



75 Years of India's Foreign Policy: Achievements

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ABSTRACT-

Over 75 years since independence India's foreign policy, India has gone to a sea change. It is not just that India started with. India's foreign policy has been radically changed and now India is regarded as a global player in World market rather than as an underdeveloped country with high mass poverty and poor infrastructure. The cumulative effects of India's foreign policy are demonstrated by its high economy growth, reduced poverty, adoption of new technology, introduction of nuclear weapons, capacity building in sphere of strategic defence and cordial relationship with other countries. The article examines evolution of India's foreign policy over 75 years since independence in terms of what India has achieved until now and what possibilities are there which could be explored by India in the ensuing years. Article also examines the possibilities and achievements of India's foreign policy by analysing some core elements of India's foreign policy such as geopolitical relations together with economic relations with the countries across the world.

Key word- Global player, foreign policy, Economic Relations, Political Relations

1- Introduction-

Foreign policy of any country is not only about defining strategic concerns and conducting international relationships. It is equally about economic interests of the country, any way not more or less than strategic concerns. Strategic concerns and economic interests both go together in shaping up foreign policy. Strategic partnerships without immediate or distant, open or opaque economic interests could not be viable and sustainable. It is a matter of fact illustrated by the history of foreign policies in the new world order, it is difficult to disagree with it. This interplay between strategic concerns and economic interests in shaping up foreign policy does not appear to have been fully appreciated by India until the economic crisis of 1991 where after India opened its door for trade and business with the world.

The initial phase of India's foreign policy is characterized by its non-aligned approach. During the cold war era the country all along maintained its independence in policy making amid all complexities typical of that time. There were occasions when India had to deviate from the linear path to make adjustments. Until the 1962 conflict with China, India was getting benefits equally from the US and USSR both. The US led west bloc was a source of economic and food assistance while infrastructure industries were being erected in India in collaboration with the USSR. After the Chinese attack in 1962 India was forced to turn to the US for help. In 1971 faced with threats of coalition between US-China-Pakistan India entered a treaty with the USSR. This Indo-US treaty illustrates a critical change in India's foreign policy suggesting a compromise between non-aligned approach and strategic concerns of the country. Subsequent era is marked by the middle approach of the country. The dissolution of the USSR in 1991 was a significant development in world politics affecting India's interests. It shattered the fundamental premise of India's foreign policy on which it was based since 1971. After the fall of the USSR and the emergence of China as a new power, India entered a nuclear deal with the US in 2005. This Indo-US treaty was symbolic of realignment in India's foreign policy. Today the country stands at another crossroads. Choices are difficult.

Looking at India's foreign policy for last 75 years from key vantage points is really helpful in arriving at a credible view of its achievements and possibilities. However before seeking to learn about achievements and possibilities of our country's foreign policy it would be worthwhile to discuss a little what goes into making it. Series of events taking place in the world have an overarching impact on foreign policy of a country. There is a certain balance between foreign policy and pace of events happening in the global context. Global events in many ways could influence foreign policy of a country. Twists and turns happening around the world and their implications could not be lost sight of in formulation of foreign policy. It is always hard to make a reconciliation between global context and national imperatives. Given this background let us see how India has fared in its foreign policy over the last 75 years.

2- Transition of India's Foreign Policy over 75 years-

As the country celebrates the completion of 75 years of its journey since independence, it is high time to analyse whether India has really achieved the goals which freedom fighters of India and its citizen dreamed of, and what are the other possibilities for the country looming in womb of future. After

independence, Indian policy makers had to deal with the world as an independent country. At that time Western bloc, a group of pro capitalist countries, was led by the USA and most of European Countries and Eastern Bloc, group of communist Countries, was led by the Soviet Union. India did not join either bloc along with the many of new independent colonies instead joined nonaligned movement in 1961. During the cold War period from 1945 to 1991, India's perceived understanding was that joining with US or USSR bloc could go against its interests so India opted to remain neutral towards these two blocs by becoming the founder member of NAM. Obviously at that time, India's foreign policy was to stay away from the military alliances. With the end of cold war, prevailing circumstances prompted many countries including India to re-think about their foreign policy. It was the reason that immediately after the end of cold War in 1991, India adopted political and economic efforts to improve their relations with U.S, China and other western countries. In 1991, India adopted new economic reforms which were virtually about liberalisation, privatisation, and globalisation of economy. It was the time when India deliberately or out of compulsions had made adequate adjustments in its foreign policy to secure its position in the global World keeping basic principles of India's foreign policy intact. These basic principles of India's foreign policy were precisely as follows-

- 1- To Follow Principles of Panchsheel.
- 2- Non- Alignment Policy.
- 3- Perseverance of National Interests.
- 4- To Achieve World Peace.
- 5- Mutual Non-Aggression.
- 6- Foreign Economic Aid- Support to UN and other International Agencies etc.

