

Making of Indian Foreign Policy an Analysis from 1947 to 2024

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Abstract

The paper analyzes India's foreign policy changes from the time of India's till date and how from the policy of 'Non Alignment', India has moved to 'Strategic Autonomy'. Article also aims to take a holistic look at India's Foreign policy and visualizes how history, culture, geography and geo-strategic environment have influenced this. Today India has a matured foreign policy which is helping in both economic development and national security. This article is descriptive in nature. The main purpose of writing this article is to make scholars and researchers feel proud of India's rich history and stable foreign policy. Major findings of this article are that in spite of many changes in governments, geopolitical situation in the world or economic setbacks like recent Pandemic, India's foreign policy has remained friendly for economic growth, technological advancements, secure nation and suitable for foreign investments. This research and article has a major significance for India as it analyses the complete spectrum of foreign policy over six to seven decades. This is going to benefit students of International Relations, Political Science and Public Policy in their further research and understanding of the country.

Keywords: foreign policy, economic development, national security, national power neighbors, non-alignment, strategic autonomy

Introduction

India is progressing by leaps and bounds. In last one year, India has achieved many milestones i.e. becoming one of the top five economies in the world, successfully landing Chandrayan-3, organizing a very laudable G-20 Summit, bagging more than 100 medals at the Asian Games and New York Times opining Mr. Narendra Modi, PM of India, as a most popular influential leader in the world. These few achievements have taken India few steps forward in becoming a developed country and the vision of Viksit Bharat at 2047. Successful foreign policy and India's standing in the world due to its economic development, military might and advancement in Science and Technology has made India a strong contender for permanent seat in UN Security Council. The same was said by Mr. Jaishankar, External Affairs Minister in Apr' 2023, where he said "Westerners cannot keep their doors closed for India for long. While several developed countries are facing economic distress, India is emerging as an

economic superpower. Hence the UNSC will be compelled to provide permanent membership".

The development path which India is showing and the confidence in all its dealings at International levels, cannot be termed as recent development only. Over the period of the last 75 years, since independence, India has evolved and its foreign policies have matured. The current paper aims to analyze how India's foreign policy has matured and has suited the country during various times of its ups and downs based on the needs of that era. There are various factors that influence making of foreign policy of a country i.e. history, geography, economic development, domestic and social structure and international environment and there are various organizations involved in making of foreign policy i.e. Parliament, MEA, PMO, NSA, Think tanks and Media. However, the success/failure of a foreign policy is always attributed to the head of the state i.e. Prime Minister in our case. Accordingly the paper would cover the making of the foreign policies under various Prime Ministers starting from Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru to Mr.

Shrivastawa, Dr Rakesh Kumar

Narendra Modi. Also, as foreign policy is directly related to national interest perceived/ prioritized by these leaders so the important foreign policies of the era would be seen in relation to the National Interests of that time.

Review of Literature

The evaluation of Indian foreign policy, ranging from Jawaharlal Nehru to Narendra Modi, illustrates substantial shifts in India's international relations, strategic imperatives, and reactions to global developments.

Nehruvian Era (1947-1964): The Cornerstone of Indian Foreign Policy

Bandyopadhyaya (2003) asserts that Nehru's foreign policy was shaped by India's historical experience of colonialism and Nehru's own socialist goals. His strategy underscored the importance of preserving independence from both the Western and Eastern blocs. Academicians such as Krishna Menon claim that this era was characterized by a focus on ethical leadership in the Global South.

Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi (1966-1989): Strategic Realism and Assertiveness

Academics such as Bajpai (2010) characterize her foreign policy as emphasizing national security and regional supremacy. This era marked India's alignment with the Soviet Union, confirmed by the Indo-Soviet Treaty of 1971, and the 1971 Bangladesh War, which reinforced India's status as a regional power in South Asia. Scholar Ganguly (2004) observes that although India upheld its non-alignment policy, Rajiv Gandhi began to acknowledge the importance of economic reforms and globalization, so establishing the foundation for the foreign policy transformations that would transpire in the post-Cold War era.

