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## India's neighborhood first policy under Narendra Modi Era (2014-2024)

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### **Abstract**

Narendra Modi became the prime minister of India in 2014 after that New Delhi made many efforts to build up India's dominance in South Asia region. The Neighborhood First Policy is the main factor in India's foreign policy. It is also known as South Asian Foreign Policy. This paper traces implementation of neighborhood first policy through lateral ties between India's and its neighboring countries. These relationships affected as well as China's interference as frequent terrorist incidents like other issues due to Border disputes which are a challenge for regional security and Corporation. Although this foreign policy connects India's neighboring countries. the Neighborhood First Policy created by the Prime Minister Modi, its effect to nurture lateral ties prosperous peace enhance regional connectivity and build up India's strong position in the south Asia region.

**Keywords:** Neighborhoods first policy, CAA, Chain's policy, Gujarat doctrine, oath taking-ceremony, comprehensive corporation relation, national security & trade

### **Introduction**

India's neighbourhood policy focuses on national security and economic development to build up its position as a regional power in the south Asia. India's geographical and geo-strategic position has also been promoted to New Delhi to persuade a particular relationship with its neighbouring countries. After coming to power, Narendra Modi started on a pragmatic and proactive approach to neighbouring countries to become an economic and political power in this region, especially need to an essential strategic plan in the view of "China's influence" in the south Asia. India proposed many projects in the region but lack of capital, couldn't complete these projects and on the other hand, China is the largest economy and ambitious country, want to dominate in South Asia, trying to cover up India's neighbouring countries to weaken India's position as regional power. China invested capital and applied the project, spreading its trade as far as china is successful in its plan, in spite of India sharing its border every South Asia country, but unfortunately, since a few years There is no bilateral trade and communication, due to lack of trust except Bhutan, there is no neighbouring country to support India and in these circumstances, China is in beneficial status in the trade, covering up India also trying to isolated India in this region, New Delhi need to focus on implement Neighbourhood first policy in practical not in hype.

### **The historical study of neighborhood first policy (1950-2014)**

India and its neighbors have a rich history of cultural and commercial ties that dates back thousands of years. India under British rule till 1948 India's foreign policy during the colonial era was mostly set by the British government. Bhutan was compelled to cede the British the routes that led to Assam in 1865 in exchange for a yearly payment. Bhutan then continued to function mainly independently as British India's buffer state. Nepal was a sovereign nation until the 1816 British-Nepali war. The Treaty of Sagauli, which was favored by Britishers, marked its conclusion. Relations between Anglo-Burmese Three Anglo-Burmese conflicts sprang out as a result of Burma's forest riches and expansionist impulses. The incorporation of Burma into British India in 1885 was the outcome of these battles. Myanmar announced his independence in 1948. Srilanka, China and Afghanistan were maintained as buffer zones along the borders of British India because they were perceived as possible threats to British interests in the region.

Sri Lanka was ruled by the British until 1948, when the country gained its independence. Following independence, Pakistan was formed along communal lines. As a result, Pakistan and India started to dispute over the Kashmir area. First, following independence, India's regional strategy was founded on the requirement that it work to prevent the intervention of big powers (the US and USSR) in the south Asian region. Nehru was the country's first prime minister and was an idealistic and upbeat leader. India's neighboring countries play a crucial role in maintaining regional peace, national security, and economic growth. India has chosen to be nonaligned as a result, given its position as the leading country of the Third globe in the bipolar globe. On April 29, 1954, Chinese President Zhou En-lai and Indian Prime Minister Nehru signed "the five principles of peace coexistence" (Panchsheel). The five pillars of the Panchsheel Agreement are territorial integrity, equity mutual benefit, non-interference in one another's internal affairs, sovereignty and integrity, and peaceful coexistence. In addition, Nehru is interested in establishing and bolstering international cooperation and is more concerned with international relations than with neighboring countries. The Panchsheel Agreement was considered one of the major pillars for developing foreign policy with neighboring countries.

