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Promotion of democracy and foreign policy in India

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Christian Wagner

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Promotion of Democracy and Foreign Policy in India

The promotion of democracy has been of highest priority in Western foreign and development policies for many years. India is perceived as the world's largest democracy, and, Germany, Europe and the USA have increasingly viewed her as an important international actor since the mid-1990's. Given their common values, the question arises as to whether India can be a partner to the West in supporting and propagating democratic forms of government. What priority does Indian foreign policy give to the promotion of democracy? The study comes to the following conclusions:

1. The promotion of democracy plays only a marginal role in Indian foreign policy, which is determined by national interests, namely, security considerations in respect to China and Pakistan, trade and economic interests, and the need to secure the supply of energy and resources. Since the 1950's, the principle of non-interference has dominated foreign policy debates in India. For this reason, Indian politicians do not view their democracy as an export model.
2. Since the 90's, in the wake of improved relations with the USA, there have been some first steps taken in the promotion of democracy. Within the context of Indian foreign policy, India has thus been able to strengthen her relationship with the Western industrial countries while simultaneously underlining her own global responsibility and ambitions as a major power. In practice, however, India pursues a very defensive policy in the promotion of democracy. Rather than being geared towards the transformation of authoritarian regimes through, for instance, the support of democratic development or the participation in economic sanctions, it is embedded in bilateral development cooperation. This form of promotion of democracy allows India to balance between international demands on the one hand and her national interests on the other.
3. Thus India will hardly act as a stabilizing power in South Asia. Firstly, Indian interventions in the past have been characterized more by the desire for political stability than by the wish to support or establish democratic governments. Secondly, for all the neighboring states, the relations with India are a

central issue in their domestic debates. India is seen by her neighbors not as part of a solution, but rather above all as part of the problem. Thus, since the mid-nineties, the Indian government has been putting more emphasis on economic and development cooperation. Within this context, there have also been sporadic measures for the promotion of democracy.

4. Hence, for German and European politics, India remains a difficult partner in respect to the promotion of democracy. On the one hand, when it comes to carrying out elections, India has great administrative know-how at her disposal—an indispensable prerequisite for the building up of democracy, especially in developing countries. On the global level, the Indian government is involved, inter alia, with the UN Democracy Fund and in multilateral initiatives that promote collaboration between democracies. But Indian participation in this policy area is dependent on national interests. Consequently, in spite of security considerations, India will hardly enter into alliances or partnerships that are directed against China. In respect to development policy, India does not view herself as a donor country. Nor does she take part in multilateral aid consortia. Even so, in a dialogue with India, Germans and Europeans should strive for more cooperation in promoting democracy. In states where Indian and European interests converge, India's administrative know-how should be taken advantage of in building up new democracies.

Democracy and Foreign Policy in India

The promotion of democratic forms of government has for many years been one of the fundamental principles of German, European and American foreign and development policy. Thereby, certain differences have become clear in recent years. German and to some extent European policy emphasizes dialogue with authoritarian regimes as a means to effect a long-term process of democratic transition. In contrast, the American administration under President George W. Bush also advocated military intervention as a way to bring democratic change, as in Afghanistan and Iraq, where a regime change was effected by force. The question of closer cooperation between democratic states on a global level and the founding of an "Alliance of Democracies" played a role in the American presidential campaign in 2008 as well.¹ The Asia strategy of the CDU/CSU parliamentary group in Germany also argued for a more intensive cooperation with the democratic states of Asia.

In deciding how and with which partners democratic change is to be achieved, the Indian Union, alongside Japan and South Korea, becomes the focus of Western foreign policy in Asia. After the end of the East-West conflict, India underwent a positive reassessment. This can be seen especially in the improvement of her relationship with the USA. In March 2006, President Bush declared that he wanted to support "India on her path to becoming a world power". The Indo-American Nuclear Treaty, signed in October 2008, ended India's international isolation in this field. Other big powers, too, now give India a significantly higher ranking than during the time of the Cold War. This is evidenced, for example, by the various strategic partnership treaties that India has in the meantime signed with, inter alia, Russia, the European Union, France, Great Britain, Germany, Japan and China.

In these and other official agreements, the common democratic values and traditions are especially emphasized. Thus, India and the USA regularly evoke the cooperation between the "oldest and the largest democracy" and consider themselves to be "natural

allies". Similar avowals are to be found in treaties between India and the EU and Japan.

Therewith, the question arises, to what degree the factor "democracy" can be considered a resource in India's foreign policy. Has this facet been important in the domestic debates as a justification for foreign policy? Furthermore, focusing on the regional and international context, is "democracy" an Indian foreign policy tool by which democratic governments are promoted or which serves as a foundation for closer cooperation with other states?

In order to clarify these issues, first, two aspects at the national level will be investigated. On the one hand, whether the support of democracy plays a role in the foreign policy doctrines and debates in India. On the other hand, the relationship between the executive and the legislative in India's political system will be dwelt upon briefly. Admittedly, the extent to which democratic values are emphasized says little about their actual importance in the foreign policy of a country.

India is one of the oldest democracies in Asia and has understood herself as a stabilizing power in South Asia. On the regional level, the question whether India purposefully supports democratic parties in the neighboring states, thus contributing to the building up of democratic regimes, is essential. Thirdly, and finally, India's involvement in those multilateral organizations and initiatives that understand the democratic system to be either the foundation or the goal of collaboration will be analyzed. In this context the possibility of India's development cooperation with Western democracies in third states will also be investigated.

¹ Cf. Peter Rudolf, *Ein "Bund der Demokratien": Amerikas neuer globaler Multilateralismus?*, Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, April 2008 (SWP-Aktuell 28/2008).

The National Level: Foreign Policy and the Political System in India

The Indian state and development model after independence in 1947 was understood as a third way between Western-style democracy and Soviet-style socialism. With a democracy that was oriented toward the Western model and an economic system that borrowed much from the Soviet model, the country's development was to be propelled forward. Internationally, India found herself to be one of the leading world powers alongside the USA, the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China.² The Indian government under Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru pursued an autonomous and independent foreign policy. In this way, Nehru wanted to raise the status of his country internationally and to stay out of the developing East-West conflict. In the national context, two aspects are thus interesting: what role did the democratic institutions, especially the executive and the legislative, play in the formulation of foreign policy? Second: to what extent was the idea of promoting democracy reflected in the foreign policy doctrine?

Actors in Indian Foreign Policy: The Dominance of the Executive

In India, foreign policy is even today the domain of the executive. After independence in 1947, Nehru took over not only the office of Prime Minister, but also that of Foreign Minister. His idealistic foreign policy and his rapprochement with China were sometimes criticized, but no discussion developed out of this about the fundamental orientation of foreign policy.³ Under the constitution, the parliament possessed minimal authority in issues of foreign policy.⁴ International treaties did not need parliamentary ratification. In most foreign policy decisions the Cabinet had

little to say as well.⁵ Thus, Nehru's decision to intervene militarily in Goa in December of 1961, by which the last European enclave in India was dissolved, was announced to the Cabinet at the last moment and without further discussion.⁶

Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, increasingly concentrated the powers of decision for both domestic and foreign policy in herself. Although she had four Foreign Ministers in her first period in office (1966–1977), the most important foreign policy decisions were made within her small circle of closest advisors. Among such decisions were the Friendship Treaty with the Soviet Union in August 1971 and the Treaty of Simla with Pakistan in July 1972.⁷ Indira Gandhi's son, Rajiv, who became her successor in office after the assassination of the Prime Minister in October 1984, continued the foreign policy of his mother and maintained the decision-making process that she had established. The Congress Party, led by the Nehru-Gandhi Dynasty, dominated the political landscape until 1989 and cemented the dominance of the Executive in foreign policy. The political debates concerning domestic conflicts such as Kashmir, Punjab, Tamil Nadu and Northeast India did influence the decisions of the government in respect to the neighboring states, but did not in any way encroach upon the predominance of the executive over the legislative. The economic liberalization since 1991 and the increasing fragmentation in party politics have in principle certainly strengthened the influence of the corporate sector and trade unions in international issues; however nothing has changed in respect to the Parliament's fundamental weakness in foreign affairs. Thus the public debate in the 1990's concerning India's planned membership in the World Trade Organization (WTO) was controversial. In November 1993, Parliament issued a report that pointed out the negative consequences of WTO membership for the Indian economy. This did not

2 Cf. Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, Calcutta 1946, p. 535.

3 Cf. Girja Shankar Bajpai, "India and the Balance of Power", in: The Indian Study Group of International Affairs (Ed.), *The Indian Year Book of International Affairs*, Madras 1952, pp. 1–87.

4 Cf. Nancy Jetly, *India-China Relations, 1947–1977. A Study of Parliament's Role in the Making of Foreign Policy*, New Delhi 1979.

5 Cf. Angadipuram Appadorai, *The Domestic Roots of India's Foreign Policy, 1947–1972*, Delhi 1981, p. 81.

6 Cf. Shashi Tharoor, *Reasons of State. Political Development and India's Foreign Policy under Indira Gandhi, 1966–1977*, New Delhi 1982, p. 24.