Post-Cold War Period: P.V. Narasimha Rao and Atal Bihari Vajpayee (1991-2004)

The economic liberalization of 1991 under Rao was coupled with diplomatic initiatives towards the United States, Southeast Asia, and other rising nations. Madan (2017) contend that Rao's Look East policy, designed to enhance relations with Southeast Asia, was a pivotal moment in India's foreign policy. Researcher such as Tellis (2001) contend that Vajpayee's diplomacy successfully normalized relations with the U.S. following the nuclear tests, leading to the Indo-U.S. strategic partnership and the Kargil conflict of 1999, which transformed India-Pakistan relations.

Manmohan Singh Administration (2004-2014): Economic Diplomacy and Strategic Alliances

The Indo-U.S. Civil Nuclear Agreement (2008) epitomized Singh's foreign policy, indicating

India's rise as a responsible nuclear state and a significant participant in world governance.

Scholarly literature, such as that by Tharoor (2012), underscores Singh's emphasis on economic diplomacy, especially with energy security and trade. During this period, India's relations with China were characterized by uncertainty, as increasing economic connections were eclipsed by geopolitical mistrust.

Modi Administration (2014-Present): Assertiveness, Multilateralism, and Novel Alliances

Pant (2019) contend that Modi's foreign policy is marked by proactive diplomacy, exemplified by his engagement with the Indian diaspora, the Act East policy, and a revised Indo-Pacific strategy designed to counterbalance China's influence.

A principal aspect of Modi's foreign policy is the focus on bilateralism and multilateralism, evidenced by India's participation in organizations like BRICS, QUAD, and G20. Modi's rapport with the U.S. has strengthened defense and strategic alliances, indicative of India's apprehension regarding China's ascent. Nevertheless, the literature highlights concerns, especially with India's neighboring policy, since relations with Pakistan and China have remained problematic, while India's connections with Nepal and Sri Lanka have seen intermittent stresses.

Overview

The paper would be discussed in the following parts:

- 2.1 History and culture of India influencing foreign policy
- 2.2 Geography and geostrategic environment
- 2.3 Core values of India's Foreign Policy
- 2.4 Indian Institutions that aid foreign policymaking
- 2.5 Important principles of Indian Foreign Policies followed by Indian Prime Ministers.

History & Culture of India Influencing its Foreign Policies

Indian foreign policy has been deeply influenced by its rich history, civilization, religion and ancient culture. The belief on the principles of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam', 'Atithi Devo Bhavah', 'Ahinsa' and ultimately concept of 'Dharm' from Hinduism, emphasizing righteous and inclusive conduct has historically guided India's approach to foreign policies and International Relations. The above is in contrast to many earlier writings where it has been said that historically India's foreign policy has been guided by colonialism or Mogul rule. India's ancient trade routes and cultural exchanges with civilization like Persians and Greeks, have

Shrivastawa, Dr Rakesh Kumar

ensured peaceful co-existence. There are historical evidences of Chandragupta Maurya getting married to daughter of Seleucus Nicator, Greek General around 304 BCE. With the spread of Buddhism in South East Asia and Central Asia, India had a close relations with all countries in these regions. Mr. Nehru followed the principles of Panchsheel, which were deeply influenced by Buddhist philosophy of mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty, non-aggression, non-Interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and peaceful co-existence.

Kautilaya in Arthshastra, which is considered as holy book on diplomacy, has mentioned that state is the most important and legitimate instrument that enjoys sovereignty. The responsibility of the State is to ensure protection and survival of its people and this should be primarily national interest. He has said that rift with neighbors is a natural phenomenon as they would always be jealous of progress of the country. Projection of comprehensive national power is a must through 'Shakti' & 'Prakriti'. Shakti includes military power to expand its influence either through conquests or alliance and Prakriti has various elements i.e. political leadership, administration, resources, infrastructure, economy, security forces, etc. Accordingly we see that historically, India has been a strong power and has very clear literature on foreign policies. Our leaders over the last 75 years have kept these in mind and crafted our foreign policies.

Geography & Geostrategic Environment

India's geographical location, its size, population, topography, natural resources, coastline and neighbors play a crucial role in making foreign policy. Whenever we discuss India's foreign policies, we need to consider development in Middle East, sea routes passing through Indian Ocean, South Asian neighbors, South East Asia and also China. Because of our geographical location India is either affected by these areas or it is in a position to influence any development in these areas.