Secondly In the era of Indira Gandhi, her foreign policy was centered on regional issues in South Asia. She was known as the "iron lady" for her decisions, which included arguing that India's neighboring territory was the ultimate exclusive zone of Indian dominion in that particular situation. When Bangladesh was founded, there was no external power involved in the region (Mohan 2003) [3]. Thirdly, the Gujral doctrine—a collection of five principles—was introduced by Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral to reshape India's neighborhood policy and direct the country's diplomatic interactions with its immediate neighbors. This changed how it conducted bilateral relations with its neighbors, based on five principles, which included These five guidelines are "(1) India does not demand reciprocity from its neighbours Bangladesh, Bhutan, the Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka, but instead gives and accommodates what it Can be in good faith and trust. (2) No country in South Asia should allow its territory to be used against the interests of another in the region. (3) No country should interfere in another's domestic affairs. (4) All countries in South Asia must respect the territorial integrity and sovereignty of each other. (5) All of their disagreements must be resolved through Peaceful bilateral dialogue (Murthy 1999) [2]. Because of its size, location, population, shared border, and economic potential, India naturally assumed a leadership position in the south Asian area. Smaller nations were insulted by India's behavior and overlapping presence as a contender for global leadership since it assumed the obligations of the South Asian region. Perceived Hegemony vs. Reluctant Leadership (Bhasin 200) [3]. It is a better way to describe the current conundrum surrounding India's position in South Asia. That being said, the Gujral philosophy has reduced tensions and hostilities between India and all of its neighbors. During the period of 1996-1997, for instance, the agreement with Nepal to regulate the Mahakali River in order to produce hydroelectric power essentially aligned with the three-month resolution of the dispute over Bangladesh's water share. After then, agreements to further grow were made with Sri Lanka.

After economic reforms, India need a strong economic development, so established its power to affect its influence in the region As a result, India has modified its foreign policy with regard to some regions and its neighbors. The former Indian prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee is quoted as saying, "Friends can be changed but not Neighbors" (2003), which supports the idea that foreign policy concerning South Asia is crucial. India has established an orientation to cooperate with neighboring countries and values them.

In addition, China has been playing a more prominent role in South Asia. This has been demonstrated by its deep involvement in and manipulation of the neighboring countries of India, its actions based on economic support, and its numerous projects, which include the development of infrastructure with Nepal, the conversion of Sri Lanka's debt into equity capital, investments in commercial ports, the BRI in Pakistan, and so on. China is a major factor in the conflict between India and Pakistan because it views itself as Pakistan's ally in all circumstances. This has caused India to worry that Beijing will gain more influence over its neighbors, which in turn creates favorable conditions for China and increases its influence in the region (Mahesar *et al.* 2016) [4].

These diplomatic activities clearly also indicate the priority of the neighborhood first policy and India's leadership role in South Asia and reshaping ties with South Asia countries.

#### **South Asian foreign policy of India under the Prime Minister Narendra Modi (In his first tenure 2014 to 2019)**

After the victory of BJP, in 2014, Narendra Modi was appointed as prime minister of India. Under his leadership, the NFP in India has seen many ups and downs. The invitations Modi sent to the heads of state of the members of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) are considered a significant change in India's foreign policy. India's neighborhood strategy is based on the idea that it cannot project its power outside of South Asia unless it can control its relationships with its neighbors, particularly given that these relationships are asymmetrical because of India's large population, military might, strategic location, and robust economy. The Modi administration responded to the NFP again with this justification. Additionally, Modi changed the "Look East Policy" to the "Act East Policy", which reflected India's plans to take a more active role in South Asia region policy. On the other hand, NFP aims to 'strengthen regional forums like SAARC' and 'pursue gracious' in the neighbourhood. Given Modi's decision to invite all SAARC leaders to the organization's oath taking ceremony on May 26, 2014, his first trip out of the country, to Bhutan, demonstrates his commitment to enhancing India's neighbourhood connections before focusing on the rest of the world (Aryal 2021) [5]". India's economy through strengthening its relationships with its neighbors and, ideally, assuming the role of a regional leader inside the SAARC's institutional framework. By 2022, though, there was a contradictory sense to Modi's 2014 ambitions to bring together all of the South Asian. On reexamination, it appears more like George V's Darbar (court), with local power brokers gathered to applaud the emperor king. After examination, it was determined that the Modi strategy for the neighborhood had fallen short of achieving the core goals of the NFP. Three

