

I: ATTAL BEHARI VAJPAYEE

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Vajpayee was first elected to parliament in 1957 as a member of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS), a forerunner of the BJP. In 1977 the BJS joined three other parties to form the Janata Party, which led a government that lasted until July 1979. As foreign minister in the Janata government, Vajpayee earned a reputation for improving relations with Pakistan and China. In 1980, following a split in the Janata Party, Vajpayee helped the BJS to reorganize itself as the BJP. In 1992 he was one of the few Hindu leaders to speak out against the destruction of the historic mosque at Ayodhya by anti-Muslim extremists.

Vajpayee was sworn in as prime minister in May 1996 but was in office only 13 days, after failing to attract support from other parties. In early 1998 he again became prime minister, in elections in which the BJP won a record number of seats, but he was forced to make a shaky alliance with regional parties. In 1999 the BJP increased its seats in parliament and consolidated its hold on government.

Although considered a pragmatist, Vajpayee assumed a defiant posture in the face of Western criticism of India's testing of several nuclear weapons in 1998. He had earlier been praised for his conciliatory gestures toward India's Muslim minority. In 2000 his government began an extensive program of divestment of public funds from several key state-run industries. In 2002 Vajpayee's government was criticized for its slowness in reacting to riots in Gujarat in which some 1,000 people (primarily Muslims) died. Nevertheless, in 2003 Vajpayee made a concerted effort to resolve India's long-running feud with Pakistan over the Kashmir region. Under his leadership, India achieved steady economic growth, and the country became a world leader in information technology, though the poorer elements of Indian society often felt left out of the economic prosperity. In 2004 his coalition was defeated in the parliamentary election, and he resigned from office.

Vajpayee announced his retirement from politics at the end of 2005. In late December 2014 he was awarded the Bharat Ratna, India's highest civilian honour.

II: MANMOHAN SINGH

After the 2004 general elections, the Indian National Congress ended the incumbent National Democratic Alliance (NDA) tenure by becoming the political party with the single largest number of seats in the Lok Sabha. It formed United Progressive Alliance (UPA) with allies and staked claim to form government. In a surprise move, Chairperson Sonia Gandhi declared Manmohan Singh, a technocrat, as the UPA candidate for the Prime Ministership. Despite the fact that Singh had never won a Lok Sabha seat, according to the BBC, he "enjoyed massive popular support, not least because he was seen by many as a clean politician untouched by the taint of corruption that has run through many Indian administrations." He took the oath as the Prime Minister of India on 22 May 2004.

Economic policy

In 1991, Singh, as Finance Minister, abolished the Licence Raj, source of slow economic growth and corruption in the Indian economy for decades. He liberalised the Indian economy, allowing it to speed up development dramatically. During his term as Prime Minister, Singh continued to encourage growth in the Indian market, enjoying widespread success in these matters. Singh, along with the former Finance Minister, P. Chidambaram, presided over a period where the Indian economy grew with an 8–9% economic growth rate. In 2007, India

achieved its highest GDP growth rate of 9% and became the second fastest growing major economy in the world. Singh's ministry enacted a National Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in 2005.

Singh's government continued the Golden Quadrilateral and the highway modernisation program that was initiated by Vajpayee's government. Singh also worked on reforming the banking and financial sectors, as well as public sector companies. The Finance ministry worked towards relieving farmers of their debt and worked towards pro-industry policies. In 2005, Singh's government introduced the value added tax, replacing sales tax. In 2007 and early 2008, the global problem of inflation impacted India.

Healthcare and education

In 2005, Prime Minister Singh and his government's health ministry started the National Rural Health Mission (NHRM), which mobilised half a million community health workers. This rural health initiative was praised by the American economist Jeffrey Sachs. In 2006, his Government implemented the proposal to reserve 27% of seats in All India Institute of Medical Studies (AIIMS), Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), the Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs) and other central institutions of higher education for Other Backward Classes which led to 2006 Indian anti-reservation protests.

On 2 July 2009, Singh ministry introduced The Right to Education Act (RTE) act. Eight IIT's were opened in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Orissa, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh. The Singh government also continued the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan programme. The programme includes the introduction and improvement of mid-day meals and the opening of schools all over India, especially in rural areas, to fight illiteracy.

