

**Department of Political Science**

**University of Delhi, Delhi**

**UGC CAS/SAP National Seminar**

## **India's Neighbourhood Policy: Issues and Challenges**

### **Concept Note**

India has a unique geo-strategic position on the map of the world. The size, the relief features, the political-economy and the diverse populace makes it one of the few nations that constantly has to negotiate with different actors on differing terms. In recent years, India has embarked on a Neighbourhood First policy. The policy is based on according political priority to its neighbours, establishing greater connectivity, encouraging free flow of goods and services. This policy seems successful in certain areas. Settlement of land boundary agreement with Bangladesh and hydropower cooperation with Bhutan exemplify this. Historically, the process of decolonisation resulted into the formation of independent sovereign states in the Indian sub-continent. However, the partition of India in 1947 and later the formation of Bangladesh in 1971 led a tense relationship among the newly independent states. Despite its unique legacy of shared cultural and historical identity, South Asian region is still struggling to accommodate its fragmented identity. This struggle has far reaching implications for the states of the region.

Despite the efforts by India in the direction of cooperation with its neighbours and to maintain cordial relationships by adopting policies such as the Look East policy and Neighbourhood First policy, it faces major challenges. While India has open borders with neighbours Nepal and Bhutan, it faces major threats from its other immediate neighbours like China and Pakistan. The recent Citizenship Amendment Act has further evoked reactions that range from considering India as an intrusive power to viewing it as regional hegemon in making.

Added to this are the forces of globalisation that is shaping a new world order. In past two decades, India has also been moving beyond its immediate neighbourhood, from South Asia and SAARC nations to its 'Extended neighbourhood' eastwards and westwards owing to geo-economic considerations. China's 'One Belt One Road' initiative and its incursions in the Indian Ocean is also a matter of rising Indian concerns in the maritime domain in both its immediate and extended neighbourhood.

This seminar, therefore, attempts to address various aspects of India's neighbourhood approach and underline the changing socio-political, economic and security dynamics of the region to understand challenges that confront India's foreign policy towards its neighbours. In pursuance of these, the Department of Political Science, University of Delhi seeks to provide a platform for discussions and deliberations on 'India's Neighbourhood Policy: Issues and Challenges'. The theme is relevant owing to the fact that South Asia as a region and India in particular is increasingly becoming conspicuous in the global arena.

Within this framework, the conference aims to achieve the following objectives:

- To analyse India's political, economic and cultural engagements with its 'extended neighbourhood'.
- To study the evolving geopolitical dynamics in the Asian region and worldwide and impact of extra-regional countries on India's neighbourhood policy.
- To understand strategic implications of India's 'Neighbourhood First' policy.
- To further examine rising India's role as a great power in the 'Asian Century' in terms of its relations with neighbouring states.
- To explore future directions in India's relations with its immediate and extended neighbours.

### **About University of Delhi**

University of Delhi is a premier university of the country with a venerable legacy and international acclaim for highest academic standards, diverse educational programmes, distinguished faculty, illustrious alumni, varied co-curricular activities and modern infrastructure. Over the many years of its existence, the University has sustained the highest global standards and best practices in higher education. Its long-term commitment to nation building and unflinching adherence to universal human values are reflected in its motto: '*Nishtha Dhriti Satyam*' (Dedication, Steadfastness and Truth). Established in 1922 as a unitary, teaching and residential University by the Act of the then Central Legislative Assembly, a strong commitment to excellence in teaching, research and social outreach has made the University a role-model and trend setter for other universities. The President of India is the Visitor, the Vice-President is the Chancellor and the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of India is the Pro-Chancellor of the University. Beginning with three colleges and 750 students, it has grown as one of the largest universities in India with 16 faculties, over 80 academic departments, an equal number of colleges and over seven lakh students.

### **About Department of Political Science**

The Department of Political Science, University of Delhi, enjoys an exceptional reputation in both teaching and research in the discipline. Extremely rich in academic potential, comprising a faculty known widely for their research and teaching, abilities, it ranks easily among the best departments in the country. The Department was established in 1952, with about 40 postgraduate students. Since then the strength of the students has gone beyond 800. Department of Political Science has immensely contributed towards creating domain knowledge through curriculum development. This has resulted in Department being awarded as Centre of Advanced Study by UGC under Special Assistance Program since 2010 and now it is under stage II of the process from 2016.