significant incidents indicate that Modi's NFP requires significant modification. First, India has demonstrated a reticent interest in South Asia's regional integration. The only regional grouping comprising all of the South Asian republics is the SAARC. There is still no reliable forum for the SAARC to discuss and resolve issues pertaining to terrorism in the region (Muzafar, Jathol & Yaseen 2017) <sup>[6]</sup>. The number of cancelled meetings is another important aspect that adds to the slow pace of progress. Due to bilateral tensions, member state presidents have previously refused to attend the SAARC summit. Pakistan was set to host the 19<sup>th</sup> SAARC Summit in 2016, but India declined due to Islamabad's role in the Uri incident. The grenade strikes carried out by four terrorists near the town of Uri in the Indian Union state of Jammu and Kashmir are known as the 'Uri attack'. After this incident and India's increasing pessimism regarding SAARC, they have focused more on sub-regional groupings which intentionally exclude Pakistan and Afghanistan. India later advocated for sub-regional organizations such as BBIN (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Nepal) and BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation), both of which exclude Pakistan (Gilani 2019) <sup>[7]</sup>. Second, there are difficulties in India's bilateral relations with the majority of the South Asian states. Since the division following independence, there has been a shambles in relations between India and Pakistan on Kashmir. Relationships soured as India imposed an unofficial blockade on Nepal following the controversial adoption of the country's constitution in 2015. Modi said that it was imperative to defend the rights of the Madhesi minority in the Terai region during a visit to Nepal in 2015 (Bhatnagar & Ahmed, 2021) <sup>[8]</sup>. In Nepal, this incident led to one of the worst humanitarian crises. Consequently, Nepal entered into several agreements with China in an effort to lessen its asymmetrical dependent on India. China is becoming more and more involved in Nepali politics as a result of India's inconsistent NFP. After the map saga involving the disputed territory of western Nepal with India, relations are worsening. On May 8, 2020, Indian Defence Minister Rajnath Singh opened the 80-km-long road to Mansarovar, some of which is being built on Nepalese soil in the Lipu Lekh area, reviving border tensions. In reaction to Nepal's outspoken opposition to the road's unilateral construction, India's external ministry quickly declared that it was built 'totally within Indian territory' (Subedi & Timilsina, 2021) <sup>[9]</sup>.

"India's relations with Sri Lanka also have been impacted by turbulence under the Modi government. The Indian academic diaspora claims that Sri Lanka has been pressurized by China to act against India. The following examples are given to support this claim: the Eastern Container Terminal (ECT) project between India and Japan, the suspension of the Japan-funded Light Rail Project, and the potential of abandoning the Millennium Challenge Corporation Project (MCC) funded by the USA. In short, the program implied that Sri Lanka was losing long-time allies and slipping more towards China's sphere of influence. However, this analysis completely missed the perspective on how India itself created such a space for China to infiltrate Sri Lanka. There is much evidence available that India has supported Tamil rebellion during the first days of civil war in Sri Lanka (Nieto 2008). Thus, the Indian government has always had a strained relationship

with the Rajapaksa government of Sri Lanka. President Mahinda Rajapaksa claimed that he lost the 2015 presidential elections due to Indian and other foreign interventions (Fernando 2020) <sup>[10]</sup>."

Similar to this, the contentious Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019, passed by the Modi administration, has led to a great deal of conflict between Bangladesh and India. It has also opened up a whole new conversation about immigration and how it affects the northeastern states of India (Ray 2011) <sup>[11]</sup>. Concerns have been expressed in Dhaka regarding the reference to "Bangladeshis" in a statute that provides citizenship to non-Muslim minorities from Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh who entered the nation on or before December 31, 2014. In response to the CAA, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina of Bangladesh said, "We don't understand why [the Indian government] did it." It [CAA] wasn't required. (2020 Hindustan Times) <sup>[12]</sup>. when India and Bangladesh signed a land swap agreement on July 31 to end a decades-long border disputes. It was to be expected that their relationship was evolving toward one of cooperation. But the gains made by both parties have been compromised by the CAA. Similarly, Bhutan and China agreed to a "three-stage" plan in October 2021 to settle the long-running border conflict. A major border dispute erupted in the Doklam region between China and India in 2017. Doklam is the part of Bhutan, and Beijing and Thimphu have a territorial dispute over it and other many areas. Bhutan claimed and India supported Bhutan. It is situated close to India's "chicken neck", a 12-mile-wide corridor that links the country's seven northern states to the mainland and is strategically susceptible (Kumar 2020) <sup>[14]</sup>. Furthermore, the fact that Bhutan signed an agreement without consulting India has sparked a lot of conjecture regarding the state of the two countries' historically strong and close relationship.

