

INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY

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India is an ancient civilization with a multiethnic, multireligious and multilingual society. Freedom of thought and expression, democracy, non-violence and tolerance form an integral part of Indian ethos. Since times immemorial these values have played an important role in the evolution of Indian civilization. As a result, India was able to absorb and assimilate alien cultures, religions and ideas, still retaining its distinctive identity. Because of this immense process of assimilation and absorption, Indian society is popularly called an 'Indian Mosaic'. Today almost all possible religious, ethnic and cultural groups co-exist in India peacefully, making India the most pluralistic society in the world. Seventh largest in size, the country is home to over one-sixth of humanity. In recent times India has been one of the fastest growing economies and in terms of purchasing power parity has been ranked as the fourth largest economic powerhouse in the world.

Though pursuit of national interest remains the single most important guiding factor in determining a country's foreign policy; national history, ethos and international realities are important factors impacting foreign policy imperatives. Therefore, at the very outset, I would like to briefly summarize the ancient Indian thoughts which have bearing on India's foreign policy.

Ancient Indian Thoughts

The 2300-year-old Indian treatise *Arthashastra* by Kautilya enunciated six basic principles of foreign policy in the form of 'Circles of States'. Peace, war, neutrality, show of force, alliance, and making peace with one and waging war with another had been defined as the basic instruments of foreign policy. It fact even today, these principles continue to remain effective instruments of diplomacy as they were several thousand years ago. The ancient Sanskrit dictum *Vasudhaiva Kutumbkam* or 'the world is one single family' encompasses the modern concepts of globalization, inter-dependence and co-existence. Global challenges such as terrorism, environmental degradation, natural disasters, epidemic, poverty and deprivation need global solutions based on the concept of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbkam*. The concept of *Panchsheel* or 'five basic principles of states' peaceful co-existence' is another defining thought from ancient India. These are: 1) mutual respect for each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity;

2) mutual non-aggression; 3) mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs; 4) equality and mutual respect; and 5) peaceful co-existence. Over the years these principles have acquired universal acceptance and are considered to be the cornerstone of international relations. These have also found a place in various international treaties and documents over the years.

Fight against Colonialism:

In modern times, India's foreign policy evolved from the womb of India's freedom struggle led by Mahatma Gandhi against the British. This was an historic struggle based on truth, non-violence, and non-cooperation. It explains why India did not nurse any bitterness against the former rulers even after a prolonged struggle against the British and even appointed the last Viceroy of British India Lord Mountbatten as the first Governor General of independent India and readily agreed to become member of the British Commonwealth. Based on these values of freedom, struggle, political morality and ethics, the fight against colonialism and racism, and the goals of equality of nations, independence of views on international issues and an effective role of the United Nations in maintenance of world peace and stability became guiding principles of India's foreign policy.

The government of India under the leadership of Pandit Nehru extended material, moral and diplomatic support to the freedom struggles against colonial rule, particularly in the African Continent. India also led a crusade against the apartheid policy followed by the white government of South Africa. It may be recalled that Mahatma Gandhi had started this struggle in the late nineteenth century when he went to practice law in South Africa. Within a short period, India emerged as an important voice against colonialism and racism in the international arena. With mounting pressure, the colonial powers had no option but to concede independence to most African and Asian nations in the 1950s and the 1960s. Given this background it was natural that the newly independent countries of Africa and Asia looked towards India for support and leadership in their tasks of political consolidation and economic development.

