

BOOK REVIEW

South Asia in 21st Century, India, Her Neighbours and the Great powers
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South Asia happens to be a unique sub-system in international politics. It has been termed as a region without regionalism. The history of this region during the last half century has been characterised more by confrontation than cooperation. The root cause of conflict is the burden of the past. The region is Indo-Centric. The centrality of India's size, population and resources keep other neighbours apprehensive of her supposedly hegemonistic designs. Significantly, the countries of the region do not have a common threat perception.

The book under review is a serious attempt to touch on some of the areas that India's foreign policy would need to look at in the coming years. The volume is a collection of papers by leading scholars and specialists. The objective of the study is to provide a perspective on India's foreign policy as well as a perception of the challenges that lie ahead for India in the 21st century.

The book is divided into four uneven parts along with a comprehensive introduction by the learned editor who is an established authority in the field of India's foreign policy. It is not possible to offer comments on each of the twenty contributions. The volume broadly reflects upon the following themes of India's foreign policy— implications of changing realities of global, regional and domestic environments, relations with neighbours, national security, foreign economic policy and Indian response to international terrorism.

Part one of the book entitled "*The Global and Domestic Milieus*" contains 5 articles. The first essay by A.P. Rana is essentially a conceptual enquiry into the globalization process. He argues that in an age of globalization, existing theoretical literature on International Relations is much too compartmentalized and there is a need to converse across rigid boundaries within these conceptualisations and give rise to healthy theoretical debates. Ramesh Babu in his paper further expands the theme of globalization. According to him the most important source of globalization could be identified in the sphere of economy. He argues that Indian foreign policy must strive to promote economic growth at home. In this process, relations with the US have to be the most

critical element in India's foreign policy. The next essay by Ali Mujtaba highlights the contradictory directions of International Relations in 21st Century. He maintains that forces of division have gained an upper hand, and those of cooperation remain in subordination. The need of the hour is to have a greater amount of interaction between nations, which may alone remove the impediments in the path of evolving a coherent regional strategy. The editor N.K. Jha focuses attention on domestic milieu of South Asia in general and India in particular. He rejects the dominant view that human dimensions of national security have been recognized only after the cold war. He calls for a more balanced combination of military, legal and human approaches to counter domestic threats to national security. He lays stress on ethnic and religious conflicts and its exploitation by hostile neighbours.

The second part captioned "*Repairing Bridges of Friendship with the Neighbours*" consists of six papers. It discusses India's endeavours to improve relations with her neighbours and prospects of these efforts in the 21st century. N.K. Jha while analyzing the recent trends in Indo-Pak relations argues that any single-track approach by India will not produce the desired results. Instead, he pleads for a multi-track approach, which must include building and sustaining international coalition against terrorism. The remaining contributions in this part deal with India's relations with Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bangladesh and Bhutan.

The third part containing six contributions deals with policies of major world powers towards South Asia and its implications for peace and security in the region. B.K. Srivastava while discussing the US approach to South Asian Security argues that Indo-American relations are much broader in scope and should not be viewed as centering around any single issue. Though at present prospects for strategic partnership with the US may not appear bright, in the long run, if India's development keeps pace, new horizons would open up in security relations as well.

In the next essay, S.K. Jha discusses how and why the successor state of the former Soviet Union, Russia, has reestablished relationship with India. The difference between Indo-Soviet and Indo-Russian friendship is that while the old relationship elicited American suspicion and hostility, now the US largely views Indo-Russian defense collaborations with equanimity. Both countries however, will be well-advised to concentrate more on economic cooperation than on indulging in any grand alliance to counter American hegemony

B. Krishnamurthy highlights the salient features, achievements and shortcomings of a common foreign and security policy of European Union. He takes into account the response of EU to some of the security concerns of India within the context of CFSP. The next essay explains how Canada intends to ensure rapid progress in social, economic, political and cultural sphere of South Asian countries. Swaran Singh talks about the China factor in South Asian security scenario. He pleads that China is an integral part of South Asia, as it has common boundaries with four South Asian countries and concludes that if India accepts China as an integral part of South Asia and teams up with Beijing, this would herald a new beginning for politics in the region in the 21st century.

Last contribution in this part by R.R. Panda emphasizes that Japan too has a vital bearing on South Asian states. Both India and Japan now find a new convergence of strategic interests, especially with the emergence of China as a major regional power. India and Japan need to

devote more attention towards coordinating their policy priorities in Southern Asia. Last part of the volume addresses some of the burning issues concerning South Asian security as well as economic confidence building and regional cooperation in the field of science and technology.

The book is a timely and commendable addition to the existing literature on the subject. The editor of the volume deserves commendation on bringing out such a neatly produced book. One may not of course, agree with all the contentions of various contributors to the volume but the suggestions made by them need to be explored. The contributions provide valuable input for policy formulation. They are sure to stimulate further discussion on the subject. One can only hope that this scholarly work gets due attention in right quarters.