's pivotal support; the impact of the 2007 protests on Sino-Myanmar relations; the evolving diplomacy of ASEAN and Western countries; and the potential for collaborative approaches. The paper effectively highlighted the complex geopolitical dynamics that were at play in Myanmar. The paper draws attention to the fact that the international community remains divided over how to engage with Myanmar- oscillating between sanctions and isolation on one hand, and providing aid and engagement on the other. This sets the stage for a critical analysis of the various international actors and their strategies towards Myanmar. Consequently, this article accentuated the critical role of Myanmar's natural resources in preserving the clout of the military regime (Tatmadaw). The analysis contended that despite increased political empowerment of the civilian authority, Myanmar's military regime by manipulating constitutional provisions had been successful in maintaining its strong hold over the state apparatus. This had been possible owing to Myanmar's vast natural resources and strategic importance. The paper suggests that, based on the political reforms within Myanmar, there was an opportunity for a broader international consensus that favours stronger trust and increased humanitarian aid. The concluding part of the paper had been a major takeaway, as it offers a pragmatic assessment of the limitations of external intervention in Myanmar's domestic affairs.

The paper, titled “Weaving the Missing Links in India–Myanmar Relations”, by Sonu Trivedi (2017), presented a fascinating analysis of India's policy towards Myanmar, emphasizing the interplay between geostrategic, security and economic considerations and how they have shaped the bilateral policies. It traces the evolution of India-Myanmar relations from the time of their independence marked by phases of tension and cooperation. The article starts by highlighting the context of shared geopolitical history and cultural ties that had largely influenced the course of action of both India and Myanmar. This aspect adds depth to the analysis and is crucial in understanding the intricacies of India's foreign policy decisions, particularly in the context of her immediate neighbourhood. The precarious military takeover in 1962 had deviated entire course bilateral relationship from outrighted cooperation to non-cooperation. This historical account serves as a foundation for the subsequent analysis of the ups and downs in the relationship and ultimately leading to the recent establishment of a quasi-civilian regime. The paper asserted to address the prevalent critical gap between the two by

means of strengthen the partnership. Alongside the author draws attention to the scope of potential role that India might in Myanmar's political reforms. Trivedi, concluded by advocated for the evolution of more robust and sustainable partnership between India and Myanmar, as this aligns with the broader theme of India's regional influence and its Act East Policy. The mention of India's Act East Policy as a part of foreign policy framework for engaging with Myanmar and other Southeast Asian neighbours further contextualises India's broader regional objectives.

The paper “India’s Look East Policy: Relations with Myanmar”, by A. Paode (2013), initiate the discussion by providing a detailed account of Myanmar's political transition following the 2010 general elections and simultaneously asserted that this creates a political environment conducive of peace-stability and intensive cooperation after years of military rule. This article in a very subtle way provided a balanced assessment of Myanmar's political transition, while acknowledging the challenges that lies ahead. The author had identified Aung San Suu Kyi's participation in parliament and the installation of a new government in 2011 as pivotal milestones, which is indicative of the tangible shift that Myanmar made towards establishing participatory democratic governance. In the article Paode, had acknowledged the contribution of positive regional and international diplomatic efforts that had not only improved relations with neighbouring countries but had also been helpful in ushering democratic mindset of an optimal number of populations. Parallel, to this the paper argues that India stands to benefit in the long term by engaging with the Myanmar's new government, because that would facilitate economic and political influence over the region. This perspective aligns with the broader theme of India's diplomatic strategy and thus Poade, vociferously advocated for further constructive engagement for achieving strategic objectives in the region. Thus it could concluded that the paper overall offers a well-reasoned analysis of India's engagement with Myanmar, taking into account political developments, regional dynamics, and economic opportunities.

The paper by Priya Chacko and Alexander E. Davis (2015), titled “Myanmar and India: Regimes of Citizenship and the Limits of Geo-economic Engagement”, delved into the complex dynamics between India and Myanmar since the 1990s, while delineating the fact that India had continued to adopt reconciliation approach with the military Junta through geo-economic strategies. However, the authors contended that these efforts had yielded limited success, which demands further exploration. Thus, through their academic exploration they delved deeper to find the rationale behind such limited outcome. In the article they asserted

that the effectiveness of the two geo-economic strategies employed—sub-regionalism and diaspora-driven trade and investment—hinges on the emergence of a specific types of de-territorialized and denationalized citizenship regimes. These regimes are crucial in facilitating the mobilization of provincial and diasporic capital.

The analysis highlighted that the development of such social forces had hindered the progress both in India and Myanmar due to the persistent resistance of older 'regimes of citizenship' rooted in geopolitical strategies based on territoriality and existing social hierarchies. Additionally, the paper drew attention to the fact that stigmatisation of India's Northeast region as culturally distinct and potentially 'disloyal', had posed a barrier on the development of effective sub-regionalism. This underscores the entrenched perceptions and historical narratives that shaped the two nations' approaches towards one another. The paper ultimately contends that transforming the India-Myanmar relationship necessitates more than just increased political will or technocratic policy adjustments, rather it calls for a comprehensive re-evaluation of deeply ingrained national anxieties and social hierarchies that had triggered the citizenship regimes of both India and Myanmar.

The article titled, "Myanmar's Transition to Democracy: New Opportunities or Obstacles for India?", by Lavina Lee (2014), provided a wide-ranging assessment of India's strategic shift from supporting democratic forces towards engaging with Myanmar's ruling military junta in the mid-1990s. Though this turnover on the part of India was heavily criticised both in the domestic and international front. In the course of discussion, the article provides a convincing rationale and accentuated the fact that pragmatic considerations and India's pursuit for security, energy, economic, and geostrategic interests had influenced this shift and necessitated cooperation with the junta. The paper acknowledged that the outcome of this change in approach had been modest and as Myanmar had undergone a transition towards electoral democracy, India had the new opportunities rather than potential obstacles.

The article's focus on the prospective role of a National League for Democracy (NLD) led government in addressing key issues of contention in India-Myanmar relations. Moreover in the article pointed out on the potential of the NLD's to eradicate Indian insurgent groups (IIGs) operating in Myanmar; expand trade and attracting Indian investment. This forward-looking perspective adds depth to the analysis. The article made a futuristic yet realistic assessment that Myanmar may not be an attractive market for Indian firms (beyond the resource sector) until liberal institutions and open competitive practices had been firmly established. It

underlined the broader challenges associated with economic engagement in Myanmar and highlighted the need for further structural reforms. Contrary to such optimisation the article had also been sceptical of NLD's capacity to resolve Myanmar's long-running ethnic insurgencies, which might impact the relation in the long run. It underscored the complex internal dynamics within Myanmar and acknowledged the limitations of external actors, including the NLD, in addressing such deeply entrenched ethnic conflicts. Overall, the article offers a comprehensive analysis of potential implications of the transition towards democracy and provides valuable insights regarding the challenges and opportunities that lies ahead for both countries.

In "India-Myanmar Relations: A Strategic Perspective", the author, Dr. Ashok Kumar (2021) undertook a thorough analysis of the complex and multi-dimensional ties between India and Myanmar, with a focus on strengthening bilateral relations and safeguarding India's strategic interests in the region. He has described the intricacies of India's evolving relationship with Myanmar and offered a detailed account of Myanmar's political transition and its consequential role as an essential platform for major powers to assert their influence in Southeast Asia. The text masterfully contextualized the shifting global collaborations and geopolitical competitions, particularly in the sub-regions such as the Bay of Bengal, the South China Sea and the Mekong River Basin. Dr. Kumar had unravelled the intentions of extra regional actors such as India's interests in extending further eastward; China's strategic positioning to the south; the United States' renewed engagement strategies, and Japan's reinvigorated stake in the region- all converges around Myanmar's evolving geo-strategic importance in the Indo-Pacific arena. In the book Dr. Kumar strongly opined that the interests of major global players intersect and often clash within and around this region. Therefore, Dr. Kumar had tried to provide a nuanced analysis of the complex dynamics at play and had effectively underscored the increasing significance of the India-Myanmar relationship in the face of these evolving geopolitical landscapes.

In "Irrawaddy Imperatives" Jaideep Chanda (2021) delved into India's dynamic relationship with Myanmar, a connection that began in 1991 and has now spanned over an impressive 30 years of bilateral engagement. The book uncoverd the two-pronged approach that India had employed: engaging with Myanmar on practical levels while simultaneously advocating for democratic reforms. However, everything changed on February 1, 2021, with Senior General Ming Aung Hlaing's coup d'état. Despite being written prior to the coup, "Irrawaddy Imperatives" offers a fresh and original perspective on India's relationship with

Myanmar. It evaluates India's strategy through three distinct lenses: the borderland studies approach, the geographic realism approach and the recognition of the Northeast' overbearing and its people as pivotal stakeholders in India-Myanmar relations.

Contrary to viewing the Northeast as merely a gateway to ASEAN markets, the book contended that the region should be considered as a primary space. This had surely been an alternative and innovative perspectives. He had also argued that in order to counter China's increasing influence in Myanmar, India may not be able to rival China's economic presence; but it can certainly surpass China's influence in the region by implementing 'public diplomacy' i.e. campaigning at the grassroot level. Therefore, J. Chanda had in favour of India being undertaking much proactive initiatives, as it will ultimately yield significant long-term benefits for New Delhi, which are vital for ensuring stability in the Northeastern region. This necessitates significant Indian investment along the India-Myanmar border and surely it is the most effective way to counterbalance Chinese influence in both Myanmar and Northeast India.

IV. Indian Foreign Policy and Democracy Promotion

The promotion of democracy has long been a focal point in Western foreign and development policies. India, being recognized as the world's largest democracy and a significant international player, has garnered increasing attention since the mid-1990s. This has prompted much consideration of whether India can serve as a partner to the West in advancing democratic governance worldwide. The research paper by Christian Wagner (2009), titled, "Promotion of Democracy and Foreign Policy in India", examined whether democracy promotion features prominently in India's foreign policy doctrines and debates; and simultaneously explored the relationship between the executive and legislative branches in India's political system in practising 'Promotion of Democracy' as a foreign policy mechanism. This study drew several key conclusions. To start with the study asserted that the promotion of democracy occupies a peripheral position in India's foreign policy agenda. National interests, particularly security concerns regarding China and Pakistan; economic and trade interests; and the imperative of securing energy and resources dominate India's foreign policy considerations.

The study conferred that India is unlikely to emerge as a stabilizing force in South Asia. Historical interventions had been motivated more by a pursuit of political stability than a commitment to establishing democratic governments. Additionally, India had been perceived by its neighbours as part of the problem rather than a solution, further complicating its role in

regional stability. While India possesses significant administrative expertise in conducting elections, an essential component for nurturing democracies, its participation in global initiatives is contingent on national interests. However, the study had been undertaken in 2009 and since then major political developments had led to a havoc changeover in the political landscape of India as well as in the region, which call for a re-evaluation of the changing dynamics.

The advancement of democracy, encompassing both the tenant of promotion and democratisation, had emerged as a novel instrument of foreign policy with substantial institutional power in the contemporary era. While prioritization of democracy promotion as a facet of foreign policy received limited attention from policy makers, but India eventually integrated itself into this paradigm. Following the conclusion of the Cold War, India's proclivity for endorsing and fortifying democratic principles had increasingly permeated its policy formulation. This evolving political paradigm in South Asia had presented a dual dynamic for India i.e. both a challenge and an opportunity. It offered a platform to address longstanding issues and foster confidence among its neighboring nations, while concurrently allowing India an opening to advance supplementary interests and safeguard its own national concerns with renewed vigor. In this context, C. Raja Mohan's (2007) seminal work, titled "Balancing Interests and Values: India's Struggle with Democracy Promotion" assumed paramount significance. As the title implies, the article primarily is an exploration of the imperatives that either impede or bolster India in its global pursuit of democracy promotion. In this endeavor, C.R Mohan delineated the prevailing quandary associated with harmonizing 'interests,' 'values,' and 'expectations'. He had concluded by asserting that India is rapidly accruing the capacity to exert influence in the region and alongside shedding certain ideological vestiges of its Third World heritage. Moreover, India demonstrated a readiness to frequently, if not invariably, collaborate with other democratic powers in the propagation of freedom. C.R Mohan had also pointed out that India had also becoming adept at negotiating the intricate interplay between democratic values and the deployment of diplomatic and coercive means to advance these values beyond its own borders.

The foremost comprehensive and methodically articulated analyses in this domain was conducted by the distinguished scholar and academician, S. D. Muni (2009), who authored the seminal volume titled 'India's Foreign Policy: The Democracy Dimension'. The book stands as a significant contribution to the discourse on India's foreign policy and its evolving stance on democracy promotion. The principal thrust of this study had been to scrutinize the crucial

junctures in India's diplomatic history and offering insights on the discernible shift in policy orientation towards a more pronounced emphasis on assisting or endorsing democracy as a key determinant of foreign policy choices. One of the central themes of Muni's work had been the historical trajectory of India's foreign policy in relation to democracy.

The investigation envisioned to address fundamental inquiries, namely, whether India's diplomatic maneuvers and stances were principally steered by overarching considerations of democracy, or whether they were substantially subordinated to safeguarding India's vital strategic interests. Additionally, it probes into whether India's approach to the question of democracy was contingent upon the prevailing political complexion of the regime—be it a political party or a coalition thereof—in power at any given juncture. In the course of addressing these inquiries, Muni delineated few specific facets of democracy that hold sway in India's foreign policy, thereby contributing to its immediate and enduring interests vis-à-vis neighboring states and the international community at large. Consequently, Muni, concludes that India has recalibrated its foreign policy posture, aligning itself with global initiatives aimed at democracy promotion. Muni contends that while India had aligned itself with global efforts to advance democratic values, it does so on its own terms and conditions while safeguarding its own strategic and national interests, which distinguishes India's approach from more conventional models of democracy promotion.

The book titled “India in South Asia: Domestic Identity Politics and Foreign Policy from Nehru to the BJP” by Sinderpal Singh (2013) offered a compelling account of the intricate relationship between domestic politics and foreign policy in India, particularly in the context of her neighbours. While extending a vivid chronology of eventualities, the book had delineated the difficulties that India had in defining her relation with the Asian neighbours over the period of seventy years. In the text S. Singh while acknowledging the volatile nature of the region had aptly underlined the impact of India's domestic political dynamics on regional stability and cooperation. The core argument of the book centres around the idea that India's foreign policy, marked both by continuities and disjunctions is deeply intertwined with how Indian elites shape and express the country's identity, especially in response to domestic political pressures. To substantiate this argument, the author employed a historical approach by examining India's foreign policy across three distinct period since gaining independence. Ultimately the book had been concluded by contending that the articulation of Indian identity by state elites is intimately tied with the exigencies of domestic politics and ultimately influencing India's perceived role as a regional power.

The article titled “India in South Asia: Interaction with Liberal Peacebuilding Projects” by Monalisa Adhikari (2018), delves into the complex dynamics of international engagement in fragile and conflict inflicted states of South Asia. M.Adhikari had identified two concurrent forms of engagement. Primarily the first one had been that of India as the regional hegemon, and the second being that of Western states championing liberal peacebuilding endeavours. This dual engagement had been evident across various instances; starting from Norwegian involvement in Sri Lanka to European Union (EU) and United Nations (UN) initiatives in Myanmar, to UN-led efforts in Nepal. Despite inherent flaws the liberal peacebuilding projects had been prevalent in Indian sub-continent- a region that is fraught with diverse forms of conflict and fragility. On the contrary India had adopted engagement strategies and liberal peacebuilding projects with distinctive normative foundations, practices and modes of operation. The article had contended that their interaction, though often unacknowledged, is characterized by uncertainties, unexpected convergences and lack of coordination.

The central argument of the paper had been postulated based on the assertion that India needs to formulate policies and liberal peacebuilding norms in order that would govern their constructive role in the region. It must implement the policies by means of engagement through various organizational and institutional networks. The article emphasizes that this approach aligns with India's regional policy, which hinges on the twin principles of regional hegemony and countering external influences. The existing study had explained India's pursuit of regional dominance and its interests in trade, natural resources, and security. But they tend to overlook the roles and engagements of key actors involved in liberal peacebuilding. These actors operate through a complex network comprising of governmental and quasi-governmental entities such as transnational civil society groups. The article contends that the evolving conflicts in the region had played monumental role in reshaping the landscape of international engagement in the region. The article is structured into five sections where the paper provided a concise account of the fragility and conflict in India's neighbouring states, followed by the examination of the backgrounds and evolution of liberal peacebuilding initiatives. Overall, the article provides a comprehensive analysis of the interplay between India's regional hegemonic objectives and the liberal peacebuilding projects in the backdrop of South Asia's fragile and conflict prone states.

The election of new governments in Pakistan and India in 2013 and 2014 sparked debates about the future direction of their long-standing rivalry. Initially, leaders Nawaz Sharif of Pakistan and Narendra Modi of India aimed to stabilize their fragile economies and

envisaged that improved bilateral ties as crucial for their respective economic agendas. Based on this perspective the paper titled, 'Breaking the Equilibrium? New Leaders and Old Structures in the India-Pakistan Rivalry', by Ishtiaq Ahmad and Hannes Ebert (2015) drew attention towards the renewed rivalry between the two. Particularly based on the equilibrium model, the authors tried to establish the proposition that structural complexities are likely to persist and would continue to hinder any conflict resolution initiatives in the future. Factors like the influential role of the army; anti-Indian sentiment in Pakistan; the presence of a conflict lobby in India; territorial disputes, power imbalances and reduced third-party mediation would undoubtedly impede any well-intended initiatives. Even if bold leadership attempt to revive any peace process, then it must be built on trust-building measures to withstand crises.

Alongside the article examines whether the changes brought about by the historic elections created a more favorable environment for de-escalation and resolution of tension, or if they continue the antagonism. The article had been broadly divided into two parts. The first part section remained engaged in defining 'enduring rivalry' and the other section restricted itself in discussing the factors led to the de-escalation of rivalry and maintain working relations based on punctuated equilibrium model. The second part while assessing the current South Asian context by using this model, considered the factors like democratic consolidation, regime change, civil war and regional power shifts. Ultimately it had been concluded by asserting the importance of confidence-building measures in managing the rivalry, especially in an environment, which is prone to outbreak of conflict.

Dhruv Katoch's (2019) 'India's Foreign Policy Towards Resurgence' provides a comprehensive exploration of India's foreign policy, spanning from ancient times to the contemporary era. The author adeptly traced the roots of India's diplomatic strategies and emphasizes the paramount importance of national interest in shaping foreign policy. By drawing a parallel to Chanakya's treatise on statecraft the book had successfully established India's historical legacy in navigating international relations to safeguard its interests. The narrative smoothly transitions to the post-independence era. One of the book's strengths lies in its recognition of the recent transformation in India's foreign policy from 2014-2018. Katoch is of the opinion that the kind of assertiveness displayed on issues related to national integrity reflects the bold and proactiveness, which was missing for long. Such proactiveness in foreign policy formulation encapsulated the principles of 'Samman, Samvad, Samriddhi, Suraksha, Sanskriti evam Sabyatha.' While the body of literature accentuated the transformation in foreign policy based on economic growth, strategic culture, and security concerns but a more

in-depth analysis of the geopolitical shifts and their implications would have added greater depth of understanding.

In the book titled “75 Years of Indian Foreign Policy: War, Peace & a World Realigned”, Madhav Das Nalapat (2022) while addressing the global transformation had skilfully presented a compelling analysis of India's diplomatic journey in the face of unpredictable geopolitical events. The book aptly begins with the tumultuous year 2020, marked by the unprecedented global impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, setting the stage for a series of transformative events that continued to reshape the world politics. The narrative seamlessly transitions from the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan in 2021, following the hasty withdrawal of US troops, and the subsequent invasion of Ukraine by Russia in 2022, both the events sending shockwaves through global politics and economies. Nalapat had astutely emphasized the need to study the world as it is based on realism and the imperative to adapt to the changing realities. The strength of the book lies in its recognition of India's potential superpower status and the corresponding demand for a foreign policy framework based on the pragmatic blend of current realities and long-term trends. The concept of resilience and flexibility, which is inherent in Indian foreign policy had been appropriately highlighted. Nalpat, had strongly advocated adopting the policy of sustained engagement for few and re-engagement for other to weather away geopolitical storms and strategically rebound from setbacks while capitalizing on emerging opportunities. By connecting past experiences with the contemporary geopolitical landscape, the book provides a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities that had and would shape India's foreign policy trajectory.

Aparna Pande (2017) in her book titled “From Chanakya to Modi” presented a compelling exploration of India's foreign policy by skilfully weaving together the historical context, civilizational heritage and modern national interests. The book posits that foreign policy is not detached from a country's cultural identity; rather deeply entrenched in its national experience and self-perception. Pande astutely argued that India's foreign policy paradigm is shaped not only by contemporary notions of national interest but also by its rich civilizational heritage. The enduring concepts of autonomy and independence in decision-making have echoed through centuries from the strategic wisdom of Chanakya in the 3rd century BC to the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2020. The book identified four recurrent trends i.e. messianic idealism, realism, isolationism, and imperial influences that have influenced and competed with each other at different junctures of India's engagement with the world. Pande's insightful analysis draws parallels between these historical trends and the dynamic interplay of

ideas in shaping India's foreign policy decisions. The strength of the book lies in its emphasis on the interconnectedness of India's pursuit of modernity and its aspiration to wield influence in the contemporary global landscape. Pande convincingly argued that to understand India's role in the world today, one must delve into its history and tradition. While the book successfully explores the broader themes of India's foreign policy, a more detailed examination of specific case studies or diplomatic initiatives and the contemporary challenges and opportunities that India faces in the global arena would have enhanced the understanding of the practical application of these historical trends.

Harsh V. Pant (ed) (2021), book titled "Politics and Geopolitics: Decoding India's Neighbourhood Challenge", presented an account of the intricacies of India's neighbourhood policy. The individual authors of the volume had meticulously emphasised on the dynamic and nimble nature of complex regional landscape. The book astutely recognizes the enduring factors that have historically complicated India's efforts to establish robust and stable relationships in its immediate vicinity. One of the strengths of this compiled volume lies in its ability to move beyond the well-documented challenges posed by Chinese hostilities and the persistent trust deficit with Pakistan. The contributors had explored a comprehensive range of political, diplomatic and economic issues that India faces in regard to its neighbouring countries. Each chapter offers a critical overview of the developments during the Modi government's tenure; assessing the current state of relationships; identifying the areas of contention; and proposing viable pathways for future bilateral engagement. This approach not only provides valuable insights into the historical context but also offers pragmatic solutions for moving forward. The kaleidoscopic view presented in the book captures the multifaceted nature of India's neighbourhood challenge and showcasing the diverse issues that demand attention and strategic foresight.

In the book "Indian Foreign Policy: An Overview" the author, Harsh V. Pant (2019) had provided a comprehensive overview of India's evolving position in the international arena. While addressing the multifaceted factors that shape India's foreign policy, Pant had made a compelling study of political, economic and military ascendancy at varied degree in different countries. The book astutely acknowledged India's newfound reputation as a balancing power in the Asia-Pacific region and identified its escalating political clout, economic growth and military capabilities. The narrative presented in the book skilfully established the delicate balance between being perceived as a democratic power in the West and parallelly challenging the Western perspectives on issues such as non-proliferation and global trade. A commendable

aspect of the book had been based on the recognition of concept of India's self-perception. Despite growing confidence in its capabilities, India grapples with uncertainties regarding its role in the world. While the book effectively captures the broad contours of India's foreign policy, but further exploration of aspects such as India's role as soft power and cultural diplomacy would have contributed to a more holistic understanding of its global influence.

“The Oxford handbook of Indian Foreign Policy” by David M. Malone, C. Raja Mohan and Srinath Raghavan (Eds.) (2015) serves as an innovative and authoritative handbook that meticulously explored and criticised Indian foreign policy. This body of literature had dealt with multifaceted dimensions, beyond the economic realm. India's transformative economic reforms in the early 1990s, had not only yielded impressive growth rates but has also ascended the nation as a significant global player, especially in matters of international economics. In this book the authors had aptly captured the country's fast-growing domestic market and its emergence as a leading voice in global geo-strategic affairs. In the volume it had been contented that India's ability to counterbalance China distinguishes her as a regional force with immense capabilities. The handbook argued that India's international identity is often shaped by its economic performance, and as a consequence, other critical dimensions, such as security concerns and other diverse aspects of foreign policy had been overlooked in existing literature. Thus, this volume had tried to rectify this gap by presenting a holistic examination of the various facets of Indian foreign policy.

Renowned scholar such as Jan Cartwright (2009) have discerned a notable shift in India's overarching policy orientation towards the promotion of democracy, particularly in the post-Cold War era. In her article titled "India's Regional and International support for Democracy: Rhetoric or Reality?", Cartwright meticulously documents instances of tangible support extended by India towards democratic endeavors, both within its immediate geographical sphere and on the international stage. While Cartwright acknowledged the heightened prominence of democratic rhetoric in India's regional and global political discourse, she astutely observed a the undercurrents characterized by certain conditionalities.

Within India's immediate periphery, Cartwright identified three overarching patterns delineating India's stance in regard to endorsing democracy. Firstly, there had been instances wherein India's national interests converges with its professed democratic principles. However, it had been articulated that India's policies vis-à-vis democratisation in these nations are fundamentally rooted in realpolitik imperatives, driven by geostrategic considerations

(exemplified by cases such as Nepal and Afghanistan). Secondly, there exist situations where India possesses limited strategic interests but nevertheless provides tentative support for democratic initiatives through material assistance (as observed in Bhutan and the Maldives). At the opposite end of the spectrum lies the case of Myanmar, where India had sought to cultivate closer relations despite the prevailing dominance of a military junta. Cartwright contends that India stands to derive substantial benefits from a judicious approach to endorsing and advancing democracy in neighboring states. Moreover, active participation in multinational endeavors aimed at democracy promotion not only augurs well for India's global leadership aspirations but also bolsters her claim of being regional hegemony.

The article by Yeshi Choedon (2015), titled 'India and Democracy Promotion: Cautious Approach and Opportunity', elucidated India's approach to democracy promotion within its foreign policy framework. Initially, faced with resistance and challenges in their endeavors to promote democracy, Western countries had been successful to sought India's cooperation. On the contrary, influenced by a variety of factors, India had displayed a degree of hesitancy to fully align with these efforts. The article commences by addressing the inconceivability of India from actively promoting democracy during the Cold War era. Subsequently, it scrutinized the underlying reasons that contributed to India's hesitancy. This shift had been characterized by an intent to usher positive changes through active engagement, as opposed to a passiveness or detachment. The article ends by underscoring the value of employing diverse approaches in the pursuit of advancing democracy.

Over the past decade, there had been an increased emphasis on establishing democracy both within Indian and international perspectives. This article titled "India's Non-liberal Democracy and the Discourse of Democracy Promotion," by Atul Mishra (2014), scrutinizes India's stance of circumventing advocating its pluralist political system on the global stage, despite being the world's largest democracy. The article begins by providing an account of historical backdrop for India's longstanding reservation towards actively promoting democracy abroad. Mishra argues that India, as a 'successful' non-Western liberal democracy, should play a role in global democratisation endeavours, though some suggest that India might align itself with Western-style democracy promotion initiatives. This article, however, challenges these notions. Based on the available theoretical frameworks, the article contends that India predominantly operates as a non-liberal democracy and meticulously outlined the inherent non-liberal elements that are present within India's democratic practices that hinder India's foreign policy from adopting an outward-oriented approach. By contesting the classification of India

as a liberal democracy the article prompts a critical examination of the rationale behind that calls for India's participation in liberal democracy promotion ventures.

The article traces the recent shift in India's foreign policies, displaying a greater, albeit cautious and selective, inclination towards supporting international democracy promotion. On the theoretical level the article had conducted a detailed experiment by comparing three prominent schools of thought in international relations i.e. neo-realism, neo-institutionalist liberalism, and social constructivism - to elucidate India's hesitance in democracy promotion. While each perspective emphasizes a distinct facets of India's reluctance, thereby collectively contributing to the analytical understanding of this phenomenon. By invoking diverse theoretical perspectives, the article had provided a comprehensive understanding of India's reticence in this domain.

One of the pioneering pieces of literary work in regard to India's Foreign policy and Promotion of Democracy had been penned by Pratap Bhanu Mehta (2011), titled "Do New Democracies Support Democracy? Reluctant India". The article discusses about India's potential role in promoting democracy on the global stage based on its own democratic success and inclination for upholding long cherished values. The article argued about the intimate connection between India's constitutional ideals, human rights, democracy, constitutional governance and progressivism. However, the article contends that while India may uphold democratic ideals, it is unlikely to explicitly prioritize democracy promotion in its foreign policy. Instead, India's engagements in this realm had been relatively modest.

Paradoxically, the article theorizes that India may inadvertently play a more active role in promoting democracy than its cautious approach. Understanding India's foreign policy requires recognizing the complex interplay of competing interests, circumstances, and ideals. It also raises a critical question: how does one reconcile a nation's self-image with its actual actions, particularly concerning democracy promotion? The article asserted that the overarching objectives of safeguarding territorial integrity and attaining maximum strategic autonomy would invariably guide India's actions. Therefore, the paramount goal of securing strategic interest take precedence over any unconditional commitment to promoting democracy and human rights. To further understand India's perspective, the article delves into the key aspects that influence its stance on democracy promotion. Ultimately, the article underlined the intricate nature of foreign policy decision-making, which is shaped by a multitude of considerations and competing interests.

Democracy promotion has never been a fundamental element of India's foreign policy. Historically, India's international endeavours had primarily been driven by concerns surrounding security, trade, and energy. Democracy promotion was not a prominent feature of its foreign policy agenda. A significant article, titled, "Democracy Promotion in India's Foreign Policy: Emerging Trends and Developments" by Arijit Mazumdar and Erin Statz (2015) identified the specific ways in which India had engaged in promotion and supporting democracy beyond its borders on the global stage and elucidate the factors driving this perceptible shift. Nevertheless, it posits that this shift may be attributed more to 'realist' considerations than an inherent idealistic commitment to democracy. The authors are of the opinion that India's pursuit of conventional/ classical foreign policy objectives will continue to take antecedence over democracy promotion.

While acknowledging the relevance of internal and domestic-level factors such as coalition politics, federalism, and bureaucratic dynamics, the article emphasizes the fact that there had been absence of adequate domestic impetus, which would manoeuvre India to play a robust role in promoting democracy overseas. At the onset the authors pronounces unequivocally that India had seized to actively promote democracy beyond its borders. Ultimately the article concludes with an argument that the pursuit of strategic objectives will endure and would take precedence over democracy promotion.

Another significant piece of literature had been structured by Sandra Destradi (2010), titled, "A Regional Power Promoting Democracy: India's Involvement in Nepal (2005–2008)", discusses India's role in promoting democracy in neighbouring countries, particularly focusing on its involvement in Nepal between 2005 and 2008. The article begins by highlighting the expectation, based on the theory of 'democratic peace,' that India, as the world's largest democracy and a major regional power in South Asia, would actively promote democracy in its neighbouring nations.

However, the text points out that New Delhi lacks an official policy specifically dedicated to democracy promotion. Eventually, Destradi, moved further to provide an detailed account of the role played by India in Nepal's democratisation process during the mentioned years. In the course of the discussion one pertinent question had been raised that whether this involvement signifies a departure from India's traditional stance of noninterference in its neighbours' internal affairs! And potentially indicating a more assertive approach to democracy promotion. The study seeks to explore whether the world's most populous democracy had

shown any sign of evolving into a new entrant in the global arena. In order to explain the content Destradi, applied an approach that progresses from a broad overview to a detailed examination. It starts with an explanation of India's traditionally limited inclination to promote democracy abroad. Subsequently, it meticulously scrutinizes India's role in Nepal's return to democratic governance; and ultimately concluding that the democracy-promoting measures adopted by India were a short-term and ad hoc shift in policy motivated by the imperative to stabilize the country, rather than a deliberate and enduring change in strategic approach.

The article titled 'Rising Powers and the Future of Democracy Promotion: The Case of Brazil and India' by Oliver Stuenkel (2013), starts by answering a crucial question: what lies ahead for democracy promotion endeavors in the event of further decline in the influence of the US and Europe? Therefore, based on various theoretical perspectives the concerned article embarks on a comprehensive exploration to elucidate the motivations that is driving Western efforts in promoting democracy. The traditional dominance of established global powers in shaping international affairs is gradually waning, bringing about significant implications for democracy promotion. Stuenkel, asserted that rising democracies like Brazil and India are appearing as promising collaborators for the US and Europe in advancing democracy in the post-Western world. But these emerging democracies had been reluctant to fully embrace this notion. Thus, the article shifts to examine the rationale for their reluctance along with the foreign policy stances of these two burgeoning democracies i.e. Brazil and India, towards democracy promotion. In light of the evidence amassed, the article intended to evaluate how the standing of emerging powers on democracy promotion might shape the global map. Overall, this article provides a multifaceted analysis of the evolving nature of democracy promotion, as influenced by the shifting attitudes of global power. The author enquires into factors that encourages the established Western powers to promote democracy in comparison to the non-western counterparts. This work serves as a valuable contribution to the discourse on international relations and offering a fresh perspective on the future of democracy promotion in a post-Western world.

Despite of the availability of extensive body of literature addressing different topics on bilateral relation and numerous examinations of various facets of India's relations with neighbours, certain aspects have been overlooked, which necessitates closer scrutiny and consideration. India's foreign policy expert have tended to shy away from integrating democracy promotion into bilateral relations with neighboring countries, as they have primarily concentrated on addressing the challenges associated with this approach.

Research Gap

Ample of literatures are available on India's bilateral relations with her neighbours and India's global initiative for Promotion of Democracy, separately. But very limited efforts have been made to evaluate the prospect of new dimensions evolved due to the renewed 'fourth wave of democracy' and viability of promotion of democracy as a conflict management and transformation mechanism in the context of India's foreign policy relations.

This research work would like to focus on India's degree of engagement in the process of consolidation of democracy in nations like Pakistan and Myanmar. When we look at the theoretical and policy discourses on these three otherwise very popular terms 'stability and development', 'foreign policy' and 'democracy and democratisation', we find very little scholarly research on the above-mentioned three sets of relationships. But unfortunately, the study in this regard has been minimal and significant gap exists concerning the study of the potential scope of democracy promotion as a foreign policy mechanism in alleviating tensions between the nations in the region. Available literature focusing on the south Asian politics argues that the notion of interrelation between Democracy and Foreign Policy and Security have not deep rooted itself. Hence it is to bridge this gap between 'promotion of democracy-as India's renewed foreign policy means and the way of engagement with this newly emergent kind of regimes required further studies.

Research Objectives

The objective of this research work are as follows:

- To examine the nature and contours of India's endeavours in fostering or more precisely in assisting consolidating democratic consolidation and its consequent reversal with her neighbours in their pursuit towards democratic transitions.
- To meticulously scrutinizes the scope of 'Endorsing/ Assisting Democracy' as an alternative foreign policy tool, particularly in relation to India's engagements with Pakistan and Myanmar with the overarching goal of mutual benefit and regional peace.
- To explore the circumstances that obligated India to move towards a paradigm shift in policy.
- To delineate the security imperatives that might influence 'promotion of democracy' and contends to examine the efficacy of this policy as an alternative tool of resolving disagreement.

Research Questions

Attempts are made to address the following questions:

- What are factors that influenced India to formulate its foreign policy and bilateral relations in regard to facilitating democracy towards selected nations such as, Pakistan and Myanmar?
- What are the shifting trends that has been witnessed in the Indian Foreign Policy at the global and regional engagement over the twenty years period of time in the context of democratization?
- How do India have redesigned its engagement with this hybrid civilian governance with military predominance?
- How security imperatives and national interest connotations are inter-related with assisting the process of democratic consolidation in these selected countries?
- Is there any prospect of materializing an ambience conducive for effectively resolving the disagreements could be ushered in, if democratic governance could be sustained particularly in country like Pakistan and Myanmar?

Hypothesis

Based on the partial framework, which has been introduced upward, few concluding propositions could be presented.

- Assistance for democracy (and rather not promotion of democracy) that aims at establishing and sustaining democracy, could be an alternative defence mechanism and a viable foreign policy means, while enhancing and without hampering national interest in one hand and in the other it has the potential to advance security, peace and stability in the long run, which has been aspired for long.
- If liberal democratic values could be implanted in the political culture of Indian sub-continent, stability and complementary security would follow in. Stable untainted democratic governance (not hybrid and free from varied ultra-political actors, such as military) are capable of engendering necessary settings, conducive for securing peace.

Research Methodology

To elucidate the complexities of India's evolving democratic engagement, this study based upon an interdisciplinary approach encompassing foreign policy analysis, political science, international relations and conflict resolution studies to provide a comprehensive analysis of

the subject matter. It is inductive research and thereby the study tends to be explanatory in nature. Therefore, this study has adopted a qualitative research design rooted in interpretivism to explain the ever-evolving scenario. By devising the systematic research technique of content analysis, the available corpus of data and content of any other form of communication has been analyzed, compared and contrasted, for making an inference. The seminal work 'Democratic Peace Thesis' by Immanuel Kant provided the theoretical foundation of the entire thesis. Through a systematic examination of relevant literature including articles and books; policy documents, official statements and news reports; speeches from notable scholars, academicians, political leaders and diplomats, this research paper intends to offer insights into the dynamics of India's engagement in regard to consolidation of democratic values and principles at the regional stage; its interplay with the India-Pakistan strategic partnership; and its premeditated rendezvous with Myanmar.

In essence, this study explores the extent to which the most populous democracy in the world has shown signs of becoming a new actor in the global politics. To achieve this objective, the paper proceeds from a general contextualisation to the particular by elucidating India's historically constrained inclination to establish democracy beyond its borders. Here, it would be necessary to clarify that the definitions and usage of the terms 'democracy', 'foreign policy', 'conflict resolution' and 'Promotion of democracy' have been used as they are normally used and understood in the academic world. Nonetheless, regarding democracy, it is required to clarify that the concept of 'democracy' has been used both in its formal (electoral) and substantive form. In a broader understanding of democracy, we include what Amartya Sen terms 'democracy as public reason', or in other words, 'government by discussion' and 'participator governance'.

Tentative Chapters

To address the above-mentioned questions this particular research work has been undertaken where the first chapter of this volume titled, 'Inter-relation Between Democratisation and Foreign Policy: Theoretical Discourse' seeks to delineate and conceptualize the inter-relationship between the process of democratization or democratic transition with foreign policy, and their collective impact on fostering peace and stability in conflict-prone regions. Central tenet of this analysis has been the 'Democratic Peace Theory', a seminal construct, which postulates that democratic states are less inclined to engage in conflicts with one another and have a proclivity towards peaceful co-existence. While acknowledging its empirical value,

the chapter also tried to provide a brief framework of the potential limitations and caveats that questions its universality.

The political landscape of India's neighbourhood had witnessed a notable transformation since the conclusion of the Cold War. The second chapter of this thesis, titled 'India's Role in Consolidation of Democratic Values at Her Neighbourhood', is broadly divided into two distinct parts. The first part of the chapter embarks on exploring the political trajectories of the nation at India's neighbourhood within the complex geopolitical milieu and their experiences with fourth wave of democratisation. The chapter identifies that a rigorous effort towards strengthening democratic institutions, mitigating historical legacies, and engendering trust among rival groups is essential for the sustained progress of democracy in the region. Alongside it had specifically identify the factors that acts as impediment for consolidation democracy and lead to the emergence of varied hybrid regimes. The second part of these chapter tried to explore the distinct shift in Indian foreign policy approach in regard to peaceful resolution of precarious situations and endorsing democracy, particularly in relation to evolving democratic upheavals in the neighbouring countries (except Pakistan and Myanmar) within its geopolitical space. In the course of discussion, attempts are made to identify the factors that has influenced the foreign policy outcome. The chapter identifies several factors contributing to this reticence, including a wariness of neocolonialism, an emphasis on non-interventionist principles, and a preference for bilateral engagement over multilateral interference.

The third chapter, titled, 'Evolving India- Pakistan Relations with the Democratic Transition of Pakistan', is one of the core areas of the thesis. Based on the available empirical data, efforts are being made to trace the swings of policies towards India with the alteration of regime in Pakistan. This chapter highlights the complexity of India-Pakistan relations in the context of Pakistan's hybrid democracy. It is concluded by contending that for any meaningful progress in India-Pakistan relations, addressing the menaces of hybrid democracy in Pakistan is a prerequisite because it has been identified that even though democratic civilian government is in force but it functions under the shadow of the army.

The chapter on India- Pakistan engagement is followed by the fourth chapter titled, 'Towards Myanmar's Democratic Transition and India's Strategic Diplomacy' where another distinctive case of bilateral engagements i.e, India- Myanmar relations has been explored through the prism of democratisation and foreign policy. Therefore, attempts are being made

to define the multitude of factors that shaped such policies. Consequently, this chapter provides a comprehensive analysis of India's intricate role in Myanmar's transition to democracy. While tracing the trajectories from extending support to pro-democracy activists to pragmatic engagements with the military junta, this chapter highlights the mutual benefits and strategic imperatives that underpinned this bilateral engagement.

The fifth chapter is followed by the 'Summary and Conclusion' where the intentions have been to summarise and answer the research questions based on the vivid discussions made in the preceding chapters. Here in the conclusion, it has been contended that India's initial reluctance for being the champion of democracy had been rooted in geopolitical complexities, and simultaneously traces the shift towards a more active engagement in the 21st century. Consequently, this particular part of the thesis tried to explore the contours of this new vision; shedding light on the factors that influence its policy choices; and elucidating the strategic shift from mere promotion to a proactive role in extending assistance for the consolidation, enhancement and capacity building of democratic apparatus. This shift from passive advocacy to proactive capacity building, represents a strategic recalibration that reflects the evolving geopolitical realities and India's growing role as a global stakeholder.

CHAPTER - 1

INTER-RELATION BETWEEN DEMOCRATISATION AND FOREIGN POLICY: THEORETICAL DISCOURSE

This chapter addresses the complex interplay between democracy-democratisation, foreign policy, stability-development. To comprehensively examine these dynamics, we must establish three distinct sets of relationships i.e. stability and development with foreign policy, democracy and democratisation with foreign policy, and stability-development with democracy-democratisation. These three sets of relationships are discussed in this chapter in the light of the theoretical discourse available on them, and an attempt is made to establish a link between them. In the end, on the basis of these three sets of relationships, we try to establish how promotion (assistance) of/ for democracy can work as a model for bolstering better relations and fostering development and stability particularly in Indian sub-continent.

Democracy, has been the most enduring contributions of western modernity to human civilization. Democracy and its process of consolidation finds both practical and theoretical justification due to their association with various essential values. These values encompass fundamental principles such as liberty, equality and justice; as well as more specific ideals, like expressing the collective will, fostering moral growth in individuals, respecting human diversity; and promoting rational and efficient decision-making. These cherished values, often regarded as the epitome of a fulfilling life, are intended to manifest themselves through the establishment and functioning of a democratic political system. As Carbone argues, the very strength of the normative arguments for democracy lies in its acceptance by the widely-held individual who have produced a series of broader anticipations about the positive effects of democratic governance (Basu Roy 2012: 218-19). Aside from what democracy may embody, be it the political equality, individual freedom, or something else – a democratic political system is often expected to generate multifaceted benefits such as better-consolidated state institution; more firmly established rational-legal administrative structures; domestic and international peace; improved economic performance and development; and the adoption of redistributive and welfare policies (Carbone 2009: 125-27).

From the annals of history, democracy as an ideational concept has been contested and had often faced criticism from political leaders and philosophers alike. However, the discourse of democratic governance underwent a remarkable transformation in the twentieth century by

defying its historical unpopularity. Today, democracy stands as the ‘world’s new universal religion’, as noted by Corcoran in 1983. Notably, influential entities such as the United States, the European Union, and the United Nations have assumed pivotal roles in shaping and implementing the tenets of this emerging democratic faith. Through various democracy promotion and assistance initiatives, they have strived to disseminate the principles and values of democracy to nations around the world. Academia has also been keenly observant of these efforts, with countless books and articles published in recent decades, offering in-depth analyses of the triumphs and tribulations of democratic transitions on a global scale.

While democratisation has emerged as a pervasive global movement, the promotion of democracy as a foreign policy tool has assumed the central role in contemporary political science and international relations discourse. In an era of globalization, the allure of democratisation within authoritarian societies is undeniable. It is widely acknowledged that democratic governance offers the best framework to safeguard individual liberties and address complex social, political and economic challenges comprehensively. Today, numerous nations, both in the global North and South, recognize democracy not only as a means but also as an end in itself. Democracy is dynamic, flourishing in many regions, yet struggling with significant deficits in others.

Given the pivotal role of the concept of ‘democracy’ in democracy promotion, it is somewhat surprising that the profound theoretical and conceptual debates surrounding this concept have received relatively little attention in existing studies and in policy implementation, on democracy promotion. While some acknowledgment over the concept of democracy is common—many scholars recognize democracy as an inherently contested concept in the history of political thought. At the contemporary context of democratisation and democracy promotion, there exists an erroneous tendency to understand democracy in a remarkably narrow perspective, namely, ‘liberal democracy’. This highlights the need for a more nuanced examination of the theoretical foundations and conceptual diversity that is reinforced with the idea of democracy in the realm of democracy promotion. While democratic theory may not offer explicit guidance in understanding a country's foreign policy stance on democracy, but it remains crucial to have a comprehensive grasp of the democratic concept.

The absence of a clear and explicit definition and comprehensive understanding of democracy’s fundamental principles and central rudiments have posed manifold challenges and hindered the formulation and effective prioritization of democracy promotion policies over the

years. Thus, this chapter contends that it may be both justified and beneficial to engage in an in-depth examination of the meaning of the concept of democratisation within the context of democracy promotion. Therefore, this chapter is divided into two distinct parts where the first segment aims at elucidating the rudiments of democracy coupled with democratisation around the world and attempts to establish a correlation between democratisation and foreign relations drawing upon the 'Democratic Peace Theory' and its scope to ensure peace and stability. While the second portion of the chapter specifically provides an account of the course of democratic consolidation in other parts of the hemisphere along with a brief framework on the potential of India, as an emergent power, to play a decisive role in redefining the concept of democracy and transition to democracy, in a context specific manner.

Defining Democracy and Democratisation: An Overview

Democracy has assumed the role of a 'universal religion' globally (Kurki 2010: 362). Despite, apprehensions among political leaders and philosophers alike vis-à-vis democracy, the twentieth century witnessed a substantial transformation in the fortunes of democratic governance. The prevailing belief had been that countries with thriving economies were typically democratic, leading to the conclusion that democracy must be beneficial for development. In contrast to other forms of government, such as totalitarianism, oligarchy, monarchy, and aristocracy, where citizens have 'limited' or 'no say' in who is elected and how the administration would function, a democracy is regarded as the most challenging form of government as participation of the people in the political decision making through elected representatives shapes the nation's course.

While democracy stands today as the most coveted form of governance, it's worth noting that ancient philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle held contrasting views on its desirability. In contemporary times, however, there has been a global shift in perspective. People worldwide aspire to be recognized as possessing equal worth, basic rights, and the opportunity for a dignified human life. In today's interconnected world, where access to the internet, FM radios, satellite television, and mobile phones is widespread, even the most disadvantaged individuals are aware that these rights can be best safeguarded within a liberal society. This transformation reflects the growing consensus that democracy, with its emphasis on equality and individual liberties, is the ideal framework to secure these fundamental rights for all.

Eminent social scientist Larry Diamond, in one of his lectures, “even the poorest states of Africa and now the Arab world, popular majorities support democracy as the best form of government because people around the world want the right to choose and replace their leaders, and today democracy is the only form of government with broad international legitimacy” (Diamond 2003: 103). Presently, to invoke on the notions of democracy and democratisation is to enter a thick web of contested meanings. Often, a great way to have a grasp of the concept is to examine its opposite. Thus, in the modern times justification of democracy lies in the concept of relativity, where its merits and demerits can be measured in comparison to other forms of government. The benchmark of merit for any form of government depends on how adequately it performed the chief functions of government, i.e. an overall welfare of the people.

Throughout the history it has been witnessed that governments of various forms, including authoritarian regimes and autocracies at the lowest end of the democratic spectrum, have been capable of implementing welfare programs to some extent. Even though the authoritarian governments initially drive economic growth, eventually encounter economic as well as social challenges. On the contrary, in the democratic nations across the world, prosperity leads to increased levels of education and greater social and economic integration. However, it is noteworthy to mention that once the authoritarian regimes are in power then they continue to sustain and consolidate all rights and responsibilities within the government itself. Citizens have limited rights, with some responsibilities assigned to them at the discretion of the government, which are subject to change based on the leaders’ whims. Since there are no clear-cut limits on government actions and power tends to flow in one direction, usually without any recourse in case of abuses of this over concentrated authority. Therefore, the limitations of authoritarian rule become evident when citizens aspire for greater political participation in their governance. In contrast, the truest form of democracy at the extreme end of the spectrum denotes that all rights and responsibilities are vested with the people; the authority flows in both directions i.e. between the people and their government, steered by a codified arrangement and applied unanimously, without discrimination.

Democracies have achieved a significant milestone in global governance. In the following century numerous countries completed their evolution to democracy, bringing widespread ecstasy concerning the future of liberal democracy. At this stage it is pertinent to distinguish between ‘formal democracy’ and ‘substantive democracy’. Essentially, the mark of a state regime of being democratic depends on the degree that the state behaves in conformity to the demands as expressed by the citizens. Beyond this uncluttered understanding however

two conceptions of democracy i.e. procedural and substantive, need to be taken into consideration. The procedural interpretation of democracy denotes a minimum set of governmental practices (especially competitive elections) must be continuously in motion for a situation to count as democratic. As Robert Dahl has identified the procedural democracy constitutes of free and fair timely election, elected officials, freedom of expression, transparency in information and inclusive citizenship. The definition of substantive democracy, in addition to procedural construct of democracy, stresses on the quality of life and politics a given regime endorses. Thus, regimes claim to democratic status rests on the extent to which it defends values such as social equality, individual freedom, human welfare, security and peaceful ways of conflict resolution and so forth.

As Ayesha Jalal explains, “formal democracy is a genuine democracy insofar as it guarantees, among other things, the right to vote and the freedom of expression” (Jalal 1995: 3) and ‘substantive democracy’, on the other hand, refers to ‘more than the exercise of citizen’s voting rights in elections’ or even the right to free speech. Though an important feature of democratic processes, elections are only political manifestations of democratisation in the wider social sphere” (Chatterjee and Maitra 2012: 159). It is extensively acknowledged that a truly democratic system of governance must embrace both these two basic components of democracy – electoral (formal) and liberal (substantive) – in terms of “who” and “how” of governing. The degree of its effective integration of the elements will determine democracy’s quality and permanence. In the words of Thomas Jefferson, without substantive democracy, electoral democracy is “nothing more than mob rule where fifty one percent of the people may take away the rights of the other forty nine percent.” Any regime where the consent of the people is acquired devoid of freedom of expression does not succeed for being called a ‘democracy’ even if it upholds certain elected autonomous institutions. The practice of labelling certain countries as democracies can hinder our ability to accurately assess the impact of governance on living standards and security. Instead, it is important to employ more stringent criteria for classifying a country as a liberal democracy, where it has been consolidated in the truest form and democratic norms has been deep rooted. This would involve evaluating whether they have implemented genuine checks and balances on executive power and established mechanisms for public participation in the political process.

‘Democratisation’ as a term indicate the progression begun after a given country, or its government, shifts from alternative means of governing i.e., authoritarian or totalitarian regimes or a period of civil conflict towards a democratic politics. This often involves the

establishment of democratic institutions, which include but are not limited to ‘free and fair election,’ a national assembly, local governance structures and other methods of linking citizens to the government, such as political parties. The existence of these institutions alone does not constitute ‘democratic’ politics, but the process of improving their performance and consolidation of electoral democracy with substantive democracy, is in itself the central component of democratisation (Luckham, Goetz and Kaldor 2003: 53-54). People across the globe are increasingly inclined towards more transparent and participatory forms of governance. This marks a positive trend that began with the third wave of democratisation three decades ago. The shift towards democratic transition has become imperative due to compelling international pressures, both in terms of economic incentives and political influence.

The third wave of democratization, which occurred during the latter part of the 20th century, significantly altered the global political landscape (Huntington 1991: 21-22). Despite variations in degree of manifestations of this transformation, the predominant tendency was that very many countries across various region transitioned away from dictatorial regimes and embraced more democratic modes of governance. Nevertheless, there had been growing apprehension regarding the quality of democracy in the countries that recently underwent this transition. Research indicates that although nearly 100 countries are classified as ‘transitioning’, a considerable number of them have not achieved full-fledged democracy but have instead adopted hybrid systems, characterized by elements of both semi-democratic and authoritarian rule (Carothers 2002: 10-11). Furthermore, the formal democratic institutions established in most of these nations, such as electoral processes and democratic institutions continue to suffer from significant deficiencies.

Democratic wave is a phenomenon that is referred to a specific period in history when there is a significant increase in the number of countries transitioning to or consolidating democratic systems of governance. These waves are characterized by a wave-like pattern of democratic expansion across regions, with periods of accelerated democratic progress followed by relative stability or even regression. The relevance of democratic waves to third world nations is multifaceted, as these countries often experience unique challenges and opportunities in their democratic transitions.

The *first wave of democracy* started with in the late 18th and early 19th centuries and was associated with the establishment of liberal democracies in Western Europe and North America. However, third world nations, which were primarily colonies or under colonial rule

during this period, were largely excluded from this wave of democratic expansion (Huntington 1991:15-16).

The *second wave of democracy* took place after World War II and lasted until the mid-1960s. This wave saw the decolonization of many third world nations, leading to their independence and aspirations for self-rule. However, the democratic transitions during this period were often unstable, as many newly independent countries faced challenges related to nation-building, socioeconomic development, and political instability (Huntington 1991: 17).

The *third wave of democracy*, which began in the mid-1970s and extended into the early 21st century, had a more significant impact on third world nations. This wave witnessed the fall of authoritarian regimes and the rise of democratic movements across various regions, including Latin America, Eastern Europe, and parts of Asia and Africa. The third wave led to an increase in the number of democracies worldwide, with many third world nations transitioning to democratic forms of governance (Huntington 1991: 19).

The fourth wave of democracy represents a significant global phenomenon in the realm of political transformation. It is marked by a notable increase in the number of countries transitioning from authoritarian rule to democratic governance, as well as the consolidation of democratic institutions in many already existing democracies; and represents an extended continuation of the third wave of democratisation. Several interconnected factors are responsible for the advent of the fourth wave of democracy. First, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the subsequent end of the Cold War created a favorable global environment for democratisation, as it removed the ideological competition between communism and liberal democracy. Second, advancements in technology, particularly in the areas of communication and information, played a crucial role in facilitating the spread of democratic ideals and organizing political movements. Additionally, increasing global interconnectedness and the spread of ideas through transnational networks contributed to the diffusion of democratic norms and practices.

This global phenomenon was characterized by the rise of democratic movements, spread of democratic ideals, proliferation of democratic transitions and the consolidation of democratic regimes across various regions of the world. It emerged in the latter half of the 20th century and has continued into the 21st century, following the third wave that occurred during the 1970s and 1980s. The term ‘fourth wave’ was coined by Samuel P. Huntington in his influential book, ‘The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century’ (1991).

Huntington argued that the third wave, which began in the mid-1970s, had witnessed an unprecedented expansion of democracy, and he identified a subsequent fourth wave that included countries such as Poland, Hungary, and South Africa (Huntington 1991: 21-22). This wave extended the democratic surge to regions that had been under authoritarian rule, including Eastern Europe and parts of Africa. The fourth wave of democracy represents a new phase of democratic transitions, characterized by a growing recognition of democratic values, aspirations for political freedom, and demands for government accountability in diverse societies. In reality the fourth wave emerged as a response to the incompleteness of the democratisation process during the third wave. The third wave primarily affected the so-called "third world," which comprises states and populations outside the Western world. These regions encompass a vast and diverse majority that had been marginalized within the global hierarchy. It is often assumed that the absence or insufficiency of democracy, and the subsequent need for democratization, are the primary impetus for the developing nations to move towards democratization in the post-colonial contexts.

Extensively examined the trajectories of new democracies, with findings suggests that not all such democracies successfully got deep rooted and establish themselves (Huntington 1991:14-15). Political Scientist like Andreas Schedler further posits that new democracies tend to either consolidate or erode, rather than remaining stagnant (Schedler 1998: 95). In cases where consolidation does not occur, disenchantment among the populace, erosion of political institutions and a loss of legitimacy within the polity can succeed. Francis Fukuyama raises concerns about excessive state involvement hindering effectiveness, such as constraining the market and self-governing communities (Fukuyama 2007: 10). Therefore, based on the degree of democratisation, some democracies can be labelled as illiberal democracies, fragile democracy so and so forth, which may grant political rights but lack essential civil liberties (Zakaria 1997: 26-27). There are instances of hybrid regimes, characterized by a mix of democratic and authoritarian features (Diamond 2002: 26-28) or labelled as "competitive authoritarianism" (Levitsky and Way 2002: 54). This plethora of terms has led David Collier and Stephen Levitsky to aptly describe this phenomenon as 'democracy with adjectives' (Collier and Levitsky 1997: 437). All these factors play critical roles in shaping the trajectory of new democracies, determining whether they consolidate or erode over time. This process of consolidation over the period of time is known as 'Democratisation'

As the global trend shifts towards democracy, leaders worldwide often emphasize their government's democratic credentials, regardless of how credible these claims may be.

However, the mere assertion of being a democracy does not necessarily confirm a regime's true democratic nature. The traditional measure of popular elections also falls short, as nearly every dictator in the world today conducts them. What truly matters is whether these elections represent genuine contests for power. Even if the majority of countries now have elections, citizens all over the world are articulating mounting disenchantment and displeasure with the results of these democratic processes. It seems that elections and basic civil and political rights do not suffice for true democratisation.

However, leaders in newly established democracies face the formidable challenge of establishing robust and sustainable democratic institutions that can live-up to the high expectations of their citizens for political freedom and opportunities for progress (Baqai 2005: 43). After an epoch of extraordinary progress in the final quarter of the twentieth century, the democratic boom has given way to democratic recession; and furthermore there have even been signs of corrosion of democracy over the years. What is significant to note is that, this third wave of democratisation propelled over the non-western, under-developed post-colonial states. Therefore, democracy primarily a traditional western notion experienced distortions and backlashes in the other hemisphere of the globe.

In the study of democratisation, Samuel Huntington's work, particularly his book "The Third Wave", stands as a prominent example of proceduralist approach to understanding democratisation, where he introduced one of the most widely recognized concepts of social science i.e. the "Third Wave" of democratisation which was eventually followed by the fourth wave. Here he deliberately employed a relatively narrow procedural understanding of democracy. According to Huntington, democratisation involves the replacement of a government that was not chosen through elections with one that is elected through a free, open, and equitable electoral process (Huntington, 1990:9). This proceduralist approach, as exemplified by Huntington, emphasizes the mechanisms and processes through which political decisions are made, rather than broader normative or ideological considerations.

Huntington proposed that after each wave of democratisation, there is typically a counter-wave where the progress of democratisation encounters obstacles and often comes to a halt. During these periods, democratic systems are often replaced by previously unseen forms of authoritarian rule. The most common types of transitions away from democracy, however, occurred either through military coups that removed democratically elected leaders, or through executive coups where democratically chosen leaders with executive authority effectively

terminated democracy by centralizing power in their own hands. This was typically achieved through actions like declaring a state of emergency or imposing martial law (Huntington 1991: 15-16). This idea suggested that we were experiencing a global wave of democratisation. However, over time, the understanding of democratisation has evolved.

A common misconception is assuming that countries transitioning away from authoritarian rule are automatically progressing towards democracy. By this logic, all former Soviet Union nations would be considered as consolidated democracies. However, in reality, several of them, such as Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Belarus and Azerbaijan, have made little to no effort in building democratic institutions or processes (Halperin, Siegle & Weinstein 2010: 67). While breaking free from the grip of a totalitarian state is a positive step, it doesn't necessarily signify an increase in democracy. Combining these two trends' risks creating an overly broad classification of democratising countries. Consequently, this blurs the distinction between genuine and non-genuine democratisers, masking the disparities in their performance.

The initial optimism surrounding the 'Third Wave' of democratisation has waned due to the instability experienced by many new democracies and the rise of stable competitive authoritarian regimes. By the early 2000s, doubts began to emerge, as expressed in a significant article by Carothers in 2002 titled "The End of the Transition Paradigm." Here he criticized the widely prevailing understanding that democratisation could easily overcome structural constraints. Contrary, he counter-theorised by posing questions about whether transitions away from authoritarian rule would inevitably result in establishing democracy! Furthermore, many countries that successfully transitioned toward democracy struggled to maintain it; while the overall number of democracies increased during the Third Wave are overshadowed by challenges of sustaining bare minimum political restructuring of democratic apparatus and a substantial number of them are betrothed by instability, with many of them reverting to authoritarianism. Thereby, to determine the actual status of progress towards democratic consolidation remains opaque.

