

INDIA'S NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY-CONTEMPORARY TRAJECTORIES

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ABSTRACT

The neighborhood policy of a country is usually regarded as a subset of its foreign policy. This is no exception in the case of India. There has been a critical response to India's neighborhood policy until recent times. Foreign policy analysts argue that India does not have a well-defined neighborhood policy. This seems to be a reflection of the challenges facing the broader context of India's foreign policy.

In the backdrop of the Indo-centric South Asian region, India can be conceptualized as a pre-eminent yet 'reluctant' power, strong in the capability quotient, but lacking the attitude and aspiration and the endeavour to stamp assertively its dominance in the region. India's immediate neighborhood policy seems to reflect such a lack of an attitude identifiable with an emerging power in the contemporary world order. In the interplay between Realism and Idealism in the realm of Indian foreign policy, pragmatism and hard-core realism has often been arrested by an adherence to the inherent idealistic culture of peace, non-violence, open diplomacy and adherence to moral norms, and reluctance to project hard power in the astute military sense of the term.

Prof. Harsh V. Pant in his seminal work "A Rising India's Search for a Foreign Policy" (Orbis, spring 2009) identifies few gray areas in Indian foreign policy. These are: (a) lack of comprehensive planning behind foreign policy; (b) dearth of proper strategic thoughts and institutions; (c) ambiguous and contradictory positions of power; and (d) continuous ad hoc crisis management system in foreign relations.

The paper analyzes the contemporary directions of 'Modified' neighborhood policy, especially harping on the so-called 'proactive' initiatives of P.M. Modi and whether that can signal a real turnaround in the context of India's relations with South Asian neighbors, in a pervasive spirit of pragmatic Realism, or is it on 'a road to nowhere'.

KEYWORDS: *Culture of Peace, Non Violence, Open Diplomacy and Adherence*