

SYNOPSIS

INDIA'S NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY IN THE PROMOTION OF DEMOCRACY: THE STUDY OF PAKISTAN AND MYANMAR (2000-2021)

Indian sub-continent is a region where exists distinct security concerns unique to each nation intertwined with profound macroeconomic disparities, which has given rise to widespread poverty and an intricate web of apprehensions, creating a security landscape that is frequently defined and identified as unpredictable. Each of the country in the region is struggling to create a stable political environment that will allow for rapid economic growth and resolution of its most serious multifaceted problems. Consequently, an approach of 'security and peace through arms' is practiced in an atmosphere, which is characterized by mutual suspicion and distrust. 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. It is evident that India does not enjoy particularly a warm relationship with either of her neighbouring countries.

Regrettably, the countries in the region are yet 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 imperative to address the issues of disunity and mistrust, both at intra and interstate level. Despite the global experience of a purported fourth wave of democracy, South Asia confronts a stark reality - the consolidation of threats and challenges to democratic norms outweighs the consolidation of democracy itself. This observation underlines the pressing need for concerted efforts to fortify democratic institutions in the face of mounting challenges. Considering India, as a preeminent regional power, and considering its potential to shape the dynamics of neighbouring countries it is expected that New Delhi would play a pivotal role within South Asia's geopolitical calculus.

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 the pursuit of perpetuation of democratic values. Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, India has pursued a foreign policy that places a significant emphasis on strengthening relations with its neighboring countries, with the overarching goal of upholding democratic values in the region. This approach is characterized by several key principles, such as Neighborhood First

Policy, Economic Diplomacy; Cultural and People-to-People Ties; Security and Counterterrorism Cooperation; Development Assistance and Capacity Building; and Conflict Resolution and Diplomatic Engagement. Recognizing that a secure and stable neighborhood is conducive to democratic progress, India under Modi has engaged in security cooperation with neighbors to counter terrorism and transnational threats and provides development assistance, including capacity-building programs, technical expertise and financial support to neighboring countries, which aimed at strengthening governance structures, civil society and democratic institutions. Alongside, it demonstrated a willingness to engage in diplomatic efforts to resolve outstanding disputes with neighboring countries, fostering an atmosphere of peace and stability that is essential for democratic progress. A distinctive hallmark of the Modi era is India's aspiration to serve as a beacon of democratic success; takes an effort to position itself as a model democracy, showcasing its robust democratic institutions, inclusive governance models, and vibrant civil society, both within the region and on the global stage. By presenting itself as an exemplar, India aims to inspire and encourage other nations on their democratic trajectories. 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, while actively engaging in regional forums and addressing security concerns. These initiatives collectively contribute to the promotion and consolidation of democratic values in the region.

With the onset of the new millennium and the advent of the fourth wave of democratisation that swept over the region, the prospect for India for furtherance with the democratic ideals accelerated manifold. But over the period of time, countries in the region experienced the emergence of a different kind of regime i.e. hybrid governance (Civilian government with military predominance or army-initiated democracy and democratisation), where India has been compelled to re-strategise its equation to deal with these changing dynamics. Nevertheless, most of the time while exploring the avenues of India's foreign policy, the discussion revolves essentially around the aspects such as Kashmir or Refugee problems as major irritants on the path of peaceful settlement; nuclearization of India and Pakistan and its impact on their relations. Regrettably, most of the academic writings focuses on giving chronology of historical events and summit meetings and the major irritants that makes the route for progress patchy. Overlapping views are evident in most of the cases, which obstructed the vision to look beyond the documented and familiar conduits. Simultaneously the experts

on India's foreign policy deliberately avoided of incorporating the 'Democracy Assistance' aspects and bilateral relations of the India's foreign policy.

This particular thesis in concern suggests an inter- relationship between democracy/ transition towards democracy, foreign policy and peaceful conflict resolution. When we look at the theoretical and policy discourses on these three otherwise very popular terms we find very little scholarly research on the above-mentioned three sets of relationships. This evolving approach signifies a growing recognition of the role that democratic principles might play in international relations and suggests a potential pivot towards diplomacy that prioritizes democratic values. 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 failed to deep rooted itself. Hence it is to bridge this gap between consolidation democracy and peaceful resolution 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 Objective

Here we have two parametric variables i.e., on-going process of democratisation and its reverse process in the region; impact of promotion of democracy as renewed foreign policy mechanism over India's relations with her neighbouring countries particularly in relation to Pakistan and Myanmar in the current milieu. Based on this the primary 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.

