



Indian Council
of World Affairs

CELEBRATING

75

YEARS OF
INDIAN
FOREIGN
POLICY

Indian Council of World Affairs
Sapru House, New Delhi

2023



Ministry of External Affairs of India
Jawaharlal Nehru Bhawan
New Delhi

CELEBRATING

75

YEARS OF
INDIAN
FOREIGN
POLICY

Indian Council of World Affairs
Sapru House, New Delhi

June 2023

Contents

Introduction	5
Inaugural Remarks	
<i>Vijay Thakur Singh</i>	11
Conversation One - From Oppression to FreedomAn Independent World View	
<i>Nalin Surie</i>	19
<i>Arvind Gupta</i>	22
<i>Swaran Singh</i>	27
<i>Sanjaya Baru</i>	32
<i>Vishnu Prakash</i>	36
Conversation Two - Setting the Norms <i>The Indian Way</i>	
<i>S. D. Muni</i>	41
<i>Anil Trigunayat</i>	44
<i>Manjeev Singh Puri</i>	50
<i>Ajay Bisaria</i>	55
Conversation Three - New India Foreign Policy in the Present Decade	
<i>Asoke Mukerji</i>	61
<i>Amar Sinha</i>	64
<i>Navdeep Suri</i>	69
<i>Rudra Chaudhuri</i>	73
Conversation Four - Indian Foreign Policy Perspectives fom Various Geographies	
<i>Dr. C. Raja Mohan</i>	79
<i>Ji Yeon Jung</i>	80
<i>Nicolas Blarel</i>	84
<i>Amrita Narlikar</i>	89
<i>Michael Kugelman</i>	93

Conversation Five - Indian and the Global Order *Setting the Narrative*

<i>Pankaj Saran</i>	99
<i>Syed Ata Hasnain</i>	101
<i>Vinod G. Khandare</i>	104
<i>Zorawar Daulet Singh</i>	108

Conversation Six - Indian Foreign Policy *The Next Seven Decades*

<i>D.B. Venkatesh Varma</i>	115
<i>Ajay Darshan Behera</i>	119
<i>Chintamani Mahapatra</i>	123
<i>Zorawar Daulet Sing</i>	128

Annexure	133
-----------------------	-----

Introduction



After the end of the Second World War, colonies started attaining independence building nations that were either devastated by the War or the years of plunder carried out by the colonial rulers. Amongst all these newly independent nations, some chose the path of constitutional democracy, others were dictatorial or military regimes and some took time to find some sort of stability in governance. India, one of the largest colonies to gain Independence, though had to experience a genocide due to the partition of the Indian sub-continent in 1947, as planned out by its colonial rulers, established one of the most stable democracies built on a constitution that has been safeguarding the rights of its people for the last 75 years and built an independent foreign policy.

Looking at the then world order, the primary objectives of Indian foreign policy included safeguarding national security, promoting economic development and its national interests, and projecting India's influence on global issues. Over these 75 years since Independence, India has shown significant dynamism in its foreign policy decisions, maintaining its strategic autonomy. External Affairs Minister of India Dr. S. Jaishankar, in one of his seminal speeches, divided India's foreign policy in the last seven decades into six phases. He said that the first phase was from the years 1946 till 1962 which was an era of optimistic non-alignment, where India resisted dilution of its sovereignty, focused on rebuilding its economy, and guided nations in Asia and Africa for a more equitable world order.

The second phase from 1962 till 1971 was a decade of realism and recovery, especially from the two wars in 1962 and 1965. India made pragmatic choices on security and political challenges despite a paucity of resources. The third phase was from 1971 till 1991, a period which witnessed greater Indian regional assertion with the creation of Bangladesh. During this period, the emergence of US-China-Pak axis seriously threatened India's prospects and the collapse of the Soviet Union and the economic crisis of 1991 compelled a re-examination of the fundamentals of both its internal and foreign policies. The fourth phase was from 1991 till 1999, which was the period of India's focus

on safeguarding its strategic autonomy. After the collapse of the USSR, India opened up its economy to the world which got reflected in its new diplomatic goals and strategies. During this period, India acquired nuclear weapons and also fended off Pakistan's military adventurism.

The fifth phase was from 2000 till 2013, where India gradually acquired the attributes of a balancing power. During this phase, it was able to forge the Nuclear Deal with the US, improve relations with the West, strengthen its ties with Russia as well as have a common understanding with China with regard to trade and climate change. The present phase is from 2014 till present which for India is a phase of energetic diplomacy. With a fast-growing China and an unsure US, a global economy that was recovering from the 2008 financial crisis and the fast growing multi-polar nature of the world, India recognized that it was now entering into a world of issue-based arrangements. Within this phase, India has turned into one of the fastest growing economies of the world, which have expanded India's capacities significantly as a development partner as also responsibilities to contribute to meeting regional and global challenges.

India, the world's largest democracy, is poised to become a political and economic pole in an increasingly multipolar world. As a beacon of stability and development, India has held an independent world view. In these 75 years, India has consistently contributed, in no small measure, to shaping the international order. It has been a force for good and a voice of reason.

To celebrate 75 years of Indian Foreign Policy, Indian Council of World Affairs organized a two-day international seminar where views were exchanged on Indian foreign policy and its evolution in the backdrop of the evolving global geo-political and geo-economic environment. This publication is unique as it reinvigorates the ancient Indian tradition of '*Shruti*' – '*that which is heard*' - by bringing to the fore the active conversations of senior and seasoned former diplomats, who have contributed to shaping of India's foreign policy, former Generals who bring a special perspective to an understanding of strategic issues, and eminent scholars, academicians and political analysts, both from India and overseas, who have observed and written about international relations. The conversations traverse seven decades since Independence and highlight the course to be charted in the *Amrit Kaal* or the future.

The first conversation titled "From Oppression to Freedom: An Independent World View" was about how Indian foreign policy emerged from the shackles of colonialism and laid the foundation of an independent world view of a young and developing nation. It analyzes the shaping of foreign policy of a civilizational State re-emerging on the world

stage. Speakers stressed the need to study India's history, ethos, culture and civilizational background to better understand its contemporary foreign policy. The conversation dealt with the role of the Constitution in moulding the foreign policy of the nation, and how freedom, peace and an independent world view remained to be the bedrock of Indian foreign policy. Discussions were held on how India played a leadership role of the third world in its struggle against colonialism. It also focused on how the story of today's India is that of an aspirational nation which considers its development and growth as not being separable from that of the countries of the Global South.

The second conversation titled "Setting the Norms: The Indian Way" highlighted that the current world order is in a state of flux facing interconnected challenges such as the pandemic, rising geopolitical tensions, economic inequalities and digital vulnerabilities. The experts examined India's role in various regional, multilateral and international bodies, like UNSC, G7, G20, SCO, QUAD in leading or contributing to solutions to challenges like global warming, climate change, sustainable development, counter-terrorism, maritime security. India's multilateral initiatives of International Solar Alliance (ISA) and Coalition of Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) were positively assessed. The session acknowledged that India seeks to promote a pluralistic and inclusive global order that is based on the foundation of an internationally agreed normative architecture.

The third conversation on "New India: Foreign Policy in the Present Decade" discussed India's achievements and role as a sustainable development partner that is shaping a new pathway of cooperation. India's development partnership model based on trust, respect, sovereignty, transparency, collaboration and requirements of the partner countries was positively assessed. It was noted that India's development partnership is growing in scale and scope and is a mutually beneficial partnership that is human-centric in its approach. Discussions also emphasized the role of technology as a determinant of a nation's capacities and global positioning and noted the recent noteworthy strides in this field in India especially in digital public infrastructure.

The fourth conversation on "Indian Foreign Policy: Perspectives from Various Geographies" dwelt on how India's foreign policy is viewed and perceived by other nations/regions. The speakers in this conversation were foreign experts of Indian foreign policy. The experts underscored that India's importance in global politics has been growing steadily and cooperation with India with various regions of the world remains significant and unique. While the present-day world is faced with strife and conflicts, India as a rising power and major economy remains confident in building dynamic and

constructive relations with all nations and global actors alike. India's role as a balancing power was noted. Discussions were held on how various regions of the world perceive India's growth and development and how India is a positive force in the emergence of a new world order.

The next conversation titled "India and the Global Order: Setting the Narrative", focused on how India is charting the global strategic narrative, by reflecting on the changing nature of India's foreign policy of reacting to global initiatives to setting the narrative. This strategic shift in approach is reflected in how India, both as a maritime and continental power, is shaping its role as a global player beyond its neighbourhood and extended neighbourhood. The conversation emphasized how various factors, such as India's economic performance, self-confidence in its growth, internal political stability and resilience have allowed India to assert itself in the international arena. Indian foreign policy was acknowledged to have successfully shown the ability to navigate the complex and turbulent world in recent years and leverage geo-political and geo-strategic advantages.

The final conversation on "Indian Foreign Policy – The Next Seven Decades" underlined that India's foreign policy, besides being an instrument for domestic development, security and prosperity and for fulfilling domestic aspirations, is positively contributing to global developments and to meeting regional and global challenges. It was assessed that the current geopolitical tumult can provide India an opportunity to strengthen its role in international affairs. The conversation emphasized the areas in which India would have to build its capabilities to fulfil its vision of a developed India by the centenary of its Independence in 2047. The experts maintained that a multi-polar world is conducive for India's growth and development given India's unique ability of maintaining balanced relations with countries across the world.

The present publication celebrates the last 75 years of Indian foreign policy and looks forward at India's foreign policy in the coming decades in consonance with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "*Amrit Kaal*" vision of a developed India @ 2047. It will be a valuable addition on the theme of Indian foreign policy and will be useful for scholars, researchers, diplomatic practitioners as well as the strategic community alike.

Indian Council of World Affairs

Sapru House, New Delhi

June 2023

Nutan Kapoor Mahawar *Joint Secretary*

Dhrubajyoti Bhattacharjee *Research Fellow*

Inaugural Remarks





'Kalpavriksha' The Wish-Fulfilling Tree,
Installation at Ministry of External Affairs,
Jawaharlal Nehru Bhawan, New Delhi

Inaugural Remarks

Vijay Thakur Singh¹



A very warm welcome to ICWA's Virtual International Seminar on 'Celebrating 75 Years of Indian Foreign Policy'. In the six sessions of the Conference, discussions will cover the evolution of Indian foreign policy, its challenges and achievements, its contributions to regional and global discourse, in the last seven decades and how its journey will be over the next seven decades. ICWA is honored to have the participation of senior and seasoned former diplomats, who have contributed to shaping of India's foreign policy; former Generals who bring a special perspective to an understanding of strategic issues; and eminent scholars, academicians and political analysts, both from India and overseas, who have observed and written about international relations. Thank you very much for joining.

Last year, India marked 75 years of its independence and celebrated it, as *Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav*. India, since freeing itself from colonial rule, has come a long way. As the world's largest democracy, one of the fastest growing major economies, an innovative society with the world's third largest start-up ecosystem and an IT leader with an impressive digital public infrastructure, India today has the capacities and capabilities to contribute, in a very large measure, to global stability and to global public goods. Foreign policy and diplomatic efforts have played an integral part in India's developmental journey.

¹ Director General, Indian Council of World Affairs

India has persistently followed an independent foreign policy that stresses on maintaining strategic autonomy which means that it adopted policies, both domestic and external based on its national interest, without being constrained in any manner by other Nation States. India has stayed away from any alliance structure but has built a web of mutually beneficial relationships and partnerships, across the world on the basis of mutual trust and co-operation.

India has now entered its *Amrit Kal*, the next 25-year period which will lead to the centenary of its independence. By all estimations, India @2047 would be a developed country, the third largest economy of the world and a key voice in the comity of nations. In this next phase too, which is likely to be extremely complex and fast changing both geo-strategically and geo-economically, India's foreign policy and diplomatic efforts will play a critical role in the nation's future growth.

Important principles of India's foreign policy are support for dialogue and engagement in the international arena; respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity; non-interference in internal affairs, commitment to peace and stability in the world and solidarity with the Global South.

In the earlier years, India was at the fore-front of the fight against colonialism and apartheid, and was a founder member of NAM during the Cold War period. India has persistently followed an independent foreign policy that stresses on maintaining strategic autonomy which means that it adopted policies, both domestic and external based on its national interest, without being constrained in any manner by other Nation States. India has stayed away from any alliance structure but has built a web of mutually beneficial relationships and partnerships, across the world on the basis of mutual trust and co-operation. Challenges faced by India in the process of development have not been easy but yet solutions were found and progress was made. Navigating foreign relations from the Cold War period to a post-Cold War phase of a unipolar world and to the contemporary multi-polar world, required great dexterity with difficult choices to be made at every stage.

India faced several external challenges -legacy issues of partition, wars and conflicts with its northern and western neighbors, and relentless state-sponsored terrorism. When

India conducted its nuclear tests – Pokhran II, there was a strong backlash from many countries but today it is accepted as a responsible nuclear power. It is a member of MTCR, Australia Group and Wassenaar Group. India's membership to the Nuclear Suppliers Group has been kept pending for nearly 7 years, more due to political considerations, rather than its credentials, but India looks forward to joining the Group.

In 1991, India faced deep economic crisis. It led to a process of liberalization and opening of the economy. There was increasing emphasis on economic and commercial diplomacy to support India's domestic growth. India was successful in addressing its economic difficulties as evident in that it was included in the G-20 Group of Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors when the Asian Financial Crisis took place in 1997-98. Thereafter, it was under the shadow of the 2008 international financial and banking crisis that the first G20 Summit was held. Today, with the global economy in a crisis, faced with volatility, uncertainty and instability, the role of G-20 assumes greater importance. This year India will be the Chair of G-20. India's G-20 priorities shall be shaped in consultation not only with G-20 partners but also with the Global South. Voice of the Global South Summit in which 125 countries participated was recently convened by India to better understand the aspirations of developing countries. This is the first time that a G-20 Presidency undertook such an exercise.

India is a member of groupings like G-20, SCO, BRICS, Commonwealth, etc. As Chair of SCO this year the conversation will be important to understand the perspective of the East and for India, to even act, as a bridge as East-West differences widen. In addition, India is increasingly engaging in group formats with ASEAN, Central Asia, BIMSTEC, Africa, EU, Nordic countries, CELAC, Pacific Islands, Caribbean countries. Partnerships like Quad, IPEF and 12U2 have taken shape adding to the scope and possibilities of collaboration with member countries.

India's first priority is the Neighbourhood First policy, followed by Act East, Extended Neighbourhood in Central Asia and Think West which has deepened ties with the Gulf countries and with Arab countries – President Al- Sisi will be the Chief Guest during this year's Republic Day celebrations. We have strategic partnerships with several countries including with 4 of the 5 members of the UN Security Council.

Being a sub-continent, India has both continental and maritime aspects to its foreign policy. With the Indo-Pacific becoming an increasingly important and contested region, India articulated its vision and in 2019 Prime Minister Modi proposed the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPO) which outlines India's collaborative effort to better manage,

conserve and sustain the maritime domain with practical cooperation under 7 pillars. IPOI allows India to engage with its Indo-Pacific partners either bilaterally, or on plurilateral and multilateral platforms. A safe, stable and secure maritime domain; free and open sea lanes of communication and a rule-based order is critical for nations, like India, which are dependent on these oceans for their trade flows and economic growth. In the Indian Ocean region, India has been a net security provider and first responder working closely with IOR countries on anti-piracy patrols; pollution control, maritime search and rescue operations, joint exercises, etc.

India has been setting the narrative and bringing a positive agenda to the table. India is active in shaping the global discourse on connectivity and maritime security, resilient and reliable supply chains, data and cyber-security and terrorism. Similarly, in the context of climate change, India has taken initiatives like International Solar Alliance and Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure even as it has as a developing country emphasized the common but differentiated responsibility and equity principles as agreed in the UNFCCC. During the COVID Pandemic, India's supply of medicines and vaccines and deployment of teams abroad spoke volumes about its internationalism. The Vaccine Maitri has earned us great goodwill across geographies.

As a developing country, India has benefited from international co-operation for example in setting up of IITs. India on its part has been forthcoming in sharing its experiences. India has been supporting capacity building in developing countries through ITEC, lines of credit, grant assistance etc. Its development assistance is based on consultations with partner countries and their needs.

India was founder member of the United Nations and since 1950 it has been contributing towards peace-keeping operations. UN has played a role with the passage of time but the fact is, that today multilateralism is in need for reforms. UN is 75 years old and the WTO 28 years old. There is a wide spread, felt need for effective and inclusive global governance structures.

The post-Cold war period was a period of intense globalization when significant expansion of interdependencies and interconnectedness of economies was taking place. Globalization is under reconsideration as it failed to lift all, leaving so many behind. It needs to be re-shaped to be made human-centric globalization. Moreover, aren't the factors of globalization –movement of capital and trade - today being weaponized? The need for rules-based order is needed more than ever today.

Another aspect of India's foreign policy relates to its diaspora which is one of the oldest and, indeed, one of the largest diasporas in the world with approximately 32 million people of Indian origin. India's approach to its diaspora is characterized by 4Cs - Care, Connect, Celebrate and Contribute - to take care of their welfare, connect them to their roots, celebrate their achievements and their contributions to India's development.

India's foreign policy is addressing issues impacting its citizens more effectively and with speed. From passport delivery to evacuation of its citizens, most recently during COVID from across the world and from Afghanistan, to concluding Migration and Mobility Partnerships and addressing the educational interests of students. All these have very much become a subject of focus for foreign policy.

Today, the world is still crippling with the impact of COVID 19 Pandemic as well as fears of inflation, public debt and recession. Strategic contestation among global powers has sharpened. Ukraine crises added to geo-political fissures, with very wide and far-reaching consequences for global energy and food security. In these very challenging times, this Conference is designed to deliberate and reflect on various aspects of Indian Foreign Policy, look at not only the current challenges but also at India's foreign policy in the coming decades.

Thank You.

Conversation
ONE

From Oppression to Freedom

An Independent
World View



'Diya' - The Lamp
Installation at Ministry of External Affairs,
Jawaharlal Nehru Bhawan, New Delhi

Remarks

Nalin Surie²



I think, in many ways, what I'm going to say, is going to be focused and more tied to the agenda given to me and the annotations given to us. My thanks to ICWA and to Ambassador Vijay Thakur Singh for inviting me to chair this first session on 75 years of Indian foreign policy, there is much to celebrate, and this first session underlines the structural basis of India's foreign policy, namely an independent worldview, in a situation I think we remain unchanged, talk of strategic autonomy notwithstanding.

This foundation has served us well over the last 75 years and in my opinion, continues to serve India well. It is reflective of India's civilizational values, its past, its size, its cross sectoral achievements, its potential and plural and democratic credentials.

Independent modern India's foreign policy was no doubt influenced by the

events of the early 20th century, not only our independence struggle against oppressive and exploitative colonial rule, but also the backdrop of the two World Wars, in which lakhs of Indian soldiers fought and thousands laid down their lives, yet India was not given a permanent seat on the UN Security Council. India's contributions to the victories of the allies in both World Wars is now only grudgingly acknowledged. In return India got partitioned.

During the Cold War, we were asked to take sides without understanding the philosophy behind India's foreign policy and its foundations. It should also be borne in mind that the postulates of India's foreign policy were drawn up in the Constituent Assembly in the aftermath of the Pakistan aggression in Kashmir, and the games played

² Former High Commissioner of India to the UK and Former Ambassador of India to China and Poland

against India on this issue in the UN Security Council.

Besides it was a time during which India was handling the huge and complex issues that arose out of partition and of nation building, which required consolidating the unity and territorial integrity of India. The issue of development and poverty alleviation also received great attention of our then leadership as it does continue to do even now.

Yet in the midst of all this, the founders of our Constitution laid down the trajectory of Indian foreign policy. This is contained in Article 51 and it's worth rereading what article 51 says. It says, the purpose is promotion of international peace and security, and for this the state shall endeavour to do four things: First, promote international peace and security. Second, maintain just and honorable relation between nations. Third, foster respect for international law and treaty obligations in the dealings of organized people with one and another, and finally encourage settlement of international disputes or arbitration.

The above provision was adopted by the Constitution Assembly on 25 November 1948, as then Article 40, the driving force behind this formulation was Dr. BR Ambedkar. The directives contained in the Constitution, by their very nature require

India to take an independent worldview, which is anchored in the fundamental premises, a premise of peace, and that takes me to the deliberations of the Asian Relations Conference in March - April 1947 even before India became independent. At that conference, some of our tallest leaders had spelled out the values and principles that would underpin Indian foreign policy.

On 23rd March 1947, in the plenary session of the Asian Relations Conference, Jawahar Lal Nehru, in his inaugural address, said, in Asia, the mind of man searched increasingly for truth. He went on to say that streams of culture have come to India, from the West and the East, and been absorbed in India, providing the rich and variegated culture, which is India today.

But India was not, he argued, swept away or overwhelmed by the streams of influence from China, Iran, Arabia, etc. Importantly, he added, and I quote, "We have no designs against anybody. Ours is the great design of promoting peace and prosperity all over the world". Looking ahead, he said, and I quote, "We propose to stand on our own feet, and to cooperate with all others who are prepared to cooperate with us. We do not intend to be the playthings of others".

On the same day, the Nightingale of India, Sarojini Naidu, said that India, like the

Freedom, peace and an independent worldview are, thus, to my mind ingrained in the collective conscience of the Indian intelligentsia and leadership well before India formally gained independence. These principles continue to provide the bedrock of Indian foreign policy.

rest of Asia, partakes of the common ideal of peace, the peace which is dynamic, creative, and of the human spirit, which exhorts. She added that and I quote “By love and not by hate, shall the world be redeemed.”

At the second session of the opening plenary of the Asian Relations Conference on 24th March 1947, Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan said, and I quote “I do hope that a liberated India will exert her greatest influence on behalf of the subjected and suppressed people of Asia”. He explained that and I quote

again “From the beginning of history, the contribution of this country, India, has been one of building up the peace.” He concluded by saying, “The world has to be made free, and unless the world is made free there cannot be one single world.”

Freedom, peace and an independent worldview are, thus, to my mind ingrained in the collective conscience of the Indian intelligentsia and leadership well before India formally gained independence. These principles continue to provide the bedrock of Indian foreign policy. ■

Remarks

Arvind Gupta³



I would like to begin by thanking Ambassador Vijay Thakur Singh for organizing this conference, very timely conference and also inviting me to be a part of this conference and this opening session.

You have already chalked out the broad contours of India's foreign policy and I think that's a very good overview that you have given. So, what I am going to look at is really the ideational basis of the foreign policy as it is unfolding in the *Amrit Kaal* that you mentioned. And, I think, the ideational basis is reflected in the

overarching theme of India's presidency of the G20 which is '*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*' which has been explained as 'One Earth, One Family, One Future'.

But I think there is much more to it than just this one. But certainly, the idea that the world is a family, which has been boldly highlighted and articulated, underlines the idealistic and visionary dimension of India's contemporary foreign policy. It may seem as an unachievable ideal in an increasingly dysfunctional world but, I think, that is precisely the point in articulation. How

India's foreign policy did not begin in 1947. It has deep roots going back to our civilizational past and also our experiences as contributors to world thought and culture, of early empires and also the experience of invasions, slavery and colonialism. So, this is a very rich mix and that is what is coming to influence our foreign policy.

³ Director, Vivekananda International Foundation, New Delhi and Former Deputy National Security Advisor, India

to bring peace, prosperity and inclusivity and security in a conflict-ridden world, that is something that we have to grapple with. This is a very important task.

