

Impact of India's Foreign Policy on Its National Interest

Archita Anand

MA International Politics School of International Studies, JNU, New Delhi
Corresponding Author: Archita Anand

ABSTRACT: Development of Nation-States and increasing interactions among them has resulted into formation of foreign policy in the modern times. Kautilya enunciated six basic principles of foreign policy in the form of 'Circles of States' in Arthashastra such as peace, war, neutrality, show of force, alliance, and making peace with one and waging war with another. These principles continue to remain effective instruments of diplomacy as they were several thousand years ago. Vasudhaiva Kutumbkam encompasses the modern concept of globalization, inter-dependence and co-existence. From the time of its independence or prior to that Indian foreign policy remains primarily responsive and characterized by relative caution. Post-cold war India has focused on two key aspects: realignment of its relations with the USA and adoption of nuclear weapon. Foreign policy of India assures its emergence as a power with an effective presence on the international stage. In the present scenario, political stability and regional peace are governing India towards a successful foreign policy and economic growth. Present paper discusses about the political and economic considerations within which foreign policy of India is being made and has changed in changing times.

KEYWORD: Foreign policy, diplomacy, Look East Policy, ASEAN

Date of Submission: 23-04-2018

Date of acceptance: 08-05-2018

I INTRODUCTION

The foreign policy of a country is the sum total of the principles, interests and objectives which it seeks to promote through its relations with other countries. Since it influences and changes behaviour of other states and adjusts its own activities to the international environment, hence, the conduct and formulation of foreign policy is governed by the interplay of a number of factors such as institutions, processes and personalities. Foreign policy acts just like radar on the ship. As radar helps in navigation of ship towards destination, foreign policy leads the state in fulfilling its national interest and acquiring rightful place among comity of nation-states. Priorities in developing bilateral relations or participation in multilateral forums, clear cut idea of friends and enemies in the international sphere, issues of export/import and many others can be dealt with ease when a clear cut foreign policy is there in place. Foreign policy not only protects unity and integrity of the nation but also defends interest of its citizens, and aims at promotion of economic progress of the country. In modern times, economic development is one of the key factors in determining state's international status.

II FACTORS INFLUENCING THE MAKING OF FOREIGN POLICY

A number of factors, whether external or internal, influence the foreign policy.

- A number of factors are crucial in international sphere, which keep changing according to various situations. Economic development with technological advancement, social structure and ideology influences the formulation of foreign policy in many ways. The foremost important factor is the security of the borders of nations which play important role in its foreign policy.
- In one place, big size, huge population and geo-political position, such as India's position, impacts the foreign relations. India's huge population once thought to be a burden on the nation, now seen as huge human resource and provides strength to its foreign policy. However the small size and strategic location of both Bhutan and Nepal are guiding their respective foreign policies. Availability of huge amount of natural resources, viz. oil and gas in west Asian region dominates its foreign policy.
- Form of government establishment plays a critical role in a country's foreign policy.
- Above all, leadership influences country's foreign policy to a greater extent. Leader's belief about the international arena, his/her peculiar intellectual strengths and weaknesses and the ability to present the country like a lucrative package to the world forum and the will to convert the promises into reality always lay a strong foundation for a foreign policy which will definitely contribute for the development of nation. Examples of such leadership are there in India where decision making process helped India in countering diplomatic pressures applied by the world super powers. Whether it is the time of Indira Gandhi in 1971 or Atal Bihari Vajpayee in 1998, leadership played a crucial role during crucial times. Presently the foreign

policy of India is focused on improving relations with neighbouring countries in South Asia, engaging the extended neighbourhood in Southeast Asia and the major global powers.

III FOREIGN POLICY OF INDIA

Indian foreign policy revolves around three concentric circles:

1. Immediate neighbourhood where India has sought to consolidate its position and has attempted, though in a limited manner – to keep the ‘outside powers’ from direct influence or interference within region.
2. Extended neighbourhood stretching across Asia and the Indian Ocean littoral, where India has sought to balance the influence of other powers and attempted to prevent them from undercutting its own national interests, and
3. Entire globe, India has endeavoured to make its place as one of the great powers – a key player in international peace and security.