Definitely, this particular dissertation does not attempt to establish the fact that consolidating democracy or promoting democratisation in the western liberal democracy model would resolve all disagreements and tensions instantly or work as a magic wand and they would live ever after; rather, under the prevailing circumstances, based on the available historical and empirical facts and trends, it is an analytical study of India foreign policy relations, particularly in regard to Pakistan and Myanmar which aims at exploring the prospect and challenges of employing ‘Democracy Assistance’ as an alternative foreign policy means for deescalating tension between the nations in the region; and usher peace, stability and democracy in the region in general.

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, has the potential to advance security, peace and stability in the long run, which has been aspired for long.
- If democracy could be implanted in the political culture of mainland South Asia, 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 tend 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 intricate relationship between democracy, the process of democratisation, foreign policy, and their collective impact on fostering peace and stability in conflict-prone regions. Central to this analysis is the Democratic Peace Theory, a seminal construct, which posits that democratic states are less inclined to engage in conflicts with one another and exhibit a proclivity towards peaceful relations. While acknowledging its heuristic value, the chapter also scrutinizes potential limitations and caveats that challenges its universality.

The chapter emphasizes three key concerns: the credulous 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. The chapter asserts that democratically governed states often prioritize diplomatic avenues, dialogue and multilateral cooperation in the resolution of disputes. This affords them a distinctive disposition towards fostering peaceful relations with neighbouring countries, thereby augmenting regional stability. The concerned chapter contends 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 chapter probes the nexus between democracy- democratisation, foreign policy formulation and conflict resolution. The chapter sets the stage for an incisive exploration of their practical implications within the South Asian context.

The following Second chapter, titled ‘India’s Role in Consolidation of Democratic Values at Her Neighbourhood’, is broadly divided into two broad categories. The first part of the chapter provides an brief framework of the unique experiences of the countries in Indian-sub-continent in their course of democratic transition within the complex geopolitical milieu. A concerted 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. Only through such concerted endeavors' the region can navigate the intricate web of challenges and ultimately emerge as a beacon of democratic resilience. This particular chapter specifically identify the factors that acts as impediment for consolidation democracy and lead to the emergence of varied hybrid regimes that is distinct of this region. Colonial legacies, the role of the military, and the influence of political elites emerge as significant factors shaping the trajectory of democracy. The intricate interplay of these determinants underscores their collective impact on the advancement of democratic norms.

Consequently, the second part scrutinizes the discernible shift in Indian foreign policy approach towards democracy promotion, particularly in relation of evolving democratic upheavals in the neighbouring countries (except Pakistan and Myanmar) within its geopolitical sphere in the post Cold War era. This section offers an elucidation of the intricate interplay between foreign policy, consolidation of democracy and regional stability within the rubric of the Indian sub-continent. The chapter emphasized the multifaceted challenges entailed with the promotion of democracy as a foreign policy tool. Cultural, historical and political idiosyncrasies pose formidable impediments to the democratisation process in certain regions. It underscores the imperative of a re-calibrated foreign policies and diplomatic mechanisms as instruments for consolidating peace and stability in this volatile landscape. Through a meticulous examination of historical antecedents and contemporary geopolitical dynamics, the chapter delineates the exigency for astute policy interventions. Thereby the chapter has been concluded by examining the implications of this paradigm shift in India's democracy promotion approach.

The third chapter, titled, 'Evolving India- Pakistan Relations with the Democratic Evolution of Pakistan', is one of the core sections of the thesis, whereby, based on the available data, efforts are being made to trace those swings of policies towards India that has been manifested with the alteration of regime in Pakistan. The paper underscores the complexity of India-Pakistan relations in the context of Pakistan's hybrid democracy. The chapter also sheds light on the nuanced approach India adopts towards Pakistan and intended to provide valuable insights on the complexities that shape India's policy choices and tried to contribute for a deeper understanding of India's foreign policy dynamics. A crucial aspect of this analysis is the examination of the precarious position of the civilian government, which often operates at the mercy of the Pakistani army; and underscores how this dependence hampers the government's

ability to pursue independent foreign policy initiatives, particularly in the context of India-Pakistan relations.