And even if you look at the UN Charter which talks about saving the succeeding generations, nations from the scourge of wars, that also is a utopian idea. So utopian ideas have their place because they lend some vision. So Indian foreign policy today, I think, needs a narrative and this narrative is beautifully captured in the theme of '*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*'.

No understanding of India's foreign policy will be complete without regarding India as a civilizational state. To understand India and the thinking of Indians, one has to take into account India's long history, culture and civilization because that's where our values and ideals are coming from. India's foreign policy did not begin in 1947. It has deep roots going back to our civilizational past and also our experiences as contributors to world thought and culture, of early empires and also the experience of invasions, slavery and colonialism. So, this is a very rich mix and that is what is coming to influence our foreign policy.

The contemporary Indian foreign policy is being articulated increasingly in terms, in phrases, which are ancient but which have never gone away actually. But they might have fallen in disuse over the last few decades. Referring to India's rich,

cultural heritage and thought leadership, Prime Minister Narendra Modi articulated many times some ideas which seem fresh but which were articulated earlier too though not so forcefully. And '*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*' is one such example. But if you look at other, you know, banner headline ideas like 'Security and Growth for All' (SAGAR), for instance, which was articulated in 2015 for the first time, it also underlined the long historical maritime connections between India and the Indian Ocean countries, which go back to our experience of deep engagement with the rest of the world for thousands of years.

So, I think these are very powerful ideas. Prime Minister Narendra Modi also invoked Mahatma Gandhi in his speeches emphasizing India's openness to ideas from other cultures, which is again a feature of our engagement. He has often said that India will be a force for global good. In the spirit of '*sarve bhavantu sukhinah*' and in the spirit of working together harmoniously as articulated in numerous Vedic hymns and of which one example is '*Om saha navavatu, saha nau bhunaktu, saha viryam karavavahe*'. So, there is a large number of Vedic hymns which Prime Minister Narendra Modi and others have invoked in the recent past to underline and to explain this theme of '*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*'. I think these are very

powerful ideas and they need discussion in the context of our foreign policy.

We should also look at briefly at how did Indian thinkers, of the last, say, couple of hundred years or even before, look at India. What are the sources of Indian thinking on our foreign policy? To understand India's foreign policy post-Independence, it would be useful to look at thinking of our forefathers who had original ideas about the world, about its creation, man, nature, society and their interaction. How did they perceive India? What was in their view India's place in the world? Their ideas have influenced contemporary thinking.

So, for instance, I came across a book on the internet, in fact, by Benoy Kumar Sarkar in 1919. He was the Director of what was called the Panini Centre in Allahabad and he wrote several articles, books and so on and he sought to give a Hindu theory of international relations. That was in the early part of the 20th century. He also wrote a book which was titled 'The Beginning of Hindu Culture as World Power (A.D. 300-600)'. And this book was written in 1916. There were others also. K.P. Jayaswal in his book written in 1924, 'Hindu Polity: A Constitutional History of India' covered

the political institutions in the era of *Janapadas* and *Mahajanapadas*.

Actually, there are many examples like this which we seem to have forgotten and which we do not discuss anymore. But Indian thinkers, scholars were constantly trying to see what India was and also trying to look for ideas in Indian civilization and culture. And, of course, *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata*, *Bhagavad Gita*, the six schools of Indian philosophy, the key ideas and from here, we have these very powerful ideas coming from literature. Key ideas like ahimsa, non-violence, tolerance, accommodation, enquiry and investigation, quest for truth, coexistence and dignity of the physical world, relation between man and his surroundings etc., which are now being articulated as even sectoral themes. For instance, when we are talking about climate change, environment and so on, many of these philosophies are finding a place in that.

So Indian thinkers, leaders, policy makers across disciplines were influenced by these ideas, even as they engaged with the western idea of democracy, industrial revolution, colonization, war and peace, etc. And it produced some very rich, set of ideas which,

Idealism and moralism are not the only hallmarks of Indian thinking. Indian culture is equally steeped in realism.

unfortunately, we have not explored very well and I think now in this *Amrit Kaal*, we have the opportunity to do so.

Idealism and moralism are not the only hallmarks of Indian thinking. Indian culture is equally steeped in realism.

Ramayana and *Mahabharata* are treatises on dharma, war and peace. *Arthashastra* provides guidance for dharma-based statecraft. Shivaji's practice of statecraft and warfare are encapsulated in *Adnyapatra* which is a great source of Indian thought and governance, irregular warfare, relations with foreign powers, importance of maritime power, etc. Guru Gobind Singh and Shivaji both fought against Aurangzeb. And there are many other people like K.M. Panikkar, a nationalist historian with global outlook and he highlighted the need for making India a maritime power and also drew attention to India's place in the Indian Ocean and these ideas are influencing today our thinking on the Indo Pacific.

Indian freedom struggle produced a variety of thought currents ranging from moderate to revolutionary. Whether moderates or militants, their patriotism and nationalism was beyond doubt. Indian National Congress represented these tendencies. The 1906 session of Indian National Congress in Surat brought into open the conflict between opposite views on nationalism to the fore. On one hand there was Gopal Krishna

Gokhale, the moderate who was in favour of cooperating with the British Empire to win concessions for India. While on the other, there was Bal Gangadhar Tilak who represented the voice of revolutionary trends.

Thinkers like Veer Savarkar emphasized cultural and territorial nationalism while Tagore talked about nationalism and internationalism. Gandhi built his political philosophy on truth, non-violence and *satyagraha*. In the *Hind Swaraj*, he engaged with the Hindu religion, values, culture, society, economy, modernism. Nehru, educated in the west but fully conscious of Indian heritage, history and culture was deeply influenced by Fabian Socialism and socialist ideas.

The Indian left was influenced by Soviet and Chinese communism. People like Tagore, Kalidas Nag, U.N. Ghoshal, Suniti Kumar Chatterjee emphasized the cultural and civilizational links between Indian and the outside world, particularly China and South East Asia.

Going beyond political *swaraj*, philosophers like K.C. Bhattacharya stressed upon the need for breaking from the stronghold of western thought and achieving *swaraj* in ideas. K.M. Munshi, R.C. Majumdar were staunch supporters of writing Indian history from the point of view of Indians. Subhash Chandra Bose, Raja Mahendra Pratap and

numerous others dedicated to see India as freed from oppression and colonial rule, took to revolutionary ways.

So, it's clear that these thinkers were fully aware of the rich Indian civilization and culture and were of the firm view that India's rejuvenation and rise will be good for the world. So, I think we are probably finding ourselves at a similar inflection point today as you mentioned the *Amrit Kaal* because the world order is changing and we need to think about it. But the important point is apart from our policies which are, of course, multifaceted, we need to have an Indian narrative for this

modern world. We need to anchor our foreign policy actions in a narrative which is rooted in our culture and civilization.

And I think that is what is probably happening. There is a continuity in Indian foreign policy, no doubt about it. But I think it's the last eight years under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, we have become bolder and more forthcoming and less apologetic about India's culture and civilization. And I think that is something which is a positive trend and this is something that we need to work on further. Thank you very much for giving me this opportunity. ■

Remarks

Swaran Singh⁴



Thank you Chair and I also join Ambassador Arvind Gupta in sincerely thanking and complementing Ambassador Vijay Thakur Singh, Director General of Indian Council of World Affairs for organizing such an exhaustive two-day discussion on 75 years of India's foreign policy. I am aware and I am honoured to have my co-panellists who are not just students and authors of Indian foreign policy, but in various ways have contributed actually to influencing, moulding and making several elements of India's foreign policy.

That makes me fully aware that I'm talking among an extremely knowledgeable set of people. So, I will try to be telegraphic in terms of what I have to say on the subject. Given the outline for the first panel, which talks about this shift from oppression to freedom basically raises five questions. And I will as I said,

telegraphically, I will try to respond to those five questions that are raised in the opening outline for this panel discussion.

The first important question raised is how did India's foreign policy emerge from the shackles of colonialism? Two things are unique when we think of British colonialism - one, that they followed a policy of divide and rule to sustain their rule for as long as they did. And second, of course, they also adopted a very piecemeal approach of promising and even giving self-rule over a long period of time.

So, starting from, you know, 1858 onwards, several Government of India Acts 1909, 1919, 1935 were passed. There was gradual piecemeal progression towards the colony becoming financially independent. And, in that sense, Indian national leadership also made best use

⁴ Professor, Centre for International Politics, Organization and Disarmament, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University

of it, and ultimately, we had a peaceful transfer of power. In fact, in some sense, some vestiges of colonialism continued even after 1947. And indeed, you hear Prime Minister Narendra Modi today in *Amrit Kaal* saying that we need to come out of colonial mind-set even today.

So, it was a very gradual and piecemeal emerging of India from the shackles of colonialism is what I'm underlining. And as Ambassador Arvind Gupta just mentioned it goes back as far back as you wish to see. So, definitely not, it doesn't begin in 1947. Now, you could see that in terms of India's liberation movement leaders linked worldwide you could link it to Gandhi's struggle in South Africa, or his return in 1915. Nehru's visit to Brussels Conference in 1928. Tagore's visit to East Asia, Subhash Bose visiting Berlin and Tokyo, you could think of several stages. And I'm in Vancouver where you know the diaspora often talks about Gadar movement in this part of the world in North America. So, one could look at various watersheds of a very piecemeal, gradual and almost imperceptible sometimes, the way India emerged out of those shackles of colonialism.

Second question raised for this panel is how did they lay foundations of an independent worldview for such a young nation? Now several ways, International Relations theorists look at how India's foreign policy was founded, whether

it was realist approach as Ambassador just mentioned before me. People also say this was idealism of those times of Nehruvian era.

Alexander Wendt, a great scholar of constructivist approach of international relations theory, talks about societies or nations that have very strong and detailed consciousness about history. In their cases, the past plays a very significant role in constructing state identity. And once a state has understanding of its identity, identity of a state decides what would be its interests and interests then, of course, would guide what will be its initiatives.

So, India definitely was a young nation and even today is described as a young nation, but it was an ancient and old, continuing civilization. And those elements clearly helped India to develop its own unique and independent worldview on all issues. But colonial experience also helped India in that sense to develop an independent approach to international relations. And the significance that was attached, for example, to anti-racial campaigns, anti-colonial campaigns, anti-apartheid, those struggles, and, of course, the complete focus on decolonization are not just simply helping, let's say Indonesia in terms of its liberation, but I am aware of, in fact, let me refer to autobiography of Former Foreign Secretary M.K. Rasgotra 'A Life in Diplomacy' where he gives in

detail description of how in the initial decade of India's independence the engagement at United Nations was primarily focused on decolonization, and giving space in United Nations to newly developed countries.

So, final point that brought us certain uniqueness in building our worldview as a young nation, was the fact that our liberation struggle leaders, as Ambassador just mentioned before me, were not just simply deeply entrenched into India's history, they were also great authors and great thinkers. And they really outlined for all of us as to what is the way they want to construct India's foreign policy. And I think that was very helpful in laying a unique vision of India's foreign policy as a young nation.

The third question is how did the civilizational state re-emerge on world stage? Now it's one thing to have a unique vision, it's another to reach and arrive on the world stage. And that again, is very significant because India historically from ancient times was aware of the

'*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*' mind-set, world is a family, we were connected and same is the slogan visible in the G20 Presidency of India, which I think only India could have said that kind of language of 'One Earth, One Future, One Family'.

So, here again India's connectivities, cultural and commercial with East Asia, India's indentured labour going all the way to Africa and American continent, India's naval connections with *Chola* and *Maratha* navies across the Indian Ocean littoral, all the way from East Africa to East Asia. So, you could link them, the arrival of India on World Stage in that sense, either way back from the Chicago world parliament of religions, where Swami Vivekanand made a very important speech or you could continue from there and see educational links of India's freedom fighters with United States and European countries. But at the time of Independence, India had started something called the Asian Relations Conference at ICWA where we are discussing this 75 years of India's foreign policy today, and that awareness

The values that have been fundamental to India's foreign policy are primarily non-violence, tolerance, pluralism, unity in diversity, respect for hierarchy which comes from respect for elders, and these are moulded into principles of India's foreign policy, which can be then seen in terms of Panchsheel, Non-Alignment, anti-colonialism, anti-racism, trust in dialogue and peaceful settlement of disputes.

and initiative that India took brought India to world stage later, in terms of Afro Asian movement, in terms of Non-Aligned Movement and then onwards, of course, increasingly Indian presence has become much more visible and perhaps more effective also.

The fourth question raised for this panel is what are the fundamental values and principles that guide India's foreign policy. And as I said, I can go on but I will be telegraphic in saying the values that have been fundamental to India's foreign policy are primarily non-violence, tolerance, pluralism, unity in diversity, respect for hierarchy which comes from respect for elders, and these are moulded into principles of India's foreign policy, which can be then seen in terms of *Panchsheel*, Non-Alignment, anti-colonialism, anti-racism, trust in dialogue and peaceful settlement of disputes.

Indeed, India has world's largest Constitution and Article 51 of the Directive Principles actually outline those principles in the Constitution itself, that talks about promoting international peace and security, maintaining just and honorable relationship with others-- with all other nations, fostering respect for international law, treaty obligations, and encouraging settlement of international disputes through arbitration.

So, both principles and values of India's foreign policy are absolutely clear,

except the last point, some of the kind of calibration in terms of putting a certain hierarchy regarding which principle becomes more important and which becomes marginalized has happened over a period of time in terms of India learning from its assessments and making course corrections.

The final point given for this panel discussion is how did India respond to the changing global environment? And I just mentioned India has constantly learnt from its assessments and done course corrections over a period of time. So, India has very clearly moved from being a third world leader to emerging in a, sort of, as one with the emerging economies. And today India is seen as not just aspirational India, but even assertive India.

So, one could see again multiple watersheds of these course corrections, how has India engaged and handled with the environment around it and how that environment has evolved. And the first important watershed for me was the war with China in 1962, where India's defense expenditure was doubled over one year. And then of course, India focused more on not just defense, but also soft balancing in terms of connecting with groupings of nations and Afro Asian nations, connectivity and Non-Alignment Movement emerges from there.

Now, one could go and talk about the second big watershed which will be the

liberation of Bangladesh, or you could then talk about the collapse of Soviet Union. But I want to take two minutes to underline how Ukraine war of last year would be seen as an inflection point, another final watershed, where India has really come of age, where India's assertive approach to articulating its national interest is not just becoming far more pronounced, but also far more acceptable.

And I think a very kind of tightrope walk of calibrating between China, Russia, on one side, and US and its allies on the other, India has managed to sustain its assertions without actually hurting its relationships with these countries. And as has been seen over a period of time, these countries are not just appreciating, but I think even respecting India's point of view.

And I think that is something that is a great celebration at 75 years of India's foreign policy when we move into a stage called *Amrit Kaal*. And these next 25 years, creating far more complex realities, as Director General Ambassador Singh just mentioned, this period is going to offer far more nuanced and complex challenges for India's foreign policy. And I think this is a beginning of that new engagement that India has from now. 2014 elections, for example, were fought with a clear understanding that India so far had been kind of punching under its weight, and

that new assertion since then I think is clearly visible for us now.

And in this new stage where world is, post pandemic world is looking at how to reorganize connectivity, food chains, supply chains, production chains, how to organize various other institutions, that kind of reset post pandemic, again, I think will be another important opportunity for India to assert its voice and contribute its wisdom. And, in that sense, I think 75 years becomes an inflection point in which case Ukraine war has demonstrated how India can beautifully calibrate its foreign policy without, you know, hurting.

And India, therefore, becomes one unique country today which has kind of friendly relations with almost all major powers, which is very unusual for any country to achieve. And that is something that gives hope that India will be a country to sort of reckon with in future, and one is noticing the kind of visibility and credibility that India is gaining. And I think this is a time to also then salute India's foreign policy makers, India's diplomatic community that has been really working hard to achieve this feat that we have seen.

And many of them will be speaking in these two days, and I look forward to listening to them and learning. And with that, I hand it back to the Chair. ■

Remarks

Sanjaya Baru⁵



Thank you very much Ambassador Suri and Ambassador Singh for inviting me to speak in this session.

I look forward to your observations Nalin, I was hoping to listen to them and learn from them. Let me take forward this conversation as it has happened till now. I think Swaran Singh has placed the perspective – the right perspective. There is always in democracy a temptation for the government of the day to differentiate itself from previous governments, and therefore, there's always this temptation of saying something new in, foreign and economic policy, etc.

Now, I think the important thing to recognize is the continuity, the ability of the Indian State to deal with challenges as they emerged from time to time. For example, you take even this slogan of '*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*' which has now become popular, it was first articulated by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, in a

speech she delivered to the Stockholm Conference on environment. It is Mrs. Gandhi who in early 70s at Stockholm Conference talked about Indian approach to climate change.

Then I saw a very famous statement of Mahatma Gandhi, that the Earth has enough for everybody's needs, but not enough for everybody's greed, or everybody's want. So, there are several other elements of Indian foreign policy, which I think people appreciate and which have a long history.

Now this first session is devoted to understanding the legacy of the national movement, of the movement from oppression to freedom. I think that was a very important foundation on which India's approach lies.

There are three elements to that foundation. First and foremost, as has been emphasized by other speakers, is our national movement. Because the

⁵ Author and Member, Governing Council, ICWA

The national movement created national thinking from the north to the south, from the east to the west, on how India's personality would evolve as an independent nation.

national movement created India and the idea of India itself as a nation, as it is today geographically constituted, is the product of our national movement. And the national movement created national thinking from the north to the south, from the east to the west, on how India's personality would evolve as an independent nation.

So, I think that one recognizes the importance of the ideas that go all the way back. So, when one individually refers to a Nehru or a Patel or a Tagore or a Gandhi or anybody else, they're all part of the national movement, and they crystallize the thinking of India's struggle for freedom. And I think it's very important to realize that they continue to significantly impact current thinking in India and the world.

But the second aspect of the National Movement was its very clear anti colonialism. Now, this is something that one doesn't hear of too much these days, it is not fashionable any longer to talk about anti-imperialism and anti-colonialism, though in the recent past we have heard about India being a voice of the Global South. What is that Global South, the Global South was a group of colonized nations and India

became a symbol for those colonized nations, because it was one of the first to be decolonized under the leadership of Gandhi, Nehru, etc. The decolonization of India, the end of the British Empire inspired countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. And therefore, the whole anti colonial movement, the anti-imperialist movement which took roots through the 50s and 60s shaped India.

For example, the concept of an independent foreign policy, of strategic autonomy comes from that history of a nation that was under colonial rule, that is asserting its Independence, is asserting the need for an independent voice in world affairs, but also the freedom to pursue its own national security interests. And therefore, I think, we must recognize the significant influence of anti-imperialism and anti-colonialism and, incidentally, these are normal and remain even today, in for example, the ongoing crisis in Ukraine which has been referred to, so much of this conflict is about big power politics, is about access to resources. The access for example to energy has been the source of conflict for the last 50 years and before Ukraine, we had Iran, Iraq, we had Middle East, we had wars in the Arab world in Africa, all of these to some extent or the other

have been linked to seeking access to energy, seeking access to resources, which has been the dominant element of the colonial experience, the western control over resources in the rest of the world.

And so, a lot of what appeared to be contemporary battles are rooted in, in fact, this entire history of colonialism and imperialism, which I believe an average Indian has not forgotten. In fact, I've read that even the government's recent exposition of the concept of Global South is a response to a generalized public reaction, a favourable reaction to the position, for example that the External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar took when he said that Europe thinks Europe's problems are the world's problems, and they don't pay attention to our problems. That idea has become deep rooted in the popular thinking which I think reflects a persistent anti colonial, anti-imperialist tradition in our foreign policy.

Finally, and most importantly in my judgment, is India's pursuit of its own economic development. I mean, I think there's Arvind Gupta who spoke before me, said very well that there is idealism and there is realism, and there are values and there are interests, and one should recognize the role of both. That is true. But often in emphasizing idealism and values, we tend to ignore the fact that our interests have equally played an important role in defining our relations with the world.

I go all the way back to December 1949, Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru's first speech into the Constituent Assembly, in which he has devoted substantial time discussing what should be India's foreign policy. And there he has this sentence which says, ultimately, foreign policy cannot be defined unless we define our economic policy, that development is imperative for a poor country, we remain still a poor country, we are still a low income, low middle income country, aspiring to become a middle-income country, our per capita income is still very low compared to many other Asian economies. And therefore, we should not have an exaggerated view of ourselves in the world merely because we are the fourth largest or fifth largest economy. We remain a developing economy and the fact that we are a developing economy, liberating ourselves from colonialism and imperialism and seeking a democratic route to freedom, to governance, defined our foreign policy.

I recall Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in many of his speeches would often say that what India seeks is a global environment conducive to our economic development. Now, that has been the principle of Indian foreign policy right through the 50s, 60s and 70s, seeking a global environment conducive to our economic development. I think that is an extremely important element of the 50s that defined the way we looked at the world. We sought not just a seat on

We sought not just a seat on the UN Security Council, but we sought an international economic system that was fair. We sought a trading system that was fair. We sought a global intellectual property regime that was fair. We sought access to technology, access to markets, and, therefore, India remains a developing country that is seeking a global environment conducive to its economic development.

the UN Security Council, but we sought an international economic system that was fair. We sought a trading system that was fair. We sought a global intellectual property regime that was fair. We sought access to technology, access to markets, and, therefore, India remains a developing country that is seeking a global environment conducive to its economic development.

So, I think these three elements, you know, in my judgment, are important elements defining our foreign policy, which go back to the -- the roots go back to the 50s, go back to the 40s, go back to our national movement, and finally, I think both Swaran and others, including Ambassador Thakur Singh mentioned, there is a concept of an Asian personality that India has seen itself, I mean, right from the beginning as part of Asia, because it has had its footprints across Asia. And this Asian personality also has an economic dimension to it. Our policies have evolved in reaching out to the economies of East Asia and

Southeast Asia, or West Asia, which in a critical sense is dependent on our need for energy. Investments also link India to a kind of an economic relationship with the West. And our neighbourhood policy which is the weakest link in the sense, I think of all the three, of the Middle East, West and neighbourhood, the neighbourhood remains the weak link given the inadequate development of our neighbourhood relations.

And finally, the important aspect which was mentioned earlier, looking into the Indian Ocean has again a very strong economic element. So, to sum up, I would say that while we talk about history, civilization, culture, Hindu values, '*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*' – all of them are important elements that shape an Indian personality. To me, our pursuit of economic development, our pursuit of a global environment conducive to our economic development, is an important defining element of our approach to international relations and to the world economy. ■

Remarks

Vishnu Prakash⁶



Good afternoon. Namaste.
Ambassador Nalin Surie,
Ambassador Vijay Thakur Singh,
fellow panellists, ladies and gentlemen.
At the outset I would like to join my
co panellists in congratulating and
complimenting the Director General
of ICWA Vijay Thakur Singh and our
colleagues for conceptualizing and
hosting this very timely international
seminar, to mark and celebrate 75 years of
India's foreign policy.

The previous speakers have already
covered a lot of valuable ground which I
endorse, I intend to be brief. As we look
ahead with great optimism, confidence
and ambition, it is in order to briefly
reflect on the past decades.

That India is unique we all know, and
not just in one but in very many respects.
There is no parallel in the world for the
successful strides in nation building,
taken within a democratic framework
by a country of India's size, complexity
and diversity in the face of daunting
challenges both internal and external.

Centuries of subjugation and oppression
had reduced us to a state of penury and
hunger, which was further compounded
by the very traumatic partition. Few
in the world had wagered on India's
success. That we accomplished what we
have today in 75 years is less of a miracle
and more in my view a saga of tenacity,
self-belief and courage of conviction.
As Dr. Baru and other speakers have

That we accomplished what we have today in 75 years is less
of a miracle and more in my view a saga of tenacity, self-belief
and courage of conviction.