Hindus name is derived for people staying South of Hindukush Mountains and Indus River. This area is blessed with ample sunshine, water bodies, regular monsoons, good weather for almost complete year and fertile land. Towards the North it is protected by Himalayas, from South by sea, from East by thick jungles and from west by desert/rann. Keeping the geography in mind coupled with our culture, Indian's developed a defensive mind-set. This led to various invasions leading finally to colonial rule. India has surely learnt lessons from these. If we consider the period after India's Independence and the Second World

War, due to its geographical location, India was saddled with many border disputes, unfriendly neighbors and quest for domination over sea routes. This led to developing strong defense forces to secure its land borders and sea. India has tackled all these problems very maturely on its own.

If we are talking about geography, India's population cannot be kept away from it. We are the most populated country in the world with approximately 142 crores population (17% of the world population). Population growth has many disadvantages which are well known but it also has certain advantages which helps India shine in geopolitics. Today it has 66% of youth population, which if skilled properly will help India grow economically, assists in security, make India a production hub and big market for the world. In addition, increasing number of Indians have global interests related to studies, business, jobs and tourism. This adds to the Indian Diaspora abroad and also helps India becoming power to reckon with.

Core Values of India's Foreign Policy

Since the time of independence and also based on factors discussed above i.e. history, culture, geography and geostrategic environment, India follows some core values while making its foreign policies. We can put it simply that over the period of time, core values have remained constant, however based on requirements and priorities, the political leaders have followed a particular foreign policy. Some of the core values are discussed as under:-

Preference for Middle Path This is based on Sanskrit saying 'Ati Sarvatra Varjayet' which means let us stay away from extremes at all times and should not have tendency to look things as black and white. It advocates focus on middle path.

Blend of Idealism & Realism This comes out of the philosophy of 'Ahinsa' or Non-violence.

War has always been an option of last resort. We see this even in our nuclear policy of 'No First Use'. There has to be peace in the beginning, and war only as an end means. Today India is looked upon with lot of hope as a mediator to peace in both Russia Ukraine war and Israel-Hamas conflict.

Value of Tolerance Value of tolerance is based on ancient idea of 'Vade Vade Jayate Tattva Siddhih' which means enlightenment is achieved through debate. India never wants to be seen as conqueror or aggressor while dealing with its neighbors. India believes humanity success lies in collective strength, not in the battle ground.

Absence of Imperialistic Traditions, India has never been imperialist. It had an old Brahmin philosophy which said that if you cross the seas, it

Shrivastawa, Dr Rakesh Kumar

would be sin. Probably it has come out of belief that India had a vast land to defend i.e. from Himalaya to sea which is fertile, prosperous and has rich culture thus needing every able bodied man to defend from aggressors. In the past and even today we have not advocated imperialism.

Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam This Sanskrit phrase means world is one family and advocates collective wellbeing over individual or family interests. This term being used very commonly is a recent development, more so after India's G-20 Presidency, but most of our foreign policies are woven around this philosophy.

Importance of Dharm Dharm means path of Right. The ancient Rishi Manu prescribes 10 important rules for Dharm which are honesty, patience, self-control, reason, forgiveness, sanctity, truthfulness, attaining knowledge, control of senses and an absence of anger. Our leaders in both past and present have followed this principle. They have been stabbed at the back but have not forgotten their Dharm. Mr. Atal Bihari Vajpayee's diplomacy with Pakistan and later Kargil war is an example of this.

Religious Tolerance and Respect of other's Culture This is one of the main attributes due to which India is accepted in Middle East, South Asia, Europe and Africa as a friend. Tolerance of Hinduism to other religion is well accepted all over the world.

Indian Institutions Responsible for Foreign Policy Making

Making of Foreign Policies is a complex process. Initially world over 'Foreign Office' was involved in Foreign Policy and entire process always remained a secret. India being a democratic country and open in its policy making, there are many institutions involved, however Indian Foreign Policy is always leadership driven i.e. by the Prime Minister. Some of these are discussed as under:-

Parliament Indian Parliament has powers to legislate on Foreign Affairs. Accordingly, any law for the successful implementation of International Treaties, agreements, and conventions are discussed and passed in the Parliament. It helps in deciding the public mood and also media support. Though the ruling party has a major say in passing any law in the Parliament but will of the house matters and mostly these are inclusive decisions and are in National Interest. For example, India's Nuclear Corporation Agreement was widely discussed and debated in Parliament.