Security and Home Affairs

Singh's government strengthened anti-terror laws with amendments to Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA). National Investigation Agency (NIA) was also created soon after the Nov 2008 Mumbai terror attacks, as need for a central agency to combat terrorism was realised. Also, Unique Identification Authority of India was established in February 2009, an agency responsible for implementing the envisioned Multipurpose National Identity Card with the objective of increasing national security and facilitating e-governance.

Singh's administration initiated a massive reconstruction effort in Kashmir to stabilise the region but after some period of success, insurgent infiltration and terrorism in Kashmir has increased since 2009. However, the Singh administration was successful in reducing terrorism in Northeast India.

Legislations

The important National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) and the Right to Information Act were passed by the Parliament in 2005 during his tenure. While the effectiveness of the NREGA has been successful at various degrees, in various regions, the RTI act has proved crucial in India's fight against corruption. New cash benefits were also introduced for widows, pregnant women, and landless persons.

The Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013 was passed on 29 August 2013 in the Lok Sabha (lower house of the Indian parliament) and on 4 September 2013 in Rajya Sabha (upper house of the Indian parliament). The bill received the assent of the President of India, Pranab Mukherjee on 27 September 2013. The Act came into force from 1 January 2014.

Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act was enacted on 4 August 2009, which describes the modalities of the importance of free and compulsory education for children between 6 and 14 in India under Article 21A of the Indian Constitution. India became one of 135 countries to make education a fundamental right of every child when the act came into force on 1 April 2010.

Foreign policy

Manmohan Singh continued the pragmatic foreign policy that was started by P.V. Narasimha Rao and continued by Bharatiya Janata Party's Atal Bihari Vajpayee. Singh continued the peace process with Pakistan initiated by his predecessor, Atal Bihari Vajpayee. Exchange of high-level visits by top leaders from both countries have highlighted his tenure. Efforts have been made during Singh's tenure to end the border dispute with People's Republic of China. In November 2006, Chinese President Hu Jintao visited India which was followed by Singh's visit to Beijing in January 2008. A major development in Sino-Indian relations was the reopening of the Nathula Pass in 2006 after being closed for more than four decades. Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, Li Keqiang paid a state visit to India (Delhi-Mumbai) from 19–21 May 2013. Singh paid an official visit to China from 22–24 October 2013. Signed were three agreements establishing sister-city partnership between Delhi-Beijing, Kolkata-Kunming and Bangalore-Chengdu. As of 2010, the People's Republic of China is the second biggest trade partner of India.

Relations with Afghanistan have improved considerably, with India now becoming the largest regional donor to Afghanistan. During Afghan President Hamid Karzai's visit to New Delhi in August 2008, Manmohan Singh increased the aid package to Afghanistan for the development of more schools, health clinics, infrastructure, and defence. Under the leadership of Singh, India emerged as one of the single largest aid donors to Afghanistan.

Singh's government worked towards stronger ties with the United States. He visited the United States in July 2005 initiating negotiations over the Indo-US civilian nuclear agreement. This was followed by George W. Bush's successful visit to India in March 2006, during which the declaration over the nuclear agreement was made, giving India access to American nuclear fuel and technology while India will have to allow IAEA inspection of its civil nuclear reactors. After more than two years for more negotiations, followed by approval from the IAEA, Nuclear Suppliers Group and the US Congress, India and the US signed the agreement on 10 October 2008 with Pranab Mukherjee representing India.^[57] Singh had the first official state visit to the White House during the administration of US President Barack Obama. The visit took place in November 2009, and several discussions took place, including on trade and nuclear power.

Relations have improved with Japan and European Union countries, like the United Kingdom, France, and Germany. Relations with Iran have continued and negotiations over the Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline have taken place. New Delhi hosted an India–Africa Summit in April 2006 which was attended by the leaders of 15 African states. Relations have improved with other developing countries, particularly Brazil and South Africa. Singh carried forward the momentum which was established after the "Brasilia Declaration" in 2003 and the IBSA Dialogue Forum was formed.