⁶ Former Ambassador of India to Canada and South Korea

said, each generation and I agree with that, each generation, administration and government has made sterling contributions in spurring India's march forward to the best of their judgment and ability, given the constraints - national and international.

From hindsight, it is easy to pass judgment about the correctness or otherwise of a certain approach taken or a decision reached, but that does not help.

Political analysts often speak of different phases of Indian foreign policy, ranging from idealism to realpolitik. Yes, I agree with that and it is justifiable at one level. Yet at the same time one can argue that there has been remarkable continuity - what has evolved or changed is not policy but our capabilities.

India's interests and core beliefs have remained immutable, not the least of which is the conviction that India needs to, will take and has taken an independent worldview.

Why is that so crucial?

Our foreign policy, as for that matter every nation's - is dictated by our geography, history, colonial experience, demography and cultural heritage. We were quick to internalize the reality that no country other than India will look out for our interests. If there was any doubt it was laid to rest. Once we took the Kashmir issue to the UN we learned

the one on one of International Relations on the trot, that political expediency, self interest in economic power, not necessarily equity or justice, shaped the outlook and responses of each nation, regardless of the lofty pronouncements or packaging.

As such since early on India has striven to maintain strategic autonomy in determining our foreign policy. Were we always successful? No, we were not. We were not always successful, but we had the nimbleness to adjust to the circumstances. India for example, actively campaigned to banish nuclear weapons globally. But realizing the inevitability and given security imperatives opted to become a nuclear weapon state. Why did we not declare ourselves to be one in 1974? We very much had the political will, but lacked economic staying power.

Soon after Independence we embraced the mantra of Non-Alignment- because being a part of a power bloc did not serve India's interests. But when compelled by circumstances we concluded a treaty of peace, friendship and cooperation with the Soviet Union in August 1971.

We championed the cause of the Global South - and still do so - Because there is strength in numbers - and today we have acquired the capability to indeed make a difference.

The key to success is economic strength - and that is what we are focusing on strongly. The journey ahead would progressively become more challenging yet rewarding. I have no doubt that we are upto the task.

Let us take another example. Consequent to the sanctions imposed by President Trump on importing oil from Iran in 2018, after he unilaterally pulled the US out of JCPOA not for the most convincing reasons, India was forced to comply even though it was not in our national interest. However just 3 years later India held its ground on importing oil from Russia, exposing western double standards and withstanding concerted political and diplomatic pressure.

As the External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar plainly stated – The West believes that its problems are the world's problems but the world's problems are not its problems.

Why is it that Al Qaeda, ISIS and, once upon a time, the Taliban were the targets of the War on Terror; But the very fountain head of terrorism Pakistan was treated as an ally - and its hordes of *jihadi tanzeems*, virtually given a free pass?

Why is that China-leave me alone-being held accountable and blocking independent investigation into the origin of COVID, did not even allow the UN Security Council to debate the matter, which wreaked havoc on the health and economy of the world?

Short answer is power, political expediency and self-interest. The plain and simple fact is that if you are powerful, you can preach one thing but practice the very opposite and also justify it.

India is progressively getting better at playing the game by the extant rules, while trying at the same time to mould them suitably and keep options open. The key to success is economic strength - and that is what we are focusing on strongly. The journey ahead would progressively become more challenging yet rewarding. I have no doubt that we are upto the task. ■

Conversation
TWO

Setting
the Norms

The Indian Way



'Delhi'
 Painting by Kashinath Das
 Installed at Ministry of External Affairs,
 Jawaharlal Nehru Bhawan, New Delhi

Remarks

S. D. Muni⁷



To begin with let me also thank ICWA, and Ambassador Vijay Thakur Singh for inviting me to this very important conference, where I will learn the unfolding of parameters of India's foreign policy. The theme of our session is norms and how to build them, sustain them through institutional participation. And we have a very eminent panel of Ambassador Trigunayat, Ambassador Puri and Ambassador Bisaria who have worked in international organizations and institutions and will take us there as to how we can sustain these norms which we wish to build.

India has always been active in building norms in the past also, I think Ambassador Singh very neatly defined some of the values and in the previous session also we have discussed a lot of these values which have pushed India's foreign policy.

Now, the difference was that in the past we were not at the high table of decision making. And now we seem to be poised on being on the high tables of decision making. And all of us are very acutely conscious of G20 Chairmanship and SCO Chairmanship and participation in various other organizations. But I think building norms will go beyond these what I call rotatory chairmanships and they should also go beyond 2024 where there is a lot of emphasis to link it up with domestic politics.

But the challenge before us is how to blend these old norms with contemporary interests. When we look at this there are questions which arise, what norms we are going to build and this is where the synthesis of the old norms with the new requirements would really-- how to synthesize them, then how to articulate them especially when we have taken the

⁷ Professor Emeritus, Jawaharlal Nehru University

There are also some lessons which we must draw from our past experiences of setting up norms. The first lesson is that we cannot really set the norms or sustain them unless we have built up both military as well as economic capabilities. Diplomatic capabilities we have always displayed and displayed very, very efficiently.

platform of being the voice of the South, of Global South.

Global South is now operating in a different international context. Today's Global South is also different from what it was earlier. The Global South is rising, it is inching towards the prosperous North, whatever you call, there are many countries which are very dynamically developing, and they have aspirations.

Now, this Global South is operating in a global context, which, fortunately, or unfortunately, is reverting back to the Cold War polarization or somehow very close to that. In this polarization India has to -- as our Foreign Minister and our Prime Minister have repeatedly mentioned that we want to be a bridge. We cannot take this side or that side. This is very, very clear. You call it Non-Alignment 2.0, you call it by any other name, but the very clear message is that

India's independent foreign policy would not completely be clubbed by either side of prevailing global polarization. Now, we have to be careful about that.

There are also some lessons which we must draw from our past experiences of setting up norms. The first lesson is that we cannot really set the norms or sustain them unless we have built up both military as well as economic capabilities. Diplomatic capabilities we have always displayed and displayed very, very efficiently.

Second lesson which we need to draw from our past experiences is how can we harmonize and synergize the voice of the South with particularly our neighbours, and there is a reference to the Neighbourhood First Policy, which again has lots of challenges, particularly in the context of Pakistan and China. And somehow, I'm quite sure in my mind that

Second lesson which we need to draw from our past experiences is how can we harmonize and synergize the voice of the South with particularly our neighbours.

unless you carry the neighbours with you, along with you, the global setting of norms would be far more ineffective, so far as India is concerned, because the world looks at us, not simply by our words but by our practice.

Therefore, this is a major question, major challenge major experience, we have to draw from the past experiences, that in the past also all our efforts were to a very large extent dented by the neighbours and neighbours are still not very cooperative, particularly two of them.

Thirdly, this is a context of the world in which we cannot contest or we cannot confront the powers that be. And that's where I said we have to be working like a bridge in order to evolve a consensus on the values and sustain those values. I am sure some of these questions and some of these lessons the panellists will discuss in terms of shaping the values. And with this, I come to our very eminent panellist and request Ambassador Trigunayat to make his presentation. ■

Remarks

Anil Trigunayat⁸



Thank you Ambassador Vijay Thakur Singh for inviting me to be part of this esteemed panel. It was really amazing to listen to the previous panel and delving down into the history and the cultural, civilizational roots of our foreign policy that has evolved and has done extremely well for India.

There is a global governance crisis as the Russia -Ukraine war goes unabated. The world is at a historical inflection point. We are seeing the 3D crisis which is marked by Deceleration, Disruption and Decoupling. It faces cascading, interconnected threats that could undermine global stability—including a relentless pandemic, runaway climate change, deepening inequalities and economic insecurity, massive digital vulnerabilities, and the proliferation of nuclear and biological weapons. Add the Russia-Ukraine war via US with even

nuclear Armageddon being threatened and played out as Star Wars and you see the worst kind of a situation since the second World War. Paradoxically, precisely the moment when global cooperation is most needed to meet these threats, international solidarity is in short supply. Weaponization of financial instruments, energy, food, fertilizer and even life saving drugs and vaccines has further accentuated the crisis.

Confronted with a widening array of transnational risks, most governments are distracted, preoccupied with attending to domestic challenges.

How will it eventually play out is any one's guess.

No doubt some efforts to unite the international community are being made but the ineffective and dysfunctional UN and other international bodies are unable

⁸ Former Ambassador of India to Libya & Jordan

Paradoxically, precisely the moment when global cooperation is most needed to meet these threats, international solidarity is in short supply.

to generate adequate trust or come up with viable and enforceable solutions.

Referring to Kim Stanley Robinson's book *The Ministry for the Future*, UN Secretary General Guterres called for a "Summit of the Future." To avert the outbreak of interstate and civil wars, he recommends that nations establish a new agenda for peace to revitalize conflict prevention, reduce the risks of cyberattacks and nuclear confrontation, and lay out rules to prevent the militarization of outer space. He also urges the creation of a global digital compact to mitigate digital divides and ensure that new technologies, including artificial intelligence, are used for positive transformation. While some critics will groan at the suggestion of more meetings and declarations, major events that assemble leaders such as the 2005 World Summit have served as catalysts for real change. Given the deep flaws in the international financial system and the uneven pace of development, the agenda calls on state leaders, the G-20, the U.N. Economic and Social Council, and international financial institutions to urgently redesign global economic governance. To help achieve this, UNSG Guterres proposes a biennial strategic

global economic dialogue and a world social summit in 2025.

If it hopes to achieve any of these goals, the U.N. will need to upgrade the way it works. For one, it needs to be much more participatory and consultative, including with environmental, human rights, and grassroots nongovernmental organizations that are on the front line of addressing climate change, humanitarian crises, and community development.

We are in for a long haul as far as the UN and other unreformed organisations are concerned. Following the frustrations over the non performing multilateral institutions and unilateralism by the super powers as preferred mode of international discourse, the frustrations of middle or aspiring powers is quite evident.

Newer modes of international interactions had to be worked upon.

India has been a founding member of most of these multilateral organisations and has worked hard to maintain their relevance despite the fact that they are not living upto the expectations or the challenges; even after 75 years the victor and vanquished mentality prevails.

Countries like US consider UN and other

organizations as the instrument of their foreign policy and, if it does not serve their express cause, they go the unilateral way. In situations like these, India has provided a sane approach or at least has been able to call out the pitfalls of such approaches. India's stance on the Russia Ukraine war is a testament to the efforts it makes to bring about some sanity in the international alliance ridden mindset.

Several countries now prefer to operate outside formal institutions, opting for issue-based and short-term partnerships. Minilaterals are narrower in scope than multilaterals, usually informal, and bring together fewer states that share the same interest. They are practical, adaptable, economical, and voluntary—without being tied down by institutional constraints. For example QUAD, BRICS, RIC, SCO, JAI, France -India-UAE, I2U2 and scores of FTAs and CEPA, etc. serve the purpose quite effectively while ensuring certain strategic autonomy as well.

Foreign Policy, simply put, is geared to serve national interests in an international landscape. This implies that it is also the reflection of the domestic policies of a country. In India's case evolution of her foreign policy was clearly impacted by India's colonial experiences, geographical compulsions, strategic location, historical narratives, and ancient philosophical thoughts of

universalism which is often heard now a days as "*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*" – world is one family, also the slogan and motto for our G20 Presidency. This is also the time for India to become a shaper rather than a follower. Quest for peace and accommodation and respect for UN Charter, sovereignty and territorial integrity and preference for diplomacy and dialogue over dispute and conflict are the key ingredients of India's outreach as it adapts to the role of a vital emerging regional and global power. Therefore, ipso facto it must be part of the geo-politics and geo-economics be it due to its physical size, international profile or an attractive growing market. But the global politics is also undergoing rapid changes and new dynamic and partnerships and axis powers are emerging with an uncertain trajectory which introduces more complex challenges that might dictate a paradigm shift in India's foreign policy priorities and functioning. Competition is becoming intense more so in this 21st century. The disorder has been further accentuated by the Covid pandemic and the Eurasian war where India has taken a centrist and principled position which has exposed several infirmities and vulnerabilities in the national and global governance architecture.

How has Indian foreign policy fared?
Even if we discount the occasional

references of arch rival Pakistan and its leaders like Imran Khan as well as China praising India's independent foreign policy, I would refer to an article in Pak Tribune by Shahzad Choudhry going viral, "India does what it feels like and to the extent she needs. And it all stays kosher. Two opposing military super powers of the world claim India to be its ally. If this is not diplomatic coup then what is? India is relevant to the world. India's global footprint is remarkable. PM Modi has brought India to the point where she has begun to cast a wider net of influence and impact. Pakistan has been skilfully reduced to a foot note to this Indian script".

India does not like alliances or the word as it is, so in the changed context it has preferred the multi alignment strategies to subserve her national interests and advance the global agendas of peace, dialogue and diplomacy for economic and energy security, stability and overall development. It also realises the need for simultaneously and actively work on the reforms of the institutions like the UN, GATT, WTO, WHO or for that matter Bretton Woods Institutions while working for the leadership as the voice of the Global South which it has championed from the very beginning. Recent Voice of Global South Summit is an indication. It does not want to be bracketed in one corner or a grouping. PM Modi spoke of

human centric globalisation through his 4R matrix to re-energise the world, we should together call for a global agenda of 'Respond, Recognize, Respect and Reform': Respond to the priorities of the Global South by framing an inclusive and balanced international agenda. That is why its policy of strategic autonomy and choices are appreciated and respected by all countries including USA, the West, Russia and even a China which does provide it a moral superiority that is so very necessary to be an honest interlocutor. India believes in both the multilateral and various other kinds of alternative matrix in trilaterals, quadrilaterals and minilaterals and plurilateral while mostly also pursuing the bilateral and regional tracks. It has maintained that for global problems like terrorism, cyber breaches, climate change and SDGs, international collaboration is a must. "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" and share and care approach underlines its own contributions. Establishment of International Solar Alliance (ISA) and Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) are two such multilateral important initiatives. PM Modi's hard pitch against terrorism at the UN Summits and other meets especially against state sponsored terrorism from Pakistan and elsewhere have put the laggard ones on the mat. India has also dehyphenated its foreign policy in several

domains. Israel-Palestine, Iran -Israel, US -Russia and Saudi Arabia or GCC and Iran and even US-China to some extent are some such examples. Thus, India's policy can perhaps be defined as another 3D approach – which is Dialogue, Diplomacy, De-Hyphenation for her own development and for the global good in the larger sense.

India's Neighbourhood First Policy, Act East policy or for that matter Look West policies have all been taking its strategic choices forward through focussed initiatives as its neighbourhood has remained vitriolic especially with regard to China, Afghanistan and Pakistan and related dimension of sponsorship of terrorism from and by these countries. China will remain a challenge in every geography as Pakistan is being handled in a more realistic manner. Pakistan's nuisance value and super powers providing them baits will continue apace and will have to be contended. With Pakistan, which follows a zero sum policy with India - terror and talks don't go hand in hand remains the underlying dictum as exchanges of list

of prisoners and nuclear installations etc. as well as visits of pilgrims remain active. SAARC is a good framework but has been subjugated to Indo-Pak rivalry, hence, India chose to move forward with sub regional frameworks like BBIN or BIMSTEC merging India's Act East and Neighbourhood First Policy. Trade agreements and CEPAs are becoming common with its extended neighbourhood in Asia but there also China will be a bigger challenge. India's counter-responses to China and Pakistan on border issues have showed that the nation will not be coerced by anybody. External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar has said that, "Our long-suffering approach created the danger of normalising terror. That is why Uri and Balakot sent a much-needed message. On the northern borders, China is today seeking to change the status quo by bringing large forces in violation of our agreements. Despite the Covid, remember this happened in May of 2020, our counter-response was strong and firm". Perhaps what explains Indian approach better is as Dr S Jaishankar, External

PM Narendra Modi in 2018 at London Hall said that, "Yes, I'll go to Israel and I'll even go to Palestine", referring to a February 2018 visit to Ramallah. "I will further cooperate with Saudi Arabia and for the energy needs of India I will also engage with Iran."

Affairs Minister in his India Way aptly estimates that this is a time for us to engage America, manage China, cultivate Europe, reassure Russia, bring Japan into play, draw neighbours in, extend the neighbourhood and expand traditional constituencies of support. And even PM Narendra Modi in 2018 at London Hall said that, "Yes, I'll go to Israel and I'll even go to Palestine", referring to a February 2018 visit to Ramallah. "I will further cooperate with Saudi Arabia and for the energy needs of India I will also engage with Iran."

So, I would say that we will have to continue to work as the voice of the

Global South for the cause of the Global South, to work as a founding member of various organizations for their reforms and relevance. This will be required and we will have to work upon this global agenda to respond, recognize, respect and reform. So, India will continue to be a major player in this, if we continue to be on the path of being a strong country, especially an economically strong nation which is very, very important and of course militarily to be able to defend and secure our borders while helping the world in maintaining peace in the hot spots.

Thank you. ■

Remarks

Manjeev Singh Puri⁹



Professor Muni, I want to say that I heard a part of the previous panel and I really want to appreciate Ambassador Nalin Surie, of course, he is a senior mentor for many of us, but for bringing out aspects of the Indian Constitution and discussions in the Constituent Assembly because, you know, we all tend to forget where India lies and where things come from in the Constitutional sense of things for us as a nation state. I am not talking about civilizational state, it is a different matter altogether.

Secondly, everybody talks about economy. I can't be any different. I have to say economy matters. You have the money, believe me even McDonald becomes a greater soft power than anybody can take. You know, this is reality and that is something that we must accept.

Now, Professor Muni, I want to thank you very much. You said something very interesting which my colleagues here across this entire spectrum should understand. Get your act together with neighbours. You remember there are these old stories, perhaps the most interesting one that when Brazil became independent and I am talking about 150 years back, their first Foreign Minister who remained in the job for about 20-25 years, only went around the neighbours. It's important. If you are not in, let me say, in consonance with those who are around you, you are really not going to be able to get the hard ball anywhere in the world. This is important and you very rightly said so.

You also made a number of other very relevant issues about contemporary realities, the South, etc. I just want to make one simple point. And again, this point goes back to something that you

⁹ Former Ambassador of India to Nepal, EU and Belgium

Why do you think the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT) has not been adopted? For a very simple reason. It's of no relevance to those who matter. They get what they want through the methodologies of the Security Council. We are struggling to get everything done. That's the nature of global power. Hegemony has not changed.

said. You are not at the high table; you are likely to be at the high table. Hence, today what you say matters. I think let's understand a few simple things. All of us, at least my generation and those before us, almost never complained when we were asked to stand second in the line because there was one that was ahead of us. Whether in March of this year or next year, and it really doesn't matter, if you become the largest country in the world, it's one thing what we think about population as a size domestically, that's a matter of debate. Many of us can have different views on it. But can you imagine if you are the largest country in the world, what it means in terms of foreign policy?

Let me leave a simple question to all of you. Do you think every child in every country in the world who goes to only the 3rd or 4th Standard in school today knows about India? Of course, we would like to say yes. But there is a chance it may not be the case. Do you think once we become the largest country in the world, any kid who goes to school anywhere in the world, goes only to the 4th Standard

geography lesson, will not have heard about India? Please understand what it does for the world's understanding of who you are.

In 1945, if the Chinese were to become a member of the Security Council, no matter the geopolitics which was involved, the argument that was the largest of the have nots and that has consistently been the case. Today in some senses, you are going to be that. So that's one thing. Secondly, we will be among the three largest economies in the world and I am not looking at the European Union as one economy but even if we are assuming, we will be among the three or four largest economies in the world by the year 2035. What does this do for things? It makes you relevant to the world. It makes the world say 'Look, guys, if we want to have a rule, you need to have this country along with you if not making the rule at least part of those who are moulding the rule into coming in.' You can't just be rule takers.

You know, when we were given the concept note of the Conference, there

If we are the largest democracy in the world, if we are the largest country in the world and we will have a GDP of the same size as the United States of America, why can't we be the leaders of the free world?

were various things there about terrorism, etc. You understand a very simple thing. Why do you think the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT) has not been adopted? For a very simple reason. It's of no relevance to those who matter. They get what they want through the methodologies of the Security Council. We are struggling to get everything done. That's the nature of global power. Hegemony has not changed. Nobody is changing. What you say for principles, is very valid. They are your points. What do the western countries say? They say they are very principled. Everything that they do is extremely principled. They stand for freedoms. They stand for capitalism. They stand for people doing what they want to do. And yet are they any number two in terms of hegemony? We look at hegemony only as one country exercising hegemony. People have exercised hegemony over us 197 years of colonization.

Point about hegemony is, be a force for good. Take the largest number together. And I want to leave one very important thought. You know, the mention of Pakistan is made. I mean let's understand it's a country which is about one sixth of

India's size. And, of course, it is not going away. Many of our Pakistan experts try to highlight this but many others simply brush us aside. It isn't going away. It will be among the ten odd largest countries in the world, perhaps among the 15-20 largest economies in the world.

However, the big issue that we have is on our northern border. And that is going to be the greatest set of competition we need to manage. And how do we manage it? The way forward really is, (a) economic growth; (b) a balancing position in the world. And that's particularly important for a country like India, one of the four-five largest economies. The largest society in the world.

Now let me leave another thought with you. And this thought, you know, very often at least in today's day and age gets forgotten, brushed aside. If we are the largest democracy in the world, if we are the largest country in the world and we will have a GDP of the same size as the United States of America, why can't we be the leaders of the free world? I am saying this deliberately, provocatively. Do you understand what it does? It also pits us for that leadership which those that take for

granted and which has been the bulwark of industrialization in the last 300 years.

These are the changes and these are the challenges that we confront. But are we going to be there? The answer in my opinion is, it's inevitable. Can we accelerate and move things faster? I hope we do. Economic growth is the absolute key to it because at the end of the day, the world listens even if you have a good idea, only if you are powerful. Then your ideas matter.

Now coming to, you know, institutional arrangement. Again, it was pointed out in the previous panel, India's contribution to the two World Wars. How come we were a founding member of the League of Nations? We were a founding member of the United Nations. We were there in all three UN conferences. Yes, we got left out. I gave you the simplest explanation which is put out in the world. Forget geopolitics. Forget the fact that we were a colony. The Chinese were also not in a greater position at that stage. That's how this world crumbles and that's how things get done.

Now the important thing for us to realize is that contemporary reality demands that India be recognized. I daresay Indo Pacific and Asia be recognized. These are the shifting strands of geopolitical power in the world and India's role in this as a democracy, as a freedom loving country, as a country which exercises its position for freedom, as a country which is a

huge and growing economic power, our ideas, our position, our being part of the rule makers becomes an important and integral element of what is happening. This is the nature of what we will see.

Now, Professor Muni, I don't know if I have a minute or two but I just want to say. If there are young people who are participating in this, I just want to tell them I am very happy for them if they are from India. When I joined the Indian Foreign Service, the greatest things that people like me used to do, want to do, was to attend the Aid-India Consortium meetings. Why? Because that's where some power was going on and some things for the benefit of India would take place. When I retired at the end of 2019, one of my last acts was to cut perhaps the largest cheque given by India to any other country as part of a cooperation and development partnership program.

A changing India has come about. But I think I was still in the middling lot. What the future generation are going to see is India a country, even if we take three, four, five, ten years more, India a country in their lifetime which will have to be a country that will have to be listened to. You may not agree. That will take another 20-30 years. But a country which will be there. A country that will matter. It will matter because of its size, the economy, the population. It will also matter because it will contribute hugely to global brain power, if I may say so.