7 Cf. Krishan D. Mathur and P. M. Kamath, *Conduct of India's Foreign Policy*, New Delhi 1996.

keep the government from signing the agreement in 1994.

However, Parliament only seems to have a limited interest in exerting more control over foreign policy. Various members of Parliament have introduced laws that would strengthen the Parliament's voice in foreign affairs. None of these initiatives found majority support. Politicians of the Congress Party countered these attempts with the argument that the Indian government would never have signed many of the agreements that were useful for the country if Parliament had had the right to decide on their ratification. The consequent domestic politicization and polarization would have tended to weaken India, whereas doing without ratification strengthened India's position internationally. One example for the less than harmonious stance of Parliament was the fierce domestic discussion concerning the Indo-American Nuclear Treaty 2007/08. Opposition parties like the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) demanded a stronger participation of Parliament on this issue. This would surely have once again brought up the fundamental question as to Parliament's right to ratify international treaties. But even the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI(M))—that supported the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government under leadership of the Congress Party, but seriously criticized the treaty with the USA—was not willing to engage in a constitutional debate. The CPI(M) did refuse to approve the treaty. However, in summer 2008, the government was able to attain a new coalition partner, the Samajwadi Party (SP) and thus retain its political majority.⁸

Democracy and Foreign Policy Doctrine: From National Security to Regional Cooperation

Conceptually, the support of democratic groups or institutions in third countries has not played a large role in Indian foreign policy. The implications of such a policy have repeatedly been weighed against other national interests, as also happens in Western states. In the 1950's, the Indian government supported a number of anti-colonial liberation movements in Asia and Africa. India also participated in international

conflict resolution negotiations, as in Indonesia or Indochina. In all these cases, India's motivation was not to support democratic structures, but rather to enforce independence from colonial rule.

The treaty signed with China in 1954 concerning Tibet contains the five principles of peaceful coexistence that then became the guidelines for Indian foreign policies: mutual respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty, non-aggression, non-interference in inner affairs, equality and mutual benefit, peaceful coexistence.⁹ Above all, the principle of non-interference in inner affairs, which is of great importance to India in respect to the Kashmir conflict and the UN-resolutions in this respect, has developed into a guiding principle of Indian foreign affairs.

Far less important, in contrast, was the question as to whether and how democracy should be promoted. This became especially clear in India's relations with the Himalayan kingdoms, Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan, during the Nehru era. In 1949/50, as the legal successor of Great Britain, India signed new treaties with the three monarchies. In this way, to a large degree, she secured a voice in the management of the inner affairs of these kingdoms. India intervened in Nepal as early as the 1950's and promoted the first steps of a democratic development (see below). But in Bhutan and Sikkim, where India possessed an even greater political influence, she made no efforts to introduce a change towards more democracy. Relations with China and unsolved border-issues clearly had a higher priority in dealing with the Himalayan kingdoms than any questions of their democratic orientation.

In the 1970's, under Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, a change happened towards a "realistic" policy, a re-orientation of Indian foreign policy in respect to the neighboring states. This policy change was taken over and continued by Rajiv Gandhi (1984–1989). South Asia was now regarded as part of India's national security. The so-called "Indira Doctrine", named after the Prime Minister, defined that any conflicts in the neighboring states should be settled only with the help of India and without the intervention of other superpowers.¹⁰ During this phase, India intervened in East Pakistan (1971), in Sri Lanka (1971, 1987–1990) and in the Maldives (1988). In all cases, security and economic interests and considerations played a larger role than the intention to implement or permanently

⁸ Cf. "India Will Await Political Consensus on Civilian Nuclear Deal: Pranab", in: *The Hindu*, August 15, 2008, www.hindu.com/2008/03/26/stories/2008032658120100.htm (viewed on August 16, 2008).

⁹ Cf. Neville Maxwell, *India's China War*, New York 1970, p. 78.

¹⁰ Cf. Devin T. Hagerty, "India's Regional Security Doctrine", in: *Asian Survey*, Vol. 31, No. 4, April 1991, pp. 351–363.

promote democratic structures in these neighboring countries (see case studies below).

After the collapse of the so-called “Mixed Economy” in early summer 1991, the Indian government completed a comprehensive reorientation of its economic policies. From this time onward, exports, direct foreign investment and the integration of the country in the world market were more strongly emphasized. This change of policy had far-reaching consequences in foreign affairs, in which economic issues increasingly became the focal point. The “Look East Policy”, formulated by Prime Minister Narasimha Rao, was intended to intensify India’s relationship with the emerging states in East and Southeast Asia.¹¹ I. K. Gujral, Foreign and Prime Minister of the United-Front-Government that was in power between 1996 and 1998, gave the policies regarding foreign relations a new conceptual basis: the core of the so-called Gujral Doctrine was the principle of non-reciprocity, i.e. India was willing to make greater concessions to the neighboring states in the case of bilateral conflicts.¹² This concept of a “Good Neighbor Policy”¹³ replaced the Indira Doctrine that had emphasized a policy of strength and intervention in inner affairs. From now on, economic issues, rather than the security considerations that had characterized the relations between the neighboring states in Indira Gandhi’s time, were to be the determining factor in bilateral relations. But the question of promoting democracy did not play a role in the Gujral Doctrine.

Even so, starting in the mid-nineties, a stronger debate developed concerning the issue of promotion of democracy in Indian foreign policies. In the wake of economic liberalization, relations with the USA improved. The dialogue between New Delhi and Washington intensified, and the common democratic values were on the agenda for foreign policy. Thus, in 1999, India together with the USA participated in the Initiative Community of Democracies, that convened for the first time in 2000 in Warsaw (see below). On his visit to India in 2000, US-President Clinton suggested setting up a Center for Asian Democracy.¹⁴

¹¹ Cf. P. V. Narasimha Rao, *India and the Asia-Pacific. Forging a New Relationship*, Singapore 1994 (Singapore Lecture Series).

¹² Cf. Inder Kumar Gujral, *A Foreign Policy for India*, New Delhi 1998.

¹³ Hans-Georg Wieck, “Indiens Politik der guten Nachbarschaft”, in: *Außenpolitik*, Vol. 48, No. 3, 1997, pp. 291–300.

¹⁴ Cf. C. Raja Mohan, “Balancing Interests and Values. India’s Struggle with Democracy Promotion”, in: *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 30, No. 3, 2007, pp. 99–115.

These developments have left their mark on Indian foreign affairs. Questions concerning the promotion of democracy have arisen in the public debates much more strongly than before. Thus, leading up to the Iraq war in 2003, the Bush Administration turned to India with the request to supply military support for the desired “regime change”. The ruling BJP declined, after vehement public protest, with the justification that the American intervention was not supported by the United Nations. The government in Washington obviously had clear ideas about close cooperation with India in respect to promotion of democracy. This came to the fore in the signing of the agreement concerning civilian nuclear cooperation, by which the USA brought to an end India’s many years of international isolation in the nuclear realm. In return, President Bush, in his speech in New Delhi immediately after the signing of the treaty on March 2, 2006, demanded that India should explicitly speak up for promoting democratic change in states like North Korea, Burma, Syria, Zimbabwe and Iran.¹⁵

In the regional context, questions of promoting democracy have played a greater role as well. When in February 2005 the Nepalese king declared a state of emergency, India imposed a series of sanctions (see below). State Secretary Shyam Saram explained in this regard that India was giving greater support to democracies in Southeast Asia.¹⁶ Admittedly, this action also brought up contradictions. The main argument of critics has been that India sets different standards, depending on her own national interests, in her support of democratic movements in different neighboring countries.¹⁷

Though foreign policy decisions continue to be determined by security as well as economic and energy considerations, the discussions about promoting democracy have left traces in the foreign affairs. Thus, India declared her activities within the framework of the UN Peacekeeping Missions as being promotion of democracy and also placed parts

¹⁵ Cf. Amit Baruah, “Bush’s Remarks on Regime Changes Put India in a Spot”, in: *The Hindu*, March 5, 2006, www.hindu.com/2006/03/05/stories/2006030504350900.htm (viewed on March 6, 2006).

¹⁶ Cf. “Democracy Promotion to Be at the Heart of India’s New South Asia Doctrine”, in: *Minivan News*, February 20, 2005.

¹⁷ Brahma Chellaney, “India Adopting Double Standard on Democracy in Neighboring States”, in: *South Asia Tribune*, March 6, 2005, www.satribune.com/archives/200503/P1_bc.htm (viewed on March 24, 2005).

of her “Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC)” program under the umbrella of the Global Democracy Initiative (GDI) founded together with the USA. Her efforts in the reconstruction of Afghanistan have also been carried out under the heading, promotion of democracy.¹⁸ Hence, the promotion of democracy is propagated, either in a very broad multilateral context or alternatively in the very narrow bilateral format of development cooperation. India has only limited interest in implementing the promotion of democracy in the Western sense, as a foreign policy tool. The yearly reports of the Defense Ministry and various speeches by the Foreign Minister show that India is not intent on exporting her ideas of political order.¹⁹

With a policy of active promotion of democracy, India would have to give up the principle of non-interference in the inner affairs of other states, with far-reaching domestic and international consequences. India would lose her reputation as the advocate for the non-aligned states and at the same time make herself vulnerable to extreme criticism of her own internal injustices, starting with Kashmir and ending with the social situation of the lower castes. Such a development is hard to imagine at this point in time. The controversial domestic debate about the Indo-American Nuclear Treaty was carried out by the leftist parties under the slogan of keeping an “independent foreign policy”, thus indirectly clinging to the goal of an unconditional retention of the principle of non-interference in inner affairs.

