

Chapter 5 Contemporary South Asia

Q 1. Identify the country:

1. The struggle among pro-monarchy, pro-democracy groups and extremists created an atmosphere of political instability.
2. A landlocked country with the multi-party competition.
3. The first country to Liberalise the economy in the South Asian region.
4. In the conflict between the military and pro-democracy groups, the military has prevailed over democracy.
5. Centrally located and shares borders with most of the South Asian Countries.
6. Earlier the island had the Sultans as the head of state. Now, it is a republic.
7. Small savings and credit cooperatives in rural areas have helped in reducing poverty.
8. A landlocked country with a monarchy.

Ans.

1. Nepal.
 2. Bhutan.
 3. India.
 4. Pakistan.
 5. India.
 6. Maldives.
 7. India.
 8. Nepal.
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Q 2. Which among the following statements about South Asia is wrong?

1. All the countries in South Asia are democratic.
2. Bangladesh and India have signed an agreement on river-water sharing.
3. SAFTA was signed at the 12th SAARC Summit in South Asian politics.
4. The US and China play an influential role in South Asian politics.

Ans. a. All the countries in South Asia are democratic.

Q 3. What are some of the commonalities and differences between Bangladesh and Pakistan in their democratic experiences?

Ans. There are some commonalities as well as differences between Bangladesh and Pakistan in their democratic experiences as mentioned below:

Commonalities:

- The majority population in both these countries are muslim.
- There has been military take over in both countries from time to time.
- There have been pro-democracy movements in both countries.

Differences:

- Pakistan has nuclear arsenals but Bangladesh is without it.
 - Bangladesh has declared its faith in secularism, democracy and socialism in its constitution and Pakistan still remain an Islamic State.
 - The representative democracy based on multi party elections has been working in Bangladesh since 1991. In the case of Pakistan democratic government has been functioning since the downfall of president Parvez Musharaff.
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Q 4. List three challenges to democracy in Nepal.

Ans. The following are the three challenges to democracy in Nepal:

1. For some time, there was a triangular conflict among the monarchist forces, the democrats and the Maoists.
 2. In 2002, the king abolished the parliament and dismissed the government, thus ending even the limited democracy that existed in Nepal.
 3. In April 2006, there were massive, country wide, pro- democracy protests. The struggling pro-democracy forces achieved their first major victory when the king was forced to restore the House of Representatives that had been dissolved in April 2002. The largely non-violent movement was led by the Seven Party Alliance (SPA), the Maoists and social activists.
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Q 5. Name the principal players in the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. How do you assess the prospects of the resolution of this conflict?

Ans. The principal players in the ethnic conflict of Sri Lanka were:

1. After its independence, politics in Sri Lanka was dominated by forces that represented the interest of the majority Sinhala community.
2. The Sinhala community were hostile to a large number of Tamils who had migrated from India to Sri Lanka and settled there. This migration continued even after independence. The Sinhala nationalists thought that Sri Lanka should not give 'concessions' to the Tamils because Sri Lanka belongs to the Sinhala people only.

The neglect of Tamil concerns led to militant Tamil nationalism. From 1983 on wards, the militant organisation, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) has been fighting an armed struggle with the army of Sri Lanka and demanding 'Tamil Eelam' or a separate country for the Tamils of Sri Lanka. The LTTE controls the northeastern parts of Sri Lanka.

Despite the ravages of internal conflict, it has maintained a democratic political system and registered considerable economic growth and a high level of human development.

Q 6. Mention some of the recent agreements between India and Pakistan. Can we be sure that the two countries are well in their way to a friendly relationship?

Ans. Some of the recent agreements between India and Pakistan are:

1. The two countries have agreed to undertake confidence building measures to reduce the risk of war.
2. Social activists and prominent personalities have collaborated to create an atmosphere of friendship among the people of both countries.

3. Leaders have met at summits to better understand each other better and to find a solution to the major problems between the two neighbours.
4. A number of bus routes have been opened up between two countries.
5. Trade between the two parts of Punjab has increased substantially in the last five years.
6. Visas have been more easily given.