We often talk in terms of the diaspora, in terms of other things. But our abilities to be able to contribute. We haven't done very well in terms of technological innovations in India. But I am sure all of these things will catch up. I, therefore, see for all the young generations in India, a wonderful future. A beautiful future. A future where India will play its rightful role in the global economy.

Let me conclude. At the stroke of the midnight hour, on the 15th of August 1947, we said, Jawaharlal Nehru said that long

time ago we made a tryst with destiny and the time has come for us to redeem it. As Prime Minister Modi chairs the G20, the premier economic body in the world, as we chair the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), as the world sees what is happening, this is certainly an *Amrit Kaal*, a good time for us and I hope in the next 25 years we will certainly take our country forward towards 'Viksit Bharat' and more than that, a true force for good and a good world at that. Thank you, Professor Muni. ■

Remarks

Ajay Bisaria¹⁰



Thank you, Professor Muni. Thank you, Ambassador Vijay Thakur Singh and your whole team for putting this together and I am grateful to my two colleagues, Ambassador Puri, Ambassador Trigunayat, for making such excellent points that makes my job much simpler.

So what I thought I would do is without repeating too much of what they said, make two very short, broader geopolitical points and then talk of three diplomatic innovations that demonstrate how India has won its position on the diplomatic high table whether it is on it or about to be on it and what it should do to stay on this diplomatic high table and to earn the respect of its peers to be able to be in that position.

You know, if I look at the historical sweep, we talk about the period of the

bipolar world from 1945 to 1991 to being a unipolar world which I think was from 1991 to about 2008 when Russia started a certain revival. But that was the period when the United States remained unchallenged. And then this multipolar world that we are talking about, where we are talking about India as a country which is inventing multi-alignment and the ability to navigate this multipolar world.

But the fact is that today's world is much more complex. Anil referred to a revival of the Cold War. I would say that we have actually two Cold Wars going on. Cold War 1.0 has been revived. We were too quick to write the obituary of the Cold War in the 90s. It turns out that the end of the history was not reached in 1991 and the victory of the liberal western order was not final. It was only a frozen conflict and has revived in multiple ways as we see the Russia-Ukraine war today.

¹⁰ Former Ambassador of India to Canada and High commissioner of India to Pakistan

India's aspiration we know is to be a leading power rather than a balancing power which India has been recognized as. This seems to be something within grasp.

And the second Cold War is the one that is on between the United States on the one hand and the larger West and China whereas which is again a geopolitical contestation where a rising China with an unruly rise is challenging both militarily and economically the United States. So I think we are living in a world of these two dyads and this is the distinctive world which India is dealing with and dealing with as we all seem to agree with a certain degree of competence.

India's aspiration we know is to be a leading power. That seems to be something within grasp rather than a balancing power which India has been recognized as and as we have been discussing this morning, we need to be or India has the aspiration to be a norm setter rather than a norm taker and all of India's nimble diplomacy in the post Cold War world has been towards...moving towards an objective of being a force that can determine these norms.

So India's economic growth of the 90s, of course, added to the credibility, added to the heft and I would argue that India has been on this high table from about 2000...the Vajpayee era because India became part of many relevant conversations in

the 21st century including those of climate, trade, health and of global governance itself. And I think I would agree that the sweet spot has perhaps come at this moment, when India took over the G20 presidency and of course, the SCO and did it with a certain degree of credibility with a voice that matters.

Also, I think, it is clear to the world thatst as these two Asian giants rise in the 21st century, India's rise will be different from China's. It will be a peaceful rise using all the principles that we talked about this morning of '*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*', 'One Earth and One Family', unlike China's rise which is likely to be more unruly and more belligerent.

What we have now seen also, I think, and that is the second point I wanted to make is that, we do live in a world where some writers are calling it between two orders. But certainly, the old order has been questioned and questioned quite aggressively. So, we are more in a G20 world since I think at least 2008 than a United Nations world because the major problems of the world including the financial crisis of 2008 and multiple other problems is something that we look at these 20 major economies to address. So

plurilateral agreements are here to stay and we are in a multipolar world with issue based alliances that we talk about for addressing issues like climate change and trade and global financial governance and of course, pandemics.

I would say that the G20 moment that we are talking about and Professor Muni, you referred to synthesis and the importance of both military and economic as well as diplomatic capacity. So, with the G20, I think, we are talking of a synthesis of these multiple interest groups of the world. The G7 is coming together with the ASEAN, with India as a voice of the Global South and Russia is also in the mix. So this is a great opportunity for India for consensus building, for staking a claim on leadership and for shaping the global agenda in multiple ways.

So let me talk about three innovations that I would argue India has made which make its position much stronger in dealing with this kind of polycrisis of the world and dealing with the kind of issues the world projects. One is the political niche that India has adopted in the Russia-Ukraine war which is while

not compromising energy security but showing the, as it were, the India way, in dealing with this issue with strategic autonomy and yet with a constructive purpose of trying to bring dialogue and diplomacy.

The second issue we demonstrated with the pandemic, which is India, the pharmacy of the world became the vaccine maker of the world and *Vaccine Maitri* we know the details of how 163 million doses of vaccines were gifted or sold to the world at a time when 96 countries benefitted from that. So, I wouldn't go into details but this was again an exhibition of India's constructive position in the world.

And the third unfolding kind of strength that India is now bringing to the world is of the digital diplomacy or the India Stack and there we have seen how India has opened up its digital public goods, its Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) to bring it for the world's benefit. You know, we are talking of India's tech aid for the next 10 years or so and we have talked to the G20 with a special focus on the development of the digital world.

Now we are willing with the Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) technologies that we are inventing and taking to the world, to bring them up to population scale, to global humanity scale. That means what we did for a billion people, we could perhaps do for 8 billion people.

But what essentially India has said that we have in the first phase of the digital revolution where we had the JAM trinity, the *Jan Dhan* accounts, the *Aadhaar* and the mobiles, we have now felt that we could bring them up to population scale of 1.4 billion people. But now we are willing with the Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) technologies that we are inventing and taking to the world, to bring them up to population scale, to global humanity scale. That means what we did for a billion people, we could perhaps do for 8 billion people.

And therefore, we try to bridge not just the digital divide within India but the global digital divide as well. And we have seen multiple examples of this, the CoWIN platform and now we are talking of technologies which are just unravelling and being tested in India as a laboratory but ready for use for the world. And I will just mention two of them, which is the Open Network Digital Commerce and digital currency. So, also essentially the problems, the digital solutions that India had for itself it is going to open up for the

rest of the world and several of the...5 of the 52 paras of the Bali Declaration of the G20 talked about this new digital world.

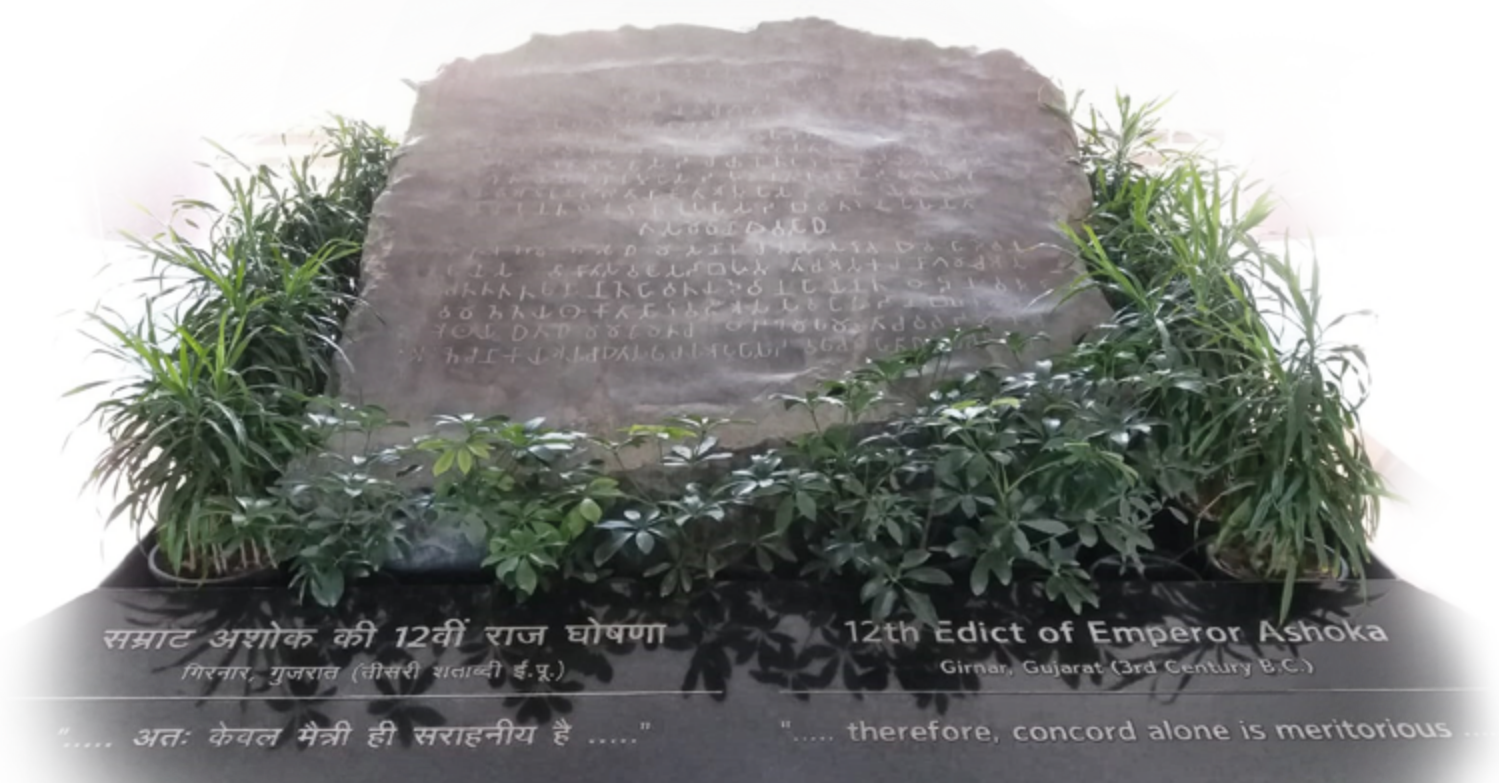
So I think the short point is that India has made positive contributions in building a political consensus, in dealing with the pandemic in a health crisis that the world faced and in digitization of our planet and in the future, I think, this is where India would need to continue with what you mentioned, Professor Muni, as leveraging the economic strengths, leveraging the political position to make specific positive contributions to the world in issues like energy transition, in digitization and even in manufacturing where greater and greater off shoring would come to India and the next generation of manufacturing would take place.

So let me stop right there by making the fundamental point that to stay on this high table, to earn credibility, India will have to keep providing the world with these public goods, with these innovations that would strengthen its position as a leader of the world. Thank you. ■

Conversation
THREE

New India

Foreign Policy in the
Present Decade



Emperor Ashoka's Girnar, Gujarat Edict
Installed at Ministry of External Affairs,
Jawaharlal Nehru Bhawan, New Delhi

Remarks

Asoke Mukerji¹¹



We have a rich panel today.

Amb. Amar Sinha will speak on

India's development cooperation record with a forward-looking perspective in the G20 framework.

Amb. Navdeep Suri would develop the theme of participation of multiple stakeholders beyond state enterprises in India's development cooperation.

And Dr Rudra Chaudhuri would speak on the role of technology in sustainable development taking the example of IndiaStack.

I would make three broad references to put our panel discussion into context.

- India and Sustainable Development. This trend is visible from the creation of the G-77 in 1964, and the adoption of the 1967 G-77 Charter of Algiers for a New International Economic Order. The response from some developed

countries to this came during the 1972 UN Stockholm Conference on the Human Habitat, positing that development should not be at the cost of environmental degradation. India's response to that proposition was "poverty is biggest polluter". The two "competing" themes of development and environment were eventually converged by the 1987 Brundtland Report, that introduced the term "Sustainable Development" into international relations. In turn, the Brundtland Report formed the basis for the convening of the UN's Rio Summit in 1992 (the "Earth Summit"), and, over the next two decades, for a process of filling in obligations on protecting the environment while pursuing development. In 2012, the

¹¹ Former Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations

India played a very prominent role in the entire Sustainable Development process, ensuring the focus remained human-centric, and included socio-economic issues as well as environmental issues. Finance and technology for sustainable development are accepted as the key means of implementing Agenda 2030.

UN Rio +20 Summit mandated the identification and negotiation of the Sustainable Development Goals, which were integrated into Agenda 2030 on Sustainable Development adopted unanimously by the UN General Assembly in September 2015. India played a very prominent role in the entire Sustainable Development process, ensuring the focus remained human-centric, and included socio-economic issues as well as environmental issues. Finance and technology for sustainable development are accepted as the key means of implementing Agenda 2030.

- The second reference is India and bilateral development cooperation. Curiously, this process too began in 1964 with the launch of the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation programme (ITEC). Through this process, India shared her own development experience with other

developing countries, prioritizing capacity building through human resource training as well as through institutional linkages. I was fortunate to be able to introduce ITEC into the Central Asian states that emerged from the former Soviet Union in 1992. Over the past three decades, we have a significant body of experience of India's bilateral development cooperation success through ITEC.

- The third is India's advocacy of multilateral platforms for development cooperation within our foreign policy commitments, including furthering human rights. 75 years ago, Hansa Mehta of India integrated gender equality into Article 1 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, and since then, the inclusion of women as key partners in sustainable development cooperation has been a priority for India. Over the past

two decades, India has taken the initiative at the UN to activate two tailored platforms for sustainable development cooperation. One is the India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) Trust Fund, coordinated by the envoys of the three countries in New York. The record of the IBSA Trust Fund in activating more than three dozen projects in developing countries speaks for itself. Its unique characteristic is that unlike developed country development cooperation approaches, the IBSA

Trust Fund projects are demand-driven, and do not contain the conditionalities associated with developed country development cooperation projects like consultancies and equipment exports from the donor countries. The second platform created more recently is the India-UNDP Partnership Fund, which focuses on South-South development cooperation.

I request Ambassador Amar Sinha to please make his presentation, to be followed by Ambassador Navdeep Suri and Dr Rudra Chaudhuri. ■

Remarks

Amar Sinha¹²



Thank you very much. Thank you to ICWA and DG, ICWA for inviting us for this important conference.

Before I come to the main theme which is developing partnership and the changing role, let me just say that I have observed India's foreign policy for 35 years from within the Government and now really 5 years from outside. So when we look back at the last 10 years, there are some changes which have to be commented upon before I come to the main theme.

One thing which is very discernible to me at least is that our national interest has been prioritized in several ways and I think the most telling example is the changing narrative as well as the actions that we have taken on how we deal with terror or a state sponsor of terror. It is clear that India is no longer going to meekly accept attacks on its sovereignty and integrity and territorial integrity

and all such attempts would be robustly challenged and pushed back.

However, when I say this, it goes hand in hand with what Prime Minister Narendra Modi has said in '*Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas*' which also prioritized our neighbourhood and the extended neighbourhood and which directly connects to our development partnership policies.

And the second point is, of course, this was our dichotomy that all of us in the service faced where the foreign policy narrative on India's territory and territorial integrity tended to collide with some of the legal and constitutional provisions which were done away with and I refer specifically to the abrogation of Article 370 which has brought in line what our narrative is with the legal structure. And this I feel would release diplomatic energy and capacities to focus on things that we do best and that is

¹² Former Secretary (Economic Relations), Ministry of External Affairs and Ambassador of India to Afghanistan

The foreign policy narrative on India's territory and territorial integrity tended to collide with some of the legal and constitutional provisions which were done away with and I refer specifically to the abrogation of Article 370 which has brought in line what our narrative is with the legal structure.

development partnership that we have done very well.

The third thing in the last 10 years that I would add is developing an idiom of India's foreign policy and drawing deep from our own socio cultural and philosophical traditions, now whether it is the theme of '*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*' which now has been translated and has become the theme of G20 itself, 'One Earth, One Family, One Future'. I think that or when you saw External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar's book, *The India Way* which actually draws very heavily from *Mahabharata*. So, some of these cultural traditions that we have started using has become very prominent in the last 10 years.

Let me come to development partnership. See, it was obviously clear that as India grew, both the expectations from it and its capacities to help people who are similarly placed would increase and that is clearly shown in the numbers. Where in the last 10 years, our aid budget, aid and assistance budget, I would call it, has more than doubled from close to a billion dollars, it is now today at 2.3 billion

dollars, the last figure that I have of 2021-2022. It was also reported that in 2015-2016, we have become a net donor and of course, the bulk of the assistance went to, in line with our own priorities, to our neighbourhood, neighbouring countries.

In addition, close to 30 billion dollars have been provided as lines of credit which are basically concessional lines of credit and I must say that in our entire portfolio of aid partnership, we have used just about every instrument, whether it is the ITEC focusing on capacity building, concessional loans, grants, project finance. What we have done is in all this we have followed the principles of what we call the South-South cooperation, which arises from both our colonial past or shared history and solidarity.

And the other major change which I saw, of course, working in the neighbourhood, was the focus on what we did and how we spent our money from the highest level. In fact, I think it was the first time that Prime Minister of the country as part of his overall monthly review programmes, he started also looking at major development projects that we are doing

We have steered away from the ideologically based alliances or blocs and we have built on our own policy tradition of non-alignment and strategic autonomy but India is also building issue-based coalitions and that I see is very, very critical in terms of development partnership as we go around.

around the world and a number of our projects came up for review. And that not only made us accountable but I thought that the system became much more responsive because, you know, India's aid assistance was always sort of hounded by this charge that we are very sluggish, slow to deliver. But this one review mechanism actually started opening doors and I think it facilitated and made MEA's life much easier because most of the approvals that were pending would happen even before the project came up for review. So that was one major change. So, the hands-on approach of the top leadership and focus on development partnership, I think, is another very discernible change I would point out here.

While we, of course, this is more political, of course, that we have steered away from the ideologically based alliances or blocs and we have built on our own policy tradition of non-alignment and strategic autonomy but India is also building issue-based coalitions and that I see is very, very critical in terms of development partnership as we go around. And you mentioned the Voice of Global South and

I think, that is what exactly India is doing. India sees itself as a developing country, as really a laboratory for developmental experiments which can all be shared with others, which can be scaled and as Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that we would like to represent the voice of the developing South in G20, act as a bridge.

The irony has been that most of the developing world has always had representation in all the forums, but they were never heard. Hopefully this time around with this concerted move, in fact, I am in Bhopal actually, attending a T20 task force meeting basically focusing on development partnership. So hopefully this time around the narrative is changing and developing partnership with our help and the help of the other like-minded countries and the two other Chairs from the South of G20 which will follow us, will be brought centre stage on the G20 agenda. And one of the key points made today was that the G20 actually came up as a response to a global crisis. But we don't have to really wait for a crisis to happen because the developing world is facing a crisis of sorts in terms of the

financing, the multiple crisis caused by COVID. So, we can start acting proactively and bring this really centre stage of the G20 leadership political agenda. Other thing that is quite clear that India also emerged as the first responder both to natural calamities around ourselves, but also to some man-made calamities. And what comes to my mind really is Sri Lanka where we see that we have become the port of first call when it comes to broken economies or unsustainable debt levels and somebody has to come to support your neighbourhood, that India has been very, sort of, generously going and picking up the pieces.

So, these are some of the broad contours of the changes but let me quickly give you an example of Afghanistan. You know, Afghanistan today, of course, nobody wants to talk about Afghanistan since Taliban took over. But what India did for the last 30 years and many have asked me that has our investment gone down the drain or has it got wasted, well my answer really is no. And this is where we have contributed to sustainability in Afghanistan because of the focus on ITEC and capacity building. I think this dictum that rather than giving them fish, teach them how to catch a fish, is holding in good stead and if you see even today the Taliban regime, if you look at the technical level officials, directors, most of them are India educated.

So, the capacities that we have built in Afghanistan through the ITEC training programme and, perhaps, the largest scholarship programmes that we ran for over 15 years, of thousand students a year, that talent and that capacity will not run away. Of course, large number of Afghans have left but they were basically Afghans who were educated abroad, in the West and they found shelter once again there. But most of the India educated Afghans are still sticking it out and serving in the best possible manner. There, too, while of course our rhetoric on terror and terrorism is very clear and is well articulated, but I feel that we are approaching it with great amount of realism that it is our neighbourhood and we can't shy away from our responsibilities in terms of the assistance that Afghanistan needs today, Afghan people need. So, we are really walking the talk that we are standing with the people of Afghanistan. So, despite the risks, and both physical as well as reputational risk of sending a team to Afghanistan, we have sent a technical team there to coordinate the humanitarian assistance that we have been sending.

So, these were the few things and of course, it was very, very heartening to hear our Prime Minister speak at this Summit, Voice of Global South which we hosted on 12 January 2023 virtually when he actually announced five

different initiatives. First, of course, was the setting up of a Global South Centre which was basically what many of us have been working with other partners, on setting up a global development centre which presents to the world an alternate paradigm of development which is sustainable, which doesn't lead to unsustainable debt burden, which draws on local capacities, which is not capital intensive, etc.

Second, he has, of course, said that we would also be setting up a centre for global science and technology drawing on India's own strength in this area. The third one is *Vaccine Maitri* which again is something that he has been talking about that we will be there as a first responder in terms of pandemics, in terms of medical assistance that we can provide and this also, I feel, is drawn from two deep philosophical roots going right back to Rig Veda, you know, '*Bahujan hitaya, bahujan sukhaya*' that ultimately you have to work for the common good of the largest number of people. And this is a great shift from the market oriented, profit seeking approach in health sector. And this will be a paradigm shift if actually India could get away from the pressures of IPRs and royalties and actually provide vaccines and medicines cheaply and affordably to the rest of the world if another pandemic hits.

On climate change, on issues of environment and climate change, rather than just being a naysayer, which was what we were known as, I think, we have now come to a stage where we are actually offering solutions, whether it was with the solar alliance initiative, now our own commitments on net zero carbon footprint by a certain timeline or even our own energy transition, a very expensive energy transition focusing on renewables, hydrogen fuels, etc.

So, these are all things that we are not only willing to do ourselves and experiment with but we are also willing to share this experience with others. And, of course, lastly I would just say that the great shift in this which has happened and I guess it's a realization of the complexity that we face and the challenges that the world faces that we have moved away from purely bilateral aid and assistance and looking increasingly at trilateral cooperation, bringing in more partners, creating a forum or a platform like the Global Development Centre or the South Centre, what Prime Minister mentioned, where we could actually learn from each other and share experiences.

I would stop there. Thank you very much. ■

Remarks

Navdeep Suri¹³



Thank you very much. My compliments also to ICWA for putting this together in such a comprehensive manner.

I'll just add two separate points to what Amb. Amar Sinha has said and Amb. Ashok Mukherjee, what you mentioned in your opening remarks. Increasingly, everybody is talking about Sustainable Development Goals and particularly how the march towards these has been impacted, first by the pandemic, and now by the war in Ukraine. And when I look at India's development partnership program, I think it stands out for what we have done consciously, subconsciously or unconsciously to promote SDGs. We

have done a lot of work in education, in capacity building, in healthcare, in housing, in power and, now, on the environment through the International Solar Alliance. But we don't talk about it, we don't measure it, we don't try and quantify the resources that we put into it, and I think there's a real need to work on this. We're doing the right things but we're not measuring them. So, I think if we can put together a plan that really tries to count all of the resources that have been allocated towards projects in various parts of the world specifically focused on promoting Sustainable Development Goals, then I think in forums like G20 we'll have something really important to contribute.