¹⁸ Cf. www.gdi.nic.in/ (viewed on July 14, 2009).

¹⁹ Cf. Ministry of Defence, *Annual Report 2005–2006*, New Delhi 2006; Siddharth Varadarajan, “India Not Interested in Exporting Ideology: Pranab”, in: *The Hindu*, January 20, 2007, www.hindu.com/2007/01/20/stories/2007012020441400.htm (viewed on January 21, 2007).

The Regional Context

In order to ascertain the weight that the promotion of democracy has in Indian foreign policies, the obvious thing to do would be to investigate more closely the interventions that India undertook in the 1970's and 1980's. Repeated test cases in this respect are the relations with Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Afghanistan. In the relationship with the two large neighbors, China and Pakistan, on the other hand, the promotion of democracy never played a role. India was able to exert influence on China using the Tibetan diaspora, which fled to India after the uprising in 1956 was put down. Though India always supported the Tibetans in exile, the support was always dependent on the status of Indo-Chinese relations. To the degree that the bilateral relationship between the two states improved after the 1990's, the Tibetan diaspora was less able to get a hearing for their cause. And in the case of Pakistan, the issue of promoting democracy never came up. Even after India's military victory in 1971 and the splitting off of East Pakistan, there was no discussion about whether certain democratic parties in West Pakistan should be supported.²⁰

Nepal: The Primacy of Stability

Nowhere has an attempt of India to support the development of a democratic regime in a neighboring state been as sustained and insistent as in Nepal. However, in this case, too, it is repeatedly clear that what was of prime importance for India was the political stability at home—above all in respect to China. Since 1947, the year of Indian independence, three phases of Indian influence in Nepal can be identified. The first phase lasted from 1950 to 1961. After independence, Prime Minister Nehru found himself in a dilemma in respect to the Himalayan states. At the international level, he vehemently defended the principle of non-interference. But because of its geographical location and its connections to Tibet and China, Nepal was strategically extremely important for India. For this

²⁰ Cf. Christian Wagner, *Der Einfluss Indiens auf Regierungsstrukturen in Pakistan und Bangladesch*, Bonn: Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE), 2008 (DIE Discussion Paper 12).

reason it was not possible for the larger neighbor to view the inner development of Nepal with indifference. In July 1950, India concluded a peace and friendship treaty and a trade agreement with Nepal and thus secured her interests. The documents that were exchanged concerning the contract, first made public in 1959, decisively limited the monarch's scope for action in foreign policy. India gained control over the arms sales of the Nepalese army and was given priority for the allocation of development projects.²¹

The inner conflicts in Nepal prompted India to intervene politically for the first time in the 1950's. In November 1950, King Tribhuvan requested asylum at the Indian Embassy in Kathmandu. The situation in the Himalayan state was threatening to escalate as a result of armed attacks by the Nepali Congress (NC) that partly operated out of India. India negotiated a compromise (Delhi Settlement) between the Rana dynasty, the king, and the political parties. The absolute monarchy of the Ranas was replaced by a constitutional monarchy under King Tribhuvan. In addition, members of the NC were given cabinet seats and elections were supposed to be held for a constituent assembly.²² However, in her negotiation efforts, India obviously had her focus more on inner stability in Nepal than on democratic development. Thus, in his address to the Indian Parliament in December 1950, Nehru referred to India's interest in peace and security in the neighboring state, but not to the purpose of installing a democratic government.²³ In this first half of the 1950's, India, through her ambassador in Kathmandu and her advisor in the royal palace, had great influence on Nepalese politics.²⁴ The fact that M. P. Koirala was named Prime

²¹ A copy of the treaty and the letters are to be found in P. D. Muni, *Foreign Policy of Nepal*, Delhi 1973, pp. 283–287.

²² Cf. Karl-Heinz Krämer, *Ethnizität und nationale Integration in Nepal. Eine Untersuchung zur Politisierung der ethnischen Gruppen im modernen Nepal*, Stuttgart 1996, pp. 78–82.

²³ Cf. Jawaharlal Nehru, *India's Foreign Policy. Selected Speeches* (September 1946–April 1961), New Delhi 1991, pp. 435f.

²⁴ On the internal political development in Nepal see Krämer, *Ethnizität und nationale Integration in Nepal* [see fn. 22], pp. 78–116.

Minister at the end of 1951 is presumed to be due largely to pressure from India.²⁵

In March 1955, the “special relationship”²⁶ ended, when King Mahendra succeeded to the throne. The new monarch normalized relations with Tibet and the People’s Republic of China and on September 20, 1956 concluded a trade agreement, inter alia, with Peking. The contract did not damage relations with India because Indo-Chinese relations were still relaxed at this time. After the first democratic elections in February 1959, the Nepali Congress took over the government. The first Nepalese democracy only lasted a short time. On December 16, 1960, the king dissolved Parliament, removed the government of Prime Minister Koirala from office, banned the parties and had their leaders imprisoned insofar as they had not fled to India.

In this early phase it was hardly the goal of India to enforce a democratic government. The larger neighbor was far more interested in political stability and the guarantee of her security interests versus China. India made use of Nepal’s economic dependence to exert political pressure on the monarchy, not, however, to stimulate democratic reforms.

In the second phase, during which Nepal’s transition to democracy in 1989/90 takes place, the domestic constellations in India and Nepal were more complex. In the spring of 1989 both of the states were in disagreement about renewing the trade treaty. In the course of the conflict, the Indian Congress Party government closed almost all of the border crossings to Nepal in March of that year. As a result there was a shortage of goods in Nepal and prices rose. This state of emergency fueled the discontent with the monarchy. In November of 1989, the opposition in India won the elections and formed a minority government that lifted the blockade against Nepal. In January 1990, the most important opposition parties in Nepal, the NC and the United Left Front (ULF), a forum of various leftist parties, joined together to form a common movement with the goal of installing democracy and a multi-party system. In mid-February, protests began and a large part of the civil society took part in the strikes and blockades.²⁷ In April, after violent demon-

strations, the monarchy relented and agreed to hold elections early in 1991.

Most Indian parties and politicians supported the demands of the Nepalese democracy movement. However, within the Hindu-Nationalist BJP, that along with the Communists supported the new Indian minority government, there were certainly those who sympathized with the king and his Hindu monarchy. In February 1990 the renewal of the trade treaty was again up for debate. But within the Indian government there was no consensus on this issue. Parties like the BJP wanted to get the treaty signed and off the table as fast as possible with the still-ruling government of the king. The Janata Dal on the other hand, in consideration of the strengthening Nepalese democracy movement, refused to continue dealing with the king. The Indian draft of the contract for the trade treaty renewal made clear that India wanted to protect her security interests above all in respect to China, irregardless of whether there was to be a democratic or an authoritarian government in Nepal.²⁸

A third phase of Indian influence on the neighboring Himalayan state, Nepal, developed in the course of the Nepalese civil war. In February 1996, a militant Maoist revolutionary movement emerged in Nepal in opposition to the democratic parties and the monarchy. India was affected as well, since the Maoists made use of territory beyond their borders for retreat and were working together there with Maoist groups (Naxalites). The king of Nepal for his part used the civil war as justification for limiting democratic liberties. In 2002 the king dismissed the Prime Minister and dissolved Parliament; in February 2005 he declared a state of emergency. The Indian government protested sharply and cancelled all military cooperation with Nepal. India then continued to pressure for a political balance between the monarchy and the political parties.²⁹ Furthermore, the Indian arms embargo held the danger that the king would turn to China for military support, something not at all in India’s interest.³⁰ In

1992; W. Raepfer and M. Hoftun, *Spring Awakening. An Account of the 1990 Revolution in Nepal*, New Delhi 1992.

²⁸ Cf. Dhruva Kumar, “Asymmetric Neighbours”, in: id. (Ed.), *Nepal’s India Policy*, Kathmandu 1992, pp. 5–33.

²⁹ Cf. Amit Baruah, “Take Political Parties into Confidence, Nepal Told”, in: *The Hindu*, March 8, 2005, www.hindu.com/2005/03/08/stories/2005030812951100.htm (viewed on March 9, 2005).

³⁰ Cf. Siddharth Varadarajan, “Arms for Nepal Part of Quid pro quo”, in: *The Hindu*, April 26, 2005, www.thehindu.com/2005/04/26/stories/2005042603961200.htm (viewed on April 27, 2005).

²⁵ Cf. Devendra Raj Upadhyaya, “The Role of the Monarchy and the Political Institutions in Nepal”, in: Kamal Prakash Malla (Ed.), *Nepal. Perspectives on Continuity and Change*, Kirtipur 1989, p. 311.

²⁶ Muni, *Foreign Policy of Nepal* [see fn. 21], p. 67.