Singh's government has also been especially keen on expanding ties with Israel. Since 2003, the two countries have made significant investments in each other and Israel now rivals Russia to become India's defence partner. Though there have been a few diplomatic glitches between India and Russia, especially over the delay and price hike of several Russian weapons

to be delivered to India, relations between the two remain strong with India and Russia signing various agreements to increase defence, nuclear energy and space co-operation.

15th Lok Sabha

India held general elections to the 15th Lok Sabha in five phases between 16 April 2009 and 13 May 2009. The results of the election were announced on 16 May 2009. Strong showing in Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh helped the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) form the new government under the incumbent Singh, who became the first prime minister since Jawaharlal Nehru in 1962 to win re-election after completing a full five-year term. The Congress and its allies were able to put together a comfortable majority with support from 322 members out of 543 members of the House. These included those of the UPA and the external support from the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), Samajwadi Party (SP), Janata Dal (Secular) (JD(S)), Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) and other minor parties.

On 22 May 2009, Manmohan Singh was sworn in as the Prime Minister during a ceremony held at Rashtrapati Bhavan. The 2009 Indian general election was the largest democratic election in the world held to date, with an eligible electorate of 714 million.

The 2012 report filed by the CAG in Parliament of India states that due to the allocation of coal blocks to certain private companies without bidding process the nation suffered an estimated loss of Rs 1.85 trillion (short scale) between 2005 and 2009 in which Manmohan Singh was the coal minister of India.

Manmohan Singh declined to appear before a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) in April 2013 when called upon by one of the members of JPC Yashwant Sinha for his alleged involvement in the 2G case.

III: INDIA AND UNO

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, slated to take the podium at the annual General Debate on September 28, and the rest of the Indian delegation comprising External Affairs Minister Salman Khurshid and senior officials would stress that the post-2015 development agenda should continue to have poverty eradication and inclusive growth on the agenda. India is of the view that principles of equity and common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR) should be accepted as beacons of the post-2015 agenda.

The Prime Minister may also appeal the developed world to turn some of its gaze inwards to look at its own humungous consumption patterns. As is usually the case in multilateral forum meetings that the Prime Minister attends, his views on the current world economic situation would be sought out by other world leaders. The current crisis surrounding Syria and the post-2014 Afghan situation are other issues that would become important both at the main debate and the dozens of bilateral meetings between leaders on the margins of the UNGA Session.

Prime Minister addressing the 66th UNGA session in New York, October 24, 2011 This would be the Prime Minister's fifth visit to the UNGA Session since 2004 having addressed the General Assembly in 2004, 2005, 2008 and 2011. External Affairs Minister Khurshid would join the PM in New York after completing his Canada visit.

The Indian delegation is slated to attend meetings of the officials of the other four BRICS

(Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) countries, as also that of the G4 (Germany, India, Japan and Brazil). The G4 has been calling for the reform of the UN, especially to expand the membership of the UN Security Council, to reflect today's reality instead of the international power balance as it had existed in 1945.

India and other G4 members have kept the issue of UN reforms alive in the past one year, and have regularly engaged with the L69 and C10 groups. The L69 is a group of 40 African, Latin American, Asia-Pacific and Caribbean countries which wants the UNSC expanded to include six more permanent members - four of G4 and two from Africa. The C10 or the African Union's proposal for UNSC expansion is on similar lines. The three - that is G4, L69 and C10 - differ with each other on the question of who should be entrusted with veto powers and who shouldn't.

Another area of concern for India as the biggest contributor of troops to UN peacekeeping operations is the changing nature of peacekeeping operations.

San Francisco Conference: India Signs United Nations Charter, 26 June 1945
Sir A. Ramaswami Mudaliar, Supply Member of the Governor-General's Executive Council and leader of the delegation of India, signs the United Nations Charter. India is one of the founding members of the UN. It signed the Declaration by United Nations at Washington on 1 January 1942 and also participated in the historic UN Conference of International Organization at San Francisco from 25 April to 26 June 1945. India has consistently supported the purposes and principles of the UN and has made significant contributions to implementing the goals of the UN Charter, particularly in the field of peace keeping.

Some years back the then UN Secretary General Kofi Annan said: "Over the decades, India has made an enormous contribution to the United Nations, through the efforts of its Government, and the work of Indian scholars, soldiers and international civil servants. India's has been one of the most eloquent voices helping the United Nations shape its agenda on behalf of the developing world. And the experience and professionalism of its armed forces has proved invaluable, time and again, in UN peacekeeping operations - in which over a hundred Indian soldiers have given their lives."