When I look at India's development partnership program, I think it stands out for what we have done consciously, subconsciously or unconsciously to promote SDGs.

¹³ Former Ambassador of India to Egypt and UAE and Former High Commissioner of India to Australia

The second point I want to make, and this kind of stems from personal experiences dating some 15 years back when I was at the Africa desk and President Abdul Kalam speaking at the African Parliament in Johannesburg made this dramatic announcement that we would set up a Pan-African e-network for tele-education and tele-medicine available to all 53 or 54 countries in Africa and that we would fund it for the first five years. So, I had to do a fair amount of heavy lifting in the early stages along with Ambassador Gurjit Singh who was then in Addis, and we put together this framework. And it was quite remarkable, the initial successes we had achieved in terms of connecting Black Lion Hospital in Addis Ababa with the AIIMS in Delhi so that people in Addis could get cardiac or neurological or other consultations at a time when bandwidth was very limited, and the internet really wasn't what it is today.

So, we had a great idea, it was getting some really good traction but execution was a handicap, and that kind of set me thinking that why are we constraining ourselves in carrying out these projects largely through public sector organizations? Is it because we are stuck with the L1 bidder (in the tender process), and it's easier to go with a Public Sector Undertaking. And how do we bring in a

range of new actors into our development partnership programs?

So, at ORF, I did a fairly detailed paper, and we said, let's look at two sectors Education and Healthcare. These are key sectors for the Global South in terms of our existing and potential development cooperation, but who are the existing players. Yes, the Pan-African network rebranded as *e-VidyaBharti* and *e-ArogyaBharti* are still there and have gotten a new lease of life, but what about all the other players that are available in that space?

And the three categories of other actors that we looked at in particular, one was Civil Society, the second was social entrepreneurs and the third was Tech Start-ups. If I take just those two sectors, Healthcare and Education, so in Education, you've got a civil society player like *Pratham* which is highly regarded for the work it has done in Botswana and in a couple of other countries. In Healthcare, you've got somebody like Aravind, who again, have a model which has been replicated through private enterprise in Ethiopia and in Nigeria and in some other places of how they've developed these assembly line surgery techniques to really, dramatically bring down the cost of ophthalmic care. So, these are the two Civil Society players.

Our development dollar or rupee will get much more bang for the buck if we leverage the capacities that are available in the private sector to work on some of the areas that we agree with our development partners.

Then you have a bunch of social entrepreneurs in this space and you've got some fantastic health tech companies which are really at the cutting edge of using software as a service and AI to drive down the cost of healthcare. There's UE LifeSciences for its early detection of breast cancer, there are others which are doing remote cardiology diagnostics and so on, solutions that are as relevant for India as they are for Africa.

In Education, again you've got everybody from Simplilearn to upGrad to others who are revolutionizing how content can be delivered in places where you will never be able to build enough classrooms and certainly, you'll never be able to have enough teachers to be able to really meet the demands of the market.

So, what I was trying to get at in this particular space is that our development dollar or rupee will get much more bang for the buck if we leverage the capacities that are available in the private sector to work on some of the areas that we agree with our development partners. I feel that by doing so, we are leveraging the passion, the creativity, the dynamism and the domain knowledge of experts who

have demonstrated the success of their models in India and may be keen to take these up in other countries.

They also have a very outcome driven approach, particularly some of the social entrepreneurs that we've spoken with, and they have a real grassroots understanding of key development challenges which need to be overcome to get better results. And if you look at, again, the *Pratham* reports, they are a case in point. Also, these organizations have access to other sources of capital. They are not reliant on government funds alone. There are other channels that they can leverage. So, while your traditional model of using a state-owned enterprise is completely dependent on government funds, here, you can probably add top-up finances or supplementary resources to achieve the same goals. And by introducing these organizations as agents of change in other developing countries, India would have the opportunity to nurture Global Champions and also burnish brand India in terms of the way these companies would go about and carry out their projects.

So, I really feel that several of these tech start-ups, several of these social entrepreneurs have the potential to change the development paradigm through their impact on both access and affordable delivery of Education and Healthcare. And perhaps, we really need to try and look at how we integrate these into our development partnership programs.

I just wanted to leave that thought because I think I -- correct me if I'm wrong, Amar, you would have more details on this, but I'm aware of only

three cases where we've stepped out to civil society actors. There's the Jaipur Foot Project that we've used in a number of countries with very good effect, there is the Barefoot College with the Solar Mamas program that has been very successful and applauded, and then there was the famous case of SEWA going to Afghanistan and maybe a couple of other places for financial empowerment of women. Each of these cases where we worked with civil society organizations, we got great outcomes. So, what holds us back from scaling up and building upon the successes that we've achieved? ■

Remarks

Rudra Chaudhuri¹⁴



Thank you very much, and thank you to ICWA and the DG for the kind invitation.

I want to talk about essentially two things. One is, what is increasingly known as Global Stack, and I'll unpack why that is important from a foreign policy perspective and why we've seen massive change when it comes to technology and development, especially in the last 8 to 10 years. And the second, I do want to touch upon the issue of emerging technologies in the economy and what more foreign policy can do here. And I do think that we're in a very special place today where unless we're able to maximize the effects of the geopolitical disruptions that we see, and a lot of that will require internal manoeuvring, we possibly -- we may just miss the bus in a whole range of issues. And essentially what I'm trying to say is I think we're well placed to make the best of these geopolitical transitions. So, one Global Stack, two, emerging tech.

On Global Stack, Ambassador Suri talked about the capabilities that we have in India. The last decade was about building domestic technological capabilities within India. And it all started with *Aadhar*. So, if you think about *Aadhar*, and I just want to put a couple of statistics here that might be interesting. The first *Aadhaar* number was generated in September of 2010. In the last 8 years, or in the last 9 years, you've seen an increase of about 900 million. We're at about 1.34 billion *Aadhaar* cards today. And just to understand how this works and why do we call it India's stack is, *Aadhar* is at the bottom of the stack. It is the building block of the stack. It is a set of protocols which essentially have allowed us and will continue to allow us to do all sorts of things with technology, financial inclusion and essentially reaching the last million, not even the last billion.

UPI got off ground around 2016, and I just want to again share some numbers

¹⁴ Director, Carnegie India

with you. In July of 2016, there were 21 banks that were essentially integrated with UPI, with roughly about 90,000 transactions per month. Today, you're at about close to 400 banks that are integrated with UPI and you're at about 7.6 billion transactions that take place per month. That is an incredible feat and it is exactly why credit card companies and MasterCard and Visa basically turning around and saying okay, we got to get – we've got to get in line with this -- with real-time payments.

So, what I'm trying to say is that what we've seen in the last 6 to 8 years is not just a change, it's a massive transformation of not just the digital economy space. And I think people mistakenly talk about transformations in the digital -- in the economy, as far as inclusion is concerned, as far as banking is concerned. I remember Prime Minister Narendra Modi's first set of comments, I think it was either Republic Day or Independence Day, 2014 or 2015, I can't quite recollect now, when it was the first time that he articulated the term Digital India. And many people turned around said okay, but how are we going to do this, how are we going to actually make the best of what is called quote-unquote Digital India, quote-unquote

Make in India, quote-unquote Start-up India today.

Fast forward to 2022 and just look where we are, think about the numbers that I've just talked about. So essentially, we have a unique identity number which is the bottom of the stack. That unique identity number has allowed us to build real-time payments by which in -- almost any nook and corner of India today has a barcode basically as a sticker attached at the back of an auto somewhere. Your fruit sellers and vegetable sellers take a UPI payment today for 10 Rupees, 20 rupees, 100 rupees. On top of that, today we're in the process of building out what is increasingly -- what is popular, being called health stack, which is essentially a unified health interface. So, that's -- so, what we're seeing is the building block of *Aadhar* moved to payments, moved to health, and essentially, all of this is about inclusion. It is also about market access, and I'll come to that.

This decade is about, in my view, it is about global stack. It's not about India stack. What India stack could have delivered for us, it has delivered, it will continue to. 7.5 billion transactions will become 10 billion transactions, it'll become 15 billion transactions. My sense

We should now start looking at what do we do with the domestic DPI architecture and how can we leverage this for foreign policy, for development and for the Global South on the one side, but also for building markets in the Global North.

is we should not hypnotize ourselves with those numbers. We should now start looking at what do we do with the domestic DPI architecture and how can we leverage this for foreign policy, for development and for the Global South on the one side, but also for building markets in the Global North. This is not just a development project, this is a project where you actually require the private sector to come in and find alliances by which you can reach different markets in rich capital nations as well.

So, two things in terms of where we are in terms of opportunity because of the massive changes that we've seen, especially in the last 7 to 8 years where the statistics are very clear, is -- one is taking UPI across borders. UPI is essentially a pipeline, it's a set of protocols, it's architecture. The Ministry of External Affairs and in fact, the current Foreign Secretary has done a staggering job of taking UPI to Nepal. Our current Ambassador in Paris has taken UPI to France where we have an agreement today with Lycra. He also took UPI to Singapore. But I think we're at a place where we need more than some individuals within the MEA to take our domestic architectures to different countries. It has to be institutionalized and systematized into the Ministry of External Affairs. And that will unbundle the transformations that we see across borders.

I'm keeping in mind that many other parts of the Global South have their own

architectures. Kenya has a very impressive architecture and M-PESA, Brazil has a very impressive architecture in Pix. So, the key question for us, I think in this decade, is if we're really to transform foreign policy and take an Indian architecture abroad, which is by the way democratic, it's open, it's built on open APIs, it's built on open protocols, this is essentially a democratic value proposition to the world through protocols and pipelines and technology. We have to, number one, I think, do quite a bit to internally rewire ourselves to be able to understand the technology and take it across borders.

The Ministry of External Affairs has the new division, a relatively new, New and Emerging Science and Technology, but if I can speak frankly, and even if it's an open forum, we have to do 10x of what NEST is doing today. Primarily, because we have to capture this moment, and the moment is now.

There's no mistake that DPIs have been baked into our G20 agenda, and for excellent reason because essentially, what we've done in India, unlike many other parts of the world, it's the Government of India that has built the stack. It's not some private sector actor in Kenya or in Brazil. And it is on top of this Government of India build stack that we're asking the private sector to come in. When you do a group GPay transaction, GPay is just a layer of technology that has been pasted on a stack built by Government of India. So, let's use that opportunity, let's think strategically and let's introduce this into

What's impressive is, in the last 3-4 years, today, we have National Missions that are designed and coordinated in a way in which different parts of Government are speaking to each other. We have India Semicon Mission, we have a Quantum Mission, we have something like an AI Mission and a lot of these conversations around emerging tech have now been formatted into bilateral negotiations.

the lexicon of international relationships and partnerships going ahead.

Very quickly on the last point, is as much as we perhaps focus on global stack, we're at an incredible point today when it comes to emerging technologies, whether it's quantum, civilian space cooperation, building a semiconductor ecosystem in India or biotechnologies, biosafety security, the list goes on, AI, ML. So, the key question is what do we do? One, and here, I think there's a -- the change that we've seen in the last 3 to 4 years, across Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs, The National Security Council, the mighty Telecom Ministry and others, a level of coordination to basically say is that look, we need to all work together in order to be able to attract these Investments, these technologies and work through traditional issues and problems like export controls, ITAR, et cetera. And I think what's impressive is, in the last 3-4 years, today, we have National Missions that are designed and coordinated in a way in which different parts of Government are speaking to each

other. We have India Semicon Mission, we have a Quantum Mission, we have something like an AI Mission and a lot of these conversations around emerging tech have now been formatted into bilateral negotiations. The NSA will be out in the United States in two weeks from now, talking to his counterpart about a new initiative in critical and emerging technologies with the United States. That is about space, it is about quantum.

So, I think and -- so, if you're talking about New India, I think New India is built -- a part of New India is built on technology that can have benefits for us when it comes to economy. And the last 4, 5 years have shown how these changes have massive benefits domestically. We're at an inflection point to take what we have domestically, build it across borders, leverage foreign policy, but perhaps not be too strategic, perhaps be less strategic about the Global South than we sometimes are. It is our technology, yes, it is our IP, we're proud of it, but sometimes it's okay to open those protocols up to countries which we like. ■

Conversation
FOUR

Indian Foreign Policy

Perspectives from
Various Geographies



'Transformation'
Installation by Prakash Vani and Jatin Bhatt at Ministry of External Affairs,
Jawaharlal Nehru Bhawan, New Delhi

Remarks

Dr. C. Raja Mohan¹⁵



Thank you very much. It's wonderful to welcome you all for this session. This is, I think, quite a unique session in this whole seminar. It is taking an outside look into India's foreign policy. As a nation, as a collective, like all large nations, India tends to be self-referential. We're consumed by our own debates. It's not often that we hear what others think of us. What others think of

us might not necessarily correspond with what we think of ourselves. So, I think it's a good reality check to have an outside look into the Indian foreign policy.

And to do that, we have a wonderful panel here. Dr. Ji from Hankuk University, Nicholas and Amrita from Europe, and Michael from Washington.

So, let's start off with Dr. Ji. Dr. Ji, the floor is yours. ■

¹⁵ Senior Fellow, Asia Society Policy Institute, New Delhi

Remarks

Ji Yeon Jung¹⁶



Thank you very much for having me here. And would like to express my sincere gratitude to ICWA.

So, the topic I'd like to discuss today is about how China, Japan, South Korea perceive India's foreign policy in transition, and India's rise, and how these countries started to build different strategies towards India.

In fact, India's rise has been much discussed for at least 2 to 3 decades. And many discuss how India's rise has been peaceful and adheres to the international order, unlike China's, but many still argue about how India's rise and foreign policy is in transition and will impact the Indo-Pacific region, and how these changes will meet their national interests.

So, China, Japan, South Korea pay more attention to this topic because they were the key countries in the Asia-Pacific region in the past, and now all three

countries want to be the more powerful player in the Indo-Pacific region. And they wish not to be isolated in this new geographical platform.

The three countries' current understandings on India are clearly varied. Unlike South Korea and Japan, China perceives that India's rise is slower than its rise. On the other hand, South Korea, Japan generally understand that India's rise is much noticeable but only for last 10 years.

A common understanding among these countries has been that India poses no or limited military threat despite New Delhi's possession of advanced military technologies.

Second point is regarding India's role in the Indo-Pacific region in the future, which the three countries again understand differently. So, first, China perceives that India's role in the Indo-

¹⁶ Research Professor, Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, Seoul

Pacific region is still limited and that India plays out as a second-tier player. Many Chinese scholars and analysts argue that India's leading role is limited, and India is expanding its engagement as led by other countries like US, India being not a top-level player.

On the other hand, Japan sees India as a leading player in this region, and Tokyo generally trusts that India can be a multi-level collaborator.

South Korea sees India as an independent key player in the Indo-Pacific region. Hence, South Korea's policy makers and scholars are much focused on what alternative agendas India can suggest where South Korea can collaborate more.

So, based on different understanding regarding India's role in transition in the Indo-Pacific region, the domestic demands to cooperate with India from these three countries are also varied.

To sum up, Beijing's understanding on India's rise is very limited and sees India as a medium level player, in gradual learning curve to be a leader. So, Beijing still does not need to consider India as a top policy priority. As a result, Beijing is determined still to follow the medium level risk management strategy towards India. In other words, Beijing is self-confident that it can balance the pressure from India.

So, for last 10 years or 15 years, China gradually developed issue based minilateralism, and China wants India to join its move to a limited extent. For instance, China wants to be a leading player on Afghanistan and Ukraine war to reinforce its position. China often sees India as a leveraging factor to garner support from other countries in South Asia friendly to India. In Beijing's understanding, India's presence is somewhat helpful in minilaterals for Beijing to forge a strategic partnership with other South Asian countries. Also, China is able to alleviate concerns in South Asia as a diplomatic checkmate to India. So, China is pursuing this pragmatic approach towards India.

Next, it is also interesting to see how Japan understands India. So, Japan's latest understanding towards India is unambiguous that India's rise meets Japan's interests, and India has the potential to be a key collaborator to Japan's foreign policy. That being said, Japan generally puts India in its policy priority. For Japan, engaging India is important to reinforce Japan's leading role in the Indo-Pacific region, and to garner regional support in the backdrop of Tokyo's military ambition to counter China. So, the recent discussions with India have included India-Japan Military Cooperation. And another noticeable point is that Japan invests in trilateral

The three major players in East Asia i.e. China, Japan, South Korea understand India differently and have different expectations from India.

dialogues with India. So, Japan has succeeded so far to collaborate with India alongwith Australia, Italy, EU, US, France, etc. So, through this diplomatic platform, Japan expects India to be an all-weather friend that supports its global ambition.

The last player is South Korea. South Korea's understanding on India's rise is also distinctive. Seoul sees India's rapid rise and that India has become a key player in the Indo-Pacific region. But South Korea's observation is more focused on India's strategic autonomy in this region. Seoul expects to make closer ties with India with mutual understanding but with strategic autonomy intact. Seoul wants to discuss all possible issues with India beyond economic cooperation. Seoul's New Southern Policy under the previous Government or President Yoon's Indo-Pacific Strategy that was recently announced prove Seoul's goodwill. Moreover, South Korea sees India as an ideal partner to discuss joint capacity building.

It is quite clear that the three major players in East Asia i.e. China, Japan, South Korea understand India differently and have different expectations from India. While all these countries have

some prospects and expectations, let me conclude with some of the leftover issues that these countries worry about.

So, in China, what policymakers and scholars worry about domestically is how to keep India engaged with China. So, while Beijing sees India being not a top tier player, it doesn't mean that India doesn't have balancing power against China. So, from China's perspective, India becoming more confident and stricter towards China challenges its power and global ambition. However, Beijing does want India to be a dialogue partner on mutually agreed issues.

In case of Japan, Tokyo worries about the extent of India's strategic autonomy that will be played in each bilateral and trilateral engagement in the future. Japan's foreign policy is in development within the U.S. alliance system, and its policy priorities cannot be altered any time soon. So, while Japan is speedily becoming closer to India at all levels, some Japanese scholars and experts are becoming a little bit cautious about what this bilateral development will harvest ultimately. And while Japan is in many diplomatic disputes with China, Tokyo sees closer Japan-China ties in many

fields including economic cooperation. So, how Japan will handle Japan-China ties when it clashes with Japan-India ties remains to be seen.

And in case of South Korea, Seoul explores if South Korea and India can forge a solid and a mutual strategic objective. One of South Korea's policy priorities is the potential unification with North Korea in the future. And this issue entangles with Chinese and US engagement in

Korean Peninsula – Seoul expects to explore India's role in Korean peninsula that is critical to the Indo-Pacific region. Seoul seeks to broaden its cooperation with India in the field of science and technology and defence technology. However, Seoul is way too cautious to make a quick move.

So, here, I hope to conclude my presentation. And thank you very much. ■

Remarks

Nicolas Blarel¹⁷



Thank you, Dr. Raja Mohan, and thank you to ICWA for having me today. I'm happy to participate in this.

I'm based as Dr. Raja Mohan mentioned, in Leiden in the Netherlands, but I am – actually I will and hopefully Dr. Narlikar will talk more about the European perspective on India, but I will focus mainly on what I actually do research on, which is India's relations with West Asia and evolving West Asian perceptions of India, which might be also interesting for this debate.

And the reason I think it's important to talk about West Asian perceptions or Middle Eastern perceptions is that there has been this discussion especially of the last decade about an evolving perception or vision of India in the Middle East, especially the GCC or Israel, and you could trace this shift back to 2014 and the BJP's coming back to power and the Prime Ministership of Narendra Modi, but also to the first visit, I think, in the UAE of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, his first Middle Eastern visit. I think that's when you see this evolving perception, and it's been judged one of the most successful

There has been this discussion especially of the last decade about an evolving perception or vision of India in the Middle East, especially the GCC or Israel, and you could trace this shift back to 2014 and the BJP's coming back to power and the Prime Ministership of Narendra Modi.

¹⁷ Associate Professor of International Relations, Institute of Political Science, Leiden University, The Netherlands

foreign policy achievements of the Modi Government. And you've seen all these strategies over the last few years, whether it's called Think West, Look West, Link West, Act West, Go West or whatever terminology you want to use, but has there actually been a strategic shift in the perception of the vision vis-à-vis India, and India's foreign policy, and what could explain this apparent change over the last years? And I'll talk a little bit maybe of how we can expect this to evolve with the perceived US withdrawal of the region, maybe not in substantial terms, but actually perceived, and the concurrent growing Chinese involvement in the region, the recent Iranian developments and also changes in the Israeli politics. So, I think it's important to take all of this into account.

I'm not going to -- we are short on time, so I'm not going to talk all about the background of India's evolving West Asian policy, but what is important to know is there's been a fluctuation of India's engagement in the region, and then evolving perceptions from the different actors in the region related to India's direct involvement in the region, especially in the '50s, all the way to the '80s, where India's material capacities were constrained. Looking at India's engagement with the region shows, as I think Dr. Raja Mohan has written in other venues, that India did not follow

the British-Indian roots of direct security, political involvement in the region and decided to engage post-colonial, non-aligned and secular Arab Governments which led to take sides and to basically not develop relations with some other players, especially in the GCC. There have also been the issues of energy and transactional involvement also with some of the GCC countries, and some degree of societal relations due to the important diaspora in the region. But India only really had a limited and not direct active involvement in the region. And this changed in the 1990s, due to some structural changes, opportunities, constraints, as also the evolving regional politics. India's direct engagement with multiple actors in the region, the most visible being the outreach to Israel with the normalization of diplomatic relations, but also engagement of Iran, with which it had estranged relations since the late 1970s, and other actors in the GCC also brought about a shift.

And I think what's important to note is the evolution of the perception by regional actors of India's role in the region as also the perception within India's leadership of its interests in regions; of India's capacities to act on these interests; and to protect these evolving Indian interests in the region. Some of them are structural, there's always been the issue of energy, there has been the issue

of trade relationships that predate even British India, diaspora and remittance, as I mentioned, and increasingly maybe also Foreign Direct Investments coming from the region, whether from Israel or the GCC. Those are new evolving factors that are shaping Indian perceptions.

But about the evolving perception of India: India always engaged all relevant actors. However, since 2014, I think there's been a more direct recognition from the Modi Government and especially from the foreign policy establishment of the trade interests, the influence of the diaspora in the region, and especially of the security interests in the region notably in the Gulf region.

So, there have been a series of interesting statements at least in the initial Modi years about India's West Asia policy that had first been a very indirect and evolutionary development, which was relatively autonomous of strategic calculations. There was a direct citation from Dr. S. Jaishanker, when he was the Foreign Secretary, noting that the ties with West Asia were dictated more by markets and social or personal relations rather than by policy. And there has been an increasing recognition that India could build on the combination of human and energy connectivity over the last decade. So, this has led this current Government to increase public exchanges, visits and

to institutionalize various partnerships in the region. Hence, there has been an evolving interest or public recognition of certain interests in the region. And also, a different perception of capacities. That is the perspective, I think, also coming from the Gulf that India is shedding a little bit of its defensiveness when it is engaging certain regional players in the region, whether it is Israel, the GCC, and India does not -- at least the current leadership does not perceive domestic politics playing as a constraint as it used to. The current Government has managed to decouple domestic politics from bilateral relationships with some of the regional actors in the Middle East.

And the diaspora also, is not perceived as a liability or a problem when engaging some of the GCC or other actors in the Middle East, but increasingly as an advantage and something to build on to develop better relations with the Middle Eastern or West Asian actors.

And Pakistan is no longer an obstacle to better ties with the GCC states. Pakistan's relationships with some of the countries in the region will be maintained but India also can develop its own relationship with some of these actors.