It is in each of these concentric circles that a transformation is seen in terms of policy postures.

3.10 In 20th Century

The 20th Century Indian foreign Policy was largely influenced by the contemporary developments world over. India maintained a balance between the two power groups and diplomatic relations with almost all independent states. The balancing act was reflected at host of issues like disarmament, racial discrimination, colonialism and china's UN membership, India was clearly with communist bloc, however, on major issues of aggression of North Korea, the US military adventurism in Korea etc. India criticises communists. Although India became member of both UN as well as Commonwealth but at the same time follow an independent course. The essence of foreign policy was Non-alignment and strategic autonomy. The thought behind the foreign affairs was that whatever policy may be laid down, it should be implemented to the most advantageous proposition to the country. The policy was balancing between thoughts of Indian National Movement with idealist currents and moral politics on one hand and diplomatic legacy of the British Raj in devising India's policies especially in dealing with the neighbourhood states of Bhutan, Sikkim, and Nepal during 1949-50 in Asia and the Indian Ocean for the supremacy of Indian subcontinent on the other. For the rebuilding of nation after independence, India tied up with both east and west for economic cooperation.

During the course of time, India's foreign policy during 20th century underwent a dramatic change which brought realist phase in India's dealing in international relations. First Nuclear Test in Pokharan in 1974 and India's role in East Pakistan and the creation of Bangladesh and close and friendly relations with the Soviet Union were the highlights of the foreign policy during 1960 to 1980.

3.20 Post-Cold War

After the collapse of Soviet Union, there was a need to redesign the foreign policy. It was necessary for India to avoid the distinct possibility of marginalisation in the emergent global order. During 1990s the State-led model of socialism was collapsed in India also and India changed its policy from closed economy to globalisation. Impact of India's search for its due place in the international order which is largely dominated by the US, an accommodation with the global nuclear order as the international system comes to terms with ‘nuclear’ India; India's balancing act of tackling the challenge of global terrorism without alienating its Islamic minority; and India's search for energy security to ensure its current rate of economic growth has been seen on the international relations of India. The look east policy helped in renewing political and economic contacts and the emphasis of historic cultural and ideological links with the countries of East and South-East Asia. During this time India realised the importance of redressing imbalance in foreign policy and adopted Look East Policy to improve the relations with its South East Asian neighbours for the strategic defence and military cooperation with nations concerned by the expansion of China's economic and strategic influence.

The strong commercial, cultural and military relations established with Philippines, Singapore, Vietnam and Cambodia and free trade agreements with Sri Lanka and East Asian economies including a Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement with Singapore and an Early Harvest Scheme with Thailand strengthened the position of India in the region.

India's focus on a strengthened and multi-faceted relationship with ASEAN is an outcome of the significant changes in the world's political and economic scenario since the early 1990s and India's own march towards economic liberalisation. India also started negotiations with ASEAN and the partnership has progressed steadily since the launch of Look East Policy in 1991. India became sectoral dialogue partner in 1992 and full dialogue partner in 1996. Since 2002, India has annual Summits with ASEAN along with China, Japan and Republic of Korea.

Government of the day also expanded efforts to encourage foreign investment, especially from Europe and the United States. A lot of efforts in the field of privatisation and infrastructure were initiated to attract more

and more foreign investments in the country. To establish and maintain good relations with its neighbours, India adopted Bus-Diplomacy with Pakistan. The relations with People's Republic of China also improved to boost the trade and seeking to resolve the territorial disputes through dialogue. India also established strategic and military cooperation with Israel to fight terrorism. During 1998, India conducted a series of nuclear tests for peaceful energy solutions; however, limited sanctions were imposed by U.S., UK, Canada and other nations

3.20 In 21st Century

Since the inception of foreign policy after independence, it is evolving to meet the new challenges and unprecedented crisis situations. The foremost task is the transformation of economy and society while promoting the values of ancient Indian culture of pluralism, democracy and secularism. Indian policy establishment has been confronting multiple existential issues and threats such as the inevitable rise of China and the intensified US-China competition in the Asia-Pacific on one hand and the revival and reconsideration of India's relations with Africa and the power volatility of the Middle East in the context of sustained energy supply and energy security on the other, and expansion and consolidation of relations with South East Asia and Japan, dealing with the nuclear issues are the major policy issues India is tackling quite effectively.