Despite the above-mentioned agreements and initiatives, we cannot say that both the countries are well in their way to friendship. India and Pakistan are holding negotiations on all issues but still, some areas of conflict exist there to be sorted out.

Q 7. Mention areas each of cooperation and disagreement between India and Bangladesh.

Ans. Disagreement:

The governments of India and Bangladesh have had differences over several issues:

1. The sharing of the Ganga and Brahmaputra river waters.
2. The Indian government has been unhappy with Bangladesh's denial of illegal immigration to India, its support for anti-Indian Islamic fundamentalist groups.
3. Bangladesh's refusal to allow Indian troops to move through its territory to northeastern India.
4. Decision not to export natural gas to India or allow Myanmar to do so through Bangladeshi territory.
5. Bangladeshi governments have felt that the Indian government behaves like a regional bully over the sharing of river waters, encouraging rebellion in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, trying to extract its natural gas and being unfair in trade.
6. The two countries have not succeeded in resolving their border disputes.

Cooperation:

Despite their differences, India and Bangladesh do cooperate on many issues such as:

1. Economic relations have improved considerably in the last ten years.
 2. Bangladesh is a part of India's Look East policy that wants to link up with Southeast Asia via Myanmar.
 3. On disaster management and environmental issues, the two states have cooperated regularly.
 4. Efforts are on to broaden the areas of cooperation further by identifying common threats and being more sensitive to each other's needs.
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Q 8. How are the external powers influencing bilateral relations in South Asia? Take anyone example to illustrate your point.

Ans. The external powers influence bilateral relations in South Asia because no region exists in the vacuum. It is influenced by outside powers and events no matter how much it may try to insulate itself from non-regional powers:

1. China and the United States remain key players in South Asian politics.
2. Sino-Indian relations have improved significantly in the last ten years, but China's strategic partnership with Pakistan remains a major irritant.
3. The demands of development and globalisation have brought the two Asian giants closer and their economic ties have multiplied rapidly since 1991.
4. The US enjoys good relations with both India and Pakistan since the end of the Cold War and increasingly works as a moderator in India-Pakistan relations.

5. Economic reforms and liberal economic policies in both countries have greatly increased the depth of American participation in the region.
 6. The large South Asian diasporas in the US and the huge size of population and markets of the region also give America an added stake in the future of regional security and peace.
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Q 9. Write a short note on the role and the limitations of SAARC as a forum for facilitating economic cooperation among the South Asian Countries.

Ans. The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) is a major regional initiative by the South Asian states to evolve cooperation through multilateral means. It began in 1985, consisting of seven members to encourage mutual harmony and understanding. Unfortunately, due to persisting political differences, SAARC has not had much success. SAARC members signed the South Asian Free Trade (SAFTA) agreement which promised the formation of a free trade zone for the whole of South Asia.

A new chapter of peace and cooperation might evolve in South Asia if all the countries in the region allow free trade across the borders. This is the spirit behind the idea of SAFTA. The Agreement was signed in 2004 and came into effect on 1 January 2006. SAFTA aims at lowering trade tariffs to 20 percent by 2007. But some of our neighbours fear that SAFTA is a way for India to 'invade' their markets and to influence their societies and politics through commercial ventures and a commercial presence in their countries.

India thinks that there are real economic benefits for all from SAFTA and that a region that trades more freely will be able to cooperate better on political issues. Some in India think that SAFTA is not worth the trouble since India already has bilateral agreements with Bhutan, Nepal and Sri Lanka.

Q 10. India's neighbours often think that the Indian government tries to dominate and interfere in the domestic affairs of the smaller countries of the region. Is this a correct impression?

Ans. It is almost incorrect to view that the Indian government tries to dominate and interfere in the domestic affairs of the smaller countries of the region.

1. India's neighbours are suspicious of her intentions due to its size and powers but the fact is that India wants stability in South Asia so that countries can make progress.
2. India is at the centre of South Asia. It shares boundaries with almost all the countries of the region. It has some differences and problems with its neighbours. However, India's policy is to solve them by peaceful means.
3. Political stability is necessary for the development of the region. Political instability will not only hinder progress and development, but it will also allow outside power to increase their influence in the region.

The above examination clearly clears the impression.