India has contributed over 1,60,000 troops to 43 of 64 UN peacekeeping operations since its inception in the 1950s. Over 160 Indian armed and police forces personnel have laid down their lives while fighting for the UN's blue flag.

The first deployment of the Indian armed forces was during the Korean War of the early 1950s. Other peacekeeping operations in which Indian personnel have taken part include Indo-China (Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia), Congo, Mozambique, Somalia, Rwanda, Angola, Sierra-Leone and Ethiopia. Currently, Indian armed forces are part of seven of the 14 ongoing UN peacekeeping missions. Indian forces are in Lebanon (UNIFIL), Congo (MONUC), Sudan (UNMISS), Golan Heights (UNDOF), Ivory Coast (MINUSTAH), and Liberia (UNMIL). The first all women contingent in any UN peacekeeping mission, a Formed Police Unit from India, was deployed in Liberia in 2007 as part of the UN peacekeeping mission.

But the changing nature of conflicts where a peacekeeping force is increasingly being asked to

do a lot more than its traditional mandate is an issue of concern to India, which it is likely to raise in the UN forums.

Over the years, India has viewed the UN as a forum that could play a role as a guarantor to international peace and security. In recent times, India has attempted to strengthen the UN system to combat in the spirit of multilateralism global challenges of development and poverty eradication, climate change, terrorism, piracy, disarmament, human rights, peace building and peacekeeping.

In the 1950s and 60s, India led the charge of newly independent countries in the UN to argue and secure freedom for still enslaved countries in Africa and Asia. India co-sponsored the landmark 1960 Declaration on Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples which proclaimed the need to unconditionally end colonialism in all its forms and manifestations.

India was also at the forefront in the fight against apartheid and racial discrimination in South Africa. India was the first country to raise the issue in the UN in 1946 and played a leading role in the formation of a sub-committee against Apartheid set up by the General Assembly. India was one of the earliest signatories to the Convention on Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination adopted in 1965.

India has over the years also championed the cause of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. In 1996, India as part of a group of 21 countries submitted to the Conference of Disarmament a Programme of Action calling for a phased elimination of nuclear weapons (1996 - 2020). India is the only state with nuclear weapons that has consistently supported the call for total nuclear disarmament.

India's has always been a strident voice at the UN, a voice that was stronger as it founded the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and the Group of 77 developing countries that argued within the UN for a more equitable international economic and political order. Article 53 of the UN Charter states that the multilateral organisation would "promote higher standard of living, full employment and conditions economic and social progress and development".

Indian economists, Professor D.R. Gadgil and Dr. V.K.R.V. Rao, were closely associated with the processes of estimation of the official development assistance that developed countries, one per cent of their national income, required to transfer to developing countries. Of this one per cent, 0.7 per cent was to constitute the ODA.

Indian delegates also played an important role in formulation of the 'development decades'. The first 'development decade' was from 1961 to 1970 and the fourth in the 1990s. The post-Cold War era changed the North-South donor and donee equation with the developing countries realising they needed to restructure their economies to attract private foreign investment as direct foreign aid was a thing of the past.

The process culminated with world leaders signing the UN Millennium Declaration in New York in September 2000 where they pledged to meet time bound and measurable targets to

reduce deprivation by 2015. It adopted eight Millennium Development Goals or MDGs. The current 68th session would mull the post-2015 agenda. India wants member countries to agree to an inter-governmental process to be set up, which should discuss the issues through 2014.

In recent decades, India has apart from calling for reforms of the UNSC and world financial institutions like the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, has also advocated "zero tolerance" approach to terrorism in all its forms. In 1996, India piloted a draft Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT) with the aim to provide an exhaustive legal framework to counter terrorism. India continues to work for its early adoption. Many of the features of CCIT have already been adopted.

India is also a major contributor to UN funds like the UN Democracy Fund that PM Manmohan Singh, US President George Bush and UN Secretary General Kofi Annan founded in 2005. India today is the second biggest contributor to the Fund to engender democratic values and processes.

