

Chapter 5. Contemporary South Asia

After reading this chapter you should be able to understand the following learning objectives.

1. South Asia in the post-cold war era.
2. Democratization and its reversals in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal.
3. Ethnic conflicts in Sri Lanka.
4. Impact of economic globalization in the region.
5. Conflicts and agreements between the region.
6. Efforts of peace in South Asia.
7. India's relation with its neighbours.

Introduction: South Asia is an area of many internal strife's and global conflicts. This region provided space to super powers during the cold war period. This region has a series of conflicts pertaining to border, water sharing, insurgencies, ethnic conflicts and resources which made the region quite turbulent. At the same time the region need to cooperate with each other so that this region can develop and prosper.

South Asia a Brief Sketch: India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan Maldives and Nepal are the states which are surrounded by Great Himalaya's in the north and Bay of Bengal, Indian ocean and Arabian sea in the south east and west, which makes this region a distinctive social, linguistic and cultural sub-continent. Some Analysts include Afghanistan and Myanmar with this region due to undefined/unmarked boundaries in the east and west. China's influence is there but it is not included in this region.

Here we are concerned with the above mentioned seven states constituting a geopolitical space but diversified in every sense. India and Sri Lanka are the only two states in this region which are able to practice democracy since their independence. The whole region is house of internal strife's and global conflicts. Which has resulted in instability of governments, changing powers from elected governments to monarchs/dictators. Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan are its examples, However the political scenario of Bhutan can be justified as constitutional monarchy since 18th of July 2008.

Bhutan once the suzerainty of British Raj the present monarch system was established. Likewise, the island Maldives established its system through a referendum approved a constitution. Which was amended, 1970, 72, 75, 97 and again 2008.

Let's discuss briefly the socio –political scenario of this region.

Indian Democracy

India: The 2nd populous and the 7th largest country of the world has attained its independence from British rule on 15th of August 1947. Since its inception it has adopted the parliamentary type of govt. with bicameral legislature. J. L. Nehru as its 1st premier and Dr. Rajendra Prasad as its first president. During the 1950's India started holding periodical elections with multi-party system and proved its success till date. Except the constitutional crises during 1975. The successive govts have strengthened the democratic institutes and made India as the largest democracy of the world.

Keeping its position strong in terms of demography it has fought several wars like 1947-48, 1965, 1971, 1999. Pakistan propagated militancy from its soil to relegate Kashmir from India since 1989, which became the root cause of cold relations between the two. The attack on Indian parliament on 13 December 2001, attack on Taj hotel in Mumbai on 26-11-2008 and attack on Indian forces convoy at Pulwama on 14-02-2019 are the examples of rivalry between the two. India fought war in 1962 with China. It also sent its IPKF to Sri Lanka to curb the ethnic conflict, likewise it has soft borders with Nepal. It stopped

Tamil insurgents to invade Bhutan. Maldives and India have the bilateral annual exercise 14-day joint military trainings since 2009.

Showing its concern India has signed several agreements with in the south Asian region under its Panchsheel Programme, Tashkent, Shimla and Agra summit with Pakistan and peace agreement with rest of its neighboring states. It has also signed socio-economic and cultural treaties with the south Asian countries. To maintain its status as the founder of (NAM). It remained neutral during cold war era although signing treaties of friendship with USSR. Its cooperation and mutual trust has resulted in formation of SAARC in 1985.

