

Paradigm Shift in Foreign policy of India

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ABSTRACT

After independence India's foreign policy, remained focused on the principles of peace, non-violence, non-alignment. Throughout the cold war period, India was tilted towards Soviet Union. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, India had to alter its foreign policy priorities to accomplish its long term objectives. Economic growth made India as an interesting economic destination for many countries especially for the United States of America. Transformation in Indian foreign policy has got a new momentum in the Administration of Prime Minister Narendra Modi . The alignment with all has been the maxim of India's foreign policy and the country is reaching out to several nations to achieve its diplomatic needs. This paper deals with the element which contributes towards the paradigm shift in India's foreign policy. China is also strengthening its relations with India's neighbours to segregate India and this paper also analyses how India is accomplishing its foreign policy objectives in the neighbourhood. The way Russia is shaping up its relationship with Beijing and Islamabad will not only influence the Indo-Russian ties, but would also have a huge impact on India and on the region at large. The article then conclude on how India is persistently pursuing its strategic interests by drifting from its traditional foreign policy approach and actively reinforcing India's current foreign policy agenda.

When India got Independence, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru had given direction to the foreign policy of India. India's foreign policy, remained focused on the principles of peace, non-violence, non-alignment, anti-imperialism and anti-racism. Although India had refused to align with any 'block' in the cold war period, it was tilted towards the Soviet Union. A relation with USSR was a key pillar of India's foreign policy, and the Soviet Union had been a established and trusted friend to India.ⁱ In the 1970s and 1980s, Nehru's most ambitious initiative of non- alignment significantly lost its importance with the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Friendship 1971. The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 was a major setback to the foreign policy of India. At the same time, India had opened up its economy and initiated comprehensive economic reforms to compete in the new era of globalisation. India had to change its foreign policy priorities to accomplish its long term objectives in the changed international scenario. A chief feature of the Indian foreign policy was its rapprochement with the United States because at that time foreign policy of India was motivated by economics to a greater extent than before. It's focus is to attract investment and to protect sea lanes , by which 70% of India's oil supplies travelled. It is in favor of Indian security interests to align with the US. Next element of the Indian foreign policy is to secure its interests in the East and to implement its 'Look East Policy'. India wants to secure its interests in the Indo-Pacific region by checking Chinese dominance as the sole player in the region. Finally India's aspiration to be recognised as a powerful state to play a greater role in Asia could be satisfied if it became a close ally of the United States.ⁱⁱ

United States foreign policy was also in a transformation phase to meet the new challenges. Attacks of September 11, 2001 brought a drastic change in US's approach. These

attacks primarily transformed the framework of relations of United States with other key powers like China, Russia and India. President George W. Bush, in his National Security Strategy gave more stress to build up constructive relationships with India to meet new challenges.ⁱⁱⁱ Bush administration was committed that he would not allow the nuclear issue to be a barrier while dealing with India.^{iv}

Shift in relations can also be seen in the Indo-US Civil Nuclear Agreement which is unique in itself. The bilateral relationship got a new momentum in the Administration of Barack Obama and Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Indian has developed strategic partnership with US which is based on growing convergence of interests on regional, global and bilateral concerns.

Prime Minister Modi strengthens India's ambitions for global power. As New Delhi reinforces this image with "aggressive diplomatic factors" and total assertion, it starts a system of multilateral diplomacy^v Not non-alignment but alignment with all has been the maxim of India's foreign policy and the country is reaching out to several nations to accomplish its diplomatic needs. This initiative is started to be a part of a world which is more inter-aligned with the global affairs. This can be actively seen from India's ambitious foreign policy goals. To play more proactive role in the Southeast Asian region, India changing its policy from "Look East to Act East," India has redefined its commitments in foreign policy with the West, extending its outreach to Asia- Pacific, Indian Ocean Region and the Arctic.^{vi} |

India had maintained distance from Israel for decades under the pressure of Arab, but it is now seeing advantages in a balancing relationship with Israel. Prime Minister Modi's

historic visit to Israel last month, added a new chapter in India's foreign policy. Israel has been a global leader in advance technology. India wants to strengthen its manufacturing base and is looking to do so with technologies coming from Israel.^{vii}

