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641, First Floor, Dr. Mukherjee Nagar, New Delhi-110009

Contact No.: 011-47532596, 8448485520

Web : www.drishtias.com

E-mail : dlpsupport@groupdrishti.in

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India's Foreign Policy and the New World Order

1

Chapter

Foreign Policy of a country is the sum total of its beliefs, principles, interests and objectives that it promotes while interacting with other countries. The major factors that shape the foreign policy of a country include its culture, economic conditions, its geographical position on the globe, its history, the prevalent political scenario within the nation and in the world etc. The foreign policy of a nation depicts its ideological aspect in the world. However, it must be noted that since nothing is permanent, accordingly, any policy, whether domestic or foreign, changes according to circumstances and conception of national interests.

Determinants of Foreign Policy

To understand the nature of a country's foreign policy, it is imperative to analyse and understand the determinants of foreign policy.

Factors	Impact
Size of the State	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The Size of the nation determines its human and non-human resources, which promote its capabilities of what it could offer to the world in exchange of its own national interests.■ Case of USA, Russia, Canada, China, France, Brazil etc are examples of the same. Large sized states, with few exceptions, always formulate and use an active Foreign Policy and through it these play an active role in international relations.■ However, size alone cannot be the sole determinant. Countries of the Middle East with a large amount of resources, present a case against the size determinant. Presence of resources plays an equally important role.■ Japan is another example, which is relatively small in size, but has a huge impact on the ongoings in the world. Israel, despite being small in size has been influencing the foreign policy of many nations. Britain till 1945 was a major super power irrespective of its small size.
Geographical Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Geography is one of the most permanent and stable factors determining the foreign policy of a country.■ Topography of land, its fertility, climate and location are the major geographic factors which determine both the needs as well as the capability to fulfil the needs of the people of a nation, along with shaping its foreign policy.■ The natural resources of a country and its food production capacities are directly linked to its geography and play a vital role. For example, shortage of food grains shaped the foreign policy of India in the 1950s and 60s.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Adequate existence of vital natural resources – minerals, food and energy resources – have been helping factors of the US and Russian foreign policies. ■ Moreover, suitable geographical factors help and encourage a nation to adopt and pursue higher goals, Suitable geographical factors can help and encourage the nation to adopt and pursue higher goals. <i>viz</i> India's presence in the Indian Ocean is a vital factor shaping its importance in world and South Asia in particular.
Economic Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The economy of a country determines its polity and thereby its foreign policy. It determines the scope of dealings and relations that a country will have with others. The success of the USA as a superpower since 1945 is an example. ■ India's focus on 'Make in India' as well shows the importance of economic development. ■ The Foreign Policy of Japan in the contemporary times is directly and fundamentally related to its economic development.
Cultural and Historical Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The influence of history and culture in foreign policy is, for instance, well understood by the impact of colonialism and coming together of nations in the form of NAM. ■ The norms and traditions that characterize the life of the people of a nation largely determine the foreign policy. During the process of interpreting and formulating the objectives of national interest, the decision makers are always governed by their cultural links, historical traditions and experiences. ■ However, these factors are subject to change as per the demands of the time. Historical experiences can be forgotten in view of national interests. Conflict among European nations despite cultural links, or strong US-Japan ties despite the World Wars are testimony to the same.
Social Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Strong internal conflict and strife in a nation lead to weak foreign policy, such as the conditions of, Pakistan, Iraq, Afghanistan, etc. ■ The democratization of the process of policy making in recent times has increased the importance of social structure as an element of foreign policy. The linkages between the domestic and international environments have tended to strengthen the role of this element.
Type of Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The polity of a nation is another important element. The way a democracy would function its foreign policy is bound to have stark differences in comparison to a monarchy or a republic. ■ Moreover, the relation between the executive and legislature of a country will have equally important role to play.
Internal Factors and Leadership in the Country	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Sudden changes within the nation in terms of polity, economy, disaster, etc. influence the course of the foreign policy of a nation. ■ For example, Indian Foreign Policy has seen a lot of changes from time to time in the face of Emergency in 1975, the Indo-China or Indo-Pakistan war, or even after the emergence of a politically strong government in 2014.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other examples include the rise of new leadership in China, internal disturbances in Pakistan, Iraq at the time of Saddam Hussein and thereafter, etc.
Ideology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Since the foreign policy of a country is shaped and implemented by the leaders, diplomats, and statesmen, therefore their attitudes, ideologies, interests, knowledge, skills, perspective, etc. are bound to have an impact. For example, the Foreign Policy of India till 1964 was largely shaped and influenced by Nehru and is rightfully so, called the Nehruvian Policy. Similarly the emergence of Prime Minister Modi and the right wing has had an impact on their ideology in the foreign affairs. Likewise, there is a stark difference between the foreign policy of President Obama and Trump in the USA However, it must be noted that regardless of their ideological perspective, every leader is guided by the national interest as the central value.
Diplomacy and Ethics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diplomacy plays a key role in helping the state to achieve its motives and interests through pursuance and negotiations. It is equally important in conflict management between the nations. Ethics in diplomatic relations is largely important determinant of the foreign policy of a nation. For instance, India's ethical stance on various issues has led to its image of a soft power.
Public Opinion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decision makers, both at the national and international level, need to give due importance to the demands and opinions of the people and shape the policies accordingly. The rise of several peace and development movements in the World has decidedly acted as a check against foreign policies of war, aggression and destruction. Various policies on climate issues are also a result of the increasing awareness and demands of people regarding the same.
Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technological advancement is a major factor in strengthening the foreign policy of major powers of the world. The USA has always used the technology factor for putting pressure on the foreign policies of developing nations. Germany, Japan, South Korea, France, China and India portray an example how technological advancement can influence the foreign policy.
Alliances and International Treaties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mutual interdependence and association with various treaties, organisations, pacts, and agreements also determines how a country shapes its foreign policy. The pressures of NPT and CTBT, and the decisions of WTO on every foreign policy is a well known fact.