India prioritizes the development of its surrounding countries' infrastructure in addition to its own connections with the area. Over a dozen Integrated Testing Stations (ITPs) have been built and expanded by India in an effort to promote trade and travel along its borders with Bangladesh, Bhutan, Myanmar, and Nepal. Additionally, India has agreements in place with Bangladesh and Nepal to build interior transportation links. Between 2008 and 2020, there were one, four, and six train links with Bangladesh; six more routes are scheduled to be operational in the upcoming years (India-Bangladesh 2019). India and Bangladesh can now exchange products directly without stopping in Colombo or other far-off seaports, due to a recent maritime pact. In 2019, India and Nepal inaugurated the first cross-border oil pipeline in The South Asia (Sharma 2019) <sup>[15]</sup>. After several years of postponement, India has now offered Nepalese products transportation and easy customs clearance through its eastern seaports. Additionally, after more than 40 years, India has helped Sri Lanka modernize the international airport at Jaffna, which is located to the north of the country. This allows Sri Lanka to link to Southern India by air travel directly (Srinivasan 2021) <sup>[16]</sup>. To aid in the development of numerous regional connectivity projects, the Indian Ministry of External Affairs formed an Indo-Pacific division in 2019 (Thakker 2019) <sup>[17]</sup>.

#### **During the second term of Narendra Modi: (2019-2024)**

The Modi administration avoided the conventional "local" position in South Asia, with India as the alone power with

interests in this region. Moreover, India switched to a new strategic approach, focusing on coordinating and promoting cooperation with powers outside the region, such as the United States, Japan, and even Russia, intending to neutralize the growing influence in the region. India has joined with Japan and the United States to form a tripartite infrastructure financing group. India and Japan worked rapidly to construct a new harbor in Colombo, Sri Lanka, to facilitate easier external expansion and regional connections. As part of the South Asia Sub-region Economic Cooperation (SASEC), India is working with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to carry out one of the largest multimodal connectivity projects in Asia along the East Coast. India and Russia are collaborating to create nuclear power stations in Bangladesh. Although Russia's presence in South Asia benefits India by fostering regional connectivity and fortifying the strategic alliance between the two nations, the two remain diametrically opposed on a number of global issues pertaining to China-Indian tensions (O'Donnell and Papa 2021) <sup>[18]</sup>.

In the framework of the COVID-19 epidemic, India too suffered greatly. Nonetheless, the Modi administration is still dedicated to carrying out the nation's "neighborhood first policy" and offering assistance to its neighbors. India has been assisting Nepal in growing its economy by implementing the "Aid to Nepal" program for two years, 2019-2020. About 150 development projects are being managed by India in Nepal, which makes about 30% of all foreign direct investment (FDI) in the nation. 2020 saw India give neighboring Sri Lanka US\$15 million to support numerous initiatives aimed strengthen the two countries' ties, focus on developing Buddhist values.

In 2021, India contributed \$3 billion to 400 development projects in Afghanistan, a neighboring country. India has primarily aggressively backed Pakistan's request to purchase a COVID-19 vaccine developed in India. As a result, the receiving countries have effectively praised New Delhi's vaccine diplomacy drive. But by the start of 2021, in addition to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, India also had to deal with a number of issues from its neighbors, including Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Myanmar, and Bangladesh. However, India is continuing to work with its neighbors to prevent crises from arising.

The "neighborhood first policy" is still being carried out by Prime Minister Modi's administration in his second term, and it is given high importance in the nation's foreign policy. India can improve its position through connectivity through the process of regional integration and inter-regional association with the important land and maritime routes connecting South Asia with East Asia and the Indian Ocean with the Pacific Ocean by implementing comprehensive cooperation with South Asian nations and an inter-regional vision within the Indo-Pacific framework. As a result, during its second term, the Modi administration has changed its focus of collaboration with South Asian neighbors to include more countries in BIMSTEC. In his remarks during the April 2021 online gathering in which all BIMSTEC members participated. Dr. Jaishankar reiterated "India's commitment to further building the momentum of regional cooperation under the BIMSTEC framework and making the organization is stronger, vibrant, more effective, and result-oriented", while initiatives under the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC, including