Cold War and Non-Aligned Movement:

The Cold War that followed World War II left divided the world into two camps. International issues were judged on the basis of alliances rather than merit and reasoning. India wanted to steer clear of Cold War rivalries and to decide international issues on the basis of merit and reasoning. This view was

shared by several other nations that were against the politics of alliances and rivalry gripping the world those days. Therefore, under the leadership of Pandit Nehru, President Nasser of Egypt and President Tito of Yugoslavia, the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) was launched in 1961. Over the years the movement became an important forum and its membership steadily grew to over 100. Since its inception, the Non-Aligned Movement has been representing the collective voice of the developing countries and has played an important role in international affairs particularly by safeguarding the interests of the weak and the poor. NAM also gave birth to the ideas of South-South Cooperation and North-South Dialogue. After the collapse of the Berlin Wall signalling the end of Cold War, the the movement needed to adapt to the new realities. When economic agenda started dominating the world, NAM gave birth to the Group of 77 so that the voice of the weak and poor nations could be articulated during crucial negotiations on international trade and economic issues. Today G-77 remains a strong voice substantially determining the road map of economic and trade negotiations under WTO. India's role as a leading member of G-77 in safeguarding the interests of the developing countries at various stages of world trade negotiations, most recently the Doha Round, has been well recognised.

United Nations

India is one of the founding members of the United Nations and has been an ardent supporter of the UN role in maintaining world peace and stability. Basic principles of the UN Charter are enshrined in the Indian Constitution. India is signatory to almost all the major UN and international conventions, charters, treaties and protocols. Over time, India has played a critical role in UN peacekeeping around the globe and has made substantial contribution of military personnel and equipment in over sixty peacekeeping operations. India firmly believes that a stable political equilibrium can only be achieved through a multi-polar and cooperative world order and with an effective role by the United Nations in maintaining world peace and stability. The UN structure which was created on the ruins of the Second World War must reflect contemporary realities. Various bodies of the UN must be democratized and made more representative. The UN Security Council must be expanded to provide adequate representation to the developing countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America. These changes are imperative in order to enable the UN to meet the challenges we face today. By any objective criteria such as population, territorial size, GNP, civilization

legacy, political system and contribution to the activities of UN; India is well qualified to be a permanent member of the UN Security Council. This view was reaffirmed by several member states during their statements at the 59th UN General Assembly. India is hopeful that the UN system would be reformed soon to reflect contemporary realities.

India and its Neighbours

India has always sought to maintain close and friendly relations with all its neighbours and is prepared to extend all possible assistance to its neighbours when required. India's relations with Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Maldives and Bangladesh are characterised with goodwill, mutual understanding and economic cooperation for mutual benefit. India has open borders with passport free travel arrangements with Nepal and Bhutan. Free trade agreements are also in place with Nepal, Bhutan and Sri Lanka. Relations with Bangladesh are also largely friction-free. Agreements have been reached on most issues including the vexed question of sharing of Ganga waters and return of Chakma refugees. Trade with Sri Lanka and Bangladesh have recorded very healthy growth in the recent times.

However, India's peaceful overtures with Pakistan have met with hostility time and again. Since its establishment, Pakistan has been at odds with the idea of a secular, liberal and democratic state. Military dictatorship and religious fundamentalism seem to characterize the Pakistani State since its birth. When India was divided by the British in 1947, all the 560 princely states acceded either to India or to Pakistan under the Independence of India Act passed by the British Parliament. The Maharaja of the State of Jammu & Kashmir exercised his right to join India following exactly the same procedure as all the other princely states did. This made the State of Jammu & Kashmir an integral part of India. This decision seems to have become an irritant for Pakistan as it feels that the State of Jammu & Kashmir, because of its Muslim majority, should have acceded to Pakistan. Since then Pakistan has forced four wars on India, continues to illegally occupy a part of Jammu & Kashmir and has been aiding and abetting cross-border terrorism. Such hostile actions are certainly not conducive to friendly relations.

Despite the hostile behaviour of Pakistan, India has launched several new recent initiatives at various levels between the two countries. These include Prime Minister Vajpayee's visit to Lahore, the Agra Summit, the Joint Declaration in Islamabad on January 6, 2004 on the margins of the SAARC Summit and a

sustained dialogue process since then. The new UPA Government in India has further invigorated this dialogue, and India is hopeful that this process will help in establishing a durable peace with Pakistan.