²⁷ On the course of the protest movement see Prem Sharma, *50 Days of Pro-democracy Movement in Nepal – 1990*, Kathmandu

the context of the civil war with the Maoists, who also posed a threat for India, the Indian government was able to move King Gyanendra to make concessions toward reinstating democracy, whereupon India again resumed her military aid for the Nepalese security forces. These conflicts with the Nepalese monarchy surely contributed to India's turning away from the royal house and consequently making an effort to negotiate a reconciliation between the Nepalese parties and the Maoists. Thereby, the Indian government was able to make use of its close ties to parties like the NC and the Maoists, whose leader, Prachandra, had studied at Jawaharlal-Nehru-University in New Delhi. In winter 2006, after a series of discussions, the Maoists and the parties agreed upon a closer cooperation, with the result that the monarchy resigned in early 2007. In early 2008, elections were finally held for the constituent assembly, bringing a clear victory for the Maoists.

India's engagement for a peaceful resolution of the civil war in Nepal was based not only on the traditional security interests in respect to China, but also on the desire to find a way to somehow integrate the Maoists politically. Indeed, India, too, has for many years been confronted with Maoist revolutionary movements (Naxalites), ranked as being the greatest domestic danger by the Ministry of Home Affairs. From the efforts to include the Nepalese Maoists in a political solution, the Indian government obviously was hoping to gain experience in how to deal with the problem in its own country. In interviews, Prachandra himself emphasized this point that is of such importance for India.³¹ New Delhi not only was engaged in the peace process politically, but also has supported the economic reconstruction of Nepal after ten years of civil war with extensive funding.

Though India played an important role in negotiating a settlement within Nepal, she has, however, not taken on a visible role in the process of the constituent assembly after the 2008 elections. In her relations with Nepal, representative of her relationships with other neighboring states, a fundamental dilemma of Indian foreign policy is obvious. On the one hand, Indian parties have diverse connections to political forces in the neighboring states. This repeatedly opens up room for maneuver in the bilateral

relationships, for governments as well as for parties. On the other hand, for most of the neighboring states, India is the central crystallization point in the process of nation-building. Thus, any involvement by India runs the danger of becoming the object of domestic disagreement in these states. This limits the potential influence of India considerably. In addition, the country has no appropriate mechanisms for implementing sustainable democratic development in neighboring states, should it have an interest in doing so. Firstly, there is a lack of ideas about how such democratic development policies for neighboring states should be designed. Secondly, the necessary resources are not available for policies that have the promotion of democracy as their goal, as for example within the framework of earmarked development cooperation. Where such mechanisms do exist, as in the form of trade agreements in the case of Nepal, these are made use of to uphold India's economic and security interests, and not to establish democratic structures. Thirdly, the civil society actors, namely the political parties, do not have the necessary means to pursue a policy of their own for the promotion of democracy. The parties do not maintain any foreign relations of their own or have any foundations through which they could advance their political concerns in other states.

Bangladesh: The Spurned Mentor

In December 1971, India intervened militarily in the Pakistani civil war. Thereby, she undertook her most far-reaching attempt so far to resolve an internal conflict in a neighboring country. In 1970, the first free elections had taken place in Pakistan. But the military leadership in the western part of the country refused to transfer the political power to the Awami League (AL), which had clearly won the elections with their demand for a greater autonomy for East Pakistan. When Mujibur Rahman, the chairman of the AL, was imprisoned, the unrest in East Pakistan escalated to a civil war between the West Pakistani army and the East Pakistani guerilla groups. In the wake of the war, millions of people fled to India.³² Because of her rivalry with Pakistan, India supported the East Pakistani opposition. India's military intervention in the

³¹ Cf. id. "Multiparty Democracy in Nepal Will Be Message to Indian Naxalites", in: *The Hindu*, February 10, 2006, www.hindu.com/2006/02/10/stories/2006021005161100.htm (viewed on February 11, 2006).

³² On the background and the course of the conflict see Richard Sisson and Leo E. Rose, *War and Secession. Pakistan, India, and the Creation of Bangladesh*, Oxford/New York 1990.

beginning of December 1971 led to the third Indo-Pakistan War, which after two weeks ended with the capitulation of the Pakistani army and the independence of East Pakistan, out of which the new state of Bangladesh emerged.

In the following years, India gave extensive support to the political and economic reconstruction in Bangladesh. Its constitution was oriented towards the Indian model with its principles of democracy and secularism. In 1972 the two countries signed mutual friendship and trade treaties. These assured India of having a voice in the development of the first democratic system of government in Bangladesh. In spite of her strong involvement, India was not able to stabilize the internal situation in Bangladesh. The government of Mujibur Rahman developed an increasingly authoritarian behavior and was not in a position to improve the economic situation. Relations with India quickly cooled down. The initial Bengali gratefulness for the support in gaining independence was replaced by a deep mistrust of the all-powerful neighbor.

After the military coup in 1975 and the assassination of Mujibur Rahman, the new leaders, the generals, introduced a fundamental change in policy with the intention of decreasing the dependence on India. In 1977, with their concept of Bangladeshi Nationalism and the inclusion of Islam in the previously secular constitution, the military wanted to create a national identity with an Islamic face and to consciously increase the cultural distance from India. In addition, the new leadership considered economic relations with the Western industrial countries and the Gulf States more promising than an orientation towards the Indian model and the resulting increase of dependence on India. The Indian government did continue to have good relations with parties like the AL, but its influence on the activities in the neighboring country became less and less. Up to 1977, the end of her time in office, Indira Gandhi supported militant groups that repeatedly carried out small attacks in Bangladesh from their bases in India. The bilateral relations were encumbered by a number of disagreements, concerning for example the water regulation of the Ganges, the illegal immigration of Bangladeshis to India, and measures against militant groups operating in Northeast India but having bases and retreat areas in Bangladesh.

The return to democracy in the years 1990/91 was a result of internal political disputes between the parties and the military and came about without the support of India. Bilateral relations with India had up

to that point hardly improved. Though a long-standing conflict had been resolved with the agreement signed in 1996 concerning the distribution of the Ganges water, the issue of illegal immigration and the problem of the retreat territories for the terrorist groups continued to be a burden on the relations between the two states.³³

As in the case of Nepal, India was neither able to sustain her political influence nor her involvement in the development of democracy in Bangladesh. The relations with India became a central issue in a bitter dispute between the AL and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). That could also be seen in the area of energy policies. At the end of the 1990's, after gas discoveries in the Gulf of Bengal, the AL and BNP agreed not to export any gas to India, even though the AL had traditionally networked with its neighbor and though international oil companies, the World Bank, and the Asian Development Bank were all in favor of such an export.³⁴ Bangladesh would have profited from the sales, closed its chronic financial gap, and decreased its trade deficit with India. It was presumably the bitter antagonism between the AL and the BNP that hindered this reasonable measure. Neither of the two large parties wanted to be made responsible for the "sell-out of national resources to India". And the efforts to at least use Bangladesh as a transit country for the planned pipeline from Myanmar to India also failed in August 2006 as a result of internal opposition. Consequently, India plans to construct a gas-pipeline to Myanmar via her northeastern states.

In her relations with Bangladesh, India shows once again that she is hardly in a position to influence the democratic development of her neighbors. Questions of democracy or the support of democratic structures only played a role in the bilateral relationship between 1972 and 1975, when India was involved in structuring the political and economic framework for Bangladesh. After that, the one-time mentor got caught up under the wheels of domestic disputes. In spite of her superior resources, India found no ways or means to influence the transformation that Bangladesh underwent after the military coup of 1975 to her own advantage.

³³ Cf. Prakash Nanda, "Indo-Bangla Treaty Is Fair and Just to Both Parties", in: *Times of India*, December 13, 1996.

³⁴ Cf. P. D. Muni and Girijesh Pant, *India's Search for Energy Security. Prospects for Cooperation with Extended Neighbourhood*, New Delhi 2005, p. 53.

Sri Lanka: The Failed Hegemon

After Bangladesh in 1971, the intervention in the civil war in Sri Lanka subsequent to 1987 was India's most comprehensive external military and political undertaking. Already in 1971, India had intervened in Sri Lankan internal affairs. The government in Colombo had been taken by surprise by the armed uprising of the Marxist Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP, "People's Liberation Front") and requested military support from India and other states for putting down the rebellion.

In the 1970's, the civil war between the Sinhalese majority and the Tamil minority escalated. India's Prime Minister Indira Gandhi wanted to assert the regional supremacy of her country. Conflicts in neighboring states were to be resolved by India's mediation alone and other superpowers were to be kept out of the region (Indira Doctrine). After 1977, Gandhi took a critical stance towards the pro-West government of President Jayawardene, fearing that the USA could become increasingly involved in Sri Lanka.³⁵ But domestic consideration also played a role. Following a pogrom in Colombo in July 1983, over 100,000 Tamils fled from Sri Lanka to the South Indian state of Tamil Nadu. Thereby, the civil war on the neighboring island also became the subject of internal controversies in India. South Indian regional parties supported or at least tolerated that the Tamil guerillas operated out of Tamil Nadu. As a way of putting the government in Colombo under pressure, the Indian secret service trained militant Tamil groups. At the same time, India tried to mediate between the Sri Lankan rivals, but numerous rounds of talks still failed to reach a solution.