So, I think this is a proactive policy from India but the regional perceptions of India changed. There's an increasing "Look East" policy of most of the relevant Middle Eastern actors that are looking

towards India and China for development support, for investing there. These states have huge sovereign funds that they want to invest in certain emerging markets. So, they're looking increasingly at Southeast Asia, India, China. As a result, there has been this kind of mutual recognition of shared interest or potential cooperation. Israel is also looking towards India, China and other actors for exports and for joint ventures.

So, there's also and within that, the more direct recognition of India as an important emerging market for energy exports but also for foreign investments and joint ventures opportunities over the last few years. There's also been an increasing recognition of shared security concerns and interests with India, from Israel historically but increasingly also from the GCC, whether it is maritime security, obviously, India's growing involvement in that region and that GCC are welcoming on counter piracy or other issues of maritime security, but also counterterrorism is becoming a joint issue of discussion of the last decade. And maritime security, counter terrorism is becoming especially pertinent in the context of perceived -- at least some of the GCC actors or potentially also Israel-- of a perceived US disengagement in the region, which again, might not be happening in material terms but is perceived as an actual development over

the long term by some of the actors in the region.

And finally, the GCC states, as I mentioned, have been going through a process of de-hyphenation of their India-Pakistan policies. They will maintain their traditional historical relationship with Pakistan, but that won't come at the expense of developing better relations with India, because there is potential cooperation with India, notably when it comes to Foreign Direct Investment.

And also, as I mentioned, Israel also sees India as a crucial market for defence exports. India is the first market for defence export for Israel, and has been now for a little while, but also a market for agriculture, water management, water technologies and other series of joint adventures in high technology and other potential domains. So, Israel has also looked at India for the last two decades, and it has welcomed this growing engagement of India in the region.

And what you see, also from a lot of these actors and especially from the GCC side, but also a series of other Middle Eastern Arab states, is limited criticism of the domestic politics or any of the BJP's policies which could be perceived as affecting the kind of welfare of certain religious minorities. You have seen this last summer during the Prophet row with one of the -- spokespersons for

the BJP. There was a series of obviously public statements from the GCC but that was quickly managed by both sides because there is a joint perception that there is an interesting cooperative kind of relationship, and that domestic developments will not affect these relationships. Hence, there has been also a change within the GCC's engagement with India in the sense that there is actually a more pragmatic long-term political, economic relationship, and domestic politics on both sides will not affect this.

I would then argue that the conditions are ripe for long-term change in orthodoxy from both sides. There will be still regional divisions in the Middle East and -- so evolving perceptions of how some actors expect India to do, and notably to take sides, whether it is in the Israel-Palestine dispute, in the Iran and the GCC dispute, other Intra-Gulf divides within

the GCC itself, but there is engagement of all actors with India because they feel that India is an emerging power.

And there's also, again as I mentioned, this long-term underlying issue of the US strategic disengagement and its consequences and concerns about Iran, especially with the latest protests and the uncertainty of local politics there. And I did not discuss the increasing involvement of China. A lot of these West Asian actors are hedging between China and India in the region.

In the context of the emphasis on the Indo-Pacific, which is also being disused by many actors in the Middle-East (I mentioned the Look East policies from the GCC for example), how India plays a major role in this expanded interpretation of the Indo-Pacific, which also includes parts of the Middle East will be something to monitor.

That's where I'll end. Thank you. ■

Remarks

Amrita Narlikar¹⁸



Thank you very much and congratulations to team ICWA on this timely event. And it's a pleasure for me to be a part of this distinguished panel, chaired by the inimitable Professor Raja Mohan. It's great to see you all.

I'll be focusing on my remarks, like Nicolas said, on EU and India relations. And I'll do three things right now. I'll first suggest why the European Union and India should be natural allies, a concept that comes out of the Panchatantra. As a second step, I'll show that the EU-India

partnership is, at best, a clumsy tango. In the third step, I'll highlight some of the miscalculations that have contributed to the clumsiness of what should be a beautiful dance.

So, the EU and India should be natural allies. They have been strategic partners since 2004. Both share a deeply held commitment to democracy. Diplomatic niceties and sweet talk of their symmetry besides, there is also an urgent need for the two to deepen their cooperation given growing assertiveness and expansionism of authoritarian states.

The EU and India should be natural allies. They have been strategic partners since 2004. Both share a deeply held commitment to democracy. Diplomatic niceties and sweet talk of their symmetry besides, there is also an urgent need for the two to deepen their cooperation given growing assertiveness and expansionism of authoritarian states.

¹⁸ President, German Institute for Global and Area Studies (GIGA), Germany

So, China's global expansion via the Belt and Road initiative, its military adventurism in Asia, misuse of the multilateral trading system, human rights violations in Xinjiang, have been well known in Europe. But all these disturbing trends were perhaps seen as being far away from Europe. So, the EU developed a narrative in 2019 that China was Europe's partner, competitor and rival. And in doing so, I would argue, Europe chose to eat its cake and have it too.

Today, the EU has greater cause for concern. Russia's invasion of Ukraine has brought the threat directly to European borders, and despite much speculation or maybe it's just wishful thinking, on how China is trying to distance itself from Russia, European politicians and technocrats will be well served to remember that China and Russia announced a No-Limits Partnership in February last year. China is no longer a distant threat to Europe. Be this via its large investment projects and infrastructure in Europe or via its partnership with Russia.

India too finds itself in a tough spot. For years now, it has experienced China's increasing overreach across multiple issue areas, including military confrontations on its border with casualties. India's concerns about China are serious enough to make India the sole holdout on the Regional Comprehensive Economic

Partnership. And also refrain from joining the BRI. Also in terms of diversifying its military dependence away from Russia, a Russia that could be increasingly drawn into the arms of China amidst sanctions and other measures from the West. India would be well served to deepen its relationship with Europe.

So, there are plenty of reasons why the world's largest democracies should be collaborating more closely than ever. And yet, despite the best intentions, shared interests and values and new imperatives demanding their cooperation, it is the limitations of this partnership that stand out.

So, I come to the second part of my argument. Witness negotiations over range of areas from trade to geopolitics and the differences between the two players are clear. Negotiations for an EU-India Free Trade Agreement were begun in 2007, but they were put on hold in 2014. It took another 7 years for them to resume in 2021. And for all the goodwill on both sides, and attempts to drum up public excitement over the step, these negotiations will still not be a cakewalk.

Amongst the difficulties include the EU's labour and environmental standards which have been quite the bugbear in its trade dealings, not only with India but also with some other major players in the Global South, see, for example,

the difficulties that the EU-Mercosur agreement has run into.

Fundamental disagreements between the EU and India also appear on questions of geo-strategy and high politics, as exemplified over the positions that the two have adopted over Russia and Ukraine. So, you'll remember that the EU had urged India to take a firm line condemning the Russian invasion of Ukraine. India chose its own path. But in doing so, at the UNGA, at the General Assembly, India again ended up in an odd corner of abstaining parties, together with China and Pakistan.

There is, as my German friends like to say, "*Luft nach oben*", room for improvement in the EU-India relationship.

So, now I come to the third and final part of my argument. A little bit of explanation: for the unfulfilled potential of their partnership, both the EU and India share some responsibility. In keeping with my assigned task today, I will focus right now on the EU, but I would also be happy to talk about India later on in Q&A.

In terms of miscalculations by the EU, three points are important. First, the EU tends to place considerable emphasis on business relations with India, and this is an issue that India too is interested in promoting, especially under the business-oriented Modi Government that has

prioritized growth and development. But then the EU swiftly goes down a cul-de-sac of the narrowly defined values of social and environmental standards whenever trade agreements are discussed, whenever business is discussed, and the tone of these discussions can come across as if the Europeans are preaching, they're preaching to their Indian counterparts, ignoring the many proud traditions of liberalism that India actually owns. And neither the content nor the tone of these discussions are useful for winning trust when negotiating with an ancient civilization like India.

The second problem - if one compares this with the EU's negotiation strategy with China it is very difficult to avoid accusations of hypocrisy and double standards. So, China's flagrant human rights violations in Xinjiang have produced little more than some finger wagging in Europe this far, but business continues as usual, and this is also the case in the country where I'm sitting right now, Germany.

Now these double standards, I must say, are also evident in media reporting and punditry in much of Europe. So, Indian democracy is frequently scrutinized and lambasted, severely criticized, while a blind eye is turned to China's domestic, regional and global excesses.

And the third problem. Even as Europe is slowly waking up to the dangers posed by China to the existing global order, the call for more China-specific research expertise is growing. Unfortunately, though, this is not matched by a demand for more in-depth knowledge on India or other actors in Asia. And to some extent, this is understandable we all tend to focus on the problems and take the rest

for granted. But this skewed focus means that there is far too little expertise on India in Europe, and public interest does not go much beyond the usual clichés.

So, opportunities to harness the full potential of EU-India relations remain untapped amidst this rather special mix of judgmentalism and limited interest.

I'll stop there. ■

Remarks

Michael Kugelman¹⁹



My task as I see it is to offer a US perspective on the evolution of India's foreign policy.

For me, three words come to mind when thinking about India's track record on foreign policy over the last 75 years, and especially over the last 30 years, when it has become an increasingly bigger player on the global stage. All three words begin with B so I'll describe these as the 3 Bs.

The first word is balancer. For me, one of India's major foreign policy achievements has been its ability to balance relationships with different sets of nations that are rivals. This is in many ways the essence of strategic autonomy—the ability to maintain foreign policy agency by pursuing relations with a range of countries, no matter where their allegiances lie or no matter what camp they're a part of.

The most obvious recent example is how India has continued to balance its relations with the US and Russia over the last year. A great indicator of success is that today, India's relations with neither Washington nor Moscow have suffered, and both capitals have essentially accepted that New Delhi's policies are not about to change. But we can also look to similar Indian success stories balancing relations with Iran and Saudi Arabia and the Israelis and Palestinians. Now of course the main exception to this balancing policy is the US-China competition. India seeks to work with the US to counterbalance China. But even here there is still some balancing at play. India prefers that the US limit its public expressions of support for India during India-China border crises, to avoid provoking China. India, of course, continues to stay out of the US-led alliance system. And India has also

¹⁹ Director, South Asia Institute, The Wilson Center, Washington, DC

continued to pursue robust commercial relations with China—even after the Galwan clash. India-China trade crossed the \$100 billion mark for the first time during the last fiscal year.

Now it wasn't always this way. Non-alignment and strategic autonomy, India's core foreign policies since independence, may be about balancing. But India did not always balance relations with rival states during the early post-colonial period. The non-aligned movement was meant to signify an unwillingness to join any one camp, but the non-aligned movement was itself a camp. Then, during the Cold War, when India concluded its Friendship Treaty with the Soviets in the early 1970s, that essentially closed off possibilities for cooperation with the US for the next two decades—and it prevented New Delhi from building on early momentum in US-India ties when President Eisenhower made a milestone visit to India in 1959 and when President Kennedy backed India in its war against China. India was impacted, deleteriously, by great power rivalry at that time. The US, in

the late 1950s and 1960s, was drawn to India because it shared India's concern about China—but then, by the early 1970s, with the US wanting to formalize relations with China, Washington turned to Islamabad for assistance, and that doomed US-India relations for several decades. India was more or less in the Soviet camp until the end of the Cold War. This is very different from today, with India, at least to this point, able to rise above the fray of great power churn and manage its relations with those rival powers and competitors.

The second B word I'd like to talk about is bridge. Over the last 75 years, and especially over the last 30 years, when India's global power began to take greater shape, New Delhi has sought to serve as a bridge between the world's two broadest geopolitical blocs: The developing and developed worlds, or the Global South and North. Decades ago, India was deeply anchored in the Global South camp, as a leader of the non-aligned movement which was often at odds with the Global North. But as it began developing deeper ties with the West and other wealthy

Over the last 75 years, and especially over the last 30 years, when India's global power began to take greater shape, New Delhi has sought to serve as a bridge between the world's two broadest geopolitical blocs: The developing and developed worlds, or the Global South and North.

There is a strong multipartisan consensus, a consensus among different political stakeholders in many countries, barring a few notable exceptions, that India should be viewed as a strategic player.

countries over the last 30 years, as its own economic growth began to take shape, and as it became more deeply anchored in the institutional architecture of the developed world—from the G20 to the more recent AIIB and of course the Quad and Indo Pacific frameworks—it has taken on a greater ability to move between both blocs. And it's found itself in a better position to work within developed world contexts to better advocate on behalf of the developing world. That's one of its big goals with its G20 leadership: Work within the G20 to push for measures that ease challenges that hit the developing world especially hard: Debt, poverty, climate change. India has sought to use other groupings where it's a member, like the BRICS, to play this role, but the G20 gives it the best opportunity since the G20 has the most economically powerful countries in the world.

The third B word I'll describe is bipartisanship—admittedly a term one doesn't hear much at all these days, in our very polarized and divided world. I say bipartisanship from the perspective of the outside world. India has evolved

from a country that struggled to develop deep partnerships with many key capitals around the world to a country that enjoys deep partnerships around the world with many key capitals where there is full bipartisan, or should I say multipartisan, multistakeholder support for such deep partnerships. There is a strong multipartisan consensus, a consensus among different political stakeholders in many countries, barring a few notable exceptions, that India should be viewed as a strategic player and especially as a key market and trade partner—and this entails good relations. This is a fairly new phenomenon. Remember that the event that's often pitched as a turning point in US-India relations, when Washington truly began to see New Delhi as a strategic partner, was the civil nuclear deal. But there were very vocal political opponents to that deal—in India for sure, but also in the US. Non-proliferation hawks, especially, were quite against the deal in Washington.

It's only over the last decade or so, with India's economic growth truly having taken off and—for many countries in the West—with competition with China

having really taken off, that we've started to see this multipartisan support for good relations with India really set in. Even a great share of the countries—and there are many of them, including in the West—that value their commercial cooperation with China, demonstrate multipartisan support for the idea of robust engagement with India. The example I like to cite to show proof of the strong bipartisan support for US-India partnership in the US is this: During the Trump administration, just about all the US foreign policy sure-things were essentially turned on their head:

US relations with many if not most of its top allies, in Europe and Asia, took big hits. The US began flirting with North Korea and Russia. But through all that tumult and revolution in foreign policy, US relations with India picked up where they had left off in the Obama, Bush, and Clinton administrations—they got stronger. Yes, there were trade tensions, but that's wasn't that new. Even an iconoclastic President like Trump wanted to keep the relationship moving with India.

I'll wrap up there, thanks! ■

Conversation
FIVE

India and the Global Order

Setting the Narrative



'The Peacock' by Unknown
Installation at Ministry of External Affairs,
Jawaharlal Nehru Bhawan, New Delhi

Remarks

Pankaj Saran²⁰



Thank you ICWA for inviting me to this event.

We have a very distinguished panel in this session, which needs no introduction, and we look forward to hearing from them.

I will make some general remarks before we hear our panellists.

India is perhaps already the largest country in terms of population in the world. It is vital for all of us to internalize this new reality which has huge geopolitical implications.

In the last few years, India has begun to assert itself on the global stage

much more than in the past. This is on account of better all-round economic performance, political stability and India's ability to withstand strategic shocks and self-confidence.

One of the lessons of the series of crises we have faced in the last few years is the inadequacy of global institutions and the post-World War II global order to either anticipate or respond to global crises.

The second is the lack of ownership of the world's problems, or in other words, lack of global leadership. The world seems to be in a state of drift, with more uncertainties and negativities than hope.

In the last few years, India has begun to assert itself on the global stage much more than in the past. This is on account of better all-round economic performance, political stability and India's ability to withstand strategic shocks and self-confidence.

²⁰ Former Deputy National Security Advisor of India, Former Ambassador of India to Russia & Former High Commissioner of India to Bangladesh

Both above facts have opened a window for India to step on to the world stage and play its part in filling up the strategic and intellectual deficit, as well as the moral deficit.

The question, however, is whether India's greater visibility and voice in global councils and on global issues is only a reaction, or does it represent something far deeper and enduring? We would like to discuss this today.

Most observers would agree that the answer to this question is the latter, and that is the real story of our times. India's words, deeds and actions all point to three behavioural changes in our approach—

- the willingness to speak and act;
- the confidence that we have the capability; and
- the faith in our values and our heritage and what we bring to the table.

India is emerging from its strategic hesitancy. It is asserting its uniqueness.

It is exhibiting pride in its history and civilization, and offering a point of view and solutions which are practical, and which are finding resonance.

It is also demanding that issues of importance to the vast sections of humanity are not brushed aside and that the current international order and institutions, if they are inadequate, or flawed must be reformed.

This is a new bolder approach to international relations. This is likely to gather momentum in the years ahead. Importantly, this is also what the world expects from us.

To achieve genuine and long lasting success, we have to avoid strategic over reach, be calm, be diligent and thorough in our analysis, and avoid pitfalls. We have to be constantly aware of our national goals and our capabilities. Never lose sight of them.

With these words, let me now invite the distinguished speakers to share their views. ■

Remarks

Syed Ata Hasnain²¹



I would have liked to actually highlight our entire approach to the world order but, because of shortage of time, I would touch upon the issues which the Indian foreign policy focused on to a great extent in the 1990s period to begin with.

Number one was that India perceived a leadership role for itself in the developing world, something which is coming to the fore once again when we are looking at the Global South and the support that India is offering to the Global South even today. And the second was, growth given the economic liberalization reforms. It became a part of national policy and cooperation with the Western world progressively commenced based upon that around 1991 and beyond.

The period of the 90s posed big challenges from turbulent international events. For example, during the first Gulf

War, we ardently continued to support Saddam Hussein. Yet, we also allowed US aircraft refuelling facilities in the Indian mainland. So, defining national interests became intensely challenging. But that is always something which confronts us.

Although, a new world order was to have arrived after the Cold War, it remained an evolution and never really cemented itself. A few factors which characterized the approach that we had during this period is something that I will move into now. India subscribed to, and openly talked about, becoming a member of multinational security efforts through virtual alignment. Although, it vehemently denied that these were alliances because we continued to follow the philosophy of non-alliance for fairly long, something which we continue to follow even today actually. Quasi-aligned against a non-aligned status was

²¹ Lieutenant General Syed Ata Hasnain (Retd.), Chancellor, Central University of Kashmir

It's the neighbourhood which has actually caused and continues to cause us concern. Our narrative must clearly be about according priority to the neighbourhood and that already appears to be underway.

considered to be in our national interest. India-US-Japan triangle, for example.

In the World Order of the 90s, the US and the EU were considered a single, all powerful entity, but the rough power of Russia was insufficient to merit the pole position. China was economically rising but its strategic outlook was yet of much lower order. Cut to the present, India's interests are in aligning with the Quad. So, multilateralism is the philosophy which India has followed. A boost to its international image followed due to this particular approach and today, India has refined that further with the strategic weight that it has acquired in international politics. It's a member of the SCO, for example, with both China and Russia and equally remains a significant part of the Quad, with the United States, Australia and Japan.

It's the neighbourhood which has actually caused and continues to cause us concern. Our narrative must clearly be about according priority to the neighbourhood and that already appears to be underway. The support and assistance to Sri Lanka, for example, that we have accorded of late is a case in point and probably will extend to other players within the subcontinent.

Three issues which need clarity in the current Indian narrative relate to its policy on Ukraine, its China policy and lastly, our rising ambition of making a mark in the field of international relations as the *Vishwa Guru*. Looking at the Ukraine-Russia war for example. India has correctly demonstrated that it would pursue its own interest. That was correctly described and defended by the Honorable External Affairs Minister. Charting the middle path without condemning or being critical of Ukraine or NATO, and without issuing statements in support of Russia has been well thought through and exemplifies the pursuance of strategic autonomy in the best national interest.

Prime Minister Modi's advice to President Putin at the SCO Summit, perhaps, sets the stage for future Indian mediation role, not only in this conflict, but perhaps in other conflicts, this is just perhaps the beginning. We should seek openings in this domain, domain of not intervention, not being referees in a dispute, but essentially those conflicts which are going to need to be resolved. If you see openings in this domain and it serves our interest, it projects India as a potential arbitrator of disputes, adds to the value

of quasi soft power and clears the path, perhaps, for the membership of the UN Security Council.

On China, China may or may not rise to a level where it could attempt to achieve its aspirations, yet India has been prepared for military confrontation and diplomatic balancing through alignments. India's presence among China's detractors erks China, but Indian steps are essentially a safeguard for its own interest. Since a complete trust deficit exists with China, safeguards for the midterm need to be built without any hesitation. This should be our narrative. It is up to China to repair this relationship and to restore whatever trust there exists.

Coming to the last point, the issue of our power projection through the route of soft power. Having transcended to G20 and honored by the leadership bestowed on India, we must show our leadership in diverse areas. The experience in handling the pandemic, the vaccination rollout experience, self-reliance, manufacturing and services, climate related issues, disaster management, initiatives such as the Prime Minister's 10 Point program are yet not sufficiently known internationally.

G20 could not have come at a better time, a time when India is readying itself for take-off in areas where the world can benefit from India's experience in the near future.

It is important to remember that we have to learn to live with certain disputes that cannot be resolved for prolonged periods. Our narratives have to proactively justify our stance. There has to be a careful cultivation of our point of view, which should be morally and factually superior. The J&K issue and the LAC problem with China are more than just military conflicts today. Our narratives must gel with important international affairs and developments.

The outreach to the Indian diaspora is one issue which has been transformational as far as the present Government is concerned and helps establish a footprint with respect to the Indian community. Recent initiatives of outreach to the Global South is another reminder of a domain where India can make a huge mark in its international footprint. With my time over, I think I will stop here, although there are many more issues to talk about. ■

It is important to remember that we have to learn to live with certain disputes that cannot be resolved for prolonged periods. Our narratives have to proactively justify our stance. There has to be a careful cultivation of our point of view, which should be morally and factually superior.

Remarks

Vinod G. Khandare²²



Thank you, Pankaj. And thanks to General Hasnain for setting the stage as always, and I will try to ensure that I do not repeat what he has said, although most of the points which you said are obviously very important, but due to constraint of time, I will avoid that. I have picked up specific lines which have been mentioned in the concept note for the Conference. That is the changing nature of India's foreign policy of reacting to global initiatives to setting the narrative. That's what Pankaj, you also said in the beginning and more important is the shift of the strategic approach wherein India both as a maritime and continental power is shaping its role as a global power beyond its existing region. Now let me specifically mention that we talk of comprehensive national power and comprehensive national security

and power comes with one dimension of security involved in it.

Where do we look at India setting its narrative? You know what we are doing, can we improve upon it? Can we do it better? Let's take for example, how do we influence the global decision makers? So, we have a unique capability that our foreign policy is displaying. We are engaging with US, we are engaging with Russia, we are engaging with Iran, we are engaging with Israel. So that is something which is a unique, a very dynamic foreign policy. Foreign policy when supported by a strong military is where we will establish our mark all over the world.

Now, how do we look at it? See what we have done in the past, can we improve upon it? The President, the current President of Nigeria, is a person who is trained in India in 1973. If we start looking at the alumni of those trained in India

²² Lt. Gen. Vinod G. Khandare (Retd.), Advisor, Ministry of Defence, Government of India

under GoI capacity building programme, you will find a large number of them are in decision making positions. So, our reach, our outreach to them has to improve. And by doing so, we will make a difference whether it is in, say Nigeria, where the President and the NSA both are alumni of an Indian military institution. I do not want to mention too many more of these but our training teams, our contribution of training those people here makes a lot of difference. You're targeting the mind. You're setting the mind in a position where they become long standing friends of India, and whatever decisions are taken in those countries, have definitely an influence from the Indian thought process. Decision makers in foreign militaries with an influence from Indian morals and ethics will do what is right for their nation, the world and mankind. Whether our thought process is purely military, no, it is civilizational. It is based on our strategic approach. It is based on our unique stand of looking at national interest and the good of humanity.