As noted by Samuel Phillips Huntington, the process of democratisation comprises two distinct phases. The initial phase starts with the transition of power, while the subsequent phase focuses on the consolidation of democratic achievements. It is important to note that this latter phase is more complex and demanding than the transition phase where difficulties arise. This is the phase where attaining democratic consolidation requires sustained efforts and careful planning for political restructuring and institutional reforms, in order to ensure that democratic

values are firmly rooted in society (Huntington, 1990: 10-11). In a given society, the degree of democratic consolidation is supposedly judged based on the following parameters:

- Well-functioning democratic institutions.
- An improvement of social and economic conditions.
- A flourishing civil society (Baqai 2005: 43).

Since the late 1990s, various scholars of democratisation have highlighted that a pertinent empirical gap is emerging between electoral and substantive democracy. Later in 1999 Larry Diamond in one of his papers “Developing Democracy”, carefully illustrated that most of the recent occurrences of democratisation fits in the category of formal electoralism, devoid of other basic liberal traits. To quote from his account, “...the gap between electoral and liberal democracy has grown markedly during the latter part of the third wave, forming one of its most significant but little-noticed features” (Diamond 1999: 12-14). Another distinguished academician Fareed Zakaria has been even more forthright. He argued that liberal and electoral democracy have more or less parted ways in the world of today. In his own words, “over the last half-century in the West, democracy and liberty have merged.....But today the two strands of liberal democracy, interwoven in the Western political fabric, are coming apart across the globe, democracy is flourishing; liberty is not” (Zakaria 2003: 29-30).

While spontaneous democratic movements against authoritarian regimes frequently emerge from civil society, only a limited number of these movements have successfully ushered in stable and well-functioning democracies. A pivotal factor contributing to the setbacks in many democratic transitions over the past generation is the failure of institutionalisation. This failure is rooted in the deficiencies of state capacity of numerous new and existing democracies, which has struggled to match the growing demands for democratic accountability towards the population (Fukuyama 2015: 12). The challenge lies in the difficulty of transitioning from a patrimonial or neo-patrimonial state to a modern and impersonal one, a task more formidable than the relatively simpler shift from an authoritarian regime to a system characterized by regular, free and fair elections.

To meet the international yardstick of democracy, without genuinely sharing power, many authoritarian leaders have adopted certain democratic features, such as a supposedly independent press, legislature and civil society. Some authoritarian leaders have initiated transitions with the aim of maintaining their autocratic rule through limited liberalization. In reality, however, many key figures in these institutions often have close ties to the government.

Meanwhile, some newly appointed leaders have used their position to sideline opposition. In many new democracies, the challenge lies not in the formal constitutional structures, but in the limited impact these arrangements have on both- those in power and those in opposition. During the times of transition, there exists an inherent uncertainty surrounding the commitment of key actors to these newly created institutions. Often being apprehensive of unforeseen consequences, the influential begone political figures have the natural tendency to make frequent adjustments or even disregard the intricate set of rules and provisions, those are outlined in the new constitutions. (Haggard & Kaufman 2016: 132-133).

As emphasized by Huntington (1968) few decades ago, the effectiveness of political systems hinges not only on the design of institutions, but also on their level of institutionalization. This refers to how stable and predictable the repeated strategic interactions are among major political players, including the opposition parties. Democracies with weak institutionalization experience interactions that are not just fluid or improvised, but rather akin to a classic security dilemma (Levitsky & Murillo 2009: 120). Incumbents may struggle to make credible commitments to oppositions; pursuing their own interests by sidestepping and altering or undermining the constitutional limitations. This behaviour sets the stage for oppositions to respond in kind, fearing that losses in the constitutional arena will lead to lasting marginalisation; and thus, encouraging them to bypass constitutional safeguards and resort to extra-constitutional means, which may include violence (Haggard & Kaufman 2016: 132). The consequence of such weak institutionalization can be seen in the erosion or overthrowing of democratic governance.

The countries failed to complete transition from formal to substantive democracy thus the democratisation process remained unfinished. This unfinished democratisation leads to the emergence of illiberal democracy, where the states fail to uphold the liberal rights through rule of law (Moller 2006: 389-92). True democratisation must occur on both the electoral and liberal fronts and is thought to progress through four stages i.e., decaying of authoritative rule, transition, consolidation and deepening and finally, expansion. The process of democratisation encounters a critical phase during its third stage, marked by the need for consolidation alongside expansion and deepening of democratic principles. It's worth mentioning that virtually every successful democracy continually undergoes these stages and remains engaged in ongoing refinement of policies, laws, and norms (Moller 2006: 5-6). Therefore, regardless of how they come to power, these regimes should be assessed based on their own characteristics, rather than being seen as imperfect democracies on a path towards full

democracy. Even if they are nominally independent, their powers are greatly restricted, rendering them ineffective in serving as meaningful checks on executive authority. This process reflects the resilience of democracy, ensuring that each citizen has a vested interest in its endurance amid shifting demographics, economic fluctuations, social dynamics, environmental challenges and geopolitical developments. This context has led political scientists to coin terms like "illiberal democracies," "liberal authoritarians," "semi-authoritarians," and "pseudo-democracies" to describe the countries like Zimbabwe, Egypt, Cambodia, Cameroon, Pakistan, Angola and Nepal, who presents the facades of democracy, (Halperin, Siegle & Weinstein 2010: 66).

Primarily based on two approaches the type and degree of democratisation of any nation are being determined. In the realm of democratisation theories, there has been a shift between structural approaches, which emphasizes factors like modernization, economic growth, class dynamics and struggle, as catalysts or factors determining the degree of outcome of democratisation; and the agency approaches that focus on the actions strategies and the pivotal role played by the dominant and existing political figures in establishing new political norms (Grugel & Bishop 2014: 43-45). While classical studies are inclined towards structural theories, but studies on democratisation since the third wave of democracy have placed greater emphasis on the tactics and capabilities of political leaders (Schmitter, 2017: 35-36). Based on this approach scholars have examined and debated that numerous countries' move towards democracy. Economic structures have received comparatively lesser attention, though some notable studies have explored how economic liberalization since the early 1990s has led to the emergence of military-owned enterprises and a class of well-connected individuals with vested interests over governance (Ford, Gillan & Thein 2015: 29-30).

Given this emphasis on political actors and strategies, it follows that transitions can manifest in various forms, yielding diverse outcomes. For instance, Schmitter (2017) outlines four ideal types of transition modes based on a dual distinction i.e. transitions driven by elites versus those propelled by the masses, and transitions characterized by compromise versus those driven by force as the prevailing strategic orientation of key actors. While established democracies typically originated from collective movements of marginalized groups, resulting in emergence of democratic systems through reformist compromises or popular uprisings. On the contrary, in case of the recent transitions, as transition approach argues, have been initiated from the top and have been directed down to the population. These transitions are either imposed by incumbent elites or negotiated by compromises made between previously

antagonistic political factions. The transition approach posits that the recent wave of transitions reflect the interests and strategies of political elites (Stokke and Aung 2020: 2). While the negotiated mode of transition has become emblematic of the third wave of democracy, but the scholars acknowledge the prevalence of imposed transitions (Stradiotto & Guo 2010:13-15). The crucial distinction between negotiated and imposed transitions lies in whether flexible autocrats and moderate democrats engage in a pact, whether a formal or informal agreement, with the aim of reducing the uncertainty surrounding a regime transition and its ultimate outcome (Schmitter 2017: 38). In contrast, imposed transitions are unilaterally designed and executed by incumbent autocratic elites with minimal or no negotiation with opposing elites.

Thus, most of these democratic interventions, driven by the desire to end civil wars, is an inherently challenging venture. Democratisation facilitated and infused from outside by means of 'democratic interventions' often appear to support the spread of democracy. Such interventions may lead to a semblance of democratisation, but the resulting systems often tend to be unstable at the worst or semi-democracies at the best (Gleditsch et al., 2007: 302-04). Several factors including the structural constraints and a complex selection process, contribute to this outcome. The periodical outcomes of the recent American interventions, for instance in economically disadvantaged country like Afghanistan and Iraq, further substantiate the assertion. These nations are often surrounded by non-democratic neighbours, which further complicate promoting democracy. Even when interventions succeed, they tend to make only marginal progression in establishing liberal democratic values such as the rule of law (Haggard & Tiede, 2014: 373-374). Under such circumstances many countries eventually revert back to their previous state of governance.

A comprehensive examination of history reveals that democratic nations are actually the exception rather than the rule. It's essential to recognize that democracy is not an inherent or default state of human organization or government. The troubling global trend of de-democratisation explains how all democracies are susceptible to negative forces ingrained in human nature, which tend to pull away from the preservation of civil liberties (Moller 2006: 383-84). It is unrealistic to assume that democratic institutions can be established effortlessly anywhere and at any time. Instead, democracy is most likely to thrive when specific social and cultural conditions are in place.

Interrelation between Democracy and Peace-Stability: Unravelling the Paradox

Typically, war and conflict have severe impact on a nation's economy and causing a reduction of approximately two percent in its annual economic output (Halperin, Siegle & Weinstein 2010: 91). During times of conflict, assets and infrastructure are often destroyed, capital tends to flee away from the affected areas and trade becomes unreliable. Resources that could have been allocated to other sectors are diverted towards military spending. Additionally, the healthcare, education, and agricultural systems frequently either face disruptions or are dismantled altogether. The consequences of war also include the displacement of populations and it is worth noting that a significant portion of the 108 million refugees and displaced persons worldwide (UNHCR Reports 2023) are a direct result of armed conflicts. Furthermore, the devastation caused by war does not stay confined within national borders; nearly one in three conflicts spills over into neighbouring countries; and this can have a damaging impact on their economies as well. This economic retrenchment, in turn, upraises the likelihood of further conflict, as each percentage point reduction in growth rates corresponds to a corresponding increase in the risk of conflict (Halperin, Siegle & Weinstein 2010: 91). Consequently, poorer countries tend to have a higher propensity for getting embroiled in conflict when compared to more prosperous nations.

While the correlation between conflict and underdevelopment is readily apparent but what often goes unnoticed is the significant role played by political regime type. Instances of war between democratic states are exceedingly rare, especially since the conclusion of World War II. The idea of a 'democratic peace' holds immense implications for the future of humanity. At this juncture a meticulous discussion is required for better understanding of the relationship between governmental forms and foreign policy outcomes. In order to explicate the democracy's interface with foreign policy and international relations, reference is made frequently to 'Democratic Peace Theory' (DPT). Kant's vision of 'Perpetual Peace' laid the conceptual groundwork for DPT. Michael Doyle's pathbreaking work, "Kant, Liberal Legacies and Foreign Affairs" (1983), laid the foundation for the Democratic Peace debate. Doyle argued that democratic states bolstered by shared norms and institutions have natural proclivity towards peaceful coexistence (Doyle 1983: 207-209). This hypothesis, had ignited a sustained scholarly discourse on the relationship between democracy and peace.

The foundations of modern DPT can be traced back to the liberal tradition in international relations and particularly associated with the philosophical insights of Immanuel

Kant. At its core, DPT posits that democracies abstain from conflict due to their adherence to the principle of 'peaceful coexistence'. This central argument stands in stark contrast to realist assertions that states are inherently locked in a perpetual struggle for security dominance. Kant envisioned a world where nations under democratic governance, would collectively commit to non-aggression and guided by a normative principle of 'live and let live' would uphold shared values and shared idea of threat (Doyel 1983: 207-211). Henceforth, by challenging the realist contention that competition for perpetual security is inevitable and attain it also elusive, DP theorist contend that conflicts can be mitigated through diplomatic means where democratic environment could be fostered.

DPT fundamentally challenges the realist assertions regarding the nature of state interactions and contends that democracies are inclined towards peaceful coexistence. This departure from realist orthodoxy calls for questioning the inevitability of conflict in the international system. Thus, in order to cover for factual aberrations this has subsequently been modified by inserting phrases like 'less likely to go to war with each other' (Muni 2009: 3). It has been observed that unlike the totalitarian states, countries with similar form of governance (democratic) are less prone to war. The democratic peace thesis rests upon two claims: (a) that democracies certainly not fight with each other and seldom consider employing force in their mutual relations; and (b) that other variants of relations are much more conflictual including democracies' interactions with non-democracies. Democratic peace theorists argue that two sets of underlying aspects are central in explaining the democratic peace (Dixon and Senese, 2002: 552-54). In the first place, the structural constrictions of democratic institutions and democratic politics make it knotty or even impossible and unfeasible for war-prone leaders to drag their states into wars. They also affirmed that the effect of these democratic constraints, coupled with greater openness and transparency of liberal democracies arrest escalation of tension. If both sides are governed by mindful, cost-sensitive politicians who apply force only defensively, then disagreement is far less likely to occur. Under the 'Democratic Peace' theory, it is proclaimed that systemic violence, within the given country is less under democratic political orders (Dixon and Senese, 2002: 552-553).

In the modern context, DPT continues to shape international discourse and policy deliberations. This theory prompts a re-evaluation of prevailing assumptions about the inherent belligerence of states. This paradigm shift has profound implications for contemporary international relations, offering a renewed perspective on the prospects for a more peaceful world order. But question arises, that how to ascertain relationship between governmental

forms and international outcomes? In this regard three primary explanations have been advanced:

- Citizen's aversion to bear the costs of war
- Shared values among democracies
- Unique internal state apparatus, which restrains leaders from waging war

According to the first proposition, which argues that in totalitarian regimes, the autocratic or parochial sovereign typically initiates war efforts and tends to transfer the associated costs onto their subjects, who possess limited or no agency in the decision-making process. In stark contrast, citizens within a republic exhibit a reduced proclivity towards warfare, as they retain the capacity to mobilize resistance in favour of preventing full-scale conflicts, recognizing that the ensuing burden will ultimately be borne by them.

This second proposition draws on the normative insights advocated by Kant himself, who contended that liberal democracies share crucial ethical norms and values rooted in their domestic political frameworks. When engaging with other democracies, these states apply these liberal principles of nurturing a predisposition towards analogous perspectives, shared outlooks and reciprocal actions. Guided by this broad understanding of shared ideals, democracies are better positioned to address disputes through peaceful means and engage in voluntary conciliation, rather than resorting to coercive military force. Actually, in democratic societies, the 'democratic norm of bounded competition' (Dixon and Senese 2002: 548) prevails that emphasizes mediation, negotiation and compromise. Concurrently democratic states externalize these 'liberal norms' of non-violent and collaboration-oriented resolution of conflict (Wolf, Jonas and Wrum 2011: 81). But the accomplishment of the externalisation of liberal-democratic norms depends on counterparts that are likewise prone to cooperative behaviour and nonviolent conflict resolutions. Hence, the more democratic the (potential) partners are, the better democracies can live out their democratic nature by constructing international relations that are built on cooperation and mutual trust; conducive to overcome the security dilemma; and enable them in the maximization of economic welfare through across-the-board interdependence (Wolf, Jonas and Wrum 2011: 81).

Finally, the institutional rationale underscores the constraints faced by policymakers within a democratic framework. Robust institutional arrangements are established based on the principle of checks and balances, a mechanism that inevitably slows down the decision-making process and complicates the initiation of any form of military operations. They may reduce

uncertainty by conveying information and may act as mediators in a conflict (Haftel 2007). Furthermore, the confederation of democracies entails the functioning of collective security institutions who even act as deterrence and coerce norm breakers to act in more rational manner (Russett/Oneal/Davies 1998: 449-51). Moreover, if another state is similarly bound by comparable institutional mechanisms, both parties are less likely to harbour apprehensions of sudden, surprise attacks. Instead, they enjoy the luxury of time to peacefully resolve international crises in a more inclusive and democratic manner (Haftel 2007: 229-231). Additionally, some experts argue that nations that have solidified their democratic foundations are perceived as more inclined to honour treaties. Consequently, a democracy is more likely to be regarded by other nations as a reliable trading partner and by foreign investors as a more stable environment for investment (Oneal/Russett 1997: 272-74). When considered collectively, these factors converge to render the outbreak of war unlikely within a community of democratic nations, thereby perpetuating a state of peace. Consequently, Kant has conceptualized and introduced the notion of an 'unjust enemy', representing a rogue state that operates outside the bounds of established legal norms. This entity poses a pervasive threat not only to other nations but also to the overarching progression towards a system founded on the rule of law. Consequently, states are deemed justified in employing armed force against this rogue entity (Müller and Wolff 2006: 57-59).

Democratic peace theorists have stressed the pivotal role of this theory in upholding or restoring global peace and stability. Throughout history, there are instances of wars waged with the aim of establishing democracy, a rationale that finds validation within the framework of the DPT. One of the most conspicuous examples substantiating the DPT is found in the political history of Europe. In recent past, Europe served as the stage for some of the most devastating conflicts in history. In 1917, amid the First World War, then-American President Woodrow Wilson justified his decision to declare war against Germany by emphasizing the imperative of creating a world 'safe for democracy'. He said: 'peace must be implanted upon the time-tested foundations of political liberty.....unwavering commitment for peace can never be sustained except by a partnership of democratic nations' (Wilson quoted in Muni 2009: 3) Thus it was a call for the alliance of democracies driven by self-consciousness in the pursuit of peaceful survival of democracies. Eventually in the aftermath of the Second World War when democratic system was ultimately adopted by the European states resulted in the culmination of enhanced cooperation among democracies whereby long-standing issues were also resolved amicably; and undesirable incidents like war in the current milieu of Europe is beyond imagination. Thus,

the period from the end of World War II to till date, there has been no instances of outbreak of rigorous warfare in the region rather it had been the zone of integration where supra-national institute like European Union has come into existence.

There is a basic assumption that if the global democratisation trend expands and is consolidated genuinely, then the twenty-first century has the potential to be pronounced for its historic decline in politically motivated bloodshed. The traditional understanding of the democratic peace theory held that it primarily applied in relations among democracies. However, there is a growing recognition of an alternative understanding that democracies tend to be more peaceful even in their interactions with autocracies. In fact, democracies are less likely to initiate military conflicts compared to any other type of regime. Statistical analysis reveals that democracies are generally not the initiator of conflicts. In other words, democracies are more frequently on the receiving end of aggression rather than the ones provoking it. Remarkably, when democracies do engage in conflicts, they emerge victorious in 76 percent of these conflicts (Halperin, Siegle & Weinstein 2010: 91). In contrast, authoritarian governments are even prone to fight amongst each other and so as they are to engage in conflict with democracies, thereby, rendering the idea of an 'autocratic peace' paradoxical.

Although the concept of democratic peace theory originally pertained to international state relations but there is a mounting body of evidence suggesting that democracies also experience fewer civil wars than nondemocratic regimes. This is attributed to the fact that elected governments are less likely to be viewed as illegitimate compared to dictatorships. Motivated by the future elections outcome the democratic governments tend to be more responsive to the needs of their populations and less inclined to resort to violence to suppress dissent (Halperin, Siegle & Weinstein 2010: 90-92). Nevertheless, some scholars have proposed that the stabilizing effect of democracies becomes pronounced only when their institutional structures are robust enough to accommodate and address competing interests through political means; ensure security against armed factions; and establish a reliable revenue-collection system. In addition to democracy, there are other factors that guarantee abridged level of conflicts in a country. Such as the degree of economic interdependence and active participation in international organizations. Though these elements function independently, yet they synergize with one another. When a country embodies all these three multifaceted elements, the risk of being embroiled in a military conflict drops by over seventy percent compared to typical standard of occurrence.

Economic integration plays a pivotal role in diminishing the likelihood of war. When trade constitutes a substantial portion of a country's national income, powerful domestic stakeholders advocate for policies that safeguard their interests by discouraging the course of action that could prove detrimental. Moreover, states that are more deeply intertwined in the international system tend to identify common interests with other member states. Trade also serves as a conduit for the exchange of cultural values and norms, thereby helps in nurturing cross-national understanding. In a broader sense, it adopts maximisation of in-flow of information between states, enabling their populations to gain clearer insights of their governments' activities, analyse policies and being critical governments' action, if required (Muni 2009: 5-7). This active political participation of the electorates in decision-making act as a deterrence against the decision of waging war, if taken by the government without the consent of the legislative body. This is the essence of the principle of check-and-balance which is one of the core tenets of liberal democracy. Furthermore, the engagement with international organizations serves as a restraining component, as it provides governments with increased access to information about the fellow members. This serves as an apparatus to alleviate mistrust and uncertainty, thereby, offering a platform for resolving disputes peacefully; and provides necessary mechanisms for enforcing binding regulations on such matters. It is worth noting that all three of these factors that mitigate conflict bear the hallmark of democratic qualities of openness and adherence to the rule of law.

It has been claimed by DP theorists that democracies are significantly equipped to contain conflicts particularly in ethnically diverse societies. Democratic governments typically manage social conflicts by channelising and accommodating them within the ambit of functional democratic political processes. When divisive ethnic issues arise in democracies, they are often expressed through peaceful protest and which are immediately resolved by adopting reformist policies (Halperin, Siegle & Weinstein 2010: 93). Contrary, ethnic differences in authoritarian regime are addressed much forcefully, which has the potential to reduce the economic growth by three percentage; whereas it has no adverse impact on economic growth in democracies (Halperin, Siegle & Weinstein 2010: 93). This suggests that democracies are more adept at reconciling the competing interests of diverse societies compared to autocracies. Though, this proposition has strongly been contended by pluralist and multiculturalists.

Despite the divergent viewpoints expressed by numerous scholars, there exists a basis for asserting that specific norms hold greater appositeness for a typical democracy compared

to an average autocracy. These norms find justification in the institutional framework and the manner in which democracies interact with their individual citizens. Democracies are consistently governed by the utilization of force in a distinctive manner, aligning with the principle of 'logic of appropriateness', and presume that other democracies adhere to a similar standard (Müller and Schörnig 2008: 195). This mutual inference from a state's internal behaviour to its conduct on the international stage alleviates the security dilemma between democratic nations and facilitates the cultivation of peaceful relations.

According to Bueno de Mesquita's 'institutional explanation', democracies engage in warfare only under specific conditions: either in self-defence against an external threat or when they possess strong indications of an assured victory. Democracies are averse to engage in conflicts against other democracies, as a clear victory cannot be guaranteed. Additionally, smaller democracies are more likely to yield to the demands of their more powerful counterparts (Bueno de Mesquita et al., 1999: 498-99). This perspective postulates that the foundation of the democratic peace theory ultimately lies in deterrence. Thomas Risse offers an alternative explanation for the peace observed between democratic states. According to his social-constructivist viewpoint (Risse-Kappen 1995: 494-95), democracies share amicable sentiments and holds high regard for one another. Democracies constitute an 'in-group' united by common institutional characteristics, setting them apart from states governed by different forms of rule. Thus, the prevailing reverence among the democracies aids in mitigating the security dilemma and thereby, paving the way for exploring non-violent course of conflict resolution. Consequently, the attribute of being democratic is theorized to exert an influence for the peaceful outcome.

Remarkably, most scholars, including prominent realists, acknowledges the robust empirical findings of the dyadic variant of the democratic peace theory, which have been reiterated time and again that democracies have not engaged in warfare with each other since 1815 and they adhere to a variant of 'separate peace'. The overarching trend stands for nearly two centuries contending that democracies have refrained from engaging in armed conflict with one another. This narrative has been highly resilient and remains largely unaffected by variations in how democracy or war is defined. While there have been some near misses or tense moments between democratic states, barring few like the well-known Cold War between Iceland and the United Kingdom. On the flip side, there exists no unchallenged empirical evidence supporting the assertion that democracies are inherently more peaceful and other are not. However, this does not preclude the possibility of other group of states from achieving

similar outcomes, such as an ‘autocratic peace’ (Peceny and Butler 2004: 786-87), an ‘ASEAN Peace’ (Goldsmith, 2006: 6) or a ‘Latin American Peace’ in a diverse community (Acharya 2001: 24). Nevertheless, these outcomes are likely to be contingent upon different attributes compared to those underlying the democratic peace theory, thus not refuting the assertion that democracy holds significance in matters of peace.

The last two decades have witnessed a notable paradigm shift in peace and conflict research, characterized by an emergent focus on the impact of democratic politics on security matters. The field of democratic peace research, which involves the systematic analysis of the foreign policy behaviour of democratic states, is relatively a recent academic pursuit despite its historical roots dating back to the late eighteenth century with Immanuel Kant work on Democratic Peace (Baum 2008: 35-37). It's only after 1970s in Germany and the 1980s in the United States the scholars began to focus on this particular form of governance as an explanation for political behaviours of state actors at various levels of analysis (Müller and Schörnig 2008: 191). In retrospect, it's regrettable that scholars didn't delve into systematic exploration of the role of democracy in international relations during the Cold War. The end of the Cold War provided an opportunity to reexamine the concept of democratic exceptionalism from a fresh perspective (Fukuyama 1992: 8; Krauthammer 1990/1: 25); and this found its quick application in political practice through the Clinton administration's ‘enlargement approach’ in 1993 (Müller and Schörnig 2008: 191). However, despite the sudden popularity of democratic exceptionalism in political discourse, scholars have, and still are, struggling to provide robust theoretical and empirical insights (Müller and Schörnig 2008:193). As a result, the significance of the rather broad variable of ‘democracy’, remains a topic of debate and contention among academics and policymakers alike.

In light of the stark disparities between the 21st century and its 19th and 20th-century predecessors, the theory of perpetual peace stands in contrast to realist and neorealist interpretations of world politics. It offers the basis for liberal optimism, albeit primarily within the sphere of democracies. It is imperative to note, however, that DPT does not extend a guarantee of peace beyond its operational domain because the DP theorists primarily conceived the notion that non-democratic entities may fail to perceive the shared understanding of mutual benefits (Müller and Schörnig 2008: 193). Consequently, democracies are more inclined to engage in conflicts with non-democracies with an intention of extending its sphere of influence and create in-group, in order to ensure its inclusive economic interests.

John Owen (2004) astutely identified the broader conceptual shift, emphasizing the need to consider both the peaceful and aggressive dimensions of democratic behaviour. Nevertheless, in the preceding decades it has been argued that, beyond the 'Democratic Peace' (DP) debate, another more substantial adjunct had transpired, what John Owen aptly termed as 'democratic distinctiveness programme' that advocates for the inclusion of the notion of 'democratic violence', i.e. the use of armed force by democracies, as a distinct and intrinsic facet of democratic behaviour (Owen 2004: 108-109). Even the proponents of the so-called monadic DPT who assume that 'generally, democracies are more peaceful in nature, never ascertained that democracies do not fight wars; rather, they merely claimed that democracies fight wars less recurrently than other regimes (Bennett, Scott and Stam 2004: 84-87).

Supporters of the DPT rarely conducted an in-depth analysis of the violence originating from (liberal) democratic states in terms of its (liberal) democratic characteristics. In instances where the rationale of 'democratic violence' had been acknowledged, either, it was often presented as a challenge to the DP proposition or regarded as an un-democratic aberration, lingering from pre-democratic eras. The utilization of force by democracies received more attention in the more prevalent dyadic variations of DP research. The DP theorists like Risse and Kappen articulated the dual nature of democracies in their use of force. They asserted that democracies exhibit both the tendencies towards peaceful coexistence and potential for engaging in conflicts, i.e. a concept encapsulated in the notion of the democratic 'Janus face' (Geis and Wagner 2008: 15). This 'democratic distinctiveness programme' not merely scrutinize the peaceful tendencies of democracies but also acknowledge their capacity for exerting armed force. Traditionally, acts of violence within democracies were often attributed to remnants of un- or pre-democratic institutions and cultural legacies. However, an evolving understanding now recognizes democratic violence as an intrinsic facet of democratic states.

Over the time the Democratic Peace research primarily concentrated on the enigma of harmonious relations between well-established democracies, while refuting the prevailing Realist assumptions about international relations (Hellmann/Herborth 2008: 505). Nevertheless, following the conclusion of the Cold War, there was a shift in attitude to study new divergences such as 'democratic' or 'liberal' wars particularly in light of emergence of the idea of 'democratic interventionism'. These military interventions, often reinvigorated by a UN Security Council, were framed in Western discourse as 'humanitarian interventions' aimed at upholding international law and order. They were officially waged in the pursuit of restoring peace, penalizing transgressors, eliminating threats to humanity and safeguarding human

rights, in parallel to perpetuation of democratic principles (Brock 2006: 65; Müller 2004:110-12). It sought, albeit with varying degrees of success, to disseminate and export Western paradigms of governance, statehood and democracy to other regions (Brock 2006: 46-49; Müller 2006: 74-75). Thus, democratic interventionism, had been perceived as the forceful manifestation of a liberal framework aimed at disseminating liberal ideology for founding global governance and order. This shift challenges conventional assumptions about the façade of ‘peacefulness’ as inherent trait of democracies. The recognition of democratic violence within the ‘democratic distinctiveness programme’ prompts a re-evaluation of the traditional understanding of democracies as inherently peaceful entities. This has proven to be even more consequential leading to the emergence of democratic peace paradox. This paradigm shift has profound implications for policy-makers and scholars alike. It necessitates to adopt a nuanced approach, one that acknowledges the potential for both peace and conflict within democratic states, for deeper understanding of security studies.

Since the end of the Cold War, there has been a snowballing tendency of using liberal justifications to legitimize Western military interventionist actions. This shift has brought an age-old debate at the forefront, which centres around the ambivalences of liberalism. It encompasses various strands of liberal thought that can be categorized either into a more self-restrained approach or more interventionist approaches to international politics (Geis and Wagner 2008: 18). Given the complexity of the ambiguities and contradictions within Kant's writings, it is not surprising that interpretations of Kantian writings varies significantly when it comes to whether he advocated for non-intervention or whether he developed liberal justifications for intervening in non-democratic regimes.

The concept of ‘democratic exceptionalism’ has sparked a vigorous debate among scholars (Müller and Wolff 2006: 112-113). Neorealists, on one hand, dismiss the significance of subsystem factors entirely and argue that anarchy in international relations will always outweigh democracy, potentially leading to conflicts (Waltz 2000: 21-24). On the other hand, proponents of the classical liberal viewpoint contend that the binary classification of states into democracies and autocracies is an oversimplified framework. They argue that it's more crucial to consider specific factors and configurations within a particular state at a particular moment in time (Müller and Wolff 2006: 113). Interestingly, this critique isn't confined to scholars outside the democratic exceptionalist camp; even within the camp, there is no consensus on what precisely sets democracies apart. It's only recently that scholars have begun to expand their focus to investigate whether there exists a distinct democratic approach to explain the

actions of those who are preparing for war (Schörnig and Lembcke 2006: 15). However, similar to the broader concept of democratic peace, the findings in this area have been mixed. This discrepancy may arise from the possibility that democracy is not the most pertinent starting point after all (Müller and Schörnig 2008: 191). Alternatively, it might indicate that the issue is more intricate than initially assumed.

Democratisation and Foreign Policy: Promotion of Democracy

In the 21st century as more and more nations advancing towards democratisation, it was expected that following the ‘Democratic Peace Theory’ proclamations, the world would be less conflictual and peace would be ushered in. Nonetheless, it has been contrary to the aforementioned assertions. It's crucial to highlight that trajectory of democratisation is not unidirectional and it can be inverted back at any stage of the transition (Huntington 1991: 9). Furthermore, the process of transitioning to democracy is often prolonged, spanning from more than a generation, and its outcome is uncertain. Since 1973 several countries have made transitions to democracy but only few can be regarded as stable and fully consolidated. About a two-third have experienced either the complete breakdown of democracy or substantial deterioration of civil liberties and peaceful electoral competition (as in Colombia, Pakistan, Myanmar and Sri Lanka). The majority of these emerging democracies are grappling with the challenge of fully institutionalizing democratic practices. Unfortunately, some of them have already faced setbacks and returned to authoritarian governance resulting in internal crisis; as well as spillovers have destabilising consequences externally (Diamond 1992: 25-26). However, in an era of interdependence and integration, sustaining democracy in isolation is impossible.

It is essential to recognize that primarily the ‘democratic peace’ concept focuses on the relations between well-established liberal democracies and tends to overlook the behavioural patterns of nations those who are entangled in the process of democratisation. Drawing from the perspective of Samuel Huntington, who proposed that while socioeconomic modernity fosters political stability, the modernization process can also lead to political deterioration, one could reasonably argue that, while democracy contributes to peace with other democratic governments, but the transition to democracy may, at times, result in a rise in international conflict and instability.

Consequently, the objective of foreign policy is the furtherance of multifaceted objectives encompassing defence, security, economic advantage and the provision of extending

aid and assistance to states in need. These objectives are inherently interconnected and are collectively responsible for shaping a comprehensive foreign policy framework for each sovereign entity (Wood and Peake 1998: 175-76). Divergent from the comparatively deliberative nature of domestic policy formulation, foreign policy concerns frequently manifest abruptly in response to dynamic developments and significant events occurring in foreign nations. Primarily, oriented towards safeguarding national security, foreign policy is often characterized by governments as forging military alliances with other states, and a strategic manoeuvre aimed at deterring potential threats and projecting heightened resilience against external aggression (Mintz and Redd 2013: 14-15).

Democracies tend not to engage in conflict with each other- this observation has become widely accepted as a conventional belief, and it has translated into a policy recommendation suggesting that the promotion of democratisation consistently contributes positively to international security. In simpler terms, the idea is that when countries embrace democracy, it reduces the likelihood of them going to war with other democracies and this principle is often advocated as a beneficial approach for enhancing global security. Thus, the former US President Clinton declared in his 1994 State of the Union address that, “the best strategy to ensure our security and to found the basis of a durable peace is to support the advancement of democracy elsewhere” (Kozhemiakin 1997: 49).

This is where the concept of promoting democracy as a foreign policy tool comes into play, that aims at fostering a more progressive international order. These connections strengthened in recent years as advocates for development recognized the importance of considering political factors, while promoters of democracy acknowledged the importance of ensuring that democratic systems effectively deliver on their promises. Various entities, including the United States, the European Union, and the United Nations, have assumed critical roles in formulating and implementing policies to advance this new ideology through democracy promotion and assistance efforts. Thus, ‘Democracy promotion’ has become the central element of contemporary foreign policy for most of the liberal states. While it has a prolonged history, particularly within the foreign policy of the United States, its significance along with the financial commitment has continued to escalate since the conclusion of the Cold War.

Liberal democracy encompasses a collection of characteristics typically associated with European (settler) states. These states, and their successful transitions to democratic systems,

have served as the primary model for democracy promotion during two significant periods following the Second World War: the modernization theories and policies of the 1950s and 60s, and the transition theories and associated democracy promotion policies, particularly in the 1990s (Diamond 1996: 35; Paris 1997: 57). South Africa, demonstrated that democratisation could be achieved even in profoundly divided societies. Spain's gradual step-by-step transition away from authoritarian rule provided a blueprint for similar transformations. Similarly, Hungary and Poland played pivotal roles in the complex shift from communism to democracy, which are often referred to as the triple transition (Whitehead 2009: 2017-19). The post-Second World War experiences of Germany and Japan are frequently cited to support the idea that foreign actors can effectively facilitate the promotion of democratic systems.

A clear definition of 'democracy promotion' is rather difficult to come by, partly because 'democracy' itself is a highly contested concept whose meaning ranges from majoritarian or popular rule, through the institution of elections through which this rule is often, but not always, established, to respect for individual rights even in the absence of a general franchise (Plattner 2008:48). It is difficult to ascertain that, which 'democracy' is to be endorsed and established! When the terms 'Democracy' is itself contested, it is obvious that it would be difficult in conferring in definite way the concept of 'Promotion of Democracy'.

Amidst the theoretical complexities surrounding the concept, the term 'democracy' has historically encompassed a broad spectrum of political entities, spanning from indigenous tribal communities and ancient Greek city-states to contemporary 'illiberal' or 'authoritarian' democracies, and the modern Western liberal democracies (Gills 2000: 331-33). The persistent ambiguity surrounding the definition of 'democracy' has been a source of contention. However, the emergence of 'illiberal democracy' since the mid-1990s has brought about a clarification in the objectives of 'democracy promotion' policies (Zakaria 1997: 31-33). It became evident that such policies were not merely concerned with the introduction of electoral processes or the adherence to liberal principles. Rather, the goal of democracy promotion policies evolved to establish political systems that serve as exemplars, characterized as 'modern, representative, liberal, political democracies practiced within nation-states, commonly referred to as liberal democracies (Schmitter 1995: 15). It is, nevertheless, the history of Western liberal democratic states that provides the basis for the main theoretical approaches to democracy promotion.

Nations often tend to adopt guiding principles for their policies they practice. The justification broadly falls into two categories i.e. ideological and realist. Ideological templates

tie a country's identity or regime legitimacy on the basis of high-end causes, such as 'instituting socialism' or the 'promotion of liberty'. Similarly, 'Promotion of Democracy' is one such exceedingly regarded 'Cause' by which the tendency had been to bring and align ideologically as many as countries possible under the ambit of liberal democracy; because this would restore the liberal ideals which is a necessary precondition for instating the harmonious world order. The second guiding template prioritizes power maximization as the central objective of foreign policy. As Raymond Aron once astutely had put it, "in the twentieth century the strength of a great power is diminished if it ceases to serve an idea". Thus, the emerging powers usually seek for some form of validation of their act of interventions. Therefore, the challenge lies in combining this philanthropic endeavour such as saving the world, fostering democracy, or safeguarding socialism with the nation's national interests in a justifiable manner. Any nation that is aspiring to be a global power requires an ideology ensuring that they represent an idea of finest international order, which would be accepted by other nations (Mehta 2011: 105-107). Thus, the Nations in the pursuit of establishing their standing on the global stage are often engaged in a crucial task of striking a delicate equilibrium amid values and interests, where already a critical dichotomy exists. There is an inherent limitation of an approach that is excessively tilted towards either end of the spectrum.

Political theorists asserts that states often justified its pursuit of establishing democracy through the policy of promotion of democracy based on the principle of 'federation of republics' an sub-variant within the democratic peace theory, which contend that the distribution of power would act as a deterrent against leaders initiating wars. Furthermore, advocates for democracy promoters argue that it is a morally imperative to disseminate universally embraced values and ensure that all individuals attain political rights and representation (Sorensen 2007: 254). Therefore, the democratic peace proponents as well as advocates of promotion of democracy strongly believe that well-established democracies not only possess a normative entitlement to endorse and establish democracies, but also a genuine strategic stake is also attached in spreading democracy worldwide (Stuenkel 2013: 340). A global community of democracies is likely to be more peaceful and conducive to trade and investment, given that authoritarian regimes typically have lesser adherence to the rule of law. This sets the foundation for international peace and mutually advantageous cooperation (Schraeder 2003: 23). By alleviating the security dilemma, democracies facilitate the optimisation of economic well-being through extensive interdependence (Stuenkel 2013: 340).

Nevertheless, the realist deems that international norms such as endorsing democracy primarily is a tool used by powerful nations to exert their influence and further their own interests. However, the Realists acknowledge that the promotion of democracy can have good intentions, but they also firmly asserted that countries will only support and advance democracy if it is associated with their strategic or economic objectives. They emphasize that the USA promotes democracy because they are more inclined to engage in trade and thereby would make an effort to integrate the nations into the US-led global system; reducing the likelihood of causing instability and conversely creating environment conducive for free market economy. But whenever democracy promotion clashes with economic or geopolitical interests, it tends to take a back seat. Hence for realist 'Promotion of Democracy' is a mere tool to legitimise its action of expanding its sphere of influence. Therefore, in most of the cases the big powers use promotion of democracy as a tool to legitimise its hegemonic claim.

Jhonas Wolf and Iris Wurm delineated an approach that integrates democracy promotion within the realm of foreign policy of democratic nations. This approach is derived and aligns with the materialist theory where democracy promotion is perceived as just one tool among many, deployed insofar as to advance the 'actual' objectives i.e., national interests such as security, influence and economic gains. This materialist theory of democracy promotion is rooted in an adapted form of neoclassical realism (Mazumder and Statz 2015: 79).

After the Cold War, there was a sense of hope and confidence in the success of market-driven economies and liberal democracies. It was believed in Western policy circles that it was both beneficial and feasible to support both political and economic development through an integrated approach. This new perspective, along with changes in programs within both communities, led promoters of democracy to start connecting with the economic and social development side, and vice versa. Democracy advocates, much like those who championed modernisation tended to believe that in matters of both economics and politics, positive outcomes were interconnected (Carothers 2010: 12-13). They were under the assumption that prosperity and democratic governance naturally complemented each other.

Grounded on the foundation of the democratic peace theory and the assertion that democracy fosters economic progress. Thus, nations worldwide have exhibited heightened enthusiasm in advocating (read: exporting) for democracy within non-democratic states. As per the democratic peace proposition, mature democracies possess not only a normative prerogative, but also a pragmatic strategic interest in advancing democracy globally. This

pursuit is driven by the desire to safeguard their own interests, including security, trade, and investment, as well as to serve the collective good through the promotion of international peace and mutually advantageous cooperation. Simultaneously, it aligns with the recognized interests of the societies receiving this democratic outreach (Czempiel, 1996: 120-21; Schraeder, 2003: 31). This very general proclamation of democratic peace theory, explains why democratic states formulate their foreign policies that aims at promoting democracy. Developed countries have played a pivotal role in supporting underdeveloped nations' pursuit of democratisation through a range of bilateral and multilateral initiatives. This assistance has been instrumental in shaping the trajectories of democratisation in recipient countries, offering resources, expertise and frameworks for democratic governance.

The prospects for democratisation within a country are profoundly influenced by the other states dedicated action of advancing liberal democracy globally. Strategies for democratisation are diverse and adaptable; applicable at various junctures in the process, ranging from dismantling authoritarian rule to transitioning towards electoral systems and fortifying democratic institutions (Wolf and Wrum 2011: 79). Scholars like Dobbin and others (2008) have attempted to understand the dynamics of how democracy spreads, by comparing it to a tide that pulls countries along. They have sought to delineate the mechanisms of diffusion, which might be an influential force that guides countries towards democratisation (Bunce & Wolchik 2013: 4010-11). They suggest that this diffusion can occur through various means, including direct coercion, competition, learning, and emulation or socialisation, which can be bolstered through a range of channels- starting from the impetus received from international institutes to regional and local progressions and cross-border influence (Bunce & Wolchik 2013: 415; Kramer 2013: 359-360).

Strategies for promoting democratisation are versatile, adaptable to distinct stages of the democratisation process. Whether targeting the erosion of authoritarian regimes, facilitating transitions to electoral systems, or bolstering democratic institutions, these strategies encompass an array of interventions aimed at fostering democratic values and practices. External actors exert pressure for democracy promotion through both direct and indirect means. Direct approaches may involve diplomatic interventions, economic incentives, or even military interventions in extreme cases. Indirect methods may encompass diplomatic advocacy, extending support for reinforcing civil society and the dissemination of democratic norms and values (Wolf and Wrum 2011: 79-80). While democracy promotion efforts are undertaken with the best intentions and may yield positive results in specific cases; but they often hasten

unintended consequences and spurs a counter-reaction against democratic reforms. These may include social and political instability, the rise of illiberal forces, or a backlash against democratic reforms.

Understanding these unintended outcomes is crucial for refining strategies and enhancing the effectiveness of democracy promotion endeavours (Wolf and Wrum 2011:80). Therefore, promoting democracy involves an intricate interplay between international actors and democratisation processes in underdeveloped countries. It is important to adopt tailored strategies that can be implemented at various stages of democratisation along with the need for a nuanced understanding of the potential unintended consequences that may arise from democracy promotion efforts. By critically evaluating these dynamics, policymakers can refine their approaches and contribute to more effective and sustainable democratisation outcomes globally. While extensive body of research on democratisation and democracy promotion have been conducted within the realms of political science and international relations to identify the trajectories of democracy on a global scale but those have failed to resolved the paradox of why democracy promotion succeeds in certain contexts while failing in other regions (Shapiro 2003: 10).

Furthermore, there are lingering doubts regarding the current literature's capacity to address the profound challenges of contention that have emerged in the realm of international relations (IR) concerning democracy promotion. Of particular concern is the growing scepticism among many nations towards democracy promotion, leading them to restrict the activities and influence of democracy promotion agencies (Carothers 2006: 61-63; Gershman and Allen 2006: 44). It is equally disconcerting that the populations targeted by democracy promotion initiatives do not always enthusiastically embrace the democratic models advocated in their best interests. This accentuates the complex and multifaceted nature of democracy promotion; and reveals that its success is conditional; and based on circumstantial factors that extend beyond mere promotional efforts (Kurki 2010: 363).

A prevailing consensus in the field of democracy promotion revolves around the idea that it primarily involves the advancement of procedural facets of liberal democracy. This entails the promotion of specific fundamental components of liberal democratic governance, encompassing electoral processes and the establishment of the rule of law, as well as the protection of freedoms such as expression, the press and association. Moreover, there is an increasing agreement that alongside these 'procedural' aspects, democracy promotion should

also emphasize the fostering of ‘liberal democratic cultural values’ (Burnell 2000: 349-350; Obama 2006: 78; Diamond 2008: 29-30). These values encompass beliefs in individual rights, toleration, consensus-building and the legitimacy of governance based on liberal democratic procedures. However, it is proposed here that a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges in democratisation, especially concerning the controversies surrounding democracy promotion, can be achieved by adopting a conceptual approach to the study of democratisation and democracy promotion. Instead of merely addressing practical issues, a deeper exploration of the conceptual foundations of democratisation and democracy promotion is advocated. In essence, while democratisation studies have shed light on the dynamics of democracy promotion, they leave us grappling with the enduring puzzle of its unpredictability and the evolving nature of international relations in this regard.

Democracy promotion is commonly perceived as a manifestation of enlightened self-interest, driven by a dual rationale. Principally, it is frequently framed as a moral imperative entrusted upon the economically affluent nations. Simultaneously, given correlation between prosperity and democratic governance, the endeavour to advance democratic principles is viewed as a means of combating poverty and fostering human development (Jahn 2012: 688). Alongside, democracies may be regarded to not only uphold egalitarian ideals worldwide (which serve to burnish their own democratic credentials), but to also seek to persuade friendly allies and open up gratifying global markets that ultimately benefit them as well.

It is well accepted wisdom that democracies generally experience more rapid and consistent improvements in the well-being of their populations than do autocracies. However, some experts caution against promoting democracy in economically disadvantaged countries, arguing that embryonic democratic institutions in these societies are too fragile to survive, especially when they face economic hardships (Halperin, Siegle & Weinstein 2010: 65). This concern has been validated by numerous instances and thus should not be dismissed outright. Since its establishment in 2000, the Community of Democracies, consisting of 127 member countries, has repeatedly emphasized the potential political consequences of economic stagnation. Most of new democracies start with significant economic burdens, including high levels of debt servicing requirements constraining economic growth; and inherited corrupt and patronage-based civil services that hinder effective governance and economic progress; alongside wide disparities between the rich and poor, along with extensive human suffering, present formidable challenges. Sluggish economic growth exacerbates each of these existing challenges. When a country that is just beginning to adopt participatory politics experiences a

slowdown or decline in its economy, it not only weakens the popularity of current political leaders but also tarnishes the overall appeal of democracy itself (Halperin, Siegle & Weinstein 2010: 65-67). Thus, addressing economic challenges alongside democratic reforms is crucial to ensure the long-term success and sustainability of democratic institutions.

In a world where war is no longer a state-centric affair, the efforts for peace and democracy must be widened enough to acknowledge the role of other actors. Yet, democratic conversion and liberal institutionalisation entails perseverance, which is tough, if not impossible to achieve when democracy consolidation and institution building goals are attached as corollaries to more primary strategic and military goals. Hence, it can be concluded that the policies aimed at promoting democracy face two main conceptual challenges. The first one involves a conflict between the political and economic aspects of liberal democracy. This leads to a need to find ways to better align the social and political aspects both in theory and in actual implementation. The second challenge stems from the theoretical division between the internal (domestic) and external (international) aspects of promoting liberal democracy. These two challenges are connected and influence each other (Jahn 2012: 687). Nonetheless, it is worth noting that the fundamental principles guiding the promotion of democracy have remained largely unchanged. There have been no significant shifts in the underlying conceptual framework that designs the strategies and objectives of democracy promotion, nor have there been explicit calls for such shifts in the various reassessments of this policy agenda.

Democracy promotion is not a panacea and not without its limitations. Contemporary models of democracy promotion are generally derived from an interpretation of the historical development of liberal democracy in the west. The outcomes and costs associated with such endeavours are contingent upon the contextual nuances in which these initiatives are implemented. While exceptions may exist, but the past decade has predominantly witnessed ambiguous upshots of advocacy of democracy. It is discernible that instances abound where the pursuit of a 'freedom agenda' has precipitated unintended consequences, effectively undermining stability within a nation-state and its broader geopolitical sphere. Such phenomenon is evident in regions such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon, and Gaza, where interventions aimed at instating democratic governance had been futile and democracy-honking meddlers inadvertently empowered and bolstered sectarian factions, paramilitary groups and extremist organizations. The ingenuity of democracy promoters to advocate for the virtues of democracy have not escaped scholarly attention. A plethora of publications in recent

decades have analysed the triumphs, as well as the setbacks emanated out-off democratic transitions worldwide.

The strategic objective of President George W. Bush to engender democratic reforms within radical Islamic states had been aborted as various other vindicating factors were in action. Such as the association of democracy promotion with military intervention in Iraq (which did not yield democracy with ease). Moreover, the utilisation of indiscriminate counterterrorism methods served to diminish the symbolic importance of the democratic ideal. Additionally, a proclivity to withdraw support when potential proponents of electoral processes engendered apprehension, as observed in the Palestinian political space, further complicated the realisation of democratic aspirations (Jahn 2012: 689). Furthermore, the disjunction between rhetorical affirmations of commitment to democracy and the corresponding operationalisation of such principles, exemplified by instances in Egypt and Pakistan, contributed to a dissonance in the efficacy of democracy promotion efforts.

In the new millennium the most common technique for promoting democracy has been employing coercive measures such as punitive sanctions, international shaming and/or punishment, military intervention under inhospitable environments. External democracy assistance devoid of internal buy-in has been documented to have the reverse consequence. Historical precedent suggests that endeavours of this nature carry a heightened susceptibility to eliciting adverse reactions, potentially outweighing the benefits that had been envisaged (Jahn 2012: 687). Such efforts are only likely to be successful when an indigenous, broadly supported reform movement already exists in the concerned country. Correspondingly, the external actors might function with highest degree of efficacy when they lend their support to internal entities possessing credible acceptance to the population. Instances of external democracy assistance bereft of internal consensus are likely to yield diametrically opposite outcomes. Entrenched high handed authoritarian leaders acquire superior legitimacy and are proficient enough to consolidate authority by manipulating their citizens' qualms and suspicions about the intentions of prospective external interveners. Consequently, the external reformers end-up by inadvertently strengthening and reinforce the very regimes they intend to undermine.

Furthermore, such external interventions risk impeding the organic and indigenous progression of democratic transitions, instead of hastening them through artificial means. Additionally, numerous logistic challenges crops-up. The allocation of substantial financial and

human and military possessions is intrinsically associated with drainage of resources in such forms of assistance. There are likely to be escalation of expenditures when external actors impose democratic reforms, as opposed to the country itself instigating the process. Critics contend that such pricey apparatus for democracy promotion, particularly within ostensibly inhospitable environments, offers scant assurances of procuring tangible and enduring dividends. Instead, it bears the onus of sustaining financially, long-term nation-building initiatives in the foreseeable future. A 2005 Harvard Study concluded that “[Our] research shows that where governmental institutions are weak at the outset of the transition and partial democratic transitions got stalled before attaining the stage of full democracy, increases the chances of getting involved in international war” (Epstein and Serafino 2007: 9-10).

The conceptual underpinning of democracy promotion has undergone rigorous scrutiny, with an increasing consensus among the observers that its propagation is motivated by strategic objectives within foreign policy priorities. Even prior to the traumatic events of September 11, 2001, the advocacy for democracy promotion, rooted primarily in the ‘democratic peace’ theory, held a security-oriented connotation. However, in the aftermath of 9/11, the imperative and rationale for democracy promotion underwent a transformation. Many came to view terrorism as an outgrowth of autocratic regimes, positing that disenfranchised and unemployed youth within authoritarian societies, such as Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan sought solace and a sense of justice within the purview of radical ideologies and violent acts. Consequently, the introduction of democracy to these regions was perceived by US President George W. Bush as an essential component of securing international security strategy. Ultimately, proponents of democracy promotion referred it as the “Freedom Agenda” which has defined US foreign policy under the Bush Administration; and was regarded as a pivotal tool for addressing the security concern.

The significance of the Democratic Peace theory in the field of International Relations is multifaceted. It not only withstood a range of criticisms, (Chernoff 2004: 697; Ray 2003: 342-43), but also exerted a discernible influence on the security strategies of Western democracies in the post-Cold War era. The promotion of democracy has held a longstanding and central position within the framework of U.S. foreign policy. Despite enduring criticisms, the United States has steadfastly endorsed the propositions underpinned by the Democratic Peace Thesis. With successive Presidents of the nation remained fervent proponents of the ‘Promotion of Democracy’ doctrine. This commitment to fostering democratic governance dates back to World War I- a period during which the United States actively engaged in the

conflict with the aim of establishing a global environment conducive to democratic principles. Subsequent administrations, including those of Presidents Reagan, George H.W. Bush and Clinton, similarly prioritized democracy promotion as an integral facet of their foreign policy endeavours.

Drawing on the core tenets of the Democratic Peace theory, the Clinton administration embraced the notion of ‘democratic enlargement’ as a foreign policy approach aimed at promoting global peace, while concurrently serving the national interests of the United States (Smith 2009: 11-12). In his keynote speech at the United Nations on September 27, 1993, President Clinton underlined that the overriding purpose of American policy, ‘was to expand and strengthen the world’s community of market-based democracies’ (Cox 2000: 219-20). Subsequently, during the George W. Bush administration, democratic intervention assumed a pivotal role in shaping their National Security Strategies, a move that drew criticism from some quarters (Smith 2009: 15-16).

The Bush Administration adopted a comprehensive perspective, viewing democracy promotion as a multifaceted tool to advance various overarching objectives. This included the dissemination of freedom and the eradication of tyranny, countering terrorism, fostering economic prosperity in impoverished nations, engendering stability and peace in regions beset by strife. Operating on the premise that an increased number of consolidated democracies would contribute to global peace, various coalitions and groups had been proposed under titles such as ‘League’, ‘Concert’, or ‘Community’ of democracies. Notably, during Clinton's tenure, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright initiated the establishment of the esteemed ‘Community of Democracies’ (CD) in Poland in June of 2000. More than one hundred countries all over the world had joined the group as founding members and committed themselves to the goal of promoting and strengthening democracy, where ‘people shall be the basis of authority of government’ (Muni 2009:139-141). Also in January 2005, Dr. Condoleezza Rice before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee listed three top priorities for her administration’s diplomacy and stated:

First, we will bond with the community of democracies in founding the edifice of an international system that is based on shared values and the rule of law. Second, we will strengthen the community of democracies to contest the threats to our mutual security..... And third, we will disseminate freedom and democracy throughout the globe. That is the mission.....” (Rice quoted in CSR Report for Congress, 2007).

In its *2006 National Strategy for Combating Terrorism*, the George W. Bush Administration underscored democracy promotion as a pivotal long-term strategy as a broader campaign against terrorism. Notably, one of the stated objectives for initiating the conflict in Iraq was to facilitate the establishment of democratic governance within the country. In the aftermath of Bush administration, President Barack Obama also expressed support for the endorsement of democracy as an integral component of U.S. foreign policy. While openly championing against the fledgling democracies such as Pakistan and Taiwan, President Obama pursued a measured approach in advancing democracy on a global scale. His re-election to the Presidency for a second term reaffirmed that the democratic agenda would continue to hold a central position within American foreign policy. However, the application of the Democratic Peace theory to justify the Iraq war led to consternation within the Democratic Peace community, as it raised questions about the effectiveness of establishing security and peace based on the rationale of the Democratic Peace theory (Owen 2010: 122; Russett 2008: 551-52).

Upon assuming office in January 2009, President Barack Obama inherited a democracy promotion policy that had been sternly reprimanded because of its broader notion of forcibly changing regimes. Initially, the Obama's foreign policy team took a step back from the issue, adopting a more moderate stance in regard to promotion of freedom internationally. They also took measures to recalibrate USA's reputation in terms of democracy promotion. As part of this shift, President Obama embarked on a broader venture to enhance diplomatic relations even with various non-democratic governments, including those in Iran, Russia, and other regions (Carothers 2012: 5-8).

Simultaneously, the Obama administration began to outline its own strategy for democracy policy, placing emphasis on engaging through multilateral channels and launching various initiatives aimed at reinforcing the broader normative and institutional framework for supporting democracies. The U.S. response to these developments had been somewhat sundry. It combined offering support for democratisation efforts where they appear to be taking place, alongside a willingness to maintain close relationships with seemingly stable authoritarian governments (Carothers 2012: 11-12). This approach reflects a subtle stance towards democracy promotion and engagement with different types of governments. The succeeding Trump administration took a stauncher department and started with heavy curtailment in fund allocation of democracy assistance aid (Foreign Policy: 2017). The administration presented its ambivalence even toward the multilateral initiative like Community of Democracies, of which United States was one of founding member. The then Secretary Tillerson had delayed

deciding on basic elements of the long-planned September 2017 ministerial meeting of the Community (Carothers 2017: 5-6); sending a clear signal of disdain for an uncontentious organisation that was dedicated to bolstering democracy worldwide.

Undoubtedly the notion that democracies do not engage in conflict with each other has profoundly influenced the foreign policies of Western democracies. Therefore, in the aftermath of the Cold War, successive US administrations prioritized the promotion of democracy as a central pillar of their foreign policy strategy. Henceforth, the transition from democratic peace theory to democratic practice had been explicitly acknowledged by the US foreign policy experts and practitioners. While one may not vehemently oppose this foreign policy approach as long as democracies are spreading their regime through peaceful means. But concerns started ascending when the ‘democratic peace’ had been invoked to justify democratisation through warfare (Grimm and Merkel 2008: 781-783). Advocates for forceful democratisation were present both in the Clinton and, notably, the Bush administrations (Smith 2007: 58-60). It's well-documented that the Iraq war was, in part, justified with the intent of effecting regime change and catalysing a democratic ‘domino effect’ in the Middle East. The setbacks of Iraq war and the subsequent sharp critique of such ‘illiberal liberalism’ (Geis and Wagner 2008: 27) had tempered such ambitions. Nevertheless, the concept of ‘democratic intervention’ itself has not been entirely discredited, so long as the actions could be justified, particularly on the principle of ‘humanitarian intervention’.

Seemingly the contemporary epoch of democratic recession is thought the incapability of new democracies to sustain themselves and to mature from electoral processes to liberal outcomes. But essentially, this is partially, the failure of the democracy promotion industry to strengthen democratic values and institutions on the ground which demands significant amount of capacity-building at the local level. Upon being interviewed by Congress at the end of his term as USAID Administrator, Andrew Natsios once opined that the most meaningful democracy promotion efforts are “changes in value system, change in attitudes of seeing world system, and the transfer of technologies and systems which you cannot see” (Natsios R&E: 2010). Others have echoed this and advocated for more realistic and equally creative measure such as cultural, scientific and educational exchanges between citizens in autocracies and those in democracies. Therefore, the most effective mechanism for promoting democracy has been those that exhibits a nuanced understanding of the specific cases at hand, taking into account the unique contextual and inimitable factors.

Given the inherently fluid and multifaceted nature of these environments, influenced by a range of internal and external variables, it is imperative that meaningful democracy promotion efforts would be identified by its adaptability and robustness. This necessitates a commitment to sustained engagement over extended periods, coupled with a substantial degree of modesty and open-mindedness. Even in the face of apparent failure, many have noted that unsuccessful democratic reform movements are, in fact, successful in what Diamond has called “tilling the soil of authoritarian stagnation” (Diamond 1997: 47). Prospectus alterations of the system are often built on the groundwork of former attempts. Therefore, a more unbeaten approach would be quiet, low-key, behind-the-scenes efforts without threatening the national sovereignty and integrity, to increase the capacity of local reformers for mounting their own liberation struggle through non-violent or revolutionary means and subsequently up-scale it.

India’s Foreign Policy Imperatives in Consolidation Democracy at Neighbourhood

The evolution of the nation-state towards a liberal democratic governance has been in varying degrees across the globe. It is particularly noteworthy that this third wave of democratisation extended its influence to non-Western, underdeveloped, post-colonial states. After a period of substantial progress in the latter part of the twentieth century, the once-robust democratic momentum has given way to what can be described as a democratic recession. Despite the prevalence of elections in many countries, citizens worldwide are increasingly expressing their disillusionment and dissatisfaction with the outcomes of these democratic processes. It has become evident that elections and the mere existence of basic civil and political rights are insufficient for genuine transition to and consolidation of democratic political framework. Moreover, there are worrisome signs of erosion of democratic principles, mostly in the this regions, such as Indian sub-continent. Consequently, democracy, which had originated as a predominantly Western concept, encountered distortions and challenges when transplanted into other parts of the world. This highlights the complexity and gradations of democratisation processes, as they were unfolded in different cultural, social, and political contexts, accentuating the need for a more comprehensive and context-sensitive approach to fostering democratic values and institutions globally.

