

Indian Foreign Policy: An Empirical Study

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Abstract

Foreign policy of a nation, also called foreign relations or foreign affairs policy, consists of self-interest strategies chosen by the country to safeguard its national interests and to achieve its goals within international relations setting. India has evolved from a protest voice on the world stage to an active shaper of the international order. India's evolving strategic outlook has made it possible. India slowly opened its economy through careful economic liberalization, and at the same time began to engage with the rest of a world on a different set of norms. By the late 1990's India was willing to place its own national interest - both economic and security - ahead of broader ideas of global justice and equity. This Paper gives a brief overview of how India has evolved its Foreign Policy over the years. It also tries to identify what needs to be done in the coming years to realize India as a Super Power. In order to get actionable pointers on this crucial aspect, an empirical study was conducted. Major stake holders of the economy such as Armed Forces personnel, Bureaucrats, Academicians, Researchers and Students from Pan India were contacted and were asked to answer the questions pertaining to various aspects of foreign policy. The data thus obtained was further analysed and conclusions were drawn on the basis of that. Foreign Policy should be Holistic, Realistic, Interest and Goal based and should be ambitious enough to achieve long-term objectives.

Keywords: Armed Forces, Foreign Policy, National Interest, Super Power

1. Introduction

In India's perspective, a highly idealistic foreign policy of non-alignment between the super-power blocs was articulated immediately after Independence by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, based on a moralistic Jeffersonian worldview of "friendship to all and enmity to none". India became one of the founding members of the Non - Aligned Movement and in setting up of the United Nations. During the Cold War, India consciously chose the foreign policy of not aligning with any major power bloc and instead devoted its energy and time in nation-building and national reconstruction. The end of Cold War instead of creating any turbulence in its foreign policy orientation, made India's leaders look toward realpolitik so as to cultivate and strengthen her diplomatic and economic ties with all the major countries of the world and regional bodies. As India came face to face with

the reality of international relations, this high moralism was gradually replaced by realpolitik, and a belief in the perception of India as a regional presence. India's armed forces were leveraged as instruments of foreign policy. In the 21st century, India has fine-tuned its relations with other countries of the world from a position of advantage. India's domestic and foreign policies became increasingly intertwined, on aspects of internal security as well as defense of the country's territorial and societal integrity against threats from externally sponsored proxy war.

As India's economy continued to grow and the country engaged with the rest of the world on a more equal footing, India underwent a third evolution in the country's strategic outlook. This shift, which is ongoing today, seeks to position India among the great powers by showcasing a willingness to take on more international responsibilities. Narendra Modi's rise to power accelerated this shift, as he sought to push India to be a global leader. India will

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be playing a greater role in solving global challenges and shaping the rules, norms, and processes that guide these efforts.

Three emerging shifts in the international order have played a key role in catalyzing India's rising stature in the international order: terrorism, climate change, and the rise of China. As the international order undergoes significant changes, India's policy continues to evolve further. It would be interesting to understand from experts that how will it take further turn and what should India focus on?

Present study is one such attempt in this direction.

2. Literature Review

India's journey from 1947 to the present day, in terms of both foreign policy and domestic politics, can be seen as a transition from idealism under Nehru, through a period of 'hard realism' from the mid-1960's to the mid-1980's, to economically driven pragmatism today. (Chand A, 1992). India followed the path of non-alignment in the face of the bipolar order of the Cold War, in backdrop of the reason that it would have to 'plough a lonely furrow'. (Zoya Hasan, 2002). At the time of independence, Indian foreign policy seemed moralistic to outsiders, defining the national interest as congruent with 'world co-operation and world peace'. India is fast emerging as an important player in regional and international arenas. However, it continues to be beset by a number of security challenges, both internally and externally. (Rohan M, 2011). Despite an all-out effort, absence of an overall strategic framework for Indian foreign and defense policy is clearly visible and is related to lack of 'institutional mechanisms ... and planning capabilities' (Sumit Ganguly, 2010). Ever since 2000, five developments have reshaped India's Foreign Policy namely India's effort to reach out to overseas Indians, its attempts to build connections with foreign business interests, its nascent foreign aid and development program, its use of major events to showcase a 'nation-brand' India, and its use of social media to reach out to younger, tech-savvy audiences. (Manali J, 2018).

Ever since India achieved independence in 1947, it has striven assiduously for adopting its foreign policy commensurate with its national interests and the vision set by its leaders who were at the helm of affairs. Hence,

shift in India's Foreign Policy ever since Independence has taken place. Same can be summarized as under:

Unified idealism: From independence through the 1950s and 1960s India's foreign policy was framed for international consumption as one of some idealism, while Nehru tackled the tremendous domestic challenges of long-term cohesion and economic revitalization that the British empire had neglected in the final decades of the Raj.