Former External Affairs Minister at the UN Security Council meeting in September 2012 India was a non-permanent member of the UNSC in 2011-12 and pushed for an open debate on maritime piracy in the region. India has served on the Security Council on seven occasions so far - in 1950-51, 1967-68, 1972-73, 1977-78, 1984-85, 1991-92, and 2011-2012.

- India has been a non-permanent member of the UNSC seven times - 1950-51, 1967-68, 1972-73, 1977-78, 1984-85, 1991-92, and 2011-2012
- India is one of the founding members of the UN
- India attended the San Francisco Conference of 1945, its delegation led by Sir C.P. Ramaswamy Mudaliar
- India is the largest contributor to the UN peacekeeping operations
- India has contributed over 1,60,000 troops to 43 of 64 UN peacekeeping operations
- More than 160 Indian defence and police personnel have laid down their lives serving under the UN's blue flag
- Indian armed forces are part of seven of the 14 ongoing UN peacekeeping missions
- India co-sponsored the landmark 1960 Declaration on Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples
- C.S. Jha headed the Special Committee to look into implementation of the declaration
- India was one of the first countries to raise the issue of apartheid in South Africa at the UN in 1946
- India was one of the earliest signatories to the Convention on Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination adopted in 1965
- India has pushed for total nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation at the UN
- it is the only nuclear weapons state to demand total elimination of nuclear weapons
- In 1996, India along with 20 other countries submitted an action plan for phased elimination of nuclear weapons (1996 - 2020)
- India played a pivotal role in UN's ascertaining of ODA estimates for developed countries
- India long with Brazil, Japan and Germany formed the G4 in 2005 to demand UNSC reforms
- In 1996, India piloted a draft Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT)
- India founded in 2005 and is a major contributor to the UN Democracy Fund.

IV: SAARC

The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) was established with the signing of the **SAARC Charter** in Dhaka on 8 December 1985.

- The idea of regional cooperation in South Asia was first raised in November 1980. After consultations, the foreign secretaries of the seven founding countries—Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka—met for the first time in Colombo in April 1981.
 - Afghanistan became the newest member of SAARC at the 13th annual summit in 2005.
 - The **Headquarters and Secretariat** of the Association are at **Kathmandu, Nepal**.

Principles

- Cooperation within the framework of the SAARC shall be based on:
 - Respect for the principles of **sovereign equality, territorial integrity, political independence, non-interference** in the internal affairs of other States and mutual benefit.
 - Such cooperation shall not be a substitute for bilateral and multilateral cooperation but shall complement them.
 - Such cooperation shall not be inconsistent with bilateral and multilateral obligations.

Members of SAARC

- SAARC comprises of eight member States:
 - Afghanistan
 - Bangladesh
 - Bhutan
 - India
 - Maldives
 - Nepal
 - Pakistan
 - Sri Lanka
- There are currently nine Observers to SAARC, namely: (i) Australia; (ii) China; (iii) the European Union; (iv) Iran; (v) Japan; (vi) the Republic of Korea; (vii) Mauritius; (viii) Myanmar; and (ix) the United States of America.

Areas of Cooperation

- Human Resource Development and Tourism
- Agriculture and Rural Development
- Environment, Natural Disasters and Biotechnology
- Economic, Trade and Finance
- Social Affairs
- Information and Poverty Alleviation
- Energy, Transport, Science and Technology
- Education, Security and Culture and Others

The Objectives of the SAARC

- To **promote the welfare** of the people of South Asia and to improve their quality of life.

- To **accelerate economic growth**, social progress and cultural development in the region and to provide all individuals the opportunity to live in dignity and to realize their full potentials.
- To **promote and strengthen collective self-reliance** among the countries of South Asia.
- To **contribute to mutual trust**, understanding and appreciation of one another's problems..
- To **promote active collaboration** and mutual assistance in the economic, social, cultural, technical and scientific fields.
- **To strengthen cooperation with other developing countries.**
- To **strengthen cooperation among themselves in international forums** on matters of common interests; and
- To cooperate with international and regional organizations with similar aims and purposes.