The chapter concludes by reiterating the paramount importance of a democratic Pakistan in securing India's interests in the region and underscores the need for continued efforts for culmination of democratic culture and mindset; and contends that strengthening of civilian authority would ultimately contributing to a more stable and cooperative India-Pakistan relationship. It concludes by underscoring the critical need for addressing the issue of hybrid democracy in Pakistan as a prerequisite for meaningful progress in India-Pakistan relations because it has been witnessed that even though democratic civilian government has been in force, it functions under the shadow of the army. Thus, the rationale that democracies are more cooperative in terms of their relations has been proven inapplicable in this particular case of Indo-Pak bilateral relations. Moreover, an escalation of tension has been reiterated even under the governance of civilian authority. This chapter ends by contending that a truly democratic Pakistan- a byproduct of genuine democratisation and free from the predominance of the military in its politics, is an essential precondition for ensuring India's sustained security, territorial integrity, uninterrupted development and for achieving lasting stability and cooperation for in the region.

The chapter on India- Pakistan engagement is followed by the fourth chapter titled, '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; and attempts are being made to define the multitude of factors that shaped such policies. This chapter provides a comprehensive account of India's intricate relationship with Myanmar, tracing its trajectory from support for democratic forces to pragmatic engagements with the military junta. This dual approach yielded some success in upholding democratic values, albeit temporarily. Within a decade, the military regime regained control, and democracy struggled to take root.

The chapter highlights how India navigated the intricate web of regional politics, carefully managing its interactions with both Myanmar and China to protect its security interests while still championing democratic ideals. The chapter underscores India's pivotal role in this complex scenario, highlighting how it balanced security concerns with its moral responsibility to promote democratic values in its neighbouring country. Myanmar serves as a classic example of India's ability to strike a delicate balance between safeguarding its own

interests and championing democratic values in its immediate vicinity. Through an intricate play of engagement and advocacy, India strived to consolidate democratic ideals at its doorstep, exemplifying its evolving role as a regional actor with global implications.

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 to champion democracy had been rooted in geopolitical complexities, and simultaneously traces the shift towards a more nuanced engagement in the 21st century. The chapter emphasizes India's distinctive approach of providing democracy assistance, underpinned by sensitivity to sovereignty concerns, a preference for state-centric engagement, and a commitment to effecting positive change through participation. 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 study also ponders over the debate whether the stance taken by India are purely ideologically driven or solely motivated by realistic imperatives. This nuanced perspective enriches the global discourse on democracy promotion, affirming the value of diverse approaches in fostering democratic ideals worldwide. Consequently, this particular chapter tried to explore the contours of this new vision; shedding light on the factors that influenced 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.

Findings

- 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. India has played a modest role, if any, in the internal arena. It offered external and expertise technical help when requested; India has prioritized a pragmatic foreign policy, particularly in a politically divergent neighbourhood, while stressing the importance of liberal values in its rhetoric.

- In the 21st Century India has redefined its commitment of endorsing or more accurately assisting democracy, albeit not entirely in the manner anticipated by the international community. Thereby India's foreign policy has undergone a discernible shift from a traditionally reactive stance to a more proactive engagement, particularly in matters of extending assistance for the consolidation of democratic systems in neighbouring countries.
- Strategy of supporting democratic movements involves, extending assistance when requested. When such requests are received from foreign governments, India adopts a top-down approach, which aligns with its commitment of respecting the sovereignty of recipient countries.
- It is noteworthy to mention here that India degree of engagement with her neighbours has been mixed; where India has followed and adopted 'Differentiated' approach. India's approach to democracy promotion exhibits a nuanced differentiation in its engagement with various neighbouring nations.
- The hybrid regimes in the selected countries of India's neighbourhood, characterised by complex dynamics of power is often significant by dominated the prevalent dominance of military regimes, which has significantly influenced India's approach to extending democratic assistance, particularly in nations like Pakistan and Myanmar. The military exerts a strong influence over decision-making processes, effectively controlling key aspects of governance.
- China's formidable presence and strategic interests in 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.
- 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 democracy in South Asia. 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 India's stance on promoting democracy might not be prominent, its focus has consistently centred on regional development irrespective of the kind of 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.
- 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.
- 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 sub-continent. 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. 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.
- It could be asserted that the benefits of forging partnership and engaging with Myanmar's military junta has been at the best partial. 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. 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 spill-over effects and instability in the north-eastern region has increased manifold.
- Therefore, it could be aptly argued, that India has a direct security interest in the restoration of our neighbour's democracy. Assistance for establishing a robust and

nurturing a strong and enduring relationship could ultimately prove beneficial for serving India's best security interest.