
Narendra Modi's Foreign Policy: Rebuild South Asian Neighbourhood

SD Muni

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's first foreign policy message was to rebuild neighbourhood relations in the South Asian region. He invited all the heads of the government of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) countries to participate in his oath taking ceremony on May 26, 2014. This was to indicate that the neighbourhood was the top priority of Modi's foreign policy. A feeling of alienation and a degree of disenchantment had set in in India's relations with the neighbours during the last years of the Manmohan Singh regime. Even where the Singh government wanted to push forward, like in the case of Bangladesh, it was constrained by coalition politics. In Nepal, the drift in Constitution making had vitiated bilateral relations with India. Dr. Manmohan Singh's dream of having breakfast in Amritsar, lunch in Islamabad and dinner in Kabul got trapped in Pakistan's inability and unwillingness to move on the question of cross-border terrorism against India. Sri Lanka and Maldives were being lured by the Chinese economic promise and strategic balancing. SAARC, being a hostage to the bilateral dynamics between India and its neighbours, has been performing far below its expectations and promise.

Professor **SD Muni** is Professor Emeritus, Jawaharlal Nehru University, and Distinguished Fellow, Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi.

A feeling of alienation and a degree of disenchantment had set in in India's relations with the neighbours during the last years of the Manmohan Singh regime.

India, until the past decade and a half, had remained a reluctant participant and a hesitant leader in SAARC.¹ India suspected the initial move for establishing the South Asian regional grouping, made by the then President of Bangladesh Gen. Zia-ul-Haq in January 1980, as being an attempt to gang up all the neighbours against India. As the Bangladeshi move was made in the context of the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan and the US and Pakistani resolve to resist this intervention, India also suspected the US strategic prompting and back-up behind this move.² At one stage, India was almost on the verge of walking out of the initiative, asking the rest of the neighbours to go ahead with a regional grouping without India. Pakistan was equally hesitant in supporting the Bangladeshi move as it suspected an eventual Indian domination of the regional institution. It took the South Asian countries almost five years of intensive bargaining and negotiations to establish SAARC in 1985. And that too could be possible only when two operational constraints were built into it, namely, to take decisions on the basis of unanimity; and to avoid bilateral and contentious issues from its deliberations. Even after these constraints, or may be because of them, the evolution of SAARC has been protracted and tardy. It has failed to live up to its promise. The obvious factor responsible in this respect has been the persisting conflict and tension between India and Pakistan, but political differences between other SAARC members have made no less contribution. During the past 30 years of its existence, SAARC has missed 12 of its annual summits largely because of bilateral issues between its members. It accounts for only 2 percent of the region's global trade and not more than 10 percent of its regional trade. Nearly

six hundred million South Asian people continue to live below the poverty line (of US \$1.25 a day) despite two commissions set up by SAARC to devise means for poverty alleviation in the region.

India's hesitation to engage with SAARC started melting away towards the latter half of the 1990s. The enunciation of the "Gujral Doctrine" in September 1996 by the then Foreign Minister I.K. Gujral was a first major indication in this regard. This doctrine underlined that India will avoid reciprocity in its engagement with the immediate neighbours and meet their aspirations by going more than half the way. This was followed by India signing the long pending Ganga Water Sharing Agreement with Bangladesh in December 1996. A Free Trade Agreement with Sri Lanka was concluded in December 1999, which has changed the entire economic texture of bilateral relations between India and Sri Lanka. Frustrated by Pakistan's negative approach towards regional cooperation, India moved in 1997 to set up a new regional grouping, BIMSTEC, with Thailand and Myanmar, that initially included Bangladesh and Sri Lanka but was later expanded in 2004 to include Nepal and Bhutan as well. Thus, BIMSTEC became like an extension of SAARC without Pakistan but including five of the then existing seven SAARC members. A comprehensive articulation of India's new approach towards SAARC was presented by then Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran in a speech at the India International Centre on February 14, 2005. He asked, "Did our reaction to events in our neighbourhood, or our decision to seek postponement of the SAARC Summit, confirm to an intelligent and well considered neighbourhood policy?" and proceeded to answer this question thus:

SAARC, being a hostage to the bilateral dynamics between India and its neighbours, has been performing far below its expectations and promise.

