

Basics of International Relations

Foreign Policy: Foreign policy is the mechanism national governments use to guide their diplomatic interactions and relationships with other countries. A state's foreign policy reflects its values and goals, and helps drive its political and economic aims in the global arena.

Purpose:

1. Protecting India's sovereignty and territorial integrity.
2. Ensuring better relations With India's neighbours and global partners
3. Protecting and expanding India's interests
4. Aiding rapid socio-economic development
5. Taking care of Indians and people of Indian origin living abroad (diaspora).
6. Achieving India's due position in the comity of nations

Determinants of Indian Foreign Policy:

Permanent determinants: Geography, history, Culture and traditions.

Transformational determinants: Nature and degree of economic development, Personality of top leadership, Domestic milieu, Ideological orientations of a given government.

Factors influencing India's Foreign Policy:

Geographical Factors: Geographical factors refer to the shape, size, geophysical peculiarities, resource endowments and surrounding geopolitical environment of a country. Natural boundaries like the Himalayas and oceans provide veritable defence to India from inimical forces. Strategic location of India is further strengthened by the long coastline that surrounds the country from east, west and south. They make her pivot of global politics and trade in the Indian Ocean region.

Economic Factors: Economic factors include natural resources such as metal, minerals, fossil fuels, fertile land, water, human resources and use of all these endowments to achieve and maintain a high rate of economic growth for the country. The significance of these factors have attained critical proportions in the wake of privatization, liberalization and globalization. India has sufficient endowment of various natural resources barring a few such as fossil fuels, uranium and precious metal such as gold. Besides, India has a favourable demographic profile.

Historical and Cultural Factors: India is one of the few countries in the world with ancient civilization, and rich historical and cultural legacy. At the same time, around two hundred years of colonial rule, and a long and chequered history of national movement also provide valuable inputs to the shaping of Indian foreign policy. Anti-colonialism, anti-imperialism, anti-apartheid, solidarity with the cause of Afro-Asian nations, support for United Nations endeavors etc. are some of the running themes of national movement that remain ingrained in the foreign policy of the country even today.

Cultural ideals like vasudhaiv kutumbkam and Swami Vivekananda's exhortation of taking all the people as our brothers and sisters still resonate in the conduct of Indian foreign policy. Gandhian paradigms of satyagraha, ahimsa and swadeshi are taken as cardinal principles of Indian foreign policy since its very inception.

Domestic Milieu: India's mammoth social and cultural diversity and democratic traditions is one of its unique selling points in international politics. Democracy has been central to engagements with the west. Having a large population of Muslims has helped in maintaining close relations with predominantly Islamic nations. Conversely, the Islamic dimension has enabled India to develop a fairly

in depth understanding of the Muslim world. Politics of Tamil Nadu always remain a determining factor in India's relations with Sri Lanka. Bengali bhadralok of West Bengal acts as the bedrock of India's relations with Bangladesh.

But at times, this also creates challenges. For instance, a major cause of India's discomfiture in its misadventure in Sri Lanka in 1987 was the opposition of that move by the people of Tamil Nadu.

Persona of the Leadership: Persona of the leadership also arguably plays a very important role in formulation of a decisive foreign policy of a country. Jawaharlal Nehru's idealistic vision and utopian perspective of India's relations with her neighbours not only cost her dearly in terms of loss in India-China war but also produced a number of perennial problems such as Kashmir. On the contrary, Indira Gandhi's resolute leadership not only won India her war with mischievous Pakistan but also earned all weather friends like Soviet Union and made India a nuclear country to be feared by its inimical forces.

Ideological Predilections: Ideological predilection means the implicit or explicit commitment of a leader to a particular ideology. Given Nehru's overt inclination towards socialist ideology, Indian foreign policy during his stewardship had socialist underpinnings. In recent times, given the ideological orientation of leadership towards free market capitalism, a marked tilt in the Indian foreign policy towards the United States and other capitalist countries are quite apparent. Thus, ideological predilections of political leadership have always been one of the determining factors of Indian foreign policy.