On the home front, issues like persistent threat of Kashmir issue, India's politics of anti-terrorism are shaping its foreign policy to a greater extent. The Indo-US civil nuclear deal put India on the map of nuclear states recognizing its potential and immense capabilities. Recently India joins Missile Technology Control Regime after clearing final hurdles is a win for its leadership. India's entry into the NSG will also consolidate its position and provide it due recognition.

The Look East Policy changed into Act East Policy and focusses on the extended neighbourhood in the Asia-Pacific region. The objective of "Act East Policy" is to promote economic cooperation, cultural ties and develop strategic relationship with countries in the Asia-Pacific region through continuous engagement at bilateral, regional and multilateral levels thereby providing enhanced connectivity to the States of North Eastern Region including Arunachal Pradesh with other countries in our neighbourhood. However China sees it as an attempt not only to extend its own regional influence both multilaterally through various regional groups (ASEAN, EAS) and bilaterally (agreements with Japan, Singapore, Vietnam) but also to enter basically what China assumes as its own region of influence. Sino-India relations are not only complicated and multifaceted but exist at various levels.

Various plans at bilateral and regional levels include steady efforts to develop and strengthen connectivity of Northeast with the ASEAN region through trade, culture, people-to-people contacts and physical infrastructure (road, airport, telecommunication, power, etc.). Some of the major projects include Kaladan Multi-modal Transit Transport Project, the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway Project, Rhi-Tiddim Road Project, Border Haats, etc.

During last decade India's multilateral relations with countries around the world have gained tremendous momentum. India has become a member of a wide array of multilateral bodies in economic and other spheres. India's participation is visible in a number of such bodies like G-20, BRICS, IBSA, as well as with those fora with pronounced thrust towards economic cooperation like ASEAN, EAS, WTO, BIMSTEC etc.

In the extended region too, India is seeking new friends and partners to strengthen its linkages with other states. For instance, India has fostered a long standing relationship with the Northern Alliance and Prime Minister Hamid Karzai to support stability and growth in Afghanistan, including providing over \$750 million in assistance and infrastructure support. The Friendship Dam in Afghanistan and its parliament are the latest examples of its longstanding relationship with Afghanistan.

Energy security for the growing India is crucial. India is focusing on a foreign policy to obtain/sustain around 10% economic growth. India is one of the largest consumers of energy, consuming more than the other developing countries and has come under serious criticism, because of its lack of commitment towards a serious environment policy. India's traditional suppliers of energy resources have been the Middle-East and Africa. In an attempt to widen its network of suppliers India has sought partnerships in Latin America between the ONGC Videsh and other oil companies in the region. India is also seeking to bring on board the countries of Central Asia which have large depositories of natural resources and can help in sustaining India's growth and development. In an effort to ensure access to energy resources, India will need to continue focus on the Middle East region particularly on countries like Iran who is currently providing 10 % of India's oil, and is the fourth largest provider after Saudi Arabia, Nigeria and Kuwait.

The National Solar Mission is a major initiative of the Government of India and State Governments to promote ecologically sustainable growth while addressing India's energy security challenges. The program was inaugurated in January 2010 with a target of 20GW by 2022 which was later increased to 100 GW in 2015 Union budget of India. The objective of the National Solar Mission is to establish India as a global leader in solar energy, by creating the policy conditions for its diffusion across the country as quickly as

possible. However, United States filed a case with WTO against India for restricting the critical materials used to domestic content.

India's foreign policy has acquired a new sense of direction. It is pragmatic. Moreover, it is imbued with a serious dose of realism seeking to make multi-directional engagements in global politics. However, there seems to be an unfinished agenda when it comes to India's relations with Asia. Likewise, the issue of Pakistan and the 'deficit of thrust' related to it continue to plague India-China relations. Strengthening relations with Africa, South America, and Central Asia must be undertaken with similar vigour. The agenda and themes are much better defined than before and with a sense of strategic planning.