Specific case, Quad versus SAGAR. Prime Minister Narendra Modi was very clear about SAGAR and that is what influences the people who rub shoulders with us, whether it is in our visits, whether it is in our training, whether it is in various opportunities that we have. So, I think the human resource factor would be

extremely important for setting the narrative. In any case, when you set the narrative, you are basically trying to influence the mind. So, your decisions have to be based on creating a receptive ecosystem abroad and look at how we are engaging the militaries. We are doing exercises with the United States. We are doing exercises with China, also. So, while we keep balancing this, and we go beyond our reach where we are not restricting ourselves only to the immediate neighbourhood, but maybe even to the extended neighbourhood.

In the Def Expo in October 2022, we had several Defence Ministers in Gandhinagar who were interacting with our Defence Minister, from Africa, as well as from the Indian Ocean region. You are setting the narrative right. So while at the level of the External Affairs Ministry, the line is decided but we are the people who propagate. To that extent, my earnest appeal is that our footprint in a very peaceful manner should increase.

Now, how does that happen? We have about 44 Defence Wings with Defence Attaches abroad, covering about 77 countries with accreditation and physical presence. I think we need to go beyond that and propagate the strategic narrative at a much faster pace. Our training teams have to reach out much more. We have already amended the charter of the Defence Attaches. We've empowered

India follows an ethical path in supply of defence material. We do not create conflicts nor do we worsen them just because of commercial interests.

them, which means when we start supplying the defence products, there is a lot of interaction again, and there's a lot of similarity of thought process which can be propagated. It also acts as signalling. So, transformation from being an importer, we are now becoming an exporter of defence material. And by being an exporter, you're increasing your own *Atmanirbharta*, at the same time, you're engaging deeply with other countries who want an option other than the current defence suppliers, whether it is USA, whether it is Russia, whether it is China or Israel, you're pitching in. It's a long way to go, but we need to do that better. India follows an ethical path in supply of defence material. We do not create conflicts nor do we worsen them just because of commercial interests.

You look at our presence in the United Nations. We have decided at an optimum level and our optimum level is, based on troops, which we can spare and how many officers can we spare? We've done well there also, but I think we could look at it more and do something more. And here is a point which a lot of African nations, where most of the peacekeeping missions have happened, they opine,

that whenever there is a crisis of global nature, it is the superpowers who shy away and countries like India chip in. You look at how it happened in peacekeeping, and now, the recent one about COVID. When others shied away, India was leading. There also we can look at the rising expectations to protect humanity from chemical and biological issues. So that is one more field where we can set the narrative.

The other issue is, we spoke only of the continental and maritime in the paper that has been given to us. I want to extend that to cyber. I want to extend that to space. These are more areas where we can become powerful, we can set the narrative to say that we are not a poor man's choice, but we are an affordable and a preferred choice due to our national image. So that is something that we can definitely do and we have been doing it, but we can do much more. In any case, cyber is the new hegemon where people will attack, deniability is there, non-attributability is there. So, I think more important now is to get into allowing countries to interact with us, reaching out and getting their cyber space insulated from the crime that is increasing. Any country which feels

that its economy is going to shatter or its internal cohesion is going to shatter through cyberspace, or info-space, I think India has a good choice to reach out and help them. India is well known for its cyber capability and that too in a positive sense.

Outer space is one more promising area. In our diplomacy, we need to go out much more and offer services and solutions from a position of friendship and trust. And to do that, firstly, I think we have to

strengthen our fundamentals, our roots and our contacts. We possibly are only looking at a few aspects of outer space capability. But I think land, aerospace, maritime, outer space, cyberspace, and many more such domains especially in the non-traditional threat areas are the ones where we can silently keep getting more populated with domain expertise and set our narrative right. I think these are the few points that I wanted to cover. Thank you, Pankaj. ■

Remarks

Zorawar Daulet Singh²³



Thank you, Ambassador Saran.

Thank you to the ICWA for guiding this fabulously timed event. So,

in my remarks, I'm going to sort of step back and look at the idea of geopolitics and possibly, how we should think about a framework for this multipolar world that's coming to be.

For the last decade we have seen India's foreign policy showing the ability to navigate a complex and turbulent world and leverage where possible geopolitical and geo-economic advantages from the changing order. But yet I feel it is becoming imperative to conceive of a geopolitical framework to avoid becoming overly transactional or getting swayed by the fads of the season. I think it's also necessary for Indian public diplomacy to have an underlying template for even a broad vision of the world.

We need to sort of look back at some of our historical legacies, which are mixed. I'm going even to the British period.

So, it seems, in my understanding that our foreign policy thought has been influenced by two key geopolitical approaches. One is, the British Indian colonial era geopolitics, and then the Cold War era geopolitics, which came with the onset of Indian Independence.

So, what was British Indian geopolitics about? We are somewhat familiar with it, but it's important to sort of re-emphasize the ideas that it brought about. British Indian Grand Strategy was aimed to project power across Asia, using India as that hub or the central sort of bridgehead. It also isolated India from other centres of wealth and power. It eventually severed India's extensive pre-colonial geo-economic and geo-cultural connection with the widest surrounding region. We

²³ Adjunct Fellow, Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi

also recall the image of the great game where India was a prize to be secured in the great power rivalry between Britain and Russia. In fact, almost all British-Indian continental military intervention, such as in Tibet, in the early part of the last century or Afghanistan in the previous, in the late 19th century, were all in some way or the other linked to the Anglo-Russian relationship. It was that period that also gave us this binary or this image of the maritime versus the continental, where geographers like Alfred Mackinder gave expression to a, or a rationale to a British Grand strategy where the continental Eurasian Heartland was seen as the main arena to contain and when possible confront. Of course, we see many of these patterns playing out in western grand strategy today.

For India, the unusual role it came to play in the era of British preponderance did or might have given the illusion of the natural Indian primacy in the Asian environment and perhaps a bias towards a system of spheres of influence. With of course, the British Indian one being the largest one in Asia at the time. But if we honestly look back, that was an aberration in a longer span of history. In its natural state, Asia and Eurasia were always a far more complicated area. It was more plural and interconnected world than the era when British India towered over the rest. The reason why I'm

emphasizing this is because even in recent decades, consciously or subconsciously, Indian geopolitical thought is still influenced by some of that colonial era geopolitics.

The second theme or influence for India's foreign policy came after 1947 and the Cold War period. We will recall that Indian Independence was accompanied by two major historical events. One was a dramatic shock on our periphery, the division of the subcontinent, which in a sense, negated Indian power, which had this sort of at least not a threat within the sub-region. We also saw a global disruption with the outbreak of the superpower rivalry between the US and the Soviets. This phase saw a new geopolitical concept, some ironically reinforcing British era thought. Nicolas Spykman, a US geo-strategist outlined a sequel to the Mackinder framework by suggesting a map of the world that was again divided between the continental heartland of Eurasia and the maritime rumbling regions on the periphery, the latter region being areas for power projection by the West, an establishment of political, economic and military footholds.

So, with containment at the time required these rumbling regions to fall under the sway, of what was called a collective alliance system of security. On this equation, with pressures to sort

of align with the superpower blocs, independent India chose a geopolitical framework. Our objective at the time was very straightforward, safeguarding the newly secured sovereignty that this nation state acquired after an intense period of opposition to colonial rule and it was felt that this could be undermined by participation, particularly military participation in the Cold War.

So, this was the context behind the articulation of non-alignment. At the time, India rejected the idea that there were only two options available. There was a third area of world order in Indian map of the world, with this was this post-colonial group which today we call, the Global South. But it is important to remember that the intention was never to lead a third bloc, much less to solve the internal problems of the non-aligned world. It was primarily to provide a legitimate geopolitical identity to states that were seeking a separate way, and a disassociation from the Cold War.

So, we now come to, how do we manage or think about a geopolitical framework? I'm certainly not offering one here, but I can sort of attempt to outline some of the features on what that might entail. So, one thing is becoming quite clear that if the global and regional setting has changed and it has changed quite dramatically in the past decade, both from the period after post 1991, but also

there have been changes for the world order that existed between '45 and '89, or '45, and '91. So, there has been a temptation in some quarters to grasp the British-era concepts and sort of re-invent some sort of a frontline role for India as a net security provider in the contemporary era. My submission is that, that particular template is no longer viable, both from a balance of power reality and also our national interest.

So, then we look at the Cold War era and the kind of ideas that we could rely on there. Now there, the situation gets a bit more complex and interesting, because Indian Agency did exist during that period and we did make certain geopolitical choices which if we retrospectively look back, did provide some security. But at the same time, the balance of power and the complex interlinks between the major powers today might not allow for a conventional non-aligned strategy to be playing out in practice and offer the kind of geo-economic and security advantages that we seek for ourselves. From this idea of Mackinder and Spykman, the continental and the maritime, sort of, we should remember that these maps of the world that were offered by these western strategists were ultimately from the perspective of a maritime great power, looking at the Eurasian super continent, and its maritime littoral regions of which South Asia was one of them.

We have an insufficiently developed school of Indian geopolitics, there is not yet consciously fused, what I would suggest, as our three international identities today. A post colonial identity of strategic independence, strategic autonomy; a deeper identity as a largest civilizational, geo-cultural, geopolitical center; a more contemporary identity and a future pole in a plural multipolar setting.

But if you look from the outside in, are these maps of the world, are these concepts relevant for India? What are the characteristics of India's geopolitical environment? So, and here I think it's important to recognize both from an identity perspective and our location, we are at the crossroads of different sub regions, of different civilizations, and also different security complexes that are in our surrounding areas. Not all the security complexes, whether in East Asia or West Asia, require an extra-regional role for India, certainly not a military strategic role.

Part of the reason why India gets offered different political security roles and pulled in different directions and we've seen this again in the recent decade is, I think we have an insufficiently developed school of Indian geopolitics, there is not yet consciously fused, what I would suggest, as our three international identities today. The first is a post colonial identity of strategic independence, strategic autonomy, whatever

nomenclature you want to use it, the idea that India is an independent actor. The second, which is now coming to the fore, that India also has even a deeper identity as a largest civilizational, geo-cultural, geopolitical center, which pre-dates anything that's happened in the last couple of centuries. And then of course, we have a more contemporary identity, a major power aspiration, as you call it, a manifest destiny so to speak, to become a future pole in a plural multipolar setting. When you combine these identities together, you will arrive at a map of the world which is very different from Mackinder or Spykman, or what's on offer in the contemporary sort of frameworks out there.

And I'll just close by making two final points on, very briefly on what this geopolitical concept should also accommodate for. I think, the multipolar world that is coming into being, still has not ruled out the possibilities for collaboration for interdependence. Globalization will still continue to play an

important role, of course, in a modified form, in a reformed form. How does our geopolitical framework accommodate for those kinds of partnerships, issue based partnerships that we're seeking to develop? I would suggest that this concept should be less imbued with ideology, and more identifiable with social and material interests, because that will empower India's foreign policy to pursue these kinds of issue based partnerships and networks without getting boxed into an all-encompassing ideological straitjacket that we've seen,

certainly for other states, in trapping them in bloc based politics.

Finally, from the idea of even a basic self-interest, India's foreign policy has always sought to reform and transform world order. So again, we are looking at the geopolitical concept that is going to transcend geography, transcend this region and look it towards a system as a whole. So, because if we're going to even have incremental change, we are going to have to develop collaborative networks and new multilateral institutions that can make those changes in either issues or regions. So, I'll just close there, Chair and hand it back to you. ■

Conversation
SIX

Indian Foreign Policy

The Next
Seven Decades



'Manthan' - The Churning
 Painting by Durgesh Kumar Joshi
 Installed at Ministry of External Affairs,
 Jawaharlal Nehru Bhawan, New Delhi

Remarks

D.B. Venkatesh Varma²⁴



Good afternoon. Namaskar to everyone. Firstly, let me convey my very warm appreciation and gratitude to Director General of ICWA, Ambassador Vijay Thakur Singh and her team. And this has been a fantastic collection of experts and scholars and diplomats on a very important theme as we celebrate the 75th anniversary of our Independence and it's been a fantastic collection. But I must say, that if at all proof is required, the previous panel, the depth of discussion was extraordinary. And which, of course, makes it easier for this last panel, which is a forward-looking panel, which makes it much easier to take the discussion forward. I'm very happy that we have three colleagues who have joined us. Professor Behera, Professor Chintamani Mahapatra and Dr. Zorawar Daulet Singh. Absolutely delighted. So, to continue with the theme, the theme

of optimism, a theme of ambition, the theme of scope, that was there in the last session, let me take this forward, pose a few broad issues, and we'll take up the comments and the discussion after the three panel speakers have spoken.

The first is the last 75 years marks an extraordinary journey for our Republic, which makes it special, but also imposes on us the responsibility to see how we can chart out for our nation a way forward in a very troubled world for the next 75 years. Now, when we are having a discussion of this nature that will take forward our vision, vision must be combined with ambition and ambition has to be backed up by capability. And this is a thing that we constantly need to keep in mind. I would say that in the first 30, 40 years of our Independence, we were batting, figuratively speaking, on the backfoot and the last 10,15 years, we have,

²⁴ Former Ambassador of India to Russia and Spain and Former Permanent Representative of India to the conference on Disarmament, Geneva

I think come to the --- we are batting now at the crease. I would imagine that in the next decade, two decades going forward, looking forward to the next 75 years, we will increasingly be capable and willing to go outside our crease to pick up the ball and sort of score runs on our initiative, on our proactive initiative.

I think a small glimpse of that was seen in the Prime Minister's address to the Global South Summit that was held just last week, preparatory for the G20 Summit that we will be hosting later this year. And India's approach and particularly, Prime Minister Modi's speech, I think brings together in a very special way, I must say, both, the vision and ambition and what we want to do, our proactive proposals and the scope and depth of India's engagement. In addition to being the G20 Chair and we have certain responsibilities that come with any Chair, I think it's quite extraordinary that India has taken the initiative to reach out to the Global South, to get a sense of where they stand, their perception of their issues, of their regional

issues, their perception of the global issues, and see how we can dovetail this and synchronize this and bring a convergence for the global conversation that we will have with 19 most powerful countries in the world, along with the European Union, at the G20 Summit in September this year.

Now, the areas in which India is wanting to engage on, that is there clearly in Prime Minister's speech, gives clarity on the range of issues, which is from debt, to economic development, impact of the pandemic, to terrorism, and also to the global issues of climate change and or international security. So, I mean, in a sense, covering the entire scope of the agenda. We are also in a sense, reaching out to the Global South. I don't think their intention is to make it as a trade union, but to represent their views with the Global North, so to speak in the G7 and in the G20 more broadly, which combines the old world in the G7, the emerging multipolarity which is represented in the other members of

This is a very troubled world. In many ways, this is a world that is far more troubled than the world we are familiar with, which is the end of the Cold War. And definitely, it goes back to some of the grave uncertainties and the lack of easy options as we have seen during the Cold War. But I think Indian Foreign Policy has shown both, the depth, the maturity and the adaptability to how to address these issues going forward.

the G20, and India's bridge with both the world that is gone by or going by and the world that is emerging. So, there is an extraordinary level of positioning in India's foreign policy, and I think this is a good indication of how we intend to go forward and there's a sense of optimism, a sense of ambition. I think these are very, very powerful indicators.

Of course, this is not an easy task because this is a very troubled world. In many ways, this is a world that is far more troubled than the world we are familiar with, which is the end of the Cold War. And definitely, it goes back to some of the grave uncertainties and the lack of easy options as we have seen during the Cold War. But I think Indian Foreign Policy has shown both, the depth, the maturity and the adaptability to how to address these issues going forward.

Let me frame three questions that our panellists - will request our panellists to dwell on as we look forward, as the theme of our panel, looking forward to the next 75 years. Please feel free to be as ambitious and as visionary as possible. We belong to a very proud country and as citizens and as experts, and as people we have and we should never fall short of vision and ambition. But I think at the same time, we should also be cognizant of realism and pragmatism and I will request you to bring that in your perspectives as well.

So, three points that I wish to make going forward in the next 75 years. The first project is India's completion of its sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of India. Let's not forget, that in the last 75 years this has been an incomplete project. And we are still challenged on our borders. Borders are challenged in various ways- in terms of legality, in terms of illegal occupation, in terms of a military build-up, but also our borders are challenged by the fact that there is not unanimous, universal, international recognition of our borders line. So, this is a project that we inherit from the last 75 years, but we should definitely correct and put down to the advantage of our Republic sooner rather than later in the coming period.

The second is to bring development in its comprehensive form. The Chinese may talk about comprehensive national power. We should talk about comprehensive national development and development of our people in terms of their well-being economically, technologically, culturally, socially, and most important, civilizational. It is not only bringing the Indian Republic on to the world stage in a manner that is consistent with the wishes of our people, which is primarily now to bring up the values of economic development, the fruits of economic development to the last man, woman and child, but also to use

economic development to increase our spiritual well-being and to be truthful to our civilizational values. Technology will play an extremely important role in the transformational aspect of India in the second aspect and I request all of you, the panellists to engage with this.

The third is finding India's true and well-deserved place in the international system and the global order. And I don't mean this just merely in terms of economic or military power, but what we can bring to the table in taking forward through humanity's vision and well-being as a whole and we will be judged. There is already an expectation that India will engage on this, or I think, going forward, this will be of course on the third point, the world is pretty complicated to say the least. There is emerging multipolarity but it is contested multipolarity. Multipolarity gives us more space which we welcome, which we should use with greater responsibility. But multipolarity is also contested, and therefore, the importance of protecting our sovereignty, territorial

integrity through adequate military deterrence and nuclear deterrence, of course, cannot be overestimated. Of course, we need to bring a balance between our military build-up and our economic resources that are available for this. But also, engagement, diplomacy as a force multiplier, not just in a power sense, but in spatial sense, in an ideation sense, in terms of ideas for the world, but also a vision for how the world should transition to not just address the power conflict between the big powers, which we are all aware of, but also in terms of the values for humanity as a whole. So, setting a fairly high bar but it is also a bar that allows all the three panellists to do sort of, in a sense, expand on these or other views that they have. I will request each one of them to confine their remarks, their initial remarks for 7 to 10 minutes and then we can have discussion. I would request our respected Professor Ajay Behera to start off the discussion, and then we'll take it up from there. Professor Chintamani Mahapatra will be the next. Thank you. ■

Remarks

Ajay Darshan Behera²⁵



So, this recent Goldman Sachs projection and I do not want to call it a forecast, it's a projection.

I mean, this can change for various reasons. The Goldman Sachs projection says that in 2075 India is going to overtake the United States and become the second largest economy in the world. By 2075, the three largest economies in the world are going to be China with about \$58 trillion GDP, India about \$53 trillion GDP and the US roughly about \$52 trillion. Now, this is a very significant transformation, if it actually does happen. We also have figures for the changes that are going to happen by about 2050 where India's GDP is gaining substantially, about \$37 trillion.

Now what we have to derive from this is that the whole power structure is going to significantly change. So, which means in the next 30, 40 years, we are seeing some

significant changes in the power structure and the five biggest countries or let me put it this way, the six biggest economies in the world in 2075 are going to be China, India, US, Indonesia, and Nigeria. And to flag it off, Pakistan is going to be the sixth largest economy in the world in 2075.

We have to derive certain conclusions from this. Which means, are we going to reach that stage with Asia being volatile or Asia being stable? Clearly, the major powers in the international system by the time would include three or four major Asian countries. I mean, it's known that Asia is the center of power and that we are currently witnessing the shift of power towards Asia. But my point is, that do we assume from this that Asia is going to be relatively peaceful to be able to achieve those kinds of GDP by 2075? What does it say about the flashpoints in Asia, which means we are again assuming that it's unlikely that either the Taiwan Straits or

²⁵ Professor, Academy of International Studies, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi

the Korean Peninsula wouldn't kind of see any overt conflict.

China is projected to be the leading economic power, but we also have to recognize that the difference in the GDP between these three, four countries is not significant. China is \$58 trillion, India is \$53 trillion and the US is about \$52 trillion, which means that there is no substantial difference, or a huge difference in the GDPs of these countries, which goes to say that they are kind of evenly matched in terms of the GDP.

But I would still say that the US and the European powers will continue to be technological giants. That's something which I do not know whether China and India are going to be able to match. And in terms of knowledge production, also it is the West that is still going to be dominating given the kind of investments they have into research and development.

But what is clear, and again this is subject to any kind of imponderable that might come about, such as the pandemic or the Ukraine war. Anything is possible, but the Goldman Sachs projection

suggests the evolution of a multipolar world. I do not see bipolarity coming back into the international system in any significant way in the coming years, if these projections are to be accepted. And secondly, the multipolar world order is also unlikely to be dominated by China. I don't think so a globalized world order is conducive for dominance by any hegemonic power.

So, what we'll probably see is the kind of post-hegemonic world order. No country or no power would be able to dominate the international system as has been there in the past. And we also have seen examples from European history that multipolar Europe also has been the best in terms of preservation of peace in Europe. The emergence of a multipolar world order is essentially conducive for development from India's point of view, which also means that there's something right that we have been doing with our foreign policy. Whether we call it a grand strategy or not, the strategy of non-alignment, which essentially ensured certain amount of strategic autonomy to India, has served us well. India will

The Goldman Sachs projection suggests the evolution of a multipolar world. I do not see bipolarity coming back into the international system in any significant way in the coming years, if these projections are to be accepted. And secondly, the multipolar world order is also unlikely to be dominated by China. I don't think so a globalized world order is conducive for dominance by any hegemonic power.

continue to exercise that strategic autonomy. India has also been one of those countries of the world which has managed contradictions between other powers in the international system. Whether it was during the non-alignment period or even now, what's probably been unique about India which is also recognized by others, that we have been able to create relations of friends with countries on opposing sides. So, which means essentially that, how do we manage our relationship with the United States and China, even if there is a certain degree of bipolarity emerging between these two powers. In terms of our relationship with the other emerging powers or the countries in Southeast Asia, we're in a sweet spot there. Our relationship with countries in West Asia, again, if you see, we have managed a relationship with Israel and Egypt. We have managed a relationship with Iran and Saudi Arabia.

So, India that way had this ability to deal with all kinds of power and it's not being kind of dragged into their issues. I think the problem lies in South Asia. As an emerging power in the international system and this is where I think we'll have to touch on the first question posed by the Chair, which links up to the question of Pakistan. How do we deal with Pakistan? There is not going to be a problem with, the smaller countries in South Asia, we will be able to take them along with us, but how do we deal with Pakistan?

Pakistan, which, I mean, recently, just a couple of days back there was an article by Air Vice Marshal Shahzad Chaudhry, which has caught a lot of media attention in India, where he clearly recognizes that the gap between India and Pakistan has become unreachable and there is a need for recalibration of Pakistan's policies. Now, one doesn't know whether the Pakistanis have really seen the writing on the wall. I mean, these kinds of observations have come across earlier. One also sees a lot of confusion in Pakistani policy as to what do they want. Unfortunately, because of Pakistani recalcitrance, the intra-regional trade in South Asia is only about \$28 billion. That's very, very-very insignificant. I do not see how the Goldman Sachs projections are going to become correct even while South Asia is lagging behind.