International Scenario: Apart from the internal dynamics of a country, external or international scenario play important role in determining the nature and thrust of foreign policy of a country.

In India, the dynamics of cold war was the key factor behind the policy of non-alignment. Similarly, given its penchant for peace and non-violence, India would have never gone for wars with Pakistan and China to settle its issues with them. But it was forced by its belligerent neighbours to fight wars with them at different points of time. In the same vein, had China not exploded its nuclear bomb in 1964, it would have been beyond imagination of Indian foreign and security establishments to reorient peaceful nuclear program of the country towards explosion of nuclear devices.

Institutions of Foreign Policy making

Parliament

1. India's Parliament (Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha) has the power to legislate on foreign affairs, one of the subjects in the exclusive domain of the central/union government.
2. This authority includes legislation or amendment of any law for the successful implementation of international treaties, agreements and conventions.
3. Government is accountable to Parliament, which can seek information and clarification on policies and issues.
4. Theoretically, by exercising budgetary control and passing necessary resolutions, Parliament can force the executive to act as per the will of the Government.

Generally, parliament contributes to making of the foreign policy of India in three ways:

1. Firstly, while debating the decisions of government, members of parliament articulate different perspectives on the subject. Thus, parliamentary debates tend to articulate the wider range of public opinion on a given policy decision of the government.

2. Secondly, on occasions, parliament also acts to suggest modifications in a particular policy decision of the government. Though such suggestions have very less chance of getting through the house, they, nonetheless, make government aware of feelings of the members on the issue.
3. Finally, when parliament accords its approval to the policy decisions of the government, such decisions become consensual approach of the country towards a given subject and tend to carry much more weight. Thus, though parliament plays only indirect role in the making of India's foreign policy, that role is unquestionably quite eminent.

The Cabinet

The Cabinet being the top most decision making body of the government, determines the course of India's external relations by giving necessary directions.

Ministry of External Affairs

A look at the 'Allocation of Business Rules' of GOI shows that MEA has been empowered with the task of planning, formulating and managing India's external relations with other nations to protect and promote national interests in the global stage. MEA is headed by the Minister of External Affairs on the political side and Foreign Secretary on the administrative side.

MEA acts like the foreign policy secretariat in India, which receives numerous policy inputs from various sources, and analyzes and channelizes the different options to the political leadership, i.e., the Cabinet headed by the PM, and then implements decisions taken at this apex level. Thus, MEA is the pivot around which the foreign policy making of India revolves.

The PMO

Under the Parliamentary form of government, Prime Minister is the executive head of the government. The PMO consisting of senior level bureaucrats provides secretarial assistance and advice to the PM and functions as the centre of policy making in India. It coordinates various central agencies like the Cabinet, Cabinet Committees, Council of Ministers and other stakeholders to sort out interdepartmental hurdles in domestic and foreign policy execution.

Insofar as making of foreign policy is concerned, PMO gets to play a more active role especially during the reign of activist Prime Ministers. Even in routine course of action, the policy decisions taken by the MEA are presented before the PMO for perusal and approval of the Prime Minister in case he does not have any modifications to suggest in those policies.

The foreign policy initiatives evolved by MEA come to their final shape only when they get approval from the Prime Minister. Thus, PMO happens to be the critical agency that provides finality to the foreign policy initiatives.

National Security Advisor

Prime Minister's take on the matters of foreign policy is generally determined by the inputs provided by National Security Advisor (NSA). NSA is the secretary of the National Security Council (NSC) (created in 1998), which is headed by the Prime Minister. The NSA remains in touch with the Prime Minister one on one to keep him abreast of the latest happenings inside and outside the country.