Intermittent realism: India veered away from non-alignment towards alignment with the Soviet Union, marked by the Indo-Soviet treaty of 1971. A few months later, military intervention in the Bangladesh war enabled India to shatter Pakistan and halve its size and weight in response to Pakistani atrocities and the influx of Bangladeshi refugees into India. In 1974 India conducted its first nuclear test, a response to that of China in 1964 at Lop Nor. In 1975 India intervened during internal unrest in independent Sikkim and incorporated it into the Indian union. India was more occupied by power politics instead of looking outwards.

The birth of pragmatism: 1990's and onwards. Over four decades of socialist economic policy and poor fiscal management resulted in severe balance of payments crisis. Emerging identity-based politics and other ideologies in India resulted in polity and its role in the world was virtually discarded. India shed its non-aligned and anti-western ideologies in favor of a pragmatic foreign policy with greater focus on national defense, including in the nuclear sphere and dawning the 'Look East' policy.

3. Research Questions

The questions that present study will try to answer are as follows:

- (a) Will use of Soft Power expand reach of India's Foreign Policy?
- (b) What will be the impact of economic development on India's Foreign Policy?
- (c) Will modernization of Armed Forces help in boosting India's Foreign Policy?
- (d) Will active diaspora policy for a mutually beneficial engagement help overseas impact of India's Foreign Policy?

4. Research Objectives

- (a) To identify the specific fields of Soft Power or Cultural Diplomacy which will expand reach of India’s Foreign Policy.
- (b) To determine how the growth of country’s economy will impact India’s Foreign Policy.
- (c) To relate and implement various new programs to strengthen bonding with Diaspora to boost India’s Foreign Policy.
- (d) To define the limit of Military modernization and energy security assertiveness to strengthen India’s Foreign Policy.

5. Hypotheses

Four hypotheses for this study are as follows:

- a) H0: There is no need to change Foreign Policy of India.
H1: India’s Foreign Policy should be reshaped and realigned to changing world order in backdrop of security scenario giving due attention to developments in its immediate neighborhood.
- b) H0: There is no need to use Soft Power of India for its Foreign Policy.
H1: India should reinforce its Soft Power to expand its Foreign Policy.

- c) H0: Strengthening of India’s Foreign Policy.
H1: Economic development, improving knowledge power along with technological capabilities and strengthening of our Armed Forces will help boost India’s Foreign Policy.
- d) H0: National Interest need not be the focus for formulating India’s Foreign Policy
H1: National interest should be borne in mind while formulating India’s Foreign Policy.

6. Research Methodology

Both Primary and Secondary data was collected to seek required information.

Secondary sources such as information documented in Journals, Government publications, Minutes of Conference/ Seminars held at national and international level were used to get valuable inputs.

Primary Data was collected as given below. Survey was conducted, following were the respondents.

Respondents: They were officers with different service bracket from Pan Armed Forces, Bureaucracy, Academicians, Journalists, Students pursuing Political Science and International Relations, Scholars, Analysts, Policymakers, Journalists, Researchers and Diplomats (Serving and retired). A sample size of 300 was taken and different Questionnaires were floated for different groups. Some Interviews were also conducted.

Table 1. Caption- Details of Respondents

SERVICE/ORGANISATION	% OF RESPONDENT	LENGTH OF SERVICE/EXPERINCE		
		Less than 10-Years	Bracket :10 -20 Years	Bracket: 20 Years and above
Pan Armed Forces	20% Junior Level 40% Middle Level 40% Senior Level	20	40	40
Bureaucracy		20	40	40
Academicians, Researchers, Analyst & Diplomats		20	40	40

Sampling Technique: Initially it was purposive to get the required respondents. At a later stage within each category, sample was taken based on voluntary participation of informants.

For ensuring quality of data, spot checks were also done. Interviews were also carried out to cross check the information.

Questionnaire: Comprehensive questionnaires for the respective target audiences were administered. The questionnaire was explicit; it included structured and

semi-structured questions giving adequate flexibility for the respondents to express their thoughts and opinions, without bias. The responses were sought on a Likert (Five Point) Scale.

7. Results and Discussions

Use of SPSS was done for data analysis. Results and Interpretations are as follows:

Questions(Q)	Content
Q1 to Q5(Less Q 6)	Soft Power & Diaspora upliftment will help boost India's Foreign Policy.
Q8 to Q11 (Less Q7)	Military modernization, Energy Security, Policy aspects related to Foreign Policy.
Q12 to Q16 (Less Q17)	Economic development and policies related to it.
Q18 to Q20	Issues of National Interest, World order changes, Balance of Power related to Foreign Policy.