Nearly six hundred million South Asian people continue to live below the poverty line (of US \$1.25 a day) despite two commissions set up by SAARC to devise means for poverty alleviation in the region.

It would be clear to any observer that India would not like to see a SAARC in which some of its members perceive it as a vehicle primarily to countervail India or to seek to limit its room for manoeuvre...

The challenge for our diplomacy lies in convincing our neighbours that India is an opportunity not a threat, that far from being besieged by India, they have a vast, productive hinterland that would give their economies far greater opportunities for growth than if they were to rely on their

domestic markets alone.

It is true that as the largest country in the region and its strongest economy, India has a greater responsibility to encourage the SAARC process. In the free markets that India has already established with Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bhutan, it has already accepted the principle of non-reciprocity. We are prepared to do more to throw open our markets to all our neighbours. We are prepared to invest our capital in rebuilding and upgrading cross-border infrastructure with each one of them. In a word, we are prepared to make our neighbours full stakeholders in India's economic destiny and through such cooperation, in creating a truly vibrant and globally competitive South Asian Economic Community.

Within this framework, under the United Progressive Alliance's (UPA's) ten years, India pushed economically for trade, investment and connectivity issues. It supported Afghanistan's candidature for full membership of SAARC and opened up to observers in SAARC to broaden the regional organisation's strategic framework and carried out projects like the South Asian University to reinforce the cultural and people-to-people dimensions of regional cooperation.

Modi's South Asian Initiative

Modi's swearing-in ceremony initiative for South Asian neighbours was pursued through his personal visits to Bhutan and Nepal and his Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj's visit to Bangladesh. In Bhutan and Nepal, Prime Minister Modi left a strong message of his commitment to build cordial bilateral relations. The formula of B2B in Bhutan (Bhutan to Bharat and Bharat to Bhutan) and assurances to Nepal on

It would be clear to any observer that India would not like to see a SAARC in which some of its members perceive it as a vehicle primarily to countervail India or to seek to limit its room for manoeuvre.

India's respect for its sovereignty as also India's willingness to join in Nepal's developmental efforts, by offering a soft loan of US\$100 billion, immensely pleased his hosts in these countries. Modi's effective articulation of India's policy towards these countries and his instant rapport with the people there went a long way in bridging the communication and confidence gap that had crept in for the past few years in mutual relations.³ Foreign Minister Swaraj's visit to Bangladesh was also undertaken to bridge the mutual confidence gap existing on the pending issues like the Teesta Water Sharing Treaty and the Land Boundary Agreement. This gap had been widened a bit more as a result of Modi's election campaign where the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) had raised questions about illegal migrants from Bangladesh and offered ready asylum in India to Hindu migrants from neighbouring countries. Swaraj assured Bangladesh that India will soon work out a consensus on the Teesta water and land boundary issues "in a manner that improves the welfare and well-being of both our people".⁴

The Modi government's initiatives towards neighbours got seriously disrupted on its approach towards Pakistan. As noted earlier,

Modi's effective articulation of India's policy and his instant rapport with the people went a long way in bridging the communication and confidence gap that had crept in for the past few years in mutual relations.

the beginning was impressive, with an invitation to all the SAARC leaders. It goes to the credit of Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif who responded positively to the invite despite some resistance from sections of the Pakistan Army. He also avoided meeting the Kashmiri Hurriyat Conference leaders, keeping in mind Indian sensitivities. Brief personal talks between Modi and Sharif opened the way for the

resumption of the stalled peace process and trade and economic cooperation through Foreign Secretary level talks between the two countries.⁵ The proposed Foreign Secretary level talks were, however, cancelled by India in August 2014, when they were about to take place, barely two months after the Modi- Sharif meeting in New Delhi. The reason given was that Pakistan continued to engage with the separatist Kashmiri Hurriyat Conference leaders, despite being cautioned by India against such activities.⁶

While India's anger at the continued hobnobbing between Pakistan and the Hurriyat, as also Pakistan's refusal to move forward on stopping cross-border terrorism and increased violations of the ceasefire on the Line of Control (LOC) was justified, the manner of cancelling the talks came under strong media scrutiny. India should have cautioned the Pakistan High Commission much in advance from going ahead with its scheduled meeting with the Hurriyat leaders and the issue should have been handled more sophisticatedly.⁷ The breakdown of the talks dashed the hopes raised by Modi's initiative of a positive turn in relations with Pakistan. Modi tried to control the damage by again offering help to Pakistan for the extensive floods damage in Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK) in September 2014, but