Pakistan Democracy/Military Rule

Pakistan: Pakistan came into being on 14th of August 1947 after two nation theory propounded by Mohammad Ali Jinnah. Since then there have been a tussle between military and Democratic governments. After the framing of constitution General Ayub Khan took over the administration in the year 1958 and later got himself elected as the president of Pakistan. During this period the Indo-Pak war 1965 and Tashkent agreement was signed. The military rule was established under General Yahya Khan replacing General Ayub Khan on 31st of March 1969. Under him the East Pakistan broke away on the question of ill treatment to Bengali language and culture. This region later emerged as Bangladesh since 1971. After Bangladesh crises, elected government of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto came into power in Pakistan from 1971-77. During his tenure the famous Shimla agreement was signed between Indian premier Indira Gandhi and her Pak counterpart Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Bhutto was later removed by Gen Zia-ul-Haq in July 1977 who was executed on 4th April 1979. The military rule of Gen Zia was replaced by elected government of Benazir Bhutto in 1988. Zia died in an air crash 17-08-1988. The successive elected government was formed by Nawaz Sharif. Nawaz Sharif's elected government was replaced by another coup of Gen Pervez Musharraf in 1999. Musharraf later in 2001 got himself elected as president of Pakistan. During the period of Nawaz Sharif Kargil war was fought between India and Pakistan, in the year 1999, and Lahore declaration on 21 Feb 1999 followed by Agra summit on 14-16 July 2001 were made during this period. On 25th of March 2008 democratic government was established in Pakistan but at a huge cost of democracy as Benazir Bhutto was assassinated on 27-12-2007 in an election relay at Liaquat

National Bagh Rawalpindi (Punjab). Pakistan Tehrik Insaaf party founded by famous cricket star on 25 April 1996 boycotted 2008 elections. This government was followed by another democratic government (PMLN) under the leadership of Nawaz Sharif. And PTI emerged as the 2nd largest party in Pakistan. On 5th of July 2018 after the completion of term fresh elections were held and PTI became the ruling party of Pakistan under the leadership of Imran Khan.

The factors which are responsible for conflicts between government/military in Pakistan are as follows;

- a) Indo-Pak war made military groups more powerful.
- b) The military rule in Pakistan is the protector of US and western interests in the region.
- c) The social dominance of military, clergy and landowning aristocracy is also a factor.
- d) The role of political parties and their corrupt practices is responsible for rift.

Areas of conflict between India and Pakistan.

- a) Safety of places of worship.
- b) Safety of abducted women.
- c) Transfer of military assets.
- d) Transfer of moveable property.
- e) Division of cash.
- f) Balance of undivided India.
- g) Division of river water.
- h) Dispute of Jammu and Kashmir

Agreements between India and Pakistan

- 1) Indus water treaty 1960.
- 2) Tashkent agreement 1966.
- 3) Shimla agreement 1972
- 4) Lahore Bus Yatra 1999.
- 5) Agra summit 2001.
- 6) Track II diplomacy.
- 7) Cricket channel.

Monarchy and democracy in Nepal.

Nepal: Nepal is a land locked Hindu kingdom in south Asia

It was monarchy since long period of history. In the recent past it has developed into constitutional limited monarchy and now from 2008 as a republic, during this period the political parties and the common people have struggled for more open and responsive governments. There had been growing movements for democracy in Nepal under its pressure the elections were held in 1959 in which Nepali congress secured electoral victory, but it could not have lasted long as king Mahendra dismissed the elected government in 1960 and imprisoned the elected members. Since then the hide and seek game between pro-king and democratic forces is there. With the passage of events, the king Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev accepted the demand for a new democratic constitution in 1990. In the wake of pro-democratic movement, Maoists also spread their influence against monarch and ruling elite. In 2002 the king abolished the parliament and dismissed the government under the massive pre democratic protests the king was forced to

restore the parliament. It was in April 2008 elections for constituent assembly were held and Maoist emerged as big political force. Monarchy was abolished on 28th of May 2008 and Nepal emerged as Republic with Ram Baran Yadav the congress leader as its president. Major parties such as Communist party of Nepal (Maoist) Communist of Nepal (Marxist-Leninist) (CPN UML) and Nepali congress agreed to write the constitution to replace the interim constitution. Ram Baran Yadav as its president and Prachanda (Maoist) as P.M. He later resigned in 2009 due to opposition for integration of former rebel fighters into national Army as such Madhav Kumar was named as new P.M. Who quitted under Maoist pressure in 2011, in which Sushil Kumar the leader of Nepali congress was elected as P.M. after securing coalition support. At present the P.M of Nepal is Khadgi Prasad Oli and president is Bidya Devi Bhandari.