Ministry of External Affairs MEA is the primary institution on matters related to External Affairs. It also has maximum inputs on international issues as part of diplomatic process and thus has the best

understanding on the subject. Till about 1962, MEA was directly under Prime Minister, but since then we have independent External Affairs Minister and he is a very powerful Cabinet Minister.

Cabinet and Cabinet Committee India is a parliamentary form of government and thus all decisions of National and International importance are taken and ratified by Cabinet Ministers and Cabinet Committee. For example, decisions on External security are taken in consultation of MHA, MoD and MEA and issues of International Trade and investment are taken in consultation with Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Finance and External Affairs.

Prime Minister's Office PMO constitutes of the chosen ones including senior level bureaucrat and subject experts who are responsible to provide secretarial assistance and advice to the PM. It also coordinates with various central agencies like Cabinet, Council of Ministers and other stakeholders to sort out interdepartmental hurdles in domestic and foreign policy execution.

National Security Council It was constituted to act as a facilitator to advise the Prime Minister in addressing issues of National Security and also in formulating National Security strategies. Thus we see the National Security Advisor Mr. Ajit Doval representing India in many International forums and convey India's point of view on National Security matters.

Think Tanks Persons or we can say professionals as part of Think Tank have different perspective to any International issue. Their writings, conferences/seminars and panel discussions gives all the pros and cons of any policy/ thought process. They help the country achieve its diplomatic objectives by developing networks and setting up new platforms to promote dialogues.

Media The 24/7 Media today ensures constant flow of news and information which helps in public perception and act as a pressing factor upon Governmental Decision making.

Important Principles of Indian Foreign Policies Followed by Indian Prime Minister

India's Foreign policies are the direct outcome of India's National Interests. However due to internal issues and geopolitics prevailing at a particular time, the perceived national interests and strategic thought of Prime Minister, the foreign policies change. According since the time we got independence in 1947, both internal and well as external situations have changed thus affecting the vision of the then PM to make /emphasise on a particular aspect of the Foreign Policy.

Core Principles of Indian Foreign Policies followed by Mr Jawaharlal Nehru

Shrivastawa, Dr Rakesh Kumar

First Prime Minister of India is known as the person who shaped and nurtured the Indian Foreign Policy. He followed the Idealism path. However as discussed earlier India had as strong history, culture and tradition of following Foreign Policies. Some of the core principles can be summarised as under:

Focus on Industrial and Economic Development

With the limited resources the country had, at the time of independence, he had a choice to either develop the country militarily or economically. He focused on Industrial Development considering that after the Second World War, the chances of war were much less. During that period all countries were recovering from the after effects of WW-II. India's immediate neighbours were economically and militarily weak and China was not a major threat. Accordingly Pandit Nehru's perception was that good relations with China diplomatically will resolve the only threat thus resulting in "Hindi Chini Bhai Bhai" Slogan. He also believed / hoped that all the bilateral or multilateral disputes could be resolved through UNO.

Great Power through Non-Alignment

His term can be related to the era of bipolar world, cold war, arms race and ideologies of Communism v/s Capitalism. Most of the countries in the world were going for new alliances based on their geographical advantages, ideologies or religion. India being a non-communist country and also not inclined towards communism was not welcome in the Soviet Block. There was no chance of joining US led alliance as US was considered Capitalist and this would have gone against the entire tradition of Indian National movement for Independence. India declared its commitment to fight imperialism and colonialism and support the unity of all nations struggling to fight imperialism and colonialism through NAM. It also had an aim plus to derive power out of it to make space for Strategic autonomy and take independent decisions.

Thus the idea of non-alignment was born in the countries of Asia and Africa who had recently got independence from imperialistic/ colonial forces. In 1956, due to the coordinated efforts of Mr. Nehru Prime Minister of India, Gamal Abdel Nasser President of Egypt, Josip Broz Tito of Yugoslavia, Mr Sukarno of Indonesia and Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana NAM was born. Non-alignment was considered different from neutrality as one was a positive term and second was a negative term. NAM gave India recognition, time for economic development, good relations with all countries in the world, leader of Third World countries and to remain away from arms race and finally strategic autonomy.

Preservation of International Peace

Preservations of peace became an integral part of our foreign policy. India dedicated lot of effort to prevent arms race and in 1961 dispatched a delegation to both USA & USSR to halt nuclear testing.

