

UNIT III INDIA'S STRATEGIC RELATIONS WITH ITS NEIGHBOURS

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INDIA'S INTERESTS IN ASIA

India has had relations with Central Asia since the 3rd Century B.C. as the nations fell on route to the legendary Silk Route. India has registered significant progress recently through renovation of Chabahar port, development of the "International North-South Transport Corridor" (INSTC) and becoming member of "Ashgabat Agreement".

1. INDIA AND WEST ASIA:

In the past, India has managed a successful balancing act in a tri-polar West Asia. India's vision to establish itself as a powerful and

Prosperous state in Asia has led it down various paths in terms of its foreign policy towards West Asia.

Today, the increasing multipolarity of the global order has enabled India to pursue its policy of strategic autonomy greater freedom when it comes to international relations and trade.

During the Cold War years of global bipolarity, India's foreign policy followed the principles of the 1955 Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) which PM Jawaharlal Nehru founded. After decades of international sidelining and subjugation, NAM aimed to use Afro-Asian Solidarity to shape international relations from offices beyond Washington and Moscow.

The non-aligned values of sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference in domestic politics were a crucial component of India's foreign policy fabric. In the West Asian context, this was reflected in the Nehru-Nasser alliance, through which India supported the Arabs against Western interference, particularly in the case of Palestine and the 1956 Suez Crisis.

In 1991, the Cold War formally ended with the dissolution of the USSR. The US-sponsored version of neo-liberalism emerged as the final evolutionary form of global governance. Such unipolarity presented India with significantly less flexibility of options in setting its West Asian policy.

India did not contribute its military forces in the coalition against the Iraqi army, however, New Delhi found itself pressured into supporting the US led coalition against the Iraqi army through intelligence and assistance. In Jan 1991, India allowed American military planes to refuel at Indian facilities, which was met with great opposition.

Such an assertion of strategic autonomy reflects India's current foreign policy towards West Asia. India's policy is motivated by its active pursuit of economic opportunities in West Asia, whether it be vis-à-vis energy security or greater connectivity and trade through the development of Chabahar port in the Iranian case.

2. INDIA AND ASIA:

South Asia is the Southern region of Asia, which is defined in both geographical and ethno-cultural terms. The region consists of the countries of Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, the Maldives and Sri Lanka.

Topographically, it is dominated by the Indian Plate and defined largely by the Indian Ocean on the South, and the Himalayas, Karakoram and Pamir mountains on the North. The

South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation (SAARC) is an economic co-operation organisation in the region which was established in 1985 and includes all eight nations comprising South Asia.

South Asia, subregion of Asia, consisting of the Indo-Gangetic Plain and Peninsular India. The term is often used synonymously with "Indian Subcontinent," though the latter term is sometimes used more restrictively to refer to Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan.

South Asia is home to one of the world's earliest known civilizations, the Indus Civilization and today is one of the most densely populated regions on the planet. Despite a history of ethnic, linguistic, and political fragmentation, the people of the subregion are unified by a common cultural and ethical outlook, a wealth of ancient textual literature in Sanskrit, Pāli, and regional

languages is a major unifying factor.

The region includes tablelands with uplifted margins, such as the Western and Eastern Ghats, and terraced and dissected plateaus with lava mantles or intrusions.

3. India and Indian Ocean

The Indian Ocean is the third largest of the world's oceanic divisions. It is bounded by Asia to the north, Africa to the west and Australia to the east. The Indian Ocean is bounded by Iran, Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh to the north; the Malay Peninsula, the Sunda Islands of Indonesia and Australia to the east, Antarctica to the south; and Africa and the Arabian peninsula

to the west.

The shape of the Indian Ocean can be described as a huge "M." This letter M covers the area between the Tropic of Cancer in the Northern Hemisphere, past the Tropic of Capricorn in the Southern Hemisphere to the line of 40 degrees S latitude. The Indian Ocean region is larger than the geographic description of this body of water. Oceans are the opposite of land masses in usual geographic thinking. Oceans have no landmarks like mountains, plains, valleys and plateaus. The coastline was the edge of human existence. For all of the time humans have lived in the Indian Oceans, with

dramatic changes over time, some things have changed little. People still gather shells and fish in the ocean as they did at the dawn of time. Sailboats and coasting voyages for trade and transportation still take place among coastal people. Markets are still places where people come to exchange, whether they are online or on the beach.