Points of agreement between India and Nepal;

- a. Allow their citizens to travel and work without passport and visas.
- b. India is the largest aid giver to Nepal to provide financial and technical assistance in areas of trade, scientific cooperation, common natural resources and electricity generation.
- c. The citizens of Nepal are allowed to serve in all subordinate services in India except IAS and IPS.

Ups and downs in Indo Nepal relations

During 1950 India and Nepal signed friendship treaty covering two broad dimensions, i.e. natural security concerns and mutual socio-cultural and economic interactions. India allow Nepali citizens to work in all govt. services except three top services i.e. IAS, IPS and IFS, however the decades of 1960 and 1970 saw some disturbances due to dismissal of elected Govt. by king Mahendra and distancing Nepal from India which was fueled by China to

appease the Nepal. King Birendra carried forward the policies of his father after whose death in 1972. However, Indian premier Indira Gandhi visited Nepal followed by her counterpart king Birendra who signed the treaty of trade and transit 1978. Pakistan ISI activities against India became a concern for India. In 2002 king Birendra and his family members were assassinated which created anti India demonstration and provocation but behaving in responsible manner tension was released. The visit of Nepali president on 16 feb 2010 and signing of various accords and various memorandum of understandings has opened a new area of cordial relation between the two. Nepal shares a border of 1850 kilometers with Indian five states- Sikkim, West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand. Narendra Modi visited Nepal twice in 2014 and his counterpart K.P. Sharma visited India twice in 2016. In view of 18th SAARC summit and first by BRICS-BIMSTEC leaders' summit in Goa. Modi paid visit to Nepal in May and August 2018. However, Nepali P.M. K.P Sharma visited India on 30-31 May 2019 in swearing-in ceremony of prime minister Narendra Modi.

Challenges to democracy in Nepal

Following are the challenges to Nepal democracy

- a) Framing of written constitution acceptable to all sects of society.
- b) Armed threat by Maoists.
- c) A sizable population and big landlords are supporting monarchy.

Struggle Between Democracy and Military in Bangladesh

In terms of population Bangladesh is world's 8th country however in terms of landmass it is 92nd country of the world. Bangladesh is a sovereign state which came into being on 16 December 1971. Its drafted constitution declares it as democratic, secular and socialist country. In 1975 the constitution was amended from parliamentary Government to presidential Government Sheikh Mujib-ur-Rehman who was assassinated on 15 August 1975, the founder of Awami League and Bangladesh. Zia-ur-Rahman (Lt. General) abolished all parties except his own party (BNP) and won elections in 1979. He too was assassinated on 03-05-1981 and Lt. Gen. H.M Ershad became the ruler of Bangladesh. He was later elected as president of Bangladesh but resigned in 1990. Elections were held in 1991. Since then late 2006 Bangladesh has multiparty democracy. However, growing instability, widespread corruption and the growing strife between (A. L and BNP) led the imposition of emergency in 2007. In 2009 the interior government finally held elections in which Sheikh Hussain of (A.L) won the landslide Victory. Hussain abolished the caretaking system. In 2014 Awami League won elections by default as BNP denied to take part in elections. The recent past elections were held in 2018 in which (A.L) maintain its power and Jayati party emerged as the main opposition party securing 22 seats.

Issues and agreements between India and Bangladesh

Issues

- a) Farakha Barrage
- b) Distribution of Ganga waters.
- c) Large scale influx of Chakma refugees.
- d) Ownership of new Moore island in the Bay of Bengal.
- e) Transfer of Teen Beegha area to Bangladesh

Agreements between India and Bangladesh

- a) Friendship, cooperation and peace treaty for 25 years 19-03-1972 also known as Indira - Mujib Treaty.
- b) Arrangements on sharing Ganga waters during Janta party rule.
- c) Establishment of SAARC in 1985.
- d) Return of Teen Beegha Corridor to Bangladesh on 26-06-1992.
- e) Agreement on sharing of Ganga waters for 30 years-1996.

Ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. (Ceylon)

The democratic socialist republic of Sri Lanka previously known as Ceylon, is governed by an elected president and legislature. It came into being from British colonial rule on 4th of February, 1948. It is a small island country in the south of India in Indian Ocean, it shares maritime boundary with Indian state Tamil Nadu. In terms of population it is 57th country of the world. The two ethnic groups i.e. Sinhalese and Tamils compose the entire population of this country. The Sinhalese consisting about 74% of population trace their ancestor to Aryan from Eastern India. However, Tamils migrated during the colonial rule as laborers for the development of coffee, tea and plantation trace their root to Dravidians of Tamil Nadu.

After its independence it started creating a new state on the basis of language and religion. It was rejected by Tamils who demanded a federal state in Sri Lanka. By 1977 a strong demand for separation from Sri

Lanka was made by Tamils. The agitation gradually started taking militant shape. The Tamils in 1983 got organized under Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam (LTTE) under the leadership of Velupillai Prabhakaran. The conflict ended on 17th May 2009 with defeat of Tamil Elam and death of Prabhakaran. The elections are held through PR system for 225 members for a period of five years. The elections were held in 2015 in which Sirisena got elected. And on 16 November 2019 Sri Lanka held the presidential elections in which Maithripala Sirisena's term ended and Gotabaya Rajapaksha won the elections. So it is right to say that democracy is prevailing in Sri Lanka.

Relations between Sri Lanka and India

After independence of Sri Lanka in 1948. It opted for Non Alignment as its foreign policy and democratic government to run the country. Despite of friendly relations there have been occasional tensions between the duo. Sri Lanka adopted neutral posture in respect of Chinese aggression on India in 1962, and also Indo-Pak wars of 1965 and 1971 the main area of tension in the states of Tamil in Sri Lanka. In Sri Lanka a sizeable population is of Indian origin. Tamils who were asked to seek their citizenship of Sri Lanka in 1949 and 23 lakh Tamils were granted Indian citizenship only a less number were granted Sri Lankan citizenship. The outstanding dispute regarding status of Tamil minority in Sri Lanka developed into major conflict between Tamils and Sinhalese in course of time an agreement was concluded between India Sri Lanka in July 1987 calling upon India to send Indian peace keeping force (IPKF) to maintain peace and normalcy in parts of Sri Lanka. However, the (IPKF) were called back by 1989 but violence remained unabated and Indo-Sri Lanka remained strained. The defeat of LTTE in May 2009 and complete control of Sri Lanka on her territories have opened a new course of relation between duo.

India and Bhutan

The Bhutanese democracy has been marked by active encouragement and participation reigning Bhutanese monarchs since the 1950's. beginning with the large reforms such as the abolition of slavery and culminating in the enactment of Bhutanese constitution. The first elections in Bhutan began in 2007 and all levels of government had been democratically elected by 2011. These include Bhutan's first ever national assembly elections. It has a bicameral legislature with four registered parties since 2007 i.e. (PDP) people's democratic party, 2) (DPT) Druk Phuensum Tshogpa, 3) (BKP) Bhutan Kuenyam Party, 4) (DNT) Druk Nyamrup Tshogpa besides other unregistered parties. The government of Bhutan is constitutional monarchy since July 2008. The king of Bhutan is head of state. There are 20 states in Bhutan. It is a small country surrounded by Himalayas. It is sandwich between India and Tibet east of Nepal and north of Bangladesh.

King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wang Chuk is the present king of Bhutan.

Relations with India.

- 1) India doesn't have any hostility with Bhutan.
- 2) India is involved in many hydro-projects in Bhutan.
- 3) India is principle provider of development aids to Bhutan.
- 4) Bhutan weeds out terrorist and Guariellas operating from North East India.