Principal Organs

- **Meeting of Heads of State or Government**
 - Meetings are held at the Summit level, usually on an annual basis.
- **Standing Committee of Foreign Secretaries**
 - The Committee provides overall monitoring and coordination, determines priorities, mobilizes resources, and approves projects and financing.
- **Secretariat**
 - The SAARC Secretariat was established in Kathmandu on 16 January 1987. Its role is to coordinate and monitor the implementation of SAARC activities, service the meetings of the association and serve as a channel of communication between SAARC and other international organizations.
 - The Secretariat comprises the secretary-general, seven directors, and the general services staff. The secretary-general is appointed by the Council of Ministers on the principle of rotation, for a non-renewable tenure of three years.

SAARC Specialized Bodies

- **SAARC Development Fund (SDF):** Its primary objective is funding of project-based collaboration in social sectors such as poverty alleviation, development, etc.
 - SDF is governed by a Board consisting of representatives from the Ministry of Finance of the Member States. The Governing Council of SDF (Finance Ministers of MSs) oversees the functioning of the Board.
- **South Asian University**
 - **South Asian University (SAU)** is an international university, located in India. Degrees and Certificates awarded by the SAU are at par with the respective Degrees and Certificates awarded by the National Universities/ Institutions.
- **South Asian Regional Standards Organization**
 - **South Asian Regional Standards Organization (SARSO)** has its Secretariat at **Dhaka, Bangladesh**.
 - It was established **to achieve and enhance coordination and cooperation among SAARC member states** in the fields of standardization and conformity

assessment and is aimed to develop harmonized Standards for the region to facilitate intra-regional trade and to have access in the global market.

- **SAARC Arbitration Council**

- It is an **inter-governmental body** having its office in **Pakistan** is mandated to provide a legal framework/forum within the region for fair and efficient settlement of commercial, industrial, trade, banking, investment and such other disputes, as may be referred to it by the member states and their people.

SAARC and its Importance

- **SAARC comprises 3% of the world's area, 21% of the world's population and 3.8% (US\$2.9 trillion) of the global economy.**
- **Creating synergies:** It is the world's most densely populated region and one of the most fertile areas. SAARC countries have common tradition, dress, food and culture and political aspects thereby synergizing their actions.
- **Common solutions:** All the SAARC countries have common problems and issues like poverty, illiteracy, malnutrition, natural disasters, internal conflicts, industrial and technological backwardness, low GDP and poor socio-economic condition and uplift their living standards thereby creating common areas of development and progress having common solutions.

SAARC Achievements

- **Free Trade Area (FTA):** SAARC is comparatively a new organization in the global arena. The member countries have established a **Free Trade Area (FTA)** which will increase their internal trade and lessen the trade gap of some states considerably.
- **SAPTA: South Asia Preferential Trading Agreement** for promoting trade amongst the member countries came into effect in 1995.
- **SAFTA: A Free Trade Agreement** confined to goods, but excluding all services like information technology. Agreement was signed to reduce customs duties of all traded goods to zero by the year 2016.
- **SAARC Agreement on Trade in Services (SATIS):** SATIS is following the GATS-plus 'positive list' approach for trade in services liberalization.
- **SAARC University:** Establish a SAARC university in India, a food bank and also an energy reserve in Pakistan.

Significance for India

- **Neighbourhood first:** Primacy to the country's immediate neighbours.
- **Geostrategic significance:** Can counter China (OBOR initiative) through engaging Nepal, Bhutan, the Maldives and Sri Lanka in development process and economic cooperation.
- **Regional stability:** SAARC can help in creation of mutual trust and peace within the region.
- **Global leadership role:** It offers India a platform to showcase its leadership in the region by taking up extra responsibilities.
- **Game changer for India's Act East Policy:** by linking South Asian economies with South East Asian will bring further economic integration and prosperity to India mainly in the Services Sector.

Challenges

- **Low frequency of meetings:** More engagement is required by the member states and instead of meeting biennial meetings should be held annually.
- **Broad area of cooperation** leads to diversion of energy and resources.
- **Limitation in SAFTA:** The implementation of SAFTA has not been satisfactory a Free Trade Agreement confined to goods, excluding all services like information technology.

- **Indo-Pak Relations:** Escalated tension and conflict between India and Pakistan have severely hampered the prospects of SAARC.
-