Pakistan said no, with a polite counter offer and hopes for the two countries developing disaster management cooperation in the future.⁸

The strong position adopted by India invoked a reactive toughening of the Pakistani position as well which perceived India's move as an unwillingness to talk on Kashmir at all. In Pakistan's Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Sartaj Aziz, adviser to the Prime Minister on foreign affairs, was reported to have said that "India does not want to raise the Kashmir issue in the Pak-India dialogue...this condition was not acceptable to Pakistan".⁹ Repeating this position in front of US Secretary of State John Kerry on his visit to Islamabad, Sartaj Aziz said, "Pakistan will not start talks with India without Kashmir". Pakistan also levelled counter-allegations on India that it was involved in unprovoked firing on the LoC and was supporting terrorist groups in India.¹⁰ Pakistan has also been saying that it would not abandon talking to the Kashmir separatist groups as it has been doing for the past many years. Thus, by stopping the talks, India could neither force Pakistan to soften its stand on the separatists nor was there any other way of reengaging with it. The position of not talking to Pakistan was also becoming unsustainable in view of pressure from the US for a resumption of the bilateral dialogue. This was underlined by President Obama during Prime Minister Modi's visit to the US in September 2014 as also the former's visit to India in January 2015. US Secretary of State John Kerry also reiterated this position during his visit to Islamabad barely two weeks before President Obama's visit to India. Kerry said in Islamabad, "We continue to be deeply concerned by the recent spate of increased violence along the working boundary and the Line of Control. It is profoundly in the interests of Pakistan and India to move this relationship forward".¹¹

The breakdown of the talks dashed the hopes raised by Modi's initiative of a positive turn in relations with Pakistan.

The position of not talking to Pakistan was also becoming unsustainable in view of pressure from the US for a resumption of the bilateral dialogue.

The unsustainability of India's position on Pakistan led to the opening of a back channel between the two countries following a brief encounter between Modi and Sharif at the Kathmandu Summit. Initiating what the media has termed as "cricket diplomacy", Modi used the Cricket World Cup tournament's opening in February 2015, where South Asian teams were participating, and spoke to Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, along with other SAARC leaders. He wished the Pakistani team well at the matches in his brief call to Nawaz Sharif and told him that the Foreign Secretary of India, Dr. S. Jaishankar, would be visiting Pakistan as a part of his "SAARC Yatra". The pitch for this cricket diplomacy had been laid by the quiet talks between the Pakistan High Commission in India and India's National Security Adviser Ajit Doval.¹² It remains to be seen as to what extent Jaishankar's visit would be able to put the India-Pakistan normalisation process back on track and control the damage done to Modi's South Asian initiative.

Kathmandu SAARC Summit

The bilateral approach towards Pakistan disrupted Modi's South Asian initiative but the regional umbrella i.e. SAARC helped rescue the situation. Bilateral preoccupations, not only of India but all of its immediate neighbours, however, continue to cast a shadow on regional cooperation under SAARC. This was evident at the 18th SAARC Summit held at Kathmandu on November 26-27, 2015.

Modi went to Kathmandu to give a push to the SAARC regional integration process. While leaving for Kathmandu on November 25, 2014, he said: "Development of close relations with our neighbours is a key priority for my government" and he hoped that "the summit will

lead to concrete outcomes, particularly in regard to various initiatives on enhancing connectivity”.¹³ In his constructive and crisp address at the summit, he assured his regional colleagues that “the future I dream for India is the future I wish for our entire region”. And this vision “rests on five pillars – trade, investment, assistance, cooperation in every area, contacts between our people – and all through seamless connectivity”. While accepting that “as SAARC, we have failed to move with the speed that our people expect and want”, he wanted the region to fight against the mindset of “cynicism and scepticism” in the approach towards SAARC, on the basis of “our boundless potential, and confidence”. Underlining the value of working together to build regional cooperation, Modi said: “We can all choose our paths to our destinations. But, when we join our hands and walk in step, the path becomes easier, the journey quicker and the destination closer”. Diverting from his prepared text in this context, he quipped in Hindi “*Paas hone se saath hone ki takat anek guna jyada hoti hai*” (the power of being together is many times more than being nearer). In the interest of building regional consensus on development, Modi avoided raising any of the sensitive issues that could offend any of his regional counterparts. Even the question of terrorism was kept on a low key, lest it be taken amiss by Pakistan. Modi only reminded his SAARC colleagues of “the horror of the terror attack in Mumbai in 2008” and urged upon them to “work together to fulfil the pledge we have taken to combat terrorism and transnational crimes”.¹⁴ This was done because November 26, the day of the summit in Kathmandu, happened to be the anniversary of the Mumbai attack.