Pakistan) have not made Progress for several reasons. In general, executing India's "neighborhood first policy" has achieved some positive results, promoting the connection between India and Its neighbouring countries in South Asia. Yet PM Modi's administration will confront greater internal and external obstacles in the changing global environment. The greatest obstacle facing Prime Minister Modi's administration in putting the "neighborhood first policy" into practice is thought to be China's growing influence through aid to emerging South Asian nations. China and India are still using competitive tactics to lessen one another's influence in the region. Beijing's political and economic influence is spreading throughout India's sphere of influence, prompting these nations aside from Bhutan to endorse and take part in China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). However, India's disinterest in the BRI could foster an environment in which China's influence grows among its neighbors. India must so move swiftly to promote the active development and improvement of current ties with its neighbors. Improving ties with Pakistan in particular is thought to be crucial because this nation still depends on China and the US for military and financial backing for its exit from Afghanistan. India is therefore unable to achieve the intended outcomes for an affluent, stable, and peaceful area. The Indian government must overcome numerous obstacles in order to formulate and implement a "neighborhood first policy" and beyond as a strategy of inter-regional connection with nuclear power. To strengthen its competitive advantage over China, PM Modi's administration will need to concentrate its next phase of investment in certain sectors and initiatives. In particular, India makes greater investments in connectivity-related areas, such as neighboring country capacity building, in an effort to lessen its long-term participation in investment projects. Enhancing the effectiveness of initiatives aimed at catalyzing long-term interdependence and harmony between India and its neighbors will benefit from it. Additionally, economic openness and all investments in cross-border infrastructure would be necessary for India's strategic connectedness with its neighbors. If trade obstacles and other existing transportation means are not removed by India, it will result in the complete loss of some ports, roads, trains, and airports, substantially impeding cooperation and connection between India and its neighbors. Rather than being unduly preoccupied with security concerns in order to thwart China's Belt and Road Initiative, India's connectivity policy needs to be more comprehensive and substantive in order to foster a strong regional integration process. India needs to concentrate more, get ready for the commitment, and move more quickly and effectively on regionally-based sustainable connectivity projects. Finally, the political, economic, and cultural sensitivities of India's neighbors must be taken into account when implementing its regional connectivity policy. India in particular should refrain from utilizing cultural similarities as a means of establishing connections with other nations in the area. Indeed, it is challenging for India's neighbors to support ideas that would imply a restoration of former unity. For the purpose to assert its position as an essential player in the region, PM Modi's "neighborhood first policy" was therefore implemented during his second term. However, other neighboring countries, who are concerned about becoming dependent on India by connecting outside the region, particularly with China, do not always share this desire.

Furthermore, India must steer clear of disputes, no matter how minor, with its neighbors since they could undermine the “neighborhood first policy.” It might present China and Pakistan with chances to bolster their diplomatic ties and sphere of influence in India’s backyard. Furthermore, given the ongoing hostilities with Pakistan and China, New Delhi may be unable to fulfill its vital position as the region’s leading power.

### Challenges of India's neighbourhood first policy

- India has not so much shaped its relationships with its neighbors as it has managed them.
- Effective regional policy implementation has been hampered by the absence of a clear policy framework. The lack of a clear and singular focus on South Asian neighbors has resulted in missed goals and unpredictable consequences due to the simultaneous focus on India’s local and extended neighbors.
- The execution of regional plans has been hindered by notable obstacles in bilateral relations among certain governments in the region. For instance, Pakistan refused to sign the other two proposed accords, so in the most recent SAARC summit, only one of the three agreements was signed. The rise of extremism in the area, the presence of open borders, and assistance from Pakistan and other neighbors all play a role in the emergence of terrorist actions within India. In addition, India’s drug trafficking issues are made worse by its proximity to the Golden Triangle and Golden Crescent. China’s One Belt One Road (OBOR) program has led to a substantial growth in trade volume with SAARC countries. Occasionally, neighboring countries of India, like Nepal, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives, have played the “China card” against it in an effort to form new alliances.
- India’s neighbors have often felt that India does not treat them equally. India’s military involvement in countries like Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Maldives is still seen as evidence of regional apprehensions. Poor infrastructure in border regions limits the impact of free trade and investment deals. For example, there were more railway connections between India and East Pakistan (now Bangladesh).
- Ethnic and domestic political variables frequently impact India’s neighborhood strategy.
- For example, West Bengal’s opposition caused the Teesta Waters agreement with Bangladesh to be delayed, while ethnic links drove support for the Sri Lankan Tamil struggle. India now has a considerable number of Line of Credit (LOC) projects with its neighbors; however, the implementation of these projects is delayed due to frustration, mistrust, and a decline in India’s power in the area may result from this.
- Moreover, the area’s the likelihood to climate change and natural calamities presents additional difficulties for development initiatives. In order for the neighborhood first policy to be effective, New Delhi must make the necessary corrections. While Modi’s foreign policy diplomacy advanced on comprehensive cooperative relations in his second term, his first term was good at boosting engagement with neighbors and regional collaboration.