In order to forge closer economic ties within the countries of the South Asian region, India played an active role in the establishment of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) in 1985. The country has taken several initiatives within the SAARC framework such as the South Asian Free Trade Association (SAFTA), increased people-to-people contact, closer dialogue on regional security and strategic issues, and an eventual a border- and tariff-free South Asian Union. However, these efforts have not succeeded because of Pakistan's persistent opposition to some of the very basic ideas of regional cooperation. Pakistan has failed to provide MNF treatment to India, which is the basic requirement for any beneficial economic relationship between the two countries. Nevertheless, India remains committed to the objectives of SAARC and shall continue to make all possible efforts on its part hoping that good sense will eventually prevail.

Relations with Major Powers

Friendship between India and Russia has withstood the test of time and vicissitudes of international relations. Relations between the two countries have now graduated to the level of strategic partnership with institutionalised annual summits. The fifth annual summit between the two countries took place in New Delhi in the first week of December 2004 when the two sides agreed to several new initiatives. India fully understands Russia's security concerns in Europe, Central Asia, and the Caucasus. Similarly, Russia understands India's security imperatives. The two countries are fully committed against the scourge of terrorism and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Over the years the two sides have developed fairly close cooperation in the fields of military technology, space, energy, diamonds, and IT. Efforts are under way to further strengthen bilateral cooperation in the areas of space, science, and technology.

India and the United States are the two largest democracies in the world with pluralistic societies, and therefore are natural partners for economic growth and world peace. Despite convergence in fundamental values, Indo-US relations have experienced several ups and downs, primarily during the Cold War era. Since 1998, Indo-US relations have undergone a sea change and the two countries have emerged strategic partners with more than eighteen institutional mechanisms to discuss a wide range of issues of bilateral and international

concern. Bilateral cooperation in all areas of economic interest, science and technology, IT, and space is growing rapidly. Military to military cooperation is also steadily growing. Both former President Clinton and President Bush have made immense contribution to bring about this transformation in our bilateral ties. The US is India's single largest trading partner and home to approximately 20 million Indian immigrants, constituting a dynamic and progressive community in the United States. The US also remains one of the largest investors in India.

India and the European Union have long standing cultural ties. They also share common values of democracy, pluralism, and economic development. The European Union as a bloc remains the largest trading partner of India, and is the largest investor in India. During the last few years, EU-India relations have graduated to strategic partnership and institutionalised annual summit, which takes place alternately at New Delhi and the capital of the EU Presidency. The fifth such summit was held in November 2004 in The Hague, where the two sides agreed to several new areas of cooperation.

Sharing a border of over 4000 kilometres, China and India are two ancient civilizations of Asia. Today they are also the two most populous countries in the world, home to 40% of humanity. In the recent past, the two have recorded healthy growth in their economies and thereby considerably reducing the incidence of poverty. During the recent past, Sino-Indian relations have taken a positive course in overcoming the differences and misunderstandings following the brief border war in 1962. Prime Minister Vajpayee's visit to China in June 2003 has helped further consolidation of Sino-Indian ties. Bilateral trade is now expanding exponentially and is expected to reach US\$12 billion in 2004. The two sides are also engaged in resolving the vexing boundary question, thereby charting a positive course for future relations and for world peace and prosperity.

Relations between India and Japan are rooted in shared spiritual values as well as cultural ties. However, during the Cold War era, Japan opted for a security alliance with the United States while India chose an independent course of action in the form of Non-Aligned Movement. These ideological differences created a psychological barrier and some stagnation in Indo-Japan ties. The fall of the Berlin Wall, improvement in Indo-US relations, and India's 'Look East Policy' have helped considerably in improvement of Indo-Japanese relations. Though Japan reacted strongly to India's nuclear tests in 1998, Prime Minister Mori's landmark visit to India in October 2000 was instrumental in paradigm change in Indo-Japanese bilateral relations. Japan remains the largest donor

and an important investor in India. Trade and economic ties between the two countries are poised for substantial growth in the near future.

