

Domestic Politics and Foreign Policy: A Linkage Aspect

Umesh Kumar Sinha

Research Scholar, Department of Political Science, Magadh University, Bodh-Gaya

1. Introduction

The transformation of the international system from one in which politically sovereign States were the only legitimate actors to one in which other entities, particularly the constituent units of federal systems, are also involved, is one of the major developments of the post-second World War period. For over more than three hundred years during the modern epoch, politically sovereign States monopolised international relations, because they had an effective monopoly of power in the international arena. The prevailing view was that while a country may adopt the federal system as a way of preserving its "unity in diversity," it was no less entitled than a unitary Government to speak with a single voice in international arena and have a single unified, national and nationwide foreign policy for the country as a whole. This is no longer the case. A contrary view has increasingly been gaining ground that the constituent units of a federation should also have a role to play so that the country's foreign policy may reflect its domestic diversity. Federalism has thus emerged as one of the most inputs domestic politics influencing foreign policy of a federal State.

India is no exception to this emerging trend in federal States. While the Constitution of India exclusively authorizes the Union Government to frame and implement foreign policy, India, being a democratic polity, can hardly afford to ignore the special interests of the constituent units. In fact, several Indian States, because of their special interests, have taken keen interest in foreign affairs, and the Union Government has taken into account their concerns. It is therefore very relevant to undertake a study of the linkages between Domestic politics and foreign policy in the Indian context to facilitate a better understanding of the making of Indian foreign policy. Besides, such an exercise is necessary for a better understanding of comparative and contemporary federalism and its interface with foreign policy. The study assumes more significance in the era of coalition politics and single majority politics in India, when the federal Government has to depend on several provincial leaders for its survival. Finally, the greater financial autonomy of the provinces that the globalization and liberalization entail has also contributed to the growing influences of constituent units of Indian Union in the making of foreign policy by increasing their autonomy, especially in the field of attracting foreign investment. The study of the role of provincial Governments in the making of India's foreign policy has thus assumed added significance.

Surprisingly, however, a systematic attempt has hardly been made to examine the role of States in the making of India's foreign policy. This is especially surprising in view of the fact that the literature on comparative foreign policy since last three decades has increasingly emphasized the international

activities of provincial Governments in federal political set-ups, which has helped to replace the perception that nation-States are the only significant international players. Unfortunately, most of the works on Indian foreign policy deal with the events in sequence form or narrate relations with other countries, hardly attempting to bring out the forces and factors in general and federalism in particular that have a bearing on it.

Accordingly, this study attempts to achieve the following objectives:

- to study linkages between federalism and foreign policy in the Indian context;
- to review international activities and influences of the States, more so in the context of the emergence of a far more complex milieu in which policy-makers are constrained to weave into single skein negotiations at both the domestic and international levels; and
- to make an appraisal of the challenges and opportunities concerning provincial inputs in the making of India's foreign policy and suggest ways and means to cope up with this emerging trend as also to consider desirability to institutionalise it within the existing federal framework.
- 'The linkage politics' is thus a broader framework that encompasses within itself the study of the impact of several domestic factors such as, geography, society, culture, history and tradition, leadership, economy, and politics on the foreign policy of a country. Our concern, however, here is limited to the study of the impact of only one domestic factor, namely federalism, on India's foreign policy. We have therefore used the linkage framework in a modified form.

The Linkage Aspects:-

- Though the Indian Constitution exclusively authorises the Union Government to frame and implement India's foreign policy, factors such as geographical location, ethnic and cultural affiliations, emergence of coalition politics, electoral calculations, etc., have promoted several States to take active interest and play their part in foreign affairs.
- Influence of Indian States in the tailoring of India's foreign policy is more noticeable in the context of policy towards its neighbouring countries.
- The compulsions of coalition politics have increased the significance of provincial inputs in the framing of India's foreign policy.

Globalisation and liberalisation have strengthened the role of the States in the foreign economic policy arena.