As the military conflicts in Sri Lanka intensified in 1987, India found it necessary to intervene. That summer, Indian airplanes carried out air drops of aid packages for the Tamil population and thus violated the sovereignty of Sri Lanka. After secret negotiations with the government in Colombo, the two states signed a treaty on July 29, 1987. It envisaged a political solution to the civil war. In addition, the Indian Peace Keeping Forces (IPKF) were to be stationed in Sri Lanka for the purpose of disarming the Tamil rebels.³⁶ The Indo-Sri Lankan Treaty was a novelty in Indian

foreign affairs, since up to that time the Indian military had only been ordered abroad on the basis of a UN mandate. The IPKF deployment, on the other hand, was based on a bilateral contract. Shortly before the signing of the treaty, the Indian government had reached an understanding with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), the most important Tamil guerilla group. The LTTE controlled large parts of northern and eastern Sri Lanka and was supposed to be given a special role in implementing the treaty and in the reconstruction of the destroyed territory.³⁷

This so far most comprehensive attempt of India to mediate an internal conflict of a neighboring state ended in a military and political fiasco. The LTTE cancelled the treaty just a few weeks later and involved the Indian troops in a further guerilla war. After changes of government in India and Sri Lanka in 1989, the constellation that had made the India-Sri Lanka Treaty possible fell apart. Both sides agreed to an IPKF withdrawal. The last Indian troops left the island in March 1990, without being any closer to a military or political solution. In May 1991, the Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, who had implemented the treaty, was assassinated by an LTTE suicide bomber while campaigning in South India.

The new Indian policy towards her neighboring states, that since 1991 has emphasized the intensification of economic cooperation instead of political intervention, results in the Sri Lankan internal political conflicts being hardly of concern within the bilateral relations. The political suggestions of the treaty of 1987, upon which, inter alia, the federal restructuring of Sri Lanka was based, are still valid in the current situation. Both countries have worked on building up their economic relationship and in 1998 signed a free trade agreement, from which Sri Lanka, in the true sense of the "good neighbor" Gujral Doctrine, benefited more than India.

In the 1980's the Indian government had less the promotion of Sri Lankan democracy in mind than much more the protection of her own interests and the enforcement of her ideas of national security. After 1991, the economic relationship became the major focus. In spite of repeated requests by the Sri Lankan government, India is still not willing to take an official part in the conflict. Even the request for renewed support in the conflict, brought forward in 2000 by the government in Colombo, was refused by the Indian government. After the political and mili-

³⁵ Cf. Neil DeVotta, *Blowback. Linguistic Nationalism, Institutional Decay, and Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka*, Stanford 2004, p. 171.

³⁶ Cf. P. D. Muni, *Pangs of Proximity. India and Sri Lanka's Ethnic Crisis*, New Delhi 1993.

³⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 102.

tary fiasco of the Indian mediation in the late 1980's, the government in New Delhi was not disposed to engage once again in the civil war. This fact also explains why India did not become a member of the so-called Co-Chairs, which were constituted at the international donor conference 2002 in Tokyo for the purpose of supporting Norway's negotiation attempts—which in the meantime have failed as well.³⁸

India's ambitious attempt to implement her ideas of political order as a regional superpower ended in a foreign policy disaster. Not only the military conflict with the LTTE in the northern and eastern part of the country, but also the violent opposition of the now Buddhist-Nationalist JVP and the bloody uprising between 1987 and 1989 in reaction to the treaty and the stationing of Indian troops, made it impossible for India to enforce her interests in Sri Lanka in the long term.

Burma/Myanmar: The Primacy of Energy Security

Burma was part of British India until 1937, when it became a separate crown colony. Business and the upper levels of the administration were dominated by Indians, who, however, returned to India after she gained independence in 1948. For this reason, India's social and political ties to Burma were weaker than to Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.

In respect to Burma, India was initially interested above all in curtailing the numerous militant movements that were fighting for independence or greater autonomy in Northeast India and that had their retreat areas in Burma.³⁹ As early as the 1950's, India was cooperating with the government in Rangoon for this purpose. But it was not possible to completely repress the armed groups of the Nagas and the Mizos, or to solve the problem of the retreat areas in Burma. In the 1980's, militant organizations in Burma, like the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO), even worked together with separatist groups in India like the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA). The Indian secret service made use of the militant networks in the region for its own interests, though, and

built up its contacts to the KIO in order to fight some groups of the Naga guerillas in India.⁴⁰

India came to an arrangement with the military that has been in power since 1962 and showed only limited interest in the internal development of the neighboring country. This changed when the opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi founded the National League for Democracy (NLD), just a few weeks after the regime put down a mass demonstration in August 1988. Suu Kyi had spent a large part of her youth in India and had personal contacts to high-level Indian politicians. The government in New Delhi criticized the repressive measures taken by the Burmese military towards the democratic movement. Numerous NLD activists fled to India and were granted asylum there. After 1991, when it became clear that the military junta had established itself, a change in India's policy became apparent. Now the long-standing security issues again came to the fore and thus the question as to how the rebellious movements in northeastern India could be counteracted. A new factor in the Indian government's considerations was China's growing involvement in Burma, seen in part as threatening, and her own interest in a share of the energy resources of the neighboring country, above all the gas from the fields off the coast of Burma in the Bay of Bengal.

China was able to expand its influence in Rangoon from the 1980's onwards because of the sanctions that the West had officially been applying against Burma since 1989. This constellation was not new for India, since the regime in Burma had been trying to play its two large neighbors off against each other since the beginning of the 1960's. Peking and Rangoon simultaneously built up solid economic ties, whereby China's particular interest in the energy reserves of Myanmar was surely a motivating factor.

Against the background of this development, the change in Indian policy towards Myanmar in the beginning of the 1990's becomes clear. In the course of the complete reorientation of Indian foreign policy after 1991, economic cooperation with the East and South Asian countries took on a significantly higher priority. Myanmar, as India's neighbor and as a bridge to the economically ambitious states of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), took on an importance that it never had before. India's support of the democratic movement at the end of the 1980's

³⁸ The group of the Co-Chairs consisted of Norway, Japan, the USA and the EU.

³⁹ The seven states in the Northeast have only 22 of the 543 seats in Parliament, namely Assam (14 seats), Manipur (2), Meghalaya (2), Mizoram (1), Nagaland (1) und Tripura (2).

⁴⁰ Cf. Muni and Pant, *India's Search for Energy Security* [see fn. 34], p. 111.

and her demand for the release of the opposition leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, thus remained no more than a short episode in the history of the bilateral relations. On the occasion of his visit in March 1993, the Indian Secretary of State, Jyotindra Nath Dixit, declared that India is not interested in a “democratic mission” vis-à-vis any other states.⁴¹

In the 1990’s, India extended her economic, military and political relations with the military regime in Myanmar, without, however, attaining China’s level of importance for Rangoon. The economic relations were above all fostered through infrastructure and road construction projects in the border areas. These were the basis for significantly better conditions in official trade. In 1995, both states for the first time signed a trade agreement. When in February 2001 a road construction project was inaugurated, even the Indian Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh was present, a gesture that attested to the increased importance of Burma in the foreign and economic policies of India.⁴²

The armed forces of both states also increased their cooperation and took joint action against rebellious groups on both sides of the border. In October 2004, General Than Shwe, Chairman of the military government of Myanmar (State Peace and Development Council), visited India. Both states signed numerous treaties, among which was a declaration according to which closer cooperation in the area of non-traditional security risks was planned. India additionally attained the right to extract gas in the Bay of Bengal. In January 2005, trilateral talks concerning the building of a pipeline from Myanmar, through Bangladesh, to India began. The negotiations failed, however, due to the veto of Bangladesh, as a result of which India now wants to relocate the pipeline, extending it from Myanmar, around Bangladesh, to Calcutta.⁴³

The issue of internal order or even of democratization in Myanmar only arose sporadically in the bilateral relations and only burdened the relationship temporarily. In May 1995, the opposition leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, who was under house arrest, received the Nehru prize in India. The military regime reacted angrily to this tribute and broke off joint military activities that had already been started against rebel-

lious groups.⁴⁴ When in March 2006 Abdul Kalam undertook the first visit of an Indian president to Myanmar, the question of a democratization of the country came up for debate. Following the visit, the Indian State Secretary, Shyam Saran, emphasized that India wished to help Myanmar to reestablish democracy and the parliamentary process.⁴⁵ Thereby, India focused more on internal political reforms than on pressure or even sanctions from abroad.