The most recent wave of democratisation, often referred to as the fourth wave, represents a prolonged continuation of the third wave of democratisation that initially occurred between 1945 and 1992. During this third wave, the principles of democracy began to spread across various regions, including Southern Europe, Latin America, Asia, the former Soviet

Union, and certain parts of Africa. The emergence of the fourth wave can be attributed to the incompleteness of the democratisation process during the third wave (Ray 2010: 10). This wave of democratisation primarily swept across what was often referred to as the 'third world', comprising states and populations outside the traditionally defined 'Western' sphere. This 'third world' consisted of a vast and diverse majority of nations and peoples who were historically positioned at the lower rungs of the global hierarchy. Here is a general tendency to assume that absences or insufficiency of democracy- and consequently the need for something called democratisation- are primarily to be found within the developing and post-colonial worlds. Primarily the idea of democracy has been among one of the most enduring contributions of western modernity to human civilization. But the attempts of replicating western version of democracy along with the liberal institutions of western vintage have had stunningly asymmetrical consequences as it proved to be dysfunctional in alien social landscape, such as South Asia. In most of the instances, authoritarian regimes were hailed as the 'vehicles of modernisation' and emerged in their new incarnation as 'elected leaders' in this 'instant democracies' without any prior economic and infrastructural background (Ray 2010: 12-13).

On the other hand, the shifting priorities of western funding agencies has only helped in multiplying the number of elected regimes within the global system; but were of limited help when it was a matter of boosting towards democratic transformation of the entrenched authoritarian social base in much of the non-western world (Desouza, Palshikar and Yadav 2008: 88-89). Essentially, the most decisive fundamentals for incubating or strengthening democratic customs within the sovereign states of the global system was to democratise the system itself and its major institutions that were persuading international relations, otherwise democratic system cannot be sustained (Ray 2010: 4).

However, the question of their applicability to Third World countries, specially, in Indian sub-continent had garnered considerable attention and debate. Primarily here it has been tried to put forward the argument that the process of consolidating democracy in countries of Indian sub-continent should be viewed in relation to nation-state building where the socio-political, economic and historical factors have played a decisive role in shaping the democratic processes and institution building; because they are compelled to pursue both the objectives simultaneously. They did not have the luxury of delving democracy in an already established and consolidated nation-state. The fragile and inefficient democracies in the Indian sub-continent have hindered the evolution of a security framework founded on the well-being of the people, which often give rise to conflicts. Unfortunately, the countries in the region have

struggled to establish a robust democratic structure that can effectively uphold peace and cultivate a culture of trust and confidence. Fostering democratic principles within each country is a prerequisite to address issues of internal discord and mutual distrust, both within and between states. There is an urgent need for a framework of coexistence to be formulated, one that ensures the continued and sustainable practice of democracy. Despite the global surge in democratic movements, the countries in this region faces very real threats and challenges to democratic values and norms. The prevailing trend leans more towards the consolidation of these challenges, rather than the consolidation of democracy itself. Nevertheless, the pathway to overcome the various predicaments lies in a greater commitment to democratic transition.

Nevertheless lately, India has frequently been characterized as one of the ‘rising power’, alongside Brazil, Indonesia, South Africa, and Turkey, who are presently regarded as champions of democracies (Piccone 2011: 140-41). With their steady upsurge of economic and political clout, these countries have acquired progressively influential roles to dictate the course of global affairs and are acutely interested in advancing democracy and upholding human rights worldwide. India’s position as the regional hegemon provides her an opportunity to lead the region towards establishing a more democratic milieu and assume the role of a regional leader with aspirations of wielding significant global influence. But a vigorous dialectic between idealism and pragmatism has always existed in Indian foreign policy and the issue of democracy is just one such area.

As we enter this new century, these emerging powers are likely to convert democracy promotion from being primarily a Western initiative to a global venture. However, it’s worth mentioning that their stance on democracy promotion will be induced and engendered by their position in the international system and their traditional security imperatives, rather than by an entirely idealistic steadfastness to the cause of democracy (Stuenkel 2013: 347-49). In practical terms, India has adopted a remarkably cautious approach concerning the advocacy of democracy. Instead of advocating for a sweeping overhaul of authoritarian regimes through means such as military interventions or the imposition of economic sanctions, India’s approach is rooted in the realm of bilateral development cooperation. So as Democracy, ‘Promotion/ Endorsing Democracy’ also mean and be different things in different cultures and contexts, and not merely a replica of conventional western model.

A state that is solely driven by ideology, without substantial military or economic clout, had the tendency of being marginalized and would be ineffective in shaping global affairs. The

ideological predilections such as disarmament, decolonization and peaceful coexistence, which were espoused by India in the 1950's failed to yield substantial impact because India was devoid of that substantial clout. Conversely, a nation merely possessing significant military and economic clout without an ideological foundation had the propensity of being turned into a cynical actor, without any capacity to influence or make some constructive contribution. Therefore, for a nation to wield meaningful influence in the global arena, the nation must blend its ideological convictions and the pragmatic usage of power. India is now at this crossroad where it has acquired that substantial power, which need to be substantiated by an 'ideal' such as 'furthering and upholding democracy' by means of assisting it. Nations like India is facing exactly the difficulties in articulation of a balanced policy decision with a perfect blend of ideological penchant and pragmatism, in her pursuit of acquiring international prominence.

Thus, a reconciliation of ideology with national interest is of utmost inevitability. As a result, India had primarily focused on developmental assistance efforts for capacity building and simultaneously to secure both strategic and ideological obligations. Hence in this manner India also attempts to strike a balance between her national interests, foreign policy priorities and international requirements. Nevertheless, in the subsequent chapters it has been considered in details and established that India has made efforts to sustain and deepening of democracy in its immediate region. But predominantly, its support has been motivated by a very 'realist' perception of its national interests, rather than a normative consideration or commitment to democracy per se.

India being the largest and dominant country in the region, primarily in geographical terms, is closely connected with each of the country. Therefore, political instability in the pursuit of consolidating democratic transition in either of the country in the region, adversely and inversely effect the peace stability and overall inclusive development of the India. Spill overs of political upheavals have binary effect over the socio-political milieu of India and become the reasons for internal security concerns. Thus, in the succeeding chapter it has been attempted to explore the corelation between democratisation, development and stability at India's eastern and western front, in greater details. Therefore, before delving deeper into the core tenants it would be better to have a broader understanding of the course of democratisation that the countries in the region had undergone. Moreover, being the largest democracy in the world India is expected to play a pivotal role in this whole process of democratic transition. Over the period, India indeed engaged at various levels with pro-democratic forces for the furtherance of the cause both at the bilateral and at global front; but at the same time preferred

to engage in a ‘constructive manner’ with few others, driven by national interest. Therefore, the succeeding chapter intends to provide a brief account of evolution of democratic transition at India’s neighbourhood along with challenges and setback that the countries had to dealt with over the course of democratisation. Along with it an attempt has been made to explore and provide a detailed account of India's involvement and interactions with its neighbouring nations within the framework of democratisation throughout the historical continuum.

CHAPTER- 2

INDIA'S ROLE IN CONSOLIDATION OF DEMOCRATIC VALUES AT HER NEIGHBOURHOOD

In the preceding chapter based on the Democratic Peace Thesis a theoretical framework has been drawn to establish the co-relationship between democratisation and foreign policy. Subsequently, it had been established that 'Promotion of Democracy' might be a viable foreign policy mechanism, if implemented with prudence. Concurrently, a brief account of democratisation in Indian Sub-Continent and its co-relations with India's foreign Policy imperatives has been introduced. But before probing further it is essential to have an in-depth understanding of the geo-political dynamics that had shaped the course of democratisation in India's neighbourhood.

The process of democratic consolidation by means of the establishing stable and effective democratic institutions has been hindered by a range of complex challenges. Primarily this particular chapter is broadly divided into two distinct sections. The first part provides an account of the unique course of transition and the challenges that the countries had experienced while consolidating their democratic institutions emanating from socio-economic disparities, weak governance structures and cultural complexities. Subsequently the second section of the chapter delves into exploring the trajectories of India's foreign policy stance in relation to the question of consolidating democracy and rather not promoting democratisation at the regional level. Thus, this section is primarily divided into three distinct sub-parts. The first part of the chapter deals with the bilateral efforts and the role that India played for peaceful resolution of recurrent issues and consolidation of democratic ideals at the regional level, from its initial days of inception, in the pretext of Cold-war period. The second sub-section deals with India's paradigm shift in policy in favour of endorsing democracy, at the global as well as at the regional level, in the twenty first century; and the last sub-part of the chapter largely focuses on the activeness or inactiveness of India, in the context of fourth wave of democracy to enhance democratic transition in its neighbourhood. In conjunction the study offers the rationale that guided and dominated the foreign policy dynamics of India.

The fourth wave of democracy represents a multifaceted development that has had a profound impact on socio-political dynamics and equivocally, shaped the discourse on governance, human rights and political participation. This wave of democratization has spurred international support and assistance for democratic development in third world nations.

International organizations, donor countries and civil society groups have played vital roles in promoting democratic values. Third world nations often face unique obstacles such as poverty, weak institutions, ethnic or religious divisions and historical legacies of authoritarianism. However, attempts to replicate the Western model of democracy, along with its liberal institutions, have yielded strikingly asymmetrical consequences. The transplanting of Western-style democracy has proven to be challenging and dysfunctional in unfamiliar social landscapes that often failed to take local contexts and societal complexities in account (Ray 2010: 4).

Brief Overview of the Course of Democratic Transition in Indian Sub-Continent

Historically, South Asia as a geographical space encompassing nine countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Myanmar. Colonial legacies, such as the partition of British India in 1947, have had profound impacts on the political boundaries and as well as on the conflicts in the region. A region that is struggling to imbue stability also has a disappointing experience of democracy. Most of the countries acquiring independence in between 1947-1950 started their journey as being a liberal democratic country but apart from India, all relegated into a non-democratic system. Specially Pakistan and Myanmar. Out of their 75 years of independence, both the nations were contended with extended periods of military rule. Pakistan had nearly five decades, while Myanmar experienced an even lengthier period of around 60 years under military governance. Thus, so far, this region is largely described as a non-democratic region, nesting India- “the largest democracy and the mother of all democracies” (Narendra Modi).

With the advent of the new millennium, there has been a resurgence in the efforts to consolidate democracy in this historically determined South Asian space. Today, democratisation has become an imperative for individual states and holds significance for the region as a whole. The region has witnessed the impact of the information revolution, which has heightened awareness on principles like human rights and fostered the growth of politically awakened middle class (Singh and Kukreja 2018: 51-52). But unfortunately, the democratic backsliding in recent years has shifted the political tides in the opposite direction, leading to the resurgence of illiberalism, and in most of the cases, intensifying authoritarianism. Therefore, there is serious concerns expressed about the global democratic recession occurring alongside the resurgence of global authoritarianism.

Politically, this space is more of a complex region with diverse political systems. The region consists of both democratic and non-democratic, semi-democratic countries, each with

its own unique political dynamics. Although primarily Pakistan, Myanmar and Sri Lanka inherited fairly operative state apparatuses, they are facing challenges. Countries like, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Myanmar, in few preceding years, even if symbolically, for a brief period of time and at regular intervals have adopted the democratic form of governance. Contrary, India, the world's largest democracy and plays a significant role in shaping the political discourse of the region. Afghanistan and Myanmar both enmeshed in protracted ethnic conflicts; Sri Lanka and Nepal continuously experimenting with democratic process; Bangladesh, Pakistan and Myanmar have been afflicted by recurrent military interference and executive overreach; and Pakistan is the one that have faced the consistent erosion of checks and balances in its governance system. Formally, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka are all democratic nations, albeit with varying degrees of stability and challenges. Primarily each of the states in the region faces five critical areas of political development: nation building, state building, participation, economy building and distribution of wealth and social benefits (Chatterjee and Maitra 2012: 161-62). Thus, most of the countries have experienced backsliding on democratic norms and practices, leading to concerns about the sustainability of democratic institutions.

Challenges to Democratic Consolidation in the Indian Sub-Continent

From the above discussion it can be comprehended that 'democracy' in itself is a contentious term and has been so far and would for quiet a sometime. Historically, most countries "have not experienced a linear progression towards democracy; more often than not, theirs have been a story of forward movement followed by setbacks and regressions" (Desouza, Palshikar and Yadav 2008: 85). In the wake of gaining independence, the majority of nations in the region opted for representative democracy as their preferred system of governance. But the experience on their journey towards democratisation had been manifested by a blend of successes and impediments. It is commonly perceived that while India managed to thrive as a democracy, other parts of the region had been less fortunate in that regard. Pakistan, Bangladesh and Myanmar had grappled with recurring military takeovers. Pakistan, which included East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) and West Pakistan (now Pakistan), initially adopted a federal parliamentary system but later shifted to military rule and autocracy. Pakistan experienced multiple military coups, leading to prolonged periods of military rule, which had a detrimental impact on democratic consolidation (Basu 2012: 178). Nepal, too, had navigated through precarious path; and it is much better to talk less about the democratic experiment of Myanmar

(Singh and Kukreja 2016: 76-77). Despite the challenges, democratic ideals remained resilient in the region, with periodic revivals of democracy after periods of military rule.

Though this research paper has no intention to establish any statistical correlation between the two, but a close relationship is too overt to deny. Yet frequent qualms and reservations have surfaced regarding the nature and understanding of democracy. The predominant view holds that democracy by far continues to be the aspiration and the most preferred political arrangement of the people in the region. Therefore, people in the subcontinent have repeatedly struggled and partially attained formal democracy but failed to sustain the transition from a 'formal' to 'substantive' democracy (Desouza, Palshikar and Yadav 2008: 88-89). More than a seven decades of election-centric democracy in the region have illustrated the fact that merely casting votes does not suffice for the consolidation and sustenance of democracy. The ever-widening gap between legitimately elected governments at various parts and their actual performance have reared disillusionment among large segments of the electorate (Oberst et. al 2019: 489-90). The further exploration of the course political narrative of countries in the region reveals that the paraphernalia of democracy have provided an avenue for unrepresentative elites to seize power and further their own interests. Thus, like scores of other developing regions, the Indian sub-continent also remained susceptible to the fallacy of electoralism, which has allowed the political elite to borrow cunningly some of the features of democracy in order to substantively avoid it (Schedler 2002: 103). However, owing to the varied indigenous understanding of democracy, this region has experienced a unique prototype of democratisation in a multi-dimensional socio-economic backdrop, which might be a lesson for the democratic west who are grappling with the challenges of multi-culturalism. Thus, a large section of scholars firmly believes that the "idea of democracy has transformed South Asia as much as South Asia has transformed the idea of democracy itself" (CSDC, SDSA Team 2008: 61).

The democratisation journey of the countries in the region has been marked by several common challenges that have hindered the consolidation and sustainability of democratic practices. These challenges are often interconnected and have contributed to the complexities. The common challenges faced by countries during their transition have been, political instability, whereby the nations have grappled with frequent changes in leadership, weak institutions, and coalition politics; and has often led to short-lived governments, making it challenging to implement long-term policy initiatives and foster democratic stability. Furthermore, Military interventions have been a recurring challenge. Periodic coups and the

direct or indirect influence of the military on political decision-making have undermined democratic processes and hindered the consolidation of civilian rule. The existing weak state institutions, including the judiciary, civil service and law enforcement agencies, have posed significant challenges to the rule of law and effective governance. The lack of institutional capacity and independence has hindered the accountability of political leaders and public officials. Besides, the deep political polarization and fragmented party systems have often led to confrontational politics and hindered consensus-building. The absence of a strong and united opposition has limited the checks and balances on the ruling party's power.

Additionally, the diverse ethnic, linguistic, and religious divisions have often led to identity-based politics and tensions in the region. Communal violence and discrimination have challenged the establishment of inclusive and pluralistic democratic systems. Also, rampant corruption and nepotism within political and bureaucratic circles have eroded the public trust on democratic institutions. The lack of transparency and accountability in governance has hindered equitable development and undermined the credibility of democratic processes. Furthermore, the widespread socioeconomic disparities have hindered the equitable distribution of resources and opportunities. Poverty, illiteracy, and lack of access to basic services have limited the meaningful participation of marginalized communities in the democratic process. While the media plays a vital role in democracies, South Asian countries have faced challenges related to media freedom and manipulation. Press censorship, biased reporting, and control of media outlets by political interests have undermined the dissemination of unbiased information and hindered public discourse. Apart from these innate factors the nations also have to face external influences, including geopolitical interests, international aid, and pressure from foreign governments. Such influences have impacted the domestic politics, as well as consolidation processes, leading to both positive and negative outcomes.

The contemporary notions of democracy and idea of welfare liberalism have been essentially introduced and implanted in the political psyche of the region by external sources, mainly the colonial master. Primarily the problem lies in the structure which they had inherited and through which democratisation get concretised. Every aspect of democracy in the region is an epitome of incoherence between the theory and practise of democracy. Thus, a wide range of form of government varies between formal ideology and political orientation; between constitutional design and political practise; and between theoretical expectations and real-life outcomes (Chatterjee and Maitra 2012: 160). Among the nations in the region, India is the only country that stands out for its sustained democratic records and its remarkable ability to

uphold democratic principles. This can be attributed to India's unique position as the core of the British imperial order in the region bestowed upon it the advantage of inheriting an established state apparatus. This institutional continuity provided a solid foundation for democratic governance, enabling India to weather away challenges posed by its diverse populace, low literacy rates and widespread poverty. Whereas Pakistan and Bangladesh, born out of successive partitions, grappled with recurring military authoritarianism had to face the challenges of rebuilding democratic state apparatus from the scratch (Basu 2012: 178-79).

But there is a common cord between all the states of the region i.e., the social elites dominate and decides the political rule and character of the state (Chatterjee and Maitra 2012: 174). The predominance of a select group of elites, largely comprising landlords, bureaucrats, prominent industrialists, plantation owners, and military officials, mirrors the concentrated nature of political power. Owing to institutional vulnerabilities, these influential figures flourish, exerting control over state resources and shaping policy decisions. Therefore, except India, other nation states in the region, have faced difficulties in sustaining democratic practices. Whatsoever course of democratic consolidation the countries might have taken, but its elitist orientation would persist. Though the bias for democratic elitism does not automatically qualify the peace potential of democratisation, still the theory of democratic peace fortunately suggests that the democratic political elites are less conflict prone than their counter parts towards other democratic elites.

The dynamics of civil-military relations during the transition to democracy play a pivotal role in determining the efficacy of democratic governance. However, it is essential to acknowledge that the foundational principles governing this transformation are shaped and dictated by military leaders who hold positions of power and authority. As a result, they retain the ability to influence the outcomes of the democratic transition. The primary challenge for a transitioning democratic government lies in establishing functional institutions that exercise civilian control over the military (Banerjee 2022: 14-19). This challenge is particularly pronounced in countries with a history of entrenched militarism, where the military can secure political and institutional advantages for itself during the democratization process.

In the context of democratic transition, a recurring pattern emerges where authoritarian leaders strategically introduce limited liberalization measures during transitions to ostensibly establish an alternative perception of inclusiveness, all the while aiming to preserve their

autocratic grip on power. Simultaneously, newly appointed leaders in the region often exploit their positions of authority to marginalize opposing voices and consolidating their own influence (Haggard and Kaufman 2016: 124-125). There is a widely held belief that economic development plays a pivotal role in the establishment of a robust democratic system. Conversely, it is also believed that democracies are more likely to face challenges in countries with lower economic development (Haggard and Kaufman 2016: 131). The region's diverse economic landscape, ranging from burgeoning powerhouses to economically challenged nations. Paradoxically, it is also acknowledged that democracies face greater hurdles in countries with lower levels of economic development, highlighting the complex interplay between political and economic factors in South Asian democratisation efforts.

The democratic trajectory of the states leads us to a crucial realization that genuine democracy encompasses not only a political system but also a collective commitment of the civilian authority to the well-being of the populace, and a persistent effort to uphold this principle. It emphasizes that democracies necessitate a shift in mindset of the citizens. They must actively engage with democratic principles rather than relying solely on legal frameworks and regulations. The prevalent absence of a robust democratic governance in South Asia give scope for questioning the true representativeness of the institutions. In numerous national or state legislatures, as well as local representative bodies, there is discernible evidence of a dominance by individuals of affluence and influence who are detached from the masses, rendering the democracies highly exclusive in nature.

Though the journey towards democratic consolidation has been marked by significant progress and persistent challenges; nevertheless, the prospects for democratisation in the region is more than ever before. Democratic forces in the past couple of years have almost unexpectedly succeeded in their struggle and simultaneously the pressure for political legitimization of regime performance is progressively intensifying in the sub-continent. Citizens, galvanized by a renewed sense of purpose, have actively engaged in advocating for democratic reforms (Oberst et. Al 2019: 491). The advent of the information revolution has fundamentally altered the socio-political landscape of South Asia. The proliferation of information and communication technologies has democratised access to knowledge and information, empowering citizens to engage more actively in political discourse. This newfound awareness has led to an evolving perception of human rights and an increased demand for political accountability. The steady expansion of the middle-class population has been instrumental in shaping the contours of democratic discourse. Furthermore, the burgeoning profile of civil

society organizations has provided a platform for citizen engagement, advocacy, and oversight, contributing to the democratisation process. The confluence of these aspects and shifts in societal and political dynamics are expected to sustain and amplify the impetus for democratisation; and hold promise for the future of democracy in the region.

Steady regime transitions in different parts of the world agree that the democratisation of a country depends not only on electing a new government through free, fair, and competitive elections, but also on a comprehensive political refurbishment. The new political leaders must enjoy sufficient and truly effective power to govern. The transformation of authoritarian civil-military relations is, therefore, a key element of any regime transitioning from authoritarian to democratic rule. However, since the prerequisites of this transition are set by the military rulers from a position of strength, they often continue to exercise substantial control over the process and outcomes, and the armed forces retain their acquired entitlements. A successful democratic transition requires establishing functional institutions of civilian control over the military, which is especially difficult in countries with a strong legacy of militarism and where the military is able to secure political and institutional privileges. Through thoughtful and inclusive efforts, these nations can overcome these obstacles and pave the way for stronger democratic governance, ultimately benefiting their citizens and contributing to regional stability and prosperity.

India's Foreign Policy Orientation Over the Period of Time

In the 21st century, amidst the context of a multi-polar world order, the concept of 'Democracy' has gained significant prominence in the realm of international politics. As it has been discussed in the earlier section that with the onset of the new millennium, fourth wave of democracy has swept over the countries of the region of South Asia at varied degree. The region has been characterized as a 'zone of backsliding democracy' where the process of transition has been incomplete and impeded frequently by various internal factors, which are innate in the socio-political landscape of the countries in the region. There is dearth of distinctive factors that can reinforce and consolidate democratic transitional process though it is cherished and desirable. Overviewing the course of democratic history of the region, reveals that time and again, external actors like international organization, supranational association and regional powers have played a decisive role in crafting and bolstering the roadmap towards democratization. But obviously it has failed to reap desired results. On the contrary, India's repute as the largest and functional democracy has been well acknowledged worldwide. Its commitment of

upholding the principles of democracy and fostering a vibrant and inclusive political system has allowed peaceful transitions of power through free and fair elections. Despite varied challenges and complexities, India's ability to maintain a functioning democracy amid diverse cultural, linguistic, religious and socio-economic backgrounds serves as a testament to its success as a democratic nation. At the same time, given its size in terms of territory and population, its geographic location, and its economic and military clout, India can unequivocally be identified as the 'regional hegemon' within this space (Destradi 2010: 5-6). All this has somehow bestowed the credential as well as the responsibility on India, to facilitate democratic consolidation in the countries of the region, which is somewhat problematic.

Indian Sub-Continent is a region where exists distinct security concerns unique to each nation intertwined with profound macroeconomic disparities. Consequently, an approach of 'security and peace through arms' is profoundly practiced in an atmosphere, which is characterised by mutual suspicion and distrust. It is evident that India does not enjoy particularly a warm relationship with either of her neighbouring countries. The smaller neighbours, with their psychological complexities and economic weakness, perceived demographically huge, militarily and economically powerful India as a threat to their sovereignty and existence (Singh 2016: 61). On the contrary, Indian foreign policy have been explicitly interlinked with Kautilya and Arthashastra. It has been argued that Indian neighbourhood policy has been derived and formulated on the basis of Kautilya (371-283 BC), Arthashastra's 'Raja-mandala Theory'. According to this theory, foreign policy is based on the principle that 'Peace is preferable to war' (Sinha 2017: 129). Thus, foreign policy devices have to be perceived as a doctrine of ironing out of differences with the neighbouring countries. Therefore, India's political approach essentially had been tolerant to the undemocratic regimes in the interest of maintaining friendly relations with its neighbours,

Even though historically, democracy did not always manifest as a proactive or central tenet of India's neighbourhood policy. Nevertheless, even prior to gaining independence, India's resolute commitment to the principles of democracy and secularism was unequivocal. Jawaharlal Nehru, a visionary in international affairs and the architect of Indian foreign policy, mused "democracy is good". Although Nehru was a great democrat, he retained a "glass-half-empty" view of democracy as a political system and in regard to practicing foreign policy formulations; his democratic moorings were tempered by various other considerations (Muni 2009: 116-117). It is true that in its neighbourhood policy, though establishing democracy did not appear as the principal plank of policy, India's commitment to the ideals of democracy and

secularism was loud and clear (Muni 2009: 18-19). Despite its own social and economic challenges, as an act of expressing solidarity, India shared its scarce resources and proficiency to assist the fellow neighbouring countries by means of developmental assistance and knowledge sharing. At the initial stage, India's development assistance was given mainly to countries, such as Nepal, Burma, and Afghanistan, in grants and multiyear loans and technical assistance. For example, India extended a credit line of around 200 million rupees to Myanmar and 100 million rupees to Nepal" in the 1950s (Sinha, 2017: 131). Between 1947 and 1964, apart from bilateral development assistance, India offered assistance through the multilateral framework such as Colombo Plan for Economic Development and Cooperation in South and Southeast Asia launched in 1950 and Special Commonwealth Assistance for Africa Program (SCAAP) begun in 1960. It also started contributing to the United Nations Development Program (Tuhin, 2016: 30). Time and again there have been political upheavals and people's struggle in India's vicinity for the establishment of democracy. Under such circumstances, it responded by military intervention on humanitarian ground, which has resulted in establishing and consolidating democratic forces and institutions by giving birth to a new democratic nation at its backyard. But such responses had been largely for the sake of stability and security, rather than driven by any ideological values.

The theory of "democratic peace" would argue that it is in the interest of a democratic country like India to have democracies around it since this reduces the likelihood of war. Theorist like Bader, Grävingholt, and Kästner (2010) present an alternative perspective that merges domestic political considerations with foreign policy behaviour within a rational choice framework. According to their argument, regional powers are more comfortable to support corresponding political systems in neighbourhood. In this view, democracies have a preference for fostering democratization in neighbouring countries because the transboundary public goods generated by democratic neighbours would reap mutual benefit and will optimize regional development and stability. Based on both these reasoning, it could be inferred that for a regional power like India, the 'promotion of democracy' can be seen as an ideal means of exerting hegemonic influence to foster a more predictable and secure neighbourhood. However, a brief look at India's foreign policy consequences persuades us to immediately disconfirm this hypothesis for the Indian case.

Western foreign policy has long prioritized the promotion of democracy as tool of interaction with other so called non-democratic nations. President Bush's 2002 National Security Strategy took an uncompromising line, declaring "freedom, democracy, and free

enterprise the single sustainable model for national success, and making their promotion as core to American foreign policy” (Department of State 2002: 3-4). Contrary, India, having been widely recognized as the world’s largest democracy, conventionally did not employ its foreign policy mechanism to consolidate democracy in other nations. Instead, it played a comparatively marginal role in this regard. Despite an ardent believer of democratic principles over any other alternative political systems, India did not align itself with the Western democracies in upgrading the ideological pretext of freedom and democracy for the furtherance of their strategic interests during the Cold War era. Scholars and foreign policy practitioners argue that, in the present political context in most of the countries of the region, democracy cannot be imposed from outside and are not conducive for promoting western prototype democracies. While India refrained from becoming a part of the ‘free world’ coalition that exploited the rhetoric of freedom and democracy for geopolitical gains. Number of analysts, suggests that despite India’s growing economic, political and military clout, New Delhi had been reluctant to take on greater responsibility for providing global public goods and upholding liberal international order of democracy (Destradi 2012: 290; Mehta 2008: 107-109). Nonetheless, a closer examination of India's foreign policy reveals that it has adopted a nuanced approach with a heightened sensitivity towards democracy and related issues.

Primarily India’s role in democracy promotion has largely been stirred by strategic and security interest and has been limited in its neighbourhood. On the pretext of an improved relations with United States, India took few measures to consolidate and rather not promote democracy on the global arena. Historically, we have witnessed that, policy makers in India consciously pursued a defensive policy in the matter of promotion of democracy (Chacko 2012:190-106; Hall 2017: 126-127). By now it is evident that India would continue to do so. Without making democracy promotion an avowed element of its foreign policy, India is rather engaged in bilateral development cooperation, and thereby will continue to display a strong commitment to democratic ideals. Therefore, as Sunil Khilnani claimed, the future of western political liberal thoughts will be decided in India. So, on the level of principle and ideology, there is a potential for India to become a beacon for democracy, not only through the power of its example but also because of the values that it espouses (Mehta 2011: 101).

With advent of the new millennium both China and India emerged as political heavyweights, wielding momentous influence not only in their region but also on the international stage; and strategic interests were being pursued as ruthlessly as ever, but the articulation and legitimisation of these interests are done through normative idiom and

discourse (Muni 2009: 125). This could be well explained by Manmohan Singh's twin observations, made in 2005, that "[l]iberal democracy is the natural order of political organisation in today's world" and that India has "an obligation to history and mankind to show that pluralism works" (Mohan 2007: 99). This shift suggests an evolving perspective and a growing willingness to engage with democratic principles on the global stage. The then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, at the launching of the UN Democracy Fund made the following remark:

"Democracy is a powerful ideal, but its successful exercise requires strong and enduring institutions, laws and procedures and the development of a parliamentary culture..... The culture of democracy or the democratic temperament must be imbibed within the citizens from a very early age..... We welcome the launch of the UN Democracy Fund, because it gives us an instrument to build the institutional and human capabilities that are necessary to underpin the successful exercise of democracy." (Launch of UN democracy Fund, PMO Website: 2005)

This priority gained institutional backing, through the establishment of the 'Community of Democracies' in June 2000, of which India became a founding member. India, recognizing this trend, had actively engaged in multilateral forums dedicated in advancing democratic principles. Shared democratic values between India and the United States have fostered an environment where both countries were steadfast in exploring new avenues to endorse democracy. Consequently, this perspective became evident in India's subsequent policy pronouncements, where New Delhi reiterated her commitment of strengthening democratic principles as a means of fostering stability and countering threats from terrorism to international as well as national security. For the first time it was indicated in the Indo-US vision Statement of March 2000, where it was issued that:

We will share our experience in nurturing and strengthening democratic institutions world over and fighting the challenge to democratic order from forces such as terrorism (Indo-US Joint Statement: 2000).

The events following the tragic 9/11 attacks brought significant attention to the role of democracy as a tool in combating terrorism. One such initiative, was establishing the Democracy Caucus (2004) at the United Nations, which sought to represent the goals of the Community of Democracies (CoD) within the framework of the UN (Wagner 2009: 23). This caucus was intended to serve as a platform for advocating democratic principles and values at the international level; fostering cooperation among democratic nations; and addressing global challenges collectively.

India, despite being an enthusiastic participant in the Community of Democracies, preferred to adopt a cautious approach concerning its leadership position within the Democracy Caucus. While engaging actively with the CoD, India tactfully declined the opportunity to lead the Caucus at the United Nations. The decision showcased India's strategic stance, where it aimed to retain its ability to exercise foreign policy autonomy, especially when its interests diverged from those of Western nations. Therefore, it becomes clear that, in spite of her occasional lip services, India was not willing to follow USA or other western democracies in their denunciation of human rights violations in third countries (Wagner 2009: 23).

The pursuit of promoting democracy in foreign policy transcends the political divide between the UPA, NDA and the preceding governments. India's stunt in this regard was expressed by the initiative taken over by launching a joint endeavour named as the Global Democracy Initiative (GDI) on July 2005 in collaboration with USA, which aimed at endorsing democracy and development. Echoing the NDA Governments thrust, UPA also underlined the implication of this policy move with respect to fighting terrorism. Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led coalition took India into the CD and helped to form the IBSA forum — a self-conscious developing democracies binding together — with Brazil and South Africa (Chitalkar & Malone 2011: 84). But it was Manmohan Singh's Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government, which took India's global engagement at the zenith (Mazumdar and Statz 2015: 83).

Both India and the U.S. acknowledged their responsibility to the global community in strengthening the values of freedom, pluralism, and the rule of law. India along with the U.S. expressed the “obligation to the global community to strengthen values, ideals, and practices of freedom, pluralism, and rule of law” and agreed to “develop and support (MEA 2005). As part of the GDI, they committed to support countries seeking assistance in building credible and effective democracies through institutions and resources. Collaboration with other civil society organizations was also included in the initiative, which involved conducting training courses to enhance democratic institutions and human resources in other nations. By the turn of the century, India has made technical cooperation and capacity-building as a major policy focus for development and providing assistance towards enhancing democratic transition. In line with this initiative, the Indian government introduced its own educational and training programs and initiated the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) as a capacity-building program. The government of India has made a considerable increase in the budget allocation from Rs. 1.33 crores in 2015–2016 to Rs. 47.97 crores in 2018–2019 (Choedon 2021:

170-171). Presently, the ITEC's focus is on providing assistance in organizing elections, training the personals, developing an independent judiciary, promoting a free press, and recognizing human rights.

India's involvement in the fund's advisory board is a noteworthy indication of its commitment to promoting democracy on the global stage. The United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF) predominantly channels its resources to support local civil society organizations during both the transition and consolidation phases of democratization (United Nations Democracy Fund 2017). This arrangement allows India to assert that its funding of NGOs does not involve any connotation of interference in the internal affairs of recipient states (Jeffrey 2015: 347-50). This alignment of India with UNDEF's objectives resonates harmoniously with India's foreign policy principles and its long-standing multilateral traditions of providing assistance upon request (Wagner 2009: 25).

The majority of these projects were geared towards enhancing grassroots participation and processes, with a specific focus on empowering women, youth and marginalized communities. The primary focus had been to educate and raise awareness about political rights and institutions. When India extends aid under such mechanism the emphasis shifts away from imparting democratic norms to target elites, and instead centres on education and technical assistance which primarily aims at capacity building and development of broader framework where democratic values and norms are cherished indirectly and unwaveringly. This support is sometimes provided through UN frameworks and at other times through bilateral agreements, which delineate the nature of the services to be rendered. This discernible stance reinforces India's commitment of advancing democratic values peacefully without resorting to intrusive or militaristic means (Cartwright 2009: 420).

In pursuit of these goals, India has adopted a two-pronged strategy. Firstly, it supports multilateral endeavours through channels such as the UNDEF (United Nations Democracy Fund). India primarily offers technical aid to both established and transitioning democracies within well-structured frameworks. This assistance leverages the considerable expertise of institutions like the ECI (Election Commission of India), notably focusing on technical aspects related to democratic processes. The India International Institute of Democracy and Election Management (IIDEM), established in 2011 with backing from the UN and the Commonwealth of Nations, exemplifies this approach (Cheodon 2015: 166-169). It offers training to electoral officials on various aspects, including voter education and registration, specific voting

technologies, and diverse electoral systems. Till date, IIDEM has played a pivotal role in training officials from approximately fifty countries, predominantly in sub-Saharan Africa and its neighbourhood. Numerous agreements had been brokered between the Electoral Commission of India (ECI) and foreign counterparts fall into this category, encompassing assistance ranging from guidance on election organization and monitoring of electronic voting machines (Cheodon 2015: 169-170). When India extends aid under this mechanism, the emphasis shifts towards capacity building and developing a framework where democratic values are cherished indirectly.

With the advent of the new government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India's outlook in regard to foreign policy stunt globally, apparently remained unaltered. The rhetorical emphasis and commitment on upholding and endorsing the principles of democracy as a governing principle has endured under the government of PM Narendra Modi (India Today 2022). This was accented in the PM Modi's speech in the 76th UNGA speech where he had given emphasis on overall transformation by following the mantra of "Reform-Perform-Transform" (India Today 2020). He explicitly reaffirmed India's commitments and great efforts to bring about transformation in the lives of millions of its citizens as well as of the people of world who are striving for consolidation of democracy (UNGA 2021).

His foreign policy has been primarily a mix of nationalist-led geopolitics where geo-economics took the centre stage and the objective of strengthening democracy and protecting human rights became the issue of 'second in order'. Though there had been unequivocal assertion in favour of furthering the strides of democracy, there were indications that India's approach towards endorsing democracy had undergone a shift under PM Modi's leadership. While the Prime Minister publicly extols and emphasized the virtues of democracy as the best possible governance model (Prime Minister's Office 2017), there have been notable alteration in the allocation of funds for democracy assistance. An intriguing characteristic worth mentioning is the significant decrease in financial contributions to the UN Democracy Fund (UNDEF). Despite maintaining its position as the second highest donor, New Delhi's financial support has experienced a substantial decline over the course of the last decade. The contributions were a mere US\$200,000 in 2014, US\$100,000 in 2015, dropped to \$50,000 in 2016, and rose to US\$150,000 in 2022-23. Significantly, there has been a resurgence in support for certain multilateral initiatives, particularly in 2021-2022, indicative of India's evolving stance towards multilateral endeavours. Concurrently, the India's Overseas Development Aid has experienced consistent growth, estimated to have risen from approximately US\$1.2 billion

in 2014-15 to about US\$1.4 billion in 2016-17 (Mullen and Arora 2016: 2). By 2019-2020, this figure surged to US\$1.32 billion and as per the latest available figure, according India's budget in 2021-22 it stood upon US\$2.3 billion (NDTV Feb, 2021). A major quantum of this aid is primarily directed towards developmental projects and training purpose of neighbouring countries in South Asia (MEA, GoI 2021).

When these figures are compared then it became evident that despite of increased engagement and political rhetoric, India's investment in development far outweighs and substantially surpasses its commitment to democratic principles and institutions. Within the realm of India's bilateral assistance projects, democracy support endeavours, such as aiding in the organization and supervision of elections, hold only a marginal role. In contrast, developmental aid assumes greater prominence than support for 'democratic norms and institutions.' Simultaneously, there has been a noticeable rise in targeted, bilateral financial assistance and economic development initiatives facilitated through the Indian Export-Import (EXIM) Bank (Younus 2020: 7).

Though 'Democracy' had one stepped down the ladder in priority in Modi's foreign policy, it still offered opportunities as Modi's nationalist perspective on geopolitics and national power has meshed well with democracy promotion. India's long-standing democratic credentials makes it an inspiration for the countries that are striving to be a democracy with a multi-ethnic diverse population. After assuming office Modi said in his first speech , "the world should understand the strength of India's democracy" (PM's comment on Siasat Daily: 2014). Following his predecessor, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, PM Narendra Modi also made a departure from the tradition of nonalignment and non-intervention and aligned with USA to encourage democratic norms and institutions. Thus, such comments by the PM ascertain the fact that India is largely prepared to manifest itself as one of the global leaders in endorsing democracy. Secondly, it demonstrates that India continues to envision itself in a role of a "positive example" or "sought-after-teacher" and not proselytizer. While the prime minister personally tried to carve a niche for BRICS through geoeconomics, similarly he also tried to refurbish democracy club IBSA—India, Brazil, and South Africa—to get its due. This shows his agility to uphold the cause of democracy but in a different manner.

PM Modi showcased India as an indispensable actor in fostering democratic cooperation, particularly in regions beyond the Western world. In the Asian and African spheres, amidst the backdrop of China's escalating autocratic influence where various states

are engaged in experiments with different governance models, the future of democracy would be decided by the ‘Indian way of Democracy’ (Modi, The Hindu 2023). He utilized the Global Summit as a platform to showcase India’s values-driven foreign policy and its commitment to supporting democracy in developing nations. In line with his references to democracy in previous international engagements, Modi’s addressed the ‘Summit for Democracy’ to present Indian democracy as an exceptional and exemplary model that has not only survived but is thriving despite multiple challenges. India has trained thousands of officials from Africa and Asia on electoral and parliamentary systems (The Wire 2023). Its South-South development cooperation model focuses on good governance and civil society participation. The summit had been the platform to showcase its international democracy assistance efforts, which remain widely unknown in the West. In the most recent times in 2021, both United States and India, renewed their profound commitment in disseminating equitable opportunities among their people based on the shared principles of liberty, democracy, human rights, inclusivity, pluralism. In unequivocal terms, they have reiterated that democracy, freedom, and the rule of law stand as common foundations for anchoring global tranquillity and sustainable progress, so it needs to be restored. (Joint Statement Briefing of Prime Modi’s Visit in USA 2023). By doing so, he sought to reinforce and consolidate his vision of Indian democracy, which is a unique and autonomous model.

Other than its normative importance, democracy as an ideal offered PM Modi, the opportunity to consolidate and expand India’s power in the rapidly changing geopolitics of the Asia-Pacific. The rapid ascendancy of China and the inherent uncertainties surrounding its ambitions have sparked significant impetus among major powers in the region to forge a democratic counterweight against the authoritarian influence. Pro-democracy initiatives hold the promise of instigating realignment in Asia, exemplified by endeavours like the quadrilateral initiative involving the major democracies of Australia, India, Japan, and the United States, as well as a potential “axis of democracy” between Japan and India (The Economist 2014). Such arrangements offer substantial strategic advantages to India in its efforts to counter the growing influence of China in the region. In recent years, India has undergone a re-evaluation of its commitment to democracy promotion, albeit diverging from the anticipated approach of the international community. Rather than adopting aggressive postures to ensure the proliferation of democratic regimes, India has demonstrated a steadfast dedication to nurturing democratic values through non-intrusive means. This measured and cautious response aligns with the broader contours of India's foreign policy framework. All these indicators hold significant

relevance in assessing the present Indian government's perception of democracy assistance as a means to advance its foreign policy objectives. Thus, it could be conferred that Modi's stunt in respect to democracy had been more of an assistance in nature rather than endorsing or promoting it. They might imply the possibility of a new episodic fluctuation, characterized by a rhetorical emphasis on India's democratic credentials more pronounced than in the past, while concurrently downplaying the role of democracy assistance to a greater extent than in previous phases.

India's Engagement at its Neighbourhood in their Quest for Consolidating Democracy

Against the backdrop of 9/11, democracy and human rights have attained a normative and strategic clout, which did not exist even before a decade. In the context of incomplete democratization even after the fourth wave the South Asian states- Nepal, Bhutan, the Maldives, Bangladesh and Pakistan- all are struggling with the idea of democracy at a time (Cartwright 2009: 406). One king has given up his power on his own in Bhutan — but another had it snatched from him in Nepal. An army-backed government has promised to bring democracy in Bangladesh, but another was accused of crushing it in Pakistan (Hindustan Times: 2007). As political analyst S. D. Muni was interviewed by Mishra, he explained that, “There are different sort of evolutions taking place, but underneath there is a common thread i.e. the search for democracy; people in the region have become far more aware and aspirational. The states are realising this” (Muni, interview given to Mishra, Hindustan Times: 2007).

These developments have left their mark on Indian foreign affairs, where the core objectives of Indian foreign policy involved- ensuring regional peace, stability, and development; promoting economic integration within the region; and safeguarding strategic and economic interests. In the contemporary era of globalization and interdependence, the concept of national security has undergone a shift, transitioning from a predominantly geopolitical and geostrategic focus to a greater emphasis on geo-economics. Following the process of economic liberalization, the issue of democracy promotion within the regional context has gained significant prominence in public debates. Consequently, the ongoing political transformations in global affairs, particularly in South Asia, have presented India with both challenges and opportunities to assert itself as an emerging power.

India's bilateral aid to countries in its immediate neighbourhood reveals a combination of direct and indirect democracy promotion strategies. In Afghanistan, Bhutan, and Nepal,

India has actively assisted in the establishment and strengthening of democratic institutions. Moreover, India has played a pivotal role in providing training and capacity-building support to a multitude of bureaucratic officials and politicians, equipping them to address the challenges associated with the democratic transition. India's diplomatic intervention, combined with economic assistance, contributed to the restoration of democratic norms in the country, indicating its keen interest in facilitating the democratic process. India's shift towards proactive engagement in promoting democratic consolidation in neighbouring countries is a strategic imperative driven by security concerns, economic interests, and a desire for enhanced regional influence.

While successful in many instances, this approach is not without its challenges, requiring nuanced diplomacy and sensitivity to historical dynamics. Continued efforts in this direction will be crucial for fostering a stable, democratic, and prosperous neighbourhood, which in turn serves India's own national interests. It is noteworthy that India's level of engagement in democracy promotion aligns closely with the explicit requests made by the respective governments in these countries. This aspect has been emphasized in official statements by India's leaders, highlighting their commitment to respecting the sovereignty and preferences of partner nations in shaping their own democratic paths. These foreign policy shift gained momentum particularly under the Manmohan Singh regime. The former Foreign Secretary Shiv Shankar Menon elaborated this shift in India's neighbourhood foreign policy when he said:

“Politically, our neighbourhood policy is now based on the recognition that what can best secure India's interests in the region would be building a web of ‘dense interdependencies’ with our neighbours. We must give our neighbours a stake in our own economic prosperity. This would impart certain stability in our relations. We want a neighbourhood policy which is capable of adjusting, capable of shaping events..... We should assess when a neighbour is in the midst of a transformational process and take steps to make ourselves relevant to that change..... Making the right judgement and adopting the policies appropriate to the nature of change, is the challenge to our diplomacy” (Menon, 2006)

With the power transition in India's political landscape since 2014, there was a dramatic shift in economic and strategic policy. In the pursuit of India's economic resurgence, Prime Minister Modi's approach has been to give emphasize on the primacy of economic diplomacy. To accomplish this objective, he recognized the necessity of cultivating an external stability at India's periphery. Based on this strategic imagination, India must resolve its differences with its small neighbours, project better image and foster enhanced connectivity through economic

diplomacy. To achieve this PM Modi, intend to ensure peaceful external conditions in the immediate neighbourhood; because an unsettled neighbourhood with various failed and failing states puts considerable strain on the economy. Thus, under the leadership of Narendra Modi, foreign policy mechanism shifted its attention to geoeconomics where 'Neighbours First' has been the striking feature of the new government's diplomatic approach, where the primary focus has been on tightening the bond between with her neighbours while giving secondary importance to democratic ideals. Thus, India's commitment to the element of strengthening democracy along with foreign policy engagement was revised in a different manner. The arena where Prime Minister Modi has naturally focused on for Indian way of democracy promotion lies in its neighbourhood. Countries such as Nepal, Myanmar, Pakistan, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan have all encountered political upheavals and required support to consolidate or attain democratic governance. It has been widely acknowledged that India's own experience with democracy can offer substantial assistance in this regard. This demands a detailed exploration of the India's engagement with her neighbours from democratic dimension in the post-cold war scenario.

Nepal

India's engagement with Nepal has seen shifts over the years. India backed the first people's movement in 1990, which resulted in King Birendra losing his position of absolute monarch. It would not have been possible for Nepal to restore multi-party democracy after the lapse of 30 long years without the backing of India (Jha 2014: 56). Since the restoration of multi-party system in 1990, though, the official foreign policy stand was India's unwillingness to influence Nepal's in-house politics. With the growing intensity of the Maoist insurgency and drastic change in temperament of Nepali monarchy following the 'palace massacre' of June 2001, the prevailing policy approach started straining. It became extremely difficult for India to handle King Gyanendra after he dismissed the elected parliament and representative government and took direct control of the polity on 1st February 2005 (Destradi 2012: 301-302).

Initially, at the governmental level, efforts were made to dissuade the King from persisting dictatorial course even in the name of fighting Maoists' terrorism. But when the king not only ignored these persuasions, India introduced coercive means by suspending arms supply, imposing sanctions and cancelled all military cooperation, imposed arms embargo and a public withdrawal of diplomatic support from King Gyanendra. This was intended to create pressure to negotiate with the Maoist insurgents at war (Destradi 2012: 295). Despite the

worries that arms embargo would indirectly help the Maoist rebels, who launched a ‘people’s war’ to establish their version of ‘new democracy’, and it also held the danger that the king would turn to China for military support, something that wouldn’t had been in India’s interest. Thus, New Delhi continued to pressure for a balanced political settlement. The king’s direct take-over of command and the Maoist insurgency, which gained pre-eminence at the cost of democratic process and institution, directed Nepal’s second people’s uprising (Jha 2014: 45-48). The King's direct takeover of power and the rise of the Maoist insurgency, which marginalized the democratic process and institutions, led to Nepal's second people's uprising. This complex situation prompted India to navigate a delicate balance between supporting democratic principles and maintaining its strategic interests in the region.

It may also be kept in mind here that, until 2006, the struggle for democracy in Nepal had been against feudal institutions and forces but after 2006, the nature of democratic struggle had radically altered, as it became a struggle for institutionalization and consolidation of democracy (Muni 2010: 70). Two factors have consistently exerted a decisive influence on the advancement or regression of democracy in Nepal: firstly, the nature of the inclusive political consensus in favour of democracy within the nation, and secondly, the role played by India in shaping the trajectory of democratic developments. Once again, the success of Jan Andolan-II, can be attributed to the convergence of an internal comprehensive political consensus with the support lent by India. Notwithstanding, India's repeated pressure and insistence, the King remained steadfast in his position, refusing to yield and reinstate democracy. Instead, he started cultivating support from all other possible sources, (China, Pakistan) which complicated India’s security concerns already arising out of the possible linkages between Nepal Maoists and Indian left extremists, the Naxalites (Muni 2009: 91).

Given the King's obstinacy, India underwent for a shift in policy and thereby, facilitated reconciliation between the Nepalese political factions and the Maoists. Thereby King Gyanendra, under mounting pressure from public opinion, issued a proclamation recognizing the ‘spirit of the people's movement’ and permitted the roadmap presented by the SPA (Seven Party Alliance) to address the ongoing violent agitation. Consequently, the King relinquished his responsibilities and authority to the Alliance, resulting in the reinstatement of the House of Representatives and then Prime Minister G. P. Koirala. Over time, democracy achieved a resounding triumph with the success of Jan Andolan-II (Peoples' Movement-II), eventually leading to the abolition of the monarchy and the establishment of a 'republic' of Nepal in 2007 (Muni 2014: 29-30). In the due course New Delhi played a crucial role in the 2006 peace

process that ended the decade-long struggle and further assisted with all technical help in framing the new constitution. Also acted as mediator between the different conflicting ethnic community. India actively supported the process of fostering an inclusive consensus and conducting negotiations in favour of democracy, operating at various levels to bridge the divide between the Maoists and the parliamentary parties in their shared determination to combat autocratic feudalism. The Government of India facilitated the conclusion of the 'Twelve Point Understanding' based on which the parliamentary parties and Maoist fractions joined in a united front in the form of a Seven Party Alliance (SPA) on November 22, 2005 (Destradi 2012: 304-309). New Delhi also provided extensive funding for the economic and infrastructural reconstruction. In spite, of India's Lok Sabha's reduction in the aid providence to Nepal from \$47 million to \$31million, it provided budget assistance of Rs.1.6 billion (approximately \$40 million) in fiscal year 2006/07 and extended a credit line worth \$100million for infrastructure development project (Cartwright 2009: 411). At that phase the then Indian Foreign Secretary Shivshankar Menon released a statement saying:

“As ever, India is ready to support all efforts aimed at promoting peace, democracy and development in Nepal, where its people are able to choose the manner in which they wish their country to be governed and developed without fear of intimidation and coercion” (Menon, The Hindu: 2006)

Indian assistance in capacity-building, electoral support and infrastructure development has contributed to Nepal's democratic consolidation. Subsequently, the general election of 2008 for the constituent assembly culminated a clear victory for the Maoists. This however failed to consolidate democracy or institutionalized as yet. After April 2008 elections for the Constituent Assembly, there was enduring political pandemonium and serious fragmentation of the coalition forces, leading to a deadlock in Nepal's political dynamics. The peace process and the reconstruction of democratic set-up had been halted; the creation and adoption of new constitution has been awfully sluggish with the critical issues of devolution of power (federalism) and the form of governance (Presidential or Parliamentary) and even a legitimate government hadn't been in place for the preceding years.

The core objective of Jan Andolan-II revolved around establishing a robust, inclusive, and sustainable democratic political framework in Nepal. It would be impractical to expect that the goal towards democratization could be achievement instantly or through hasty political solutions. As previously indicated, the history of democratic striving in Nepal exhibits a clear and intrinsic connection to a broader political consensus within the nation, in harmony with India's constructive and supportive assistance (Muni 2014: 29). When India strongly pushed

the cause of democracy in Nepal in 1951, 1990 or 2006, none of the external powers including China or Pakistan came to the rescue of the authoritarian regimes in Nepal. All the democratic movements in Nepal, thus, seem to trace their roots to Indian democracy. However, India's shift in approach to Nepal in post 2008 context has primarily been, in close coordination with and the international community. But the policy shift seems to be more premeditated, and not a strategic policy deviation.

The restrained reaction from India served to convey its discontent with the manner in which Nepal's Constitution had been formulated. Throughout the trajectory of events initiated in May 2010, India had adhered to a policy of non-interference, refraining from involvement in the constitutional drafting process, and instead endorsing a self-derived Nepalese model to facilitate consensus. This approach, denoted as a 'hands-off' policy, had been consistently upheld. However, in the immediate aftermath of the conclusive development of Nepal's Constitution, and particularly in light of escalated violence and an influx of individuals seeking political asylum into Indian territory, India found itself enmeshed in the internal affairs of Nepal. Over the course of time, India's predominant focus on Nepal has been guided by considerations pertaining to its own security imperatives. Though not happy with the new constitution New Delhi didn't have much to do because foreign policy practitioners were apprehensive that any wrong move would bring China at the doorstep of India. During his visit to Kathmandu, Prime Minister Modi demonstrated commendable efforts in this direction. He not only celebrated the Nepalese for renouncing violence and embracing democratic principles but also lauded their endurance in crafting a constitution. Furthermore, he pledged comprehensive support to the interim government on its journey towards strengthening democracy and pushed for a more balanced constitution (Economic Times 2016). Thus 2015 onwards India engagement with Nepal had primarily been restricted to economic fronts. India had been carefully engaged Nepal in providing economic aid that is likely to contribute to a strengthening of democratic institutions in the country. In its pursuit of safeguarding its security, the Indian government sought a stable and cooperative administration within Nepal. India lent support solely to those political parties in Nepal that demonstrated an ability to ensure political stability, acknowledged the significance of India's security interests, and contributed to diminishing foreign influence in Nepal. But unfortunately, this defensive approach in regard to consolidating democracy in Nepal had proved to be a miscalculation because post 2019 eventualities proved that China would continue to overshadow the political landscape of the region.

Bangladesh

Over the past few decades, Bangladesh has witnessed remarkable advancements in the realms of human and economic development. However, this progress has been tempered by a disheartening reality wherein the country's democracy has been significantly compromised, with democratic principles experiencing a steady decline. Furthermore, since 1999, there has been a gradual but persistent rise of phenomenon like Islamic militancy, which has cast shadows upon the nation's secular system. Regrettably, despite constitutionally embracing democratic principles, Bangladesh struggles to effectively translate them into practical implementation beyond the realm of legal documentation. Therefore, the country gradually turned into what Fareed Zakaria has termed as an “illiberal democracy”

Consequently, public disdain for politicians who undermined the political institutions reached its zenith during the BNP's governance from 2001 to 2006 (Muni 2009: 108). As a result, the military intervention was supervened, leading to yet another episode of military rule in the country. In due course, in January 2007, a military-backed 'caretaker' government assumed power, pledged to facilitate a free and fair election and thereby rejuvenate democratic norms and institutions in the due course. Under those circumstances, India adopted a cautious stance, quietly lending support to the interim government's roadmap. It maintained silence towards the internal developments and tried to pursue its vital interest by reviving normal bilateral relations, while assuring Bangladesh of non-interference in internal affairs (Muni 2009: 116). This was followed by discussion on an array of issues ranging from- providing relief assistance, Free trade Agreement, lifting of ban on Bangladeshi investment to the prospect of improving military to military engagements between the two countries. However, in the midst of recuperating bilateral relations, India, on low key, persistently articulated its interest in the restoration of democratic norms and institutes at the first possible opportunity (Datta 2008:761-762).

On the release of Awami League leader Sheikh Hasina, on medical ground India expressed:

The release of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for medical treatment is a positive step by the caretaker government.....We reiterate our expectation ofa credible elections leading to full restoration of democracy in Bangladesh. As a close and friendly neighbour, India remains committed to seeing a peaceful, stable, prosperous and a liberal democratic Bangladesh (Joint Statement, MEA: 2008).

Such expression makes it clear that India would not prefer or inspire any direct or indirect institutionalisation of military in state affairs; rather would prefer the emergence of indigenous secular and democratic forces. But at the same time would choose to refrain from any kind of intervention with an intention to manoeuvre the democratic transition and strengthening democratic institution. However, after many uncertainties, eventually Awami League, under the leadership of Hasina Wajed, emerged victorious and captured power through a general free and fair election, held in December 2008(Muni 2009: 117). India officially welcomed the large victory of democratic forced and expressed its desire to work with the new leaders for the renewal and progression of old ties.

With the advent of the democratic government led by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, India- Bangladesh relations reached its zenith. During the tenure of Manmohan Singh and Sheikh Hasina, India–Bangladesh relations gained a new momentum. It was observed that Sheikh Hasina’s state visit to Delhi in 2010 laid foundation of a comprehensive framework of cooperation. As Narendra Modi came to power in May 2014 policy makers and academicians prophesied that Modi’s foreign policy would focus more on continuity rather than change (Madan 2014: 8-9; Ramachandran, *The Diplomat* 2014). Hence, in the agenda of Narendra Modi, ‘domestic priorities were expected to dominate’ (Madan 2014). This has also been reflected in the foreign policy formulations of India under Narendra Modi. Indian National Security Adviser Ajit Doval, in a seminar in New Delhi on India–Bangladesh relations acknowledged Bangladesh as ‘India’s most important neighbour’ (Haidar & Habib, 2015). In Modi’s landmark visit, 22 deals were signed and renewed on a wider range of issue areas including connectivity, power, trade and investment and security. It was anticipated that the deals signed during the visit, would facilitate India–Bangladesh relations to a large extent and strengthen the position of the existing democratic regime. As ‘3C Mantra’, that is, Commerce, Culture and Connectivity were the major objectives of Narendra Modi’s foreign policy and the economic dimension remains as a major area of cooperation in Indian policy towards Bangladesh. It has become India’s leading South Asian trading partner and the world’s fourth-largest market for Indian exports in the years 2021–2022. Exports to Bangladesh increased by more than 66% during FY 2020-21 and FY 2021-22, from \$9.69 billion to \$16.15 billion. India is Bangladesh’s second-largest trading partner and Asia’s top market destination for exports. Bilateral trade between both countries increased at an unprecedented rate of approximately 44% from \$10.78 billion in 2020-21 to \$18.13 billion in 2021-22, despite Covid-19-related difficulties (The Indian Express 2023).

Culture is one of the primary dimensions of Modi regime's foreign policy; promotion of socio-cultural relations is noticeable between Delhi and Dhaka during Modi's regime (MEA GoI, 2015). Though India has strong cultural ties with Bangladesh further scope for enhanced collaboration had been witnessed in socio-cultural sphere. Within the framework of socio-cultural interrelations, facilitation of educational interchange, collaborative training and initiatives stands out as a paramount facet. Statistical approximations indicate that more than 50,000 students from Bangladesh are engaged in advanced scholastic pursuits in India and among them approximately 100 scholars are beneficiaries of diverse scholarship programs (Datta, 2008: 769).

It is noteworthy that the establishment of Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) between institutions of higher educational institute of India and Bangladesh has been instrumentalized to foster educational exchange and collaborative ventures. To exemplify, an MoU was established between the University of Dhaka and India's Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) with the purpose of joint research on oceanography of the Bay of Bengal. Furthermore, an MoU between the University of Rajshahi and India's Jamia Millia Islamia University was enacted to promote educational cooperation (Kashem and Islam 2016: 259). Enhancing human resource development through training initiatives constitutes another significant dimension of the India-Bangladesh relationship. The Government of India has been providing training to Bangladesh Civil Service officials, police officials, judicial officials, among others, at various premier training institutes in India (India- Bangladesh bilateral Brief, MEA, 2021). It has been reported that India had extend training to 1500 Bangladeshi civil service officers over the upcoming three years, utilizing various educational establishments in India for this purpose. These undertakings, occurring under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi, have effectively laid a robust groundwork for fortifying the ties between India and Bangladesh (Kashem and Islam 2016: 260).

Over the years, after Prime Minister Narendra Modi came in power a shift in foreign policy engagement has been witnessed in regard to endorsing democracy. Though democracy as an ideal holds importance in policy agenda but in a tacit manner. New Delhi has concentrated on providing assistance through economic and socio-cultural collaborative ventures with an aim for the furtherance of capacity building. In contrast to the countries examined so far, India's engagement with countries such as Bhutan, Afghanistan and Maldives demonstrate an alteration in the question of promoting democracy. In the aftermath of 9/11, due to sudden major development in international political arena India reoriented its foreign policy approach

towards her distant neighbours like Maldives and Afghanistan. New Delhi has increasingly granted resources and other technical expertise to these nations for setting the edifice of democratic institutions being within the framework of development policies.