Other Regions of the World

As part of our 'Look East Policy' India has maintained close ties with the ASEAN region with which it shares deep cultural links. When I was in the Philippines, the ASEAN countries were asked to organize a cultural event on a subject common to all. I was surprised to see that the cultural event was based on the Indian epic Ramayan, demonstrating our common cultural ties in ASEAN. Since 2002, India has become a full summit level dialogue partner of ASEAN countries. India is also a member of the Asian Regional Forum (ARF), which addresses itself to the security concerns of the region. Indo-ASEAN trade has recorded considerable growth during the last five years and is estimated to be around \$15 billion in 2004. India has also made considerable contribution in development of human resources in the region under India's Technical and Economic Cooperation Programme. India has committed to help ASEAN nations in the fields of IT, pharmaceuticals, space sciences and others. During the recent third India-ASEAN Summit in Vientiane, Lao PDR, Indian Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh proposed the idea of Asian Economic Community which has already evoked favourable response in many ASEAN capitals. India and ASEAN countries are destined to live together as was reaffirmed during the December 2004 Tsunami disaster.

Like ASEAN, India and the Arab nations are also closely linked over thousands of years. Until the mid 1960s Indian currency was still the legal tender in several Gulf States. Similarly, Indian postage and customs were used by most Gulf States till 1966. The older generation of most Gulf Arabs were educated in India and spoke fluent Hindustani. Until the fifteenth century, ports of Cochin, Mumbai, Karachi, Eden and Basra constituted the busiest trade routes in the world. Since the discovery of oil in the Arab States, India has emerged one of the most important importers of petroleum and oil products from the region. At the same time over 20 million Indian nationals have gone to these states in search of their livelihood. Simultaneously they are making substantial contribution to the economic development of these countries. During my posting in Bahrain I saw how the Indian workers have created a niche for themselves through dedication, honesty and hard work. India has also given its un-wavering support to the Palestinian cause and continues to do so. Departed Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat considered India to be a close friend

of the Palestinian people. India is fully committed to Palestinian statehood in accordance with the relevant UN resolutions. Egyptian leader Nasser and Pandit Nehru were the co-founder of the Non-Aligned Movement. India has also become a dialogue partner in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

Relations between India and Central Asia go back to antiquity. Even the origin of Aryans who came to India about 6000 years ago is attributed to Central Asia. Buddhism travelled from India to Central Asia about 2300 years ago. It is, therefore, natural that the two sides have a shared history, culture and civilization. Since most countries in this region are landlocked, India and Iran have offered them access through their ports. Given the vast energy resources in the region, India is also negotiating for construction of pipelines for transportation of gas and crude. This will be the new silk route of prosperity between India and the nations of Central Asian. The region has also benefited immensely from the training facilities and scholarships offered by India under economic assistance programmes. In recent years, assistance has been offered to the Central Asian countries in the fields of IT, pharmaceuticals, space research and biotechnology. As a result, economic cooperation between the two sides is gradually strengthening. India is an active member of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA). India's role in restoration of democracy and reconstruction of Afghanistan is well documented. India was the first country to offer massive reconstruction assistance to Afghanistan without any strings attached. Culturally, Indian films and music are widely popular in this part of the world, helping to strengthen our cultural links and people-to-people contacts.

India's links with Africa acquired a new dynamism during early 1950s and 1960s as a result of India's unwavering support to their freedom struggles and struggle against racism. In the post-colonial era, a large number of African countries joined the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and looked towards India's leadership in the new and emerging world order. Today India plays an active role in the economic development of Africa. African countries have been the largest beneficiaries of India's Technical and Economic Assistance Programme and the scholarship programme for foreign students in India. Recently India has committed US\$200 million to Africa Development Fund. Since India helped Africans in their hour of need, Africans consider India as their true friend. India thus, enjoys considerable goodwill in this old continent. People of Indian origin constitute a sizeable community in some African nations, which has also been a source of strength in cementing Indo-African ties.