Exploratory Factor Analysis: This analysis helps to reduce correlated variables to certain attributable factors. For results, a total of 20 Questions were analyzed on Likert scale. Noticing the Screen plot and suppressing the absolute value below 0.385 the numbers of factors were reduced from 7 to 4. Based on the Questionnaire and the elimination of three questions, the Newly Grouped Factors were as follows:

Reliability Test: Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.744 confirmed the reliability analysis:

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.744	.749	17

Inferential Statistics: Categorical data duly tabulated provided the basis for use of Chi-square test of independence to test the hypothesis.

Factors	Pearson Chi Square	Asymp. Sig. (2 sided)	Inference
National Interest always are always kept in mind while formulating Foreign Policies.	31.846	0.000	<0.05
Policy changes in Defense modernization aligned to changing security situation will boost Foreign Policies initiatives.	15.123	0.001	<0.05
Cultural Diplomacy by using Soft Power is a must to extend Foreign Policy.	23.066	0.000	<0.05

Moving towards stronger economy and exchanges of high-level visits by scholars, media persons, think tanks will be beneficial to the Nation for its matured foreign policy.	8.245	0.010	<0.05
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Results from Inferential Statistics indicate that all the alternative hypothesis - Honoring National Interests, Use of Soft Power, Stronger and Stable Economy, Military Modernization and Diaspora integration with mainstream will go a long way to boost India's Foreign Policy have been proved correct. Hence, they were accepted.

To achieve what is desired from India's Foreign Policy, several factors have to be tactfully encountered in Indian scenario. Some of them are listed below:

a) **Economic growth and reshaping of India's Foreign policy:** India's has a rapidly growing economy, which is now projected to be the world's third largest by 2028. India wants to enlarge its foreign policy ambitions as it increases its global presence in business. India has developed internationally focused service sectors in the cities of Bangalore, Hyderabad and National Capital Region. India wants to be part of a global trade system and understands the growing importance of multinational logistical chains. India is a growing source of outward Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). For a successful FDI model, the companies should be able to get natural resources and access higher technology from other nations. This is only possible if the futuristic foreign policy is designed and implemented with precision. This indirectly will also enhance India's global position and outreach. India has transformed its 'look east' to 'act east' policy under the present regime to take advantage of the huge trade potential in East Asia and South East Asia. India's growing engagement with ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) and SAARC (South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation) will further enhance its ability to access a wider market as well.

India is moving ahead to use its Trade Policy as extension of its Foreign Policy.

b) **Soft Power or Cultural Diplomacy to boost India's Foreign Policy:** Soft power is one of the key components of foreign policy in this age of mass communication, global trade and tourism. India boasts an amazing variety and wealth of soft power resources. Topping the list is its spirituality. India's influence as a Soft Power in its myriad forms has also increased manifold in shaping values, beliefs and attitudes of a wide cross-section of world's population. India is progressing steadily to become a global hub for education and healthcare. India is regarded as a knowledge-producing machine & its healthcare industry is growing at a rapid pace and likely to become a \$280 billion industry by 2020. Both Education and Medical tourism is on rise, attracting world's attention. India's film industry is expanding even though its share in global cinema revenue is a mere 1%, but still it has been instrumental in spreading Indian culture. Large Indian diaspora across different continents are big source of spreading the policies of the government, thus indirectly fostering better relations with other countries. Over the years, India has been able to address their issues and emphasizing the goodwill of the country towards them. Diaspora outreach initiatives like Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas started in year 2002 are a step towards this direction.

c) **Aligning Foreign Policy with contemporary security challenges:** India is fast emerging as an important player in regional and international arenas. However, it continues to be beset by a number of security challenges, both internally and externally. External threats are arising out of unstable states such as Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bangladesh, Myanmar and Afghanistan. China is growing its influence in the region due to its military modernization, maritime interference in Indian Ocean Region and threatening nuclear policies. Growing radicalization, secessionist movements and insurgencies with in certain Indian states coupled with rise of ISIS in its neighborhood, poses new challenges for India as never before.

8. Conclusion

By pursuing economic relationships with major powers, India can build up its own institutional capacity to develop and execute a grander strategy internationally while simultaneously attending better to its key internal security challenges. However, economic growth alone will not solve

all of India's problems, and will not alone secure much greater power status. Taking a holistic perspective, however, India has a bright future as its foreign policy directions are benign, dynamic, evolving and flexible and thus taking care of the fluid international environment in a fast-changing world. India is striving not only to revive national pride in the country's ancient values, but also enhancing its hard power by using its soft-power advantages so as to pave way for stronger Foreign policy. However, like any other nation, National interest alone would guide our foreign policy in days to come. However, in this uncertain world, it is essential that for India to move from sphere of Regional Power to Global Power, India's Foreign Policy should be Holistic, Realistic, Interest and Goal based and should be ambitious enough to achieve long-term objectives.

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