



INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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ABSTRACT

In the twenty-first century, the world's scenario has changed to a great extent. The foreign policy of any state in any era is determined by its national interest and India is no exceptional case. Most of India's accounts like newfound glory in the comity of nations is directly or indirectly attendant re-orientation of India's foreign policy in the post-liberalization era. The decade of the 1990s is seen as a turning point which not only ushered India into economic reforms but also brought about enormous change in its foreign policy. India was no longer a prisoner to the historical legacy of non-alignment, socialism, and 'third world solidarity'. It attempted to change its traditional course, shedding much of the past baggage to respond to the rapid and monumental changes that international affairs were going through. In a way, the need for departing from its traditional core values in the domain of foreign policy was as much an outcome of pulls and pressures of the newly emerging global realities as of changes in the internal as well as external political dynamics. Besides these challenges, India's location is insecure in the turbulent region of South Asia, being surrounded by all sides unsuccessful democracies, military leaders, authoritarian governments, militancy, all these factors force India to move forward and make genuine changes in its foreign policy. India has had to seek new partners, allies and friends to deal with the realpolitik of international politics. While negotiating numerous challenges since then, India's foreign policy has to be framed with the rising aspirations and opportunities that epithets like 'emerging power', 'rising power', 'great power' could be achieved. Against the backdrop of this study, this paper would analyse what are the contemporary challenges and what are future opportunities for India in this swiftly changing world. In this paper observations and findings will be elaborated on the basis of secondary sources of data.

KEYWORDS: Scenario, Comity, Foreign policy, Enormous, Realpolitik

INTRODUCTION

Epithets like 'Emerging India' and 'Global power' have been in a wide range of discourses among academicians, scholars and statesmen. The foreign policy of any country is determined by its national interest. National interest is above all the interest of the state, and India's foreign policy is also oriented toward its national interest. India's foreign policy got abrupt changes after the turbulent decade of the 1990s in which not only India ushered into economic reforms like liberalization, privatization but also the old paradigm shifted into a new one. India no longer became a prisoner of non-alignment, socialism, or third world solidarity but also brought changes in its foreign policy as the world was passing through a transitional phase. In this period of transition, India had to frame its foreign policy according to changing circumstances and time. India had to seek new friends and allies in order to deal with the realpolitik of international politics. Scholars

and thinkers have perceived changes in India's foreign policy differently. C. Raja Mohan argues

"After more than a half-century of a false start in the global balance of power. In the coming years, it will have opportunity to shape outcomes on the most critical issues of the 21st century of the Asian stability, the political modernization of the greater Middle East, the management of globalisation." (Mohan, 2006)

Traditionally, India's foreign policy has been based on three dimensions. Firstly, India's foreign policy towards her immediate neighbourhood states where India has tried to use her power and consolidate her position. Secondly, India's foreign policy towards South Asia where India has sought to protect the Indian Ocean and to prevent external actors from intervention in the region. The third, India's Foreign policy towards the whole world where India has sought to consolidate her place at the global level as a global power. These dimensions were relevant to only time and circumstances but



could not qualify as a success. India's distant dream of 'global power' is still to be achieved. In the absence of insightful and careful formulation of foreign policy, India cannot change its status in international politics. (Tripathi, 2012)

OBJECTIVES

The present study has certain research objectives

- 1 To examine what have been the dynamics of India's foreign policy after the turbulent decade of the 1990s
- 2 To examine what are the challenges and opportunities for India in the twenty first century.
- 3 To propose feasible suggestions on how India can formulate a balanced foreign policy that would be beneficial for the interests of India.

METHODOLOGY

In the present study, mostly secondary data has been used. Secondary data has been collected through journals, magazines, newspapers articles. In addition to this data has also been collected from different websites

CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES

The primary job of India is to make the external environment conducive for the all-around development of India. It's the priorities that matter how India formulate its foreign policy it faces the challenges like poverty, terrorism, climate change, unemployment etc. In the broader perspective, there are numerous others challenges such as ensuring a peaceful periphery, maintaining cordial relations with the world's major powers, and tackling a cluster of challenges like poverty, terrorism, climate change, and water and health issues. (Kumar, 2007)

India's first challenge and area of focus in foreign policy should be to ensure cordial relations with its neighbours. India has been always committed to maintaining a peaceful, stable relationship with neighbours like Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Nepal, Afghanistan, China, and Pakistan. India has been trying for decades to remain concerned about continuing ethnic conflict and to find a comprehensive solution to the Tamil issue that could be acceptable to all Sri Lankans. India as a rising power in south Asia has been committed to peaceful, stable and democratic Bangladesh, Nepal, and Afghanistan. Since independence, there have been ups and downs between India Pakistan relations. Terrorism and Kashmir issue always remains dominant in almost every dialogue and summit. Challenges for India from its neighbours are to build interdependence that will help not only to integrate the economy but also would help for the prosperity and development of the subcontinent. Neighbouring

states of India look at India as a positive factor for their economic development and trade enhancement.