The question about Pakistan also relates to India's nation building and or the eventual recognition of India's sovereignty over disputed territories. This is a tough question. Because as still a third world country, India might remain a nation in the making. It may not ever become a nation in that sense. And I remember also some scholar, a couple of years back had written about the rise of India and said that, this is going to be a third world major power. So, I think we might still be in that stage where we will continue to have domestic challenges on various counts, and that is the reason why I think it's important that India focuses

We also have to build up a narrative of vocabulary which essentially projects to the world the moral values to which Indian foreign policy works.

much more internally or domestically, because, by the end of it, the purpose of Indian foreign policy is essentially to ensure security and development and the focus, I think, should remain largely on the question of India's development and on ways in which Indian foreign policy or the change in geopolitics is translated into benefit of all Indians.

The Goldman Sachs report for 2075 also, unfortunately, projects per capita GDP of India as nineteenth in the world. The top five are still the US, Canada, Germany, Japan, and India is nineteenth in that list. So, if \$52 trillion does not translate into adequate per capita GDP growth, where the human resources are not developed, all Indians do not live a dignified life, which I think should be essentially the goal of the major transformation that we are seeing in Indian foreign policy.

So, two points I would like to say before I end, one, I think that India needs to become a knowledge producer. In the last session, Zorawar mentioned about a geopolitical school, which is important but we also have to build up a narrative of vocabulary which essentially projects to the world the moral values to which

Indian foreign policy works. We haven't been able to tell the ideas of non-alignment even when you know, the grand strategy was non-alignment, which was not acceptable to the world. And essentially the reason was that, we didn't have the power. Now, we have the power or the rising power. We need investments and this is where I think our investments need to be much more focused on creating those institutions, which can contribute to knowledge production and therefore, a country like India with its growing GDP needs to significantly enhance its investments into education. The budget, which is roughly about 3% and projections are that the New Education Policy will invest about 6%. I think that's crucial. That is going to be very-very crucial to the kind of power India is going to be in the future. A high GDP growth rate may not necessarily mean India has all the instruments of power or what one can call as comprehensive development of power. And Mr. Verma was trying to raise the question what is the kind of comprehensive development we envisage.

So, with those few points, I would like to conclude. And Mr. Verma, thank you very much for giving me that opportunity. ■

Remarks

Chintamani Mahapatra²⁶



Thank you very much Ambassador Varma. Let me at the outset, express my gratefulness to ICWA, particularly DG, Ambassador Vijay Thakur Singh for giving me an opportunity to share my thoughts in such an important conference. I have listened to all the presentations since yesterday by the distinguished speakers, and I have learnt a lot. Most of them have deliberated upon various dimensions of Indian foreign policy in the last 75 years. This particular session is really special. It is aimed at looking at the next 70 years. It is easy to analyse what has happened, but difficult to predict what will happen. Yet, it is necessary to talk about the future, not to predict the future, but to set the goals and what works towards achieving those goals.

I have been a student of international relations for 44 years and whatever I

am going to say just now is basically the dream of a student of international relations. My dream is, set of aspirations that India should have. That is in my view. Now, it will all be speculations, but yet doing so would be worthwhile. In fact, one can speculate about the past as well. For example, if World War I and World War II would not have taken place, then Japan would not have suffered the nuclear attack. If colonialism would have continued, what would have been the alternative history of the world? It is very difficult to imagine. So is predicting the future. Even then, let me make a few observations about the future.

Number one, the rise and fall are inevitable for individuals, for families, for societies and even nation states. Some countries, some civilizations rise and fall, whereas many, many countries do not even get a chance to rise enough,

²⁶ Founder and Honorary Chairman, Kalinga Institute of Indo-Pacific Studies and Formerly Professor and Pro-Vice Chancellor, Jawaharlal Nehru University

let alone fall. We all know that the former Soviet Union was nothing but an experiment that worked only for about 70 years, and then it disintegrated. What was the United States until the Europeans and subsequently the Asians and others went to settle in that country? The United States emerged as a world power in late 19th century and has by and large remained on the top of the global order, at least since the end of the World War II. But *Pax Americana* has had its ups and downs. We have seen several colonial empires at work, and then their dissipation.

India in that sense is a well-known and continuing civilization for about 50 centuries, although, India as a modern nation state is about seven and a half decades old. Now, when I dream about the future, I also think in the following way, what was India at its birth as an independent country, and where has it reached today? By any standard, India has performed better in its democratic experiments, economic growth, demography, empowerment, military strength, and even playing a significant role in international affairs. It is admitted on all hands, that India's potentials are enormous and it has to go a long way to realize those potentials.

More than seven decades ago, India had mass poverty and mass illiteracy. Today, the story is different. India was backward

in agriculture and industrial activities. Today, the scene is so different. India was a victim of external aggression quite a few times during the first few decades of its independent existence. Now, it is able to deter external powers from launching attacks. India was a leader of the developing countries and played a key role in NAM that consisted of more than 100 nations. Now, the Non-Aligned Movement is in a way non-existent, but a very innovative group of countries known as the G20 is playing a role in global political economy, and India is a respectable member of that G20 and its current Chairperson.

India's return as an independent, autonomous, economically dynamic, politically resilient, militarily stronger nation has been possible through about 75 years of evolution and we have talked about it since yesterday. This experience of India would certainly enable the country to plan a future where it will be an acceptable and effective player in global affairs through the next 70 years, as per the theme of this session.

What should India do to make it happen? To start with, setting the goals. In my view, in my dream, India in the next 25 years, that is towards a century after its Independence, should work diligently to become one of the global superpowers. First, India should not look for a role model to play the leadership role in world

In my dream, India in the next 25 years, that is towards a century after its Independence, should work diligently to become one of the global superpowers.

affairs. All the current and erstwhile powerful nations and their role may be studied, should be studied for knowledge, but not for imitating them. That means India should aspire to play a unique role befitting its status, its civilizational background and its knowledge system in coming years and decades.

Secondly, India's leadership should aim at democratization of global decision making, as against the oligarchic method prevailing today. Third, Indian scholars, in my view, should do deep research into why empires and powerful nations declined and provide inputs to the policymakers to make India a superpower and sustain India's global role for a long haul. Let's learn from the experiences of others. Fourth, India should invest sufficiently in developing comprehensive national power to protect its interest against all kinds of wild card developments that may take place in the world. The future is full of unpredictables and there will be wild card developments,

but the academics and researchers and the policymakers should think about, imagine the wild card developments and try to find out solutions in case things go wrong. Fifth, India as a superpower should aim at acquiring a capability to be the principal development partner in the world, a security provider and offer a model of good governance to the world. Sixth, India should be one of the leading nations to combat climate change, deal with natural disasters, prevent terrorist activities, and deter aggression in international relations.

What should be done to achieve all these dreams and goals? A, while priorities should be given to science, technology and innovation, strengthening social sciences to promote national unity, equitable economic growth, social cohesion, and good governance at all levels are extremely important. B, maintaining the balance. A balanced approach to national security and internal security needs to be adopted because we

India as a superpower should aim at acquiring a capability to be the principal development partner in the world, a security provider and offer a model of good governance to the world.

know in the past from Indian history, how it was the internal enemies which invited the external forces and we got colonized. C, the expansion of disruptive technologies is going to cause major challenges to India's inclusive growth and social stability. Envisioning the challenges and setting up appropriate mechanisms to provide social security to people need to be a priority in public policy formulations and implementation. D. Formulating an innovative set of foreign policy goals and national security strategy are also very, very important. India's engagements with the rest of the world should not be confined in my view, to immediate neighbourhood and extended neighbourhood or for that matter to Indo-Pacific. India needs to formulate a comprehensive and integrated vision to engage with the entire world. Indo-Pacific concept may be extended to include even the Atlantic and should not be confined to only the littoral countries. E, there is no doubt that India today engages itself with Africa, Latin America, Europe and North America, but, Indian foreign policy goals need to be integrated and comprehensive, not fragmented or compartmentalized one. F, while current limitations of India have to be overcome, and I'm aware of all those, the future needs are to be nurtured with appropriate goals and strategies. India's political economy is affected today by what happens in different parts of the

world. In my dream, I see that after seven decades, India's domestic dynamism should influence the globe and not just the other way around. G, India needs to innovate its diplomatic strategies and methodologies commensurate with emerging technologies, international challenges and domestic requirements and train its diplomatic personnel accordingly. Ministry of External Affairs needs periodic modernization and appropriate innovation of its tools and personnel, specially in the selection and training of diplomats. The future diplomats should be specialists and have deeper knowledge of foreign countries, their societies, economies, internal strengths and weaknesses. They should be well versed in the languages of the countries they will be sent to represent Mother India.

If India will seek to be a force of global good, which India should, what is imperative is developing self-reliance, *Atmanirbharta* on energy, technology, weapons and resource exploitation. India will most likely remain the most populous country in the world in next seven decades, with a large geography, considerable natural resources, and of course, the huge human capital that we have.

In conclusion, I think the future planning may be done at three levels, immediate, mid-term and long-term goals. I have

some thoughts about the near-term developments that may take place and that will address some of the questions raised by Ambassador Varma. I think, rise of Germany and Japan as key players in global affairs are inevitable in the near future, and these two countries may emerge as autonomous international actors. The United States and China may actually continue to checkmate each other by following a policy of mutual containment. Russia will be weakened after the Ukraine War. The European Union and ASEAN and similar regional organizations may just struggle along. The United Kingdom and France may

become more assertive, individual actors and less dependent on the United States in the near future. India thus, may have to align carefully and cautiously with all these multiple actors. India's rise has been peaceful and so, it should also remain peaceful to make itself an attractive superpower for other countries to admire and befriend in the future. Role of public diplomacy and shaping opinion about India in other countries to keep it an attractive nation and a *Vishwa Guru* is the need of the hour. These are my dreams and to realize all these dreams, our country, India, has to stay awake. Thank you for your attention. ■

Remarks

Zorawar Daulet Singh²⁷



Technological and military power, the diffusion has been occurring for the past several decades. There was an imbalance in the 1990s, where you had, and the early 2000s, the unipolar phase had kind of concentrated preponderant amount of power in the United States and in its collective alliances. That kind of has faded away. The relative shifts have been occurring. Of course, the Ukraine conflict has been called as the first conflict in a multipolar world. The sources of that of course, are not only linked to that particular geography, there is a bigger struggle between a unipolar world and a multipolar world and it's manifesting in Ukraine, and we see the protagonists from both sides in that conflict are openly calling, one side is calling to preserve the post-Cold War settlement, which was this period of the 1990s and 2000s and on the other side, Russia and perhaps

even many non-Western states who are silently watching are looking to see what will follow. Regardless of how that crisis unfolds and concludes, there certainly is no going back to the post-Cold War era.

If we look back to that unipolar world, I think it's important to understand that it's the illusion of stability and a universalism that made it somewhat easier for the rising powers to operate. The reason for that was you really had one system of rules that you really were asked to either choose to plug into that system, and they were no real alternatives. The resistance to that system, ironically, as we now can see from the past several years, certainly in politics in Western societies was, there was disillusionment of a system that was providing unequal gains to the West, but yet they felt the cost of governing the system was becoming far too onerous.

27 Adjunct Fellow, Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi

So, I think the first sort of crack on the block of unipolar world ironically comes from within the West, but it also comes from several non-Western powers. A whole range of them, China, India, Iran, Indonesia. I mean, you have a whole range of other states, in different levels, which are dissatisfied with the spirit of, which is not providing them an opportunity to move up the value chain, so to speak. So collectively, that world order has become unsustainable.

So, what do we do now that we have this multipolar world? The problem arises is that we are lacking a commonly acceptable framework for the rules, norms and institutions. So, you have this normative framework and the key institutions which are still lagging behind. The power realities are more balanced. Even there's an economic balance of power. There's even a military balance of power. There is even a civilizational balance, but the legacy institutions are so overbearing, that that's

where India's focus should be in the coming decade.

So, the three areas that I would suggest where India's foreign policy can sort of make a mark and should be actively thinking about. First is in the security front. I won't dwell too much on this, but basically, for reasons of political geography, India, which is thankfully and it's perhaps its geopolitical fortune is outside the main theatres of great power confrontations and the key potential flashpoints. Whether we look at what's happening in the Western Pacific, in East Asia, North East Asia, Europe, India is not the front and center of those particular great power sort of flashpoints. We have, of course, our own security challenges on our frontier but they are different from those and I think that gives India somewhat of an advantage to articulate security ideas for the broader region that are somewhat more inclusive, not one sided or zero-sum, more sustainable.

I think the aim for India's foreign policy will not be to interfere in these other

The aim for India's foreign policy will not be to interfere in these other disputes that are occurring beyond India's region, but certainly to see for support in transition to a multipolar world that is as less destabilizing as possible. Because our interests lie in arresting a further fragmentation of the international system. We want interdependence to continue to prevail.

disputes that are occurring beyond India's region, but certainly to see for support in transition to a multipolar world that is as less destabilizing as possible. Because our interests lie in arresting a further fragmentation of the international system. Return to the spheres of influence world is not in our interest, because we can't go it alone for a variety of our development needs. We still need access to multiple power centers. So of course, it's not in our hands to completely prevent return to let's say, a 19th century style of an international system, but certainly we want interdependence to continue to prevail.

So, this is where the second sort of area that India's foreign policy, and I think here where the Chair mentioned this idea of comprehensive national development. I think, becoming more of a conscious driver than simply comprehensive national power is called for, though, of course, they're both very, very interlinked. India's economic and developmental requirements in the coming decades are going to be the highest of any single state in the international system, given the size of our population and the matrix of targets that we've set to reach. So, India has a big role to play in how this new form of globalization and interdependence, whether it applies to trade, development or industrialization is now reoriented towards a domestic renewal framework.

Recall that the unipolar world had a new liberal economic framework operating. Countries plugged in for growth, but that growth could be highly imbalanced, unsustainable and not necessarily advance your comprehensive national development of power. So, I think many of the Global South countries are seeking a framework for globalization that sort of allows them to enhance domestic capacities and an opportunity to upgrade the industrial, scientific, technological basis, while continuing to engage with the global economy. So, we are talking about a very different form of economic interdependence as compared to the largely asymmetrical or one sided options that were available in the 1990s and 2000s, which gave the illusion of supernormal growth even to the emerging markets, but they were highly imbalanced.

Finally, a very important area for India's foreign policy to engage with is, the idea of what will be the rules and framework of access to key public, global public goods. So, multipolarity by definition means they can be no monopoly on the regulation and access to what we could call three key global public goods like strategic commodities, digital networks or financial networks. I think we've seen in the recent conflict in Europe and in the decades leading up to it, that a single state can arbitrarily be turned off or

plucked out or shut out of that system. So, I think renewing that confidence in a more polar network that allows countries to hedge against geopolitical risks is important. So, we would like a digital system or a financial system that is not dominated or controlled by a single actor that can turn it off for you.

So, I think these are some of the areas that if we are going to seek a new form of globalization, the underlying institutions of the commons, whether it's the financial system or the digital system, or even the way sanctions are sort of deployed internationally, I think it's very, very

important for that confidence to be renewed, because if we do not have faith in those commons, we're going to see a fragmentation of a number of supply chains across industries, which will start going towards more and more national and sub-regional concentrations. Again, that's not something that will entirely suit India, because we still need a period of let's say, a decade, decade and a half to move up the value chain in many of these critical technologies, which require us to have partnerships with let's say, Asia, Europe and North America.

So, I'll perhaps close there and hand it back to you. ■



'Language & Communication'
Installation at Ministry of External Affairs,
Jawaharlal Nehru Bhawan, New Delhi

Annexure



Two Day Virtual International Seminar Celebrating 75 Years of Indian Foreign Policy

17-18 January 2023

Concept Note



Marking its 75th year of Independence, India, the world's largest democracy, is poised to become a political and economic pole. As a beacon of stability and development, India has held an independent world view and maintained its strategic autonomy in foreign policy making since Independence.

In these 75 years, India has consistently contributed, in no small measure, to shaping the international order. It has been a force for good and a voice of reason. While celebrating '*Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav*', this international seminar will reflect on the evolution of Indian foreign policy in the backdrop of the evolving global geo-political and geo-economic environment.

Guided by traditional values and principles, India participates actively in various platforms, be it multilateral or plurilateral structures, and is a voice of the developing and the vulnerable. India continues to shape the global discourse on critical issues like global warming, climate change, sustainable development, global trade, counter-terrorism, pluralistic and inclusive global order that is based on the foundation of normative architecture. In recent years, as a first, India has sought to sponsor global initiatives like

the International Solar Alliance, Coalition of Disaster Resilient Infrastructure, Green Grids, etc.

While the present-day world is faced with strife and conflicts, India as a rising power and major economy which remains confident in building dynamic and constructive relations with all nations and global players, alike.

As India celebrates its *Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav*, this seminar looks back at the development of India's diplomacy and foreign policy post-Independence, by analyzing the key tenets that have shaped India's foreign policy in the new millennium. The seminar will reflect on how the world perceives India's foreign policy as a leading voice in the affairs of the world. While reflecting on key achievements, core values and interests of India's foreign policy, it will seek to chart the way forward in the service of the security and prosperity of India and the good of the world.

Themes for Discussion

- Theme 1** From Oppression to Freedom : An Independent World View
- Theme 2** Setting the Norms : The Indian Way
- Theme 3** New India: Foreign Policy in the Present Decade
- Theme 4** Indian Foreign Policy : Perspectives from Different Geographies
- Theme 5** India and the Global Order : Setting the Narrative
- Theme 6** Indian Foreign Policy : The Next Seven Decades

Programme

Inaugural Session 1145 – 1200 Hrs IST

Welcome Remarks

Vijay Thakur Singh

Director General, Indian Council of World Affairs

Session 1 1200-1300 Hrs IST

From Oppression to Freedom: An Independent World View

This session will analyze how Indian foreign policy emerged from the shackles of colonialism and laid the foundation of an independent world view of a young and developing nation. It will analyze the shaping of foreign policy of a civilizational State re-emerging on the world stage. It will dwell on the values and principles on which India's foreign policy rests. How it has responded to the changing global environment – from playing the leadership role for the third world to the rise of an aspirational India of the post-Cold War period?

Chair

Nalin Surie

Former High Commissioner of India to UK and former Ambassador of India to China and Poland

Speakers

Arvind Gupta

Director, Vivekananda International Foundation, New Delhi

Swaran Singh

Centre for International Politics, Organization and Disarmament, School of international Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University

Sanjaya Baru

Member, Governing Body, Indian Council of World Affairs

Vishnu Prakash

Former Ambassador of India to Canada and South Korea

Setting the Norms: The Indian Way

This session will discuss India's role in various regional, multilateral and international bodies, especially UNSC, G7, G20, BRICS, SCO, QUAD, I2U2. It will also discuss India's role in being part of issues like global warming, climate change, sustainable development, global trade, counter-terrorism, pluralistic and inclusive global order that is based on the foundation of an internationally agreed normative architecture. This is the session that will assess India on the global high table.

Chair

SD Muni

Former Member Executive Council, IDSA. Professor Emeritus, JNU

Speakers

Anil Trigunayat

Former Ambassador of India to Libya and Jordan

Manjeev Singh Puri

Former Ambassador of India to Nepal and Brussels

Ajay Bisaria

Former Ambassador of India to Canada and High Commissioner of India to Pakistan

Lunch Break 1350-1500 Hrs IST

New India: Foreign Policy in the Present Decade

This session will bring forth India's achievement as a sustainable developmental partner that is shaping a new pathway of cooperation, partnership that prioritizes the requirements of partner countries based on capacity building. While expanding India's footprint, this engagement has been a mutually beneficial economic and commercial partnership that takes into account environmental concerns. This is a reflection of a country that is a leader of the Global South and yet, has a pluralistic and a democratic system that intersects so much with the West. India has a polity with a flavor that is uniquely its own and which is shaping its expanding global engagements, its engagements in new constructs and its global initiatives.

Chair

Asoke Kumar Mukerji

Former Indian Permanent Representative to the United Nations

Speakers

Amar Sinha

Former Ambassador of India to Afghanistan

Navdeep Suri

Former High Commissioner of India to Australia and Ambassador of India to Egypt and UAE

Rudra Chaudhuri

Director, Carnegie India

Break 1550 – 1830 Hrs IST

Indian Foreign Policy – Perspectives from Various Geographies

India's external outlook is not tainted by compartmentalizing individual countries into identifiable silos. Resultantly, India is one of the few global players that has maintained and nurtured ties in all continents. Appreciating the uniqueness of the various regions of the world, India has taken a conscious effort to tailor its external engagement that takes into account the salient features of individual geographic regions. Owing to this approach, the perception about India in the various regions of the world is not only diverse but also unique.

Chair

C. Raja Mohan

Senior Fellow, Asia Society Policy Institute, New Delhi

Speakers

Ji Yeon-jung

Research Professor, Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, Seoul

Nicolas Blarel

Associate Professor of International Relations at the Institute of Political Science, Leiden University, The Netherlands

Amrita Narlikar

President, German Institute for Global and Area Studies (GIGA), Germany

Michael Kugelman

Wilson Center, Washington

India and the Global Order: Setting the Narrative

This session will discuss on how India is charting the global strategic narrative, by reflecting on the changing nature of India's foreign policy of reacting to global initiatives to setting the narrative. This shift is one of strategic approach, wherein India both as a maritime and continental power is shaping its role as a global player beyond its existing region. India's geostrategic and geo-economic position is shaping the current global strategic thought.

Chair

Pankaj Saran

Former Deputy National Security Advisor of India, former Ambassador of India to Russia and former High Commissioner of India to Bangladesh

Speakers

Lt. General Syed Ata Hasnain (Retd.)

Chancellor, Central University of Kashmir

Lt. Gen. Vinod G. Khandare (Retd.)

Adviser, Ministry of Defence, Government of India

Zorawar Daulet Singh

Adjunct Fellow, Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi

Indian Foreign Policy – The Next Seven Decades

This session will assess the various foreign policy initiatives that India has adapted that narrate and strengthen its strategic autonomy as well as usher in new standards and norms in bilateral and multilateral relations along the lines of the International Solar Alliance, Coalition of Disaster Resilient Infrastructure, Green Grids, etc. It will assess how India's foreign policy is on its course to become an instrument for domestic development, security and prosperity and for fulfilling domestic aspirations. It will assess how the current geopolitical tumult can provide India the space to strengthen its position on the world stage. This session will also try to assess, how Indian foreign policy continues to contribute to shaping the new world order, in a post Covid world, facing traditional and non-traditional security challenges, working for food, water and climate security, partnering development partnerships internally and externally, and charting the future path ahead.

Chair**D B Venkatesh Varma***Former Ambassador of India to Spain and the Russian Federation***Speakers****Ajay Darshan Behera***Academy of International Studies, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi***Chintamani Mahapatra***Founder and Honorary Chairman of Kalinga Institute of Indo-Pacific Studies***Zorawar Daulet Singh***Adjunct Fellow, Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi***Vote of Thanks****Nivedita Ray***Director Research, Indian Council of World Affairs*



The South Block
Raisina Hill
New Delhi



Indian Council of World Affairs
Sapru House
New Delhi

About ICWA

The Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA) was established in 1943 by a group of eminent intellectuals led by Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Dr. H.N. Kunzru. Its principal objective was to create an Indian perspective on international relations and act as a repository of knowledge and thinking on foreign policy issues. The Council today conducts policy research through an in-house faculty as well as through external experts. It regularly organizes an array of intellectual activities including conferences, seminars, roundtable discussions, lectures and brings out a range of publications. It has a well-stocked library, an active website, and publishes the journal *India Quarterly*. ICWA has over 50 MoUs with international think tanks and research institutions to promote better understanding on international issues and develop areas of mutual cooperation. The Council also has partnerships with leading research institutions, think tanks and universities in India.



**Indian Council
of World Affairs**

Sapru House, New Delhi