Think Tanks:

Think tanks are non-governmental, non-profit organisations engaged in study and research on different aspects of India's strategic and foreign affairs. They publish occasional research papers and policy briefs to make policy interventions in the formulation of foreign policy of the country. Staffed by professional researchers as well as former diplomats and practitioners of strategic and foreign affairs of the country, these think tanks carry the unique blend of theory and practice of foreign affairs. These organisations are also roped in by the government to act as the co-sponsors of important policy dialogues such as Raisina Dialogue on strategic and foreign policies of India.

Inputs are also taken from state governments, National Security Council, NGOs, Pressure Groups, and Interest Groups etc.

Continuity and Changes in Indian foreign Policy

Continuity

1. Support for multilateralism, multipolarity and collective security.
2. Commitment to peaceful and rule based international order
3. Increasing India's stakes and India's profile at the global level.
4. Commitment to nuclear disarmament
5. Peaceful and strong relation with the neighbours
6. Pacifism and support to diplomacy for dispute resolution

Changes

1. India's policy has shifted from Non-Alignment to Strategic Autonomy.
2. Deepening relations with the US and the West while remaining engaged with other players.
3. Greater focus on economic diplomacy
4. India becoming a reluctant nuclear power
5. Greater focus on diaspora
6. Military action to impose cost on adversaries.
7. Shift from Idealism to Pragmatism

Key inflexion points In Indian Foreign Policy

- **India's independence:** India became responsible for its relations with other nations. Prior to independence it was being controlled by the British government.
- **Establishment of NAM:** NAM is the largest organization outside the UN. It provided India with leadership of the 3rd world in a bipolar world. Through the platform of NAM, India advocated for decolonisation, anti-apartheid, nuclear disarmament etc.

- **War with China:** The war in 1962, where India was comprehensively defeated, was a setback for India's idealism and Hindi Chini Bhai-Bhai. It resulted in a freeze in relationship with China which only opened in late 1980s. Lack of support from any of the NAM members was a reality check for India. This also led to strengthening of China-Pakistan relations.
- **War with Pakistan- 1971:** This changed the geography of the subcontinent with the creation of Bangladesh. It ended the two-front threat from Pakistan and emergence of India as a decisive military power. India also signed Indo-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation leading to deepening of India Russia relations.
- **Economic liberalization:** India's 1991 economic crisis and subsequent reforms led to India's emergence as a major economic power. It also resulted in deeper engagements with the West based on economic engagements and diversification of Indian diplomacy.
- **Collapse of USSR: This resulted shift from bipolarity to a unipolar world.** India also opened up its diplomatic engagements through Look East Policy and shifted from Non-Alignment to Strategic Autonomy.
- **Nuclear Test:** India conducting Pokharan II tests in May 1998 made India a de facto nuclear power and provided ultimate deterrence against nuclear China. It led to emergence of a more confident India who could withstand western pressure in its national interest. But it led to nuclearisation of Pakistan and concerns about nuclear exchange in the sub-continent.
- **Civil Nuclear agreement with USA:** After nuclear tests, India engaged with the USA which led to removal of sanctions. Furthermore, Civil Nuclear Agreement was the beginning of deeper US-India engagements, Indian civil nuclear program under IAEA. India also got NSG waiver which opened up civil nuclear commerce for India.

Some common terms:

- **Track 1 dialogue/diplomacy:** Formal diplomacy. Between governments, diplomats and military leadership.
- **Track 1.5 dialogue/diplomacy:** Combination of formal and informal diplomacy. Eg.- Raisina dialogues
- **Track 2 dialogue/diplomacy:** Back-channel diplomacy mainly to avoid media attraction and arrive at consensus over contentious issues.
- **Track 3 dialogue/diplomacy:** People to People engagements.
- **Para diplomacy:** Para diplomacy is conducted by sub-state governments. It introduces the idea of decentralisation of political power to make regional governments prominent actors in the international sphere.
- **Public diplomacy:** Also called as people's diplomacy, is any of various government sponsored efforts aimed at communicating directly with foreign public. Public diplomacy includes all official efforts to convince targeted sectors of foreign opinion to support or tolerate a government strategic objective.