Sovereignty, Federalism and Foreign policy

The distinguishing feature of international politics has always been the existence of independent political communities trying to give expression to their autonomy. The modern state system has sought to institutionalize this ideal state of autonomy as sovereignty. The attempts date back to the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia that conceded the rights of European monarchs to make their own political decision unfettered by the dictates of the Holy Roman Empire. Sovereignty refers to the ability of a state to make decisions autonomously from other states. In the latter half of the last millennium, members of the state system have sought to give both political expression and legal meaning to the attributes of sovereignty. In International Law, a sovereign state has three important legal and political rights: *jus belli* (the right to use force in defense of its interests); *jus legationis* (the right to send and receive diplomatic missions), and *jus tractatum* (the right to negotiate treaties or agreements with other sovereign state). These rights and attributes of a sovereign state are possessed by a government exercising supreme authority on behalf of the state over the population within a defined territorial area. They are deemed to be indivisible. The exercise of sovereignty is assumed to be zero-sum: only one sovereign authority can exercise them for a given territory and population. This precludes the possibility of two or more 'sovereigns' legitimately exercising these rights for the same territory and the people.

Paradoxical, though, it may appear that when the doctrine of sovereignty, with its assumption to one supreme authority within a defined territory, was gaining ground in the state system, a form of government that was based on the 'divisibility' of supreme power (sovereignty) was adopted in a number of governmental systems. After independence in 1776, the United States created a confederation before a truly federal constitution was finally adopted in 1790. In 1848, Switzerland, which had a confederal system dating back to 1291, adopted a constitution that transformed the confederation into a federation. And federalism, by its very nature, precludes a single and supreme authority. It assumes that sovereign political authority can be exercised in the same territory, over the same people, by more than one independent political authority. Each level of government is granted sovereign jurisdiction over responsibilities specified by the constitution. In short, federalism can work only when sovereignty gets divided.

This assumed indivisibility of sovereignty in the international system, and the necessary divisibility of domestic sovereignty converged in a federal state's external policy. While a federal state is assumed by the international community to be a unitary actor, the realities of the domestic political structure provide the constituent parts of a federal state with the sovereign competence of their own in specified areas. With divided sovereignty internally could present itself to the international community as unitary sovereign.

Needed: A Co-operative Framework

Back at the theoretical level, much of the apprehensions arise due to a misplaced significance of non-central

governments (NCGs) in terms of their uniqueness as international actors and their separateness from traditional modes of diplomatic intercourse. As a consequence, rather than attempting to locate NCGs within the foreign policy processes alongside their national governments, there has been a strong presumption that each have incompatible interests and stand in opposition to one another. The problem has been further compounded by an over-emphasis on changes at the systemic level coupled with an under-emphasis on changes characterizing foreign policy processes.

In this context, the problem of managing domestic and external policy intermesh. Once regarded as lying firmly within the jurisdiction of the federal government, issues relating to the international environment have become matters

of jurisdictional dispute. This, of course, reflects the fact that the foreign policy agenda has expanded greatly since the era in which many federal constitutions were drafted, touching a policy issue under the control of the constituent governments. In sum, if central government, by virtue of its control over foreign policy, can impinge more and more on the responsibilities of the constituent governments using the argument that the foreign policy agenda has expanded to include a range of issues once assumed to be exclusively domestic in nature, then the logic of a division of powers is endangered.

Thus, the issue concerning the relationship between federalism and foreign policy can be approached at two levels. At a broader level. It concerns the operation of federal political systems. As the boundaries between the domestic and international policy arenas become hazier, understanding federalism increasingly demands that the international environment in which a given system functions be taken into account.

The second level concerns the conduct of foreign relations. The traditional assumption that foreign relations are the exclusive concerns of central governments no longer holds validity. There is no denying the fact that the management of the multi-layered diplomatic environment with the domestic and international dimensions presents formidable complexities. But complexity does not mean paralysis. It suggests that it poses challenges that demand practical solutions going beyond simple assertions of the constitutional prerogatives of central government in the foreign policy sphere. The essence of the problem is not so much the demarcation of area of responsibility, but is creating ways and means by which the increasingly diverse policy interests bearing on the international environment which national communities possess can be related one to another and integrated into the overall policy framework. Within the context of federal states, as in the domestic sphere, this involves overcoming the constraints imposed by constitutional norms through processes of intergovernmental negotiations and collaboration. That is also the essence of "co-operative federalism."

The aforesaid analysis thus clarifies that the federal impact on foreign policy making and its implementation can be studied at two levels: first, at the level of an analysis of provisions enshrined in the constitution facilitating a division of powers between the Union and its constituent units with regards to subjects concerning the field of foreign relation; and second, at the level of an analysis of the special problems which the constituent units may have with regard to their

neighboring foreign states and the possible interests which they may have in developing economic and trade relations with

the some other countries or constituent units of some other federal states.

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