Bhutan

Bhutan a tiny state, long being influenced by larger nation, like India, never had a democratic movement worthy of note. Though Bhutan enjoys geostrategic importance but unlike Nepal it was never a troublemaker. In contrast to Nepal, since 1998, Bhutan has moved steadily along the path towards more representative government when King Jigme Singye Wangchuk gave up absolute power and began to rule with the advice of a royal council and national assembly (Cartwright 2009: 412). Bhutan's trajectory towards democratic governance was set into motion "from above" when the king himself, in 2006, declared his intention to transform the nation into a parliamentary democracy under his son, Jugme Khesar Namgyal Wangchuck, by the year 2008. Staying true to the commitment, Bhutan effectively completed its transition from a monarchy to a two-party democracy, culminating in a thriving parliamentary election in March 2008 and the installation of a new democratic government. Throughout this process, India played a proactive and supportive role by providing essential resources for conducting the general election; extending economic aid along with logistic support for capacity-building, had been instrumental in strengthening Bhutan's democratic institutions and facilitating Bhutan's democratisation. Expert personnel from New Delhi collaborated with their Bhutanese counterparts to draft the new constitution and assist with the logistical arrangements for the election. India also extended a warm welcome to Bhutanese election officials, staff, observers, and security personnel, sharing valuable technical knowledge and experiences. Additionally, India contributed significantly to Bhutan's economic and financial stability, offering substantial aid amounting to sixty percent of the Bhutanese national budget.

In the aftermath of UPA government, Prime Minister Narendra Modi while giving stress on geo-economics and policy of furthering democratic ideals by strengthening economic ties, selected Bhutan as his first foreign destination- signifying its importance in his diplomatic efforts. India is Bhutan's top trade partner both as an import source and as an export destination. Since 2014, India's merchandise trade with Bhutan has almost tripled from USD 484 million in 2014-15 to USD 1422 million in 2021-22, accounting for about 80% of Bhutan's overall trade, with the balance of trade in India's favour (India- Bhutan Bilateral Brief, MEA, 2023). As a gesture of furthering capacity-building PM Modi inaugurated Bhutan's Supreme Court

Complex and pledged support to Bhutan's IT and digital sectors (India- Bhutan Bilateral Brief, MEA, 2018). The bilateral relationship between India and Bhutan encompasses a range of institutional mechanisms spanning security, border management, trade, transit, economics, hydro-power, development cooperation, and water resources. Regular exchanges, both at ministerial and official levels, as well as parliamentary delegations, have been instrumental in strengthening collaboration across diverse domains. Beyond discussions on bilateral relations and economic cooperation, PM Modi announced substantial enhancements, including a doubling of the Nehru Wangchuck Scholarship to Rs. 2 crores annually (India- Bhutan Bilateral Brief, MEA, 2018). Furthermore, he revealed India's commitment to assisting Bhutan in establishing an E-Library project covering all 20 districts of the country. The Government of India (GoI) offers 300 training slots each year through the ITEC program and an additional 60 slots under the TCS Colombo Plan, aimed at empowering Bhutanese individuals with improved administrative and technical skills. Notably, an extra 40 slots were allocated to this Mission during a mid-term review, supplementing the existing 282 slots utilized under this initiative (India- Bhutan Bilateral Brief, MEA, 2018). Instead of impeding Bhutan's democratic transition, India embraced the inevitability of the nation's journey towards democracy and chose to engage actively in the pursuit to strengthen and consolidation of democratic forces in the country by providing assistance towards capacity building. This approach exemplified India's commitment to supporting Bhutan's democratic aspirations and fostering a collaborative and cooperative relationship during this crucial phase of Bhutanese history.

Sri Lanka

Since 2009, there have been noteworthy shifts in the dynamics of India-Sri Lanka relations. These changes have been influenced by factors such as geo-political considerations, security requirements, economic diplomacy, developmental support, and the pursuit of reconciliation following the armed conflict. India has been actively involved in Sri Lanka's democratic processes, particularly during periods of political transition. For instance, India's role in the 2015 presidential election and subsequent support for reconciliation and reconstruction efforts demonstrate its proactive approach in Sri Lanka. Within this framework, it's worth highlighting the significance of two guiding principles – India's "Neighbourhood First Policy" and Sri Lanka's 'India First' policy. Following the previous Indian government's decision not to attend the Commonwealth Summit in Sri Lanka during the presidency of the autocratic leader Mahinda Rajapaksa, Modi visited Colombo after Rajapaksa's unexpected electoral defeat. There, he addressed the parliament, highlighting India's success with 'cooperative federalism'

as a constructive approach to the island's longstanding separatist conflict. He also emphasized the paramount importance of Sri Lanka's unity and integrity (Piconne 2015: 13).

India's approach has evolved over time to avoid being perceived as interfering in the internal affairs of other nations. Beyond addressing immediate crises, India's growing development assistance has played a pivotal role in stabilizing the historically unpredictable relationship between India and Sri Lanka. Notably, this positive trajectory gained momentum after the conclusion of Eelam War IV in 2009. India accorded highest priority to rehabilitation and rebuilding of North and East of Sri Lanka in post-war years. Sri Lanka is one of the major recipients of development assistance provided by India and India's "overall commitment to Sri Lanka is more than US\$ 5 billion, of which around US\$ 600 million is grant-in-aid and the rest is concessional loan. In total, 13 Lines of Credit worth US\$ 2.68 billion have been extended to Sri Lanka" (MEA, Question No. 1342 2022).

Prior to the 2014 Indian general election, a prevalent perception in Sri Lanka, particularly within the Sinhala community, was that India's approach to the country was significantly influenced by the politics of Tamil Nadu. However, the Modi government took careful steps to address this concern at an early stage. Through constructive dialogues with the delegation of the Tamil National Alliance (TNA), assurances were provided to all relevant stakeholders that India's policies would harmonize with the political requirements of both India and Tamil Nadu. What Prime Minister Modi effectively achieved a delicate equilibrium that addressed the apprehensions of the Tamil population while also mitigating criticisms from Sinhala nationalists. In clear terms, he expressed India's support for a 'united' Sri Lanka, all the while emphasizing the necessity of surpassing the political limitations set by the Thirteenth Amendment of the Sri Lankan Constitution for the empowerment of the Tamil minority (Chahal 2017: 53-54). Beyond the implications for the Tamil issue, this careful balancing act orchestrated by PM Modi successfully steered India-Sri Lanka relations away from being overshadowed by the complexities of the Tamil question.

Cultural collaboration showcases how Prime Minister Modi has strategically utilized cultural diplomacy as a regional asset, transcending the complexities of Tamil politics. By emphasizing cultural unity, Modi has consistently worked to frame the India-Sri Lanka relationship, building upon an approach initiated by the previous UPA government and given renewed impetus under his leadership. Starting from collaborative efforts to establish the 'Ramayana Trail' in Sri Lanka and the 'Buddhist Circuit' in India, to significant events like the

unveiling of Anagarika Dharmapala's statue in Sanchi by the then Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena, nearly every official visit exchanged between India and Sri Lanka since 2014 has placed a distinct spotlight on fostering and strengthening cultural connections (Chahal 2017: 55). This pioneering effort involves a substantial grant assistance amounting to USD 15 million (Brief on India- Sri Lanka Relations, Indian High Commission, 2021). Through this magnanimous initiative, Prime Minister Modi set in motion a milestone that reflects India's dedication to bolstering its ties with Sri Lanka through the lens of shared Buddhist heritage.

But unfortunately, very little had been achieved in the economic collaborative front. China and terrorist outfits had been major irritant in this regard. It was only in 2021 that breakthrough in Indo- Sri Lankan has been witnessed. In 2021, India solidified its role as Sri Lanka's principal trading ally, contributing significantly to an overall bilateral merchandise trade worth US\$ 5.45 billion. Beyond its status as Sri Lanka's primary trading partner, India significantly contributes to the country's Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). Key sectors of Indian investment include petroleum retail, tourism and hospitality, manufacturing, real estate, telecommunications, and banking and financial services. The Central Bank of Sri Lanka reports that India's cumulative FDI inflow surpasses US\$ 2.2 billion, with a prominent inflow of US\$ 142 million in 2021 (Brief on India- Sri Lanka Relations, Indian High Commission, 2021).

In 2022, India-Sri Lanka relations once again find themselves in a precarious situation. This year has witnessed an unparalleled economic and political upheaval in Sri Lanka's history. The nation confronted varied challenges, including a three-decade-long ethnic conflict, the repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ukraine War, and political crisis emanated from a series of economic policy decisions made by past governments (Mallempati 2022: 54-55). Decisions ranging from tax reductions to a transition towards organic farming, collectively contributing to the ongoing economic turmoil. The administration led by Gotabaya Rajapaksa faced severe criticism for its inability to ensure an adequate supply of fuel and essential food items, leading to widespread public discontent. This situation further exacerbated as Sri Lanka faltered in servicing its \$52 billion debt and eventually declared bankruptcy for the first time in its history (Mallempati 2022: 56). Amidst the crisis, India stood as a reliable partner for Sri Lanka by extending moral and material support. By mid-2022 alone, India provided financial support of nearly \$4 billion (MEA, Press Release 2022). After the 9 July 2022 developments, India made a statement that “it stands with the people of Sri Lanka as they seek to realise their aspirations for prosperity and progress through democratic means, values and constitutional framework” (Mallempati 2022: 56-57). This is undoubtedly a significant statement from India,

as it exhibited India's support to constitutional means of resolving economic and political crisis in Sri Lanka. Unlike China, India is compelled to extend support to Sri Lanka due to its distinct strategic and geographical position. India's inherent necessities prevent it from simply observing Sri Lanka's descent into turmoil, a luxury that Beijing can enjoy. India's approach toward Sri Lanka centres around the well-being of its people. It strives to foster democracy, stability, and recovery, consistently providing assistance despite shifts in political and economic landscapes. Previous aid efforts have already yielded significant benefits for India in Sri Lanka. In essence, India would continue its diplomatic engagement and assistance. This response carries strategic significance and reflects India's status in the region. Moreover, it holds symbolic as India's partners in the Indo-Pacific anticipate its substantial role. Refraining from or altering assistance to Sri Lanka could inadvertently bolster Chinese influence and reverse the positive progress achieved over the past two years. Thus, India's continued commitment is essential in preserving stability and counterbalancing external influences in the region.

Maldives

Alike Bhutan, Maldives is a small far off littoral state in the Indian Ocean, but unlike Bhutan it is off less strategic significance to India. Until, 2000 the strategic importance of Maldives had hardly been considered. But in post 9/11 context, the strategic location with its overwhelmingly Muslim population elevated Maldives' priority for India from maritime and regional security perspective. Political instability aggravated, in the first phase in 2004, when pro-democracy demonstrations became violent. Against the backdrop of international pressure and criticism, in March 2006, a new roadmap for reforms was unveiled in the Maldives, with the then President Gayoom committing to hold a multi-party election by 2008. Since Maldives embraced multi-party democracy in 2008, its political landscape has been chiefly shaped by either the pro-India MDP or the pro-China PPM (Dey 2023: 1-2). The basic trend shows that the pro-India MDP administration, both under President Solih and former President Nasheed, had consistently pursued an "India-first" policy.

India's active involvement in the form of cooperation, sharing expertise in building democratic institutions, and providing financial assistance for the democratic reform process was anticipated from the Maldivian Government. India fulfilled these expectations by tripling aid to the Maldives from \$1 million to \$3 million in the fiscal year 2007/08 budget, while also expressing a willingness to offer technical training and material assistance (Murthy 2010: 2).

India had contributed in the process of making legal and judicial procedures more secular and democratic. This extends to adopting administrative frameworks at all tiers, where integrating the methodical 'Indian model' of incorporating internal checks and balances could significantly enhance the efficiency of the previous personalized administrative and accounting system in the Maldives (Murthy 2010: 2-4).

Eventually, in 2008, Mohamed Nasheed emerged triumphant and became the first democratically elected president of the Maldives. However, the success story of this democratic milestone remained incomplete and short-lived, as political turmoil resurfaced by the end of 2011. The first democratically elected president was compelled to relinquish his authority and faced accusations of misusing political power. Seeking refuge, the ex-president turned to the Indian high commission to evade arrest. Under the prevailing circumstances, India proactively employed all its diplomatic channels to mediate and reconcile the situation (Panda, *The Diplomat*: 2019). It convinced the existing authorities to conduct a general election at the earliest opportunity, ensuring a level playing field for all candidates regardless of colour or party affiliation. India's policy stance towards Maldives on the matter of endorsing democracy was evident in one of the speeches of the then Foreign Secretary, Ranjan Mathai, where he remarked:

“Peace and stability in Maldives is of utmost importance to India and the region. Maldives is a nascent democracy and requires support through technical assistance and capacity building. In this context, we have remained actively engaged with all stakeholders in the reconciliation process in the wake of recent developments, in order to ensure that they continue to take the democratic process forward. India remains committed to assist the Government and people of Maldives in their endeavours to build a stable, peaceful and prosperous country” (Mathai 2011)

It is significant to note that the stalemate had been resolved within relatively short period of time, due to the proactive role played by India in favour of supporting democracy, whereby the next general election was being scheduled to be held in September- October, 2013. Following Abdulla Yameen's coming in 2013, Maldives increased its interactions with China and India- Maldives relations spiralled downward with his crackdown on democracy; and anti-India rhetoric used to muster nationalist sentiments. Subsequently, Modi government distanced itself from the Maldives after its increasingly authoritarian government pursued questionable charges against a former president. This led Modi to cancel a planned visit to the country in February 2015 (Piccone 2015: 13). Upon assuming the presidency in 2018, Ibrahim Solih immediately got engaged to rectify the strain on India-Maldives relations inflicted by his predecessor's

actions. Subsequently, various offerings from China, encompassing initiatives within the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) framework and a Free Trade Agreement (FTA), were shelved. Instead, a revitalized commitment to the "India First" policy emerged, driving collaborative projects aimed at enhancing the economic, social, and defence capacities of the island nation (Panda, *The Diplomat*: 2019). Under President Solih, India's commitment has extended to projects totalling over C\$2.71 billion, equivalent to 30.7 billion Maldivian rufiyaa (India-Maldives Bilateral relation Brief, MEA, 2022).

India has historically been a dependable partner for the Maldives, particularly in the sphere of human resource development across diverse sectors. Given the Maldives' small population and the isolated geographical nature of its islands, coupled with resource challenges, there exists a shortage of skilled human capital. To address this, India extended a considerable number of assistances in capacity-building and arranged for higher education for considerable number of Maldivian students in Indian universities each year, often benefiting from the significant ICCR scholarships provided by India. Maldives has been a partner of the ITEC programme for several years (India- Maldives Bilateral relation Brief, MEA, 2022). In recent years, India has proactively aimed to establish and strengthen institutional connections with various entities within the Maldivian government and society. This approach has led to enhanced collaborations between counterpart organizations on both sides, significantly boosting capacity-building and training initiatives. Multiple Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) have been established, concentrating on augmenting the proficiency of human resources. These MoUs encompass areas such as Civil Services, Customs Capacity Building, Parliamentary Cooperation, Judicial Services, Election Commissions, Public Broadcasting, Auditor General's Office, and academic collaboration between institutions like Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) and the Islamic University of Maldives (IUM) (India- Maldives Bilateral relation Brief, MEA, 2022). These MoUs have facilitated the implementation of both physical and virtual training programs, encompassing a wide range of fields such as online education, election processes, policing, healthcare, auditing, governance, and judiciary (India-Maldives Bilateral relation Brief, MEA, 2022). Notably, even amidst the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, various virtual training sessions were successfully conducted, further highlighting the commitment to collaborative development efforts between India and the Maldives. It is significant to note that India's growing willingness to provide assistance for supporting democracy are faltering indicators of the small states being the forerunners in regard to India's policy reorientation, involving more active participation. To India, endorsing

democracy in these states incur few costs and many potential benefits, thereby attaining international plaudits- without jeopardizing its realist priorities.

Afghanistan

Historically, India has maintained amicable relations with Afghanistan, largely driven by their shared concerns regarding Pakistan. However, after the Soviet Union's withdrawal, the long-standing civilizational ties between the two nations experienced a downturn due to Afghanistan's involvement in South Asian politics, particularly in the Indo-Pak conflict. Pakistan's expansion of influence westward, aimed at achieving strategic depth in Afghanistan, further exacerbated the situation. The turning point came with the events of 9/11 in 2001, when the United States launched the 'Global War on Terror,' and India became a cooperative partner in this endeavour. While India did not engage in direct military intervention under the pretext of consolidating and strengthening democracy. Instead, India pursued its unique approach to advance democracy by actively participating in civil reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts and strengthening democratic alternatives to the Taliban within Afghanistan.

Foreign policy practitioners believed that democracy and development are the key instruments to ensure that Afghanistan becomes a source of regional stability. At the first instances the Indian Embassy in Kabul was reestablished on 22nd December 2001, signifying India's active involvement in the Bonn process. This process played a crucial role in establishing the Interim Authority in Afghanistan and convening the “grand tribal council” that elected Hamid Karzai as the head of the government in June 2002. Subsequently, India's engagement mostly extended by providing substantial assistance in reconstructing the nation's democratic institutions, bolstering its economy, and enhancing state capacities and thereby pushing towards the path of democratic transition. During Hamid Karzai's visit to India in April 2006, three agreements were signed between Afghanistan and India, aimed at enhancing collaboration in the areas of rural development, education, and standardisation (India 2008: 490). They were established between the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) and the Afghan National Standardisation Authority. Additionally, an agreement was made during the visit of Afghan Foreign Minister Rangin Dadfar Spanta from June 29 to July 1, 2006, providing \$50 million to support mutual business ventures between Afghanistan and India (Cartwright 2009: 407). In the same year, India also increased its aid package to Afghanistan by an additional \$150 million, raising the total assistance to \$750 million (Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, India 2008: 494). As part of the Global Democracy Initiative (GDI), India has provided assistance for the following projects: construction of the Afghan parliamentary

building, parliamentary training for Afghan officials, assistance for the U.N development program called “Support to the establishment of the Afghan Legislature” and material support for elections including voting machines and indelible markers (Cartwright 2009: 409). Till then India made available a total of \$750 million economic assistance, the primary focus of which was restoring institutional capabilities by providing trainings to teachers, diplomats, judicial officials, doctors, journalists, and governmental officials.

Throughout this endeavour, India rendered significant humanitarian aid, promoted educational initiatives, and actively supported infrastructure development, including road-building projects, all aimed at fostering Afghanistan's overall development and progress. India's programmes cover four broad areas – infrastructure projects, humanitarian assistance, small and community-based development projects, and education and capacity development. In the field of education and institution development, India had been actively contributing by offering 675 long-term university scholarships annually. Those scholarships were sponsored by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) and cover undergraduate and postgraduate studies for Afghan students in India. Additionally, India provided 675 short-term scholarships every year through the India Technical and Educational Cooperation (ITEC) program (India Afghan Relations Briefing, MEA, 2012). These scholarships were targeted at Afghan public servants and were aimed at enhancing their skills in Indian technical and professional institutions. As part of capacity-building efforts, over 20 Indian Civil Servants had taken on roles as coaches and mentors under the Capacity for Afghan Public Administration program. This program, supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the governments of Afghanistan and India, focused on strengthening the Afghan public administration system.

Furthermore, India's contributions extend to vocational training. The Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) had established the India-Afghanistan Vocational Training Centre, where Afghan youth were trained in various skills such as carpentry, plumbing, welding, masonry, and tailoring (India Afghan Relations Briefing, MEA, 2012). An innovative initiative led by the renowned Indian NGO, Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA), involved the establishment of a Women's Vocational Training Centre in Bagh-e-Zanana in Kabul. This centre was dedicated to training of Afghan women, including war widows and orphans, in areas like garment making, nursery plantation, food processing, and marketing (India Afghan Relations Briefing, MEA, 2012). Through these comprehensive efforts, India was actively contributing to the skill development and capacity building of Afghanistan's people and

institutions. India had been actively engaged in various capacity-building programs across several fields. These programs cover areas such as diplomacy, media and information, civil aviation, agricultural research and education, healthcare and medicinal science, tourism, education, standardization, rural development, public administration, electoral management and administration, as well as local governance. Moreover, India's involvement extends to reconstruction efforts. Specifically, India was working on rebuilding the Indira Gandhi Institute of Child Health and the Habibia School in Kabul (India Afghan Relations Briefing, MEA, 2012). India had been actively involved in the progress of nation building with the purpose that promoting social and economic growth in Afghanistan holds great importance for maintaining stability in the region. India's primary goal in its development partnership had been to support the establishment of indigenous Afghan self-reliance institutions and facilities which would usher in democratic mindset.

The relationship between Afghanistan and India saw significant improvement in 2011 when they entered into a strategic partnership agreement. Additionally, India extended a line of credit of 90 million for the construction of Afghan Parliament building which was completed in December 2015 under India-Afghanistan development cooperation and was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 20th December, 2015 (Hindustan Times, 2015). It was a part of India's efforts in the reconstruction and rehabilitation of Afghanistan. The project had been a discernible symbol of India's contribution to strengthening and rebuilding democracy in Afghanistan. Under the leadership of the Modi government, a significant step had been taken to initiate 116 impactful community development projects across 31 provinces in Afghanistan. This decision was reached during a meeting between India's External Affairs Minister, Sushma Swaraj, and Afghanistan's Foreign Minister, Salahuddin Rabbani, held in New Delhi on September 11, 2017 (MEA 2017). These projects aimed at concentrating on various essential areas such as education, health, agriculture, irrigation, drinking water, renewable energy, flood control, micro hydro power, sports, and administrative infrastructure (MEA 2017). The aim was to make substantial improvements in these sectors and contribute positively to the well-being and progress of communities throughout Afghanistan. Shahida Mohammad Abdali, Afghanistan's former ambassador to India, mentioned in April 2017 that "India is the largest regional donor to Afghanistan and is the fifth-largest donor globally, having provided more than \$3 billion in assistance. India's contributions include the construction of over 200 schools, support for more than 1,000 scholarships, and hosting of more than 16,000 Afghan students" (Talukdar, FirstPost: 2017).

Following the seizure of power by the Taliban in 2021, New Delhi is engaged in a carefully balanced act, driven by pragmatism. The Taliban have sought India's assistance in rebuilding their country. For a government that has faced diplomatic and financial isolation, establishing a regular relationship with India holds significant practical benefits. This is especially true considering India's increasing influence in global politics and its longstanding interest in utilizing Afghanistan as a gateway to Central Asian markets. As of June in the previous year, New Delhi took the initiative to deploy a 'technical team' to the Indian embassy in Kabul. This marked India's first diplomatic presence and attitude to reestablish diplomatic relations in Afghanistan since the Taliban came into power. Following this, India extended humanitarian aid by delivering medical supplies to Afghanistan. S. Jaishankar, India's Minister of External Affairs, referred to India as a dependable 'first responder' in Afghanistan (Jaishankar tweeted 2022). Further highlighting their commitment, India allocated a dedicated portion of its 2023-24 union budget for a \$25 million aid package aimed at Afghanistan's development (The Economic Times, 2023). This was wholeheartedly welcomed by the Taliban. In fact, the Taliban expressed their interest and requested India to complete roughly 20 stalled infrastructure projects across the nation (NDTV, 2022). In April, during the agreement signing with India for an additional shipment of 10,000 metric tons of wheat, the World Food Programme (WFP) reassured India that the necessary infrastructure was in place to swiftly distribute the wheat to the most vulnerable segments of Afghanistan's population. Lately, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), operating through the India Technical and Economic Cooperation Programme (ITEC), extended an invitation to the Taliban led Afghan government officials to participate in a comprehensive four-day online course focused on understanding Indian laws and the prevailing business environment (Economics, 2023).

The withdrawal of American troops has created a void in terms of security, economic prospects, and humanitarian support. The consequences of such a hasty decision on the part of US administration has greatly impacted India's interests within the region. India's longstanding goal has been to establish a stable Afghanistan free from the threat of any terrorist organizations. Though India hasn't formally acknowledged the Taliban's authority, but its recent official statements reflect that New Delhi has accepted the current reality; and has emphasized the need for the Taliban regime to reform its governance particularly in terms of inclusivity for gender and ethnic representation. The growing alignment between India and the Taliban-led Afghanistan is a prime demonstration of practical foreign policy decision-making. India's approach involves establishing diplomatic interactions and providing developmental aid as a

means to discourage the Taliban from allowing the export of terrorism from Afghanistan. On the other hand, despite the Taliban's steadfast ideological stance within their own territory, their urgent requirement for development aid compels them to remain silent about India's stance on the predominantly Muslim Kashmir Valley. However, these principles are unlikely to significantly impact the core of India's relationship with the Taliban, unless they have a direct effect on the stability of the region. Unlike many other countries, India has refrained from waging any military interventions or political meddling in Afghanistan. Instead, India's focus has been on fostering people-to-people relations and exerting influence through non-coercive means. That is why, despite setbacks due to the hasty exit of U.S. forces, India continues to maintain goodwill among ordinary Afghans and perhaps even within a fraction of the Taliban leadership.

According to the India official records, except for Bhutan, no other country receives as much Indian development aid as Afghanistan. It would be incorrect to view India's policy approach towards Afghanistan as solely driven by democratic idealism. In reality, India's motivations for providing democracy assistance were rooted in its perceived national interests, of containing Pakistan's influence and seeking stability in a vulnerable state. Consequently, India's substantial material assistance and active engagement in Afghanistan raised a sense of insecurity in Pakistan because they were obliterated by a sense of encirclement. However, it was widely acknowledged that India's involvement in Afghanistan played a crucial role in 'winning hearts and minds of people' which was considered as an increasingly indispensable and vital element to combat terrorism effectively.

Basic Trends of Indian Foreign Policy in Regard to Consolidation of Democracy

The democratic transitions that have been encountered by the various South Asian countries can be perceived as a distinct and fresh wave of democratization, orchestrated by the popular demands for alteration and progress. Concurrently, the international community has exerted a significantly affirmative influence in facilitating these transitions. A new opening for India was created in the wake of incomplete democratization process initiated in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan and Myanmar. Being the oldest, most stable and relatively mature democracy in the region, probably she is expected to garner democratic ideals as it is believed that nation finds it easier to interact with common interests or grounds with those having a similar political structure (Saha 2017: 1244).

During its formative years, India's support for democracy as its foreign policy mechanism had to be aligned and synchronized with the imperatives of these complex developments such as consolidating Cold War rivalries and supporting the struggles for independence from colonialism, imperialism, and radicalism in Asia and Africa. While Nehru, was ardently committed to democratic values, he also grappled with the harsh political realities and the tumultuous transitions taking place in neighbouring countries. This compelled him to balance democracy promotion with India's strategic and security priorities (Muni 2009: 119-120). Consequently, promoting democracy took on a subordinate role in India's foreign policy agenda. Simultaneously, there was a prevailing perception of the foreign policy practitioners that if India forsakes the principle of non-intervention in favour of actively promoting democracy, then that might have weakened the country's regional standing instead of bolstering it. Hence, a cautioned attitude prevailed in adopting overt measures to advance democracy at large.

Therefore, India came relatively late to democracy promotion, ten years after the EU and US. This step was taken amid a backdrop where concerns regarding democracy promotion were amplifying, coinciding with instances of military intervention to induce regime changes and the resurrection of authoritarian influence. Notably, India undertook this approach without a much consent from the foreign policy making elite, in its favour; indeed, many intellectuals, politicians, diplomats and policy analysts remained exceedingly sceptical about democracy promotion as a set of foreign policy practices, perceiving it as inconsistent with the principles of non-intervention and non-interference, and with prudent diplomacy (Puri 2016: 226-227). A similar sentiment, was expressed by a senior diplomat in mid-2015 while addressing to a think tank, that “although democratic ideals align with India's security and economic imperatives, New Delhi refrains from any kind of business of exporting democracy” (Wadhwa 2015).

Overburdened by the postcolonial experiences and long cherished foreign policy ideals of non-alignment, non-interference, non-intervention, and sovereignty; as well as factors determined to be in India's national interest- such as geopolitical realignments and a yearning for strategic autonomy, have moulded India's outlook on democracy assistance and support. However, few recent developments indicate a shift in foreign policy attitude towards a more proactive role in promoting and supporting democracy abroad. Driven by a couple of strategic reasons despite its strong reservations, India has opted to engage in a particular procedure of democracy promotion—specifically, known as democracy assistance. This approach has facilitated a smoother alignment with the United States, a notable partner. In this pretext it is

essential to consider the 'realist' factors, such as strategic and economic interests, particularly India's efforts to enhance its relationship with the United States and solidify its position as an emerging power, rather than an idealistic commitment to democracy. In most of the contexts India has taken a calculated approach in conformity with its perceived strategic interests. Additionally, India recognizes that fostering democratization in its regional vicinity and beyond could contribute to its broader goal of effectively handling and containing the expansionist nature of China. However, whether this approach has yielded the anticipated results remains a subject of debate. While India's stance as a reluctant democracy promoter has not significantly altered perceptions among Western observers, the young democracies in South Asia that India has engaged with, such as Afghanistan, Myanmar, and Nepal, still grapple with fragility and uncertainty.

India's approach to democracy assistance has been manifest by a combination of multilateral and bilateral initiatives, predominantly targeted at South Asia and often running parallel to more generously funded economic development projects, reflects the interplay of these various pressures and concerns that shape India's foreign policy decisions. New Delhi's attitude towards endorsing democracy in its neighbourhood has been mixed and marked by differential approach. In one hand, India has actively aligned itself with the democratic forces in Nepal and Afghanistan, demonstrating a strong commitment to the promotion of democracy in these countries. On the contrary in regard to Myanmar, India has deliberately chosen to maintain a certain level of distance from the democratic forces and continued its constructive engagement even with the non-democratic forces. Conferring to the principle of non-intervention in other countries' internal affairs, India has been overtly supportive of undemocratic regimes, for example, in Myanmar and has displayed a high degree of readiness to compromise on issues of human rights and democratic freedoms, for example, in Sri Lanka in 2009 (Kurlantzick 2007; Mohan 2007: 111-112). Conversely, in cases where democratic transitions have occurred relatively peacefully and smoothly, such as in Bangladesh, Maldives, and Bhutan, India has adopted a more subtle approach, opting for a low-profile engagement while offering logistic assistance in the process of democratic reconsolidation. It is noteworthy to mention that India's response towards the sliding democratic political system of Pakistan, which initially rested on a democratic structure but remained unstable over the years, has been somewhat reserved. Though India intermittently expressed disappointment over the frequent upsurge of military government and leadership in Pakistan, which hindered in the culmination

of any meaningful and constructive dialogues between the two countries over crucial issues, but refrained from any direct engagement in Pakistan's democratic dynamics.

The only instance where India interceded in the internal political dynamics of Pakistan was during the struggle for independence of erstwhile East Pakistan. This episode involved a risky war against Pakistan with an intention to establish stable peaceful democratic political system at her vicinity. While, India justified her actions in the name of curbing 'genocide' and ending gross human rights violation. Probably it was the first and last incident of military intervention and proactive engagement on the part of India, leading to the birth of a new nation and consolidation of democratic transition. However, it should be acknowledged that for India, this moment presented a unique 'opportunity of a century' to establish regional hegemony for the first time, and it may be overt appreciation to solely attribute the intervention as an action driven by her commitment to uphold democracy.

Though in most instances India has been reluctant to promote democracy, New Delhi has prudently and judiciously got plighted with Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka, providing economic aid, which is likely to contribute in the consolidation of democratic institutions in these countries, as it serves best of the interests. Parallely, the country has for over a decade followed a so-called 'constructive engagement' policy with Burma's military junta and has refrained from criticising the regime's human rights abuses even as it hosts large numbers of Burmese refugees and political exiles on its soil. Nor did New Delhi took much of a position one way or the other on the repetitive political upheavals in Myanmar, disappointing the pro-democracy activists. As the foreign policy analysts, Raja Mohan, argues that democracy as a political priority had chiefly been absent from India's foreign policy, something which may be partly explained by the fact that India is surrounded by unstable and often autocratic regime.

What is evident from the above discussion, is that- though conventionally, democracy promotion has not been a central aspect of India's foreign policy but since its inception, either discreetly or proactively India got engaged with an array of diverse democratic struggles and got embroiled in the political dynamics of neighbours within its region. But it is to be mentioned that India's any pro-democratic actions are predominantly driven by security imperatives, economic essentials and national interest, without jeopardising vital security and strategic concerns. Economic and security calculations have historically determined the kind and level of India's involvement, which have contributed to a fluctuating emphasis on democracy assistance. A practitioner of the Indian foreign policy, the former Indian foreign

secretary Nirupama Rao (2009-2011), has argued and accepted that a 'peaceful neighbourhood is mandatory for the realization of India's vision of economic growth' (Rao's Speech 2010). The nation has typically prioritized matters of security, trade, and energy while delineating her engagement within the neighbourhood. Being comparatively the prosperous ones, India's involvement with the democratic upsurge has been conditioned largely by the stakes it has developed in the concerned situation and the extent of spill-over effects the turbulence has generated. Realizing the geopolitical and geostrategic imperatives, India has invoked all the neighbouring countries to be partners and contribute to the regional growth and prosperity (MEA, Annual Report 2005: 1).

India is endowed with abundant properties of being a soft power, owing to its open, multi-ethnic, and multi-cultural society, along with a secular, federal, and democratic state structure. As a nation founded on the principle of 'Unity in Diversity,' India stands as a potential model for many other internally divided countries. The endurance of a democratic polity within a society characterized by relative poverty, illiteracy, and immense diversity serves as a robust foundation for advocating democracy as the most preferred political system (Saha 2017: 1245-1246). India is well aware of the value and political utility of democracy in foreign relations, particularly while engaging with democratic partners such as the USA, the EU, and Japan (Saha 2017: 1245-1247). However, India is notably reluctant to impose and refrain from actively exporting its democratic model on other countries. Instead, it prefers to promote democracy through the power of its own example, exhibiting the strengths and merits of its democratic system.

Once again under the Prime Ministership of Modi's administration there were indications that India's foreign policy approach has undergoing a paradigm shift. Modi has pushed international democracy more than the previous Congress-led government as part of his geopolitical agenda to extend Indian global power. Notably, he has often emphasized the value of democracy as governing system in his political discourse (refer to Prime Minister's Office, 2017b; Hall, 2017: 128). But there has been steady decline in the allocation of funds for democracy assistance under his leadership (Mullen and Arora, 2016: 2). This underscores the fact that despite increased involvement and political discourse, India's investment in developmental initiatives significantly overshadows its commitment to democratic principles and institutions. India's restrained approach to democracy promotion, differing from Western practices, could potentially challenge the fate of liberal international order. Extensive study elucidates that India's divergence from Western methods does not signifies her absolute

disinterest in aiding democratic transitions or enhancing established democracies analyses (Choedon 2015: 167-170; Mazumdar & Statz 2015: 83-84). This paper underlines that while India maintains reservations about democracy promotion, it does participate in the provision of "democracy assistance". Its approach in this sphere is progressively expanding and developing.

In the absence of an official policy engagement in regard to providing assistance to democracy, a narrative with certain distinct features can be inferred upon: First, Indian government has not formulated anything like an official democracy-promotion policy (Wagner 2009:14). Rather, India is primarily motivated to lead by the example of its domestic commitment to democratic values; Second, India has played at the most marginal role, if any, in the recent "wave" of democratization processes at its neighbourhood. It offered external and expertise technical help when requested; Third, India has prioritized a pragmatic foreign policy, particularly in a politically divergent neighbourhood, while stressing the importance of liberal values in its rhetoric. This has led some authors to interpret India's multilateral engagement for democracy as an instrumental attempt to improve its relations with the United States and its standing as an emerging hegemonic power rather than a move driven by the genuine commitment of democracy pro-motion as a policy (Cartwright 2009: 421-425; Wagner 2009: 23). India holds a firm stance in favour of democracy and supports it as a guiding principle. However, India refrains from advocating the exportation of ideologies to other nations. Instead, India approaches has been to deal with the government-of-the-day, whether democratic, monarchic, or led by a military dictatorship, with a commitment to engage. India believes that the process of choosing or removing leaders and shaping the governance structure should be left to the people of that country. This principle extends to the concept of regime change or attempts to infringe upon a country's territorial integrity through force or other means. India firmly rejects such actions by external parties. At the same time, India does not hesitate in promoting democracy wherever potential exists. This is achieved by providing assistance aimed at strengthening democratic institutions and capacity building. However, India undertakes such initiatives only with the explicit consent of the respective government involved, respecting the sovereignty of the nation in question. Therefore, the pattern of engagement has been in varying degrees ranging from 'active', 'quasi-active' to 'non-active.' Despite, a minimal shift, traditional foreign policy objectives have and will continue to take precedence over democracy promotion as a means of foreign policy engagement. Thus, there

exists a mix of continuity and change in India's foreign policy regarding democracy promotion, better to say democracy assistance.

India demonstrated minimum interest over Pakistan's quest for democracy and absolutely refrained from taking part in their struggle for restoring democratic institutions (Hall 2017: 8-10). At the same time, it has extended its hands of cooperation and also maintained a functional relation with the military regime of Myanmar for a long period of time without any qualms as it best suited to its national interest. However, this issue would be dealt in great details in the subsequent chapters. Therefore, in the following chapters, attempts have been made to capture the glimpses of evolving nature of India's relation with Pakistan and Myanmar respectively under varied regime to substantiate and critically assert the fact that India's foreign policy have always been the byproduct of complex equation of varied factors with a pinch of democratic ideals; and not ever been influenced by any pro-western ideals like democracy promotion in reality, rather it has been the sheer matter of national imperatives. For the sake of clarity, these two phases will be discussed separately in order to highlight the shift towards more explicit support for democracy assistance on the part of India along with the potential scope of changing dimensions of involvement. Effort would also be made to investigate the factors driving India's kind of action towards these nations under the ever-evolving dynamics of the region.

CHAPTER- 3

EVOLVING INDIA-PAKISTAN RELATIONS WITH THE DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION OF PAKISTAN

In the preceding chapter, a detailed account of India's bilateral engagement with her neighbouring countries had been provided. There it has been contented that India extended assistance and been a reliable partner in their endeavour towards democratisation. It has also been asserted that regime type plays a pivotal role in shaping the course of bilateral relationship. Alongside it had also been evident that though upholding democracy had been a cherished ideal, India had refrained from furthering 'democracy agenda' towards her two immediate neighbours i.e. Pakistan and Myanmar. This leads to raise question about India's reliability as a champion of upholding liberal democratic ideals. Therefore, to investigate the rationale behind this dichotomy this chapter would explore the India- Pakistan relations through the prism of 'Promotion of Democracy' as a foreign policy tool. In the course of discussion, a comprehensive examination would reveal that the evolution of India-Pakistan relations has been inextricably linked to the kind of prevailing political systems in respective nations. Crucially, the course of bilateral relations had been remarkably sensitive to the democratization process, revealing a distinctive pattern that demands careful consideration.

In the backdrop of complex geopolitical landscape of South Asia, the bilateral relationship between India and Pakistan has been a topic of global interest and concern. Since the partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947, tenor of the relationship has been defined by persistent conflicts both overt and covert. Political tensions arising from territorial disputes, dissenting thoughts and a prevailing sense of mistrust have collectively led to the creation of two adversarial neighbours i.e. India and Pakistan. The glaring difference between the successful functioning of liberal democracy in India and its apparent 'failure' in Pakistan, exemplifies the prevalence of diametrically opposite political conditions. This disparity not only raises inquiries about how similar colonial experiences under British rule resulted in such incongruent post-independence political developments; But also garner curiosity regarding whether these varying political systems contribute to the enduring animosity between the two nations!

The history of this bilateral relationship is fraught with recurring challenges and setbacks when it comes to engagements even under the ostensibly democratic structures and civilian regimes. This persistent pattern of animosity lead to a critical an inquiry into the factors

that impede constructive dialogue and cooperative initiatives. Hence, this article hypothesizes a central argument i.e. for any substantive advancement in India-Pakistan relations, there must be a fundamental inculcation of democratic culture within the political spheres of both nations. This assertion arises from a recognition that the failure of democratisation not only perpetuated historical animosities but had also been the formidable obstacle for forging meaningful connections and fostering mutual understanding. Based upon the historical precedents, political theory and empirical evidences, the subsequent sections embark on an analytical journey to substantiate this hypothesis. By probing into the intricate interplay between regime type, democratisation and the contours of India-Pakistan relations, it has been tried to curve out a path forward; a path, one that holds the promises of a more stable, cooperative and prosperous future for these two nations, whose destinies have long been intertwined. Alongside, this part of the thesis intends to capture the glimpses of Pakistan's persistent struggle for instating and sustaining democracy in the country and its impact over the perennial India-Pakistan relations.

We have entered into an era when the risks of discord and fragmentation are evident, where leading countries are buffeted by fiscal pressures and distracted by political division. Definitely there is a correlation between democracy, economy and human development, alongside an impact over the inter-state relations of the region. The degree of success of the democratic model of governance lies in crafting constructive environment for long-term sustainable development along with its capacity to surmount the hindrances to all-encompassing development posed by authoritarian regime and vies-versa. A number of countries in the region, especially in Pakistan the democratic model is under continuous stress to prove its effectiveness, as they have been incapable of perking-up the living conditions of majority of their population and the hopes pinned upon democracy have been belied. At the more micro-level the most alarming trait has been the pre-eminence of conservative elements like the army as in case of Pakistan, which certainly block the democratization procedure.

Pakistan faces an uncertain future where even after seven decades of independence it confronts profound challenges to its integrity as an independent nation-state. Often the constitutional norms have been breached and alternating periods of military and civilian rule had disrupted the stability of the nation. Pakistan is presently ruled on the basis of a constitution (the third in its history framed in 1973) which has been suspended twice (in 1977 and 1999), and reinstated twice (in 1985 and 2002) and amended several times; and elections were often managed by the army operating in close nexus with the bureaucrats (Basu 2012: 178). Throughout the history of Pakistan, the military has wielded a disproportionate amount of

influence over the governance of the state. Instances of military takeovers have occurred on multiple occasions, prominently under the leadership of General Ayub Khan (1958-1969), General Yahya Khan (1969-1971), General Zia-Ul-Haque (1978-1988), and General Pervez Musharraf (2001-2008). These interventions disrupted the democratic process, leading to a lack of continuity in civilian-led governments (Oberst 2019: 161). The chronic problem of numerous military rules after every alternative civilian government has made Pakistan a classic example of 'Failed Democracy'. Unfortunately, even when democratically elected civilian politicians assumed power, they failed to deliver creditable performance. The civilian regimes have been marred by issues such as corruption, inefficiency and constant conflicts among various institutions (Baqai 2005: 49-50). There have been instances of the denial of fundamental rights to the citizens. From 1953 to 2022 each of the democratically elected past Prime Ministers, has faced convictions or imprisonment, after their respective terms in office. Prior to 2013, Pakistan had not witnessed a single instance of a democratic transfer of power. Instead, all previous attempts at democratic transitions were prematurely terminated due to military coups.

It was only after the 2008 election that a democratically elected government was able to complete a full five-years term in office and power was transferred through ballot box to another civilian government, marking a significant milestone in Pakistan's political history. However, even with ostensibly civilian rule, the current state of democracy in the country can be best described as a pseudo-democracy. At present, the federal government is led by a coalition with strong military backing, which raises concerns about the extent of civilian authority (Abbas 2011: 18-19). Additionally, there had been reports of strict control over the media, limiting its independence and infringing upon the freedom of expression. Journalists critical of the ultra-pro military regime are often compelled to take self-exile, fearing persecution, while individuals daring to voice dissent against the government face harassment and imprisonment. These challenges highlight the fragile nature of democracy in Pakistan; the ongoing influence of the military in political affairs; and the curtailment of essential civil liberties.

Dr. Larry Diamond, a distinguished professor in the field of political science and sociology at Stanford University, postulated that "democracies tend to flourish when they reside in a democratic neighbourhood," (Diamond 1999) implying that the presence of robust democratic neighbours fosters democratic growth. However, this proposition faces substantial challenges when applied to the South Asian context. Despite the widely acknowledged

assertion that “impoverished nations may find the cost of sustaining democracy unaffordable,” India stands as an exemplar of enduring democratic governance. In contrast, Pakistan has experienced intermittent phases of democratic governance interspersed with alternating decades of military rule and subsequently disrupted by a facade of democratic governance.

While it remains a valid assertion that a politically unswerving Pakistan possesses the potential to wield effective negotiating power, given the necessity of engaging with a single entity that maintains exclusive control over the state machinery. It would be undeniable that the stability and consistency of Pakistan's political structure significantly influence its efficacy as a negotiating partner. Nevertheless, India's response to Pakistan's political fluctuations has demonstrated a propensity for limited or at most measured engagement, with sporadic expressions of concern over wavering leadership transitions. This sentiment arises from the recognition that such precarious leadership hampers the prospect of meaningful dialogues between the two nations and impedes the advancement of bilateral progress.

India's Engagement with Pakistan in the Aftermath of Independence

The nascent phase subsequent to achieving independence was characterized by a period of parliamentary democracy when regrettably the electoral processes suffered from lack of legitimacy. Soon after its inception, democracy was undermined by instituting constitutional coup in 1953 whereby constitutional assembly was dissolved and the Nazimuddin government was dismissed by Ghulam Mohammad (Oberst 2019: 162). Federal judiciary was used to justify Mohammad's unconstitutional deed. In buttressing Ghulam Mohammad's utilization of extra-constitutional emergency powers, Justice Munir in the case ‘Federation of Pakistan v. Maulvi Tamizuddin Khan, perceived the need to extend his legal argumentation beyond the confines of the constitution itself. To this end, Munir invoked various legal sources, including the common law, general legal maxims, and precedents from English history. Central to his legal reasoning were the influential dictum of Bracton, postulating that “*which is otherwise not lawful is made lawful by the necessity*” (Khan 2005: 85). Additionally, Munir drew upon a Roman law maxim advocated by Jennings, “the well-being of the people is the supreme law” (Khan 2005:86). These legal rationales were intended to serve as the underpinning for subsequent instances of martial law, thereby providing a veneer of legitimacy, under the ‘*Doctrine of Necessity*’, to exercise emergency powers beyond the constitutional framework (Khan 2005: 86). This era was further marked by constitutional transgressions perpetrated by the governor-general, and the persistent estrangement of East Pakistan due to

the encroachment upon the economic and political entitlements of its people. All this entanglement ushered-in the coup that marked the end of representative democracy as envisaged by M.A. Jinnah and the beginning of the overt assumption of power by the Pakistan bureaucracy with the military's assistance. Soon after that the military made their overarching presence felt in the political arena of Pakistan. In the wake of intensifying political instability, the civilian bureaucracy and military assumed governing power in 1958 and dominated the political sphere of Pakistan for over a decade by subverting the basic ideals of democracy.

In the aftermath of an unbridled partition, political leaders Jawaharlal Nehru of India and Muhammad Ali Jinnah of Pakistan conceived a vision of cooperative neighbourliness. Central to this vision was a commitment to uphold one another's sovereignty and territorial integrity, irrespective of their ideological differences and power dynamics (Gehlot and Satsangi 2004: 53-54). These leaders aspired to restore a state of inter-communal peace and harmony, thereby allowing both nations to embark on the formidable journey of economic advancement within a geo-political ethos where peace, stability, benevolence and collaborative effort prevail. Keeping this in mind, immediately after achieving independence, diplomatic ties were established between the two nations (Chadda 2000: 116). However, these diplomatic connections failed to solidify into a robust friendship and the trajectory of India-Pakistan relations had been overshadowed by a series of conflicts, dashed hopes, unfulfilled commitments, historical grievances and perpetual tension.

Almost immediately after partition, a decisive incident transpired in when local tribal forces, supported and abetted by Pakistan's regular military, launched an invasion of Kashmir. Consequently, the relationship between India and Pakistan became strained from its inception and teetered at the brink of collapse. This was swiftly followed by the entry of the Pakistani armed forces into the region, thus instituting an explicit act of aggression against India. It is imperative to mention that the initial disruptions were triggered and engineered by an autocratic entity, namely the Pakistani military (Gehlot and Satsangi 2004: 43-44). This underscores the pivotal role played by non-democratic forces in triggering the early disturbances in the India-Pakistan relationship. At the very onset it became evident that there would be multiple of inherent challenges in maintaining peaceful relations between nations with a shared history and complex geopolitical dynamics.

The abrupt demise of the charismatic figure Muhammad Ali Jinnah, generated a profound shift in the political dynamics of the nation. The ideological struggle regarding the

incorporation of Western democratic ideals vis-à-vis Islamic principles surged to the forefront, triggering fervent debates and contentions. Against this backdrop, Liaquat Ali Khan's advocacy for the preservation of Pakistan's core Islamic identity and cultural integrity gained predominate acceptance (Cohen 2004:126). The subsequent unholy nexus between religious and ultra-political actors, symbolized by the two A's (Army and Allah), had profoundly influenced Pakistan's trajectory, moulded its internal and external narratives, and shaped the equation between religion and statecraft (Gehlot and Satsangi 2004: 43; Basu 2012: 175). At this juncture, religious scholars and leaders i.e. the Ullema voiced their discontent, asserting that the democratic and liberal institutions originating from Western paradigms were incongruent with the teachings as encapsulated within the Holy Quran and Sunnah. Concurrently, Liaquat Ali Khan, who assumed the office of Prime Minister of Pakistan's, accentuated the utmost importance of safeguarding the nation's unity and cultural distinctiveness. This emphasis was secured by the preservation of an Islamic way of life, closely intertwined with the pursuit of economic development. From this point onward, Islam played distinctly role in Pakistan's socio-political fabric in two ways. On one hand, it became a tool harnessed by the leadership to advance their specific political agendas, and on the other, it served as a rationale underpinning various demands directed against India and lastly offering a sense of justification at the global platform for the endeavours pursued (Basu 2012: 178). Henceforth, both the Army and religious elements significantly shaped the Pakistan's national identity as well as the trajectory of Pakistan's destiny.

The post-independence era in Pakistan was marked by a dearth of national leadership, resulting in a state of political uncertainty and rapid leadership void. This power vacuum provided the impetus for military intervention, given them the chance of reformulate the nation's governance dynamics and delaying the pursuit of coherent foreign policy objectives. With assassination of Liaquat Ali Khan in 1951, Pakistan found itself bereft of leaders of national prominence, which paved the way for a succession of military figures to assume leadership positions. Ghulam Mohammad emerged as the governor-general, forging an alliance between the military and the landed aristocracy of the Punjab region (Cohen 2004:126-128). This alliance not only consolidated the military's influence but also gradually eroded the powers vested with the office of the prime minister. As internal power struggles persisted, the challenges associated with managing a divided nation escalated. Between 1947 and 1958, a total of seven Prime Ministers either resigned or were ousted from their positions, underscoring

the inherent political volatility (Cohen 2004: 96). This tumultuous environment set the stage for the first ever military intervention in Pakistani political governance.

On October 7, 1958, Pakistan's President Iskander Mirza, in conjunction with General Mohammad Ayub Khan, orchestrated the abrogation of the nation's constitution and declared the imposition of Martial Law (Cohen 2004: 103-104). Between 1958 and 1971, President Ayub Khan implemented an autocratic rule, effectively centralizing the government and dispensing with the instability brought about by ministerial coalitions that had characterized the initial post-independence decade. To achieve this, Khan formed an alliance predominantly comprising of Punjabi army, civil bureaucracy, influential industrial class and segments of the landed elite. This coalition aimed to replace the parliamentary government with the "Basic Democracy" system (Cohen 2004: 58-59), which was supposed to mobilize people and politically educate them to be participants in local affairs at the grassroot level. It was presented as a form of democracy that purportedly suited the people's genius (Baqai 2005: 50). The foundation of the 'Basic Democracies' was based on Khan's belief that the country had suffered adverse effects from the contentious nature of politics and the "free-for-all" fighting among politicians (Cohen 2004: 101-102). In this context, he enacted the Elective Bodies Disqualification Order, 1959 (EBDO), disqualifying all old politicians. The initial step in this process involved conducting the first Basic Democracy (BD) elections in December 1959, through which forty thousand representatives were to be elected from both East Pakistan and West Pakistan (Cohen 2004: 137-38). These elected representatives were expected to play a crucial role in shaping and enhancing the democratic structure within the country. Consequently, the Basic Democracies system failed to garner political literacy amongst individual citizens to participate directly in the democratic process (Basu 2012: 183). Instead, it offered the opportunity for bribery and vote-buying within this limited privileged voter pool. In reality, the system was so designed to keep the ordinary citizen out of politics.

This momentous act had profound implications including the suspension of a coherent long-term foreign policy trajectory. The military's ascendancy to administrative control in October 1958 further accentuated Pakistan's internal political instability. Consequent to this internal turmoil the perception of India as a potential adversary cultivated. Thereby, impeding any prospects of rapprochement between the two nations. Meanwhile, the dispute over equitable allocation of Indus water, underscored the complexities and challenges of resource-sharing between the two neighbouring countries (Chadda 2000: 121). Whereby both nations grappled with divergent interpretations and concerns that hindered the formulation of a

definitive agreement. Gen. Ayub Khan went to the extent of releasing statement that he will go to war with India 'if necessary' (Muni 2009: 52). Under such strained circumstances Nehru, in India, also did not conceal his disliking and resistance towards the military regime and few weeks later after Ayub Khan's statement, in press conference said:

If I may say so with all respect to Gen Ayub Khan, it (war) does not worry us very much, although inevitably we have to be wide awake. Where power is concentrated in an individual, and that individual is a military person, the normal checks which occur in a government is good or not is not for me but for the people of Pakistan to say. But one thing is clear that nowhere in the wide world today there is such a naked military dictatorship as in Pakistan. There is no veil about it. Inherent in such a system are always certain risks and dangers. (Jawaharlal Nehru: Selected Speeches, September 1946-April 1961.)

Concurrently, amid the backdrop of strained relations, the bilateral trade volume between India and Pakistan experienced a consistent and discernible downturn. In the backdrop of this tensed environment efforts were made by New Delhi to ameliorate the situation. It is worth mentioning that during the years between 1962 and 1963, diplomatic mission for addressing the contentious Kashmir issue was launched alongside a series of comprehensive dialogues unfolded between the two nations. These six rounds of dialogue sought to iron out the complexities of the long-standing dispute. In 1964, an additional diplomatic manoeuvre transpired when Sheikh Abdullah, a prominent Kashmiri leader, was released after an extended period of eleven years in detention (Cohen 2004: 115). His release was accompanied by a calculated initiative, often referred to as a 'peace plan' with an intention of fostering a more amicable environment. Regrettably, the objectives were abruptly cutten short due to the untimely demise of Jawaharlal Nehru, which terminated the momentum of Sheikh Abdullah's mission and the associated peace efforts (Chadda 2000: 198). Concurrently, the region found itself enmeshed in escalating tensions that eventually propelled India and Pakistan into a full-fledged war, within less than two decades after their partition.

In April of 1965, Pakistan's armed forces launched an attack on Indian positions with a full infantry brigade, targeting areas situated six to eight miles within Indian territory in the region of Kutch (Gehlot and Satsangi 2004: 19). Pakistan's rationale for this assault was based on a revisionist approach to international boundaries, wherein they unilaterally redefined the boundary with India's Kutch district in the state of Gujarat while disregarding the previous maps and agreements. This conflict subsequently extended into the Kashmir region resulting in a seventeen-day-long war. While Indian leaders characterized by a more liberal approach, exhibited eagerness to restore the status quo. Driven by the foreign policy principles like

‘peaceful resolution of conflict’ and ‘peaceful co-existence’ and ‘willingness to cooperate’ the foreign policy practitioners, initiated dialogue towards chalking out the roadmap for peaceful resolution. But on the contrary the Pakistani military was reluctant to engage. Gen. Ayub Khan, exercised a more stubborn stance, primarily, focusing on achieving resolution of the Kashmir dispute at the onset (Mukherjee 2014: 177). Under the umbrella of United Nations diplomacy, a ceasefire was brokered, which came in effect on September 23, 1965. Eventually, international pressure compelled Gen. Ayub Khan to agree upon the peace discussions without any preconditions. Following a sequence of deliberations, guided, supervised and mediated by the Premier of the Soviet Union, Alexei Kosygin, India and Pakistan culminated their diplomatic efforts in the Tashkent Declaration on the 10th of January 1966. The principal impetus for India's engagement in this process was to laid down the foundation of a robust and amicable neighbouring relation that aimed at comprehensively enhancing the overall bilateral relationship. However, this declaration was prematurely terminated by the untimely passing of Lal Bahadur Shastri shortly after the accord had been signed (Chadda 2000: 200-201). Despite partial diplomatic progress, the ground reality remained complex. Although both countries had reached a diplomatic compromise and the ceasefire was in place, Pakistan's armed forces continued to violate the agreement on various occasion at numerous fronts. Soldiers on both the sides were still entrenched along the border, maintaining a state of tension and vigilance. Approximately one thousand seven hundred violations of the cease-fire line took place after the U.N. trace agreements (Gehlot and Satsangi 2004: 17-21).

Concurrently, the same period witnessed a discernible reduction in bilateral trade and economic interactions between India and Pakistan. It is pertinent to recognize that the phase under scrutiny has been the period when the leadership of Pakistan was vested predominantly on the military generals, an ultra-political actor who had significantly shaped the trajectory of Pakistani foreign policy. This gradual deterioration culminated in a state where even minimal interactions between the two nations were absent; and concomitantly there was a significant escalation of defence and military expenditures. While both nations engaged in peace negotiations, the challenges of translating diplomatic agreements into on-the-ground stability and cooperation remained superficial. Thus, the period of 1965 had been marked as significant phase of diplomatic manoeuvring and engaging with military though underlying tensions that persisted despite continuous efforts.

Whether through military means or diplomatic negotiations, the inability of the Ayub Khan-led administration to achieve its objectives of revolving the protracted dispute exerted

profound ramifications. This led to the culmination of internal unrest that reverberated through Pakistan's sociopolitical landscape. As events unfolded, General Ayub Khan found himself compelled to relinquish authority to General Yahya Khan in 1969 (Oberest 2019: 123). Both the consecutive military regimes emphasized on the process of centralization under bureaucratic and military tutelage which had ultimately fragmented Pakistani society and politics and gave birth to Bangladesh (Basu 2012: 183-84). Myriad of unfulfilled pledges and instances of perceived betrayal fuelled in the intensification of a struggle for self-determination and clamour for autonomy, within the geo-political space of erstwhile East Pakistan (Cohen 2004: 91-93). This climate of discontent and struggle eventually prompted India to get involved in the internal dynamics of Pakistan. The developments in East Pakistan held a gushing influence over regional stability. As the struggle further intensified the stability along the border areas were disrupted heavily and consequently India was almost forced to intervene. In a span of less than six years, the historical adversaries once again found themselves facing each other and gearing-up for another armed conflict. On the 3rd of December 1971, General Yahya Khan officially initiated hostilities against India, on-ground of accusations of abetting a secessionist movement within East Pakistan. This was the third in the series of India-Pakistan wars and the one that was fought on a major scale. In a brilliant action the Indian Army, Air and Navy fought back the aggression, liberated East Pakistan (Bangladesh) and forced the Pakistani troops for an unconditional surrender in Dacca cantonment (Gehlot and Satsangi 2004: 23-25). This action of India had gone down the history as the first and most significant strategic as well as reactive foreign policy effort undertaken by India to consolidate democratic aspirations of the East Pakistanis.

The triumph achieved through the intensive effort and bolstered by India's support, ensured that the course of these emerging nation (Bangladesh) would be shielded from the influence of radical pro-Islamic nationalist factions. The evolution of these young democracy would be safeguarded from the sway of radical and extreme nationalist elements of Pakistan. By this means, India in one hand safeguarded its ideological predilection and on the other ensured her pragmatic goal. The conclusion of hostilities marked a pivotal juncture, not only resulting in the emergence of a democratic order in the form of the newly established Bangladesh in the eastern domain but also hastening a shift in Pakistan's geopolitical landscape and territorial construct (Basu 2012: 185). In the immediate aftermath of the cessation of hostilities, the reins of Pakistan's governance were embraced by democratic forces under the leadership of Julfikar Ali Bhutto. The disintegration of Pakistan had a detrimental impact on

both the civil bureaucracy and the army, compelling General Yahya Khan to transfer all authority to the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), which subsequently formed a representative government under the leadership of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (Oberst 2019: 164). The trajectories of democratization took a turn, in 1974, when the parliament gave approval to 1973 constitution and the country was shifted back to parliamentary democracy. The 1973 constitution granted significant concessions to the non-Punjabi provinces and laid the groundwork for a political system seemingly based on national consensus.

The aftermath of the 1971 conflict witnessed India's proactive engagement in seeking to reconcile differences with Pakistan, under the leadership of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, a pro-liberal democratic statesman. India, in particular, extended an overture of amicable engagement to Pakistan by inviting to participate in a conference aimed at addressing the longstanding issues, excluding the Kashmir question, as a means of fostering a tranquil and harmonious atmosphere. This diplomatic endeavour culminated in the Shimla Agreement on 2nd of July 1972, a significant milestone in Indo-Pak relations. This underscores the fact that efforts were made on the part of both the nations to address the post-war challenges and cultivate a more harmonious environment. As anticipated, bilateral equation between India and the reconstituted Pakistan at the western frontier two nations under liberal democratic leaders begun on a positive note and on a much democratic manner.