Panchsheel and vasudhavekutubkum are of most significance among all these principles. The idea of Panchsheel, combo of five principles given below, was formally envisaged in agreement on trade and intercourse between the Tibet region of China and India, signed on April 29, 1954-

- 1- Mutual respect for each others territorial integrity and sovereignty.
- 2- Non- aggression against each other.
- 3- Non interference in each other internal affairs.
- 4- Equality and Mutual benefits.
- 5- Peaceful coexistence.

Vasudhaivkutumbkum is the policy of our Honourable P.M Shri Narendra Modi. Non-aligned movement has lost its relevance after the end of cold war and India is not adopting non alignment in foreign policy.

Different phases of India's foreign policy can be broadly divided into three phases.

- During the cold War.
- Post-cold War.
- Present scenario.

2.1- During the cold War(1947 To 1991) –

In 1945 India was under the control of British Empire when it became the member of U.N. After independence, India did not join any bloc in cold war instead it adopted policy of non allienegment. In succeeding years India played a major role in leading the decolonization movement and it became the voice of the colonies of Asia and Africa for decolonization. During this period, India was dragged into war with Pakistan and China both. India was however able to manage and limit the damages and to protect its interests. From early 1970s, the India started to distance from the non-alignment policy in practice but officially remained a member of NAM for name shake. In second Indo-Pakistan war during 1971 culminating into formation of new country in the name of Bangladesh Pakistan and China developed an all-weather friend's relationship. Since then, India has been under perpetual military threats from Pakistan in north-west region and from China in North region. It was in this background that in 1971, India signed the Indo- Soviet treaty of peace, friendship, and cooperation.

2.2- Post cold War-

Period of 1991 to 2013 was the economic reforms period. It was the time when India decisively sought to reorient direction of its foreign policy from non-alignment to multi alignment in order to sustain its relations with western countries in the perspective of its own interests. In 1998, India conducted nuclear weapon tests amid comprehensive nuclear tests ban treaty with the US. It was a great and historic effort of India to explain the world about India's security challenges and justify its stand for nuclear option. India continued its efforts for friendly and cordial relationship with neighbour countries. It was in this background that Gujral government went to the extent of execution of non-reciprocal accommodation treaty between Bangladesh and India. NDA government and Manmohan Singh government continued to follow Gujral foreign policy to ensure peaceful and conducive environment in the

neighbourhood. In 1992 India became a sectoral dialogue partner of ASEAN and full dialogue partner of it during the 5th ASEAN summit in 1995. India also adopted a membership of ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in 1996. This partnership of India with the ASEAN had a long run effect on India's foreign policy. India was able to interact with all ASEAN economies. It was result of this platform that India developed economic relations with the Japan and south Korea during this period. To sum up it could be said that ASEAN facilitated India to function on multiple axis in the global scenario. In 2004 and thereafter in 2009 India foreign policy is seen to play a major role in the establishment of BIMSTEC and BRICS respectively. In 2008 India signed the Indo-US Nuclear agreement which facilitated nuclear technology transfer to India. This agreement also legitimately recognised India as a nuclear weapon state and changed its relations with US.

2.3- Present scenario-

After the victory of BJP in 2014 under the leadership of Honourable PM Shri Narendra Modi India adopted a foreign policy not only to strike balance with other nations but also to play a leadership role in the global context. Indian foreign policy is now aimed at acting on multiple axis at a time. Country is engaging with US, at the same time, reassuring Russia about solidarity of old relations. This is demonstrated well by decision of Indian government to continue purchase of crude oil from Russia even after sanction of US amid Russia Ukraine war. India is suppling every kind of support to Sri Lanka in the wake of civil turmoil in Lanka leading to change of regime just to demonstrate its commitment to the neighbourhood country. Likewise, India has also assisted Afghanistan on humanitarian grounds after take over by Taliban government even at the cost of hostile attitude of Taliban Government towards India. In the same breath, India is balancing its relationship with Arab word along with developing its partnership with Israel. On the whole India is pursuing issue-based policy of multi alignment. This is illustrated by its agreement with US, membership of Quad and SCO etc.