Core principle of India's Foreign Policy followed by Miss Indira Gandhi

Indira Gandhi became the Prime Minister on 24 Jan 1966. The country had seen two major wars by then i.e. backstabbing by China leading to Chinese aggression on our Northern borders and war of 1965 with Pakistan on Western borders. 1962 happened because over the time Indian Defence forces had become weak and 1965 happened following Pakistan's operation Gibraltar, which was designed to infiltrate forces into Jammu and Kashmir to precipitate an insurgency against Indian rule. The period between 1960 and 1970, also saw the Vietnam War, the Civil Nuclear arms race and stockpiling, rise of China as a dominant player in the world and problems in Bangladesh. Accordingly, the priorities for national interest and foreign policies changed for Indira Gandhi. She was believer of realism path. Some of the core principles are discussed as under:-

India as a Military Power

Mrs Indira Gandhi realized this age-old concept that 'power flows from the barrel of the gun' thus a strong military leads to a strong economy and further increased status in world affairs. The Diplomatic efforts by Mrs Indira Gandhi during 1971 war and later India's Nuclear tests at Pokhran on May 18, 1974 were praiseworthy and gave her the status of "Iron Lady" internationally.

Equality as a Basis of Global Engagement

Mrs Indira Gandhi emphasised in World Forums that 'India wished to be friends with all nations but on the basis of equality'. She asserted that no state can look at India as an inferior state and India would conduct its diplomacy with all states including the US & USSR on equal footing.

Foreign Policy based on Merit of each situation

She did not support actions of the US & USSR in world affairs based on taking any side, but India's response was based on the merit of each situation. When the USSR invaded Afghanistan and the US tried to fight it out by training and supporting the 'Mujahedeen Campaign', India did not condemn USSR actions. It stated that its policy is based on the merit of the situation and India considers the invasion of Soviets as somewhat beneficial for the stability and development of Afghanistan.

Shrivastawa, Dr Rakesh Kumar

Core Principles of India's Foreign Policy followed by Mr. Rajiv Gandhi

Mr. Rajiv Gandhi took over as Prime Minister of India in November 1984 after the assassination of Mrs. Indira Gandhi. He was new to politics and power thus he treaded his path on International relations carefully. He was a blend of Realism and Idealism. He wanted to open up the economy so looked for positive relations with US and also with China which was becoming a growing economy by then. He also believed in the core principle of 'Enlightened self-interest', which can be attributed to his visit to China in 1989 and meeting with Deng Xiaoping, urging to separate the border issue from economic diplomacy. He also used NAM as a tool to promote the economic strength of India.

Core Principles of India's Foreign Policy followed by Mr. I. K. Gujral

Mr. I.K. Gujral took over as Prime Minister of India in April 1997. He was an Indian Diplomat and politician thus gave lot of priority to Foreign Policy. He was a believer of Idealism and gave focus on good relations with India's neighbors. He gave the famous Gujral Doctrine which had mainly five point plan to improve diplomatic relations between India and its neighbors. The doctrine was based on the principles of mutual respect, non-interference and cooperation. Few of the major impact of Gujral Doctrine were

Improving people-to-people contact and dialogue with Pakistan.

Water sharing agreement of Ganga water with Bangladesh.

Confidence building measures between India and China to resolve border dispute peacefully.

Conflict resolution and development agreements with Nepal and Sri Lanka.

Bilateral composite dialogue with most of the neighbors.

Core Principles of India's Foreign Policy followed by Mr. Atal Bihari Vajpayee

Mr. Vajpayee had vast experience as leader of opposition and had represented India in UN and world forums many times as Ministers of External Affairs under Morarji Desai before he took over as Prime Minister. His first terms as PM was for 13 days in 1996, followed by 13 months in 1998, followed by full term from 1999-2004. He was a poet and writer and was from BJP which had a different ideology from earlier parties who ruled the nation. Accordingly, his priorities on National Interest came out from this background.

Rightful place for India in UN and International Institutions

He wanted to deal with other nations from the position of power. Accordingly Pokhran II, a thermonuclear test with hydrogen bomb

capabilities was conducted from 11 to 13 May 1998. India declared itself a Nuclear Weapon State. He was the first statesman in UN General Assembly to deliver speech in Hindi. He advocated peace and equality and for the first time referred to the term 'Yasudhaiva Kutumbakam'- the world is one family. During various events from 1977-2003 he delivered speeches to UNGA on seven occasions and was very vocal on increasing the number of permanent members in the UN Security Council with India as one of its members.

