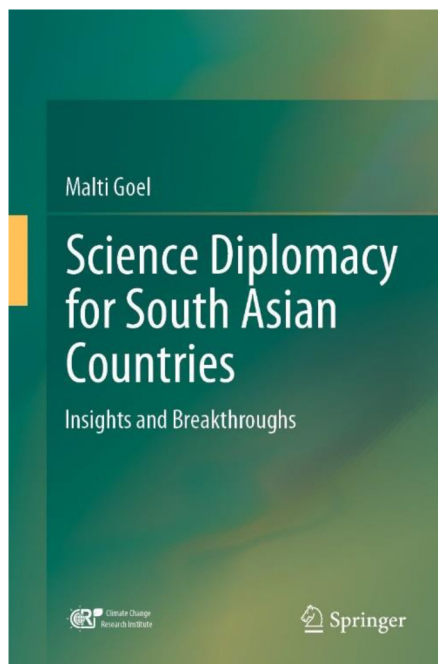


South Asian Science Diplomacy in a Nutshell



Science Diplomacy for South Asian Countries: Insights and Breakthroughs; by Malti Goel, Springer Nature, 2021, ISBN 9789811630248. Price not known.

Can South Asia sustain the momentum of growth rate by adopting science diplomacy for a noble cause? We need to grasp the basics of science diplomacy. There is no standard manual for it. The book titled 'Science Diplomacy for South Asian Countries: Insights and Breakthroughs', is a unique book to elaborate the multiple approaches to the role of Science Diplomacy in foreign affairs with a focus on the South Asian region. India is no doubt the fastest growing economy in the region. Emerging as global hub in providing software services, it is yet to fully display the power of science diplomacy to integrate science into the foreign affairs of the sovereign nations especially in South Asia.

Among the developing nations, there is a realization that science diplomacy is much less known. Opangmeren Jamir of the Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA), New Delhi, opines "Regional initiatives relating to science diplomacy in South Asia are largely absent". Shortage of financial resources with multi-lateral agencies like the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and lack

of political will are cited as reasons preventing scientists from taking initiatives.

In this background, the author has covered various issues about insights and breakthroughs in Science Diplomacy for South Asian Countries in 214 pages. The book delves into three parts, namely, Global Perspectives, South Asian Countries and S&T: Case for Science Diplomacy, and Tackling Global and Regional Challenges. The book includes 13 Chapters, and eight Appendices. Part 1 'Global Perspectives' begins by describing the concepts and contours of science diplomacy. Three distinct contours for science diplomacy are; Science in Diplomacy, it helps to provide inputs to foreign policy, such as information on the latest scientific and technological advancements to facilitate cross-border collaboration. Diplomacy for Science, it aims to strengthen science and innovation through international cooperation agreements. Science for Diplomacy, it comes to the fore when conflicts among the nations using science cooperation to improve strained relations and finding a scientific approach to resolve a difficult situation. Examples of several mega science projects through science diplomacy between developed and developing countries are included.

Prof D.P. Agrawal, in his Foreword, opines "Science diplomacy is a much less-known concept among the developing countries". He reminisced about his experience on South Asian countries perspectives while serving as the Chairperson of UPSC. India



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needs to take action to develop strategies to make it a win-win situation for the partners. He recommended the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) should come forward by creating an arm of science diplomacy for South Asia. New Delhi-based think tank, the Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), has taken a key role in this area.

There is need to explore the significant potential of science diplomacy by taking actions for South Asian countries to come together. In the Part 2 of the book on 'South Asian Countries and S&T: Case for Science Diplomacy' explores the existing S&T collaborations between India and neighbouring countries namely; Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka and role of SAARC. The author provides examples of science diplomacy from Indian perspectives. She shares her perspectives on science diplomacy between India and Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Pakistan, respectively in subsequent chapters.

Progress in Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in South Asian region has a critical role in achieving the global SDGs agenda by 2030. Part 3 of the book on 'Tackling Global and Regional Challenges' is strong point of the author on how science diplomacy can address global grand challenges of this century viz. climate change mitigation and sustainable development goals through science cooperation in south Asian countries.

A unique feature of the book is the subject experts' perspectives on science diplomacy. Their viewpoint would be of immense interest to readers who would like to take further steps towards diplomacy beyond an S&T collaboration on a topic of their concern.

Prof. Dorairajan Balasubramanian, former Vice President of the World Academy of Sciences, Italy, and Former President of the Indian Academy of Sciences, Bangaluru, in his foreword indicates "The book on Science Diplomacy for South Asian Countries: Insights and Breakthroughs is a laudable and brave attempt to catalyze understanding of science diplomacy cross-cutting concepts among the scientists and diplomats in South Asian countries. The need for the book is apparent". We need 'diplomats'

with scientific appraisal and 'scientists' conversant with the art of diplomacy. He compliments Dr. Malti Goel for her pioneering effort to take the first step to create awareness and unravel the disparities and difficulties in cooperation, with possible strategies for adopting science diplomacy in South Asian countries.

The book is inclusive about science diplomacy perspectives for eight SAARC member countries and Myanmar at one place. It is a notable book for understanding the major worldwide trends in Science Diplomacy. While creating awareness among the researchers, students and policymakers in South Asian countries, it would do well to motivate them to harness the potential for sustainable growth of the region.

The book enlightens the readers on the conceptual framework of Science Diplomacy, as it is practiced globally and in South Asian countries. Science Diplomacy in India draws deep impetus from the Regional S&T Cooperation that has been practiced since independence. Science Diplomacy evolves as a key multilateral and bilateral instrument to achieve many common goals by the member nations. Achieving the climate change mitigation, or implementation of the Global Goals require a committed approach of scientific and technological cooperations and collaborations that Science Diplomacy promotes passionately. The cases of Science Diplomacy discussed in this book help us understand the nuances of Science Diplomacy approaches and breakthroughs. At the end, the book includes six interviews of prominent scholars and practitioners who unfolded Science Diplomacy stories around them.

The book is an essential read for the public policymakers, policy analysts, researchers, diplomats, and civil service aspirants in India and South Asia.

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