Prime Minister's initiatives like Digital India, Make in India, promising to make governance more responsible and transparent has caught the attention of foreign giants. Prime Minister Modi's extensive efforts to connect with the Indian Diaspora received a massive response overseas Indians especially when the current government portrayed them as their "face on foreign land." Also, during foreign visits, Prime Minister Modi did not limit his speech to socio-political but adequately and extensively addressed India's cultural and historical importance, establishing a clear connection between India, its history, and its rich cultural heritage. His visit to Silicon Valley was a new exercise. The success stories of Indians had a cumulative effect. Sunder Pichai, CEO of Google has said "I am not just excited because I grew up in India, I am excited because I deeply care about technology and know that India will play a bigger role in future." It was proclaimed that Google will assist to set up base for free Wi-Fi at 500 railway stations in India. Microsoft will also come up with low cost broadband connectivity to 5 lakh villages of India. Leading chipmaker Qualcomm will invest \$ 150 million for mobile and internet connectivity in the country. Apple's largest manufacturer Foxconn will also set up a manufacturing unit in India.^{viii} The total bilateral trade in goods touched USD 62.8 billion in 2012. While speaking in 11th Indo-US Economic Summit Finance Minister emphasized that the Indian government would reform its taxation system to boost the bilateral trade from \$100 billion to \$500 billion.^{ix}

The foreign policy priorities of the Modi government have given impetus to Indo-US relations. On the nuclear issue, both countries have developed a common understanding. The cooperation in this area has been strengthened by the regular meeting of the Indo-US Civil Nuclear Working Group (CNWG). Indian Civil Nuclear Liability Act, which was a huge obstacle in the Indo-US civil nuclear cooperation, has been resolved by an ordinance passed by Prime Minister Modi during the visit of US President Barak Obama in January 2015.^x

Overall value of the bilateral trade in goods and services between India and the USA, was \$21,002 in 2002 and it rose to \$107594 in 2015.^{xi} The United States emerged as one of the largest foreign direct investors in India. As for economic growth, two way trade increased fivefold since 2001 to nearly \$100 billion.^{xii} US-India defence trade has increased from approximately zero to around \$13 billion in the past decade.^{xiii}

Indian tilt towards the US has influenced its relationship with Russia. Ex-Defence Minister Arun Jaitley, answering a written query in the Lok Sabha in August 2014, has said that the US has become the largest supplier of weapon systems to India in the last three years. Earlier, Russia was the biggest supplier of defence items to India. Around 40% of the defence imports during this period had gone to American companies, Russia got 30% contracts and French companies had received 14% of the total contracts.^{xiv} Trade between India and the US is estimated to have jumped substantially from \$118 billion in 2016 to \$140 billion in 2017.

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Foreign policy is a strategy to achieve the vital interests of a country. The paradigm of the world order has changed completely today; therefore, India has adopted a changed foreign policy to protect its interests.

Challenges in the Asia Pacific region have played a crucial role in strengthening of the Indo-US strategic partnership. To check the growing power of China, US has seen India as a key balancer in the Asia Pacific region. The Asia-Pacific region is also significant for India, however Chinese supremacy in the region is a potential threat to India's sovereignty. In addition, China is deploying its troops in Pakistan-administered Kashmir posing a danger to Indian sovereignty.^{xvi} The list of Chinese assertive moves in Asia-Pacific region has been growing in recent years. China is investing in the development of ports in the India Ocean, in the regions of Pakistan, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh,.