The second challenge for India's foreign policy is to maintain cordial relations with the world's major powers. This is the era of soft power where India has to frame its foreign policy to keep all the social, economic, political factors at the forefront. India's distant dream of 'global power' could not be fulfilled until it would not have cordial relations with great powers like the USA, Russia, China, France and Japan. India's relations with the USA have substantially been transferred from the last two decades. India after the end of the cold war leaning towards the USA and has established ties in defence, health, science and technology, trade and infrastructure, counterterrorism, agriculture and the environment. (Ministry of External Affairs Website, 2017)

The July 18, 2005 decision to cooperate on civil nuclear energy is a major symbol of this transformed relationship (Agarwal, 2019). India has developed long and cooperative relations with the European Union (EU) covering a wide range of areas like health, investment, culture, trade and infrastructure. India's relations with Russia have been always cordial and India is a very close friend of Russia since independence. India's relations with Japan have also developed considerably with several exchanges of high-level visits. As we look forward to becoming global power this India has to revisit its foreign policy and have to expand political, economic, defence ties with the neighbour and with major power as well. Challenges that India faces like poverty, hunger, unemployment, security issue, climate change can be resolved only through cooperation with our neighbours and the globe as a whole. (Ministry of External Affairs)

Lastly, there are several cluster issues like poverty, hunger, terrorism, international security, food, water, and environmental issue. Some of these issues are domestic in nature which can be resolved at the domestic level. But there are some issues that are global in nature like environmental issues, terrorism, and international security issue these issues can be resolved only through mutual cooperation with other countries. Food security is a challenge for India 2/3rd of India's population is dependent on agriculture for their livelihood. Assuming a 7-8% GDP growth rate by 2020 we would require 340 million tonnes of food grains. This is a major challenge both for scientists and for agromanagement. We also need the latest agricultural technology for better food production for that we have to make ties with agriculturally developed countries. India's continued economic growth needs an increase in the supply of cheap and sustainable sources of energy. India's GDP has been average between 6-8% and per capita income electricity



consumption continues to be as low as 1/6th of our electricity comes from burning of fossil fuels and 70% of our oil is imported. To meet our further energy requirement we have to establish ties with those nations who have surplus energy resources. Further India has to enlarge its capacity to generate energy from non-fossil fuels for this need is to utilise the latest technology that can be imported from different countries. (Shukla, 2007)

OPPORTUNITIES FOR INDIA

There are several opportunities for India to open new avenues of social and economical development. It is high time for India to become soft power and give a proper balance of power equation to the world. Abraham writes

“The apparent choice facing India today is covered in terms of greater or lesser autonomy from existing power structures (...) India’s foreign policy has not changed much. It continues to remain primarily India’s search for security and stability in South Asia and quest for influence in international politics beyond the immediate neighbourhood through growing ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ power that forms the mainstay of New Delhi’s foreign policy” (Abraham, 2007)

Shashi Tharoor emphasis that

“If there is one independent India in which increasing attention is now being paid around to globe. It is not economic or military or nuclear strength, but the quality that India is already displaying is ample measure today and that is its ‘soft power. By these definitions, we can say that India can influence the world by its rich culture. To achieve the distant dream of ‘global power’ India has to shift its paradigm from Idealism to Realism. We have to simultaneously focus on Asia, Africa, North and South America, Europe and the Middle East as well. It is a prerequisite for India to move from its traditional policy of non-alignment to multi-alliances in order to unleash the different avenues of development. It is a better opportunity for India to emerge as a ‘global power’ but it is possible only to maintain cordial relations with its neighbours, Asia and at the global level.” (Tharoor, 2008)

SUGGESTIONS

There are some feasible suggestions which India can follow while framing a balanced foreign policy which is mentioned under:

- (1) While India formulates her foreign policy emphasis should be laid upon equitability in order to make it possible that the first area of focus would be on neighbouring states, then Asia and then major powers.

- (2) The era of ‘Hard power’ has gone like military, and nuclear weapons. Now this is the era of ‘Soft power’ where India has to focus on conservation of culture, enhancement of economy, etc in order to achieve India’s distant dream of ‘Global power’ (Munni, 2007)
- (3) There have been always tense relations between India and China. China has been considered India’s rival for a long time. So India should formulate such kind of foreign policy where she can persuade china by her relations and simultaneously have cordial relations with countries like Japan, Singapore, North Korea, and Taiwan.
- (4) India should no longer affix with her traditional foreign policy domains i.e. Idealism, Non-alignment and should accept emerging realities of the world like Realism, multilateralism and realpolitik. (Gangopadhyay, 2012)
- (5) India should join hands with regional as well as international organisations in order to counter Terrorism, Global warming, Epidemics and several other issues which are international in nature can be controlled by mutual cooperation. (The Hindu, 2003)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In the study, it has been found that there are many serious challenges for India’s foreign policy like hostile relations with some immediate neighbours and the world’s major powers; poverty, terrorism, climate change, illiteracy, unemployment are the major issues that substantially affect the foreign policy of India. Undoubtedly, India’s foreign policy is facing grave challenges but there are also several opportunities for it like India has the potential to influence global actors through its ‘Soft power’. Besides, several global financial institutions have predicted that India would be a leading economic power in the twenty first century. India can play a pivotal role in persuading the other countries to adopt the policy of ‘Non-Violence’ which was advocated by Mahatma Gandhi.

CONCLUSION

Foreign policy is unpredictable; it changes with the change of time and circumstances. After the end of the cold war new world order came to the forefront, new challenges emerged, like terrorism, climate change, drug trafficking, that forced foreign policymakers to abandon traditional characters of foreign policy like idealism and accept new global realities. Since the end of the cold war, India has made several changes in its foreign policy and has been trying to deepen its relations with the world’s major powers. But some foreign policy experts



criticise India for her close ties with major powers while ignoring her immediate neighbours like Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Sri Lanka. China's influence is growing over the whole of South Asia because of the reluctant attitude of India's towards her immediate neighbours. It is high time for India to redefine her foreign policy and should adopt a 'Neighbour first' policy in order to maintain peace in South Asia and achieve her distant dream to become a 'Global power'.

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