The Shimla agreement was a brief one that offered a framework for the promotion of harmonious relation, whereby the two countries agreed that, “neither side shall unilaterally alter the situation and both sides shall prevent the organization, nor provide assistance or encouragement of any acts detrimental to their maintenance of peaceful and harmonious relationship” (Gehlot and Satsangi 2004: 25-26), in order to ensure durable peace. The Agreement was underpinned by a set of foundational principles that the signatories reiterated unequivocally. These guiding principles encompasses the promises of the preservation and reverence of territorial integrity, sovereign equality, political independence and non-interference in each other's internal affairs. The agreement was served as a pivotal instrument that sought to recalibrate the relationship, primarily with the intention of establishing a framework for peaceful coexistence. Integral components of the agreement included the commitment to repatriate approximately 90,000 prisoners of war, alongside the redefining the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir front and the identification of the 1971 LoC as the new international border accompanied by minor territorial adjustments (The New York Times 1973).

Moreover, the accord pursued to rejuvenate people-to-people communication, facilitating trade and economic cooperation and fostering cultural and scientific exchanges. The Shimla Agreement facilitated several crucial outcomes, including the withdrawal of stationed troops, the repatriation of prisoners of war, and the recognition of the LoC within Jammu and Kashmir (Official Agreement, MEA 1972). It is important to mention that unilateral actions, as a gesture of friendliness, were undertaken by both India and Pakistan to manifest their intentions to rebuild confidence and trust. India notably ceded a substantial concession by returning a substantial portion of the territory that it had captured during the 1971 conflict (Official Agreement, MEA 1972). In return, it received a smaller area held by Pakistan. Moreover, India also concurred with Bhutto's proposal of sequentially addressing the issues at hand. On the other hand, Pakistan demonstrated a significant concession by agreeing to resolve the outstanding Kashmir issues bilaterally, foregoing its earlier insistence on external mediation, notably involving the United Nations (Muni 2004: 79). It was of particular significance that the agreement remained adaptable and accommodative, leaving room for future engagements to address pending concerns. The Shimla Agreement, in essence, laid the foundation for the future of a brighter possibilities for both nations. It can be considered as a precursor to contemporary initiatives like “Aman Ki Asha”.

This accord was entered into with Pakistan's civilian government, led by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. India promptly initiated concrete efforts to address the divergences that existed with Pakistan, with the overarching aim of establishing a durable foundation for India-Pakistan relations. The civilian administrations of both countries took concrete initiatives to minimise the hostilities out of their shared commitment of restoring peace and tranquillity in the subcontinent through bilateral negotiations independently devoid of influences or interferences of external powers. This gesture was motivated by India's recognition of the need to allow Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the space to consolidate public support, which would, in the long term, facilitate the incremental resolution of persisting concerns (Muni 2004: 69-70). As a testament to this collaborative spirit, leaders from both nations based on the shared interest, rationality and likeminded attitude sat across the table for discussing comprehensive peace agreement with long enduring implications (Mukherjee 2014: 179-180).

Among political observers there were widespread understanding and assumption that Bhutto was whole heartedly committed to take the Shimla process to its logical conclusion if he had managed to overcome the crises of Baluchistan and 1977 elections enveloping his regime (Abdullah quoted in Muni 2004: 72). Within two years the Bhutto government got

embroiled in internal crisis and by the end of its five-year tenure, he managed to alienate all other opposition parties. However, Bhutto struggled to implement the federal provisions of the constitution. Instead, he resorted to employing the coercive machinery of the state to suppress political opposition. Under such circumstances, Bhutto required at least the implicit support of the civil bureaucracy and the military high command (Oberst 2019: 164-165). Butto failed to garner support from the both, setting the stage for another coup. Thus, against the allegations of rigging the 1977 national assembly election, the army stepped-in to throw out the civilian government (Muni 2004: 72).

Upon assuming power, General Zia imposed a ban on all political parties and expressed his firm commitment to transform the Pakistani state and society into an Islamic framework. To establish a popular support base and legitimize the military's role in Pakistani politics, Zia conducted non-party elections and introduced a series of Islamization policies. After confirming his own position through a controversial 'Islamic' referendum, Zia completed a non-party election for the provincial and national assemblies and amended the 1973 constitution (Cohen 2004: 107-108). Thereby, he announced the end of martial law on December 30, 1985, heralding a new era of democracy in Pakistan. One significant initiative taken by President Zia was the introduction of amendments to the 1973 constitution, which aimed to consolidate his authority within the parliamentary system (Baqai 2005: 50). The most consequential of these amendments was the eighth amendment, which severely undermined public faith in the democratic system. With this amendment in place, the president gained substantial control and empowering him with the authority to take any drastic decisions that deemed necessary to safeguard national integrity. Over the subsequent twelve years, often driven by personal conflicts or concerns over power shifts various, presidents exploited this amendment to dismiss several prime ministers from their positions. This tendency had the potential for further eroding the stability of democratic governance. Consequently, a renewed phase of Martial law regime under Gen. Zia-ul-Haq commenced.

In the aftermath of the general elections held in March 1977, a significant change of regime unfolded in India as well. The newly formed coalition government, led by Morarji Desai, assumed power. This transition occurred against the backdrop of a military takeover in Pakistan, which was marked as a momentous disruption of the consolidation of electoral democracy. General Zia-ul-Haq's administration pursued a course of action that involved the imprisonment and the prosecution of the deposed Prime Minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and his other associates, on charges of corruption and complicity in the murder of political adversaries.

(Oberest et al.: 116). In response to these developments, the official foreign policy stance of the Indian government was underscored by non-interference in Pakistan's internal affairs (Gehlot and Satsangi 2004: 75-76) and chose not to formally comment on Bhutto's hanging. The then president of India, Dr. Sanjiva Reddy, who happened to be on a visit to India's North eastern region, condemned Bhutto's hanging, while officially the Indian Government maintained silence. Further, by an official statement it was clarified that President Reddy's reaction was his personal opinion and none of the government's policy and thereby it was publicly acknowledged as an act of non-interference in the internal affairs of Pakistan. While the civil society and media in India strongly reacted to the military intervention viewing it as a detrimental setback to Pakistan's nascent democratic phase and exhibited robust sympathy towards Bhutto and vehemently condemned his execution (Muni 2009: 73). On the contrary the Indian government refrained from openly criticizing General Zia-ul-Haq's military coup. Regrettably, the momentum that had been cultivated towards fostering amicable relations and mitigating long-standing hostilities encountered an impasse with the passing of likeminded statesmen from both nations. This juncture marked the onset of a period characterized by tepid relations for nearly eleven years, enduring throughout the military regime's tenure. During this time, occasional, albeit largely insignificant and without a genuine commitment, diplomatic overtures were made, in an attempt to maintain a superficial formal diplomatic engagement. Therefore, what is evident that the period following the 1977 elections and takeover by the military brought about prominent behavioural alteration leading to paradigm shift in political equations.

Soon afterward, within a span of three years political landscape underwent another transition as the non-Congress coalition government's tenure proved short-lived. Mrs. Indira Gandhi's return to office with landslide victory. During this time, the bilateral relationship further decline marked by mutual accusations and strained relations. During this phase, the relationship between Mrs. Gandhi and her Pakistani counterpart, plummeted at the nadir. The 1980s ushered in a period of renewed military confrontations subsequent of Mrs. Gandhi's authorization of 'Operation Meghdoot' aimed at consolidating India's authority over the Siachen glaciers. This operational dynamic underscored the strategic significance attached to territorial integrity and sovereignty. This operation was primarily conceived as a pre-emptive measure aimed at asserting India's control and ownership over the Siachen glaciers (Muni 2009: 74).

During the 1980s, a distinct and concerning pattern of equation emerged, marked by Pakistan's sponsorship of political terrorism. It was a state-sanctioned strategy directed against

India's political establishment. This strategy took root and subsequently gained traction. Its primary objective was to undermine India's political system and destabilize its internal affairs. This deliberate tilling of political terrorism by Pakistan engendered as one of the most formidable obstacles in the course of India-Pakistan relations. The external forces such as Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) after the return of Amanullah Khan from Britain in December 1986 started indoctrination and providing aid to the Kashmiri youth. Besides there were traces of growing involvement of the intelligence agencies of Pakistan in arms sponsoring and training to Kashmiri youth, landed Kashmir valley in a precarious situation (Gehlot and Satsangi 2004:83-84).

Subsequently in the political front also momentous changes were introduced. General Zia's attempts to quell opposition through concessions, coupled with an erosion of human rights standards, paradoxically contributed to the consolidation of resistance against his rule. A consensus was reached involving the Pakistan People's Party, the Pakistan National Alliance, and eight additional political entities that aimed at dismantling the authoritative regime. On the 6th of February, 1981, formalized their coalition by signing a charter, heralding the inception of the "Movement to Restore Democracy" (Sardar 2008: 21-22). This movement catalysed protests and violent clashes with the Zia government, spanning Karachi and the western regions of Pakistan. Zia-ul Haq is remembered in history as the architect of the Islamic thrust in Pakistan's politics. Islamization, pioneered by Zia as a weapon of policy, had grown by leaps and bounds in Pakistan. The motive was to transform the psyche and value system based on Islamic value system. This approach was shared by many, even this garnered support from the armed forces and ISI, resulting that the Islamic valour in Pakistan outshined even the military might. As a response to this approach Mrs. Gandhi adopted a calculated countermeasure rooted in realpolitik. She started extending clandestine support to the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and its emerging leader, Benazir Bhutto, the daughter of the late Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. This support was directed towards the PPP's endeavour to restore democratic institutions and counter challenge Gen. Zia-ul-Haq's regime. The part of broader strategy the pro-democratic PPP activists were permitted to find sanctuary in India and utilize the country as a base for their political activities. Significantly, Mrs. Gandhi displayed empathy for the agitation unfolded in Sindh against General Zia-ul-Haq's administration (Mukherjee 2014: 180-181). The combining effect of this chain of action led India's relation with her military counterpart to reach at nadir. This phase was further marked by a conspicuous decline in bilateral trade, coincided with an escalation in defence expenditure (reaching an apex) thereby accentuating the prevailing

security concerns (Muni 2009: 78). This dimension presented itself as a formidable impediment to cultivating meaningful and stable relations between the two nations.

The period from 1983 witnessed heightened internal political tensions within India due to the emergence of secessionist movements, prominently spearheaded by Sikhs. Mrs. Gandhi attributed the emergence of secessionist movements in Punjab aiming at establishment of Khalistan, on General Zia-ul-Haq's alleged support for the movement and accused him of orchestrating conspiracies against India (Muni 2009: 75-78). This period culminated with a tragic turn of events, as Mrs. Gandhi was murdered on the 31st of October 1984, at the hands of her own bodyguards to avenge the military incursion into the sacred Harmandir Sahib during 'Operation Blue Star' (Brar 2014: 51). This era illustrated the intricacies of India's political manoeuvring and nuanced approaches employed in response to geopolitical developments. This was partly in the line with India's sympathy for any democratic movement and partly in reaction to the suspected Pakistani support for Sikh insurgency in the Punjab (Satish Kaushik quoted in Muni 2009: 73-77).

All these eventualities triggered a profound upheaval in Indian politics, ushering in a period of profound uncertainty and significant changes. In the immediate aftermath of Mrs. Gandhi's assassination, her son, Rajiv Gandhi, assumed her mantle under the collective insistence of prominent political leaders (Gehlot and Satsangi 2004:83). Rajiv Gandhi's electoral victory engendered a resolute shift in India's domestic political landscape. He sought to normalise relations with General Zia-ul-Haq's regime in Pakistan (Kukreja 2003: 49). In this manner, Mr. Gandhi's leadership steered by a pragmatic approach ushered in a distinctive foreign policy orientation, characterized by a departure from his predecessor's strategy. These domestic developments had palpable foreign policy implications, prompting a gradual transformation in Pakistan's stance towards India. This shift was underpinned by an intent to foster more cooperative and constructive relations with Pakistan, marked by pragmatic diplomacy and recalibrated diplomatic engagement.

Rajiv Gandhi, undertook a proactive diplomatic initiative, with the aim of addressing the protracted Siachen conflict, by initiating discussions with Pakistan's military regime. A number of mutual Confidence Building Measures (CBM) were agreed upon between the two countries. The CBMs were primarily related to nuclear facilities, by which the possibilities of a direct conflict was avoided during India's Operation Brass Tacks (November 1986- March 1987). This diplomatic endeavour presented a remarkable instance of military officials

demonstrating a willingness to curtail defence expenditures through collaborative efforts with India. Swiftly reciprocating this overture, India responded affirmatively by initiating constructive dialogue that yielded significant breakthroughs (Jain 1988:59).

This unusual collaboration between liberal democrat and military entities to mitigate defence expenditures was a development worth mentioning. Regrettably, the nascent hope for sustained progress was short-lived, undermined by internal dynamics within Pakistan's military hierarchy. Certain military constituents perceived the burgeoning peace process with India as antithetical to their strategic interests and sought to impede it at all cost. This unfavourable turn of events was coupled with the sudden demise of General Zia-ul-Haq in a perplexing plane crash (Kukreja 2003: 82), ultimately obstructed the culmination of a promising diplomatic advancement that was under process. His death not only marked the cessation of his leadership but also faced an insurmountable challenge that hindered the realization of ambitious Siachen accord, which was formulated with an aspiration of fostering a prosperous harmonious and cooperative bilateral relationship.

Pakistan's Initial Democratic Endeavour and Dawn of Renewed Bilateral Efforts

The ten years period between 1988-1999, was marked in the political history Pakistan as a decade of twelve government within ten years. Following Zia's demise, Ghulam Ishaq Khan assumed the presidency as the chairman of the Senate and elections were set in motion. The November 1988 elections marked a significant shift, as they were strong-minded to conduct election based on political party platforms for the first time in fifteen years. By 1988, Pakistan had descended into a state of instability with violence permeating various regions. The unexpected demise of General Zia, paved the way for Benazir Bhutto to secure victory in the parliamentary elections. None of the parties secured an outright majority in the National Assembly, but the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) secured maximum number of seats. Consequently, Benazir Bhutto, the chairperson of PPP, became the prime minister after the party formed a coalition with smaller parties to establish a working majority (Khan 2005: 122; Bora 2010: 680). Throughout this pro-democracy campaign, the Bhutto family members faced harassment, and repeated imprisonments. India consistently exhibited sympathy and provided discreet backing to Benazir Bhutto and the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) in their endeavours to establish democratic governance. Concurrently, the power struggle between elected civilian politicians and unelected ruling factions escalated after the 1985 elections. Meanwhile, Benazir Bhutto displayed her adeptness in the political arena by consistently advocating for the

advancement of election dates ahead of the originally planned 1990 schedule (Cohen 2004: 61). Assuming the mantle of her father Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's political legacy, Benazir Bhutto officially assumed office on December 2, 1988, becoming the second democratically elected head of state in her country's brief history of democracy (Sardar 2008: 24). Notably, she not only became Pakistan's first female Prime Minister but also the first woman to lead a contemporary Muslim nation.

It is important to mention that the resurgence of a civilian administration within the framework of democratic principles was wholeheartedly greeted by India. A significant event in this context was the meticulously scheduled three-day summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), convened from December 29 to 31, 1988. From this summit PM Benazir Bhutto started her journey of engaging with her counterparts from neighbouring South Asian nations. The foremost among them was Rajiv Gandhi, the then prime minister of India. At that time Ms. Bhutto commented, “Bury the Hatchet.....let’s start a new chapter.....Rajiv & I belong to a new generation.....we both can start afresh” (Sardar 2011: 25-28). The conference facilitated the resumption of dialogues encompassing a wide spectrum of issues. The initiative was an alluring blending of multitude of elements ranging from cultural exchange to deliberations on civil aviation matters. A pivotal bilateral agreement was forged wherein both parties committed to refraining from launching assaults against each other's nuclear power installations. Collectively, the elected leaders achieved consensus on matters of cooperation on intelligence sharing; and combating the persistent challenge posed by illicit drug trade within the region; and yielded agreement on a range of issues that were necessitating attention impending for decades (Doherty and Katheriene 1990: 21).

A disconcerting observation emerges though civilian government under the leadership of democratically elected Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto was at the helm of affairs. Her tenure was characterized by an emphasis on sociopolitical reforms and foreign policy initiatives, which often sparked contention with the more traditional or Islamist political elements. But unfortunately, the subsequent period did not perform any better in terms of advancing the diplomatic agenda because conflict resolution and policy implementation remained hostages of military predominance. Despite the democratic façade, the civilian administration found itself bereft of definitive authority over pivotal matters particularly, relating to India. Despite assurances from Benazir Bhutto regarding an investigation in matter of Pakistan's covert support for insurgency and militant activities in the Punjab and Kashmir regions, was never conducted. Practical implementation of the pledges made by Bhutto remained elusive

(Mukherjee 2014:182-183). Underlying this state of affairs, the inexorable reality was that Pakistan's military establishment maintained a stranglehold over critical policy domains such as those involving India and the nation's nuclear programme. Consequently, the civilian government started operating within the constraints of the military dominance. This dynamic highlighted the enduring influence of the military apparatus in shaping Pakistan's strategic and security-oriented decisions, even as the country appeared to have moved towards democratic governance under the leadership of Benazir Bhutto (Dixit 2002: 91-93). Later in 2001 in one of her interviews she characterised the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) as a 'state within a state' and added that even when she was Prime Minister, her conversations were monitored by the ISI and she even blamed the military for encouraging Pakistan-based militant organisations such as the Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT), the Jaish-e-Mohammed and the Harkatul Mujahideen to be active in the Kashmir valley (Cherain 2001: Frontline). It was unfortunate that the evil eye of the military kept falling on Pakistan's democracy that clogged democratic institutionalism from taking strong roots in Pakistan and correspondingly the preferred rapport between the two could never be established.

The era spanning from 1988 to 1999 marked a phase of democratic governance in Pakistan, characterized by alternating leadership between Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif, each holding brief tenures as heads of state. However, the efficacy of Benazir Bhutto's political reform initiatives was substantially curtailed by the considerable influence wielded by Ghulam Ishaq Khan, an ultraconservative President and his collaborators within the military hierarchy (Kukreja 2003: 53). In 1990, President Ghulam Ishaq Khan dismissed Prime Minister Bhutto under the provision of the eighth amendment of the constitution and the Supreme Court upheld this decision. Subsequently, election was once again held, merely after two years of the previous electoral exercise (Oberst 2019: 167-68). Though Khan formally dismissed her, but had been widely reported that the military played a proactive role in instigating this process and a course of action that the bureaucratic apparatus willingly embraced. This orchestrated transition propelled the ascendancy of Nawaz Sharif, another conservative parliamentarian, to the position of Prime Minister (Sardar 2008: 33).

Amidst the subsequent regime changes both in India and Pakistan, the pursuit of building trust and enhancing neighbourly relations receded into the background. Despite some limited progress in economic ties during the post-Cold War 1990s, bilateral economic relations remained relatively marginal. This period witnessed a consistent escalation of tensions between India and Pakistan, primarily driven by the ongoing insurgency in Kashmir sponsored by

elements within the Pakistani military. Being intertwined with issue of national identity, the nature of terrorism underwent a transformative shift in their formation and purpose. In parlance another disturbing tendency of garnering excessive trust on police and paramilitary forces became the norm of the day. Furthermore, the common people became increasingly internalized by radical ideologies disseminated by various actors. Notably, the Kashmir valley became the focal point, with entrenched fundamentalists and militants infiltrating various echelons of governmental structures. Official reports had hard evidence that insurgent elements in collusion with the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and Pakistani armed forces was deliberately fomenting unrest in the region (Muni 2009: 58). Terrorism, thus, evolved into a strategic tool used to manipulate foreign policy dynamics and advance particular strategic objectives. This period of political transition was contextualized by a havoc shift in socio-political, geo-strategic and economic sphere.

Yet, Nawaz Sharif's economic policies experienced relative success, which in turn irked other stakeholders within Pakistan's political landscape. The Pakistani public exhibited a declining trust in the democratic system, perceiving it as corrupt, disorderly and entangled in-between the conflicts of the military and bureaucratic elite. This sentiment was reinforced with the dismissal of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. By 1993, before completing his term, Sharif faced similar charges of corruption, mismanagement and constitutional violations. Once again, his dislodgment was also orchestrated by President Ghulam Ishaq Khan under the same provisions of the Eighth Amendment, as Ms. Bhutto's (Muni 2009: 59-62). The unprecedented declaration of the dismissal of the National Assembly (NA) and Sharif, as unconstitutional by the Supreme Court, demonstrated a shift in the power dynamics. This political upheaval led to military intervention, compelling both the president and prime minister to resign and further diminishing the legitimacy of the electoral process (Cohen 2004: 147-48). A discernible shift in popular sentiment in favour of democratically elected leader was evident and alongside apprehensions about power dynamics moving away from military control to the judiciary was glaring.

This facilitated Benazir Bhutto's return to the office of Prime Minister for the second term. In the subsequent elections, once again the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) claimed the majority of seats, resulting in the reinstatement of Bhutto as prime minister. During this phase, Benazir Bhutto's regime was marked by a more measured approach to India, operating in tandem with the military establishment. The trajectory of Pakistan's India policy was chiefly steered by the Pakistani intelligence agency, the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), and the armed

forces. This time Ms Bhutto made a clear departure from her earlier stance as Prime Minister. Contrary to earlier policy stance, she overtly lent her support to Muslim insurgents operating in Indian-held Jammu and Kashmir, who were engaged in sporadic confrontations with the Indian military. To remain in power, she made a calculated move by making public declarations and affirming Pakistan's intent to advance its nuclear weapons program (Gehlot and Satsangi 2004: 194-195). This heightening apprehensions about a potential nuclear arms race between Pakistan and India. This pronouncement further strained the already uptight relations between the two nations

Over decades, the persistent political hostilities between India and Pakistan have translated into a state of fragile economic ties, even though the notion of preferential trade agreements gained momentum among South Asian countries under the banner of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) from the mid-1990s onwards. Despite India's gesture of extending Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status in 1994, the Pakistani stance toward India remained contingent upon a resolution of the Kashmir issue (Bush and Floger 1994: 20-24). Evidently, the prospects of improving bilateral relations were hitched with breakthrough of 'core' concern i.e. Kashmir.

In retrospect, despite a promising initiation during Benazir Bhutto's first term in office in 1988, the resolution of critical outstanding matters remained elusive. This elusiveness, coupled with Pakistan's covert backing of separatist insurgency, underscored Pakistan's enduring role as an active revisionist force. Ms. Bhutto's consistent effort to avert clashes and maintain a peaceful rapport with the Pakistani military started straining her fiscal policies, which appeared to jeopardize the nation's relationship with the international community providing assistance (Muni 2009: 81). However, her tenure of governance proved to be marred by corruption and misuse of state resources, severely impacting the welfare of the Pakistani people (Fair 2011: 583). President Leghari, alongside the support of the Supreme Court for the second time dismissed Bhutto to safeguard the autonomy of their positions in the government. By then another election was scheduled for February 1997, marking the fifth electoral exercise in a span of twelve years, signifying the continuous turbulence and volatility in Pakistan's political landscape. This pattern of transitional shifts in leadership and recurring elections accentuated the inherent volatility within Pakistan's political landscape during this period.

The electoral landscape in Pakistan underwent another shift in February 1997. This resurgence marked a new phase of governance under Nawaz Sharif leadership. Utilizing their

parliamentary majority, the Muslim League (ML) brought about a significant transformation in the political system with the introduction of the thirteenth amendment to the constitution (Yamin 2015: 16-17). Subsequently, by the year 1999, the constraints imposed by the eighth amendment were removed. This amendment was formulated with an intention of effectively revoking the president's overarching authority to dissolve the National Assembly or dismiss the Prime Minister (PM), relegating their role to that of a nominal head of state, while simultaneously reasserting the primacy of the parliament as the central locus of governmental power (Cohen 2004:153-54). Its underlying objective was to reinstitute the system of checks and balances; thereby fostering and preserving political stability.

During the same period India was also steering through a period of political upheaval. The absence of a single party majority, along with the fragility of coalition governments due to recurrent departures of constituent members, created an atmosphere of uncertainty from 1996 to 1997. After a three-year hiatus, in the year of 1997, high-level India-Pakistan discussions resumed, signalling a potential renewal of diplomatic dialogue. However, these talks concluded without any substantive progress. Instead, the years 1997 and 1998 would be remembered for a series of significant terrorist incidents, such as the Sangrampora Massacre in 1997 and the Wandhama Massacre in 1998, both of which targeted Kashmiri pundits across various districts of Kashmir. These violent acts were clandestinely supported by the Pakistani military and intelligence apparatus (Muni 2009: 88-90). Evidently, during this period, the infrastructure support provided to the Jaish-e-Mohammed, an extremist group, intensified significantly.

Notably, even with a civilian government ostensibly in control in Pakistan, the military continued to exert influence over the nation's nuclear program, an authority that was intertwined with the practice of nuclear diplomacy. During the tenure of General Zia, Pakistan had adopted a strategic approach centred on undermining Indian security through proxy warfare in Jammu and Kashmir (Sardar 2008: 34). By 1998, this strategy had reached its culmination, bypassing the democratic institution. In parallel, India-Pakistan relations had further deteriorated. In this context, the year 1998 saw the rise of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) coalition government in India, with Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) majority (Muni 2009: 93-94). The nascent NDA government, characterized by a radical and anti-Pakistani posture, embarked on the initiation of a nuclear testing program to augment military capabilities. Consequently, series of events, including intensification of proxy warfare and the adoption of assertive foreign policy stances, contributed to the heightened of tension. This escalation ultimately brought India and Pakistan to the verge of armed conflict during the spring

of 1998 (Muni 2009: 91). The complex interplay of domestic politics, regional dynamics, and security concerns culminated in a critical juncture, where both nations stood at the brink of another potentially devastating conflict.

Within the democratic framework in both the nations, persistent ingenuities were undertaken to establish optimal agreements aimed at alleviating an environment of security. This process was initiated through a notable diplomatic initiative known as the ‘Bus Diplomacy’. It saw the light of the day by the introduction of the Delhi-Lahore bus service officially titled “Sada-e-Sarhad” (Mukherjee 2014: 179). On its inaugural voyage on February 19, 1999, this bus service accommodated Atal Bihari Vajpayee, the then Prime Minister of India, enroute to a summit in Lahore (Sardar 2008: 22). His counterpart, Nawaz Sharif, the Prime Minister of Pakistan, received him at the Wagah border post. Drawing upon the model set forth by the Samjhauta Express, this newly established passenger bus route facilitated travel between the Delhi and Lahore via the Wagah border transit point. This initiative was conceived with the intent of reuniting the separated families across the borders and fostering economic and tourism activities between the two nations (Muni 2009: 92-93). This inauguration marked a significant juncture in the collaborative efforts of the Indian and Pakistani governments, seeking to ameliorate the frigid and strained bilateral relations.

Both the leaders (democratically elected civilian) of these nations exhibited a resolute determination to elevate the course of their comprehensive and interconnected dialogic process, with the aim of expedite positive and constructive resolution to their predetermined bilateral agenda. Nawaz Sharif, in particular, emphasized the necessity to transcend beyond the premediated stances in order to effectively address the persistent and longstanding disputes. In response, Atal Bihari Vajpayee regarded this summit as an event of paramount significance, representing a decisive juncture in the annals of South Asian history, and cited it as “defining moment in South Asian history” (Cherian 2004: Frontline). He voiced his unwavering support for a stable, secured and flourishing Pakistan. Built upon this shared understanding and conviction, the Prime Ministers of the respective nations formally ratified ‘The Lahore Declaration’ on the 22nd of February, 1999; and agreed on the resolution of all outstanding issues including Jammu and Kashmir. Unequivocally both the statemen agreed on the approach and defined the essentiality for the “environment of peace and security” and pledging to “intensify their efforts to resolve all issues, including J&K.” (Cherian 2004: Frontline). Within the framework of this declaration both the democratic government apparatus acknowledged the inherent obligation to maintain the integrity and stability of the region which had been

challenged due to adopting the stance of moving further with nuclear programme. Thereby both the nations recognized responsibility that had been bestowed upon them to actively avert the outbreak of any nuclear conflict.

Each side pledged to "take immediate steps for reducing the risk of accidental or unauthorized use of nuclear weapons and discussed multifaceted concepts and unique doctrines with a view of elaborating measures for confidence building in the nuclear and conventional fields, aimed at prevention of conflict" (MEA, India, Lahore Declaration 1999). Alongside, both the leaders discussed the entire range of bilateral relations and regional cooperation within the ambit South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), and other issues of international concern. In a joint statement they decided that:

- Foreign Ministers of the respective nations will meet intermittently to discuss all matters of mutual concern, including nuclear-related issues;
- the two sides would discuss on World Trade Organization (WTO)-related issues to managing their individual positions;
- Will mutually determine the areas of cooperation in information technology;
- Will hold discussion for further liberalizing the visa and travel regime
- Both the countries would appoint a two-member committee at the ministerial level to examine humanitarian issues relating to civilian detainees and missing prisoners of war (Lahore Declaration 1999).

This proclamation served as a restatement of shared understanding, conviction and unwavering dedication of the like-minded leaders in overcoming the persistently strained bilateral relations and to seek a peaceful resolution of the complex issues of paramount importance.

Following the breakthrough, indications of turmoil surfaced shortly after the historic summit. This summit was regarded as an emerging challenge to the army. A notable military figure was recorded as expressing concern regarding the growing influence of PM Sharif. Among these dissenting voices was Gen. Jehangir Karamat, the Chief of the Army Staff, who advocated for the integration of the military establishment into the nation's decision-making framework, which is ostensibly necessary to restore a balance between the civilian government and the military (Gehlot and Satsangi 2004: 25-26). This move sought to mitigate the perceived over concentration of power within the civilian administration. Within a mere span of two days, Gen. Karamat resigned from his post and subsequently leading to the appointment of Gen. Pervez Musharraf as his successor who was instrumental in orchestrating the Kargil conflict with India. Gen. Musharraf's initial allegation was that security of Pakistan had been

jeopardised by devising the Lahore Summit. Lack of adequate political endorsement from the civilian government prompted him to opt for a more independent approach (Basu 2012: 182). To disseminate his objectives, he resolved to execute his mission unilaterally, embarking on a campaign of low-intensity warfare in the Kargil region to safeguard Pakistan's interest.

Consequently, the unilateral action on the part of Gen. Musharraf marked a definitive departure from the pursuit of peace that had been initiated; and the spirit of Lahore summit, was effectively derailed as the Kargil conflict unfolded leading to a discordant and fragmented trajectory in the diplomatic relations between India and Pakistan. Barely three months after the euphoric 'bus diplomacy' between India and Pakistan, infiltration from Pakistan into India had triggered the worst crisis between the two countries ever since the 1971 war. Throughout the winter of 1998 to 1999, discrete elements embedded within the Pakistani Armed Forces and intelligence agencies orchestrated covert training activities, dispatched proficient mercenaries, ostensibly cloaked as mujahideen, across the Indian side of the Line of Control (LoC) (Muni 2009: 173). This surreptitious mission was christened as 'Operation Badr' and it harboured ambitions to sever the essential communication lines between the regions of Kashmir and Ladakh. Simultaneously, the operation sought to compel the Indian military forces to retreat from the Siachen Glacier and ultimately coercing India into participating in negotiations to resolve the broader Kashmir dispute (Gehlot and Satsangi 2004: 35-40). Kargil war manifested a clear departure from the previous three conflicts. This was because the conflict transpired at a juncture when the subcontinent had just barged into a nuclearized security milieu.

Undoubtedly, it could be asserted with unwavering certainty that the intrusions by Pakistan across the border were meticulously planned over a span of several months. According to some official reports it was conceived that even as PM Vajpayee was engaged in talks with his Pakistani counterpart in Lahore, a duplicitous move unfolded with Pakistani troops being surreptitiously dispatched into Indian territory (Muni 2009: 75). The Kargil infiltration must be understood as an integral component of a calculated and strategic manoeuvre aimed at thrusting the Kashmir issue to the forefront of international attention. This assertion gained credence from the fact that merely three months subsequent to the "historic summit", PM Vajpayee was compelled to authorize Indian armed forces to initiate air strikes against Pakistani intruders in the Kargil region. The Kargil incident manifests the inauguration of a new phase characterized by heightened Pakistani military decisiveness in policy outcome. This exemplifies the intricate intersections between military strategy, diplomatic endeavours, and the underlying dynamics of the devolution of Pakistan from democratisation to militarization.

The political analysts believed that the stratagem underpinning the assault had been initiated in the wake of Pervez Musharraf's appointment as the Chief of Army Staff in October 1998. Subsequent to the conflict, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif vociferously claimed his lack of awareness and knowledge regarding the plans. He contended that he was only acquainted of the situation when he received an urgent phone call from his Indian counterpart, A.B Vajpayee (Muni 2009: 94-95 & 99). It should be noted that Pakistan had previously encountered military setbacks, but none of them had inflicted such profound repercussions as Kargil. Global condemnation reverberated strongly. This denunciation encompassed Pakistan's status as a state that facilitated terrorism and harboured rogue elements.

In the wake of the Kargil conflict, diplomatic dialogues between democratic India and military led Pakistan were conspicuously absent at the higher echelons, coinciding with an escalated insurgency within the Kashmir valley (Mukherjee 2014: 175). Musharraf's resolute stance on the Kashmir matter engendered a truncation of negotiations with India. In parallel, the ambitious agenda of the India-Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, established subsequent to Prime Minister Vajpayee's Lahore visit in March 1999, found itself in a state of suspended animation following the confrontations in Kargil. The strategic cooperative endeavour such as the Natural Gas pipeline project, conceived to facilitate energy transmission from Iran through Pakistan to India, lost its appeal to India after Kargil, leading to a cessation of dialogue between the two nations on this initiative. The hijacking of Indian Airlines flight IC 841, attributed to the intelligence agency ISI, in December 1999, further exacerbated the already strained environment (Gehlot and Satsangi 2004: 174).

Return of Authoritarianism and Down-Scaling of Bilateral Relation

Though the legislative achievements of the Muslim League were commendable, their overall performance was characterized by a mixture of successes and challenges. PM Sharif encountered growing disapproval from various fronts, as he faced allegations of being power-hungry and potentially involved in corruption. His actions, such as the removal of the chief justice of the supreme court and the army chief shortly after the revision of the eighth amendment, raised concerns about his expanding influence (Oberest et.al 2019: 169-70). Additionally, there were reports of crackdowns on media outlets critical of his government. The convergence of several factors, including Prime Minister Sharif's reluctance in addressing the Kashmiri opposition, escalating factional disputes and the pervasive threat of terrorism, provided Gen. Musharraf the necessary rationale to orchestrate a coup d'état and overthrow the

civilian government (Cohen 2004:155; Oberst 2019: 226-27. These developments underscored the complex interplay of political power and the need for equitable governance in Pakistan. Effectively executed on October 12th, 1999, General Musharraf successfully deposed Prime Minister Sharif and the Muslim League, from their democratically elected positions of power, justifying his actions by asserting that he aimed to restore law and order while reinforcing the institutions of governance (Basu 2012: 192). Upon assuming power, General Musharraf declared the dissolution of the Sharif government, suspension of the constitution and adjourned both national and state legislatures. Despite this action, Musharraf refrained from declaring martial law and emphasized on the preservation of fundamental rights guaranteed by the constitution and the continuity of all laws except those altered by military authority (Cohen 2004: 127). The country's courts were allowed to function, albeit with limitations, as they were not permitted to interfere with orders originating from the chief executive (Oberst 2019: 169-71). Notably, Provisional Constitution Order No. 1 of 1999 stipulated that the President could only act in accordance with and with the advice of the chief executive. Under his role as chief executive, Musharraf vested himself virtually with entire power by undermining the legislative and judiciary branches (Basu 2012: 191); thereby establishing an authoritarian regime at its zenith. It is noteworthy that despite the suspension of the constitution, it was not abrogated; rather held in 'abeyance,' with the expectation of its eventual reinstatement when more conducive circumstances would prevail (Baqai 2005: 50). Initially, the Pakistani public were of the apprehension that Musharraf's assumption of power might be temporary, with the expectation that he would eventually call for new elections to reestablish the National Assembly.

Pakistan contended with the notion that the ousting the existing leaders had been the part of transitory measure ostensibly undertaken to restore and uphold the principles of law and order while simultaneously reinforcing the institutional framework of governance. Musharraf assured the popular mass that military would not continue to clinch onto the realm of authority rather would convene fresh elections for the National Assembly, soon after the completion of cleansing mechanism. The period spanning from 1999 to 2010, the state of Pakistan witnessed a dominant influence of the military, which was exerted through the implementation of various legal mechanisms, most notably the Provincial Constitution Orders (PCOs) in 1999 and 2007, as well as a Legal Framework Order (LFO) and a significantly altered constitution following the 17th Amendment (Oberst 2019: 172-73). However, Musharraf abstained from instituting electoral reinstatement until October 2002, thus maintaining his strong grip on authority

(Oberest et.al 2019: 164). However, contrary to these expectations, Musharraf refrained from conducting any elections until October 2002, as directed by the Supreme Court (Oberst 2019: 229). On the contrary by July of 2001, Musharraf further consolidated his authority by declaring himself president before engaging in a meeting with the Indian prime minister; a move ostensibly aimed at legitimizing his position within the Pakistani government (Muni 2009: 115). In April 2002, General Musharraf sought to formalize his position as the head of state held a referendum, which secured an overwhelming victory and granted him an additional five-year term as president. The referendum also resulted in the reinstatement of the constitution, albeit with modifications outlined in a document known as the LFO. This framework not only extended Musharraf's term but also augmented the president's authority and expanded the membership of both houses of the legislature. Subsequently, parliamentary elections were conducted in October, subject to the limitations imposed by the LFO (Oberst 2019: 230). This eventualities of reenforcing the military authority rescinded any immediate prospects of diffusing the prevailing tension. Indian PM A. B. Vajpayee's engagement with Musharraf at that juncture was met with scepticism, particularly given the backdrop of heightened discord and profoundly reduced bilateral relations between the two nations.

Mr. Vajpayee once again acceded to the prospect of engaging in dialogue, with the aim of re-discovering a lasting resolution to the persistent quandary. The Agra Summit, convened on the 16th and 17th of July in the year 2001, marked as a futile effort of the two contrasting minded leaders to confront the situation (Gehlot and Satsangi 2004:179). The summit introduced the unprecedented opportunity for a tête-à-tête between two leaders characterized by starkly opposing personas, facing each other over an assortment of contentious subjects, spanning from the Kashmir issue and trans-border terrorism to the reduction of nuclear risks and the prospect of India-Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline that poised for comprehensive deliberation. Both parties embarked upon the summit with a high sense of optimism and a spirit of magnanimity, reflecting a collective anticipation of constructive outcomes. Particularly President Musharraf used the axioms like, “cautious optimism”, “flexibility” and “open mind” to express his buoyant views for the summit (Muni 2009: 99-101). The Indian President, K. R. Narayanan, also guaranteed to take “bold and innovative” measures to discuss the “core issue” between the two countries. There were high hopes both in Pakistan and India that mutually the leaders would arrive at a robust agreement and a joint statement or declaration would be made at the end of the summit as the two leaders plunged into serious talks.

However, the negotiations and peace process collapse disastrously rendering the Agra treaty bereft of signatures. This, in turn, imparted a profound sense of disillusionment and intense bitterness that had seeped into the perceived state of relations between the two nations. While India exhibited a succession of initiatives aimed at building mutual confidence, Pakistan remained steadfast in its single-minded emphasis on the Kashmir issue (Sardar 2008: 41). Parallel to this India unwaveringly maintained that by no means it would discuss Kashmir without a 'measure of trust' concerning Pakistan's future intentions. It signalled the willingness to prioritize the expeditious resolution of the Kashmir quandary, contingent upon concurrent discussions about cross-border terrorism. However, General Pervez Musharraf declined to acquiesce to this approach. Within Pakistan's perspective, Kashmir represented the unresolved residue of the partition's agenda, consequently designating it as a contested territory and acts of violence against innocent individuals as a purported "freedom struggle" (Mukherjee 2014:183).

During a press gathering Gen. Musharraf defended the cross-border terrorism by comparing Pakistan's actions to India's support for the 'Mukti Bahini' during the liberation of Bangladesh and attributing the insurgents in Kashmir with the label of 'freedom fighters' who are striving for the liberation of the region. Despite the Agra Summit culminating in failure, Gen. Musharraf adeptly executed his covert and implicit agenda. Subsequently, it was revealed that his visit was not driven by a desire to rejuvenate bilateral relations; instead, he harboured an undisclosed intention to clandestinely convene a meeting with Hurriyat leaders in New Delhi, facilitated by the Pakistani High Commissioner. Through such actions he sought to solidify his stature as a military leader striving to safeguard his nation from obscurantist elements, while simultaneously portraying himself as a skilful negotiator and a diplomatically refined statesman. Regrettably, he accomplished both of these objectives. His private interaction with the Hurriyat leaders, conducted in defiance of the Indian government's opposition, undeniably bolstered his political standing within Pakistan and obviously strengthened his political credentials in Pakistan as being the new President (Muni 2009:101-102). Later Ms. Bhutto, asserted that the biggest obstacle to the success of Musharraf's talk with the Indian PM was the Pakistani leader's lack of 'democratic legitimacy', thus it was wrong on the part of Indian PM to receive such a disputed President of Pakistan on Indian soil, in spite of knowing well that Gen. Musharraf was the architect of Kargil massacre. Thus, it was confirmed that the traditional adversaries with divergent mindset cannot become friends overnight.

Following the breakdown of the Agra summit Pakistan's support for cross-border terrorism reached at its pinnacle when, on December 13, 2001, terrorists attacked the heavily securitised Indian Parliament complex, a symbol of strength and pride of Indian pluralist democracy. This incident followed by a successful terrorist attack on the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly House in Srinagar. These attacks on highly secured areas not only alarmed the government but also shook the entire nation. Consequently, this marked one of the most menacing security situations in the history of India-Pakistan relations. This perilous act was retrograded by the diabolic and sinister acts of militants in Kaluchak in May 2002 (Kumar 2010: 44-45). India accused Pakistan of these gruesome acts. Atal Behari Vajpayee, the Prime Minister at that time, even declared that the war on terror had reached a critical juncture. Under such grave context, not only South Asia but the whole world feared that this crisis might escalate into a nuclear confrontation.

By the last quarter of 2001, relations between India and Pakistan had sunk to a point of extreme dejection. Responding to this tension, the Indian Government implemented a series of measures, such as discontinuing the services of the Samjhauta Express train and the New Delhi to Lahore bus route; and also rejected the idea of restoring air, rail and road connections. The Indian stance was that these strains could be alleviated if Islamabad take a more meaningful steps to curb cross-border terrorism. In such tensed environment, on February 27, 2002, a Muslim mob attacked the Sabarmati Express at Godhra in Gujarat (Mukherjee 2014: 187-88). Although the intended target was military personnel but eventually the incident escalated into heinous acts of immolation of Hindus, including women and children leading to an abhorrent communal violence between Hindus and Muslims in the state of Gujrat. The idea of revising the Indus Water Treaty was abandoned and an almost undeclared state of emergency seemed to prevail along the borders. Prime Minister Vajpayee emphasized that any talks with Islamabad would be initiated only on condition of prioritize the return of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (POK) and affirmed India's unwavering stance on the Line of Control (LoC). Russia and other international actors strongly seconded India's stance on cross-border terrorism and urged Islamabad to demonstrate its novel intentions on ground by taking tangible action against terrorist operating from its soil (The Hindu 2002). Under the prevailing scenario the bitterness of relations between the two took an ugly turn with the recurring terrorist attacks throughout the year of 2002, at different parts of the country ranging from the U.S Embassy in Kolkata, Akshardham Temple in the heart of Gujarat to Ansal Plaza in New Delhi and Raghunath Temple in Jammu. Prime Minister A. B. Vajpayee reiterates that India would not hold talk with Pakistan

while “terrorists’ guns are held to our heads” (Gehlot and Satsangi 2004: 233). By the end of 2002 India rejected invitation from the Pakistan to play cricket saying ‘sports’ and ‘cross-border terrorism’ cannot go together and SAARC, a regional effort became the victim of the situation and got postponed (The Hindu 2002). With the onset of 2003, the war of words between the leaders of the respective countries was at its acme.

Unexpectedly, by the end of April 2003, a crucial development transpired in the strained relations between India and Pakistan, as Pakistani Prime Minister Zafarullah Khan Jamil had a direct telephonic conversation with his Indian counterpart, Mr. A.B. Vajpayee (The Hindu 2003). This obviously raised hopes for an early breakthrough in resuming a substantive political dialogue between the two countries. Subsequently, India took affirmative measures to restore diplomatic normalcy. The restoration of diplomatic ties commenced with the reinstatement of the High Commissioner to Islamabad, a symbolic gesture of renewed engagement. Furthermore, India announced its intention to recommence the civil aviation and bus links with Pakistan by July 2003, emphasizing on to reestablish connectivity and facilitating people-to-people interactions. Concurrently, India exhibited her commitment of reinstating peace by releasing one hundred and thirty Pakistani prisoners, underscoring a step towards humanitarian reconciliation. This multi-pronged approach exemplified a conscious effort on the part of both nations to thaw the icy political impasse and pave the way for potential amelioration in bilateral relations (The Hindu 2003). On May 2003, Pakistani P.M proposed a dialogue to India on nuclear issue where President Musharraf proclaimed that his country would work for a ‘no war pact’ with India followed by mutual reduction of troops along the borders and de-nuclearisation of South Asia (Reddy, The Hindu: 2003).

Nonetheless, despite the prolonged nature of the crisis, the growing likelihood of a protracted standoff coupled with international pressure for resolution, prompted both sides to return to the negotiation table in 2004. In February of that year, both leaders were resolute in their decision to initiate a comprehensive dialogue. The ensuing Composite Dialogue persisted for a span of five years. Throughout this duration, the public-facing diplomatic gestures exhibited by the leaders of India and Pakistan played a significant role in fostering dialogue and fostering more amicable attitudes among civil society and the media in both nations. Perhaps it was one of the superlative testimonials to the conventional confidence-building measures that had ever been espoused.

However, a remarkable and unexpected shift in dynamics occurred when a transformation in the perceptions and mindsets of the ordinary citizens of both countries was bolstered. This change was particularly noticeable among the newer generation of professionals, esteemed intellectuals and individuals from diverse walks of life. These individuals in addition to politicians, diplomats and administrative figures, began to foster a widespread belief in the potential of establishing lasting peace by moving beyond the weight of historical grievances (Gehlot and Satsangi 2004: 250). As a result, a robust civil society, buoyed by equally strong public sentiment, began to solidify its presence. In the contemporary era of advanced technology, innovative forms of communication connected people across the region. These individuals, driven by a quest for improved life choices, demonstrated a determination to shape their destinies regardless of externalities such as politics. Illustrating this transformation, a poignant example emerged when a two-year-old girl in need of heart surgery became one of the first passengers to travel to India after the reinstatement of bus service between the countries. Her parents articulated the need for better ties between the two countries despite of the intractable position of our respective government and half a century of violent history (Gehlot and Satsangi 2004: 250). At that time Indian government had announced that as a 'gesture of friendship towards the people of Pakistan, it would bear the cost of travel, stay and medical treatment of twenty Pakistani children' (Philipose, The Indian Express: 2003).

This underscores the significant role that media and public sentiment can play in shaping the trajectory of India-Pakistan relations. It highlights the potential of cooperation and a shared mindset to define the terms of discussion between the two nations. These circumstances had placed the countries at a critical crossroads, where initiatives from civil society possess the capability to impact governmental policies and reversing the usual dynamic. This shift had undeniably contributed to curbing the activities of terrorist groups that seek nothing but to perpetuate public anger and animosity on both sides of the border (Philipose, The Indian Express: 2003). This symbolized a new narrative, one that highlighted the potential for human connection and progress, even amidst historically strained relations.

The progress in bilateral relations, as envisaged, faced a temporary setback due to a change in government. Following India's national general assembly election, a coalition government led by the Congress Party and headed by Dr. Manmohan Singh came to power in May 2004. The coalition garnered support from the Left front and other regional parties. The primary policy focus of the newly formed UPA-I government was on establishing a comprehensive network of politico-economic and diplomatic connections with neighbouring

countries, with particular emphasis on Pakistan (Muni 2009: 76). The overarching vision was to break free from the historical constraints and lay the foundation for regional peace and cooperation (The Times of India: 2004). In one of his interviews with Jonathan Power, in May 2004, the then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh responding to a question how far he would accept a compromise with Pakistan on Kashmir said:

“(short) of secession, short of redrawing boundaries, the Indian establishment can live with anything as far as question of Kashmir is concerned and we need soft borders — then borders are not important, people on both sides of the border should be able to move freely.....Autonomy we are prepared to consider though all these are negotiable but an independent Kashmir would become a hotbed of fundamentalism” (The Times of India: 2004)

At that moment the diplomatic relations between India-Pakistan were dominantly about managing the link-ups in a short-term basis. The demilitarization of Siachen became an essential part of the composite dialogue, after PM Singh publicly expressed the hope in 2005 that the highest battlefield in the world could be converted into a ‘mountain of peace’ (Ghosh 2009: 2) In the mean while President Musharraf proposed a three-phase formula along with a proposal of ‘demilitarisation’, maximum ‘self-governance’ and ‘joint management’ for Kashmir in 2004 and 2005 respectively. India discarded both the proposal asserting that it encourages division of Kashmir on religious lines. Manmohan Singh said: “Any proposal that smacks of a further division of our country on the basis of religion is not going to be acceptable to us” (Sardar 2008: 25).

By the beginning of 2007, preparations for the fourth round of the composite dialogue were underway. Just before this meeting, a deeply sensitive incident occurred when the Samjhota Express, a train that symbolized connections between India and Pakistan, was targeted for bombing. The attack took place on the Indian side while the train was returning to Pakistan, carrying Pakistani civilians and a few Indian military personnel (Kumar 2010:49). Both the Indian and Pakistani governments unequivocally condemned the attack. Officials from both sides surmised that the attackers aimed to disrupt the improving relations between the two nations. This was especially poignant as the attack occurred a day prior to Pakistani Foreign Minister Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri's planned visit to New Delhi to restart peace talks with Indian leaders (Sardar 2008: 29-31). Initially, suspicions centred around Muslim fundamentalist groups, but as investigations progressed, it became apparent that the bombing was more closely tied to Hindutva militant groups. Surprisingly, subsequent investigations and a U.S. intelligence report revealed that both Hindu and Muslim fundamentalist groups had

collaborated in orchestrating the attack. It's an unfortunate irony that these religious extremists joined forces to perpetuate enmity, yet failed to cooperate when it came to fostering peace.

With the onset of new millennium, the matter of democracy already regained prominence across South Asia and Pakistan was no exception to this trend. Different factors ignited the drive towards democracy in various countries, but a common thread was the influence of popular pressure in different forms and degrees. Politically awakened and technologically interconnected new electorates played a crucial role in expediting the establishment of democratic structures. Starting from 2006, Pakistan witnessed a combination of mounting international pressure and popular demand to put an end to military rule.

Over the period of time series of unexpected events unfolded, significantly transforming the societal and political landscape of the country. The catalyst for this process emerged in November 2007, when the military dictator was compelled to relinquish his uniform in response to Lawyers' revolt, burgeoning a wave of democratic fervour. Both the opposition parties, as well as the Pakistan Supreme Court raised constitutional objections to his candidacy due to his concurrent role as the head of the military (Oberst 2019: 163). This period marked a momentous shift in Pakistan's political ethos, when the growing impact of grassroots movements was witnessed; civil society, Judiciary and media gained unprecedented importance; along with a renewed emphasis on democratic principles and accountability. This dissatisfaction gained momentum in 2007 when General Musharraf took the decision to suspend Pakistan's Chief Justice, Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry, on allegations of 'misuse of authority' (Kumar 2010: 55-56). This move prompted a wave of protests from lawyers advocating for the reinstatement of the Chief Justice and the preservation of judicial independence. Using the authority granted by the Provisional Constitutional Order, he further dismissed sixty judges from Pakistan's federal and provincial courts (Basu 2012: 182-183). This move was aimed at quashing any potential court petitions that might contest against him in election as President.

Pakistan's ostensibly dormant civil society awakened from a prolonged slumber and played pro-active role in Chaudhary's affair. Despite facing recurring economic losses, the lawyers continued their fight for re-establishing the rule of law, the reinstatement of the Chief Justice, the supremacy of the judiciary and the restoration of the constitution (Basu 2012: 207). Subsequently, parliamentary election was successfully conducted and the dismissed judges, notably Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry was reinstated (Fair 2011: 576-78). Their unwavering

commitment demonstrated the resilience of Pakistan's population in the pursuit of consolidating democracy. The lawyers' movement, identified as the 'vanguard of democracy,' was widely perceived as the embodiment of the long-awaited maturation of civil society (Basu 2012: 207). To quote a statement by Asian Human Rights Commission-

“Throughout Asia there has been no parallel to this movement. It was largely because of the movement the election was possible and in turn the people gave their mandateagainst army rulers and the illegal unconstitutional way of governance” (Asian Human Rights Commission: 2008).

These developments highlight the evolving role of civil society and media and their potential for democratic non-violent resistance to effect positive change in the nation's governance. The gaining importance of this trio held out distinctive promises as far as transition towards democracy was concerned, at least for the time being. This gave an impetus to the demand for a civilian government through elections. This civil society movement brought back the eminent opposition leaders like Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif from exile into active politics and ignited to reinforce process for restoration of democracy (Muni 2009: 113). Indeed, the citizens of Pakistan had grown weary of the prolonged military rule, reaching at its zenith with the tragic assassination of Benazir Bhutto in a public gathering during her return to Pakistan in 2007. This incident marked a turning point, intensifying public frustration. Simultaneously, a movement advocating for the restoration of judicial independence gained momentum. This period of agitation aligned with the unfolding process of democratic reinstatement and the culmination of General Musharraf's tenure as both the Chief of the Army and the head of the state, in November 2007, set the stage for a paradigm shift in politics as well as foreign policy (Basu 2012: 184). This election marked a crucial milestone as Pakistan moved forward from the era of military dominance towards the restoration of democratic courses.

Setting the Stage for Democratic Transition and Reinforcing Ties with India

From 2008 to 2020, Pakistan witnessed a dynamic and complex political landscape marked by both democratic, pseudo-democratic and undemocratic happenings. However, despite notable democratic achievements, the country also experienced several challenges to its democratic institutions and processes. The post-Musharraf era saw a transition to civilian rule, with the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) assuming power after winning the 2008 parliamentary elections (Oberst 2019: 175-76). Asif Ali Zardari became the President, and Yousaf Raza Gillani served as the Prime Minister. This marked a significant shift towards democratic governance, with the restoration of the judiciary and the repeal of various repressive laws. Nonetheless, this period also witnessed recurring political instability, which hampered the government's ability to

undertake comprehensive reforms. The PPP-led coalition government struggled to address pressing issues such as economic challenges, terrorism, and governance inefficiencies. Corruption allegations and the perceived inability to tackle pressing problems eroded the public's trust in the political leadership (Oberst 2019: 231-32). Still the existence of enormous predicaments the elected representative government was successful to complete the tenure, probably for the first time.

Amid widespread public discontentment against Gen Musharraf's nearly decade-long rule and out-off a sense of sympathy following the tragic loss of Benazir Bhutto, the Pakistan People Party (PPP) of Bhutto in juxtaposition with The Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N) headed by Nawaz Sharif emerged victorious and ascended to power (Basu 2012: 185). However, the initial coalition between these two parties was not built on strong foundations and was marred by significant differences on various matters leading to a split followed by Asif Ali Zardari, assuming the sole authority. But it is worth mentioning that throughout the political course, Sharif remained steadfast in his commitment to democratic restoration and advocated for improved relations with India despite the complex political landscape. This movement brought about a significant shift in public discourse. Even though he withdrew his support from the PPP Government led by Asif Ali Zardari, he demonstrated remarkable restraint by not destabilizing the government and allowing it to complete its tenure (Maini, Asia Dialogue: 2018). This marked a significant moment in Pakistan's journey toward democratization, whereby efforts were made to shift from a period of military influence to a more comprehensive civilian administration.

The reestablishment of democracy and the formation of a stable government in Pakistan were crucial prerequisites for reviving the stagnant peace process. However, India's response to these developments was distinct from its previous approach in similar situations. India was observing the unfolding of political course without extending any explicit moral support to the struggling democratic forces. For the first time in Pakistan's history, a prevailing sentiment emerged that advocated for the normalization of relations with India (Sardar 2008: 36). Political figures from Sharif and Zardari to the Islamist leader Maulana Fazlur Rahman were united in expressing their support for ironing out the hiccups in the bilateral ties, thanks to the potential of the newly established civilian government in Pakistan (Muni 2009: 125). Unfortunately, this opportunity was slipping away hastily. If leadership is about seizing risks and making timely decisions, then UPA-I's approach appeared to be overly cautious and hesitant in capitalizing

the situation. On the transition to democracy in Pakistan, India made very formal statement and the then, Minister of External Affairs, Pranab Mukherjee said:

India shared the anguish of the people of Pakistan at the tragic assassination of former Prime Minister Mrs. Benazir Bhutto in the despicable terrorist attack. We are gratified that in the recent elections the people of Pakistan were able to express their wishes clearly and in a democratic manner on their future. India wishes to see Pakistan develop and prosper in a stable democratic order. Government stands ready to resume the Composite Dialogue process as soon as a duly constituted government is in place (Muni 2009: 114).

Soon after assuming power the democratically elected administration in Pakistan became embroiled in internal political disputes. The stability of this democratic government was imperilled by the presence of extremist elements that often-found refuge in unstable societies. Among political analysts, there was a growing apprehension that the failure of the civilian government could plummet down Pakistan into becoming a failed state and simultaneously the India-Pakistan relations. Fortunately, Pakistan sustained the course and after a six-month hiatus, representatives from both countries resumed discussions. In May 2008, they engaged in a ministerial review of the fourth round of the composite dialogue. Despite this reengagement, persistent doubts lingered among Indian administrators (Sardar 2008: 37-38). They were concerned about the civilian government's ability to exert control over the military and effectively counter extremism and cross-border terrorism. These doubts were reinforced with suspension of the fifth phase of the composite dialogue in July 2008, against the backdrop of a suicidal attack on the Indian Embassy in Kabul, Afghanistan. The attack bears traces of involvement of Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and the Taliban extremists of Afghanistan to halt the process of de-escalation of tension (Narayanan, Hindustan Times: 2008).

Given this complex situation, restarting the dialogue was a challenge for India, especially in the aftermath of subsequent terrorist attacks in Ahmadabad and New Delhi. Upon coming into power, Zardari consistently articulated his intention to adopt a tougher stance against the menace of militancy. Interestingly, around the same time as Musharraf's resignation from the presidency, the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) was banned (Basu 2012: 201-202). This sequence of events might not had been coincidental, suggesting a shift in Pakistan's approach towards tackling extremist forces. In a statement made in October 2008 to the Wall Street Journal he stunned the world by describing the militants operating in Kashmir as 'terrorists' and also by asserting that he did not perceive India as a 'threat' (Basu 2012: 202-

203). Concurrently, annual trade volumes between India and Pakistan leap-fogged from \$251 million to \$2.3 billion over 2000-01 to 2007-08 (Mehta and Suleri, *The News*: 2010).

Following these events, a series of constructive measures were enacted, culminating in a process of reconciliation that permeated both political and social spheres for citizens of both countries. An array of Confidence-building measures was implemented, each aimed at fostering trust and cooperation (Sardar 2008: 39). Notably, initiatives were launched to enhance cross-border connectivity, such as expanding the number of flights operated by national carriers and formally reestablishing trade through road and rail links across the Line of Control (LoC). Particularly there was a significant shift in Pakistan's approach as well. For the first time, a Pakistani Head of State pledged for a “no-first nuclear-strike” policy towards India, signifying a commitment to peaceful resolution (Mehta and Suleri, *The News*: 2010). These steps collectively reflected a positive momentum towards bridging divides and fostering mutual understanding between the two nations. Zardari borrowed a quote from his late wife, and said that there's a “little bit of India in every Pakistani and a little bit of Pakistan in every Indian” (Sharma and Haq, *Hindustan Times*: 2008). All such proclamations were not only disconcerted militants but were also likely to cause discomfort within the army hierarchy. Furthermore, there was a valid concern that civilian leaders were resolute in initiating peace efforts with India, which, if realized, would potentially encroach upon the army's ostensibly impregnable position within the nation's political structure. Thus, instantaneously the backdrop of the vicious terrorist offensive in Mumbai in November was laid out. True to the oscillatory nature of the India-Pakistan relationship the progression of the Composite Dialogue found itself completely arrested subsequent to the terrorist assaults in Mumbai during November 2008. On that fateful evening of 26th of November, conversations between Pranab Mukherjee and Shah Mehmood Qureshi had revolved around augmenting trade affiliations, fostering interpersonal connections, and jointly combatting terrorism. The Indian government was also considering sending the Indian cricket team to tour Pakistan, a move which had always served as a most effective means of track-two diplomacy (Mukherjee 2014: 175).

India had asserted its position that the assault had been orchestrated by the Lashkar-e-Taiba, a Pakistan-based militant organization acting in concert and under the sponsorship of Pakistani Intelligence Agencies. The tragic events of 26/11 unveiled an unmistakable reality that the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), or at least its renegade faction, persisted in pursuing its agenda of fomenting terrorism against India. In the aftermath of the attack the inconsistent responses and contradictory statements on the part of Pakistan was an indicator of the

prevalence of influence of the Army Chief Gen. Kayani over the decision making of the civilian leadership (Muni 2009: 115). The act of nullifying the declarations made by the civilian administration accentuated the prevailing quandary that while amicable sentiments might prevail within the political echelons of the two nations but such sentiment failed to permeate through the corridors of intelligence and security apparatuses within Pakistan. Without naming Pakistan, the then Foreign Minister of India, Mr. Pranab Mukherjee said:

India believes it is the sovereign right of any people to decide..... genuine democracy does not come about simply by holding elections but rather through the process of democratisation that makes the elected representatives accountable and more importantly, in ensuring that there does not exist a separate and de facto centre of power that is actually pulling the strings (Indian Express 2008).