Friendly Relations with Neighbors

Vajpayee sought to improve relations with Pakistan by travelling to Lahore by Bus to meet Pakistan PM. However, 'Kargil War' happened after that. After the war also he made efforts to have good relations with all neighbors.

Core Principle of India's Foreign Policy followed by Mr. Manmohan Singh

Mr Manmohan Singh was an economist and bureaucrat who become 13th PM from 2004 to 2014. He focused on liberalizing Indian economy and growth in the Indian Market. The economy boomed with an 8-9% economic growth rate. He also abolished 'License Raj' to promote industrialization. With the growing economy, India's standing in the world kept improving. He continued to deepen India's relations with ASEAN countries as these countries were also focusing on economic development. During his time India and ASEAN concluded a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) in goods (2010) and Services (2012). He developed close relations with African countries with 'Focus Africa Programme'. He worked on Energy Diplomacy saw improved ties with West Asian countries and during his time Indian and Saudi Arabia concluded a 'Strategic Partnership Agreement'.

Core Principles of India's Foreign Policy followed by Mr. Narendra Modi

Mr. Modi came to power in 2014. He was the person who had risen from ground level, was a Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh worker and had a successful tenure as Chief Minister of Gujarat which was a developing state. During his foreign visits he had developed a style of personal diplomacy where he emphasized on strong personal relationships with foreign leaders. Over a time his style of diplomacy can also be called 'India First' diplomacy. Some of his core principles are discussed as under:-

India First

Two core values of Modi Doctrine are 'Personal Diplomacy' and 'Retail Diplomacy'. He does not believe only in Government to Government interaction but deals with heads of states at

Shrivastawa, Dr Rakesh Kumar

personal level with a friendlier atmosphere. He maintains close personal relations with many world leaders. Second, while interacting with other nations he interacts with leader as well as influential peoples/ professionals/ Industrialists directly, also known as 'Retail Diplomacy'. He interacted one to one with wide spectrum of professional's, scholars, workers and educationists. This not only helped him in enhancing the approachability of the leader in the eyes of the public but also helped in developing very strong interpersonal relationships. Recent example of this was during recent US visit of Mr Modi, where he interacted with Engineering Tech CEOs at MIT School of Engineering in New York. During the interaction he showed personal bonding with Google CEO Sundar Pichai and Adobe CEO Shantanu Narayan. He urged all CEOs to look at India's growth story as the country is taking all efforts to become third largest economy and invest in India.

Economic Diplomacy as a key to Great Power Status

Another very crucial dimension of the Modi Doctrine is his thrust on economic diplomacy. India became a USD four trillion economy few months back and is likely to be a USD 5 trillion economy and the third largest in the world by Market Exchange rates by 2030. In this quest, India has to have support of many economic powers, Indian diaspora, big industrialists of the world and own infrastructure and skills. In this run, it is also going to rub feathers with some of the big economies in the world and likely to take their share. India has to have a proper vision and road map to achieve this. In addition, diplomatic initiatives will also play a very major role.

Neighborhood is a key to Global Power Aspirations

One of the key focus areas of Modi is 'Neighborhood first policy' and very close interaction with SAARC, both with respect to diplomacy and foreign trade. On his swearing-in in 2014, he had invited all heads of SAARC countries including Pakistan. He even called on Nawaz Sharif at Pakistan. His aim is to transform India's image from "Big Brother" to "Collaborative ally".

Focus on Extended Neighborhood

In order to extend its global clout, it is not merely enough to interact with immediate neighborhood. Mr. Modi realizes the importance of extended neighborhood. In this regard, the major focus is on greater push for Indo-Pacific cooperation, Middle East and Central Asia. The two major areas in Indo-Pacific cooperation are importance of Quad and India's Indo-Pacific Ocean Initiative. Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) is on informal strategic

multilateral forum which is of great importance due to countering China's expansionist activities in area of South China Sea and to maintain peace in Indo-Pacific. Mr. Modi attended the Quad summit hosted by Mr. Joe Biden at Wilmington, Delaware, the home town of Mr. Biden in his recent US trip. Quad also become important for ASEAN as all ASEAN members have some stake in Indo-Pacific and the peace initiatives. Middle East will remain a mainstay of Modi's foreign policy as it helps in employment, investment and maintaining traditional friendship. India and Mr. Modi are giving a great push to relations with Central Asia. The biggest problem in India's proximity of relations with Central Asia is the connectivity. With the Chabahar port in India's control, the connectivity and trade with Central Asia is certainly going to improve in near future.