With the change in government in 2014, the foreign policy of India changes to a more economy-centric direction. The focus is on improving relations with neighbouring countries in South Asia, extended neighbourhood in Southeast Asia and major global powers with a vision, enthusiasm and energy with which India is shaping its international relations.

Due to deepening economic interdependence with the rest of the world, India's appreciation of the developing world has also been changed. From a past view of third-world nations as part of an anti-Western trade union, New Delhi now sees them as markets for its products, sources of raw material, potential recipients of India's expanding foreign aid, and partners in the promotion of India's increasingly global interests.

At a time when China is pursuing an increasingly assertive foreign policy, when the future of the American re-balancing strategy is unclear and with much of the Middle East aflame, India's foreign policy choices will have considerable bearing on the country's overall fortunes.

In considerable measure, present day government appears cognizant of the significance of foreign policy. The world is dynamic where frames of reference are shifting rapidly. In Modi's foreign policy approach, a sense of a broader shift in ideas is seen. Modi's various trips to a number of key states in East Asia suggest that he grasps the significance of attracting foreign investment and building a set of key strategic partnerships, especially at a time when India's relations with China remains fraught with uncertainty. India has also sought to improve ties with India's smaller neighbours. The most significant of these, of course, has been his successful conclusion of a border accord with Bangladesh. However, despite initial efforts to woo Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, India's efforts have not yielded useful results in respect of Pakistan.

Though liberalisation and globalisation during 1990s commenced a new period in India's political and economic growth, however during this period only Indian markets were opened for global trade, but no attention was given to the manufacturing or as we call it today make in India. Today India can fill that gap by "Make in India" Mantra.

However, if India truly intends to make foreign policy one of its legacy issues, she will need to sustain the various initiatives that have been undertaken during recent times. It needs to resist the temptation to fall back on the shibboleths of yesteryear as charts a new course are drawn. Finally, India's relations with Middle East are very important due to the sheer significance of the region to India's national interests. A failure to move on all three fronts could well jeopardize the renewed enterprise that has brought to this arena.

IV CONCLUSION

India is the largest democracy in the world. India has consistently followed the policy of peace, friendly relations with other countries and sovereign equality of all nations big and small. The success of India's policy lies in the fact that it has well-adjusted with the changing times and circumstances and its core principles have stood the test of time.

India in the 21st century is in a unique position to act as a bridge between different interests and worlds: 'India is the most 'western' and liberal among the non-western powers, but we are rooted in Asia. As a poor and developing country, we also have an enormous global footprint. We have the potential to become a technological powerhouse, yet remain an informal economy. We are committed to democratic practices and are convinced that robust democracies are better guarantee of security. Yet we do not 'promote' democracy or see it as an ideological concept that polarizes states. This diverse identity and multiplicity of interests is India's greatest strategic asset.

India's foreign policy continues to grow and develop on the firm plank of strategic independence. Despite some of the most transformative changes and the beginning of a "new phase" since the 1990s, India's foreign policy mantra has no longer been nonalignment; instead it's now multi-alignment which constitutes an effective strategy to new transnational challenges of the 21st century. Foreign policy has played and been playing a very crucial role in the overall development of the nation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The author extends her sincere thanks to the Professors and friends of School of International Studies, JNU, New Delhi, India for the help extended by them. She also extends her sincere gratitude to all the authors whose publications provided directional information from time to time.

