

INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY SINCE INDEPENDENCE

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Introduction

The foreign policy of India like that of any other country is an extension of its internal policy and reflects the dominant domestic concerns. 'Our foreign policy', Nehru wrote, 'will ultimately be governed by our internal policy'. The foreign policy of a country is primarily based on its own individual interests and what it considers good for the world in general. Further a country's foreign policy is essentially conditioned by its internal circumstances. Foreign policy is a product of 'interests', which are governed by a country's political, economic and social structure perceived through its history, culture, and tradition. Every country conducts its foreign relations with a view to protecting its national interests.

In foreign relations India thought it imperative to cultivate friendly cooperation with all the countries and help the process of maintaining international peace and harmony. India's national interest was the governing principle of her foreign policy.

Indian foreign policy was also a formula to keep away from the grave threat to peace in the world emanating from the antagonistic ideological-cum-military blocs in the post-war period.

There may be euphoria of change in the media circles and bordering countries with reference to Indian foreign policy after Modi became the prime minister of India with a huge mandate and thumping majority. He also became the architect of his own cabinet in many ways after 1984 elections when congress under Rajiv Gandhi won 415 seats. The expectations on the part of Modi are very within the country and outside India. But, realistically the message for the country men could be don't expect the magic wand from Modi led BJP and try to understand the

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sensitivity of issues that India has with neighbors particularly China and Pakistan. Since our neighbor states can give us “SARIES” but not something that we may otherwise wish for! The second message for other countries could be “don’t forget the fact that MODI has become the prime minister of India not yours”. The rational argument that everyone understands rather should understand is there are no permanent enemies or friends in politics if there is anything permanent that is INTEREST, politics apart otherwise as well. So, the concluding line on the same could be that, yes there may be shift in the driver but not the car! There would be no paradigm shift in the foreign policy of India.

Elements of Indian foreign policy -

- 1- Non-alignment
- 2- Opposition to Imperialism, colonialism and Neo-Colonialism
- 3- Opposition to Racial discrimination
- 4- Opposition to discriminatory international regimes and hegemonistic policies
- 5- Purity of means
- 6- Panchsheel
- 7- Support for United Nations and world peace
- 8- Solidarity with the third world, particularly with countries of Asia and Africa
- 9- Use of high-level economic diplomacy for securing India's rightful place in the emerging world order of 21st Century
- 10- Friendship with all
- 11- Independent foreign policy, based upon national interests of India
- 12- Support for disarmament, particularly nuclear disarmament and arms control
- 13- Independent nuclear policy

These are then the fundamental Principles of foreign policy which guide the Indian policy - makers in the process of formulating the foreign policy goals, objectives and actions. India is now getting engaged in very active economic diplomacy for developing economic and trade relations with other countries. India has been more strongly and comprehensively pursuing the objective of developing of bonds of cooperation and friendship through the development of

economic, trade, industrial and technological relations and cooperation particularly with the USA, EU, ASEAN, SAARC, East Asia and SAARC Nations.

Determinants of India's Foreign Policy

Geography: India's size, average temperature, position and topography have played a vital role in shaping its foreign policy. Nehru had said in 1949 that India's position was strategic and that no power could ignore us. He said: "Look at the map. If you have to consider any question affecting the Middle East, India inevitably comes into the picture. If you have to consider any question concerning South-East Asia, you cannot do so without India. So also with the Far-East. While the Middle East may not be directly connected with South-East Asia, both are connected with India. Even if you think in terms of regional organizations in India. You have to keep in touch with the other regions."

Location: Location of a country, from the strategic point of view, is a big deciding factor of her fate. India is situated in South Asia; its northern borders are generally protected to some extent by the mighty Himalayas. It has a vast sea coast on three sides. This factor cannot be ignored in foreign policy making. India's coastline is vital for its foreign Policy. Indian Ocean was used as a route for penetration into India during 17th-19th centuries by the French, British, Dutch and the Portuguese. Most of the Foreign Trade of India goes through the Indian Ocean. Any Foreign domination of the Indian Ocean is injurious to the national interest of this country.

Size: India emerged as the one of the largest state in the world is not without considerable geopolitical significance. In the first place, unless the soil and the sub-soil are unusually barren, a large territory generally means a relatively large stock of natural resources. It is partly for this reason that the Russia and the USA, the two largest states of the world, are also the richest in natural resources: and this fact in turn partly explains why they have been also the only super powers of the world. The same reason makes India as well as China potentially big powers in material terms, which are capable of playing an independent and influential role in world affairs. Secondly, the vastness of India's territory has an importance in terms of security; it would not be easy for any other state to occupy the whole country. One of the important reasons why Napoleon or Hitler could not conquer Russia is the vastness of the latter's territory.

Some other determinants are- ideological; economic factor; natural resources; cultural, historical and political values; personality factor and International milieu.

India and UN: India one of the founding fathers of UN. It's challenge to nations that UN can work as an independent organization. India made an effort to do so. Organizational and institutional restructuring and reform of the UN is core objective of India's foreign policy in 21st century. India convince to other countries including P-5 nations since post-cold war period for decentralization and democratization of UN. Another challenge to India's foreign policy that is to achieve the permanent membership in UN Security Council.

Challenges for Indian foreign policy: First, Scholars argued that NAM was the consequence of bipolar world order and now world is unipolar so non-alignment with whom? NAM facing fundamental problem and challenges but by redefining and modifying the objectives of the movement and its role it can overcome these challenges.

Second, to alleviate the losses that arise from the initial stages of trade, the government of India must be able to effectively redistribute some of the wealth to those industries who suffer from the increased competition with ASEAN Markets. This way, total welfare gains in India would increase and India would ultimately benefit from trade with ASEAN.

Third, in its 30 years existence, SAARC failed to hold 11 annual summits for political reasons, both at the bilateral and internal levels. Even in the Kathmandu Summit 2014, there were three connectivity agreements on road, rail and energy, to be endorsed by the eight SAARC leaders. Only one of these- on energy- has been signed.

Conclusion: Indian foreign policy is neither an abrupt development nor a political outburst rather has evolved gradually rather than dramatically. There are hardly any domestic political or international reasons to expect brisk changes in India's foreign policy. Swami Vivekananda right and relent in saying "India must conquer the world and nothing less is my ideal.... Our eternal foreign policy must be the preaching of the Shastras¹⁴ to the nations of the world.... One of the reasons for India's downfall was that she narrowed herself, went into a shell, as the oyster does

and refused to give her treasures and jewels to the other races of mankind outside the Aryan fold”. So the government of the day shall have to deal with outstanding issues in a statesmanship attitude and aptitude, since the hollow out engagements won’t mend unless substance is delivered.

References:

1. Idem.
2. Abhinandan, Dr. Netajee; India’s Push for Permanent Membership of Security Council: The China Factor; World Focus, Nov.-Dec. 2010, p.532.
3. Farooq Ahmad Malik; ‘Politics of Foreign Policy of India’.
4. Ibid. pp.1213-1226
5. U.R.Ghai; ‘Foreign Policy of India’