Whenever progress toward peace-building between the two nations seemed to be taking shape, certain elements within Pakistan acted to undermine it, leading to a blame game between both countries. The disrupting elements had maintained affiliations with Islamic militants, Islamic political factions and the ISI (Indian Express: 2008). If their objective was to obstruct reconciliation, then these dissenters had indeed achieved their goal; because such heinous attack inflicted a rupture in the ongoing efforts to thaw-up relations between the two adversaries. The intricate interplay of power dynamics between civilian and military spheres consistently exerted direct influence over India-Pakistan relations. However, a few months later in June 2009, President Asif Zardari and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh convened in Russia. Their meeting was a symbol of yearning for agreement to rejuvenate bilateral engagement. This move aimed at resuscitating a process that had momentarily taken a backseat. Subsequently, another meeting occurred between then Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani and his Indian counterpart, Manmohan Singh, in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, that same year. During this encounter, both leaders expressed their shared aspiration to reinitiate the peace process. Yet, faced with robust public and political opposition and being criticized for “appeasing Pakistan”, the Prime Minister distanced himself from the initiative (Muni 2009: 116-117).

Despite the tumultuous circumstances, the UPA-II government, which returned to power in 2009 for its second term, remained committed to addressing the bilateral tensions and persisted in cultivating a constructive atmosphere of dialogue, confidence-building, and comprehensive engagement. In comparison to its initial term, the UPA's second term exhibited a heightened sense of purpose, particularly regarding its neighbours, with Pakistan being at the focal point of attention. The SAARC summit in Thimphu played a transformative role by altering the previously entrenched dynamic between India and Pakistan, shifting it from a state

of ‘trust deficit’ to one of ‘trust building’. This shift provided a glimmer of hope for revitalizing the bilateral dialogue, and the two Prime Ministers concurred on their Foreign Ministers and secretaries convening in Islamabad in July 2010 to discuss ‘all issues of mutual concern without any preconditions’ (Chakraborty 2011: 794). Amid efforts to restore the lost momentum in relations, the Thimphu summit propelled discussions on pragmatically managing shared water resources and accentuated the need to enhance bilateral trade. Despite of talks and interactions at the secretariat level, the “Thimphu spirit” of composite dialogue process remained largely confined to paper without manifesting any substantial progress in reality, due to Pakistan's inconsistency in taking tangible actions against those responsible for the 26/11 attacks (Mukherjee 2014: 179). In spite of the numerous attempts that were made to initiate the process, it continued to remain suspended, characterized by false starts and a persistent state of limbo. Fortunately, beyond official channels, various endeavours had emerged at the level of civil society and non-governmental actors, all aimed at fostering an environment conducive to peace-building. One of the most prominent and notable among such initiatives was “Aman Ki Asha” (Hope for Peace), a collaborative venture that took root in January 2010. This initiative was led by two prominent media entities, namely the Times of India group in India and the Jang Group in Pakistan (Chakraborty 2011: 795). The two media groups call it a ‘paradigm shift’ initiative which seek to involve ‘all segments of society- the civil society, students, the business community, artists, politicians and academia (Nizami 2017:19-20).

Nonetheless, progress at the official level remained stagnant until the advent of what came to be known as “cricket diplomacy” in March 2011. During this momentous event, Singh extended an invitation to his counterpart, Yusuf Raza Gilani, to attend the semi-final match of the cricket World Cup between India and Pakistan held in Mohali. This cricket match served as a platform for discussions regarding the revival of the peace process between the two nations (Manner 2012: 3-4). Following the Mohali match, a significant development occurred in April when Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari embarked on a private visit to India. Remarkably, this visit marked the first instance of a Pakistani Head of State visiting India since 2005. Although the visit took place on an unofficial basis, primarily due to the ineptness of the Composite Dialogue, it was widely believed that Zardari and Dr. Manmohan Singh engaged in comprehensive discussions encompassing diverse subjects, ranging from counterterrorism efforts to economic ties. Following the talks, Singh said “relations between India and Pakistan should become normal that is our common desire.....We have a number of issues and we are willing to find tactical, pragmatic solutions to all of these issues” (Manner 2012: 4). Zardari

also resonated the same and desired to normalise relations, claiming: ‘we would like to have better relations with India.....we are hoping to meet on Pakistan soil very soon’ (Manner 2012: 4).

Following this encounter, a series of renewed bilateral discussions transpired in both May and July, infusing optimism for a potential resolution. In a genuine endeavour to uphold the prevailing sense of positivity, efforts were made to reinitiate negotiations concerning the Tulbul Navigation Project (also referred to as the Wullar Lake project). Remarkably, these negotiations were reignited in Islamabad, marking a significant step forward after a hiatus of four years. The most significant bilateral level progress evolved when in a sincere effort to address the core issues under the composite dialogue process, Foreign Ministers of India and Pakistan, S. M. Krishna and Hina Rabbani Khar respectively, meet in New Delhi in July to review the progress in dialogue process, in addition to charting a mutually sustainable forward-looking approach to the corpus of contentious ties (Chakraborty 2011: 794-95). This path breaking meeting was preceded by another ‘genial optimistic and constructive’ convention between the Foreign Secretaries in New Delhi, in which both the nations pledged to embark on a series of steps to bolster the course of mutual cooperation, with particular reference to trade, confidence building measures, people-to-people contact, cooperation on humanitarian and other wide-ranging issues.

An avenue brimming with potential to reshape Pakistan-India relations was laid in the realm of economic cooperation. The momentum witnessed in the political sphere bolstered both nations' resolve to augment economic collaboration, seen as a bulwark for regional and bilateral peace, progress, and prosperity. This shared sentiment found its culmination in an ambitious joint statement released on April 28, 2011, by Pakistan and India. Furthermore, concerted effort was put in action to upsurge bilateral trade from \$2.7 billion annually in 2011 to a substantial \$6 billion by the fiscal year 2013-14 (Chakraborty 2011: 796-97). To counteract unauthorized cross-border trade, customs authorities on both sides proactively established a hotline along the Attari-Wagah train route, complementing the pre-existing one for road transport. Furthermore, to breathe fresh vitality into the burgeoning economic connections between India and Pakistan, Islamabad took a significant stride in November 2011 by announcing its intention to confer “Most Favoured Nation” (MFN) status upon India by December 2012. This gesture was coupled with the replacement of the 'positive trade list' with a 'negative trade list' consisting of around twenty items (Mukherjee 2014:185-86).

These tangible measures, often referred to as ‘confidence-building measures,’ indeed demonstrated their merit leading to a talk held between the foreign ministers of India and Pakistan in July 2011. Additionally, a concerted efforts were channelised to encourage interactions between the residents of Indian-administered and Pakistani-administered regions of Jammu and Kashmir. These actions aimed to cultivate a greater sense of understanding and cooperation between the two populations (Puri, Foreign Policy: 2011). Subsequently, this meeting concluded with the formalisation of a ‘21 point Joint Statement’ that accentuated the significance of addressing the persisting unresolved disputes and the potential threats emanating from the menaces of terrorism as well as the concerning trajectory of a nuclear arms race (Jauhari 2013: 48-50).

Furthermore, in addition to these initiatives, the Foreign Ministers also reached to an accord to facilitate regular meeting of the Chambers of Commerce and Industry from both the sides. They also intended to bolster telecommunication facilities across the Line of Control (LOC) to enhance trade and to fortify counter-terrorism measures. This new wave of economic Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) held the potential to significantly augment trade links and simultaneously working towards the normalization of relations between common populace of the two nations (Puri Foreign Policy: 2011). Such endeavours had sought to unify the region of Kashmir through mechanisms like the bus service across the Line of Control (LoC), the gradual easing of visa regulations and the establishment of intra-Kashmir business entities such as the Federation of Jammu and Kashmir Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Jauhari 2013: 50) was indeed an innovative approach in itself. Resolving the Kashmir issue, which had persistently been the broader bilateral challenges, by means of non-traditional methods, was pathbreaking. The outstanding aspect of this approach here was that the two governments, albeit through unofficial channels, had earnestly and closely scrutinized potential of resolving the Kashmir issue outside the ambit of geo-politics. Thereby, the tendency was to unite the destinies of two nations not by animosity, rather by development. From such gestures it was evident that there was presence of rational minds within both the establishments who were capable of thinking beyond the conventional boundaries.

India had long held the perception that a gradual approach, rather than pursuing dramatic breakthroughs, would be the most prudent way to proceed forward. India envisaged such developments as consistent with what Krishna refers to as its ‘step-by-step approach’ to the relationship (Pattanaik, IDSA: 2012). Emphasizing liberalized trade, robust commercial ties and deeper mutual economic investments was perceived as an apparatus to strengthen and

consolidate moderate and comparatively democratic forces within Pakistan's governmental, political parties, business community, and civil society—something that even the civilian administration in Pakistan aspired to observe.

In April 2012, a significant meeting between President Zardari and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in New Delhi added further momentum to their bilateral communication and the impetus of bilateral communiqué was further reinforced. Numerous trade agreements were formulated to strengthen economic ties. Throughout 2012, Pakistan and India achieved remarkable progress in enhancing their trade relations, leading both leaders to assert that the relationship was undergoing the most cherished phase (Pattanaik, IDSA: 2012). During this time, India took the step of permitting Foreign Direct Investment from Pakistan, while Pakistan expressed its determination to import petroleum and energy resources from India. Concurrently, India was committed of granting tariff concessions to 264 items over the subsequent three years and also agreed to transmit 500 MW of electricity from Amritsar to Lahore (Economic Times 2014). Both nations also expressed a shared interest in collaborating on higher education programs. Banking restrictions for establishing branches across the border were lifted, with banks like Habib Bank and National Bank of Pakistan opening branches in India, and Punjab National Bank and Bank of India expressing interest in opening branches in Pakistan (Pattanaik IDSA: 2012). These decisions, beyond their economic implications, carried substantial political significance, signalling the potential of concerted effort to pave the way for more substantial interactions on complex matters.

An effective integration of the two economies would only be possible if Pakistani and Indian traders, business representatives and average citizens could travel more freely across borders; necessitating a more flexible visa regime with multiple-entry options and the elimination of obligations for entering and exiting through the same point. This deal envisaged the liberalization of visas under eight categories, included granting visas on entry at land borders for the elderly and young, as well as the provision of multiple-entry and multiple-city visas for businesspeople. While acknowledging such rationality, the Indian Foreign Minister visited Pakistan in September 2012, affirming New Delhi's willingness to establish a new visa system that would facilitate travel across the Line of Control (LoC) for Pakistani nationals (Pattanaik, IDSA: 2012). The liberalization of visas system holds paramount significance as it would not only enable easier movement but would also encourage exchange of perspectives, which would contribute in eroding the walls of mistrust. Thus, with such perceived agenda, in October 2012, during a three-day meeting between the Pakistani Foreign Minister Hina

Rabbani Khar and her Indian counterpart S.M. Krishna in Islamabad, the long cherished bilateral visa deal was signed (Pattanaik, IDSA: 2012). The resolution of India and Pakistan to slacken visa procedures comes as a boon for hundreds of divided families on both sides of the border. Thus, it is important to mention that during this phase Pakistan's democratic government altered its stance by no longer tying to corroborate "normalization of relations" to the resolution of the Kashmir dispute. This shift was embraced across the party lines, where both the PML-N and PPP recognized the rationale that liberalized trade and commerce with India would give leverage to Pakistan's economic interests and foster an environment conducive to addressing longstanding disputes, including Kashmir.

But unfortunately, with the advent of the Year 2013, a series of armed clashes vented out along the Line of Control (LoC) within the disputed Kashmir region. Owing to its inhuman and barbaric nature of the incident of beheading of one of the Indian soldiers ignited strong negative reactions. The incident evoked profound outrage in India, leading to strong reactions both from the Indian military establishment and the government. The then Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh commented: "After this barbaric act [alleged beheading of an Indian soldier by the Pakistani military], there cannot be business as usual with Pakistan " (Bhattacharya, Reuters: 2013). On January 15, as a response to the mounting hostilities, the decision was made to send back Pakistani hockey players who had come to India to partake in the hockey league (Bhattacharya, Reuters: 2013). In a parallel move, Pakistan reciprocated by suspending the cross-border bus service and trade activities. This reciprocal action further escalated tensions and the strained state of affairs between the two nations. In the face of the prevailing situation, Raza Rumi from the Pakistani think tank named, The Jinnah Institute once commented that: "This has been the historical trend that whenever India and Pakistan move toward peace, one small incident reverses all progress made by the dialogue process" (Eulich, The Christian Science Monitor: 2013).

Amidst the prevailing political tensions, it's worth mentioning that trade between the two countries continued to gain momentum. This was true that even in the face of several constraints, including difficulties for businesspeople to effectively communicate, transfer funds, or establish large-scale economic ventures due to various limitations. The eagerness demonstrated by individuals on both sides of the Line of Control (LoC) to explore economic collaborations for mutual advantage was a mark of readiness to transcend the nationalistic and chauvinistic discourse surrounding the conflict (Maini, Asia Dialogue: 2018). This willingness

to seek common ground indicates a collective endeavour to enhance livelihoods by focusing on shared interests beyond the conflict-driven rhetoric.

In the meanwhile, Pakistan witnessed its major accomplishment by completing full tenure of the civilian Government with the first democratic transition of power between two elected governments for the first time in its political history. The PPP government completed its term, and the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) came into power after securing a majority in the parliamentary elections (Lashari and Mirza 2013: 79). This peaceful transfer of power was a significant milestone for Pakistan's democratic process, signalling the onset of being maturing of its democratic institutions. However, the PML-N government also faced challenges, with accusations of governance issues, political nepotism and corruption hindering its effectiveness; and ultimately leading to Nawaz Sharif's disqualification for the third time as Prime Minister by the Supreme Court in 2017 (The Guardian: 2017). The process was viewed as both a victory for accountability and an example of judicial activism. In the years that followed, Pakistan's political landscape remained turbulent, with a series of sit-ins and protests by opposition parties demanding the resignation of the government on allegations of election rigging and governance failures. The military's role in politics continued to be a contentious issue, with concerns raised about the influence of the military establishment on civilian governance. Constitutionally National General Assembly election was scheduled and in May 13, 2013 having received an overwhelming lead over rivals in Pakistan elections, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PMLN) under the leadership of Nawaz Sharif formed the new government (Vaid and Maini, IDSA: 2013). Before being elected as PM in 2013, Sharif had also sought an enquiry into the Kargil Conflict and went to the extent of demanding an inquiry commission for the purpose (Dawn, 2013). The PML (N) in its manifesto reiterated the importance of the 1999 Lahore Accord in the context of promoting cordial ties between both countries and Pakistan's newly elected Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif while commenting on his party's vision stated that, "We will pick the threads from where we left. We want to move toward better relations with India, to resolve the remaining issues through peaceful means, including that of Kashmir" (Vaid and Maini, IDSA: 2013).

Sharif's resurgence in the political sphere had engendered a renewed sense of positive outlook and a fresh sense of optimism both within industrial and political domains of India. Evidently, during the preceding fiscal year of 2012-13, India experienced an escalation of fifteen per cent of trade in its exports to Pakistan, concurrently accompanied by a substantial thirty per cent upsurge in imports. Furthermore, it was anticipated that the electoral victory of

the Pakistan Muslim League (N) party, under the leadership of Nawaz Sharif, was poised to provide added impetus to the furtherance of economic affiliations between the two countries. According to FICCI, General Secretary, Didar Singh, 'The more economic stake we create in Pakistan, the better it is for normalising relations and bringing people together' (Vaid and Maini, IDSA: 2013). But unfortunately, within a months after his assumption of office, tensions escalated along the Line of Control with India. The timing of a terror attack in Jammu, occurring just before his scheduled meeting with Indian Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh in New York, added to the challenges he faced.

Consequently, ascension of Narendra Modi to the position of Prime Minister of India in May 2014 marked a significant juncture in the evolving dynamics between the two neighbouring nations. Recognizing the integral role of regional cooperation in realizing his vision for India, Narendra Modi had embraced the imperative of fostering strong ties with neighbouring countries. He understands that in today's interconnected world, a nation's sustained progress relies heavily on cultivating amicable relationships with its neighbours. This understanding had prompted him to launch his 'Neighbourhood First policy', signifying a commitment to placing paramount importance on engaging with neighbouring states. In Modi's view, India's growth and well-being had been intricately intertwined with the collective development and integration of the entire region (Sahoo 2017: 124-125).

With a background as a charismatic leader known for his assertive approach to governance, Modi's tenure brought both hope and scepticism regarding the trajectory of India-Pakistan relations. As Modi assumed office, the world watched with anticipation to see if his leadership would usher in a new era of cooperation, or if the status quo of distrust and occasional hostilities would persist. Modi's initial stance appeared to be a blend of diplomatic pragmatism with an emphasis on economic development. Initiatives like inviting Pakistan's Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to his inauguration and engaging in informal meetings on the sidelines of international summits symbolised willingness to explore avenues for dialogue (Sahoo 2017: 125). Despite the strain, caused due to Pakistani high commissioner in India holding discussions with Kashmiri separatist leaders, a series of diplomatic engagements unfolded in 2015. An impromptu meeting occurred in December at the UN Climate Change Conference in Paris, followed by another ensuing meeting of national security advisors in Bangkok few days later, during which the Kashmir dispute was addressed. Towards the end of December, PM Modi surprised many by making an unanticipated visit to Lahore, where he met with PM Sharif (The Indian Epress 2015). This marked the first visit by an Indian leader to

Pakistan in over a decade. However, these renewed attempts with greater vigour and optimism were soon overshadowed by the recurring challenge of cross-border terrorism and insurgency, often fuelling a cycle of escalation. The inherent dichotomy between domestic political considerations, public sentiment, and the quest for regional stability had determined the course of relationship. While fervent desire for engagement had been evident, but challenges rooted in historical animosities, security concerns and ultra-political actors continued to shape the course of diplomatic interactions. This phase of interaction can be best described as a crucial bilateral dynamic consequential of complex interplay between political leadership, strategic imperatives and public expectations with a mix of hope, scepticism, and pragmatism.

The dialogue between Sushma Swaraj and Sharif's foreign affairs advisor, Sartaj Aziz led to the resumption of the Comprehensive Bilateral Dialogue, which had been suspended ever since January 2013 (Sahoo 2017: 126). This dialogue at the ministerial level were indicative of initiation for diplomatic engagement with a potential for improved bilateral economic ties relations Sharif's leadership (Bhaumik, Deccan Herald: 2022). True to the perception over all bilateral trade with Pakistan plummeted by 12.84 per cent from \$2.35 billion in 2013-14 compared to \$2.70 billion in 2014-2015. This was due to the fact that exports from India to Pakistan witnessed a decline of 18.34 per cent reaching \$1.85 billion over \$2.27 billion in 2013-2014, while imports from Pakistan rose by 16.50 per cent to \$0.49 billion from \$0.42 billion in the subsequent fiscal year. (Business Standard, 2015). Prior to episodes like Uri India and Pakistan had initiated several measures aimed at reestablishing a dialogue between the two nations. The national security advisors of respective nations convened in Bangkok, a move that set the stage for India's external affairs minister to undertake a significant visit to Pakistan. Meeting between the two Prime Ministers in Russia in 2015 to the Foreign Minister's visit to Islamabad, India had consistently placed more emphasis on proposing a sustained comprehensive bilateral dialogue (Diwan 2021:8107). Furthermore, since PM Sharif assumed office in 2013, there was evidently decline in army actions. He had put all army action on hold and tried to initiate enquiry against few sensitive issues to gain trust of India (Basu 2014: 110). He also tried to address the problem of internal militant activities. The improved relations with India would eradicate the perceived threat, which would further marginalise the military stakes. Hence, such pro-activeness on the part of civilian democratic leadership made both the army, Judiciary and bureaucracy apprehensive of their slackening importance within the Pakistani political landscape.

Hereafter, the roadmap of India-Pakistan relationship degenerated downward after the Uri and Pulwama attacks in 2016 and 2019, respectively, and India's subsequent military responses highlighted the persistent vulnerability of the relationship to security-related provocations (Kulkarni, South Asian Voices: 2019). The initial optimism surrounding the potential for improved bilateral relations between India and Pakistan was swiftly shattered by a series of disturbing events. Just as hope for progression in bilateral relations was kindled back, a group of five Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) terrorists managed to infiltrate India from Pakistan on the subsequent New Year's Eve. Their coordinated attack on the Indian Air Force base in Pathankot, resulted in the tragic loss of civilian lives as well as casualties among security personnel. The incident unfolded a five-day-long ordeal before security forces were able to neutralize the terrorists (The Economic Times: 2016). Additional attacks followed, including those in Pampore, Jammu and Kashmir, on February 22 and June 25. As well as a significant strike on the Indian Army's brigade headquarters at Uri in Jammu and Kashmir on September 18, 2016 (The Times of India: 2016). Following a series of terrorist attacks in India, Narendra Modi's patience reached at the breaking point, leading him to authorize the Indian army to execute robust countermeasures against the terrorists. This resulted in India conducting its inaugural surgical strikes in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) beyond the Line of Control (LoC), effectively neutralizing terrorists and dismantling their infrastructure (Sahoo 2017: 126). Concurrently, Modi Government for the first time extended its support to the Baluchistan cause of representation, had highlighted the atrocities committed in Baluchistan by Pakistan and mentioned that "The time has come when Pakistan shall have to answer to the world for the atrocities committed by it against the people in Baluchistan, Gilgit-Baltistan and Pakistan occupied Kashmir" (Financial Express: 2016).

Pakistan was surprised by Modi's comments on Baluchistan and shocked after the Indian army's surgical strike inside the occupied territory. It had been reported that although in bilateral dialogues Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif promised action against those involved in the attacks, but under the pressure from army and ISI his country continues to shield terrorists including Zakir-ur-Rehman Lakhvi, Dawood Ibrahim and Hafiz-Saeed. Modi lost hope after Pakistan's inaction and categorisation of terrorists into "good" and "bad" (Sahoo 2017:127-128). Modi's administration demonstrated that would be less enduring than its predecessor when it comes to Pakistani terror provocations. The trade relations between the two came at its nadir. In the aftermath of cross border terror attack in Pulwama, India, on 15 February 2019 withdrew 'Most Favoured Nation Status' to Pakistan. India also hiked customs

duty on exports from Pakistan to two hundred per cent on 16 February 2019. Subsequently, as part of its unilateral measures, Pakistan suspended bilateral trade with India on 7 August 2019 (Bilateral Brief, MEA, 2020).

Predominance of Military over Civilian Governance and Foreign Policy Outcome

During Nawaz Sharif's third term as Prime Minister, his tenure was marked by a notable power struggle between his administration and the Pakistani military. Within a year of taking office, Sharif encountered sizable protests orchestrated by the ultra-political establishments, as exemplified by Tahir-ul-Qadri and the PTI. Despite accusations and attempts to portray him aligned with external interests, Sharif's pragmatic approach as a business-minded leader inclined him to prioritize the advantages of improved relations with India, thereby deviating from a perpetual cycle of zero-sum narratives (Sahoo 2017: 130). This period of his leadership underscored the complexities he navigated, as he sought to balance both domestic and international interests in a dynamic political landscape. In response to the Uri attack, Prime Minister Narendra Modi adopted a multifaceted strategy, a combination of both diplomatic and military assertion that balanced both assertive and conciliatory approaches towards Pakistan. On one hand, Modi sought to diplomatically isolate Pakistan on the national, regional, and global stages. This effort involved garnering international support to cast a spotlight on Pakistan's alleged sponsorship of terrorism. Concurrently, Modi adopted a more robust stance by orchestrating surgical strikes on terrorist training camps situated along the Line of Control (LoC) (Sahoo 2017:130-131). At the same time, he had made personal efforts to reach out to Nawaz Sharif and had tried to insist Pakistan to act against terrorists and their infrastructure (Sahoo 2017:132-134). Thereby, the period following the Uri incident witnessed a two/ three-pronged approach by PM Modi towards Pakistan. This approach encompassed diplomatic isolation alongside decisive military action to counter terrorism and persuading like-minded pro-democratic leadership for further cooperation on various contentious issues. But it is noteworthy to mention here that Sharif is one civilian leadership who has experienced direct conflict with army, facing ousting on two occasions – firstly by Pervez Musharraf in 1999 and later in 2018. The latter incident, attributed to the 'Dawn leaks,' was believed to have resulted from a strained relationship between the civilian government and the military establishment (ARY News, 2017).

Over the past decade, Pakistan had undergone a transformative journey marked by political transitions and evolving governance paradigms. With the conclusion of its third five-

year parliamentary term since the shift from military rule in 2008, the nation had demonstrated a commitment to democratic processes. Notably, the peaceful transitions of power following the 2013 and 2018 elections showcased Pakistan's growing maturity in handling political changes. While the political landscape of Pakistan has undergone significant shifts, the journey had not been without its share of challenges. The nation grapples with internal secessionist movement and a delicate economic situation that demands careful policy considerations and strategic planning. This, combined with deepening domestic polarization, added layers of complexity to governance and societal cohesion. The alternating leadership of the Imran Khan-led Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) coalition and the subsequent tenure under the Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) and allies under Shehbaz Sharif highlighted the diverse spectrum of political representation within the country. However, these transitions were accompanied by legal challenges, exemplified by Imran Khan's recent conviction for improper disclosure of state gift sales, leading to his disqualification from electoral contention. The five-year parliamentary term spanning from 2018 to 2023 was characterized by a persistent sense of scepticism surrounding the legitimacy of the domestic political landscape in Pakistan. Reports of the military's discreet involvement in political affairs and governance practices casted a shadow over the political order, leading to the classification of the regime as a hybrid governance.

In 2018, Pakistan witnessed another democratic transition as the PML-N government completed its term, and the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), led by Imran Khan, emerged as the largest party in the general elections; but failed to secure the majority. The party subsequently formed a coalition government with several smaller parties, where Imran Khan was sworn in as Prime Minister, marking the third democratic transfer of power in the country's history. Despite the democratic transitions, some critics highlighted the challenges to Pakistan's democratic process. As reported, the escalating corruption, lack of transparency in the functioning of civilian governance and the continuous ultra-pro existence of the military, led to the erosion of popular trust and faith over parliamentary democracy. This was glaringly evident when there was a decline in voters' turnout to more than 3% (The Express Tribune: 2018). Issues such as political polarization, weak institutions, and the influence of the military on political affairs raised concerns about the consolidation of democratic governance. Additionally, the media faced challenges, with instances of censorship and pressure on independent journalism (BBC News: 2018).

The 2018 elections, marked by allegations of military intervention that favoured the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party, created a legitimacy crisis that reverberated throughout the early years of the term. This situation saw the PTI coalition government struggling to establish its credibility in the eyes of the public, fostering an atmosphere of uncertainty (Mir 2023:1). During this period, the complex interplay between civilian and military powers became definitely pronounced, which shaping the political trajectory as well the foreign relations of the nation. Following the election, a period referred to as the military- civilian on the "same page" era was set in motion, where convergence of interests between the military and the civilian leadership under PM Imran Khan (Mir 2023: 4-6) became the norm of action. However, this alignment was short-lived, as a significant disagreement between Khan and Army Chief Gen. Qamar Bajwa over the selection of the Inter-Services Intelligence agency's chief led to a consequential civilian-military standoff (Mir 2023: 1-2). The resolution of this conflict marked a turning point, prompting the military to gradually retract its hidden support, and thereby recalibrating the dynamic that had influenced the political realm for years. These complicated domestic equations have been intricately intertwined with Pakistan's foreign relations with India.

Contrary to Pakistan's historical pattern of military opposition to improved relations with India, a remarkable shift in action occurred during this period as the military advocated for a thaw in India-Pakistan ties. Surprisingly, it was the political leadership displayed hesitation in moving forward. Initially, both PM Imran Khan and Army Chief Gen. Qamar Bajwa were aligned in their approach toward India. When a terrorist attack struck Indian-administered Kashmir's Pulwama region, India responded with cross-border airstrikes into Pakistan. Khan and Bajwa authorized a military show of force in response. Amid the ensuing conflict, escalation of tension occurred when Pakistan shot down an Indian fighter jet and captured its pilot, pushing both countries perilously close to a nuclear confrontation. However, Khan in pressure of Bajwa acted swiftly to de-escalate tensions by releasing the captured pilot (The Guardian: 2019). PM Khan also had to abide by Bajwa's initiatives such as opening a corridor for Sikh pilgrims to a temple in Pakistan and reinvigorating a cease-fire along the Line of Control in 2021(Mir 2023: 6-7). In 2021, General Bajwa aimed to normalize relations with India through a discreet approach by extending an invitation for PM Modi to visit Pakistan and renew trade ties. Nevertheless, Khan intervened and halted the planned visit (India Herald 2023). Khan and his advisors were concerned that a reconciliation without addressing the Kashmir issue could be perceived as a betrayal of Pakistan's stance on the matter (Jacob 2020:

3). These concerns, which persisted during the subsequent Sharif government's brief tenure, prevented substantial initiatives, highlighting the complex interplay between political considerations, regional dynamics and the delicate balance of power.

However, as time passed, apprehensions about potential domestic backlash hindered a fleeting chance for reconciliation with India, leading to strain between civilian and military leaders. Both the civilian governments continue to hold profound suspicions about each other. In India, the Imran Khan government had been seen as a puppet, functioning through the patronage of the country's powerful army and ISI. The Modi government doubted Khan's ability to take decisions vis-à-vis India that doesn't serve the Pakistani Army's interests. Conversely, in Pakistan, the Modi government had been perceived as a Hindu right-wing dominant force with aspirations of regional dominance in South Asia. This narrative has prominently featured in Pakistan's efforts to internationalize various events, particularly since the revocation of Article 370.

Factors Influenced the India-Pakistan Trajectories

Since its establishment both the military and militants in Pakistan had consistently influenced the country's political dynamics and its foreign relations with neighbouring nations, particularly India. One of the major reasons for failure of many rounds of their bilateral dialogue was that during negotiation both the parties would raise their "core area of concern," i.e. Kashmir (Jacob 2020: 3). The Kashmir issue had served as a pivotal element, often manipulated by the military to advance its own interests and maintain a substantial role in national affairs; overshadowing the authority of civilian governance. Most of the time, Kashmir had been deliberately raised by both military and militant (sponsored by army), to terminate any other ongoing bilateral dialogue. The Pakistan military had played a role in internationalizing the Kashmir issue, which had been an internal matter of India and partially a bilateral issue of contention between India and Pakistan (Muni 2009: 156). By using the Kashmir matter as a pawn in the broader geopolitical context, the military had managed to consolidate its relevance and assert its control over various aspects of the country's decision-making processes.

In early August 2019, the Indian government took a significant of constitutional amendment, leading to the division of the Indian-administered state of Jammu and Kashmir into two union territories under direct federal administration (Gazette of India: 2019). This move also involved altering the special constitutional provisions granted to the state under Article 370 of the Indian Constitution (Roche liveMint: 2019). Following the revocation of the

special status of Jammu and Kashmir under Article 370, the diplomatic rift between India and Pakistan intensified when PM Imran Khan's, relegated all diplomatic ties, debarred the Indian envoy, evoked its high commissioner from New Delhi and suspended all bilateral trades (Rawat, India today: 2019). While strained relations between the two nations are not extraordinary, but the most striking aspect of this situation was Pakistan's unprecedented decision to halt all bilateral trade with India, thereby the bilateral relation took a nose-dive. Contrary to Khan's stance several business chambers had urged the government to resume bilateral trade and advocated for importing essential items like onion and tomato from India for the sake of consumers in the wake of soaring prices of the vegetables following the devastating floods in the country. Also, the Shehbaz Sharif-led govt wanted to resume trade ties with India (PTI, Peshwar: 2022).

The pivotal move made by the Indian government had seemingly, at least in the immediate term, closed off opportunities for a negotiated resolution of the Kashmir issue with Pakistan. Furthermore, this move had significantly diminished the appeal of political factions in Kashmir that had advocated for self-determination and was nurtured by Pakistan military and militant simultaneously. One of the senior ministers of the Indian government had gone on record and unequivocally stated that “there will be no bilateral talks on Kashmir except on the part presently under Pakistani control” (Rajnath Singh in an interview with Roche on live Mint: 2019). This strategic stance marks a departure from India's prior assertion that the dispute was a matter solely for bilateral negotiations, now characterizing Kashmir's status as an exclusively domestic affair, thereby obviating the necessity for engagement with Pakistan on the issue.

Democracy in Pakistan can be perceived as the periods of brief interlude punctuated by periods of quasi or full-fledged military rule. Over the last 15 years, the country has witnessed a form of quasi-democracy, characterized by elected governments facing consistent challenges from powerful, yet unelected and unaccountable state institutions, particularly the military and judiciary. From 2008 to 2020, Pakistan experienced governance under a feeble civilian administration that increasingly found its decisions subject to the control of the Supreme Court of Pakistan. The transformation from the old military-bureaucratic nexus to the judiciary-military alliance had paradoxically led to the emergence of political forces, exemplified by Imran Khan, who had the potential to disrupt the military-judiciary compact and reinstate a balance in civil-military relations. Throughout the period from 2008 to 2020, Pakistan's democratic journey remained a mix of achievements and challenges. Democratic elections, civilian transitions and accountability processes demonstrated progress towards democratic

norms. Nevertheless, the persisting issues of predominance of military over politics and corruption underscored the need for sustained efforts to strengthen democratic institutions and ensuring meaningful citizen participation in governance.

A comprehensive and detailed examination of the trajectory of India-Pakistan relations would reveal that the most significant breakthroughs and advancements in their interactions had transpired through when a democratic governance structure were at the helm of state affairs. Conversely, under military regimes, instances of heightened cross-border terrorism, border disputes, stalled peace processes, and increased tensions were prominent. Causality assessments indicates a inter-relationship between heightened militarization and suboptimal bilateral trade ties. Specifically, a greater emphasis on military expenditures and marginal trade lead to bare minimum expenditure on social developmental, lower economic growth rates and reduced levels of democratic participation – all of this are correlated and contribute to conflict escalation. This correlation extends both ways.

The challenge of governance and the prevailing security conundrums lead to the military's perceived role as the ultimate guardian that collectively contributed to the tapestry of factors shaping the trajectory of democracy within the nation from its inception. Compounding these complexities, Pakistan emerged as an 'insecure state', largely due to its pronounced security vulnerabilities in relation to India's colossal size and military prevalence. The apprehension of potential defeat and subjugation inflated the power and social prestige of the military above all other groups; and made the army to stood out in public eye as the sole protector or messiah, who can ensure national survival; and eventually turned from arbiter to monopolist of decision-making and prevented the de-politicization of the armed forces (Chatterjee and Maitra 2012: 170).

The civilian administrations at both the federal and provincial levels, grappling with the complexities of governance, increasingly sought the military's assistance to fulfil essential tasks related to governance such as road construction, extension of health care, power distribution, conduct of census and other welfare related jobs- which in turn added to the salience and relevance of the armed force for the orderly functioning of the polity (Basu 2012: 179-180). As to quote one commentator, "Because foreign and defence policies for new states are matters of survival, they seriously affect domestic policy. By this chain of logic, the Pakistani army leaders were propelled into the centre of decision-making and became first of its arbitrator and then its monopolists" (Kukreja 2003: 22). All the civilian governments seemed

agreed that a strong military was essential; and consequently, the major share of the national budget was allocated to the defence, which in the course of time kept on rising exponentially (Basu 2012: 180). This reliance on the military's support became more frequent as civilian governments encountered challenges in effectively addressing governance-related issues. Tharoor rightly observed “in other countries, the state has an army, in Pakistan, the army has a state.” (Sharma 2009: 877). The enduring and deeply ingrained involvement of the military in Pakistan's political sphere from its inception has presented itself as a significant impediment in Pakistan's efforts towards fostering a stable democratic governance framework. The consequential political instability prevailing within the nation has consistently acted as a catalyst, exacerbating the underlying tensions between India and Pakistan. This is particularly discernible, due to the intensification of an adverse narrative of “India as threat”, a factor that has been strategically employed by successive military-led governments to assert the legitimacy of their rule and bolstered the military's grip over the political apparatus.

Nevertheless, limited progress has been made in transforming a political culture which can be advantageous to democratic consolidation. The political landscape continues to be characterized by a strong sense of personalization, overshadowing the development of robust party institutions. For genuine progress to occur, there is a pressing need for the parties themselves to undergo democratic turnover, as this is pivotal for the broader political system to transition from a state of flux to a state of consolidated democracy. The restructuring of civil-military relations is an indispensable component for the sustainable evolution of democratic politics. This intricate interplay between internal politics and external dynamics underscored the multifaceted challenges faced by Pakistan in its journey towards democratic consolidation and as well as in managing its relations with its overarching neighbour.

Hence, the genuine enhancement of relations directly correlates with the swift consolidation and sustenance of robust democracy. In Pakistan's context, India's engagement with democratic forces striving to uphold and restore democracy had been steadfast and resilient yet trifling; there's scant evidence of direct assistance or intervention rather there has had been no evidence of involvement. Therefore, the anticipated outcome of complete pacification effect of democracy posited by the democratic peace theory has not materialized in this case of India- Pakistan rivalry. Consequently, it could be inferred that while the logic of ‘both nations being democracies (joint democracy) might have exerted at the best modest (Ahmad and Ebert 2015: 54). The presence of democratic leadership doesn't always guarantee stability, particularly when civilian authority remains under the shadow of military control.

India's approach prioritizes constructive engagement while safeguarding its security interests. For the Modi government, a significant challenge lies in navigating a path of constructive interaction with Pakistan while upholding its existing stance. This task is particularly intricate considering Pakistan's internal challenges and political uncertainties, which might result in a weaker civilian government and a stronger hold of the military over its India policy.

Here in this chapter by examining the intricate interplay between regime type and its impact on India-Pakistan relations, a compelling narrative had been contended that underscores the paramount importance of democratization in fostering a constructive bilateral engagement. While moving further towards the subsequent chapter, there has been an intention to embark on an in-depth exploration of India-Myanmar relations, where a fascinating divergence from the overarching course has been practised and unravelling the intricate threads that have woven a distinctive narrative of engagement. India, a steadfast proponent of democratic principles, has navigated its engagement with an authoritarian regime in Myanmar, driven by compelling security imperatives. This apparent incongruity prompts a closer examination of the multifaceted dimensions, which are at play. Through a rigorous analysis of historical precedent, geopolitical exigencies, and developmental imperatives, have tried to explore the opportunities of being a transformative power through sustained engagement, even within the context of an authoritarian regime. This exploration of the trajectory serves as a testament to the intricate dance between principle and pragmatism in the realm of international relations, a dynamic that continues to shape the destinies of nations and the contours of their engagements.

CHAPTER- 4

MYANMAR'S DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION AND INDIA'S STRATEGIC DIPLOMACY

In the earlier chapter it has been delineated that an intricate interplay between regime type and its impact on India-Pakistan relations is glaringly evident. Therefore, a compelling narrative on the paramount importance of proper democratization in fostering a constructive bilateral engagement has been put forwarded. The challenges and setbacks that emanates in absence of true democratic apparatus and democratic culture can hinder meaningful progress, even within an ostensibly civilian regime, has been highlighted. The tapestry of international relations is often intertwined with principle and pragmatism, where states are compelled to steer through the intricacies of values, interests and strategic imperatives. The central paradox that emerges here is -while India, a steadfast proponent of democratic principles whose foreign policy is firmly rooted on the principle of upholding and strengthening democratic values and aspirations, compelled by security imperatives, has concurrently engaged with Myanmar- a nation governed by an authoritarian regime that has repeatedly nibbed the democratic struggles. In this regard, India through continued engagement has played a pivotal role in cultivating democratic values and nurturing nascent democratic institutions within Myanmar's political ethos. This transformative process is not only indicative of the potential for pragmatic engagement with regimes of varying political orientations but also emphasises the degree of instrumental role that security imperatives can play in shaping the contours of bilateral relations. Thus, the apparent incongruity in the ever-evolving dynamics between democratic ideals and engagement with authoritarian regimes, which is evident in Myanmar, demands further exploration.

With a population of over 54 million people, Myanmar is the culturally rich country located in Southeast Asia that homes a multitude of ethnic groups. The nation's continued struggle for democracy is a narrative of resilience and determination. Myanmar's inconsistent socio-economic situation is characterised by abundance of natural resources in juxtaposition with widespread poverty and inequality that the county has been mired in for decades. With such striking imbalances Myanmar stands as one of the poorest nations in Southeast Asia. While economic reforms had been pathetically slow, encountered by continuous hurdles in infrastructure development and institutional capacity-building. This volatility in Myanmar's

socio-political space had spillover effects on India that exacerbated the security concerns of an already sensitive Northeastern region.

During the fourth wave of democratization in the 21st century, when the majority of nations decisively moved away from dictatorship with an aspiration of embracing more democratic forms of governance- albeit with varied degree, foreshadowed the global politics. Countries in South and South East Asia is no exceptions. Several countries have transitioned towards robust parliamentary democracy and many of them failed as well. Now there has been a growing concern regarding the nature and substance of democracy in countries that have recently undergone this transition. Numerous studies are indicative of the fact that although nearly 100 countries, which were categorized as “transitioning”, had mostly degenerated into hybrid systems that exhibited the characteristics of both semi-democracy and authoritarianism, rather than embodying true democratic ideals (Carothers 2002: 7-8). Furthermore, the formal democratic institutions established in many of these nations, conducting formal electoral processes, continue to grapple with its inherent substantial shortcomings (Levitsky and Way 2010: 61). Myanmar is one such country that was apparently being indifferent to such global trend of transformation. Since the watershed year of 1988, when Myanmar witnessed the foremost nationwide democracy uprising, had remained embroiled in a persistent state of political turmoil. The entire political history of Myanmar has been characterized by a relentless tug-of-war between entrenched military authoritarianism and the persistent aspirations of democratic factions, with the former consistently maintaining a position of dominance. With the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic a concerning trend has been set forth, which is indicative of steady increase of authoritarianism on the global scale (Global State of Democracy Report 2021). Several countries have regressed in terms of democratic values and had a downfall on the democracy index, with Myanmar being the most recent entrant in the list. Despite making strides towards being a young democracy, Myanmar slide back to the military rule in February 2021. This event accentuates the fragile nature of democratic progress in nations.

Both the nations started their journey being independent sovereign democratic nations almost holding hands together, standing at the opposites ends of the spectrum with glaring differences in every respect (socio-political and economic). Despite their shared history, over the years, the relationship between Myanmar and India had evolved, albeit with occasional challenges, primarily stemming from internal developments within Myanmar. Discernibly, the overarching supremacy of the army has its bearings over the foreign policy outcomes and

heavily influenced the trajectories of Indo- Myanmar relations; and consequently, effecting and at times clogging the security-stability of the region.

Initially, India, cognizant of the imperative of upholding democratic ideals, extended support to the democratic struggle and provided sanctuaries along with financial aid to political activists from Myanmar. But eventually, in the post-cold-war scenario being mindful of its enduring strategic imperatives in the region, India, prudently cultivated relations with the military administrations of Myanmar as well. Therefore, India's relationship with Myanmar has been characterized by its dual nature- over time, oscillating between periods of trust and suspicion. As observed by an Indian analyst, “India faces a moral dilemma of whether to support the pro-democratic forces in Myanmar or adhere to the principle of *realpolitik*.....India's foreign policy makers prefer to follow the middle path or *Madhyam Marga*, as it chooses to engage with the military junta without abandoning her ideological stance of extending support to the pro-democracy forces in Myanmar” (Mujtaba, Indo-Burma Newz: 2007). However, it is pertinent to mention that the stakes are so high that India is bound to balance between its pragmatic and normative goals equally at the same pace. Long back this had been best described by renowned academician Dilip Gogoi, which holds true till date that it has been essential to make concrete rational policy choice that could focus beyond the conduit of military regime and remove ambiguities present within it (Gogoi 2019: 19-20).

Myanmar in India's Geo-political Calculus

Before delving into further exploration of India- Myanmar dynamics as they navigated through the complexities of the 21st century, it would undoubtedly be instrumental to have a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted components that designed the course of their diplomatic and strategic partnership. Starting with the secessionist seeking shelter in Burma, Chinese encroachment, India's increasingly growing interest for natural gas and energy security and the strategic location of Myanmar as the land bridge to ASEAN- all these combined forces had made New Delhi to dance on their tunes.

Situated at the crossroads of South and Southeast Asia, Myanmar occupies a pivotal geostrategic position of paramount significance. It functions as a buffer state strategically positioned between India and China, with its borders linking Bangladesh, China, Laos, and Thailand and the Northeastern states of India (Rieffel 2012: 212). Its geographical location serves as a bridge connecting the Indian subcontinent with mainland Southeast Asia, rendering it a crucial player in regional politics and geopolitics (Linter, Asia Times: 2007). Its

southeastern coast is in close proximity to India's Nicobar archipelago along with the Bay of Bengal, the Andaman Sea, and the Strait of Malacca all converge around Myanmar, making it an indispensable gateway for maritime trade routes. Given its strategic location, Myanmar naturally emerges as a state likely to be contested for, by both India and China.

The end of the Cold War (CW) resulted in a significant disruption of the assumed anarchic nature of the international system, leading to the emergence of a unipolar world order. In such a scenario, the ascension of a unipolar power implies that rising powers would make an effort to counterbalance a hegemon, whether benevolent or belligerent by means of internal and/or external balancing in order to contend the capabilities of the hegemon (Waltz, 2000: 22-24). A corollary of this systemic transformation was the emergence of China, aspiring to attain regional hegemony and ultimately establishing itself as a new entrant in the world of power politics. China's strategic interests in Myanmar became apparent for first time during the 1990s when India received reports of alleged military build-ups in the country (Bhat, The Print: 2019). Thus, at the backdrop of altered distribution of power India was also facing structural imperatives to cultivate new partnerships with states, aimed at augmenting its capabilities vis-à-vis China. India espoused a more self-help stance and pursued an assertive foreign policy in consonance with the systemic shift following the Cold War (Ganguly and Pardesi 2009:12-15). In this entire power play Myanmar occupied the fundamental position of key player to counterbalance the hegemonic China. India sought to bolster its capabilities by means of establishing strategic partnerships with nations at her vicinity, even at the cost of drifting away from her cherished principle of supporting and endorsing the cause of democracy.

The 'Look East' policy (LEP), which was implemented subsequent to a post-CW review, represents an ingenuity to counterbalance the mounting influence of China in the region by pursuing regional balancing strategies (Batyabal 2006: 186-187). Myanmar's geographical position between India and Southeast Asia positioned it as a linchpin in the broader geopolitical landscape of the region. As a result, in the 21st century, Myanmar emerged as a pivotal player in India's 'Act East Policy' and a key component in regional efforts to bolster connectivity, trade, and strategic partnerships. The importance of Myanmar is further accentuated by the presence of vital Sea Lanes of Communication (SLOC) in the vicinity, which holds strategic implications for very foreign states (Egretreau, 2003: 53).

India's burgeoning interest over Myanmar has amplified with the discovery of offshore gas fields along the western coastal line of Myanmar. Over the period of time, there has been a

growing recognition within India's energy policy circles regarding the pivotal role of natural gas to ensure the country's sustainable energy security. The Government of India has repeatedly emphasized its commitment to transitioning towards a 'energy and natural gas-based economy' (Pimpalkhare, Raisina Debate: 2019). This newfound resources in the western coastal line of Myanmar have prompted India to strategic re-evaluation of its engagement with her neighbour. Additionally, this move is underpinned by a premeditated geopolitical calculus. By engaging in substantial economic cooperation, India, not only aims at securing access to vital energy resources or forge a closer partnership with Myanmar but also intends to strategically position itself as a significant player in the economic development and stability of the region. This multidimensional approach delineates India's proactive efforts to safeguard its interests while contributing to the broader regional dynamics.

The alleged threat of Chinese expansionism emanated from India's limited control over the Northeast, where state authority had been relatively weak. In reality, for India forging ties with Myanmar became an integral foreign policy strategy because of its imperative of securing its Northeastern frontier from potential Chinese influences and thwart it from taking deep root into the society (Abraham 2014: 129-131). Eventually, Myanmar had emerged as an essential element in safeguarding India's territorial integrity by assisting in the suppression of insurgent elements in the region. Moreover, India's aspiration to enhance regional connectivity and linking the Northeast with neighbouring countries, both through land and sea routes, aims at fostering economic development, long-term stability, with the ultimate goal of discouraging insurgencies. Gaining substantial economic influence in Myanmar holds the potential to translate into latent power for India, which could be a leveraged for counterbalancing China's ongoing efforts (Kanwal 2010: 136).

India's Role in Myanmar's Struggle for Democracy (1948-1990)

Democratic ideas are not new-fangled to Myanmar. Voting was instituted for the local government of Burma as early as 1882 and by 1923; and domiciliary suffrage without any gender discrimination was introduced for the formation of legislature in Burma (Kundu 2021: 2). But political dynamics underwent an alteration with the subsequent military rule in the country. Myanmar's political history is dominated by military rule and its subsequent transition to democracy in 2016 only to witness the return of military once again within a five years of time span. The recent global trend has been the tendency of intensification of authoritarianism. Several nations have slid down the democracy scale, Myanmar being the

latest. On 4 January 1948, Myanmar started its journey as an independent country and became the parliamentary democracy. Within a brief span of time the nation came under the military domination and endured more than five decades of military rule since General Ne Win's military coup of 1962.

Ensuing Myanmar's independence, a constitutional government was established and U Nu was appointed as the first Prime Minister of the newly independent nation. Since inception, Myanmar faced a plethora of domestic issues, including ethnic tensions, insurgency problems, corruption and mismanagement. These problems were exacerbated by armed conflicts between various ethnic insurgent groups. Since long time back Myanmar (formerly Burma) has grappled with a protracted internal political struggle pitting democratic elements against entrenched military authorities.

With every alteration in regime India- Myanmar relations also endured variations in equation. India-Myanmar relations can broadly be divided into five phases: 1948-1962; 1962-1992; 1992-2010; 2010- 2021; and 2021 to till date. Both the nations under the leadership of parliamentary democrats, U Nu and Nehru, had a promising start where they forged a closer alliance, which was culminated with the ratification of the 1951 Treaty of Friendship. In those early days, when both the nations were navigating through the challenges of their newfound democracies, two overarching elements shaped the contours of their bilateral relationship. Firstly, the warm camaraderie between Prime Ministers Nehru and U Nu fostered an amicable state of affairs, which facilitated close consultations and frequent visits between the two like-minded leaders (Hariharan 2007:4). Both PM Nehru and Myanmar's Premier U Nu shared congruent perspectives on a multitude of international political matters and laying the foundation for the inception of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) (Cohen 2001: 253). Secondly, the Indian diaspora residing in the country for generations. This influenced India to foster a closer economic and military tie with Myanmar's civilian administration in alignment with its strategy of bolstering democratic forces. Nonetheless, Myanmar's democratic transition faced challenges stemming from internal conflicts, political rivalries, constitutional disagreements, as well as ethnic and communal tensions.

Soon after assuming leadership the civilian government encountered significant challenges in maintaining national unity and stability, in the face of mounting from various communist factions. In 1958, the political situation in Myanmar became even more precarious when a split emerged within the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL), the ruling

party (Trivedi 2018: 44). The Burmese national army was teetering on the brink of collapse. To address the escalating crisis and restore order, Prime Minister U Nu made the decision to invite the military to assume control temporarily and form a caretaker government.

At that precarious situation, India took proactive measures to assist Myanmar's embattled democratic government. India extended assistance to the Myanmar government in quelling down the insurgencies and sub-national militancy by swiftly dispatching essential arms to reinforce the national army (Cohen 2001:253). Additionally, India mobilized international support and provided both financial and military aid to address the challenging circumstances. Alongside, India extended an individual financial assistance package amounting to 1,000,000 Kyats and entered into a Treaty of Friendship to ensure sustained support and cooperation (Muni 2009: 48-49). These intensive efforts decisively aided Burma in overcoming the challenges faced by its nascent democracy. If we delve deeper to explain the rationale that were at play in the case of Myanmar then it would be evident that India's act of supporting pro-democratic elements in their efforts towards consolidation of democracy was underpinned by several factors. Primarily two security imperatives motivated India to support Burma in its democratic endeavours. Firstly, it was not in India's interest to allow the communist uprising to succeed at its doorstep, especially at a time when China was exerting influence in the northern Himalayan region. Secondly, there was a security consideration linked to the ethnic dimension, as the potential spill-over effects of Burmese ethnic conflict were likely to have had an adverse impact on India's vulnerable North East region (Muni 2009:50); and lastly India, sought to guarantee the continuity of a friendly like-minded democratic regime in the vicinity of the newly independent nation.

But unfortunately, the period of cold-peace was short lived. Soon Burma's democratic system started waning again after a decade and political situation got further complicated when a military coup was staged; the civilian government was ousted; abolished the 1947 constitution; and democratic apparatus was ultimately dissolved in the year of 1962 (Asraf 2008:226). In this period from 1958 to 1960, a 'caretaker government' was established under the leadership of General Ne Win (Ashraf 2008: 225-26). During his tenure as head of the caretaker government, he wielded significant influence over the country's affairs and subsequently the military took a prominent role in governance (Shakhila 2014: 47-48). This marked a departure from the civilian-led constitutional system, as the military's involvement became more direct and substantial. It is worth mentioning that this period of military rule was initially ordained as a temporary measure to stabilize the nation and address the internal

political divisions. However, it set the stage for greater military involvement in Myanmar's politics in the years to come, culminating in a full-fledged military coup in 1962, which further entrenched military rule in the country for several decades.

Following the coup, the military government took decisive actions, including the arrest of government officials, the suspension of the existing constitution, and the establishment of a Revolutionary Council (RC) to govern Myanmar through decrees (Cribb 1999: 47). The coup of 1962 signified the ascendance of the military's influence in Myanmar's political affairs and heralded an era of military rule that would continue for several decades, fundamentally shaping the nation's political trajectory. The coup marked the definitive end of constitutional democracy; democratic institutions were systematically dismantled; the constitution was suspended, rendering it inoperative in regions where the RC exercised its authority by issuing decrees, promulgating orders (Trivedi 2018: 97-98). Alongside, an accumulation of power occurred in the hands of the newly formed Revolutionary Council. Although Myanmar ostensibly retained its federal state structure in-form and theory, in practice, the military junta treated the country as a unitary state, consolidating control at the central level and significantly diminishing regional autonomy. The information was greatly controlled, press was subject to tight censorship, and the country's education system was nothing more than a vehicle of indoctrination for the military's interpretation of Myanmar's history and its central role in this history. The top leaders were the final authority on all matters concerning governance and security (Turnell 2011: 83-84). At the same time, the regime announced the formulation of a new national ideology called 'The Burmese Way to Socialism.' This ideology was presented as the guiding principle to steer the nation's direction and policies. With the implementation of this socialist doctrine, the military junta sought to exert substantial influence over the country's economic, political and social domains (Fred & Meheden 1963: 131-32).

During the period spanning from 1962 to 1974, Myanmar underwent a profound transformation as it transitioned into a socialist one-party state. The constitutional framework was suspended, leading to the dissolution of the Parliament and the abolition of state councils, effectively granting full control to the military junta. In a bid to consolidate their power, all political parties, associations, and unions were declared illegal. The stifling political pluralism, and any form of dissent or protest was suppressed through brutal means (Kipgen 2016: 34-35). However, amidst the tightly controlled political landscape, attempts were made for political liberalization in the early months of 1967. Notably, in July 1971, the military junta made a public commitment to draft a new constitution and announced its intention to hold elections in

accordance with the new constitutional framework (Kipgen 2016: 34-35). They further pledged to transfer power to an elected civilian government following the election. During the same year, the Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP) underwent a transformation into a mass party at the First Party Congress, signifying its institutional evolution (Turnell 2011:79).

Then onwards Myanmar endured more than five decades of military domination. Myanmar was controlled by a military government with only two consecutive leaders at the top, both of whom ruled with an iron fist. General Ne Win's military coup ushered in an era of stringent and capricious governance lasting for 26 years, characterized by 'Burmese way to socialism' (Muni 2009:56). This period witnessed Myanmar's self-imposed isolation from the international community, as it advocated for its own form of neutrality and consequently, withdrew itself from the nonaligned movement. Unrealistic economic policies soon led to paradoxical outcome where an inherently resourceful nation starts facing economic fragility. The decision by General Ne Win to nationalize enterprises in 1963 gave a severe blow to numerous Indian businesses enterprises those who were still operating in the country. This prompted another wave of emigration.

While Indian and Burmese leaders did engage in reciprocal visits, which culminated with the 'Land Border Agreement' in 1967 and the 'Maritime Border Agreement' in 1986, mostly the relationship was cold. During the period from 1962 to 1988, the second phase of India-Myanmar relations could aptly be characterized as a time of "strained ties." General Ne Win's policies, which included political oppression, restrictions on Indians and the deportation of approximately 100,000 Indians, were reciprocated with discontentment from India (Cohen 2001: 253). This further deepened the divide between the two nations. But in the view of escalation of Sino-Indian tension, India had to play down. Thus, New Delhi became cautious and tried to get in terms with the undemocratic military regime. Therefore, India as an act of prudence, drifted away from U. Nu and gave a cold shoulder to attempts of waggling an armed struggle against undemocratic regime. Even, during his stay as political refugee in India, he was restrained from organizing any anti Burma activities (Muni 2009:95). Further, the closer Sino-Burmese axis soured the relationship with Delhi and until 1988 there was virtually no diplomatic contact.

By April 1972, to demonstrate a facade of civilian governance, Ne Win and a group of twenty other senior commanders retired from the army; while publicly declaring the end of the revolutionary government, assumed civilian roles in the government. This marked the onset of

the second phase of military rule, referred to as the 'Constitutional Dictatorship phase,' commencing in March 1974 (Kipgen 2016: 16). During this phase, Ne Win introduced a socialist constitution and established a single-party parliament, albeit one dominated by the military. Though superficially a civilian rule was in the state-of-affair, the military retained overarching control over the country by effectively centralizing power within the party. National elections were held in 1978 and 1981, but the glaring weaknesses of the regime became increasingly evident after the 1981 election. The unadulterated neglect of the civilian economy, resulted in civil unrest and mounting demands for democratic transition (Kipgen 2016:17-18). Myanmar's political landscape has been marred by a deep-seated belief within the military leadership that the civilian population was not well-equipped enough to participate in governance. This perception, coupled with the implementation of stringent laws banning political activities, lead to an era of protracted political suppression and stifled civil discourse. The conspicuous weakness of the military regime was its inability to effectively manage the economy. Faced with this challenge, the regime resorted to centralization of economic control; and started diverting critical resources for the reinforcement of the military apparatus at the expense of the civilian economy (Clapp 2015: 4). This lopsided allocation of resources further aggravated an unsustainable economic framework leading to a stark divide between the military and civilian spheres. Political and economic sanctions from Western governments worsened the situation. The repercussions of such mismanagement were glaring. Amidst such a political turmoil Gen Ne Win while apprehending the forthcoming situation stepped down and instructed his cabinet to bolster the process of getting back to the multiparty parliamentary governance (Clapp 2015: 4-5); and thereby Gen Ne Win's one-party rule came to an end in the wake of the infamous 8-8-88 episode. As the political situation further worsened, General Ne Win's government was replaced by another military government: 'State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC),' which instituted martial law over Myanmar (Asaraf 2008:227). Things underwent a change with the subsequent military rule in the country.

The dynamics further shifted with the struggle for democratisation- a movement spearheaded by students under the leadership of opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi who established the National League for Democracy (NLD). This movement held promise for change and progress. Having spent a significant portion of her youth in India, Suu Kyi had established personal connections with influential Indian politicians (Wanger 2009:17). In the course of political upheavals in Myanmar, New Delhi started playing a crucial role in curving out the course of it. Throughout 1980s to 1990s, India was an active proponent of reinstating

democracy in Myanmar; and subsequently India-Myanmar relationship plunged to its lowest point (Yhome 2009:1) due to India's staunch opposition to the Myanmar military's brutal crackdown on the pro-democracy uprising and their subsequent seizure of power. This was apparent in India action when it started providing refuge to the pro-democratic forces in the wake of the “8888 Movement” and publicly expressed her displeasure with the ongoing military crackdown. India adjusted its policy stance and threw its weight behind the political movement advocating for freedom and democracy, which was initially sparked by economic grievances. Reports indicated that India extended comprehensive financial, material, and logistical aid to the democratic factions opposing the military authorities (Muni 2009: 94). This enhanced the “people-to-people” relationship, parallel to the radical scaling down of “government-to-government” ties (Trivedi 2017:151). This proactive approach yielded positive results. In face of popular uprising in the aftermath of 1988, Gen Ne Win, was compelled to relinquish power amidst the mayhem. Upon stepping down, he issued directives to his cabinet, instructing them to guide the country back to a system of multiparty parliamentary governance. Ne Win's military successors took it as a decree and swiftly initiated drafting the roadmap for a transition. Their primary objective was to create a multi-party system in the disguise of a single-party regime, mirroring the former Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP) government. Subsequently, in reality, one party, consisting of trusted members from the former BSPP, would be strategically dominant (Kipgen 2016: 19-21).