India is collaborating with the US led alliance in the Indo-Pacific region; it is seen as a significant shift in the Indian foreign policy. United States, India, Australia and Japan are the main balancers of the Indo-Pacific region.^{xvii}

India's conflict with Pakistan remains the most emotive issue in its foreign policy. This issue has the power to fetch the attention of all the policy makers and officials. Indian strategic partnership with United States and other countries of the Indo-Pacific region is seen as a challenge by Pakistan and China. According to a report by China's State-owned Xinhua News Agency, Chinese premier has said that China has a number of economic sea lanes to protect. China is building up its military capabilities to defend its sovereignty and look after its immense global interests. The US led alliance could threaten China's international trade and other natural resources it requires to maintain and grow its economy.^{xviii} China has been using Pakistan to counter the influence of this alliance. Chinese President Xi Jinping during his visit to Pakistan has committed to invest \$45 billion in Pakistan, representing the single largest Chinese investment in a foreign country. This investment is part of China's "One Belt, One Road" initiative, which is a global project in character and scope representing China's inevitable mount on the world stage as a superpower.^{xix} Recently Pakistan has concluded an agreement with China to acquire eight submarines, some of them will be manufactured in Pakistan. China is assisting Pakistan in its nuclear programme and Pakistan's missile programme also relies upon the Chinese designs and technology. China has supported Pakistan in the United Nations when it was going to sanction Pakistan based terrorist groups.^{xx} Even on the issue on NSG, China, despite much persuading did not disguise its lurking anxiety in dealing with India, played spoilsport, and prevented India's efforts on the grounds of 'procedure'. China insisted that India must sign the Nuclear non-Proliferation Treaty first. By preventing India from becoming a member of the NSG, China in a big way assisting Pakistan.

China is also strengthening its relations with India's neighbours to isolate India. Recently we have seen the changed stance of Nepal's policies towards India. Apart from Pakistan, China is also exporting weapons to other

neighbouring countries of India. Bangladesh is set to import two submarines from China. It seems that India's neighbours like Nepal and Maldives have fallen for the Chinese charisma.

Recently, Moscow signed a landmark military agreement with Islamabad – the first in many decades. It is playing a quiet role in Afghanistan along with China and Pakistan for seeking a settlement with the Taliban. Russian shift towards Pakistan is noticeable; it is now avoiding pointing out any link between Pakistan and terrorism. Russian Defence Minister Sergey Shoigu, appreciated Pakistan's efforts to tackle terrorism during his visit to Islamabad in November 20, 2016. This is quite a shift from an earlier stance, when Moscow was critical of the country's establishment utilizing extremist groups to fulfil its strategic objectives.^{xxi}

New Delhi is determined to increase its influence in the neighbouring South Asian countries including Nepal and Bhutan - a region where Beijing is fast establishing its footprints. In the foreign policy under Modi, more emphasis has been given to our immediate neighbouring countries. Maintaining relations with immediate neighbours is the highest priority for the Modi Government. India has signed several Memorandum of Understanding and agreements to encourage cooperation in regional issues like trade, connectivity, and infrastructure among the member states of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation.^{xxii}

India has a strategic partnership with the US to protect its interests in the Asia-Pacific region from assertive China. But Moscow's relationships with China and Pakistan would have a great impact on India and also on the Indo-Russian ties. This new Russian approach will have a lot of implications for India. Russia's union with Indian rivals may segregate India in the

region, unless Moscow strikes the right balance in its relations with India and its neighbours.

Conclusion

Today, India has learned the art of securing national interests at global level and considerably implemented it as a structural framework in multilateral diplomacy. The current confrontation between United States and Russia poses a risk to India's multi-lateral approach. India has been the largest consumer of Russian defence equipments. But now it has diversified its sources of weaponry to United States. Indian government has also acknowledged that a major part of the defence items comes from United States, which has led Russia to find alternate buyers. No country can compromise on its economic interests. Obviously, Russia has to fulfil its economic interests by selling weapons to Pakistan and China. However, Russia is unlikely to put at risk its relations with New Delhi for Pakistan. After all, India is not only its defence customer; Russia also sees the sub-continent as a potential energy export destination. Recently Indian Defence Minister reiterated New Delhi's determination to go ahead with procuring the Russian made S-400. Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) could not affect the deal. Indian Defence Minister is expected to raise the issue of sanctions under CAATSA at the upcoming '2+2 Dialogue' between the India and the United States. United States is demanding its allies to act fully in favour of its interests on global issues. India needs both countries for the defence equipment and strategic partnership among area of interests. While making the foreign policy, it is paramount for India to find the right balance between United States and Russia.

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