### Suggestions

- New Delhi focus on prioritize high-level visits, summit meetings and regular dialogue to address issues, disputes and build trust.
- Need to avoid reactions to internal politics of neighboring countries and promote mature statesmanship.
- India efforts to resolve border disputes and other conflicts through dialogue and mediation.
- India try to build measures such as joint military exercises and cultural exchanges.
- Indian government efforts to improve connectivity and economic integration through infrastructure projects and trade facilitation, Continue economic assistance to neighbors to enhance India’s image as a reliable partner
- India focus on Strengthen cooperation on counter-terrorism, maritime security, and border management, enhance national security.
- India plays an active role in regional multilateral organizations to address common challenges, engagement in SAARC, BIMSTEC, and IORA to boost regional cooperation.
- India need to promote programs like ITEC, cultural festivals, and tourism initiatives to enhance people-to-people ties, Utilize soft-power assets to build positive perceptions of India.

These suggestions, the government can reinvigorate India’s “Neighborhood First” policy and realize its vision of a peaceful, prosperous, and interconnected region, re-boost regional security and power.

### Methods

This paper have a range of research methods, historical study, to examine different historical periods and chronological aspects simultaneously, along with specific social science methods like analysis, statistics, synthesis, and comparison to present data. In addition, especially for analysis of recent periods, such as content analysis, comparative analysis, and event analysis, to explain the foreign perspectives of India and its neighbouring countries. In this research paper used the primary data like the external affairs's ministry of the south Asian countries, world affairs reports, CRS report, embassy paper of South Asian countries, official report and website, and secondary data collected from newspaper editorials, articles, journals, webinar, seminar etc.

### Conclusion

As we know, prosperity and stability of nations are very much dependent on the peace and prosperity of its surroundings. No nation can grow of its surroundings the environment is calm that’s why to flourish a nation or to becoming a powerful nation it is compulsory that the country first creates a peaceful and stable environment around itself. This process always started with making good relations with your neighboring countries. So we can say that India’s “Neighborhood First Policy was the practical implementation of this theoretical idea. Apart from this, the peaceful coexistence with our neighboring countries is also necessary to create our importance in the South Asia region. Why? Because of two reasons, First, as Jonathan Lemeo and

Scott B Mar Donald and other thinkers had already told that the 21<sup>st</sup> century belongs to Asia. Among the south Asia region is most important for both point of view trade and security. And the second growing dominance of china in the region is an alarming situation for India and other liberal demo cries.

India's good relations with its neighboring countries are also necessary to curtail the growing influence in the region. China's growing influence severely weakens India's policy of prioritizing its neighboring nations despite India's continuous efforts. India should use compassionate and pragmatic strategies towards its smaller neighboring countries in this situation. India should provide more economic aid, improve trade agreements, expand market Opportunities, and provide other diplomatic advantages to neighboring nations to support their economic progress and socio-economic Advancement. However, regarding India's strategic interests, India must take a more realistic approach in its dealings with neighboring countries. India should insensitive the positive conduct of its smaller Neighboring countries and actively counteract the attempts made by China to undermine Indian interests via the manipulation of smaller South Asian nations. India should explicitly communicate to its Neighboring countries that they stand to gain economic advantages From India's economic growth. In the period of 2014-2019, it was good towards south Asian countries, cooperate with regional cooperation in 2019-2024 periods Indian government foreign policy diplomacy moved on comprehensive cooperation relations. In recent time, in this region China's influence is growing, Indian government need to fix them. India's "Neighborhood First" Policy is a strategic approach aimed at strengthening India's relations with its neighboring countries. Though the initiative started in early 90's its name and priorities had change in 2014 when Mr. Narendra Modi take oath as the prime minister of India. The policy reflects India's intent to maintain a peaceful and cooperative environment in its immediate vicinity, which is crucial for its own development and regional influence. In conclusion India's "Neighborhood First" policy is a strategic commitment to fostering a strong, cooperative and mutually beneficial relationship with its immediate neighbors. By prioritizing diplomatic engagement, economic collaboration, and regional stability. India's aim is to create a peaceful and prosperous environment in South Asia. This approach not only supports India's national interests but also contributes to regional stability and development, reflecting a vision of a connected and cooperative neighborhood.

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