In the course of his address, he explained that the difficulties of SAARC come not only from the “development gap” within the region but also “because we are stuck behind the walls of our differences and hesitant to move out of the shadows of the past”. Such differences in trade and other areas are escalating costs for South Asia’s consumers and

he admitted that “India too has its share of responsibility – because of our size and location”. Towards discharging this responsibility, he made a number of unilateral gestures and promises on India’s part towards the SAARC neighbours. Most important of them was the intent to “set up a special purpose facility in India to finance infrastructure projects in our region that enhances our connectivity and trade”. Related to this was another proposal for India to “give business visa for 3-5 years for SAARC. Let us make it even easier for our businesses through a SAARC Business Traveller Card”. It was disclosed by the Indian Prime Minister that India already provides to its “five South Asian partners duty free access to 99.7 percent of their goods and is prepared to do more with others”. In the health sector, India offered to “meet the shortfall in funds to establish the SAARC Regional Supra Reference Laboratory for TB and HIV”, polio vaccine and “immediate medical visa for the patient and an attendant” for those coming for medical treatment to India from SAARC countries. India’s offer of a “satellite for the SAARC region...in areas like education, telemedicine, disaster response, resource management, weather forecasting and communication” as also “capabilities and expertise in disaster management” for all South Asian citizens was renewed.¹⁵ Most of these gestures were seen by the South Asian leaders and analysts more as promises than concrete offers, and they fell below the expectations. They were not bold and far-reaching, in the assessment of informed critics. There were obviously pressures from the business and security stakeholders on Modi to unilaterally offer absolutely free entry into India of goods and movement of people (visa-free) from the SAARC countries.

Though India played a leading role in gearing the deliberations of the Kathmandu Summit along with the host, Nepal, the overall outcome was disappointing. The agenda of pushing forward the objective of connectivity so strongly emphasised in Modi’s statement could not get regional endorsement. The proposal to have three agreements on road, rail and power (electricity) connectivity finalised at Kathmandu

faced stiff resistance from Pakistan. After considerable persuasion and lobbying by the host and other SAARC leaders, only the Framework Agreement for Energy Cooperation (electricity) got through. This provided a thin face saver to the summit from complete failure. Agreements on the movement of motor vehicles and rail links were pushed into cold storage as Pakistan insisted that “internal processes”

Modi's opening statement hinted that India was prepared to push the regional integration process forward even without SAARC or, without Pakistan, if need be.

on getting these agreements accepted had not been completed within Pakistan. Besides this massive disappointment, there were no new initiatives or breakthroughs in the areas of trade, financial integration and investments. There was nothing to show that the summit had moved towards its much acclaimed motto of “Deeper Integration for Peace and Prosperity”. Even the question of terrorism was ignored despite strong emphasis made in this respect by Afghanistan, Nepal and Sri Lanka in their summit presentations. The 36 para long Kathmandu Summit Declaration adopted on November 27, 2015, made an uninspiring reading in platitudes and promises. These paras also include (para 34) a decision to hold a summit “every two years or earlier”. This reduces the frequency of SAARC leaders meeting each other and may further dampen the SAARC momentum.¹⁶

Shadows on SAARC

The India-Pakistan hiatus was the single most important factor behind the disappointing outcome of the SAARC Kathmandu Summit.¹⁷ Pakistan was unhappy at India's cancellation of the promised Foreign Secretary level talks in August 2014, and India seems to have prepared itself to ignore Pakistan's unhappiness. This was evident in the stiff body language of Prime Ministers Modi and Sharif on the very first

Modi's reversal in February 2015 through cricket diplomacy, to reinitiate talks with Pakistan is a rude recognition of the hard reality that there are limits to pushing regional projects without Pakistan.

day of the summit where the two leaders refused to acknowledge each other's presence and exchange even courtesy greetings. The gloom cast on the summit because of this was broken only briefly at the informal meeting of the SAARC leaders away from Kathmandu under the 'retreat' part of the summit process. Modi had bilateral meetings on the sidelines of the SAARC Summit with all other SAARC leaders except Pakistan's Nawaz Sharif.

