

At the same time **India turned towards Southeast Asia** in search for avenues that can be explored for engagement in economic and strategic arena. Previously, in the duration of the cold war India had been largely oblivious to the states of Southeast Asia. With the opening of its markets to foreign investment and an eye on development of a viable export sector, the country embarked upon a **“Look East policy” after 1991**. While these changes were afoot, the P.V. Narasimha Rao Government in **1992**, in the context of the **Oslo Accord** between Israel and the Palestinians, **upgraded its diplomatic relations with Israel to the ambassadorial level**.

With **China** the Narasimha Rao government continued a process that had been initiated during the Rajiv Gandhi government. During the Prime Minister **Narsimha Rao’s visit to China in September 1993** a land mark **agreement on the Maintenance of Peace and Tranquillity along the Line of Actual Control (LAC)** in the India - China Border Area was signed. This was followed up by the **visit of Chinese President Jiang Zemin in 1996** when another **agreement on Confidence-Building Measures (CBM) in the Military Field** was signed.

In the neighbourhood India reassessed its tactics to bring about transformation in relations with its neighbours. The neighbourhood was identified as the **first concentric circle of India’s foreign policy** and in policy terms this was reflected in the **Gujral Doctrine of 1996**, named so after the then Foreign Minister Inder Kumar Gujral .

The five key principles of Gujral Doctrine were as follows:

- With neighbours viz. Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka, **India must not ask for reciprocity**, but should give all that it can in good faith and trust.
- No South Asian country would allow its territory to be used against the interest of another country
- No country would interfere in the internal affairs of another.
- South Asian Countries should respect each other’s territorial integrity and sovereignty
- Countries of South Asia must settle all their disputes through peaceful bilateral negotiations.

However, for most part in the 1990s the **relations with Pakistan remained contentious**. This was majorly on account Pakistan’s role in the **armed insurgency in Jammu and Kashmir since December 1989**. With the outbreak of the insurgency Pakistan’s leadership helped transform a largely internal militancy into an ideologically charged **proxy war**. In this context and in view of the **clandestine nuclear programme of Islamabad** concerns regarding conventional military balance played large on India’s security calculations.

Coupled with the Pakistan factor, the calculation from nuclear threat posed by China drove **India’s nuclear weapons program to its next stage**. In this scenario, the successful **extension of NPT in 1995** and the efforts by United States to complete the **Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT)**, which came up in **1996**, coincided with India seriously considering its nuclear options. Thus, the Indian policymakers chose to exercise the nuclear option to thwart rising pressures to accede to the international nuclear regimes. India declared itself a fully fledged nuclear state after **5 nuclear tests at Pokharan in May 1998**. This attracted **sanctions from United States and the other great powers**; and led to the recognition of India as a de facto nuclear power in the later years.

2.3.1. Beginning of A New Era

This was also the beginning of an era of **new engagement with the United States**, which involved bilateral negotiations between **US Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott and India’s Minister of External Affairs Jaswant Singh (1998-2000)**. This was followed by a visit of **President Clinton to India in 2000**. The upswing in these relations since this period culminated in the **Civil Nuclear Deal of 2005** which de-facto recognized India as a nuclear power as well as