REFERENCE

- [1]. Brecher, Miachel, *India and World Politics: Krishna Menon's View of the World*, OUP, 1968, London 18.
- [2]. Chandra, Bipin and others, *India Since Independence*, Penguin Books, 2007, New Delhi
- [3]. Dixit, J.N., *My South Block Years: Memoirs of a Foreign Secretary*, WBSPD, 1996, New Delhi
- [4]. Jain, P.C., *Economic Determinants of India's Foreign Policy: Nehru Years*, Vitasta Publishing, 2012, New Delhi
- [5]. Mathai, M.O., *Reminiscences of the Nehru Age*, Vikas Publications, 1978, New Delhi
- [6]. Mattoo, Amitabh and Happymon Jacob, *Shaping India's Foreign Policy*, Har-Anand Publications, 2010
- [7]. Mishra, K. P. (ed), *Studies in India's Foreign Policy*, Vikas Publications, 1969, New Delhi
- [8]. Mukherjee, Amitaava and J. Bandyopadhyaya, *International relations Theory: From Anarchy to World Government*, Manuscript India, 2001, Howrah
- [9]. Nehru, Jawaharlal, *India's Foreign Policy*, Publications Divisions, 1962, New Delhi
- [10]. Panandikar, V. A. Pai and Ajay K Sharma, *The Indian Cabinet: A Study in Government*, Konark, 1996, New Delhi
- [11]. ThongkholalHaokip, "India's Look East Policy: Its Evolution and Approach," *South Asian Survey*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (September 2011), pp. 239-257
- [12]. Arvind Kumar *Indian Foreign Policy since the End of Cold War: Containing or Coping with Unipolarity?* *Mainstream*, Vol. XLIX No 6, January 29, 2011
- [13]. Rohan Mukherjee and David M. Malone. *Indian foreign policy and contemporary security challenges*. *International Affairs* 87:1 (2011) 87-104 © 2011
- [14]. Arun R. Swamy, 'India in 2001: a year of living dangerously', *Asian Survey* 42: 1, 'A survey of Asia in 2001', Jan.- Feb. 2002, pp. 165-76.
- [15]. SudiptaKaviraj, 'The nature of Indian democracy', in Veena Das, ed., *Handbook of sociology in India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 451-70
- [16]. AtulKohli, 'Politics of economic growth in India, 1980-2005, part I: the 1980s', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 1 April 2006, pp. 1251-9
- [17]. T. N. Srinivasan, 'China and India: growth and poverty, 1980-2000', *Stanford Center for International Development*, working paper 182, Sept. 2003
- [18]. Angus Deaton and Jean Dreze, 'Poverty and inequality in India: a re-examination', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 7 Sept. 2002, pp. 3729-48.
- [19]. VikramSood, 'India and regional security interests', in Alyssa Ayres and C. Raja Mohan, eds, *Power realignments in Asia: China, India, and the United States* (New Delhi: Sage, 2009), p. 252.
- [20]. RajenHarshe, 'South Asian regional cooperation: problems and prospects', in RajenHarshe and K. M. Seethi, eds, *Engaging with the world: critical reflections on India's foreign policy* (New Delhi: Orient BlackSwan, 2009), p. 321.
- [21]. Varun Sahni, 'The agent-structure problem and India's external security policy', in Navnita Chadha Behera, ed., *International relations in South Asia: search for an alternative paradigm* (New Delhi: Sage, 2008), pp. 212-13.
- [22]. J. N. Dixit, *Across borders: fifty years of India's foreign policy* (New Delhi: Picus Books, 1998), pp. 182-93.
- [23]. ArunSwamy, 'India in 2000: a respite from instability', *Asian Survey* 41: 1, 'A survey of Asia in 2000', Jan.-Feb. 2001, pp. 91-103.
- [24]. Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal, eds, *Nationalism, democracy and development* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997).
- [25]. Jim Yardley, 'Balancing act for India as talks with Pakistan resume', *International Herald Tribune*, 25 Feb. 2010.
- [26]. SiddharthVaradarajan, 'Time to end the impasse with Pakistan', *The Hindu*, 26 April 2010
- [27]. C. Raja Mohan, 'Balancing act in Thimphu', *Indian Express*, 28 April 2010. 43 See World Bank, *World Development Indicators* 2010,
- [28]. P. C. Chidambaram, 'India empowered to me is', in *A view from the outside: why good economics works for everyone* (London: Penguin, 2007).
- [29]. Ninan Koshy, "Under the empire: India's new foreign policy" (New Delhi: LeftWord Books, 2006), p. 155.