Fearing the outcome, Military Junta started working towards the introduction of a controlled transition. The military's intention was to establish a political system with multiple parties, albeit with one dominant party comprised of trusted members from the former Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP) (Clapp 2015: 4-5). This reflected a calculated approach on the part of Army to maintain control while creating an illusion of accommodating political diversity and promoting democratic transition. The 1990 multiparty election was organized under the supervision of the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) with trifling consideration of the subsequent governmental structure that would be established (Clapp 2015:8). Moreover, the military authorities actively obstructed the participation of antimilitary parties during their election campaigns.

However, this strategy was devoid critical forth sights. The absence of a new constitution to delineate the modalities and composition of elected governance created a void in the transition process. Additionally, the military leadership failed to anticipate the degree of popular resentment that their regime might experience. Consequently, when the main

opposition party, the National League for Democracy (NLD), which was in actuality a coalition of smaller democratic parties united to compete against the pro-military party (Kipgen 2016: 24). The miscalculation on the part of the military Junta became glaringly evident when the National League for Democracy (NLD), the principal opposition party formed out of coalition, succeeded to secure an overwhelming majority of seats in the newly established parliament (Clapp 2015: 4-5). Backed by India's assistance, the outcome of democratic elections in 1990 was that the League of Democracy (NLD) led by Aung San Suu Kyi secured a resounding victory (Seshadri 2022: 3). Nonetheless, India's backing of the democratic struggle in Myanmar proved to be unsustainable in the long run. Immediately, the military leaders understood that they had gravely misjudged the overwhelming sentiments of the nation. As a consequence, they abruptly halted the transition process and decided that they would need much better preparation before embarking on political transition. Before the newly elected government could assume office, the military intervened, General Than Shwe eventually assumed power in 1992- ushering in two more decades of military rule. The sudden disporting of transition was sufficient enough to underline the disconnect between the military's perception of governance and the genuine aspirations of the people.

In the context of such turn of events, initially, India adopted a firm stance in support of the democratic movement, especially when many of its leaders, including Suu Kyi, were placed under house arrest. The New Delhi government openly condemned the repressive actions taken by the Burmese military against the democratic movement. In its struggle for ushering democratic governance, India being a compatriot provided refuge and even granted asylum to a substantial number of NLD activists (Wanger 2009:17). In July 1992, Myanmar's opposition group, the National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma (NCGUB) constituted of the members of the 1990 elected parliament of Myanmar who were not allowed to take power by the ruling military regime, was granted permission to open its office on Indian soil (Muni 2009:98). The democratic activists were allowed to operate for advocating democratic reforms in Myanmar, while they were in exile. Such actions on part of India signifies the support extended to Myanmar's struggle for upholding democracy in the country. Explicably, these steps were not accepted on a good note- "Yangon regarded this as blatant interference in Myanmar's internal affairs" (Freedman 2017:94).

In the aftermath of 1990 election, they spent next twenty years in drafting a new constitution, holding the democracy movement at bay with punitive measures and simultaneously building a strong military force that could prevail against internal challenges.

In the meanwhile, the flow of information within the nation was significantly restricted. The press functioned under stringent censorship, and the government maintained strict control over the Internet. The country's education system, which was largely perfunctory, served as a tool for military indoctrination; and promoting a specific interpretation of Myanmar's history and emphasizing the military's central role in shaping that history (Fink 2009: 197-200). Myanmar's universities were dismantled long ago, and their faculties were dispersed at various corners of the nation to prevent the concentration of students and curb activism. Additionally, Myanmar allocated minimal resources to education, with spending at just over 0.57 percent of GDP in 2000, marking the lowest in the world (UIS data Centre 2000).

Paradigm Shift in Policy in the Post Cold-War Period (1990-2009)

However, India's support for democratic struggle in Myanmar could not be sustained for long. In the early 1990s, there was indeed a paradigm shift and reorientation in India's policy towards Myanmar. With the launch of India's "Look East" policy, New Delhi felt the necessity to initiate the process of constructive engagement with Myanmar, despite of the existence of military junta in power. This marked the beginning of departure from their long exercised foreign policy practise of extending support to the struggle for freedom and democracy; concurrently it marked the onset of a new kind of a bilateral relation that lasted for long.

Obviously, this change in approach was motivated by varied factors including the need to address security concerns along the shared border; enhance transportation connections into Southeast Asia; secure access to energy resources; and to counter the ever-expanding area of influence of China in the region (Mohan 2007:112; Bhatia 2015: 89-90). China's influence in Rangoon started spreading its tentacles from early 1990s due to the sanctions imposed by the West on Burma since 1989. Myanmar's close economic and military ties with China raised concerns for India. Through Myanmar, China started gaining expedient access to the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea, which has been a source of consistent worry for India (Wanger 2009: 17). China became the supplier of nearly 80 percent of Myanmar's defence equipment (Hariharan 2007: 7-8). Additionally, China has established naval listening and weather posts on Myanmar's Coco Island (Mujtaba 2007: Indo-Burma News). These changing dynamics started raising eyebrows for India, as the Burmese regime had been attempting to play China and India against each other. Both Beijing and Rangoon concurrently cultivated strong economic connections where China's growing interest for Myanmar's energy reserves undoubtedly played a significant role in this board game.

India had been persistently facing internal security challenges from various ethnic-based militant insurgencies in its northeastern states. The presence of activists from insurgent groups operating in Indian states like Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram, and Nagaland, sharing a 1,643 km border with Myanmar, was a perennial source of security concern for India. Since the 1980s, militant organizations in Burma, such as the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO), collaborated with United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA), a separatist group in India like (Wanger 2009: 17). Insurgent groups like the Nagas and ULFA were receiving tacit assistance from the Burmese junta. They had operational freedom of functioning from the soil of Myanmar and also received steady supply of arms, ammunitions and narcotics from China, via Myanmar. Thus, Myanmar started sheltering this insurgent groups who found a safe haven there (Muni 2009: 63). Thus, India's intelligence service sought to establish connections with the militant networks in the region for its own interests and engaged with the KIO to combat certain factions of Naga guerillas in India (Muni 2009: 60-61). The military Junta in Myanmar, strengthened by substantial assistance from China, started forging strategic partnership with Pakistan and underwent for procuring arms from them as well (Khanna 2007: 185-186). During this precarious situation India found itself steering through a complex web of geopolitical regional dynamics. Under prevailing complexities of strained counter-insurgency cooperation an upswing in relations from the year of 1998 were set forth with series of high-profile visits and exchange of officials from both nations. Eminent dignitaries such as Indian Foreign Secretary K. Ragunath and Myanmar's Vice Chairman of SPDC, Maung Aye, played instrumental role in advancing bilateral ties during this period (Asraf 2008:231). This was complemented by a series of engagements at various levels encompassing military dialogues and joint engagements. India was then motivated by a desire to carve out a space within the nation so that New Delhi might depend on Myanmar's cooperation in addressing separatist activities in the northeast. This development bore significance in the context of India's security calculus. This perception emanated from a geopolitical reality wherein India found itself sandwiched between adversarial neighbours, both in the eastern flank comprising of Myanmar and Bangladesh and also at the western flank involving Pakistan. Such a geopolitical conundrum demanded a carefully calibrated response from Indian policymakers.

Given these mounting security imperatives, New Delhi felt compelled to reevaluate and reorient its policies towards Myanmar. New Delhi adopted a stance characterized by pragmatism. Eschewing alignment with Western powers, India embarked on a proactive effort to mend relations with Myanmar, by going against its normative principle. This entailed a

deliberate shift in policy wherein India, recognizing the complexities at play, choose to withdraw its overt support from pro-democratic movements and explicitly declared to be abided by the principle of “non-interference” in Myanmar's internal affairs. This became more evident when the then Indian Secretary of State, Jyotindra Nath Dixit, on the occasion of his visit in March 1993, declared that “India is not interested in a “democratic mission” vis-à-vis any other states” (Wanger 2009:18).

During the initial years of engagement with the Junta, New Delhi overtly emphasized economic and security interests as pivotal aspects of its foreign policy over the establishment of knowledge-based institutions in Myanmar. These accords encompassed the augmentation of border trade and intensive efforts were made to combat drug trafficking. In 1994, a milestone was reached with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding aimed at the preservation of border tranquillity and accentuating the mutual commitment to maintaining regional stability (Freedman 2006: 42). This phase saw an augmentation of security cooperation along with expansion of trade and investment links (Hall 2017:15). Concurrently, India embarked on an ambitious program of economic and technical cooperation with Myanmar. As a part of infrastructural development for the furtherance of economic and bilateral trade, initiative like the construction of the Tamu-Kalay/Kalewa India-Myanmar Friendship Road was undertaken, which was completed and inaugurated in 2001. It was an infrastructural venture spanning Manipur State in India and Myanmar, was conceived and for materialising the project Indian granted a hefty financial assistance of 90 cores of Indian Rupees (Bhatia 2015: 33-35).

Following the provision of the UN Human Rights Commission, which advocated for engaging varied regional and cross-regional organizations as a platform for augmenting, advancing and fortifying democracy; and imparting democratic values and mindset (UNHCR Report 1999: 220-223), India supported Myanmar's inclusion in sub/regional economic organizations. This included India's advocacy for Myanmar's inclusion in the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) in 1997 and the Mekong-Ganga Cooperation (MGC) in 2000. The admission of Myanmar into sub/regional economic organizations was made to expand the perspectives of the military regime and concurrently made them accommodative of the liberal democratic ideals (Lwin 2013:129). India played a leading role in this regard. At the sub/regional level, there was a continuous effort to promote and solidify democracy and broader political participation. Trade facilitation and pluralism increased the potential for a shift in attitude towards a more democratic norm.

Eventually, with the change of millennium, as fourth wave of democratization started creeping in the region, India also concurrently started shifting her focus towards human resource development and capacity-building, with the objective of facilitating steady and holistic political transformation within Myanmar. India actively engaged in capacity-building initiatives by sponsoring training programs for civil servants, military personnel and members of civil society (Seshadri 2022:5-6). The training courses conducted both in India and Myanmar served as fundamental pillars for a country's reformation system, which would contribute to the promotion of rule of law, effective governance, robust public administration, democratic principles, protection of human rights, active participation of government officials in decision-making processes, and enhanced transparency in information dissemination. During this period, India and Myanmar embarked on a series of bilateral agreements aimed at bolstering various facets of their relationship. Broadly India's policy stance during this phase was standing on four major pillars.

- Emphasising on enhancing the capabilities of state institutions through human capital development, with a particular focus on capacity building.
- While prioritization grassroot-level endeavours the focus would be on promoting civil society initiatives and undertaking additional developmental initiatives.
- Delivering training to both civilian and military personnel with an intention of forging a connection between democracy strengthening and development.
- Defining the bilateral relation based on the principle of effective collaboration even at the cost of engaging with authoritarian regimes.

Furthermore, India made substantial investments in Myanmar for the advancement of its rail infrastructure connecting northeast spanning from Jiribam of Manipur to Moreh in Myanmar. This initiative was aligned with the broader Mekong-Ganga Cooperation (MGC) project, which seeks to establish a strategic linkage between New Delhi and Hanoi, Vietnam. To support the venture, India had allocated a credit of US\$ 56 million (Mujtaba 2007: Indo-Burma News). India was also vigorously involved in the modernization of the Yangon-Mandalay rail sector in Myanmar, reflecting her commitment to bolster transportation networks in the region; and represented a significant stride towards enhancing connectivity and fostering economic integration between the two.

The economic sphere also witnessed significant strides, as Indian entities such as ONGC and GAIL were accorded with permission to acquire a stake in the Shwe gas project,

situated off Myanmar's coast (Bhatia 2015: 67-69). This development holds significant implications, particularly in the context of the gas pipeline project designed to transport natural gas from Myanmar's Arakan state to India's northeastern state of Assam (Bhatia 2015: 67-69). A notable event took place when General Than Shwe, the head of Myanmar's military government (the State Peace and Development Council), paid an official visit to India in October 2004 when both the countries entered into several pivotal agreements including one crucial declaration that laid the foundation and outlined the plans for enhanced cooperation in addressing non-traditional security challenges. Concurrently India also secured the rights to extract natural gas from the Bay of Bengal (Varadarajan, *The Hindu*: 2005). This was an absolute divergence from India's stated principle when India opened its door for authoritarian heads while subverting her normative principle of supporting democratic ideals.

Stability in the Northeast region holds paramount importance for India. It had been viewed as the nucleus of a dynamic and interconnected economic space. This region not only offers opportunities for integration with the Indian mainland economy but also serves as a gateway for collaboration with South Eastern countries. Accordingly, the stability of the northeastern region had always been a compelling imperative. Thus, the armed forces of both nations significantly bolstered their collaboration with the purpose of jointly combating insurgent groups operating on either side of the border. These cooperative military efforts had been pivotal in achieving regional stability and fostering economic integration in the Northeast (Wagner 2009: 18), reflecting their shared commitment of combatting internal threats and ensuring the safety and security of the Northeast region. Engaging with Myanmar not only helped stabilize insurgency and foster development in India's Northeast region but also established an extensive network of transnational and trans-governmental connections at various governmental levels.

Recognizing the pivotal role of education as the gateway for laying the foundation of liberal democratic temperament, India was actively engaged in education development initiatives since the turn of the millennium. One praiseworthy effort was extending laboratory equipment valued at 500,000 US Dollars to Yangon University that aimed at bolstering scientific research endeavours (Egretau 2011: 470-472). This comprehensive approach emphasized India's commitment of fostering a conducive educational environment in Myanmar. India's involvement extended beyond material provisions encompassing a wide array of academic and educational support measures for developing higher educational system.

These included the exchange of vital research materials, publications and information of latest technological and scientific updates. India was also committed for facilitating training programme for Myanmar scientists along with exchange of Indian technicians to Myanmar. There was an upsurge of collaborative efforts to organize joint conferences and seminars aimed at facilitating joint research programs. There had been a significant stride in academic cooperation by the Indo-Myanmar Working Group, particularly in the domain of scientific and technological collaboration. The establishment of integrated programs specifically designed for PhD students (Egreteau 2011: 470-472) further exemplified the depth of India's investment in Myanmar's educational landscape. Additionally, India allocated funds for the establishment of specialized institutions including a business training institute, an 'Entrepreneurship Development Centre' to impart crucial skills such as English language training for acquiring proficiency over the language, entrepreneurial development, industrial training and computer education, which would facilitate in the upgradation of the human assets (Egreteau 2011: 471-472). Concurrently India introduced numerous multifaceted ventures for providing technical expertise to small and medium-sized enterprises; as well as providing support for the development of banking facilities.

Such engagements invigorated the exchange of academic and administrative staff, as well as scholars, students and parliamentarians. This partnership has extended to various academic disciplines, encompassing medical instrumentation, aquaculture and biotechnology, metrology, standards and quality certification, as well as non-conventional sources of energy. A significant and conspicuous Indian venture was the generous allocation of 2 million US Dollars towards the establishment of the India-Myanmar Centre for Enhancement in Yangon for developing IT Skills (Lwin 2013:125) of the younger generation, enabling them to have access of the broader spectrum of knowledge. This collaborative spirit fostered a dynamic environment for cross-pollination of ideas and knowledge-sharing between the two nations. Additionally, there was an intensive effort towards the collaborative exploration of technology that would further congeal the foundation for educational progress and mutual advancement. This multifaceted approach highlights India's steadfast dedication to nurturing educational development as a cornerstone of democratic progress in the region.

India's pioneering approach towards advancing democracy is exemplified by its provision of comprehensive training programs not only to civilians but also to military personnel, demonstrating a unique and innovative mechanism aimed at strengthening

democratic institutions. Apart from engaging in joint military operations, India had actively contributed to the capacity-building efforts of Myanmar's defence officials (Lwin 2013:133-134). After decades of dialogue by the Indian diplomats and determined engagements finally enabled India to inculcate a certain degree of trust in Myanmar Junta government, whereby after much interface they took part in the special courses offered by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), which included a dedicated program for Myanmar diplomats at the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) and a training course for mid-level military officials at the National Defence College (NDC) (Egretau 2011: 471-472). To make it a successful venture India also offered scholarships to Myanmar military officers for enrolment at NDC. This collaboration involved the training of mid-level army personnel aged between 40 to 50 who are identified as potentially eminent leaders in the military hierarchy (Bhatia 2015: 98-101). These courses offered to them encompasses a wide spectrum of subjects- science and technology; economics, socio-political and international security studies. The NDC serves as an advocate for democratic transition, exemplifying democratic principles through its curriculum. Intriguingly, the syllabus extends beyond the scope of national security, delving into a broader outlook encompassing socio-political dynamics, domestic influence, economic development, environmental concerns, strategic neighbourhood considerations, and multilateralism with an emphasizes on critical areas such as India's Strategic Neighbourhood, Strategies and Structure for National Security and a thorough examination of global issues (Course Brief, NDC, 2022).

This holistic approach equips military officers with a comprehensive understanding of various facets that bear relevance to their roles as leaders in the armed forces. This approach was perceived as a crucial mechanism for enhancing bilateral cooperation by developing a camaraderie between the army personals of both the nations. Such military cooperation extends beyond mere exchange of equipment and financial resources; rather created a platform for fostering a meaningful interconnection among army officials, thereby strengthening the overall partnership between India and Myanmar in the defence sector as well as in capacity building segments (Bhatia 2015: 102).

India's commitment of enhancing cross-border infrastructure extended to the upgrading of key road sections, including the Rhi-Tidim and Rhi-Falam segments in Myanmar. Additionally, India was actively engaged in the improvement of the Yangon-Mandalay Trunk line, a vital transportation artery. Moreover, there were efforts undertaken to establish an optical Fiber link between Moreh in India and Mandalay in Myanmar (Bhattacharya 2008: 3) with an

aim of bolstering digital connectivity between the two nations. These initiatives exemplified India's dedication for strengthening regional connectivity and promoting economic integration within the nation. In pursuit of further enhancing connectivity, plans were set in motion for the ambitious Kaladan River cum Road Corridor Project. As of January 2008, the Indian government had earmarked a substantial sum of US\$ 120 million for the reconstruction of the Sittwe Port, along with the construction of associated road and water links. This visionary initiative sought to provide an alternative supply route from Kolkata to Mizoram, traversing through the Sittwe port in Myanmar (Bhattacharya 2008: 3-4). Simultaneously, the foundation for a trilateral highway, linking Northeast Mandalay and Thailand was laid down when the deliberations and feasibility report for the extension of the India-Myanmar Friendship Road was tabled.

Realists argue that states generally maximise power to ensure survival and stability. On the other hand, liberals believe in minimising the tendency of conflicts among states via transnational cooperation and by increasing economic interdependence. Realism and liberalism together, for instance, can generate powerful intuitions that blends both 'interest' and 'interdependence'. Indo- Myanmar policy is also a reflection of the perfect blend of realist and liberal elements. India since the 1990s has consistently sought to engage with Myanmar both economically and militarily. India looks out for way to maximize its economic interest and to counter growing Chinese presence in Myanmar and concurrently moving steadily towards its normative objective. India's the then policy reflected a pragmatic blend of realism and liberalism, exemplifying India's strategic approach in the region.

The prevalent understanding had been that both political and developmental strategies could be adopted at multiple fronts. The political approach emphasizes democratisation as a dynamic process involving democratic actors contending with non-democratic forces for state authority. Conversely, the developmental approach perceives democratization as a gradual, incremental journey spanning for decade, characterized by the steady growth in progress. In case of India's policy towards Myanmar, the developmental approach took precedence. Though India strongly believed on principle that the developmental cooperation had the potential of being the most effective means to introduce more tangible democratic governance in Myanmar, unlike OECD countries, India had no systematic and tangible route map for satiating its policy of developmental cooperation (Lwin 2013:133). However, since 2000 India's involvement in various development initiatives in the region, especially, within Myanmar had become

increasingly noticeable. By participating in grass-root level projects, India was intending to contribute for the tangible improvement of living conditions and infrastructure in Myanmar, ultimately fostering an environment conducive for democratic growth (Lwin 2013:133). The emphasis on gradual progress aligns with the understanding that true democratization is a multifaceted process that requires time and persistence. Such unique perspective underlined India's commitment not only to bolster political transformation in its pursuit of democracy but also endorse long-term sustainable development.

However, an apparent shift in policy stance was manifested when the then Indian president Abdul Kalam Azad, first visited Myanmar in March 2006 (Wagner 2009:18). During that visit, both the head of the states discussed upon the speedy restoration of parliamentary democracy and building the electoral "The two leaders discussed restoration of multi-party democracy and exchanged views on the progress made so far. India expressed her willingness to support Myanmar in its democratic process" (PTI, 2006). Following the visit, the debate on democratization of the country attracted both public and international attention. Therefore, the then Indian State Secretary, Shyam Saran, emphasized that, India wished to help Myanmar to re-establish democracy and the parliamentary process (PTI, 2006) and thereby, India intend to focused more on internal political reforms than on imposing sanctions. Unfortunately, Shyam Saran's statements early in 2006 were, however, not followed up by any renewed policy towards Myanmar.

Apparently, New Delhi distanced itself from blatantly supporting any Burmese armed movement for establishing democracy. Instead preferred to denote the support or assistance as, what it called the "national reconciliation process and transition to metered democracy in Myanmar" (Routray 2011: 307-308). It is worth noting that this stance garnered criticism for distancing herself from pro-democratic elements. Despite facing substantial criticism from Western nations, India's unwavering obligation/ commitment to maintain diplomatic relations with the Myanmar government highlighted its distinct foreign policy attitude. A handful of foreign policy analysts argue that this compromise did not yield the anticipated benefits for India. New Delhi defended its position by asserting that supporting economic development would ultimately contribute to creating conditions conducive for a return to democratic governance in Myanmar (Egretau 2011: 471-472). Similar to several other countries, India also appeared to utilize development assistance as a tool to foster goodwill and garner support from the recipient population and exert influence on the government for any transition. However, India's approach diverges significantly from that of certain other international donor

institutions. Notably, India's development initiatives prioritized and placed significant emphasis on the enhancement of education, establishment of centres dedicated to human resources development, media development and focused on the activities such as capacity building (Lwin 2013:128). This distinctive approach reflects India's strategic priorities in Myanmar while prioritizing long-term sustainability and the nurturing human capital as an integral facet of its bilateral engagement.

As the global community made a headway towards a global economy, propelled by the tide of globalization, they found themselves integrated into an increasingly interconnected world economy. In stark contrast, Myanmar's trajectory followed a markedly different course. The nation touched the rock bottom in international rankings across a spectrum of crucial indicators encompassing economic development, political governance, human rights, transparency and corruption, as well as on issues of human and narcotics trafficking. The stark disparities between Myanmar and its regional counterparts became glaringly evident. Consequently, external pressure on the entrenched military regime began to mount steadily. In anticipation of potential intervention from the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) to forge a roadmap for transition within Myanmar. The military regime being pre-emptive of any such initiative, swiftly devised its own seven-step plan towards transition to liberal democracy by drafting a new constitution that intend to establish a new multiparty civilian government (Bashar 2015: 17). It was essentially a strategic manoeuvre aimed at retaining a semblance of control amidst mounting external pressures. The regime's proclivity in formulating a plan was an indicator that the country was at the brink of political and economic crush down. Moreover, the inability of the regime to address adequately two of the major events – the Saffron Revolution in 2007 and the Nargis Cyclone in 2008, further complicated the political and economic scenario (Clapp 2015: 8).

The failure of the highest-ranking military leaders to adeptly address the multifaceted crises faced by Myanmar can be attributed, at least in part, to their pre-engagement in the intricate preparations for a long impending political transition, according to their terms and conditions. Just prior to the Saffron Revolution, the government was making significant strides towards the culmination of the constitution-drafting process. The State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), in an effort to engineer a political landscape that would perpetuate military dominance, undertook the task of formulating a new constitution. This constitution was designed to facilitate multiparty elections while ensuring that the military retained its firm

control over the political process (Clapp 2015: 8-9). The underlying intention was of flourishing “discipline democracy,” that present a façade of democratic practices, under the umbrella of authoritarian system. The resultant 2008 constitution exemplified a pattern known as electoral authoritarianism- a prevalent characteristic in numerous developing nations. In such cases, various forms of dictatorships strive to mask their autocratic rule by adopting an electoral framework. Essentially, the regime seeks to legitimize itself through the semblance of elected representation while strategically maintaining a firm grip on power from behind the scenes. This approach allowed the SPDC to consolidate its authority while ostensibly conforming to the concept of a multi-party system, albeit one that heavily continued military supremacy (Kipgen 2016: 25-26).

The 2008 Constitution had been the biggest source of military power in Myanmar. In addition to granting the military a prominent role in politics, it ensures that state institutions reflect the ideology advocated by the Tatmadaw. The 2008 Constitution acted as a roadmap for ‘disciplined democracy,’ delineating the scope and boundaries of reforms during regime changes. A considerable portion of the civilian government's limited authority can be attributed to the provisions outlined in the 2008 Constitution. As per the 2008 Constitution, Myanmar's Parliament reserved twenty five percent representation for unelected military officers. Furthermore, the Constitution bestowed sovereign powers upon the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces, granting control over the executive, legislative and judiciary branches in emergencies (Clapp 2015: 10-11). These provisions had allowed the military to protect its core ideological and private interests and maintain its position as “guardian”. Thus, any amendments to the Constitution would have severely damage the Tatmadaw’s grip on the Myanmar government. As a result, the political landscape remains significantly tilted in favour of the military-dominated party. But the process exhibited a relatively inclusive approach, encompassing former regime opponents, including advocates of democracy and ethnic minorities (Kipgen 2016: 76; Clapp 2015: 10-11). Remarkably, the drafting of this constitutional framework was unfolded amidst the tumultuous events of 2007 and merely within a few days after the devastating cyclone of 2008, was swiftly presented for approval in a public referendum, (Clapp 2015: 10-11). Shortly thereafter, the regime made the significant announcement that elections would be convened in 2010 to establish a new multiparty parliament (Kundu 2012:5). The series of events accentuated the fact of delicate balancing act that the military leadership sought to maintain, as they were

grappling with the prevailing crises and the imperative of orchestrating a seamless illusionary political transition.

The 2007 revolution sent a clear message to the government that significant changes in political system was urgently required. While recognizing the fact that robust democratic institutions in the subcontinent are integral to India's own security and stability, had consistently advocated for the reinstatement of democratic governance and adherence to the rule of law in its neighbouring countries. This is a general understanding that political mayhem within Myanmar would unswervingly affect the stability and progress of the northeastern region of India. Disengagement with Myanmar government was not in the interest of India in that particular context. (Lwin 2013:126-128). This invigorated India to step in to initiate a negotiation between the military rulers and pro-democracy factions. Though New Delhi refrained from imposing sanctions but empirical evidences substantiate that India exhorted the Junta to expedite the reforms as well as transition. India adopted a pragmatic approach, aiming to keep Myanmar thoroughly betrothed with democratic institutions. The belief was that sanctions would only isolate and Myanmar would drift further away from the international community and liber political ideals, whereas sustained engagement would encourage Myanmar's leaders to embrace democratic values on a broader scale.

In October 2007, during a meeting at the U.N. General Assembly, Indian External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee urged his counterpart U Nyan Win to actively advance the process of national reconciliation and political reform (MEA Brief 2008). It was noticeable and there was some evidence that Indian policy towards Myanmar was shifting in the direction towards 'endorsing democratic transition' and was no more reluctant to use its voice in favour of expediting the transition process and upholding democratic values (Rajesh, Reuters 2007). Both at the domestic front in particular and international community in general, India had to face severe criticism for its inactiveness, when the military junta ruthlessly suppressed the anti-government demonstrations, in the context of Monk's uprising in September 2007 (Bagchi ToI: 2007). Within India, the incident spurred a fervent public debate and galvanized a growing chorus of voices calling on the Indian government to extend greater support to the democratic opposition in Myanmar. There was surge of public opinion within the nation to take a more assertive stance and were advocating for a more robust engagement in support of the democratic opposition (Dikshit, The Hindu: 2008). Therefore, with the best interests in mind, the Indian government through continuous dialogue and engagement, strongly advised and

persistently pressed the military regime to release of pro-democracy activists like Aung San Suu Kyi; disapproved the military crackdown and repeatedly reminded the military regime for prioritising the restoration of democratic system (The Economics Times: 2007). Persuaded by the country like India to expedite the democratic process, the Myanmar military regime announced the appointment of a Referendum Commission on February, 2008, which eventually declared that referendum on the new constitution would be held on May 2008 (Wagner 2009:18-19). In reality India navigated a delicate path between balancing international pressure with regional stability and emphasizing the importance of democratic principles while eschewing punitive sanctions.

In rhetoric, if not in reality, India had persistently (though in a selective manner) been compassionated towards the political forces, struggling for founding democracy, in the region. Myanmar is a glaring exception to this general rule, where India, maintained a reversed approach and abandoned its support for democracy. For most of the part of Indo-Myanmar trajectory, India certainly had maintained silence on the matter of Myanmar's internal struggle for democracy, though it was always endowed with the necessary capabilities to instigate the movement. On the contrary, in the due course, through diverse diplomatic channels and high-level political exchanges, New Delhi reinforced and fortified 'constructive engagement' with the military junta of Myanmar (Mehta 2011: 101). To west in general and to the U.S. in particular, India's extensive burgeoning ties with the military regime had been seen as being blatantly hypocritical. But India had its own good old reasons that had prompted her policy stance. Consistent with its policy of balancing its support for the junta with the question of democracy (without any active support), India articulated her unconditional support for the national reconciliation process and progress in transition to democracy in Myanmar, without exporting any ideology (democracy) (Muni 2009: 97).

Myanmar's Move Towards Democratic Transition and India's Contribution (2010-2021)

After enduring the dominance of military rule for over half a century, Myanmar was underway to a transition from authoritarianism to democracy, with the propensity of yielding diverse outcomes and several setbacks. The 2010 electoral exercise was not the first of its kind to reinstate the elected governance. Under pressure of severe economic crisis after Cyclone Nargis in 2008, Saffron Revolution in 2007 and Indian persuasion the military Junta was forced to bolster the political transition towards democracy. The process that was initiated with the referendum of 2008 constitution reached its culmination by the 2010 elections. Both the events

stand as an atypical case of a deliberate and phased process of transition, wherein the leadership orchestrated incremental measures while preserving certain authoritarian elements from the previous regime.

The country had witnessed significant transition towards consolidation of democratic ideals that included amendments to election laws, lifting the ban on the NLD, and the release of Aung San Suu Kyi from house arrest. Restoration of freedom of speech and the revocation of the ban on social media platforms further contributed to the perception that the army were open to democratic changes (Kundu 2012: 4-5). As a consequence, this approach garnered significant attention and support from the international community. Simultaneously, Thein Sein and fellow reformers sought to engage and reassure the military about its continued independence and power. Aligning with the 2008 Myanmar Constitution's emphasis on the centrality of the armed forces in the country's new era (Banerjee 2022: 5). The provisions in the constitution were formulated in a manner to safeguard the army officers from prosecution, thereby, securing the military's prominent role, regardless of the electoral outcome. Furthermore, to secure the pre-conceived outcome the outgoing military regime openly manipulated the elections of 2010. Subsequently a quasi-elected government was moulded where uniformed military were appointed to one-quarter of all parliamentary seats. Observers both inside and outside the country thus expected the new government to be simply an embodiment of the SPDC in civilian clothing, holding veto power over all vital decisions and poised to reinstate martial law at its will and in accordance to the new 2008 constitution.

Typically, in most of the cases the transitions were driven by social movements, mass protests or instability, rather than being methodically and precisely planned by the governing leadership by itself. The transformation in Myanmar, stands out as an atypical instance of a carefully orchestrated transition, famously known as 'flourishing discipline democracy' (Clapp 2015: 2). The 2010 effort represented a more extensive and carefully planned approach and surpassed prior attempts in terms of its scope and meticulous planning.

With the initiation of the 2010 election, the ruling regime embarked on a string of modifications to spearhead planned transition towards a hybrid democracy and mixed economy. The transition started with the establishment of the National Human Rights Commission; granting of general reprieves for more than 200 political prisoners; easing of press censorship; and the regulation of currency practices. This constitution (2008)

unmistakably exemplified a form of electoral authoritarianism- a pattern commonly observed in many developing nations where autocratic regimes seek to legitimize themselves through the electoral process (Banerjee 2022: 9-10). Though it was a significant step, but it's important to note that the proposed new governance structures were still falling short of meeting the standards of a genuine democracy. But still the process was significant because it had exhibited relatively more inclusiveness of adversaries from the former regime, comprising both proponents of democracy and ethnic minorities. This had garnered substantial interest and backing from the global community. Therefore, the transition was unique indeed.

The ostensibly civilian government had assumed power in 2011, which was the outcome of an election process marred by significant irregularities and widely criticized for its lack of fairness. Further the election was conducted under the ambit of 2008 constitution, which was equally blemished. Eventually, National League for Democracy (NLD) won victory by securing forty-three out of forty-five available seats, in the by-election that held in April 2012. While this new administration initially expressed its intention to reform the constitutional provisions, failed to take concrete actions towards substantive restructuring, even after being in power for a substantial period of time. This earned them the reputation of primarily serving as a facade for continued military dominance. Notably, the president previously held the position of prime minister in the preceding regime and nearly 90 percent of the ministerial appointments had been associated with the former military junta (Turnell 2011:88- 89). In accordance with the constitution, a quarter of the seats in the new legislature were occupied by military officers who were still in active military service; and the army as an institution retained its exclusive authority of nominating Ministers of Defence and Border Affairs.

In 2011, the National League for Democracy (NLD) under the leadership of Aung San Suu Kyi made a momentous decision to embrace the government's collaborative approach in pursuit of achieving multiparty democracy and democratic reforms. However, the NLD was cognizant of the potential risks associated with such tactics, as they could impede progress toward genuine democracy and potentially facilitate the resurgence of hardline elements or further consolidate the military's power (Banerjee 2022: 5). This approach culminated in a seamless and peaceful transition to a democratic government in 2015. The NLD government pursued a delicate balancing act in its efforts to manage civilian-military relations while simultaneously enhancing civilian influence within predominantly militarized institutions (Kundu 2012: 7-8). This strategic approach was deemed crucial in establishing civilian control over various administrative bodies. A significant milestone in this

endeavour was taken in 2019 when the NLD aimed to bring the General Administration Department (GAD), under civilian authority. As the designated "bureaucratic backbone of the country," (Arnold, East Asia Forum: 2019) the GAD exercised direct control over all state bureaucracy at the local level, including districts, townships, and village tracts. By seeking to transfer authority, the NLD government aimed at exerting greater civilian influence over the administrative structure of Myanmar, which had historically been entrenched in military control (Arnold, East Asia Forum: 2019). On the contrary, NLD's response to the military's actions in the context of ethnic conflicts within the country was essentially silent (The New York Times 2017). Certainly, the insensitivity and the incapacity of democratically elected government became profoundly apparent when the NLD government established the 'Central Committee on the Implementation of Peace and Stability' (Banerjee 2022: 6). This garnered severe criticism from international observers. This exemplified the constraints faced by Aung San Suu Kyi in wielding substantive power in a context where the military continued to hold significant sway over the nation's affairs.

Nevertheless, the new structure of governance was still far away from meeting the standards of being a genuine democracy. Looking back, the period of the 2010s held the promise of a democratic transition in Myanmar, fostering particularly constructive relations between the two nations. This era stood out as a remarkable phase in their bilateral history, marked by greater cooperation and mutual understanding. The bilateral relations between India and Myanmar had witnessed a remarkable upswing, marked by significant diplomatic overtures and collaborative initiatives across diverse domains. Since the 2010s, there had been a notable improvement in relations between India and Myanmar. New Delhi, which had abetted in Myanmar's transition towards quasi-democracy in the past decade had facilitated cooperation. Both nations demonstrated support for Myanmar's transformative efforts in democratization and national reconciliation. At this stage of newly established democracy, India started sharing her experiences about the parliamentary democracy and facilitated all possible assistance in the national reconciliation. The collaborative initiatives between India and Myanmar had transcended conventional boundaries to encompass sectors such as connectivity, power, trade, defence, culture, and people-to-people relations. Furthermore, India was resolute for extending a substantial line of credit amounting to US\$ 500 million for developmental projects and there were ambitious plans for strategic economic cooperation and collaboration on maritime security (Bhatia 2015: 122). This were indicative of the depth of New Delhi's commitment of being the partner of Myanmar's sustained progress. Moreover, there had been

a significant increase in high-level visits between the two countries. Additionally, there was an emphasis on engaging in costly and sensitive military-to-military collaborations, which were perceived as a starting point for further enhancing bilateral relations.

The state visits of President Thein Sein in 2011 and Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh in 2012 played a pivotal role in further strengthening the ties. The state visit by Thein Sein to India marked a watershed moment, setting the stage for enhanced cooperation. Subsequently, in May 2012, Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh reciprocated with a visit to Myanmar, further cementing the burgeoning ties (Media Centre, MEA, 2012). The visit laid a Roadmap for future cooperation between the two sides. Alongside, twelve agreements and Memorandum of Understanding were signed on diverse areas encompassing- Air Service Agreement; setting up of an Advanced Centre for Agricultural Research and Education (ACARE); Rice Bio Park; an Information Technology Institute; border area development; Cultural Exchange Programme; and academic exchanges between Universities and Think Tanks, including the credit line of US\$ 500 million (Media Centre, MEA, 2012). These visits not only signified a mutual commitment to deepening diplomatic engagement but also paved the way for substantive collaboration.

The significant political and economic reforms instituted by the Government of Myanmar with assistance from New Delhi, over the past year had led to an augmented international attention on Myanmar. As partner of their efforts to promote the emerging democracy and its institutions in Myanmar, India shared experience on parliamentary democracy and facilitated regular exchanges between parliamentarians of the two countries. In this context, a parliamentary delegation led by the Speaker of the Lower House of Myanmar Parliament, H.E. Thura Shwe Mann, visited India from December 11-17, 2011(Media Centre, MEA, 2012); and participated in the training programmes for Parliamentarians and Parliamentary staff that was organized to make them aware of the nuances of legislative functioning. Furthermore, India was working vigorously and closely with newly instated democratic government of Myanmar on few other cooperation projects and infrastructure development sectors, which were including in the field of health, education and industrial training, power supply, roads and waterways, telecommunications, and many others (Media Centre, MEA, 2012). The NLD's coming in the helm of affairs had engendered tremendous enthusiasm among the foreign policy practitioners in India. Despite several shortcomings the initial transition towards democratic consolidation was whole heartedly welcomed and

embraced by India. In the aftermath of the victory, Ranjan Mathai, the Foreign Secretary, in one of his keynote addresses in an international conference, in Imphal, restated that:

As a part of our efforts to promote the nascent democracy and its institutions in Myanmar, we have shared India's experience in parliamentary democracy and facilitate regular exchanges between parliamentarians of the two countries. India remains committed to extending all possible assistance and support to the process of national reconciliation and the further strengthening of democracy in Myanmar. (keynote Address by foreign Secretary 2012)

The predominant understanding of the Indian leadership was that consolidated liberal democracy plays a crucial role in fostering national reconciliation by uniting communities and addressing the socio-economic disparity between the affluent and the underprivileged. India's unwavering endorsement of Myanmar's strides towards democratization and national reconciliation had been the cornerstone of their bilateral relations; and remained committed to extend all possible assistance and support to the process. Further, the visit by Aung San Suu Kyi in 2012 further solidified the relationship (BBC News 2012). Her speech at the occasion of the Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial lecture in JNU resonated deeply the shared values of democracy and human rights that bind the two nations. In the memorial lecture for Nehru, Suu Kyi said, "We have not yet achieved the goal of democracy, we are still trying, and we hope that in this most difficult phase the people of India will stand by us and walk by us," (Daniel, Reuters: 2012). This visit served as a poignant reminder of the historical connections between India and Myanmar and kind of trust and mutual understanding that the democratically elected civilian government had on another democracy.

Soon after assuming office PM Modi being mindful of enhancing his 'Neighbourhood First' and geo-economics had given special attention to Myanmar's endeavour towards democratic transition. He made an effort to meet Aung San Suu Kyi, the emblematic leader of democracy in Myanmar. During their meeting, she emphasized the crucial connection between democracy and stability. Acknowledging India as a nation, which had been the epitome of a diverse and multifaceted yet inclusive population capable of both development and democratic self-governance (Piconne 2015:13). With Aung San Suu Kyi leading Myanmar, India had a unique opportunity to extend support in fortifying the democratic process to a nation, which was earnestly striving to distance itself from Chinese influence (Ichihara, Sahoo, And Erawan 2016: 3). This strategic partnership had the potential not only to bolster Myanmar's democratic transition but also to strengthen India's regional influence in Southeast Asia. The Indian embassy in Yangon become extremely active. After the victory India was poised to elevate its

relationship with Myanmar to new heights. Indian officials continued being dedicated in assisting the process of political reform (Bhatia 2015: 19). While India had been cautioned in explicitly using the term "democracy promotion," its embassy dynamically affianced political and administrative reforms in Myanmar. The focus was particularly in rejuvenating Myanmar's struggling service-delivery system. Thus, assisting the nation in strengthening institutions was a priority while it was transitioning to become a democracy.

In comparison to its regional counterparts, Myanmar trails significantly in crucial human development indicators. Education, healthcare, and overall quality of life was depleting. This was indicative of the challenges faced by the country in providing basic services to its citizens (Bhatia 2015: 19). Infrastructure deficiencies further compound these issues. Frequent power cuts and an inadequate electric grid contribute to an unstable energy supply, hindering industrial growth and impeding progress in various sectors. Additionally, the state of transportation infrastructure posed a formidable barrier to economic development. Inefficient road networks, limited access to modern transportation modes, and underdeveloped ports hampered the movement of goods and people, impeding trade and economic expansion (Basu Roy Chaudhury and Basu 2015: 105). Therefore, the then Indian Ambassador to Myanmar Mr. Gautam Mukhopadhyay while accentuating the gap in the accessibility of free flow of information, lack of banking facilities and absence of regular air connectivity, he specifically emphasised that India's measured engagement with Myanmar during the Junta era was responsible for restraining back India from becoming the whole-heartedly investor for the country. However soon after coming in power, the Modi government being mindful of the importance of geo-economics started providing substantial assistance in capacity-building and technical expertise for electoral processes, upgrading information technology and telecom networks; alongside extended technical and infrastructural aid to the education and healthcare sectors. Remarkably, India stands among the selected few nations that had contributed over \$1 billion to fortify Myanmar's institutions and facilitate its developmental progress (News track, IDSA: 2016).

With an intention of helping Myanmar in strengthen democratic institutions and socioeconomic development, India had intensified her constructive engagement by means of "development cooperation projects" through grants in aid, lines of credit, training programmes and provisions for expert knowledge and capacity building initiatives. India had been instrumental in setting up centres for industrial training and enhancement of information technology skills and other capacity building programmes. India had adopted the mechanism

of sharing knowledge from diverse discipline for inculcating liberal democratic outlook and ushering stability and strengthening democratic roots in countries such as Myanmar, those who were at a nascent state and experimenting with the transition. This time with new vigour continued extending assistance for strengthening of various institutions. Once again India, substantiated its long-standing commitment towards capacity-building and human resource development approach. Thus, India sponsors the training of young diplomats, mid-senior military officials and budding journalists (an initiative that started during the early years of 2000, regardless of the change in regime continued) falls under the umbrella of a knowledge-sharing approach (Lwin 2013:132). The courses provided by institutions like the NDC, Foreign Service Institute (FSI), and Institute of Mass Communication are designed with explicit emphasis on key areas such as information transparency, human rights, Urban Development, Parliamentary Studies, Mass Communication, Management, SME/Rural Development, Indian political system, and multilateralism (India – Myanmar HRD Corporation, 2022). These curricula had been arranged with the purpose of educating and training individuals in crucial aspects that contribute to a more informed and globally engaged citizenry. This initiative aims at sharing expertise and knowledge with individuals who are poised to play influential roles in their respective fields. Moreover, India was also eager to mend its historically strained relations with Aung San Suu Kyi, who had expressed her reservations and was sceptical about India's close ties with the junta (Swe, South Asia Analysis Group:2012). Such diplomatic manoeuvres highlighted India's obligation of fostering stronger ties and supporting Myanmar's evolution towards a more inclusive and democratic society.

During the visit of the President of Myanmar to India in August 2016 PM Modi while putting emphasis on intensifying developmental cooperation stated: “The extent and depth of the India–Myanmar relationship is visible in the robust development cooperation partnership, which has a strong ‘people first’ philosophy ... India stands ready to enhance its development partnership with Myanmar ... as per the priorities of the Myanmar government”. (MEA, GoI, Statement by the Prime Minister,) Their bilateral relations reached to a new height when India bolstered assistance toward upgrading electoral infrastructure and public service capacity. India extended formal assistance aimed at enhancing the efficacy of Myanmar's electoral processes. This assistance encompassed capacity-building initiatives and system upgrades within the public service sector, along with comprehensive training programs of the electoral officials. Notably, India also pledged to extend a substantial sum of US\$1 billion in aid and development initiatives, underscoring its commitment to Myanmar's progress in both political and economic

sectors (Hall 2017:15). Prime Minister Narendra Modi's official visit in September 2017 further congealed this collaborative effort and culminated by the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Election Commission of India and Myanmar's Union Election Commission. This MoU pledged to facilitate technical cooperation and media exchanges. This exemplifies the depth of their joint commitment to advancing democratic processes and governance in the region (Prime Minister's Office 2017).

Bilateral maritime cooperation between India and Myanmar has witnessed substantial progress in recent years. Beyond routine patrol operations, the two nations have engaged in a range of collaborative efforts- reflecting their deeper commitment to mutual security and regional stability. The initiatives included participation in international events, the establishment of operational protocols and providing advanced maritime equipment. The growing camaraderie between the two naval forces were evident when Myanmar fleet took part in Indian Navy's International Fleet Review in 2016, setting the stage for further cooperation. Further in February 2016, a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) was signed that provided a structured framework for joint naval operations (Vijay NMF: 2018,). Simultaneously in March 2017, the Indian Navy pledged to establish meteorological facilities and offer specialized training for the Myanmar Navy personals (Vijay NMF: 2018). This initiative underscores India's commitment to sharing expertise and resources, ultimately enhancing the operational capabilities of their maritime counterparts.

The most recent, signed in September 2017 were two Memoranda of Understanding, which were pivotal in intensifying maritime security cooperation. These agreements prioritize the sharing of crucial 'white shipping' information and a technical agreement on a coastal surveillance system, further fortifying mutual situational awareness and response capabilities in the maritime domain (Vijay, NMF:2018). These collaborative efforts between India and Myanmar in the maritime domain exemplified their shared commitment to regional security and stability. The provision of advanced equipment, establishment of operational protocols and strategic agreements had significantly strengthened their maritime partnership. These initiatives served as a foundation for continued cooperation, ensuring a safer and more secured maritime environment in the Indo-Pacific region.

Prominent figures such as Soe Myint, the founder and editor-in-chief of the Mizzima Media Group, who played a pivotal role in the 1988 students' uprising against the junta, was of the opinion that India should take a more assertive stance and should be more proactive in its

assistance, while supporting the ongoing transition. He was optimistic because of India's previous actions during the 1988 pro-democracy protests and the commendable role that India played in providing refuge to thousands of democracy activists during the 1990s. According to Myint, India possesses both a strong track record and credentials to galvanize democratic progress in Myanmar.

Concomitantly, there were divergent voices within Myanmar who were apprehensive and of the opinion that India might not take an assertive stance in supporting reforms. A leader from a democracy promotion NGO univocally avowed that 'India's geopolitical considerations might lead it to approach the situation cautiously, refraining from placing all its efforts in one direction.' Similar comments were made by a Burmese diplomat highlighting that 'India's aid currently tends to be more on the softer side, similar to its approach in Afghanistan' (Ichihara, Sahoo, And Erawan 2016: 4). However, the dominant perception among the stakeholders within the nation was that they were expecting to receive substantial assistance from India, particularly through the development of trade and transportation infrastructure connecting the two nations. They believed that it would be mutually beneficial for both the nations because it would augment India's ambitious Act East policy. Equivocally, it had immense potential for bolstering Myanmar's economic situation which would pave the way for major shift in Myanmar's developmental trajectory, facilitated by stronger ties and improved infrastructure links with India (Basu Ray Chaudhury and Basu 2015: 103-104).

On part of the Indian policy makers, they highlighted the past collaboration between India and ASEAN in diplomatically encouraging the junta towards democratic reforms. As sanctions from the United States and Europe were lifted and concerted efforts were underway to forge a pro-democracy coalition in Asia, involving Australia, India, Indonesia, and Japan, India was more insistent for engaging in a unified action with Myanmar as such coordinated approach aligned with India's broader regional objectives and accentuated its commitment of promoting democratic values within the region (Ichihara, Sahoo, And Erawan 2016: 3). While bilateral trade between India and Myanmar had grown over the years, it was still lagging behind in comparison to China's trade equations with Myanmar. India's exports to Myanmar exceed \$1 billion, while imports from Myanmar amount to over \$500 million (World Bank, 2018). In contrast, China's exports to Myanmar surpass \$10 billion (World Bank, 2018). This discrepancy, in part, could be attributed to Myanmar's global export profile, which had been predominantly comprised of food, fuel, and non-food agricultural products (World Bank, 2018).

In the realm of energy, India was further keen on deepening its engagement by forwarding substantial investments on alternative renewable energy. Myanmar currently stands as the primary recipient of India's investments in the oil and gas sector within Southeast Asia, boasting an energy portfolio of exceeding \$1.2 billion (The Economic Times 2020). The then Joint Working Group discussions had underlined the mutual interest in augmenting the involvement of Indian companies in this sector, alongside providing capacity-building training across various domains. In the Joint Steering Committee meeting of recent past, both sides expressed their shared commitment for establishing a low voltage radial interconnection between bordering villages, aiming to bolster connectivity and energy accessibility (The Economic Times 2020). Furthermore, discussions are underway regarding the potential establishment of a high voltage, high-capacity interconnection from the Indian grid, marking a significant stride towards reinforcing energy infrastructure and cooperation between the two nations.

In a significant stride towards regional cooperation, India had committed to offer debt service relief through the G-20 Debt Service Suspension Initiative (Roy Chaudhury, Economic Times:2020). This move exemplifies India's commitment to alleviating the economic repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, India's unwavering support for Myanmar's democratic evolution, national reconciliation efforts and peace-building endeavours was noteworthy. This indicates India's keen interest in the stability and progress of its neighbouring nation. In a demonstration of goodwill and solidarity, India had also expressed its readiness to provide assistance and share its valuable experiences in matters pertaining to constitutionalism and federalism. This gesture not only signifies India's intent to foster mutual understanding and cooperation but also underscores the depth of its commitment towards nurturing democratic ideals and principles within the region.

The comprehensive financial assistance and collaborative initiatives between India and Myanmar exemplify a steadfast commitment to mutual growth and development. These agreements and projects not only addressed critical sectors such as education, infrastructure, and agriculture but simultaneously paved the way for enhanced connectivity and regional integration. The extension of educational and research collaborations further underscores the long-term vision of the partnership. Significant strides had been made in the period between 2016-2020 to extend its support to the Yamethin Police Training Academy and at the Basic Technical Training School aimed at advancing technical training infrastructure (The Economic Times 2020); and thereby further contributing to capacity building in Myanmar's law

enforcement sector. A strikingly important trilateral partnership between India, Myanmar, and Japan had been forged, focusing on the upliftment and development of the Rakhine province. This collaboration was initiated with the purpose to develop soft infrastructure for 15 schools (The Economic Times 2020), illustrating a concerted effort to enhance educational facilities and opportunities in the region. Furthermore, existing Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) related to institutions like the Myanmar Institute of Information Technology and the Advanced Centre for Agricultural Research and Education (ACARE) have had their validity extended (Roy Chaudhury, 2020, Economic Times).

Till 2020 India had extended a financial aid amounting to approximately \$1.4 billion (Roy Chaudhury, 2020, Economic Times). India had affirmed its commitment to continue extending its assistance and support to Myanmar in fulfilling its Financial Action Task Force (FATF) related obligations that signifies their joint efforts in combating financial crimes and ensuring regional security. Additionally, several arrangements including a Project Agreement for the establishment of a modern Integrated Check Post at Tamu, an MoU for the construction of 50 basic schools and a Project Agreement for the advancement of an agricultural mechanization sub-station (Roy Chaudhury, 2020, Economic Times) were in the pipeline. India will also provide support for the construction of the Bwaynu bridge in Myanmar. Both the nations were actively engaged in formulating the modalities of a training program for the Myanmar Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) that aimed at enhancing financial intelligence capabilities, strengthening efforts against money laundering and financial crimes.

In an era characterized by economic interdependence, a trade-centred approach serves not only to spur economic activities along the India-Myanmar border but also cultivate mutual benefits and connections among the people of the two nations. Additionally, this approach served to curtail illicit trade. It follows that escalation of developmental initiatives in border regions directly contributes to increased stability along the borders. These actions align with liberal perspectives, representing a shift in India's stance from mere engagement to proactive re-engagement with Myanmar. This shift was motivated not only to counter balance Chinese influence but also to boost economic ties and quell insurgent groups in India's northeast with assistance from the Myanmar army, but also by a genuine aspiration to support the strengthening and consolidation of liberal democracy.

Aftermath of Democratic Back Sliding in Myanmar and the India-Myanmar Dynamics

Despite the progress made by the NLD in establishing democratic processes in Myanmar, the military coup of February 2021 showed that the government had failed to exercise civilian control over the junta. Only after losing the 2018 by-elections, NLD concentrated its effort to amend the 2008 Constitution. In January 2019, a parliamentary Charter Amendment Committee (CAC) was established, comprising of hundred and forty-nine lawmakers to decide upon the structure of parliament. After seven-days of debate it was concluded that in the Parliament there would be NLD's significant representation of fifty-nine percent, followed by ethnic minority parties at eleven percent, the USDP at five percent, and the military maintaining its constitutionally mandated share of twenty five percent (Banerjee 2022: 8). The proposed amendments put forth by the National League for Democracy (NLD) aimed at curbing the prevailing influence of the military within Myanmar's political landscape. The other key proposals were initiatives to eliminate the military's veto power over constitutional changes, imposed limitations on its representation in Parliament, diminish its political leadership role, and revoke the authority of army chiefs to assume power during emergency situations (Aung, The Irrawaddy: 2020). The NLD's recommendations also included at altering the provision of seeking approval of the military for charter amendment. This signifies a profound shift from the existing threshold of more than seventy five percent of Parliament to “two-thirds of elected representatives,” (Aung, The Irrawaddy: 2020). However, these proposals failed to garner the required vote in the assembly. In total, the NLD proposed 114 amendments to the Constitution, of which only minor ones were approved. In Myanmar's case, the failure of the NLD to amend the Constitution or successfully reform the GAD highlights the difficulties encountered in advancing towards a stable democracy. The centralized nature and weaknesses within the democratic leadership further hindered progress in this direction (Banerjee 2022: 11).

In 2021, Myanmar witnessed a deeply troubling event as the military returned back, reasserted its dominance over the country; and shattered hopes for democratic progress in this Southeast Asian country beset by decades of conflict and repressive regimes. After a near-decade of sharing power with elected lawmaker's army were taking back control. On February 1st, a coup d'état unfolded that abruptly halting Myanmar's fragile transition towards democracy. The elected government, led by Aung San Suu Kyi, was deposed, claiming unsubstantiated allegations of electoral irregularities (Jeffrey 2021: Special Commentary). Despite the caretaker government's claims of organizing democratic multiparty elections in the coming year, its actions had exhibited characteristics typical of repressive authoritarian rule.

Moreover, the Junta was strategically planning to amend the Political Parties Registration Law (PPRL) to ensure that future election outcomes do not favour any specific party; thus, making landslide victories unachievable (Maizland, Council on Foreign Relations: 2022). This proposed amendment was likely to impact the involvement and participation of pro-democracy parties, perpetuating a power balance that continues to favour the military regime.

Following the coup in 2021, the military Junta has adopted increasingly coercive and violent tactics to maintain control over the nation (Maizland, Council on Foreign Relations: 2022). The coup led to widespread protests and civil unrest, as the people of Myanmar rallied against this regressive step towards authoritarian rule. The coup marked a tragic regression in Myanmar's political trajectory. It brought to an end of a decade of cautiously implemented democratic reforms. The military's own initiation reforms, marked by a power-sharing agreement with figures like Aung San Suu Kyi, had initially sparked hopes for a more inclusive and representative governance. Despite of rigorous efforts to sustain democracy, Myanmar failed to hold back and the nation retreated back to authoritarian rule. The aversion of these efforts raised grave concerns underscoring the fragility of democratic progress in the face of deeply entrenched power dynamics. This abrupt jolt in the consolidation of democracy sent shockwaves through the nation and garnered international condemnation. The return of the military to the forefront of Myanmar's political landscape in 2021 marked a sombre and uncertain period for the nation, as the international community closely watched the developments in hope of a peaceful and democratic resolution.

The sweeping victory of NLD and the mere formation of the government didn't confer the complete realization of democracy because the military continued to wield significant influence over the political landscape of the nation. Several ambassadorial positions remained under military control and entrenched bureaucrats with a junta-era mindset continue to hold their official positions. While collaboration with the military was an imperative for a stable transition but there was genuine growing concern about the NLD's capacity to govern. The Director of the Sandhi Governance Institute, an organization offering public policy training, expressed their reservations stating that the inexperienced NLD team was not equipped enough to meet the heightened public expectations (Ichihara, Sahoo, And Erawan 2016: 7-8). In fact, there had been an upsurge in power outages over the past few years.

The inexperience and limited capacity of NLD was particularly glaring in matter of peace and reconciliation efforts and were responsible for its inability to tackle the situation

more effectively. Experts and think tanks in Myanmar both were in consonance that the new government was unable to address, resolve and accommodate adequately, the fundamental concerns of conflicting ethnic groups. The peace initiative formulated by the junta, achieved a breakthrough by persuading eight ethnic groups to sign a ceasefire agreement in 2014, but whatever progress was made proved to be futile. The government was grappling with crisis and challenges to devise a clear strategy for its revival. The most severe test for the new government was ensuring the 'Rights' concerning liberty and citizenship of the minorities. In the face of a rising tide of Buddhist nationalism and Islamophobia, Suu Kyi's administration was struggling to alleviate the suffering of the Rohingyas- the most persecuted minority group in the country. Thousands of Rohingyas were residing in camps dedicated for internally displaced persons (IDPs); and continue migrating to the neighbouring countries such as India and Bangladesh, with limited access to healthcare and education.

Despite international criticism, there was a broad consensus that the new government was aligning with the junta's hardline stance on the Rohingyas. Contrary, there were varying degree of opinion regarding Aung San Suu Kyi's influence over the new government. Barred by the constitution from assuming the presidency, she assumed the newly created role of state counsellor, a position she claimed was 'above the president' as promised during the 2015 election campaigns (Ichihara, Sahoo, And Erawan 2016: 3-4). However, this extra constitutional provision faced opposition from military parliamentarians. As state counsellor, Aung San Suu Kyi used to accompany President Htin Kyaw and tried to play the presidential role most effectively. Her directives were heeded by ministers (Egreteau 2016:136). But still the political analysts, academicians and the general citizenry were highly apprehension about the extent of her real control over the power equations. Suu Kyi tend to seek advice from a select few indicative of the fact that political power remained highly personalized and could had been further diversified, decentralized and de-personified beyond her (Ko Ko 2018: 42). Likewise, being novice in political handling and lack of experience within the NLD government, there was a shortfall in efforts, in adequately nurturing and developing the skills of party members and grooming the emerging leaders of the future. A nominal proportion of the leadership had received formal training, possessing professional qualifications; and the majority were devoid of substantial managerial expertise (Banerjee 2022: 11).

A similar trend was observed in the civil society as well. The government had emphasized that NGOs were operating in the country must work in favour of furtherance of

national interest. While this approach may have contributed to political stability for the time being but it raised concerns about the ability of single-issue NGOs to effectively serve as watchdogs. Indeed, Aung San Suu Kyi was known for her inclination against single-issue NGOs (Ichihara, Sahoo, And Erawan 2016: 3). Civil society was also grappling with the task of ensuring transparency and accountability within the government. The NLD's decisive electoral triumph and Suu Kyi's remarkable victory signified the onset of a new era in Myanmar's tumultuous journey towards democracy, was not devoid of the equally substantial challenge. Apart from the above-mentioned reasons the most important factor that made the way patchy for democratic consolidation had been the omnipotent presence and the predominance of the army over the decision making.