Deepening Relationship with USA

Mr. Modi's priority is economic development for which high end technology of USA is very vital. US is important to balance China threat and also for India's quest for permanent seat in UN Security Council. The US can be major investor in India as it is also looking for manufacturing bases away from China. Keeping this in mind, Mr. Modi visit to USA from September 21 to 23 is an important milestone in Indo US relationship. Mr. Modi had a successful Quad meeting with Quad members and leaders including US President Mr. Joe Biden, Japan PM Mr. Fumio Kishida and Australian PM Mr. Anthony Albanese. The bilateral meeting with Mr. Biden, his address to Indian diaspora at New York and address at UN General Assembly at New York have helped in cementing Indo-US relations.

Shift of Focus from Maintaining Distance to Maintaining Proximity

India as leader and follower of NAM believed in maintaining safe distance from super powers and power blocks. Mr. Modi has completely changed this concept to maintaining proximity with super powers. His recent visit to Russia and Ukraine and to USA are example of this. This is a subject of great interest and in future many scholars & researchers are going to write on this. India under Mr. Modi is not focusing on balancing the relationship with Russia, USA & China but is maintaining a close proximity with all three.

Indian Diaspora as a Bridge between Indian and the World

Over a period of last 20 years Indian Diaspora all across the world has become very significant force to reckon with. Mr. Modi realized this advantage both for economic boom back home and also projecting this population as a Vote Bank in foreign countries. He makes it a point to address the Indian Diaspora whenever he visits important foreign

Shrivastawa, Dr Rakesh Kumar countries telling them about development and economic advancement of India and recent government initiatives. His address is also a message to local government of those countries indicating "if you take care of this constituency, they will take care of your government in elections". Modi knows that the diaspora is part of the great Indian family, which will be a partner to India's emergence as a global player.

Soft Power is India's Power

India's religion, culture and traditional practices are being projected as soft power. This also gives impression of India as a peaceful country and thus favorable destination for manufacturing and investment. Diplomacy to get 21st June declared as International Yoga Day at the UN General Assembly is an example of soft power diplomacy.

Strategic Autonomy

While dealing with foreign powers, India is not looking for alliances but strategic Autonomy i.e. independence to take decision on foreign policy without any pressure and biases but only in national interests. Last year India had the privilege of chairing SCO as well as a very successful G-20 presidency. It is having a good say in BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) and Quad (India, Australia, Japan, & US). It has been able to balance the relations with US and Russia and to some extent even with China. Today world is looking at India for peace negotiations both in Ukraine war and Hamas-Israel conflict.

Conclusion:

In general, evolution of India's Foreign Policy has gone through phases. We can safely say that it has been handled very maturely by various Prime Ministers and other stake holders over the period since independence. From the policy related to NAM during Cold War to strategic autonomy in current times, have been tested and India has achieved success. Today, India is perceived as net security provider, net development provider, connectivity provider, firm in dealing with terrorism, one which has values in place and finally one that will address global issues maturely. India is moving towards becoming five trillion economy and third largest economy in the world. Internally, India has to work a lot to skill its young work force, create infrastructure towards 'Make in India' and 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' but on diplomatic front is has to attract foreign investments, create market for the world and project India as big manufacturing nation. Equally important is the Security Front where India has to deal with other nations from power of strength. It is a known fact that Military Power is directly proportional to economic power and this change of thought is very evident from Nehru Era to Modi era.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declares no competing interests.

About Author:

Colonel (Dr) Rakesh Kumar Shrivastawa is an administrator and educationist, who obtained his Doctorate Degree from Jiwaji University, Gwalior in international relations. After a glorious service in the Indian Army for 34 years, he joined as Registrar at Pandit Deendayal Energy University. He also serves as a faculty of international relations at PDEU, Gandhinagar.

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