Though geographically far apart, India has not overlooked Latin American and the Caribbean States. India's relations with Mexico and Brazil are characterized by goodwill and mutually beneficial economic and political ties. During my tenure in Mexico I was pleasantly surprised to see that how the people of two countries could identify with each other so easily, though that are located on the two opposite contours of the globe. These similarities were evident in Nalanda and Gandhi bookstores, in tortillas and chili, in Mayan and Aztec gods and goddesses and so on. Similar commonalities are also visible in Brazil, Panama, Guatemala and Peru. These visible symbols help in forging closer links with this region so far away from India. India is negotiating a preferential trade agreement with MERCOSUR countries. In the Caribbean, people of Indian origin who migrated in the nineteenth century have been a great source of strength in forging our relations.

Terrorism

In the recent past, international terrorism has emerged as the most serious menace to humanity with democratic and pluralistic societies becoming the most vulnerable targets. Though India has been victim of this menace for over two decades, the world community woke up to this grim reality only on the fateful day of September 11, 2001 when for the first time, the terrorists were able to perpetrate this heinous crime in a well coordinated manner at the very heart of the most powerful nation on this planet. The indiscriminate and wanton acts of barbarism could never be justified whatever may be the cause. In this civilized world of today, how could we tolerate killings and torture of innocent people? Barbarism must find no shelter on this planet.

India believes that this borderless and faceless enemy must be defeated, and defeated decisively by the collective action of the world community. The states that are still sponsoring terror groups and providing them infrastructure of terror must realize that they might be the next victims of the very monster they are aiding and abetting. The approach by some nations that 'this is your terrorism and this is mine' is a dangerous trend. Terrorism, whether it is in Chechnya, Jammu & Kashmir, Indonesia, Nepal, New York or Madrid, is a threat to the entire human race and must be addressed resolutely and collectively.

The world community must evolve a consensus to define terrorism so that the existing international treaties, conventions and instruments could be strengthened to combat this menace. Justifying terror attacks on innocent people in the name of fight for freedom, jihad or the so called 'root causes', is

perverse logic. International laws and other legal instruments must plug these loopholes. The states that are still aiding and abetting terror networks must face complete isolation of the world community if this menace has to be tackled effectively. Intolerance, extremism, totalitarianism, and religious fanaticism are the core elements sustaining and nurturing terror networks. The world community must act collectively and decisively to eliminate this menace from the face of mother earth before the terrorists could lay their hands on the weapons of mass destruction and spell doom for the humanity as a whole. UN Security Council Resolution 1373 is a step in right direction and therefore must be carried to its logical conclusion.

Nuclear Disarmament

Weapons of mass destruction including nuclear weapons are a scourge for humanity. Therefore, from the very inception of its foreign policy, India is determined to rid the world of these destructive weapon systems through universal and total disarmament in a timely manner. Since independence, India has been working hard with the international community and the UN to achieve this objective. Several proposals both at the United Nations and also at the UN Conference on Disarmament were put forward by India. Unfortunately India's efforts were repeatedly frustrated in the wake of selective and partial approaches adopted by certain nations. India believes that the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) are not only discriminatory but also fail to address the very objective of universal and total nuclear disarmament. India is therefore firmly opposed to these discriminatory measures and believes that such selective and partial approaches are doomed to fail.

After decades of repeated frustration in its mission to achieve universal and total nuclear disarmament, India finally decided to go nuclear in 1998 to safeguard its national security and sovereignty. Today, India is a responsible nuclear state with a well thought out and well defined nuclear policy. The following are the important elements of this policy:

(a) India's nuclear weapons are essentially defensive in character and the country would maintain only a minimum credible nuclear deterrence for the purpose of national security;

(b) India is firmly opposed to proliferation of nuclear arms & technology and is committed to the long-term goal of universal and total elimination of weapons of mass destruction. India believes that complete elimination of nuclear

weapons is the only answer to peace among nations. A policy of maintaining a minimum nuclear deterrence is only an interim measure.

(c) India has committed itself to the 'No First Use Doctrine' - the first and the only nuclear state to do so.

(d) India is committed not to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon states;

(e) India has declared a voluntary moratorium on further underground tests of nuclear devices.