3- Foreign Policy Achievements-

Some significant achievements of India illustrating efficacy of its foreign policy are appended below -

- 1- India has secured significant success in its efforts to emerge in the global scenario. Organisations like Indo- Pacific, QUAD, BRICS speak volumes about its global presence. Cultural programmes organised by India across multiple countries in the world have added a new dimension to its global presence. Declaration of International Yoga Day by UNESCO is a new feather in the cap.
- 2- Change in diplomatic priorities and approaches of India's foreign policy to facilitate opening up of the country more to the world after economic reforms is the most significant development in transition of India's foreign policy over the last 75 years.
- 3- Nuclear tests carried out by the country in 1974 and thereafter in 1998 in the face of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty when India was left with no option except to demonstrate its willpower for having nuclear weapons with strategic reasons, are significant milestones in India's foreign policy. After this, India has become a declared nuclear power in the world.
- 4- Enactment of India-US Nuclear Treaty in 2005 demonstrating a shared understanding with the west is one of its diplomatic milestones.
- 5-Global acquisitions by Indian businesses demonstrate the success story of India's foreign policy. These acquisitions are living testament of India's economic growth led by the dent of its foreign policy among other things.
- 6- Uri and Balakot operations to strike on terrorist camps running into territory of Pakistan across the border are latest examples of current pro-active approach of India's foreign policy to meet its strategic requirements. The tough positions taken by India assumes a greater significance when compared with its inaction after 9/11 terrorist strike on Indian land sponsored by Pakistan.
- 7- One of the significant achievements of India's foreign policy is its success in ensuring availability of different equipment and technology required for defence preparedness by effectively engaging with world powers. The acquisitions of Jaguars, Mirages and HRD submarines are evidence of this success.
- 8- The decisive victory of India in 1971 during the Bangladesh war has also been a landmark achievement of India's foreign policy. The division of Pakistan by this war changed the geopolitical realities in the neighbourhood of India. This victory was also a solace for the country in the backdrop of setbacks faced by it in the 1962 conflict with China.
- 9- The scheme of financing Line of Credits to multiple manufacturing projects of power, health, water and cement running in different countries of the world in an attempt to develop economic partnerships is a unique initiative undertaken by GoI. Until now, about 300 LoCs covering 540 projects have been offered by India. Out of these 540 projects 321 are running in Africa, 181 projects in Asia ,32 in Latin America and Caribbean, and 3 each in Central Asia and Oceania.

Besides financing of LoCs , India has also started to provide Grant assistance to many of the developing countries of the world.

4- India's foreign policy: possibilities-

Following eventual possibilities seem to follow from India's foreign policy.

- 1- U.N General Assembly, WTO and IMF policies are more favourable to the developed countries. India has consistently been trying to make international forums amenable to less developed and developing countries. Outcomes are still in the offing and hold prospects for materialisation in the future.
- 2- India is continuously putting its demand for a permanent seat in UN Security Council and that for reforms in Union Security Council. To this end, India has established G4 nations forum along with the Germany, Japan and Brazil to promote the agenda of reforms in UN Security Council.
- 3- Maintaining cordial and friendly relations with the China and Pakistan has always been a challenge for India as India has always been exercising lenient and favourable foreign policy towards both. India always wants to maintain friendly relationship but the China and Pakistan ever come to create tension at border and do not follow L AC. Anyway, India nurtures hope that issue will ultimately be resolved through diplomatic dialogue.
- 4- India is the third largest economy and the second most populous country in the world after China. It is the biggest source of demand in the world market. Given this favourable placement of India in the world scenario vis a vis other countries of the world, India may explore many more avenues for its economic growth by suitably modulating its foreign policy.
- 5- India is having good trade relationship with China and US both. US is the largest exporting partner of India while China is the largest importing partner. Both the US and China have the global rivalry at the world level. India may adopt a foreign policy conducive to its economic growth and to strike a balance between the China and US.
- 6- In the matter of conflicts between many countries at global level like ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine, India may adopt a calibrated approach conducive to global peace and justice and also to suit its economic interests in the larger perspective.
- 7- Climate change is a burning issue in the present world scenario. This is also an agenda of SDGs. Exploring renewable resources of energy is need of our times. India has already started working on this line by setting up International Solar Alliance in 2015 in collaboration with France. The initiative started by India holds many more possibilities for the future.

5- Conclusion –

Nowadays, India is a significant player at global level. Indian foreign policy is proactive and flexible enough to make suitable adjustments as per the changing global situations but simultaneously adhering to basic principles of its own foreign policy. India is seeking to become a superpower in the global scenario and maintain friendly relationships with all countries in the world. Indian foreign policy is a people centric and the following spirit of sabka saath, sabka Vikas, sabka vishwas. For the border security issues with the China, India is making all out efforts to resolve the border disputes through bilateral negotiations at political and bureaucratic levels. India is also harnessing manufacturing of goods in India through Make in India programme to promote industrial and economic growth. We are celebrating Azadi ka Amrita Mahotsav on the completion of 75 years of our independence. Let us all feel proud at this momentous occasion.

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