With this position India obviously was trying to justify her policy of cooperation with Myanmar against the severe criticism of the international community. Indeed, the Western international donor community had just recently intensified its sanctions against Myanmar, after Aung San Suu Kyi was once again placed under house arrest in 2003. Even the member states of ASEAN, which Myanmar had joined in 1997, started to criticize the military junta, an unprecedented occurrence. Shyam Saran’s statements early in 2006 were, however, not followed up by any new Indian policy. In summer 2006, India started to train Myanmar marines on her territory and in January 2007 she delivered further armaments to the military regime.⁴⁶ Because of the military cooperation a controversy between India and the EC also ensued. In summer 2007, plans came to light according to which India was to supply the military junta with helicopter parts, items that had been placed on embargo by the EC. The international pressure on India grew when the Myanmar regime violently suppress a demonstration in autumn 2007. In India, as well, a public debate arose and the number of voices urging the government to engage more strongly in favor of the democratic opposition increased.⁴⁷ Consequently, India did repeatedly remind the military regime of the importance of a democratic opening of the political

⁴¹ Cf. Soe Myint, “India Must Review Myanmar Policy”, in: *The Hindu*, June 13, 2003, www.hindu.com/2003/06/13/stories/2003061303231200.htm (viewed on June 14, 2003).

⁴² Cf. Amit Baruah, “The Roads to Myanmar”, in *Frontline*, Vol. 18, No. 5, March 3 to 16, 2001.

⁴³ Cf. Siddharth Varadarajan, “Distant Neighbours Warm up to Each Other, but Slowly”, in: *The Hindu*, January 19, 2005.

⁴⁴ Cf. Renaud Egretreau, “India’s Ambitions in Burma. More Frustration than Success?”, in: *Asian Survey*, Vol. 48, No. 6, 2008, p. 941.

⁴⁵ Cf. “India Offers Myanmar Help to Set up Democratic Structure”, in: *Press Trust of India (PTI)*, September 3, 2006.

⁴⁶ Cf. Siddharth Varadarajan, “India to Supply Military Equipment to Myanmar”, in: *The Hindu*, January 22, 2007, www.hindu.com/2007/01/22/stories/2007012208851400.htm (viewed on January 23, 2007).

⁴⁷ Cf. Indrani Bagchi, “US, EU Want India to Put Pressure on Myanmar”, in: *Times of India*, September 28, 2007; “Yearning for Democracy”, in: *Rajasthan Patrika*, September 29, 2007; Jo Johnson and Amy Kazmin, “India Pressed to Take Lead on Democracy”, in: *The Financial Times*, September 30, 2007.

system, but she stuck to her repudiation of the sanctions of the international community.⁴⁸

The case of Burma shows clearly how strongly national interests, and in this case security and energy resource interests, above all, have the upper hand over questions of democratization in the decision-making processes of the Indian government. This is not surprising, since India, differently than with neighboring states like Nepal or Sri Lanka, hardly has direct political connections to Myanmar such as through ethnic groups or political parties. Indeed, different civil society organizations with the goal of a liberalization of Myanmar do exist, and there is also a Myanmar diaspora in India. These forces are, however, too weak, for example, to effect a permanent discussion concerning the promotion of democracy in Myanmar on the Indian foreign and domestic agenda. The states in Northeast India that share a border with Myanmar only play a minimal role in domestic politics, as they only have a few representatives in the National Parliament.

In spite of her efforts, India has failed in many of her goals in her cooperation with Myanmar. Although she carried out different military operations with the Burmese army, the militant groups continue to be a threat for India. Also, as for the realization of the energy interests tied to Myanmar, China has a significant advantage due to its greater economic engagement. At least the Indian fears about encirclement by China have been put into perspective thanks to the military cooperation with Burma. Any plans China may have had in this direction have turned out to be more in the realm of fantasy, since there are surely also tensions in the Sino-Burmese relationship and India is aware of these as well.⁴⁹

Afghanistan, Bhutan and the Maldives: Promotion of Democracy as Development Cooperation

In contrast to the states investigated so far, Afghanistan, Bhutan and the Maldives attest to the change in India's involvement in the question of promoting democracy. Since approximately the year 2000, India has increasingly provided resources for the building

up of democratic institutions within the framework of development policies. This is not happening through an active support of political parties representing Indian interests, but through different activities of intergovernmental cooperation.

Afghanistan

India and Afghanistan traditionally have had good relations, resulting from their common rivalry with Pakistan. Afghanistan opposed the creation of Pakistan in 1947, since it claimed the Pashtun territories in the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) for itself. For this reason, Afghanistan was the only country which protested against giving Pakistan membership in the United Nations. But for a long time, Afghanistan did not play a role in the Indo-Pakistani conflict. On account of the geographical distance, the fruits of the good social and political relationship between India and Afghanistan remained limited.⁵⁰ Not until the 1990's did Afghanistan start to play more of a role in the Indo-Pakistani conflict. After the withdrawal of the Soviet Union, the Pakistani army leadership strove for control of Afghanistan in order to attain strategic depth for the next conflict with India. Through the support of the Taliban in the Afghan civil war and of Islamist groups in Kashmir, the Pakistani military connected the two trouble spots that up to that time had largely been separate. After 1992, India worked together with the Rabbani government in Kabul. In the Afghan civil war, she was on the side of the Northern Alliance that fought against the Pakistani-sponsored Taliban. When in autumn 1996 the Taliban took power in Kabul, their rule was only given diplomatic recognition by a few states, among them Pakistan.

After the attack of September 11, 2001, India did not take part in the military intervention in Afghanistan that led to the fall of the Taliban. But India did consequently get involved in the civil reconstruction of the country. She supplied humanitarian aid, promoted educational programs, supported road building and the rebuilding of the Parliament, and trained Afghan diplomats.⁵¹ Up to this point, India has spent

⁵⁰ According to the official Indian view, Afghanistan and India are neighbors, since Afghanistan borders on India in Northern Kashmir. Admittedly, this territory has been under the control of Pakistan since the first India-Pakistan War in 1947/48.

⁵¹ Cf. *Hilfe an vorderster Front. Indiens Hilfsmaßnahmen für Afghanistan*, n.p. 2004.

⁴⁸ Cf. Sandeep Dikshit, "India Asks Myanmar to Expedite Reconciliation", in: *The Hindu*, February 12, 2008.

⁴⁹ Cf. EgretEAU, "India's Ambitions in Burma" [see fn. 44], pp. 951-953.

over 750 million US dollars for reconstruction in Afghanistan. According to Indian figures, 3,000 to 4,000 Indians are working in Afghanistan in private and public reconstruction projects.⁵² Except for Bhutan, no other country receives as much Indian development aid as Afghanistan.⁵³

India has good relations with the government of President Karzai, who lived in India for a long time. He strongly advocated that Afghanistan should be given membership in the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). At the SAARC summit in 2007 in Delhi, Afghanistan actually did become a new member and thus entered back onto the international stage as an independent actor. India has numerous security interests in common with the government of President Karzai and repudiates the Taliban. Officially, India speaks out for democracy in Afghanistan, but there is little evidence that the Indian government is supporting particular parties or groupings. Since at present there are no clearly delineated party structures in Afghanistan, it is presumable that India is cultivating and building upon her traditional relationships with the secular groups among the Pashtuns and the groups of the Northern Alliance.

The comprehensive Indian involvement in Afghanistan has elicited Pakistani fears of possible encirclement by India. The Indian consulates on their common border that are supposedly supporting the rebellious movement in Beluchistan are a source of anger for the Pakistani. Afghanistan has thus become a stage for the Indo-Pakistani conflict. Indian consulates and relief projects have repeatedly been attacked in the last years, presumably by the Taliban. The worst attack so far was in July 2008 when two Indian diplomats lost their lives in a bombing attack on the Indian embassy in Kabul.⁵⁴ In the meantime, to protect her facilities, India has stationed her own paramilitary units in Afghanistan.

In contrast to the other neighboring states, the relationship of India to Afghanistan has significantly stronger soft power elements that are the result of the special relations between the two states. Indeed, India

never officially criticized the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan during the Cold War, since she was cultivating her good relations with the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, in the 1990's she won a lot of sympathy from her support of the Northern Alliance. In addition, politicians and moderate groups in Afghanistan have personal connections to India. Instead of joining in the international military intervention in Afghanistan, India involved herself in the civil reconstruction. In this way, she built up a positive image, without appearing as an independent player in Afghanistan so far.

Bhutan and the Maldives

With the Friendship Treaty of 1949, India secured for herself a far-reaching share in decisions in the internal political development of Bhutan. As in the case of Nepal, security considerations in respect to China played an extraordinary role in this treaty, though in contrast to Nepal, Bhutan never had a democratic movement worthy of note. Internal political conflicts in the Himalayan kingdom, such as the question of the status of the Nepalese immigrants, never directly affected India. In December 2003, both states jointly combated the northeastern Indian rebel movement, which had retreat areas in Bhutanese territory. The dam projects financed by India made it possible for Bhutan to export energy to India. In this way, the economic performance indicators for this small country have been improved significantly in the last years.

Surprisingly, in 2006, King Jigme Singye Wangchuck announced that under his son Jugme Khesar Namgyal Wangchuck his country would be transformed into a parliamentary democracy by the year 2008. In spite of the strong Indian influence on the politics, economy and army of the kingdom, it is unclear whether this system change "from above" was supported by India. Obviously, the developments in Nepal, where the civil war of the Maoists was also directed against the monarchy, prompted the royal house to this amazing reform.⁵⁵ India supported the democratization of Bhutan in various ways. She sent experts who collaborated on the conception of the new constitution, helped with the work of the elec-

⁵² Cf. Fahmida Ashraf, "India-Afghanistan Relations: Post 9/11", in: *ISSI Strategic Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 2, 2007, www.issi.org.pk/journal/2007_files/no_2/article/a4.htm (viewed on July 28, 2009).