It was also reflected in Modi's opening statement where he hinted that India was prepared to push the regional integration process forward even without SAARC or without Pakistan, if need be. In his concluding remarks in the summit address, Modi said:

There is a new awakening in South Asia; a new recognition of inter-linked destinies; and a new belief in shared opportunities. The bonds will grow. Through SAARC or outside it. Among us all or some of us.

Pakistan, by blocking the connectivity projects, wanted to send a message to India that it was not possible to ignore its importance. It is possible to argue that Pakistan's resistance to connectivity projects had more to it than just a reaction to the breakdown of India-Pakistan talks. It was a well-considered strategic move to thwart India's connectivity with Afghanistan, greater access to other neighbours and eventual regional dominance. Modi's reversal in February 2015 through the cricket diplomacy, to reinitiate talks with Pakistan is a rude recognition of the hard reality that there are limits to pushing the regional projects without Pakistan.

Pakistan was also at the forefront in pushing China's case for elevating its status from an 'observer state' of SAARC. In his address, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif described China as an engine of growth and said that Pakistan was trying to "integrate South Asia, China and Central Asia". He then pleaded for enhancing the role of the observers through which SAARC can benefit.¹⁸ He was backed in this by Maldives President Yameen who said that SAARC should "work with other countries keen to work with us" and Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa who wanted SAARC to enhance the "engagement with the observer states and consider graduating their role to a more project based, result oriented partnership".

The issue has been a continuation of the SAARC Summit decision taken at Addu, Maldives, in 2011, to "undertake a comprehensive review, of all matters relating to SAARC's engagement with observers including the question of dialogue partnerships". Since its inclusion as an observer in SAARC in 2007, China has been vigorously pursuing a dynamic South Asian policy. This policy is driven by China's strategic as well as economic interests. Strategically, its concerns for instability in Tibet and Xinjiang periphery, as also its stakes in the security of trade routes flowing through the Indian Ocean make it imperative for a presence in, and cooperation from, the South Asian neighbours. Economically, if China has to keep its growth momentum, it cannot afford to keep out of the 1.6 billion strong South Asian market where economies are registering an average rate of 4.5 to 6 percent growth.¹⁹

This came out clearly through the participation of the Chinese delegation at the Kathmandu Summit. The spokesperson of the Chinese Foreign Ministry, Hua Chunying, briefing the media at Kathmandu, said, "We are ready to lift relations with SAARC and contribute to peace, stability and prosperity of the South Asian region".²⁰ The head of the Chinese delegation, Deputy Foreign Minister Liu Zhenmin, in his speech at the summit, listed various platforms through which

China was engaging the South Asian countries and outlined projects like the Maritime Silk Route and the belt and economic corridors with Pakistan, Bangladesh and Myanmar that were targeting infrastructure development in South Asia. He rolled out the attractive offer of increasing trade with South Asia to \$150 billion, and investing \$30 billion for the coming five years, as well as offering 10,000 fellowships for youths and training opportunities and sending 5,000 Chinese language teachers to South Asia during the same period. No one at the summit was left in any doubt that China has come to stay and enhance its presence in South Asia.²¹