India's Foreign Policy: Objectives and Principles

India's foreign policy has been guided by certain principles and objectives, which have although undergone certain changes with respect to the changing dynamics of the international politics, but the nucleus has remained unchanged and promises to remain the same in future as well.

The decade of India's independence was an eventful one. World War II ended in 1945, with a heavy toll on the economy and society of the world as a whole. These experiences led to the formation of a new organization, the United Nations, to maintain global peace and ensure security. A lot of new nations came into existence, particularly in Asia and Africa, which suffered from poverty and underdevelopment. Besides, the postwar period saw the world divided into two camps with the USA and USSR engaged in a cold war. Both these nations wanted the newly independent countries to follow their models of development.

In such situations, India faced its own challenges due to British colonial legacy like partition, huge poverty, abysmally low level of human development. India's foreign policy was shaped in these circumstances.

It decided to conduct its foreign relations with an aim to respect the sovereignty of all other nations and to achieve security through the maintenance of peace.

Prime Objectives

An un-exhaustive list of the basic features of our foreign policy can be summarized in the following points:

National Security is Sacrosanct

- Protecting the country's political independence and promoting its external security is the foremost objective of India's foreign policy. This is particularly relevant in light of India's experience with colonialism in the past.
- This has been further exaggerated due to the presence of belligerent neighbours like China and Pakistan.