India and Maldives

Maldives is an island nation in the Indian ocean formed by a chain of 1200 coral island grouped into 26 atolls south west of Sri Lanka and India. It has a mixed economy system which includes a variety of business of fiscal freedom combined with centralized economic planning and government regulation. Maldives has a history of political protests. Its first democratically elected leader Mohamad Nasheed was elected to office in 2008. That ended decades of autocratic rule by Maumoon Abdul Gayoom. The present system of election in Maldives is they elect a national level head of state the president directly for a term of 5 years. It has multiparty system. Its assembly (Majlis) has 88 members. Three types of elections are being hold here i.e. local council, parliamentary elections and presidential election. During 2008 democratic alliance formed the government under the leadership of Mohammad Nasheed. The progressive party of Maldives won elections during 2013 under the leadership of Abdullah Yamon. At the present Ibrahim Mohammad Solih, the leader of (MDP) Maldivian democratic party is the president of the state since 2018.

Relations between India and Maldives

India and Maldives share maritime border relations have been friendly and close in strategic, economic and military cooperation.

Trace out the formation of SAARC.

South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) was established in December 1985 at Dhaka by seven South Asian countries viz India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and Maldives. Afghanistan was included in it in 2007 at its 14th summit which held in New Delhi. It is an economic organization meant for the development of South Asian countries. It was established primarily for cooperation in Agri-Rural development, Science and technology, culture, health, population and control terrorism. SAARC agreed to replace SAPTA with SAFTA which was in vogue since December 07 1995 on Jan 6, 2004 a 12th SAARC in Islamabad in order to increase the level of trade and economic cooperation among the SAARC nations.

Objectives

The main objectives of SAARC are as under.

- 1) To provide welfare to the people of South Asia.
- 2) To accelerate economic growth, social progress and cultural development in the region.
- 3) To promote and strengthen collective self-reliance among these countries.
- 4) To contribute to mutual trust, understanding and solution to each other's problems.
- 5) To promote active collaboration and mutual existence in various fields.
- 6) To strengthen cooperation in international forums on matters of common interest.
- 7) To strengthen cooperation with other developing countries.
- 8) To cooperate with international and regional organizations with similar aim and purpose

NOW YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS

Long Answer Type Questions.

1. What is South Asia? Describe the nature of polity and difference among South Asian states?
2. Discuss the nature of polity and military role in Pakistan?
3. Examine the role of military in Bangladesh?
4. Discuss the Monarchy and Democracy in Nepal?
5. How far is it true that democracy is prevailing in Sri Lanka?
6. Examine the wars and agreements between India and Pakistan?
7. India is friendly with Sri Lanka. Elaborate your answer with suitable examples?
8. What are the major issues between India and Bangladesh?
9. SAARC is the outcome of cordiality between South Asian nations. Discuss?
10. India has got an upper hand in South Asia, Comment?
11. Briefly discuss the emerging hostility between India and Pakistan?

Short Answer Type Questions.

1. What is South Asia?
2. Examine the role of military in Pakistan?
3. Bangladesh has overcome from military rule. Comment?
4. Is Nepal a democracy? Elucidate.
5. Briefly discuss SAARC a forum facilitating economic cooperation among the south Asian countries.
6. What are the main disputes between South Asian Giants?
7. What type of government is there in Bangladesh?
8. Define the topography of Maldives?
9. Comment on India Bhutan relations?

Very Short Type Questions.

1. List the problems between South Asian countries?
2. Bangladesh and Pakistan have witnessed same kind of rule since their emergence. Comment?
3. What is the cause of ethnic conflicts in Sri Lanka?
4. Name any two political parties of Bhutan?
5. What type of government is in Maldives?
6. What is SAARC?
7. When Bangladesh became an independent country?
8. What do you mean by SAFTA and SAPTA?
9. What is the official language of Bangladesh?
10. Discuss Indo Nepal relations?
11. Which agreement is known as Indira-Bhutan accord?
12. Mention any two agreements between India and Pakistan?
13. J&K is the bone contention between India and Pakistan. Discuss with recent developments?
14. How many islands are there in Maldives?