⁵³ Cf. Ministry of External Affairs, *Annual Report 2007-2008*, New Delhi 2008, p. 158.

⁵⁴ Cf. Saurabh Shukla and Danish Karokhel, "Why India Is the New Target", in: *India Today*, July 21, 2008, p. 36-38.

⁵⁵ Cf. H. D. P. Greenway, "Change Nears for Bhutan", in: *The Boston Globe*, June 14, 2007.

toral commission and sent election observers.⁵⁶ India again secured her influence in Bhutan with the new Friendship Treaty of February 2007. Since the 2007 and 2008 elections, the Himalayan state is a constitutional monarchy with a two-party system. In contrast to Nepal or Bangladesh, India's role is not a source of internal political controversy. It remains to be seen whether this continues to be the case or whether at some point the prominent role of its larger neighbor will be questioned in Bhutan, as has been the case in Nepal and Bangladesh.

In a similar way, India supported the process of democratization in the Maldives. In 1988, India had supported the authoritarian government of President Gayoom in order to prevent the Tamil rebels from taking over power. In recent years the internal criticism of the authoritarian rule of the President increased. He finally turned to India for help when it came to the point of making reforms and holding elections.⁵⁷ In 2007/08, India tripled her aid to the Maldives in order to secure their path to democracy.⁵⁸ In the October 2008 elections, the opposition leader, Mohamed Nasheed asserted himself over President Gayoom.

⁵⁶ Cf. Jan Cartwright, "India's Regional and International Support for Democracy. Rhetoric or Reality?", in: *Asian Survey*, Vol. 49, No. 3, 2009, p. 412.

⁵⁷ Cf. "Maldives Seeks India's Help to Build Democracy", *Indian-Asian News Service (IANS)*, October 24, 2006, www.siliconindia.com/shownews/Maldives_seeks_Indias_help_to_build_democracy-nid-33643.html/1 (viewed on March 13, 2009).

⁵⁸ Cf. Cartwright, "India's Regional and International Support for Democracy" [see fn. 56], p. 413.

The Global Context

On the global level, India, as an advocate for the developing countries and the non-aligned movement, has in the past spoken up repeatedly for a democratization of international relations and multilateral organizations. These ideas remained vague, however, and have not been heard by the Western industrial countries. India's support of democracies is not only to be seen in the context of improved Indo-American relations, but rather also in connection with her ambitions for recognition as a great power. The promotion of democracy has turned out to be a foreign policy resource for deepening and strengthening the country's relations with the USA and Japan. This explains why, since the end of the 1990's, India has participated in new global initiatives for the promotion of democracy and in approaches that have the goal of strengthening the cooperation of democracies in Asia.

Multilateral Initiatives: Indo-American Relations and the UN Democracy Fund

That India has participated in the multilateral forums for the promotion of democracy has much to do with the improvement of her relations with the USA in the 1990's.

In the year 2000, at the urging of the Clinton administration, India supported the founding of the Community of Democracies (CoD) in Warsaw, which, inter alia, promotes the spread of democratic regulations and institutions at the regional and international level.⁵⁹ In 2002, at the ministerial meeting in Seoul, a plan of action was decided upon and the forum for civil society actors was opened.⁶⁰ In January 2004, India and the Bush administration agreed upon a program for the intensification of political, economic and military cooperation, the Next Steps in Strategic Partnership (NSSP). A year later, in 2005,

⁵⁹ Cf. B. Raman, *Community of Democracies*, Noida: South Asia Analysis Group, 2000 (Paper 119), www.southasiaanalysis.org/%5Cpapers2%5Cpaper119.html (viewed on February 30, 2008).

⁶⁰ For more information see the Homepage of the Democracy Coalition Project, www.demcoalition.org/site09-2008/2005_html/commu_cdm02.html (viewed on July 20, 2009).

both countries signed a first treaty concerning civilian nuclear cooperation. This then became the basis for the Indo-American Nuclear Treaty of October 2008.

Against this background, new activities in the area of the promotion of democracy unfolded. In 2004, the states of the CoD founded the Democracy Caucus at the United Nations, an initiative for the purpose of representing the goals of the CoD under the umbrella of the UN and its organizations. In the following vote on human rights questions, it became clear that India, in spite of her lip service, was not willing to follow the USA and other Western democracies in their denunciation of human rights violations in third countries.⁶¹ Obviously, to the irritation of the USA, she was not willing to disregard her guiding principle of non-interference.

Nevertheless, in July 2005, India and the USA proclaimed a common Global Democracy Initiative (GDI) for the purpose of promoting democracy and development. In the context of this initiative, the Indian government developed the first steps towards their own education and training programs. These are part of the ITEC-program, through which India has been organizing her development cooperation since the 1960's. The activities are presently concentrated on helping with the organization of elections, the development of an independent judiciary and a free press, and the realization of human rights.⁶²

Likewise in the summer of 2005, India participated in the UN Democracy Fund, a further institution for the building up of democratic structures and the protection of human rights.⁶³ Since the beginning of 2009, India has paid 15 million US dollars into this fund and is thus the second largest donor after the USA. Mainly civil society projects are supported with

⁶¹ Cf. Cartwright, "India's Regional and International Support for Democracy" [see fn. 56], p. 419.

⁶² An overview of the up to now modest activities is offered on the homepage of the Ministry of External Affairs, *Capacity Building Exercise under Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) Programme*, www.gdi.nic.in (viewed on July 20, 2009).

⁶³ For more information on the goals and the projects see www.un.org/democracyfund/index.htm (viewed on January 13, 2009).

this money. India ranked 6th place among the applicants at the end of 2008.⁶⁴

India had various purposes behind her collaboration in these global initiatives. By working together with the USA in the GDI, she was able to build up her political as well as her economic and military relationship with Washington. At the same time, she underlined her global leadership ambitions that were readily supported by the Bush administration. That India was now clearly involved in promoting democratic principles obviously had an additional side effect: now the country was able to counter with greater credibility the desire of the USA that she should take part in American actions to effect system changes in third countries. India embedded her democracy promoting activities, as already noted, in the ITEC-program, so that the development policy measures would be valid in the context of bilateral relations. In this way, India was able to deal with the touchy domestic problem of “non-interference in inner affairs”, since as a matter of course the measures were undertaken only with the previous agreement of the states involved.

In the context of the United Nations, the initiatives for the promotion of democracy fit very well into India’s foreign policy profile and her multilateral traditions. Thus, India is one of the countries that make available the largest number of troops for UN peace-keeping missions. Within the framework of the UN Democracy Fund, India has certainly been able to show that she is interested in promoting democracy. Beyond this, the country itself profits by the newly instigated measures. India’s voting record makes it clear that she insists on the principle of non-interference, and that she has not subordinated or even given up this principle in favor of the promotion of democracy or the protection of human rights.

The importance of the various initiatives within the context of India’s total foreign policy, however, is not very high. Thus, in the 2005/06 and 2007/08 yearly report of the foreign ministry the UN Democracy Fund was referred to only briefly, and in the 2006/07 report not at all. This is similar for the GDI, which is not mentioned in any of these three annual reports.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Cf. United Nations, *The United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF). Objectives, Activities and Project Funding*, www.un.org/democracyfund/Docs/Presentation%20UNDEF_Jan2009.pdf (viewed on January 13, 2009).

⁶⁵ Cf. Ministry of External Affairs, *Annual Reports* [various years], <http://meaindia.nic.in>.

Approaches in Asia: The Quad-Initiative

In Asia in recent years, there have been various initiatives for the purpose of deepening the cooperation between the democratic states, i.e. to promote democratic structures. Thus, in 2006/07, Japan, under Prime Minister Abe, propagated a “values-oriented diplomacy” with the goal of strengthening the cooperation between the democracies in Asia.⁶⁶ Against the background of Japan’s difficult relations with China, one of Abe’s motives was to indirectly create a counterbalance to China through such an arrangement. India was definitely open to the idea of a closer coordination between the democratic states, as Prime Minister Singh emphasized before his visit to Japan in December 2006.⁶⁷

The USA intensified its trilateral security dialogue with Japan and Australia during the Bush administration. Since the relations with New Delhi improved significantly in this time, in 2007 Vice President Cheney suggested including India in this dialogue.⁶⁸ For the first time, the members of this quadrilateral initiative (“Quad”) met in May 2007 on the side-lines of the ASEAN Regional Forums (ARF).⁶⁹ The Indian government participated in the talks and strengthened its relationship with Japan and Australia. The interests of the participating states were very divergent, however. Whereas Japan and the USA understood the Quad more as a counterbalance to China, the Australian Defense Minister Nelson emphasized on his visit to India in 2007 that they were most interested in cooperation in the areas of trade and culture.⁷⁰ The Indian government held back with statements about the Quad initiative, wanting to avoid any open confrontation with China. Its political and economic relations with the People’s Republic had recognizably improved since the 1990’s, in spite

⁶⁶ Cf. *Speech by Mr. Taro Aso, Minister for Foreign Affairs on the Occasion of the Japan Institute of International Affairs Seminar “Arc of Freedom and Prosperity: Japan’s Expanding Diplomatic Horizons”*, November 30, 2006, www.mofa.go.jp/announce/fm/aso/speech0611.html (viewed on March 11, 2009).