SAARC members led by Pakistan and supported by Sri Lanka, Maldives, Nepal and Bangladesh have been favourably inclined to raising China's 'observer' status to full membership, but India has had serious reservations on it. This was primarily to ensure that China did not emerge as a competitor to India in South Asia. There were other genuine and serious difficulties as well. As a full member, China would have a veto on all SAARC decisions and developmental projects since the SAARC decisions are taken on the basis of unanimity. This could create problems for India initiated proposals in regional development. It may be recalled that China has objected to Asian Development Bank loans requested by India for developmental projects in its sensitive northeast like Arunachal Pradesh, which China claims as disputed. It is also prudent for all SAARC members to carefully assess China's role in other regional organisations. In the case of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), China managed to seriously dent its organisational unity and harmony in July 2012, when the ASEAN Summit could not even adopt a customary summit declaration because of the reservations expressed by Kampuchea, a strong supporter of China, on the question of the South China Sea dispute. Thus, China succeeded in breaching ASEAN when it came to promoting and preserving its so-called "core interests". Such Chinese behaviour can be seen a precursor for its role

in SAARC as well. Knowing India's strong reservations on China's role in ASEAN, the other SAARC members pitched the Chinese case for the status of a dialogue partner. The Kathmandu Summit agreed to "direct the Programme Committee to engage the SAARC Observers into productive, demand driven and objective project based cooperation in priority areas as identified by Member States" (Para 35, Kathmandu SAARC Declaration). Under

this formulation, any Chinese initiative through SAARC will have to fit into the programmes already accepted by SAARC and there too, it will be subjected to the unanimous approval of all the SAARC members, India included, starting from the lowest level of the programme committee to the highest level of the summit.

The challenge of coping with China's growing presence in South Asia becomes formidable in view of China's deep pockets and efficient delivery on promises made to the South Asian countries.

Appraisal

In carrying forward its South Asian regional policy, India, under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, faces challenges from three sources, namely, Pakistan, China and other neighbours. The challenge from Pakistan is rooted more in its domestic policy where greater civilian control of its India policy may facilitate better regional responses. There is no way in which India can restrain the Pakistan Army from dictating its India policy, particularly with the diplomatic tantrums as were evident in the recent Indian moves regarding bilateral talks. The challenge of coping with China's growing presence in South Asia becomes formidable in view of China's deep pockets and efficient delivery on promises made to the South Asian countries. India will also be called upon to work out a careful strategy about the extent, and the areas in which it can cooperate with China in South Asia and also compete with it. India will have to

India has to address the question of their alienation seriously, which lets China or any other power exploit India's disadvantage and encroach upon its strategic turf.

improve its growth trajectory to put more economic resources in its regional policy. There are formidable civilisational (long standing cultural bonds and social harmonies) and political (democratic and open system) assets that India has in South Asia over China. However, India has not been able to harness these assets in any effective manner. Modi's South Asian initiatives are often wrapped with

these assets, but their effective implementation is still work in progress.

As regards other neighbours, India has to address the question of their alienation seriously, which lets China or any other power exploit India's disadvantage and encroach upon its strategic turf. Modi's recent moves reflect sensitivity in this respect and he has tried to employ his personal charm to put many of the unnecessary concerns of the smaller neighbours to rest. But India needs to work hard in improving its delivery deficit – the gap between promise and performance – in its neighbourhood policy. Indian diplomacy at all levels, will also have to be more responsive to the smaller neighbours' expectations and concerns. Any disconnect between India's neighbourhood policy and its internal socio-political dynamics will be counter-productive.

Notes

1. S.D. Muni, "India in SAARC: A Reluctant Policy Maker", in Bjorn Hettne, AndrasInotai and Osvaldo Sunkel, eds., *National Perspectives on the New Regionalism in the South*, Vol. 3 (Great Britain: Macmillan Press Ltd.,1998).
2. S.D. Muni and Anuradha Muni, *Regional Cooperation in South Asia* (New Delhi: National Publishing House, 1984).
3. "10 Key Points of PM Narendra Modi's Bhutan Visit", *The Times of India*, June 17, 2014; Shastri Ramachandran, "Reading Between the Lines of PM Narendra Modi's Bhutan Visit," *DNA (Daily News & Analyses)*, (Mumbai), June 17, 2014; Suhasini Haider and Damakant Joshi, "Modi Concludes Historic Visit to Nepal", *The Hindu*, August 05, 2014; Ajay Kaul, "Mission Accomplished: Modi Ends Nepal Visit on a High", <http://>