While many Asian nations, particularly those in Southeast Asia such as Indonesia, Philippines and Thailand had experienced extended period of military rule after World War II; but the Burmese generals' dictatorship stood out as outrightly exceptional. This coup marked the existence of one of the lengthiest stretches of uninterrupted military governance in contemporary history. Though General Ne Win's coup marked the significant turning point in Burmese history but even prior to the coup d'état in 1962, the Tatmadaw, the armed forces held substantial political sway even before the formalization of military rule. In 2011, there was an eyewash transition towards a quasi-civilian administration comprised predominantly of former generals and most of them were still closely tied to the military establishment. A convergence of several multifaceted critical elements sets the Burmese variant of military authoritarianism apart, making it uniquely disastrous in the history of modern praetorian rule. The enduring security threats and Tatmadaw's control over the national economy had been the reasons that sets Tatmadaw's globally unique remarkably prolonged rule (Egretreau 2016: 58; Barany 2016: 82-84). The other factor that has been responsible to a significant extent for the prolonged and pervasive dominance of the Tatmadaw had been the absence of a politically robust opposition. This weakness can be attributed to primarily two factors. The inherent shortcomings within the opposition played pivotal role in sustaining the military's grip over state authority. Furthermore, as the security apparatus was predominantly controlled by Bamar Buddhists, the judiciary's purported independence exists only in theory. It remains staffed by judges and magistrates who previously served in the military or under the former military regime (Jolliffe 2019: 4). It is important to acknowledge that a mere transition of authority from the military to civilian governance does not inherently guarantee a more equitable and harmonious society. Meaningful reforms within the judicial system necessitate meticulous planning and execution,

which were grossly unavailable in case of Myanmar's transition process (Banerjee 2017: 13). Finally, the last one of these factors stems from the fact of very presence of military rule for such a prolonged duration. The protracted timespan makes the difference. Obviously, the impact of a repressive authoritarian regime holding power for seven or ten years versus fifty years, as seen in Burma, has been monumental. An entire generation, in Myanmar grew up under the shadow of military rule; allowing the Tatmadaw to deeply infiltrate and entrench itself in society, culture, education and even religious life; and altering the general democratic perception towards political modalities. As David Steinberg notes, the military can be best defined as "state within a state" a blinkered community of up to 400,000 men in uniform—the second largest in Southeast Asia—and 2 million dependents, which constitutes 4 percent of Myanmar's populations (Steinberg 2010: 101-103). Conglomeration of all these factors underlines the intricate dynamics that contributed to the Tatmadaw's enduring rule and the formidable deterrents faced by potential dissidents. Moreover, the deep-seated divisions within the opposition have been the most crucial factor that bolstered the return back of the army in political scenario of the nation.

Military has played pivotal role in shaping Myanmar's political landscape. Political transition in Myanmar have historically been initiated by the military regime itself. But transitions initiated by the military may appear peaceful, but they may not always lead to sustainable democratic progress. Instead, these transitions may prove to be temporary, as military regimes retain the aptitude to regain power through non-democratic methods if they deem the direction of the transformation unfavourable to their interests. Exactly, this has been witnessed in case of Myanmar. The Junta's attempts to manipulate future election outcomes, underscores the future of democratic process. Thus, consolidation of democracy can set forth only when the military regime itself initiates the shift towards the transition process. Achieving a successful democratic transition is contingent upon the establishment of effective civilian control over the military. This task becomes particularly challenging in nation like Myanmar, which is characterized by a deep-rooted legacy of militarism; where the military holds the capacity to secure both political and institutional privileges. Given the prevailing circumstances, the aspiration for a democratic Myanmar free from military influence remains an elusive quest. The interplay of historical legacies, institutional structures, and political dynamics underscores the complexities involved in achieving a democratic system that can operate independently of military oversight and control.

Myanmar's tumultuous path towards democracy, had been short-lived. In reality the road was fraught with substantial challenges. A successful democratic transition requires establishing functional institutions of civilian control over the military, which was especially difficult in countries like Myanmar with a strong legacy of militarism and where the military had abled to secure both political as well as institutional privileges. Suu Kyi's administration and Myanmar's fledgling steps towards democratic governance required substantial backing, particularly from fellow Asian democracies. Nations such as Indonesia, India, Japan, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) were expected to bear a pivotal role in bolstering Myanmar's fragile reform process. Their sustained support, both in terms of political engagement and material assistance was indispensable for nurturing a stable and inclusive democracy in Myanmar. By standing alongside Myanmar during this critical phase, these regional partners were expected to contribute significantly towards the consolidation of democratic values and the realization of a more prosperous, harmonious Southeast Asia. Thus, for robust consolidation of democracy necessitates encompassing and reorienting the military and police towards public service; providing skill training to enhance tactical proficiency without resorting to excessive force; implementing people-centric mechanisms; prioritizing gender inclusivity and sensitivity; and fostering overall inclusivity, which was absolutely inaccessible in the Myanmar context.

The return back of the military had not only affected the nation's political landscape but it had garnered larger impact over its neighbours in the region. If we look at from the aspect of security and national interest then undeniable that instability within Myanmar had posed challenges for India at multiple fronts. To begin with, it had prompted the longstanding threat of Chinese predominance in the region. Soon after the coup United States, the European Union, Canada, the United Kingdom and Australia, had levied manifold sanctions on Myanmar. Such punitive measures by West had further encouraged Myanmar's military rulers to resort under China's umbrella. Myanmar's isolation from the other part of the globe has facilitated China to reinforce its presence in India's backyard. China already been one of Myanmar's largest trading partners and post 2021 it had also become a major partner both economically and strategically. According to Myanmar's Ministry of Commerce the trade volume between the two nations has shoot-up to around \$8.4 billion in the fiscal year of 2022-2023 (Marjani, The Diplomat: 2023). China has also been a major investor for Myanmar for decades. In the last two years, since the Military coup in 2021, China has invested more than \$113 million in Myanmar for infrastructure development (Marjani, The Diplomat: 2023). China's mounting presence in

Myanmar boons a significant strategic challenge for India's interactions with Myanmar and impede its broader outreach to Southeast Asia. Further India's concerns are heightened by report of China establishing a listening post on Myanmar's Great Coco Island, situated merely 55 kilometres north of India's Andaman and Nicobar Islands (Marjani, *The Diplomat*: 2023). This dynamic poses a dual challenge for India, impacting both its security concerns and the principle of unimpeded navigation in Southeast Asia. This development further complicates This regional security dynamics, necessitating India to carefully navigate its regional engagements to safeguard its interests and maintain stability in the broader Indo-Pacific arena.

The military upsurge in Myanmar, has triggered security concerns for India's Northeast region which got mostly unnoticed and unexamined. Clashes between Myanmar's military and the People's Defence Forces (PDFs), formed to protect communities from the military's aggression, had intensified in the western and northwestern regions bordering India. The sudden shift in Myanmar's political landscape had not only disrupted a decade of limited democratic reforms but posed significant challenges to India's regional policies, particularly affected the 'Act East' initiative. The coup in Myanmar has had far-reaching implications for India's economic and security interests in Southeast Asia. Vital projects, instrumental to India's Act East policy, had been stalled due to the prevailing instability. The Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project and The India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway Project, aimed at establishing a crucial trade route connecting the Northeastern states with Myanmar's Sittwe Port (Ambarkhane and Gathia 2022: 5) are now under regular air raids and attacks by the military; and completion of these projects is a formidable challenge. The multi-dimensional civil war, has made progress on these projects nearly impossible. The abrupt halt in progress of the vital economic and logistical ventures, which are pivotal to its Act East policy, has severely hindered India's endeavour for integration with Southeast Asia and also undermined its strategic outreach in the region.

The ongoing military actions in Myanmar since February 2021 have sever spill over repercussions in the Northeastern region. It resulted in a severe humanitarian crisis, leading to a staggering number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and the influx of refugees from Myanmar into India's northeastern states. The ever-mounting violence has compelled thousands of Myanmar's residents to flee that triggered a substantial influx of refugees to India's vulnerable northeastern states particularly, Manipur and Mizoram. This influx included leaders of the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM), organizers of anti-coup pro-democratic forces,

civil servants, defectors from the military and police, educators, and student activists (Yadav and Saha, India Today: 2023). By April, as Myanmar's military intensified attacks on civilians in Chin State and Sagaing Region, the number of refugees seeking shelter in India continued to rise. Among them reportedly there were relatively a large number of members of the PDFs (Yadav and Saha, India Today: 2023). According to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), an estimated 22,000 refugees have entered India from Myanmar since February 2021, with around 7,000 arriving in Manipur and Mizoram States in the latter half of January 2022 alone. According to the latest report from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in 2023, the total number of IDPs has reached a distressing 1,827,000 of which substantial 53,500 individuals have sought shelter in India from the beleaguered region of Chin province to its bordering Manipur and Mizoram states (UNHCR Report 2023). The UNHCR estimates that over 40,150 individuals have sought refuge in Mizoram and 8,250 in Manipur (UNHCR, Myanmar Report 2023).

This surge had led to significant tensions between district administrations in Manipur and Mizoram, who have welcomed refugees with open arms, and the central government in New Delhi, which has mandated not to establish camps or offer assistance. The Indian government was concerned that accepting refugees would strain relations with Myanmar's military regime. The sudden influx of refugees from Myanmar posed substantial challenges to India, including security risks and added burdens on local populations as refugees embark on the arduous journey across India without proper access to essential resources like food and medicine. There was also a concern regarding the potential spread of infectious diseases and incapacity to provide proper medical infrastructure (Marjani, The Diplomat: 2023). Moreover, it has strained local resources and infrastructure, which not only heightened social tensions but also created vulnerabilities that has been exploited by various groups, making it a pressing nontraditional security concern for the Northeastern states.

Manipur, with its deep socio-ethnic links to ethnic communities in Myanmar, has experienced the brunt of this refugee influx, leading to sever ethnic conflict and complicated inter-community dynamics. The state government, under immense public pressure, has directed Indian paramilitary forces guarding the border to exercise leniency, allowing refugees to cross. The influx of Chin and Kuki refugees from Myanmar has ignited tensions among the Meiteis and Nagas in the Northeast region. This area has a historical backdrop of ethnic conflicts, compounded by the existing divide between indigenous populations and non-local residents.

The arrival of Myanmar refugees further exacerbates the already delicate social dynamics in the region, adding another layer of complexity to an already intricate situation (Marjani, *The Diplomat*: 2023). The influx caused internal ethnic conflicts culminating tensions between the state administration and the central government. Parallel to it New Delhi is apprehensive about antagonizing Myanmar's military regime. As a result, Manipur is caught in a delicate balancing act between local sentiments and national security interests.

There have been documented cases of insurgents from Myanmar establishing operational bases in Mizoram, utilizing the region as a conduit for transporting weaponry and supplies to support their struggle against the military junta. Additionally, India's Northeastern states are concomitantly exploited by Myanmar as a safe passage for illicit drug and human trafficking. This network extends through regions such as Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram and Nagaland. The presence of robust ethnic affiliations across the border further facilitates the flow of narcotics, posing a substantial threat to India's overall national security framework.

India, despite being a democratic nation, has maintained a longstanding alliance with Myanmar's military. India's engagement with Myanmar's military is rooted in their shared interest in countering insurgent activities along their border regions. The November 13, 2021 attacks by Manipuri Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAOs) on Indian security forces marked as a crucial turning point because it has uncovered the fact that benefits of the counterinsurgency partnership have dwindled and this could compel New Delhi to reevaluate its relationship with Myanmar's military junta. India's engagement with the military junta of Myanmar is underpinned by a strategic calculus aimed at offsetting the activities of certain Indian Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAOs). These groups, often with the backing of China or affiliated proxies of the Chinese government pose a significant security concern for India. They not only procure weaponry from China but also exploit the northwestern states of Myanmar as a sanctuary for planning and launching cross-border attacks. This partnership built on the premise that Myanmar's military is a crucial ally in their joint counterinsurgency efforts and have the capacity to effectively manage cross-border threats emanating from insurgent elements has been proven fundamentally flawed. Recent developments had revealed the limitations of this approach.

India's engagement with Myanmar has always been marked by a complex interplay of political, economic, and security considerations. For the last two and a half decade, the

Government of India (GOI) has exhibited somewhat lenient and indifferent stance towards political developments or instability within Myanmar. Simultaneously, there has been a distinguishing enthusiasm to enhance economic and strategic ties with the same nation, irrespectively of whoever in power. This duality has once again highlighted the underlying essence of India's Myanmar policy. The country for over a few decades has cultivated a relationship of so-called 'constructive engagement' with authoritarian regimes was an indicator of departure from its stated principles of upholding democracy and safeguarding human rights. It has abstained from criticising human rights abuses by the military junta, even though it has received and hosts a large number of Burmese refugees and political exiles on its soil, who has been a cause of non-traditional security threats. Since the late 1990s, India's approach towards authoritarian regimes of Myanmar, has raised questions about its commitment to upholding democracy and safeguarding human rights. New Delhi has refrained from taking a position on the recurring political turmoil which had disappointed pro-democracy activists.

Even in the most recent times India, as the largest democracy in the region, has adopted a more restrained approach in its public statements. One of the foreign policy practitioners commented “They are very clear that they want to impress on the Tatmadaw that what has happened is wrong, but prefer not to condemn it openly” (Ghoshal, Reuters:2021). In the ongoing struggle between upholding ethical and ideological principles versus pragmatic realpolitik, it appears that New Delhi, at this juncture, has leaned towards practising realpolitik in regard to its engagement with Myanmar, particularly concerning the issue of reinstating democratic governance. According to undisclosed sources, New Delhi is cognizant of its constraints in exerting influence on the Tatmadaw and is inclined towards avoiding direct admonishment. But in one of its earlier statements coming from an individual like T.S. Tirumurti, India’s Permanent Representative to the United Nations said that “Restoring democratic order should be the priority of all stakeholders in Myanmar,” (The Hindu 2021).

A sect of analysts prefers to denote that New Delhi has no choice but to engage with its autocratic neighbours or for that matter whoever is in helm of affairs, as it is driven by an apprehensive about that the outsider- more precisely China can and will domesticate India’s largest neighbour. The ever-growing Chinese presence in the region have always been one of the determining reasons behind New Delhi’s unwillingness or hesitance to openly condemn the military regime in Rangoon. China's expanding influence in the Bay of Bengal region has further complicated the scenario. Myanmar, with its proximity to India's northeastern states and

its strategic significance in China's Belt and Road Initiative, has emerged as a critical battleground for the 'Dragoon' and the 'White Elephant' influence in the Bay of Bengal. This shift has been evident since the late 1990s, with India prioritizing pragmatic considerations over normative values.

For long, in the backdrop of post Cold-War India's engagement with Myanmar was its economic imperatives. Myanmar's strategic location provides India with a gateway to Southeast Asia- a region of growing economic importance. India's "Look East" policy, subsequently rebranded as "Act East," emphasized the need to tap into the economic potential of this region. In order to rationalize and materialize the "Act East" policy, India has regarded Myanmar as a linchpin because it serves as a crucial bridge between South Asia and Southeast Asia. Thus, by establishing diplomatic and economic ties with Myanmar, India sought to and had established a foothold in a region poised for economic growth. Such engagement was essentially a pragmatic manoeuvre to gain a competitive edge in a rapidly changing global economic landscape. During that period India's security considerations had emerged as a driving force in India's engagement with Myanmar's regime. The exigencies of border security, counterinsurgency efforts, and the broader regional stability imperatives had compelled India to adopt a pragmatic stance, fostering a relationship that extends beyond ideological boundaries. The socio-political disturbances in north-eastern states, which share porous border with Myanmar, made it an imperative for India to seek cooperation from Junta to ensure stability in the region. Thus, engaging with the Myanmar, during that period became a calculated move to secure India's northeastern borders. This strategic realism had been indicative of the complex calculus where the imperatives of security coalesced with broader democratic ideals. In the context of prevailing regional dynamics India's approach of sustained assistance aptly played an instrumental role in nurturing democratic values within Myanmar's political ethos and contributed to the gradual development of democratic notions. This transformative process represented a testament of the potential for positive influence, even within the context of an authoritarian regime. Though, out of varied compulsions India had to deviate and wither away from its commitment but being engaged with the regime it relentlessly tried to manoeuvre the ruling force towards democratic transition and simultaneously curving a niche for herself. But the return back of the army; and the incapacity of the democratic regimes to accommodate multi-plurality within the democratic purview and address the ethnic crisis, showed that democratisation was superfluous and democratic values failed to consolidate and take deep root in the political ethos. Hence, India's engagement with Myanmar

had been fraught with complexities, as it navigates the delicate balance between its democratic ideals and pragmatic geopolitical interests. Such engagements with authoritarian regimes have raised questions about India's commitment to human rights and democracy. Striking this balance remains a formidable challenge for India as it seeks to advance its national interests in the Bay of Bengal region while upholding its core values.

Since the civilian government in Myanmar a significant reduction in insurgency activities in northeast India had been witnessed. It is the testament of combined efforts of the Indian government, pro-activeness of the civilian authority and various stakeholders in the region. The steady escalation of Indian Army's proactive engagements had led to the subsequent decline in recruitment by insurgent factions (Kushwaha 2023:171-172). The Indian Army has undertaken proactive measures to engage the youth of the northeast, offering a range of opportunities in education, skill development, and employment. The initiatives aimed at engaging the youth coupled with the revocation of AFSPA; promoting community engagement; reduced instances of alleged human rights violations and successful implementation of reintegration initiatives have played a crucial role in diverting young individuals away from insurgent groups; have contributed to a positive shift towards personal and societal advancement; and have brought a change in psyche of the youth, which encouraged them to surrender and get reintegrated with the mainstream society (Philip, The Print:2022). Thus, India's reliance on the Tatmadaw may no longer be deemed essential or strategically advantageous in suppressing insurgency, given the significant success of internal efforts in mitigating violence and fostering stability in northeast India

India's foreign policy stance of noninterference and its hesitancy to openly criticize the actions of the Tatmadaw in Myanmar stand in contrast to its global commitment to democratic values. While the ASEAN bloc has collectively condemned Myanmar's armed forces and even excluded them from crucial ASEAN gatherings. But India recent interactions with Myanmar's military leadership, contrast to coordinated efforts of the ASEAN countries, may unacceptably jeopardise India's strategy of fostering ties with the ASEAN through Myanmar. Therefore, it is imperative for India to thoroughly reevaluate its association with Myanmar and judiciously weigh the broader ramifications of its involvement with the Tatmadaw, especially in light of the ongoing vehemence and gross human rights violation in Myanmar.

The people of Myanmar have unequivocally expressed their longing for a functional democracy in their nation by electing the NLD in the 2020 general elections. Nevertheless, the

power-monger leadership within the Tatmadaw is unlikely to voluntarily renounce their hold on power. Their tactics however, are fundamentally unsustainable, as governing a population for a long-term without their genuine support is unfeasible. In formulating India's policy towards its tumultuous eastern neighbour, New Delhi must take into account the democratic aspirations of the people of Myanmar and the significant outcome of the 2020 elections. Turning a blind eye to the violence against Rohingya Muslims or the suppression of democratic protests contradicts India's ambition to be a global leader that champions democracy.

It is an imperative that India recalibrate its approach and adopt a fresh slant that safeguards its security interests, foster regional stability, and continue to advance its economic objectives. A paradigm shift entails public engagement with the National Unity Government (NUG), Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM), and People's Defence Forces (PDFs), as well as Myanmar EAOs active in India's borderlands, offers a promising path forward. On the contrary, should India persist in its strategy of offering military aid and backing to the Myanmar army in an attempt to curb China's influence, there is a significant risk of eroding any positive sentiment it may have held with the Myanmar public as well as in the realm of international community. This recalibrated strategy of engaging with pro-democracy forces and addressing humanitarian challenges will enable India to strengthen cross-border ethnic ties in its northeastern states; bolster its reputation among communities collaborating with anti-junta forces; can foster regional stability; forge robust relations with the NUG; lay the foundation for deeper people-to-people relations; and contribute to the emergence of a democratic and prosperous Myanmar. Moreover, it will safeguard infrastructure projects integral to the 'Act East' Policy and pave the way for inclusive democratic and economic initiatives within a federal democratic Myanmar.

New Delhi should actively advocate for a peaceful resolution among all parties involved, with the ultimate aim of quelling the unrest in Myanmar expeditiously. A secure and democratic government in Myanmar would ultimately serve India's interests in the long term; and India should not hesitate in striving towards this objective. It is almost a security imperative for India to collaborate with pro-democracy forces as it offers India an opportunity to play a more influential role in Myanmar's future; position India to counterbalance vis-à-vis China who has been the steadfast support for the military junta; and also aligns with its normative principle of upholding democratic values as envisaged by the global community.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The thesis provides a theoretical framework of three key concerns: the diverse usage of the term ‘democracy’, the menace of legitimizing and furthering democratisation through warfare, and the introduction of a hypothetically contentious dichotomy between democracies and non-democracies in international discourse. Here it’s being articulated for a more introspective approach to the study of democratic security policies, one that acknowledges the inherent ambivalences, tensions, contradictions and paradoxes within democratic principles, norms and practices. Transitioning from theoretical abstractions to practical implications, the thesis enquires into the nexus between democracy- democratisation, foreign policy formulation and international relations. Based on the theoretical foundation of ‘Democratic Peace Thesis’, it has been contented that democratically governed states often prioritize diplomatic channels and multilateral cooperation for the resolution of disputes. This proposition has a distinctive disposition towards fostering peaceful relations with neighbouring countries, thereby augmenting regional stability. Thereby, the thesis sets the stage for further in-depth exploration of this inter-relationship between democratisation and foreign policy and its practical implications within the context of Indian sub-continent.

In the thesis it has been intended in shedding light on the scopes and innate challenges that have arisen within the realm of structural and constitutional democratisation. It’s being identified that the intricate interplay of multifaceted factors like colonial legacies, the predominance of the military and political elites, ethno-religious fault lines etc. had shaped the trajectory of democracy. Based on empirical evidences this chapter shown the intricate ways by which these nations have navigated the complexities that are inherent in fostering democratic governance. With the onset of the new millennium as fourth wave of democratization swept over Indian Sub-continent, it is the general perception that as the world's largest democracy, India would play a pivotal role in fostering democratic governance. India's geographical dominance in the region closely tied her fate with the democratisation efforts of the neighboring countries. Political instability in the region directly impacts India's stability and comprehensive development. The spill-over effects of political upheavals in neighboring countries poses security threats for India. But often driven by principles like non-interference, non-intervention and upholding democratic ideals, India’s approach had been wavering between constructive engagement and cautious diplomacy.

Ensuring the longevity of democratic institutions in neighbouring countries is a significant challenge. In that milieu, 'Neighbourhood First Policy' represented a strategic shift towards a more cooperative approach with neighbouring states, underscoring India's commitment to regional stability and prosperity. The implications of this doctrine on India, as a regional actor and its impact on the promotion of democratic values is immense. In recent years, Indian policymakers have been striving towards the vision of fostering South Asia as an integrated and interconnected region. Their belief is grounded in the idea that a prosperous and well-connected neighbourhood is key to ensuring predictability and stability in international relations. Proactive engagement in neighbouring countries has sometimes been met with apprehension. In its dealings with neighbouring states, India aims to project the image of a benevolent hegemon that respects their sovereign decisions and refrains from meddling in their internal affairs. Recognizing the apprehensions of its smaller neighbours, India is mindful that a forceful push for democracy promotion policy could be interpreted as an infringement of their sovereignty and an aggressive interference in their domestic matters. Thus, Proactive engagement requires a sustained commitment to capacity-building, institutional development, and governance reforms.

Thus, a duality in approach had been evident, which is being highlighted by India's foreign policy actions characterised by assisting democratic struggles and simultaneously safeguarding its strategic interests in the region. Thus, in this research work it is being intended to trace the paradigm shift in Indian foreign policy over the past two decades from reactive to proactiveness. Based on the historical antecedents and contemporary geopolitical dynamics, the imperative of redefining astute foreign policy intervention and diplomatic mechanisms as instruments for consolidating peace and stability in this volatile landscape, has been highlighted.

As it has been contented earlier that democratic regimes prefer diplomatic mechanism over conflict, thereby in this thesis it has been intended to examine this proposition through the prism of India-Pakistan relations. Primarily this research work starts by exploring the co-relationship between regime change and foreign policy outcome, thereby establishing the rationale for a democratic neighbourhood. One of the crucial aspects of this analysis is based on the precarious position of the civilian government that operates at the mercy of the Pakistani army; and by doing so it is being tried to establish that these leads to the emerge of an unique kind of governance, best identified as hybrid regimes (questioning

the efficacy of true democratization), which hampers the government's ability to pursue independent foreign policy initiatives, particularly in the context of India-Pakistan relations. Simultaneously, it's being contended that such hybrid regimes are an impediment for democratisation as well as for regional stability. Further it reiterates the paramount importance of a democratic Pakistan for ensuring India's interests in the region and emphasizes the need for continued efforts for culmination of democratic culture and mindset; and contends that strengthening of civilian authority would ultimately contribute to a more stable and cooperative India-Pakistan relationship.

Alongside India-Pakistan relations it is pertinent to examine India-Myanmar relations to gather a comprehensive understanding of how India transcended the intricate web of regional politics and carefully managed her equations with authoritarian regime of Myanmar to ensure its security interests; simultaneously championing democratic ideals. This relation stands as a testament of India's ability of striking the delicate balance between furthering pragmatic agenda and upholding normative ideals, through 'engagement and advocacy'. It has also been tried to delineate the factors that shaped India's foreign policy stance and prompted her to actively or cautiously engaged in consolidating and assisting democratic processes in the selected countries i.e, Pakistan and Myanmar. Therefore, this research revolved around the inter-relationship between democratisation, security-stability and foreign policy in the Indian Sub-continent.

Findings

The findings encapsulate the essence of the investigation while identifying the shifting trends in Indian foreign policy and the inter-relationships between foreign policy and democratisation for conflict transformation. This part describes the unique facet of the research questions, contributing to the holistic understanding of the phenomena under scrutiny.

What are the shifting trends that has been witnessed in the Indian Foreign policy at the global and regional engagement over the twenty years period of time in the context of democratization?

India's foreign policy, particularly in the realm of democracy promotion, is characterised as being a sophisticated and pragmatic approach. The shift from reactive to proactive engagement, coupled with a parlance of differentiation in its dealings with

neighbouring nations, exemplifies India's commitment to adopt a tailored and context-specific approach, which is not predetermined by any logic. Hence, India has adopted a gradual step-by-step approach to implement developmental efforts that focuses on education and training projects to serve the dual purpose of enhancing capacity building for strengthening the ideological foundations of the concerned country and fortifying strategic interest for mutual benefits. In the backdrop of this complex landscape of international politics, this multifaceted approach of India, defined by strategic foresight and diplomatic acumen is the testament of her evolving role on the global stage. India, has developed her own distinct methodologies based on her historical experiences, foreign policy goals and established traditions. In essence, India has avowed her preparedness to offer discreet support to democratisation efforts of the nations those who are seeking such assistance; all the while refraining from adopting an aggressive or doctrinal stance. This approach allows India to strike a delicate equilibrium between its national interests, foreign policy priorities and global demands.

Democracy endorsement has primarily been an ideological penchant or proclivity, but foreign policies are not solely ideologically driven. Though democratic establishments are enormously appreciated, endorsing it has merely been an ideological predilection for India. It remains true that Indian leaders cherished democracy in high regard as an ideal, yet they never perceived the promotion of democracy as an instrument to augment their influence in Asia or within the immediate neighbourhood. For an extensive period of time, the emphasis was more on the pragmatic dimension of India's 'real' interests where democracy was promoted and supported, if it suited such interest. Under political upheavals in the neighbourhood, consolidating democratic apparatus was pursued within the constraints of alleged strategic and security interest. Thus, it can be conferred that while India engaged in interventions in neighbouring countries, these were typically driven by regional security concerns rather than merely promoting democracy. Empirical evidences lead to confirm that India's commitment to the Endorsement/ Promotion of democracy, until the onset of 21st century, had persistently been lukewarm.

In the more recent times, the paradigm shift in India's foreign policy had been apparent. With the advent of the new millennium, India has become acutely aware of the strategic advantage it holds as the world's largest democracy. Nonetheless, the recent surge in democratisation trends within the region presented an opportunity for India to lend support to fledgling democracies in their endeavour to embed democratic principles within their political

fabric. Concurrently, India had acquired a central role in fortifying, and even revitalizing democratic governance in its neighbourhood. A select section of policy analysts believes that concurrent effort in this direction would serve to enhance India's geopolitical and geostrategic objectives. Thereby India's foreign policy has undergone a discernible shift from a traditionally reactive stance to a more proactive engagement, in matters of extending assistance for the consolidation of democratic systems in neighbouring countries.

While harbouring reservations about the outcomes of western democracy promotion efforts, India has gradually got engaged in extending "democracy assistance" since the mid-2000s. Though, India has redefined its commitment of endorsing or more accurately assisting democracy, albeit not entirely in the manner anticipated by the international community. India still continues to accord greater primacy to 'national sovereignty and autonomy' than democracy as a principle to be safeguarded. Therefore, as a corollary of the non-intervention principle, India prefers to project itself as a possible representation for other states rather than simply preaching or imposing a particular creed of democracy. To be precise, India has often engaged in its own form of Realpolitik and refrained from adopting Machtpolitik. This is the reason why advocacy for democracy is implemented by means of spreading 'the idea of Indian democracy' rather than 'the use of force'. India refrains from employing ethically questionable means; rather prefers to opt for a more subtle method of furthering assistance. India is devoted to nurturing democratic values through non-intrusive means and refrains from adopting aggressive postures to enforce the proliferation of democratic regimes. India's strategy of extending assistance for upholding democracy revolves around setting Indian standard of democracy as an example of modernity and pluralist democracy. India certainly has the wisdom that the greatest source of its clout will be the power of its example. Its successful management of its deep-rooted pluralism vis-à-vis maintaining a vibrant democracy and sustaining a decent economic growth rate which, automatically secured certain stature and pre-eminence within the region in particular and in the global arena, in general.

Being receptive to local demands, New Delhi, has adopted the policy of 'extending assistance when requested'. India adopts a top-down approach, which aligns with its commitment of respecting the sovereignty of recipient countries. Instead of imposing its own democratic model, India aims to facilitate the development of democratic institutions tailored according to the unique circumstances of each country. As a result, the response has been measured and cautious, aligning with the broader framework of India's foreign policy. India

realises its objective by extending technical support and focusing on institution-building while avoiding overt political interventions. This approach allows India to foster deeper and more personalized relationships with its neighbouring countries, thereby enabling more effective cooperation and mutual understanding. But after the infusion of new leadership and under the ambit of 'Neighbourhood First' policy, which includes an interest in greater integration, trade, and transportation links, makes it more evident that India is using the means of trade and development and simultaneously expanding its influence to bolster robust institutions of democratic governance and the rule of law, and overtly support countries on the democratic trajectory. By now it's an established reality that India has an inclination for and commitment of strengthening democracy by providing assistance as opposed to spreading or exporting it. Thus, India has employed the policy of 'constructive engagement' to define relations with states under non-democratic regime.

Subsequently, it is also evident that India would continue to use this as a platform for the furtherance of its avowed foreign policy agenda without making democracy promotion a declared element of its foreign policy framework. This consideration will not rule out the chances of active Indian engagement in the service of democracy, but such arrangements will be modest at best. India possesses significant soft power, especially among nations in the Global South, which could be potentially an invaluable asset not only for promoting democracy but also for addressing various other global governance challenges. Therefore, rather than interpreting India's model of democratic assistance as a sign of weakness or lack of enthusiasm; and persistently urging India to conform to the established paradigms, it would serve the collective objective of disseminating democracy of the proponents of this cause and acknowledge the existence of diverse approaches to assisting democracy.

It is noteworthy to mention here that India's degree of engagement with her neighbours has been mixed because it has been evident that India has followed and adopted 'Differentiated' approach. India's approach to democracy promotion exhibits a nuanced differentiation in its engagement with various neighbouring nations. In regard to nations such as Nepal, Bhutan, Afghanistan, and Maldives India have engaged proactively and participated in their endeavour of democratisation. In contrast, India has adopted a more cautious and calculated approach towards Pakistan and Myanmar. While India welcomes democratic forces in both countries, it maintains a degree of distance in its engagement. This reflects a recognition of the complex

geopolitical realities and historical context surrounding these nations. India's approach is shaped by a desire to balance its interests with the imperative of promoting democratic values.

How do India have redesigned its engagement with this hybrid civilian governance with military predominance?

The trajectories of India-Pakistan and India-Myanmar relations demonstrate a complex interplay between regime change and foreign policy outcomes. While it can be inferred from the discussions made in the preceding chapters that there is a degree of causal relation between regime change and foreign policy decisions; and the prospect of a better understanding between the adversaries increases when democratic civilian regime is at work. But it is important to note that the democratic transition in these nations has been incomplete or flawed thus such expectations are futile. Democratic regime not necessarily ensure mutual cooperation or better understanding when army is taking the call at the backdrop.

The military's substantial role in both Pakistan's and Myanmar's policy formulation is a deeply ingrained feature of its political landscape. In both cases, the military plays a crucial role in decision-making, exerting substantial influence over foreign policy outcomes and by every possible means secure their power within the ambit of so-called democratic regime. The armed forces often wield considerable sway over strategic decisions, particularly those related to regional security and geopolitical interests, which has majorly influenced the broader democratisation process. This influence stems from a historical context where Pakistan's security concerns have been paramount, leading to a distinct role for the military in shaping the nation's foreign policy agenda. Undoubtedly, the pronounced military influence on foreign policy has had detrimental effects on India-Pakistan and India-Myanmar relation respectively. The militaristic approach often prioritizes security concerns over diplomatic dialogue, lead to the continuation of perpetual conflict and tension between the two nations. This has resulted in a series of historical conflicts, undermining any sustained efforts towards peaceful resolution.

The military's overarching influence ensures that initiatives aimed at bolstering democratic institutions or promoting socio-economic progress face formidable resistance. Their grip on power is paramount, often superseding the broader interests of the nation and its citizens. This results in a systemic impasse, where the potential for positive change is stifled, and the prospects for genuine democratic progress remain elusive. As a consequence, the environment remains distinctly unfavourable for any substantial external intervention or support, towards democratic development. Military's enduring influence and overarching

presence hinders the establishment of a truly democratic platform, making it challenging for India to actively support democratic regimes in these countries.

The emergence of hybrid regime both in Pakistan and Myanmar, characterized by the coexistence of civilian democratic institutions and a preponderant military and bureaucratic elite, has impeded the true democratisation and consolidation process. The military's influence acts as a constraint on the autonomy of civilian institutions, limiting their capacity to effectively govern and implement policies. This stifles the evolution of a thriving democratic ethos; growth of democratic institutions, suppresses political dissent, and limits the scope for civil society participation and overall poses a substantial barrier to the development of a robust and vibrant democratic culture. Whether characterized by a direct military government or a civilian administration with a prominent military backing, these regimes pose substantial challenges to the promotion of democratic values.

Such an arrangement, characterized by civilian democratic institutions coexisting with a dominant military and bureaucratic elite acts as a significant impediment to fostering constructive engagement with India. India's reluctance to engage with Pakistan's democratisation process is rooted in this enduring dominance of the military. Furthermore, in countries (both in Pakistan and Myanmar) where transitions towards democratisation have been controlled and orchestrated by military forces, the nature of democracy remains a subject of contention, challenging the credibility of the resultant democratic process and system. This ambiguity raises questions about the sincerity of democratisation efforts, making it challenging for India to gauge the true commitment of these regimes to democratic values. The innate volatility of this kind of regime, raises apprehensions about the sustainability and reliability of any agreements or engagements reached with civilian leaders. This reluctance stems from the perception that agreements may be subject to reinterpretation or abrupt reversal in the face of military interests. This makes it difficult to expect unbiased foreign policy outcomes, thereby making the prospect of supporting democracy in these nations a complex and elusive endeavour. Without addressing these challenges, establishing enduring peace and stability in the region is an impossibility. As a result, extending democratic assistance in such contexts becomes a complex venture, fraught with uncertainties.

The hybrid regimes in the selected countries of India's neighbourhood, characterised by complex dynamics of power has significantly influenced India's approach to extending democratic assistance, particularly in nations like Pakistan and Myanmar. This can be

articulated by examining the pathway of India-Myanmar and India-Pakistan relation; where India has been most reluctant to endorse democracy. Obviously, it has been a calculated and deliberative policy stance. Therefore, many times New Delhi exhibited a tendency to tolerate unfriendly monarchies and hostile military regimes within its immediate vicinity. Though this approach came at the expense of undermining and weakening democratic forces. Hence, India adopted a largely reactive posture towards the idea of endorsing or more precisely ‘assisting democracy’- intervening only when democratic principles aligned with perceived security imperatives and national interests. India meticulously refrained from integrating the promotion of democracy into its foreign policy framework as a central tenet.

India, for over a decade has cultivated a relationship of ‘constructive engagement’ with authoritarian regimes, is an indication of departure from its stated principles of upholding democracy and safeguarding human rights and supporting democratic endeavour. New Delhi refrained from taking a position on the recurring political turmoil, while disappointing pro-democracy activists. A sect of analysts prefers to denote that New Delhi has no choice but to engage with its autocratic neighbours, as it is apprehensive about that outside actor, namely China, who can and might domesticate India’s largest neighbour. The ever-growing Chinese presence in the region have always been one of the determining reasons behind New Delhi’s hesitance to openly condemn the military regime.

This analysis underscores that India, in its idiosyncratic manner, has made significant contributions to the global proliferation of democratic ideals. South Asia has passed through an intermediate phase of instability and insecurity in which Pakistan has been increasingly isolated while India has made its presence felt around the world. Modi’s proactive diplomacy has expanded the strategic space for New Delhi to manoeuvre in South Asia and beyond where India has been become more diplomatically engaging. By opting to carry out a surgical strike and at the same time reiterating the pledge to uphold democratic values- India has taken the first step away from being a soft state and simultaneously took a step forward for being a benevolent hegemon. That is, a soft state with the capacity to make hard choices when required and a hard state with the capability of using both defensive and offensive tactics. Therefore, it is obvious that India would continue to assist the neighbouring countries towards their pursuit to democracy and stability in the region but in its own way, which is not driven by any normative templet. If at-all there is a guiding principle, it is this: India's own achievements and successes will likely do more to advance democracy than any overtly ideological push in that

direction could ever hope to achieve. This can be best described as brand Indian or Indian way of 'Assisting Democracy'.

This research work also dealt with the factors that influenced India to formulate its foreign policy and bilateral relations in regard to facilitating democracy towards selected nations such as, Pakistan and Myanmar

The degree of democratisation varies across regions due to a multitude of historical, socio-economic, and cultural factors. This variation in the level of democratisation necessitates a diverse model of democracy promotion, as the challenges and opportunities faced by each country are inherently different. Countries like Pakistan and Myanmar exemplify inimitable kind of democratic transitions resulting unique outcomes. Pakistan's transition has led to the emergence of a hybrid regime, where civilian institutions coexist with a dominant military presence. In Myanmar, a controlled transition to democracy with army prevalence has paved the way for the potential return of authoritarianism. The prevalence of military regimes, hybrid governance structures, and military-engineered transitions in South Asia significantly impacts India's ability to extend democratic assistance; and creates substantial barriers to effective democratic reform.

China's formidable presence and strategic interests in the sub-continent play a pivotal role in shaping India's foreign policy decisions in regard to promotion of democracy. The need to navigate in a complex regional landscape, characterized by China's overbearing presence and its assertive engagement with neighbouring countries, particularly with Pakistan and Myanmar has compelled India to adopt pragmatic approaches to navigate intricate diplomatic challenges. The strategic alignment between Islamabad and Beijing and its deceiving existence in Myanmar, creates a situation where any substantial engagement aimed at promoting democratic ideals in the region becomes considerably challenging. Pakistan's reliance on China for economic and military support, coupled with their shared strategic interests; and extensive Chinese investments in infrastructure projects in Myanmar, reinforces this dynamic, which at instances have prompted India to engage with the ruling authoritarian regime. The exigencies of maintaining regional stability and preventing the consolidation of anti-India alliances have, at times, necessitated engagement with authoritarian regimes, even at the expense of compromising on democratic values and human rights concerns. Recognizing these challenges is crucial for India to craft diplomatic strategies that strike a balance between safeguarding its national-security interests and promoting democratic values in the region. Hence, India finds

itself in a position where furtherance of democratic engagement is met with resistance, and the prospect of instigating democratic reform is substantially complicated.

Another outlook, as advocated by a sect of theorists, blends domestic political considerations with foreign policy decisions within a rational choice framework, argues that regional powers like India are inclined to prefer similar political systems in the neighbouring states because democratisation of these states would generate transboundary public good, which would enhance the regional power's capabilities to provide better services to its own citizen. India's involvement in democracy promotion is motivated by expectations of fostering trade, creating investment opportunities, ensuring a stable energy supply, and advancing its strategic interests. Furthermore, democracy assistance serves as a means for India to project itself as an ascendant global power and to establish an image as a responsible international actor. Considering these perspectives, it might be logically assumed that India, being the regional power would view democracy promotion as an effective and ideal tool for exerting hegemonic influence and fostering a more stable and secure neighbourhood. However, a closer examination of India's foreign policy reveals that this hypothesis does not hold explicitly true in the Indian context.

Another key reasons for India's engagement with particularly with Myanmar, lies in its economic imperatives. Myanmar's strategic location provides India with a gateway to Southeast Asia, a region of growing economic importance. In order to rationalize and materialize the 'Act East' policy, India recognized the importance of Myanmar as a linchpin. This engagement was actually a pragmatic manoeuvre to gain a competitive edge in a rapidly changing global economic landscape. India's security interests also played a pivotal role in this regard. The north-eastern states of India share a porous border with Myanmar, making it imperative for India to engage with Myanmar's authoritarian regime to ensure stability and security in the region. Therefore, out of varied compulsions India had to deviate and wither away from its commitment, but being engaged with the regime, it relentlessly tried to manoeuvre the ruling force towards democratic transition and simultaneously curving a niche for herself. As a result, ultimately in 2010 Myanmar moved a step forward towards democracy. But the return back of the army; and the incapacity of the democratic regimes to accommodate multi-plurality within the democratic purview showed that democratisation was superfluous and democratic values failed to consolidate and take deep root in the political ethos. Hence, India's engagement with Myanmar has been fraught with complexities, as it navigates the delicate balance between its democratic ideals and pragmatic geopolitical interests.

Therefore, India's differential approach of supporting democracy in neighbouring countries reflects a nuanced understanding of the intricate dynamics at play. Recognizing that democracy cannot be imposed, India focuses on nurturing and consolidating democratic platforms that are homegrown. Until a genuine democratic transition takes place in countries like Pakistan and Myanmar, the extent of India's support for democracy remains contingent on requests made through proper channels, reflecting India's pragmatic approach to promoting democratic values in the region. Therefore adopting 'Differential Approach' is nothing but the symbol of 'cautious prudence' when it comes to democracy promotion.

Is there any prospect of materializing an ambience conducive for effectively resolving the disagreements could be ushered in, if democratic governance could be sustained particularly in country like Pakistan and Myanmar?

India-Pakistan relations that underscores the complexity of diplomatic manoeuvring and the intricate balance between diplomatic dialogue and resolute action. The consolidation of democracy in Pakistan is a task that cannot be imposed from external sources, and it is equally unrealistic to expect India to play a role in fostering such consolidation. For genuine progress in this regard, Pakistan must undertake a transformation of its political culture, which necessitates comprehensive structural and institutional reforms aimed at diminishing the influence of the military along with sustainable development and further capacity building. While India's stance on promoting democracy might not be prominent, its focus has consistently centred on regional development irrespective of the governing forces in place. Therefore, it could be recommended that India need to engage and continue with extending assistance for technical and capacity building, by using the regional platform like SAARC that would help in culminating a democratic culture, which is grossly absent. Exchange of Parliamentarians for training and exchange of innovative ideas can be reinvigorated. Academic events such as conferences, seminars, round tables, and similar interactions among academicians, young minds and new age policy makers are to be encouraged and should be shielded from undue scrutiny by intelligence agencies. In this age of information technology, social networking platforms have already bridged the gap between India and Pakistan, facilitating regular exchanges of ideas over the internet. Easing visa restrictions for scholars will sojourn potential 'subtle subversion' of shared history and cultural values by forces who have vested interests seeking to disseminate contentious narratives about either country.

The potential of the Civil Society lies in its aptitude to focus on transforming the psyche of the society by socializing and training the citizens to utilize their democratic rights and articulate their ideas. Through diverse avenues such as exchange programs, peace education and joint cultural events, these actors promote democratic attitudes and inculcate democratic practices. It is worth mentioning that associations like Pakistan-India People's Forum for Peace and Democracy, Women's Initiative for Peace in South Asia, The India-Pakistan Friendship Society, The People's Asia Forum, The South Asian Human Rights Association, and the South Asia Free Media Association, along with initiatives like Aman ki Aasha (hope for peace), have played crucial roles in fostering connections among the people of the subcontinent. These civil society actors served as peace ambassadors and significantly swayed the often-conflicted ruling elites in the region.

A steady exchange of peace activists and human rights activists has been advocated between India and Pakistan. This would further cultivate the ground for exchange of normative values and would garner mutual confidence. Additionally, they champion the interests of marginalized groups by bringing their issues at public glare, integrating them into peace agendas, and empowering them to categorize their true potential in societal transformation. Furthermore, civil society immensely contribute by advancing innovative archetypes for economic development, and creating cross-border constituencies. These constituencies, in turn, exert pressure on official circles for increased cooperation. The collective efforts of civil society actors have the potential to reshape the narrative and dynamics in the region, facilitating a more peaceful and collaborative future.

How security imperatives and national interest connotations are inter-related with assisting the process of democratic consolidation in these selected countries?

A comprehensive examination had revealed that the democratic peace theory is partially capable of offering a compelling explanation for the absence of peace in the Indian subcontinent. This assertion finds support in the historical trajectory of political systems in both nations. Since 1958, when Ayub Khan, an Army General, assumed power in Pakistan, the country's political landscape witnessed a series of shifts. Pakistan experienced recurrent transitions between authoritarian regimes, while in India, democratic norms and ethos became firmly entrenched from the early years. As previously mentioned, according to the democratic peace theory's proposition, democracies are seldom inclined to engage in conflict with other democracies; rather, their confrontations often occur with non-democratic states. Conversely,

non-democratic entities may fail to discern a shared understanding of mutual loss or gain, leading to potential conflicts.

Therefore, it can be asserted that the present conducts and perceived threats posed by non-democratic states under military coup, in close proximity are primary catalysts for conflict. This rationale provides the theoretical justification for the ongoing India-Pakistan rivalry. It is evident that undemocratic authoritarian regimes, particularly those under military rule, unilaterally initiated hostilities against India, a democratic republic. In contrast, India, as a democracy, did not exhibit aggressive behaviour towards Pakistan, a stance that aligns with the established principles of the peace-democracy argument. Hence, India's assertiveness towards Pakistan can be viewed as rational, given the latter's non-democratic character and the potential malicious intentions associated with its military establishment. However, the Kargil conflict, often cited as evidence against the Kantian Peace Theory, can be attributed to a fabricated set of circumstances. While Pakistan was ostensibly under the rule of a democratically elected government at the time, the Kargil conflict was a result of a military misadventure led by the then Army Chief, General Pervez Musharraf.

A closer examination of the political histories of the respective nations and their mutual relations compels the establishment of a correlation between regime changes and shifts in their foreign policies towards one another. It is also evident that in cases where democratic regimes were in place, the restoration of concord had been facilitated and easy to brokered. In one of the previous chapters this had been dealt-in with greater detail, leading to a conclusion without ambiguity that democratic leaders and ordinary citizens in Pakistan are much eager to enhance friendly ties with their immediate neighbour. This is because democracies, under the influence of popular pressure, possess a natural inclination and obligation to pursue improved and cooperative relations with another democracy (in this case its India) as it ensures the welfare of their respective communities. Thus, a democratic Pakistan free from army dominance, emerges as a prerequisite for ensuring peace in the region. While this may seem highly idealistic or perhaps unimpressive, but there exists no evidence to suggest that democratisation would exacerbate existing discrepancies or amplify the intensity of conflict, even if doesn't eradicate it completely. On the contrary, it is likely to enhance the capacity of a democratic state to foster and maintain peace.

It has been empirically observed that authoritarian regimes tend to foster religious and sectarian extremism as a means to sow division in societies and prolong their hold on power. In light of this, having democratic neighbours is essential to India's security and stability interests and should have been pursued with greater proactive effort, which regrettably hasn't been the case. Further analysis emphasizes that considerable progress and goodwill in bilateral relations between historically adversarial nations could be achieved within a democratic framework, where shared interests and benefits are acknowledged. This assertion can be substantiated while explaining the Indo-Pakistan relations. Diehl, Geortez and Daniel Saeedi (2005) writing at a time when the then Pakistani President General Pervez Musharraf was decisively in helm of affairs and then Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had just been elected, firmly asserted that the probabilities for end of the rivalry between the two were to be extremely limited as "the competition is deeply ingrained in each society, both the public psyche and in military and government planning. They specifically proclaimed that the process of democratic consolidation affects longstanding rivalries and claimed that in concurrence with the general principles of the "democratic peace" theory, their empirical findings strongly supported the idea that rivalries are more likely to come to an end when both states involved become democracies.

Similarly, by examining the course of actions, in the context of South Asia, it could be conferred that the India-Pakistan rivalry was less disputes prone when both countries were democracies compared to other periods. According to their findings the probability of a new dispute arising in any given year during the joint democracy period was approximately 40% and 46% in last 15years (7 major conflicts from 2008-2023) as opposed to almost 100% (36 disputes in 38 years) when there were no joint democracies. There has been an absence of full-scale warfare or attacks on institutions like Parliament in India during periods when civilian prime ministers governed Pakistan. From its inception, Pakistan grappled with the challenge of sustaining democratic governance. Prominent political figures such as Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif consistently asserted that Pakistan's relations with India witnessed improvement under democratic leadership and deteriorated under military rule. The civilian leaders such as Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif had arguably been as eager to pursue revisionist claims towards Kashmir, but tended to use military force less often to advance their claims and focused more on addressing domestic issues. This approach could be attributed to their greater accountability to their domestic audiences as democratic leaders. In essence, this empirical

finding suggested that democratic systems in both nations contribute to a more just relations between two, by reducing the likelihood of conflicts and disputes.

The Myanmar case serves as a classic example to ascertain the fact that India's national interests, particularly in respect to security and energy security take precedence over its decision-making processes, while often overshadowing the considerations of democratic transition. Almost since eternity Myanmar had been under military coup and simultaneously the India-Myanmar relations had been shaped accordingly. In Cold-war period, relations had worsened as India condemned the suppression of democracy and expressed its. After a long course of zero tolerance and disengagement towards authoritarian regime, India was compelled to reinstate a working relationship out of geostrategic compulsions and as part of broader foreign policy imperative. But it is to be pointed out that this working engagement could not ensure security and stability at India's eastern doorstep.

If we look through the prism of the wider perspective then it could be asserted that the benefits of forging partnership and engaging with Myanmar's military junta has been at the best partial, even when Myanmar's military had inclusive control over the territory along the Indian border, it was ineffective at suppressing Indian EAOs. Presently as it has lost territorial control and is preoccupied with fighting a nationwide civil war and suppressing its entire population, the military has virtually nothing to offer that could be beneficial to India. Rather closeness to an army, who is identified as a brutal dictator and a global pariah and universally loathed by the Myanmar people, would and has become a liability that serves no purpose; and makes India, subject to sever criticism from every corner of political sphere. India can respond to the growing humanitarian challenges on its northeastern borders by providing support to state governments and civil society groups hosting refugees from Myanmar. Facilitating access for international humanitarian aid agencies is crucial in offering direct support to affected communities.

Despite collaborative military operations with the Burmese army, insurgent groups still persist as a threat to India and remains a challenge in achieving its objectives. New Delhi has rationalized its engagement with the Tatmadaw junta by asserting that the cooperation of Myanmar's military is crucial in its efforts to suppress insurgency in northeast India. However, various analysts on condition of anonymity have claimed "this assumption was never fully correct and has completely fallen apart since the coup". Myanmar's military has proven ineffective in quelling its own internal insurgency, let alone that of India. Instead of curbing

their influence, decades of military rule have bolstered Myanmar's Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAOs). In the wake of the coup, the military junta has relinquished territory to People's Defence Forces (PDFs) and EAOs, further diminishing its capacity to control Indian EAOs operating from Myanmar. Thus, while taking into consideration the eventualities by far, it can be conferred that though India's rational for engaging with the army has remain unchanged but such foreign policy stance is inadequate and has failed to reap desired outcome.

On the contrary, the persistent civil conflict within Myanmar has potentially resulted in the proliferation of insurgency along the border. This situation has exerted increased pressure on the Indian Army to effectively manage and contain the situation. Furthermore, the EAOs' insurgency in Myanmar had declined during the tenure of the NLD, while political instability has only shoot up since the return of military coup. Therefore, it could be aptly argued, that India has a direct security interest in the restoration of our neighbour's democracy. On the contrary, given the present situation, it might be asserted that the Tatmadaw needs the Indian Army far more than India needs the Tatmadaw. This policy of aligning with 'whoever functions in India's interests' may no longer be effective, as the Tatmadaw has proven ineffective in containing the civil war and addressing the economic crisis in which Myanmar mired-in.

Given the Tatmadaw's inability and reluctance to address India's concerns suggests that India would have relatively little to lose while extending assistance to democratically inclined forces of Myanmar. The advocates of reinstating democratic apparatus across Myanmar seek out the support of India in their quest for a democratic trajectory and to steer Myanmar back toward the democratic pathways. Assistance for establishing a robust and nurturing a strong and enduring relationship could ultimately prove beneficial for serving India's best security interest. It is the moral obligation on the part of the Indian policy makers to acknowledge their role in fostering peace and democracy within the regional sphere, all the while refraining from imposing their own values on the Tatmadaw.

India's present approach toward Myanmar is quite similar to the approach that New Delhi had assumed while dealing with Pakistani military leadership during Musharaff's reign. The Indian government has deliberately preferred to engage with the military leaders of Myanmar while sidelining the other stakeholders in Myanmar completely. Once, recalling India's approach towards the former dictator of Pakistan Pervez Musharraf, the chief editor of The Indian Express cautioned that "the Mumbai attacks . . . should be a reminder that engaging with a military dictator or an Army Chief alone, hoping that other stakeholders will fall in line,

neither guarantee durable peace nor sustained stability”. Similar postulation can be conferred in Myanmar’s case as well. Self-complacent interaction and utopian approach with the military junta may not reap expected outcome in the long run.

Its high time that India needs to reconsider whether its pragmatic stance towards Myanmar would yield the intended outcomes. The most advantageous course of action for India would be to endorse a stable, democratic and inclusive society. However, under the prevailing context, peaceful negotiation and promoting democracy has acquired a security connotation. The empirical findings based on democratic peace theory establish, ‘in as much as the spread of liberal democracy creates shared values, common interests and most important, greater transparency of state motivations, it should lower threat perceptions and increase cooperation among states. Hence this assertion confirms that democracy in neighbourhood is intrinsic to India’s security and stability interests and must have been pursued more proactively, which obviously has not been the case.

The persistent tension between India and Pakistan and the spill overs of political upheavals in the Eastern periphery have outdone the peace and stability of the political landscape of Indian Sub-Continent. The resources and attention diverted to military preparedness and security concerns could have otherwise been channelised towards fostering socio-economic progress and addressing pressing domestic issues. Furthermore, the perpetual state of tension has fuelled an arms race in the region, at the cost of diverting resources away from education, healthcare, and infrastructure. From a political perspective, the persisting milieu of tension has often been manipulated by various actors, present within each countries, for their own domestic political gain. Nationalist sentiments, historical grievances, and security concerns have been skilfully exploited by political elites to rally public support and consolidate power. This manipulation had been successful enough in diverting attentions from pressing governance and development issues, perpetuating a cycle of hostility that hampers effective governance and constructive diplomacy.

The security environment in South Asia is inherently interlinked. Instability or conflict in neighbouring countries directly impacts India's security. Consequently, fostering democracy in our neighbouring countries could potentially serve India's long-term geostrategic interests even more effectively, without compromising our national security concerns or our relative position of power. Moreover, considering the substantial financial resources allocated to armaments for the purposes of waging warfare or for ensuring security, investments in

furthering democracy assistance, hold the promises of yielding greater benefits. Proactively engaging in democratic consolidation helps in fostering regional stability, reducing the potential for conflict and extremist elements. A stable and prosperous neighbourhood is vital for India's economic growth and trade expansion. A democratic and stable neighbourhood facilitates smoother economic integration, cross-border investments, and trade relationships. Therefore, a peaceful democratic neighbourhood and assisting in imbibing democratic culture at her eastern and western frontier could perhaps serve India's geostrategic interests even more effectively in the long run, without adversely affecting national security interests or its relative position of power. Even such 'opportunistic behaviour' aligns coherently with a modified realist perspective, as it converges, if not coincides, with prevailing ideological inclinations.

Hence without having altered the backdrop from destructive to constructive, any direct approach to the resolution of outstanding issues would be like probing in the dark. Therefore, the guarantee of good rapport, peaceful co-existence and conflict-free future lies in the conflict transformation, rather than conflict resolution. It promises to generate a gracious and responsive atmosphere where both the parties would appreciate and comprehend each other's rationales, where mutually beneficial resolution can be achieved easily. However, the ultimate objective of conflict transformation is not just to come-up with a solution of the scrupulous issues but goes afar while promising to offer an ambience that would not only be conducive for resolution but also supportive for peaceful co-existence. Now the question arises that, how the transformation of atmosphere, which is conducive to resolution, could be constructed? The answer is that both Pakistan's and Myanmar ability to broaden engagement with India and to create a region of stability depends on the evolution of robust democratic system with elected leaders gaining control over foreign and security policy devoid of military dominance i.e. when the country complete proper transition of evolving from an electoral or formal democracy to a liberal or substantive democracy and finishes the process of democratisation; thereby consolidate democracy that possess institutional and political mechanism to countervail illiberal tendencies and initiate liberal reforms.

Only a vibrant and effective democratic authority could offer a milieu where negotiating parties would have grasp over each other's rationale. All-inclusive development of the region is only achievable only in collaboration with India than in conflict with it. The bond resulting from economic interaction, connectivity and people to people contacts could put together the sinews of a more resilient and enduring peace in which stakeholders will have a

vested interest in safeguarding the gains of a mutually advantageous relationship. For India, it offers an opportunity to bypass military preponderance; counteract externalities like China's presence in the region and address the nontraditional security concerns such as terrorism from Pakistan and influx of migrants from Myanmar. Concurrently for Pakistan and Myanmar, it is a way out of the multiple crises like the worsened internal security scenario, instable state and societal structure and the fast-declining economic performances, which these countries are beset with. However, the efficacy of such a claim is subject to individual interpretation and perception.

Conceivably, there is a realization gradually dawning that enhanced bilateral ties with India will further trim down the salience of the Army in politics and reinforce the fundamentals of democracy. It is important to acknowledge that the consolidation process is time consuming and will face frequent hiccups and there will be continuous derailment of attempts. But it is an imperative to engage with the true civilian democratic regimes for strengthening collective development of the region. In order to strengthen the democratic constituencies and minimise the overpowering Army, it is important to continue engagement and furthering capacity building. At this juncture, one would foresee that enhanced political and economic relations with India would serve Pakistan well. Keeping in mind the existing mayhem both Pakistan and Myanmar mired in, any upping up of the ante by India would buttress the very forces that seek to wreck the process of engagement. This would further lead to potentially disastrous consequences. Therefore, when an indigenous, broadly-supported reform movements are brewing up and credible internal players already exists within both the nations, India need to extend required technical assistance, which primarily aims at strengthening democratic values and institutions on the ground and demands significant amount of capacity-building at the local level, in order to ensure apposite democratisation.

By examining trajectories of relationship with both the neighbouring countries under various regimes it could be asserted that in the context of military regimes, relations were at rock bottom; tension escalated manifold; and security concerns emanating from terrorism and migration augmented. Based on the 'Democratic Peace Theory' proposition it can be asserted that democratisation will neither exaggerate existing inconsistencies or amplify their ferocity, rather it's the other way round; and it might provide an alternative platform and scope for a more constructive engagement, which might lead to the de-escalation of tension and the capacity of the democratic state.

Therefore, democratic neighbourhood and supporting democracy by extending developmental assistance perhaps would serve India's geostrategic interests even better in the long run, without having negative effects on national security interests and the relative power position. But India requires to endure with the ventures without challenging the national sovereignty of either of the nation. Laying the edifice for a robust democratic system along with democratic norms and culture in its truest sense goes beyond merely supporting a struggle for democracy. Indian policy will be called upon to remain incessantly involved with the post systematic changing procedure for constructing and reinforcing institutions, norms, building capacities, infrastructures and cadres of democracy. Primarily, measures need to be adopted to fortify and reinforce democratic institutions and rebuild resilient democratic structure. But this cannot be imposed upon rather assistance has to be extended in the form of providing expertise in cautious manner. The process could be started with mutual cooperation in non-security related areas like by improving trade and tariff ties, initiating joint economic ventures and developmental projects, enhanced educational and cultural exchange and a greater inflow of information.

This research work articulates that consolidation of democracy, though has the prospect of evolving as an alternative foreign policy mechanism that might be a tool for managing conflict by de-escalating tension between the two adversaries, it might not reap desired outcome instantly in the context of relations between India and her neighbours, particularly with countries like Pakistan or Myanmar, so long as the military has its predominance; but this would definitely create a platform where India would have leverage without any negative impact; and India might have a scope to negotiate and resolve the diverse nontraditional security concerns emanating from migration or terrorism, which have a destabilizing impact over India's peace and security. Thus, in conclusion it is conferred that this study finds the initial hypothesis, which has been proposed in the introduction, is partially validated and has illuminated new perspectives and avenues for further exploration.

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