(f) A comprehensive command and control system for nuclear weapons with supremacy of the civilian authority is already in place. India has demonstrated to be a responsible nuclear state and will continue to do so.

Democracy and Development

India firmly believes that freedom of thought and expression, democratic governance, tolerance and secular values are essential ingredients for world peace and economic development. Intolerance, extremism, religious fanaticism and military dictatorships not only promote terrorism but also create divisions and frictions among nations and societies. Sustainable development is possible only through well-considered policies and democratic governance. India, therefore, fully supports these values as an integral part of its foreign policy. However, at the same time, India does not believe in imposition of a particular variety of system of governance on foreign nations and societies. These systems must evolve with the support of people themselves. Systems imposed from outside are not only undemocratic but are doomed to fail. Any action against totalitarian and anti-people regimes, if need be, must be taken with the approval of the comity of nations as it was done against the Taliban in Afghanistan.

The fight against poverty, deprivation and illiteracy is another important goal of India's foreign policy. It is difficult to pursue an enlightened approach to development in a world where ODA levels are falling, protectionism is on the rise, terms of trade are stacked in favour of the rich, debt burdens are spiralling and investments are flowing from the developing countries to the developed ones. Over 2.8 billion people live on less than \$2 a day while the richest one percent receives as much income each year as the poorest 57 percent put together. Tariffs imposed by the developed countries on imports from the developing countries are four times of those from other industrialised nations. While the poor countries are lectured on the virtues of an open market economy, the OECD countries continue to provide **\$ 1 billion a day** in agricultural subsidies

to at home. These issues must be addressed if durable peace is to be achieved. So long as a substantial part of the world population continues to live in abject poverty and deprivation, world peace will remain fragile.

India and Mongolia

Before I conclude, I would like to mention Indo-Mongolian relations. India and Mongolia are two ancient civilisations of Asia. Though geographically far apart, the two countries have had cultural links spanning over a period of 2700 years.* These links are fascinating, intense and inseparable; including all human activities from language, literature, religion, medicine, and folklore to culture and traditions. Mongolian literary writings of Tanjur and Kanjur are testimony to these rich exchanges between civilizations. Given such a rich legacy of interaction, assimilation and exchanges by our ancestors, it is natural that the two countries have established close and friendly relations in modern times.

Around the time of India's independence, a Mongolian delegation went to New Delhi to attend the first Asian Relations Conference in March 1947 held at the initiative of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. Since then the leadership of the two countries has been in constant contact with each other. This led to establishment of diplomatic relations between our two countries on December 24, 1955. India was the first country outside the Socialist bloc to establish full diplomatic ties with Mongolia. Since then there has been regular exchange of high level visits between the two countries. This year the two countries are celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of establishment of diplomatic ties. Close friendship and cooperation have characterised our relations during this half-century. Today we have wide-ranging cooperation in the areas of education, IT, agriculture, security and defence, regional and international issues. Several Indian-assisted projects are running smoothly in Mongolia. Mongolia has publicly endorsed its support to India's permanent membership of an expanded UN Security Council. The two countries closely coordinate their policies at international and regional fora. India recognises Mongolia's nuclear weapon free status but firmly believes that universal and total nuclear disarmament is the only answer to world peace and security.

Conclusion

To conclude, freedom of thought and expression, democratic governance, tolerance, peaceful co-existence, non-aggression, peaceful resolution of disputes, non-interference in internal affairs, and all round economic development with distributive justice remain the fundamental principles of India's foreign policy. The UN and other international institutions must be reformed to meet the challenges of our time. Through an inclusive approach, the substantial part of humanity who remain passive spectators outside the ambit of these institutions must be allowed to play an active role in international affairs in order to find global solutions to global problems. Problems of massive poverty, rapid environmental degradation and terrorism must be tackled without further loss of time to make the world a safer place to live. India is firmly committed to these goals and would continue to strive for their realization for betterment of humanity.

Editor's note: The Moghul Dynasty, which ruled India from 1527 to 1857, was descended from the Mongolian Khans and Tamerlane.