- www.rediff.com/news/slide-show... August 04, 2014; also see, S.D. Muni, "Modi's Neighbourhood Initiative", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 49, No. 38, September 20, 2014.
4. For an assessment of this visit, see Smruti S Pattanaik, "Sushma Swaraj's Visit to Bangladesh: A New Beginning", *IDS Comments*, June 30, 2014; Delawar Hossain, "India-Bangladesh: After Sushma Swaraj's Visit", Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, Article No. 4569, July 21, 2014.
 5. For a detailed account of Nawaz Sharif's engagements in Delhi in May 2014, see "India-Pakistan Agree to get Peace Talks Back on Track", *The Express Tribune* (in collaboration with *The New York Times*), May 27, 2014.
 6. Suhasini Haider, "India Pakistan Talks are Off", *The Hindu*, August 18, 2014; Jaideep Prabhu, "Why Indian Decision to Cancel Talks with Pakistan is not a Mistake", *DNA (Daily News & Analysis)* (Mumbai), August 22, 2014.
 7. Ellen Barry, "India Cancelled Talks After Pakistan Envoy Meets With Separatists", *The New York Times*, August 18, 2014; Siddhartha Varadarajan, "The Futility of not Talking to Pakistan", <http://svaradarajan.com/2014/08/21/the-futility-of-not...>
 8. *Live Mint* (an associate publication of *The Hindustan Times*), September 08, 2014.
 9. *The News* (International) Islamabad, October 29, 2014.
 10. *The Hindu*, January 13, 2015; *The Indian Express*, January 14, 2015.
 11. Ibid.
 12. Harinder Baweja, "Howzzat? NSA Doval and Pak Envoy Laid Pitch for Modi's Cricket Diplomacy", *The Hindustan Times*, February 19, 2015; Makhdoom Babar, "Pakistan Rejects India's 'Minus Hurriyat' Talks Formula", *International Daily Mail*, February 22, 2015, <http://dailymainnews.com/2015/02/22/pakistan-rejects-india-s-minus-hurriyat-talks-formula/>; also see, C. Raja Mohan, "Modi's Cricket Diplomacy: Renewing Political Contacts with Pakistan", *The Indian Express*, February 13, 2015; Suhasini Haider, "Pakistan Pads up for New Innings in Pakistan Talks", *The Hindu*, February 14, 2015.
 13. Text of "Prime Minister's Statement Prior to his Departure for Nepal" issued by the Press Information Bureau, Government of India, New Delhi, November 25, 2014.
 14. For the text of Modi's address at the SAARC Summit, see Press Information Bureau release on November 26, 2014, <http://pib.nic.in/NEWSSITE/printRelease.aspx?relid=111876>
 15. All these promises and offers were made in Modi's address at the summit; Ibid.
 16. Text of the Kathmandu Declaration, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, New Delhi, November 27, 2014, at <http://mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/24375...>; also see, S.D. Muni, "A Disappointing SAARC Summit" *Al Jazeera*, November 28, 2014. <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2014/11/disappointing-saarc-summit-2014112885157300755.html...>
 17. Elizabeth Roche, "SAARC Summit Nears Failure as Pakistan, India Differ", *Live Mint*, November 26, 2014; Deepak Partiyar, "SAARC Summit: The Same old Story", *Election.in* (Blog), <http://www.election.in/blog/saac-summit-same-old-story...>; "Pakistan Refuses to Sign Three Multilateral Pacts at SAARC Summit: Officials", *The Express Tribune*,

- and *International New York Times*, November 26, 2014, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/797403/modi-to-meet-all-saarc-leaders-but-pm-nawaz-ind...>
18. Text of Nawaz Sharif's Kathmandu Summit address, <http://www.pmo.gov.pk/pm-speech-details.php?spec...>
 19. For an analysis of China's South Asia policy, see Monika Chansoria, "South Asia's Struggle: Searching for Integration amid the Anomalous Chinese Shadow", GUEST BRIEF, Delhi Policy Group, January 2015, New Delhi.
 20. "China Respects 'Will' of SAARC Members: Vows to Deepen Ties", *DNA (Daily News & Analysis)*, November 28, 2014.
 21. "China Pledges Increased Engagement with SAARC", *Sify News*, November 27, 2014; also see, Yohannan Chemarpally, "SAARC: Not on Track", *People's Democracy* (Beijing), Vol. 39, No. 8, February 22, 2015, available at http://peoplesdemocracy.in/2014/1228_pd/saarc-not-on-track...