⁶⁷ Cf. B. Raman, *India & Japan. Democracy as a Strategic Weapon*, Noida: South Asia Analysis Group, 2006 (Paper 2064).

⁶⁸ Cf. Howard Loewen, “The ‘Quadrilateral Initiative’. A New Security Structure in Asia?”, in: *Südostasien aktuell – Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, Vol. 27, No. 1, 2008, pp. 101–110.

⁶⁹ Cf. *ibid.*

⁷⁰ Cf. Brahma Chellaney, “‘Quad Initiative’: An Inharmonious Concert of Democracies”, in: *The Japan Times*, July 19, 2007, <http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/eo20070719bc.html> (viewed on September 3, 2007).

of the still unresolved border issues. Nevertheless, India took part, as incidentally Singapore did, too, in a combined fleet maneuver of the Quad states in September 2007 in the Gulf of Bengal. Security experts interpreted the maneuver as a signal against the growing military presence of the Chinese Marines in the Indian Ocean.⁷¹ India's interest in the Quad was limited, however. Indeed, from 2007, the Indian Navy undertook a number of maneuvers together with one or more of the Quad-initiative states. But the yearly report of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2007/08 does not record the activities of the Quad as significant political events.⁷²

A further rather more trans-nationally designed initiative is the Indonesian-supported Bali Democracy Forum (BDF). It was founded in December 2008, and up to this point 32 states in Asia including Australia have participated. The states in this group that are democratic by Western standards are so far, however, in the minority. Nevertheless, the Forum has agreed "to place democracy as a strategic agenda in regional discourse in Asia".⁷³ India will presumably make use of the BDF as one of many international forums. In the overall context of Indian foreign policy, however, it will most probably only play a minor role.

Cooperation in Third States: Development Cooperation and the Promotion of Democracy

Economic and development cooperation was always an important instrument for the Western industrial countries for implementing political goals like the establishment of democratic forms of government. India is one of the world-wide largest recipients of development aid over the last fifty years, but has since come into the position of providing such cooperation herself. This is usually in the form of financial cooperation or business development. It is very hard to decide whether India's activities should be seen as development policy measures according to Western

understanding or simply as business development for Indian companies because it is difficult to find reliable data. At the present time, over 75% of Indian development aid flows into the neighboring states of South Asia. Although India provides quite generous aid in part, she is not a member of international consortia like the Nepal Aid Group. Instead, she has built up her own institutions for distributing her funds.⁷⁴ At the same time, she offers a number of educational and training programs within the framework of the ITEC.

This brings up the question of whether India could become a partner for the German and the European policies promoting democracy and good governance, for example in Africa. China has supported authoritarian regimes in Africa for several years, in order to secure its energy and resource interests. This has introduced a discussion as to whether, analogous to the development model of the Western industrial countries, as it was formulated in the Washington Consensus at the beginning of the 1990's, there is in the meantime also a Beijing Consensus following which Chinese ideas of a political order are exported. India has increased her involvement in Africa significantly in recent years, in spite of the fact that only approx. 3% of Indian development aid flows into African states.⁷⁵ However, it is obvious from her policies in Africa that she is, just like China, interested in the resources and energy, whereas democracy and good governance play a minor role in the Indian Africa Agenda.⁷⁶ In spite of their competition, both states are increasingly working together, for example in the exploration of oil wells in Sudan. India is very intensively involved in Sudan and remains unimpressed by international criticism concerning the violation of human rights by the regime there. India gives loans, participates in infrastructure projects, trains Sudanese diplomats and reserves 100 openings within the ITEC-program for Sudan. On the other hand, India has been responsible for a strengthening of democratic regimes in Africa. She sent election observers to the 2001 and 2002 elections in Benin, and the Ivory Coast government sent a delegation to India on the occasion of the 2004 elections.⁷⁷

⁷¹ Cf. Sudha Ramachandran, "India Promotes 'Goodwill' Naval Exercises", in: *Asia Times*, 8.14.2007, www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/IH14Df01.html (viewed on August 15, 2007).

⁷² For an overview of the fleet maneuvers without reference to the Quad-Initiative see Ministry of Defence, *Annual Report 2007-2008*, New Delhi 2008, pp. 32f.

⁷³ Chairman's Statement, *The Bali Democracy Forum*, Bali 2008, p. 4 (mimeographed paper).

⁷⁴ Cf. Loewen, "The 'Quadrilateral Initiative'" [see fn. 68].

⁷⁵ Cf. Ministry of External Affairs, *Annual Report 2007-2008*, [see fn. 53], p. 158.

⁷⁶ Cf. Christian Wagner, "Auf leisen Sohlen. Indiens Engagement in Afrika", in: *eins Entwicklungspolitik*, No. 6-7, May 2007, pp. 46f.

⁷⁷ Cf. Ministry of External Affairs, *Annual Report* [various years], <http://meaindia.nic.in>.

Before, the Africa Forum Summit Meeting in Delhi in April 2008, representatives of the Indian Ministry of Foreign Affairs pointed out that in development cooperation, India focuses on third states like Brazil that have a colonial heritage of their own, rather than on European actors.⁷⁸ Thus, in respect to a partnership for development cooperation between India and the Western industrial countries, there has so far been no point of contact which could serve as a common basis for the propagation and settling of good governance.

78 Cf. Sandeep Dikshit, "India to Shun Partnership with West in Africa", in: *The Hindu*, February 13, 2008, www.hindu.com/2008/02/13/stories/2008021360171300.htm (viewed on February 14, 2008).

Prospects: India as Partner of the West in the Promotion of Democracy

The above case studies show that 'democracy' has a rather low priority in Indian foreign affairs so far. National interests, like security concerns vis-à-vis China and Pakistan, economic and trade considerations, or the question of energy supply have a significantly greater weight in foreign policy decisions than normative considerations concerning the promotion of democracy.

The most important source of this restraint is the principle of non-interference that has had particular importance in the foreign policy discourse in India since Nehru's time. Democracy is not seen as a resource by the foreign policy elite, as a soft-power-factor in the sense of an attractive societal model that might serve as a model for other states. That promotion of democracy has come onto the Indian foreign policy agenda since the 1990's, is to be seen in the context of improved relations with the USA. By recognizing the relevance of the promotion of democracy, India was able to emphasize her good relations with the USA and through her involvement with the UN-organizations was able to show her international responsibility as well as her ambitions to become a major world power.

In practice, however, there are clear differences to the Western strategies for the promotion of democracy. These differences can be attributed to India's attempt to strike a balance between her foreign policy priorities and interests and the external requirements. Thus, the country carries out her measures for the promotion of democracy within the framework of inter-governmental cooperation and concentrates mainly on educational and training projects. In this way, India can first of all satisfy the imperative of non-interference. Secondly, she can show her involvement in the promotion of democracy to the Western industrial countries. And thirdly, this form of promotion of democracy is a signal to the neighboring countries in terms of the Gujral Doctrine: India is willing to support democratic processes and institutions in her region without, however, falling back into policies of intervention like those that were characteristic for India's South Asia policy of the 1970's and 1980's.

For this reason, the demand of the European Union that India should use her influence to strengthen

democracy in the neighboring states and to resolve conflicts, fails to recognize the limitations of Indian foreign policy.⁷⁹ The development of India's bilateral relations in her surrounding region shows that the limitations of Indian influence are the result of the process of nation-building in the neighboring countries. India has numerous possibilities for political, economic and societal influence in countries like Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. However, in the internal political debates of these neighboring countries, the issue of distancing themselves from India is a constant point of contention. Thus, India is almost always seen as part of the problem there, rather than as part of the solution. This discourse is the most pronounced in Pakistan, but there are similar tendencies in Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and to some extent also in Myanmar. Against the background of the variable and mostly negative experiences of the South Asian neighbors, it becomes clear why India will only be pursuing a very restrained and defensive strategy for the promotion of democracy in the foreseeable future.

⁷⁹ Cf. "India Should Use Influence for Neighbourhood Peace: EU", *Press Trust of India (PTI)*, January 4, 2008.

Abbreviations

AL	Awami League (Bangladesh)
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
BDF	Bali Democracy Forum
BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party (India)
BNP	Bangladesh Nationalist Party
CoD	Community of Democracies
CPI(M)	Communist Party of India (Marxist)
GDI	Global Democracy Initiative
IPKF	Indian Peace Keeping Forces
ITEC	Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation
JVP	Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (Sri Lanka)
KIO	Kachin Independence Organization (Burma)
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (Sri Lanka)
NC	Nepali Congress
NLD	National League for Democracy (Burma)
NWFP	North West Frontier Province
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SP	Samajwadi Party (India)
ULF	United Left Front (Nepal)
ULFA	United Liberation Front of Asom (India)
UN	United Nations
UPA	United Progressive Alliance (India)
WTO	World Trade Organization