Abhorrence for Colonialism

- Since India has been a victim of colonialism, it is committed to resist and oppose colonialism and hegemonic domination in all its forms and structures, including neo-imperialism built on economic lines and discrimination based on economic and political criteria, at the international level.
- This is best illustrated by India's stand on issues related to climate change wherein it has always maintained that the principle of 'Common but differentiated responsibility' should be adhered to and the developed countries who are the major polluting countries should not only be made to pay but also should shoulder the responsibility of transferring clean technologies to developing countries.
- Another aspect of its policy is non-interference in the internal affairs of any country.
- India has always maintained that every country should have the right to follow its own political system and practices as per the requirements of its national interests. Any change whatsoever should come from within the country rather than from an external intervention.
- This policy was illustrated when India chose to stay away from directly supporting the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 on the grounds that regime change in order to be sustainable should only be brought about by the people of Iraq, rather than externally enforced by military intervention.



Economic Development for All

- India supports promotion of economic development for itself and all the other nations, third world countries in particular.
- Its foreign policy seeks to develop beneficial relationships with the industrially advanced countries with a view to securing necessary assistance.
- India through its foreign policy aims to create a more equitable economic and social world order that would help in eventually eliminating diseases and deprivations from the world.
- In this line of thinking, India has always tried to extend a helping hand to other countries in various capacities which include economic aid, technological assistance and overseas investments to bring about development in the partner countries. For example, India had extended economic assistance to its neighbours like Nepal, Bangladesh, Srilanka, Maldives and even to Pakistan, when it was hit by a devastating earthquake in 2005. India is at the forefront of infrastructural reconstruction in Afghanistan after that country was devastated in the recent American war against the Taliban.
- Apart from such direct initiatives, India has always been the voice of the developing countries in various international forums like the UN, WTO, etc., wherein it has always insisted on a fair and equitable treatment to the various developing countries in matters of international affairs. An analysis of the patterns of India's vote at the UNGA on various issues reveals that, India's voting pattern has largely been in line with that of the G-77 country, which is the organization representing the developing nations.

Respect for International Law

- India has always actively supported the development of international law to regulate various problematic aspects of world affairs. It firmly believes in strengthening the United Nations and other global and regional organizations as useful tools for international harmony and cooperation.
- In line with this thought, India continues to advocate reconstitution of the UN and particularly the UNSC, in order to make it more representative and effective, in tune with the current realities of the world.
- On the other hand, India has used various international forums for resolution of those matters which it thinks cannot be resolved by mutual negotiation with the other countries. For example, India took the Indus River Water sharing treaty with Pakistan to the ICJ and had successfully obtained rulings in its favour on several occasions.
- Another recent development was when India took the matter of import duties imposed by the US on steel and aluminium imports to the WTO Dispute Resolution Agency, the decision on it is however awaited.

Nuclear Disarmament and World Peace

- India believes in working for the reduction and final elimination of nuclear and other types of weapons of mass destruction. Though India is itself a nuclear state, yet it has always maintained that its nuclear status is a protest against double standards followed by the nuclear power states of the world regarding retaining their exclusivity in maintaining nuclear arsenals while restraining other countries from joining the club.
- This is also in line with maintaining our independent foreign policy and upholding our sovereignty vis-à-vis taking decisions in matters of external security.

- However, it is important to mention herein that, despite acquiring the status of nuclear state, India has always maintained that it is committed to a policy of ‘no-first use’ of nuclear weapons and at the same time also maintains an impeccable record of nuclear non-proliferation.

Prime Determinants

There are various other factors which have contributed in shaping our foreign policy and our relations with other countries of the world. These factors acquire relevance as per the requirements of time and space, however, their presence can never be overlooked as they always exist as subterranean currents within the larger matrix of our foreign policy. The prominent features are summarized below:

Geographical Factors

- India is the seventh largest country in the world, with nearly 3 million square kilometres of territory. On its north, its boundaries are associated with the Himalayan mountain range. It has 15,000 km long land boundary with Pakistan in the West; Bhutan, China and Nepal in the North; and Bangladesh and Myanmar in the East.
- Afghanistan and the former Soviet Union are in the immediate vicinity of Jammu & Kashmir.
- Apart from this, India has a 7,500 km of coastline touched by the waters of the Indian Ocean on three sides of its territory. Most of India’s foreign trade is routed through the Indian Ocean. Therefore, the Indian harbours witness dense traffic of merchant ships proceeding from or towards Europe, West Asia, Southeast Asia and East Asian regions. Hence, there is immense geopolitical and geo-strategic significance of the ocean to India’s external relations.
- Further, India is strategically located at the heart of Asia with a large area of the Indian Ocean within its outreach. India in the past had to suffer attacks from its neighbours, China and Pakistan, yet it is in its interest that the channels of communication are kept open. However, in keeping with the fact that India is the gateway of both South-East Asia and West Asia, India’s security and vital interests are closely knit with the peace and stability in the larger region of Asia. Therefore, apart from China and Pakistan, India also keeps close relations with regional powers such as Iran, Indonesia, Malaysia, Indonesia, Japan, Vietnam, etc. largely to maintain the balance of power in the region. In pursuance of this objective, India has followed the Look East Policy, the Act East Policy and is developing economic as well as strategic relations with the ASEAN countries.

Natural Resources and Economic Conditions

- One of the most prominent determinants of our foreign policy is the availability and scarcity of natural resources within the country, as well as various economic compulsions arising out of the forces of demand and supply.
- This is best illustrated by looking at the range of relations which India pursues so as to ensure that oil keeps flowing in its refineries.
- Apart from oil, trade which is a very important aspect of our foreign policy, depends upon the availability of various natural resources within the country and the markets for the various commodities produced within the country. Therefore, economic factors constitute the most important aspect of our foreign policy, particularly in the globalized world.



Incumbent Leadership

- The personality of the leader in office, particularly at the highest level is another important determinant in shaping the foreign policy, which is true not only for India but for other countries as well.
- To illustrate, while the period of Nehru is largely viewed as an idealist phase wherein the principles of non-violence and peace found ultimate importance, the period of Indira Gandhi is largely remembered for her proclivity towards realism and precedence to national interest in foreign policy matters.
- This is how India's policy with reference to the liberation of Bangladesh, non-accession to Non-Proliferation Treaty, and strengthening of ties with the former Soviet Union may be viewed.
- Further, moderatism, which was the hallmark of Vajpayee's personality, is said to have influenced the policy of engagement with Pakistan and the United States.

Domestic Concern

- At no point of time can foreign policy remain immune from the concerns and issues within the country. As it has been seen in the past, during the food shortage in the 1960s, India turned towards the United States for imports of food grains.
- Then, our position on the Arab-Israel conflict as well as on the question of America's invasion of Iraq, the Indian response has largely been to caress the sensitivities of a particular constituency within the country.
- Further, with the rise of terrorist attacks within the country, one of the prime movers of India's foreign policy was to develop a global consensus against terrorism.

International Developments

- Another significant aspect of India's foreign policy has been to update itself as per the changing dynamics of world politics.
- During the cold war era, the focus was to shield India from the tensions and anxieties of the Cold War. With the end of the Cold War and the advent of neo-liberal philosophy in a unipolar world, India has largely dropped its reluctance to engage with the US in a big way. India now shares a strategic partnership with the US, and the US is one of the principal investors in India, apart from being a significant trade and defence partner.

Decision-making Institutions

Foreign policy is a highly complicated affair mainly because, unlike domestic policy affairs wherein we can control all aspects of the issue, in foreign policy matters, we have to think in terms of the possibilities as to what are the possible ways in which a country may react, in view of any statement or action. This is because foreign policy is always vis-à-vis other country(s) and we have to work with very specialized agencies and factors, and carry out a strenuous analysis of all the circumstances which might unfold in a given situation and by given reaction. In view of the aforesaid challenge, we have a very specialized setup which provides the decision-makers with specialized information so as to ensure that a given situation pans out in the manner which caters to our national interests, and in case such a scenario cannot be ensured, damage caused by it can be minimized.