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India's Foreign Policy with Special Reference to China

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Abstract

The foreign policy of India aims to maintain international peace and security, to oppose imperialism, to stand against the apartheid policy, to propagate the peaceful and political settlement of international disputes, to foster peaceful coexistence, to remain non-aligned and non-committed and to maintain the unity and solidarity of the Third World.

China is another great Asian power and offers India a stiff competition in all the areas be they economic or political. India's border issue with China has kept the two on the toes and the bilateralism between the two is less than comfortable over the decades. This article is not an attempt to explicate India-China relations in detail. Rather it is an attempt to examine the reasons for the lack of a long-term strategic vision in India's China policy.

This article observes that lack of a strategic approach has to do with domestic political constraints that have made it difficult for India to carve out a coherent foreign policy vis-à-vis China. While China has displayed a remarkable consistency in its dealings with India, India seems satisfied in muddling along from one high-level visit to another and anxious to keep China pleased. The absence of a guiding strategic framework in India's China policy can have grave implications for India's national security interests as well as for its emergence as a global player.

Keyword: Foreign Policy, Global peace, India's China Policy, India-China Relations, International disputes etc.

Introduction:

China recognizes India's growing importance and attaches considerable importance to ties with New Delhi. This is hardly surprising because India undoubtedly is a major player in the Asia-Pacific regional balance of power along with the US, China, and Japan. In spite of the importance attached by both the countries to bilateral ties and hopes of improvement in relations that have surfaced from time to time, however, the Sino-Indian relationship has overall been mired in suspicion and mistrust. China may have replaced the US as India's largest trading partner, but even in the sphere of economic

relations there is anxiety arising out of India's soaring trade deficit with China. Not surprisingly, as Zhang Yan, former Chinese ambassador to India put it, relations between the two countries remain very fragile, very easy to be damaged and very difficult to repair.' Being rising powers, India and China will, as is quite natural, increasingly compete for resources, markets and influence. But the important question is whether the two Asian powers succeed in safeguarding the relationship in the midst of the turbulence and face-offs witnessed especially in recent times.

The important objectives of India's foreign policy include preservation of national interest, achievement of world peace, disarmament, independence for Afro-Asian nations. The major objectives governing India's Foreign policy are detailed below:

1. The preservation of India's territorial integrity and independence:

- i) The territorial integrity and protection of national boundaries from foreign aggression is the core interest of a nation.
- ii) India had gained hard-earned independence from foreign rule after a long time. Thus, it was natural for her to give due emphasis on the independence of foreign policy.
- iii) India's effort to strengthen Afro-Asian solidarity endorsement of principles of non-interference, in the internal affairs of other nations and finally the adoption of the policy of non-alignment should be seen in this light.
- iv) To sustain the country's growth trajectory, India needs to interact with its foreign partners to bring in Foreign Direct Investments, financial assistance, and transfer of technology for schemes and programmes like Make in India, Skills India, Smart Cities, infrastructure development, Digital India, Clean India etc. Therefore, it can be noted that in recent years, India's foreign policy adopted an approach by integrating economic diplomacy with political diplomacy.
- v) India has the largest diaspora in the world, comprising about 20 million Non-Resident Indians and Persons of Indian Origin, spread all over the world. Therefore, one of the major objectives is to engage them and derive maximum benefits from their presence abroad, while at the same time protecting their interests to the extent possible.
- vi) To summarise, four important goals of India's Foreign Policy are:
 - a) To protect India from traditional and non-traditional threats;
 - b) To create an external environment that is conducive for inclusive development of India so that the benefits of growth can reach the poorest of the poor in the country;
 - c) To make sure that India's opinions are heard on global platforms and that India is able to influence world opinion on issues of global dimensions such as terrorism, climate change, disarmament, reforms of institutions of global governance;
 - d) To engage and protect the Indian Diaspora.

2. Promoting international peace and security:

- i) India as a 'newly independent and developing country rightly realized that international peace and development are correlated.
- ii) Her emphasis on disarmament and the policy of keeping away from military alliances is intended to promote global peace.

3. The economic development of India:

- i) The fast development of the country was the fundamental requirement of India at the time of independence.
- ii) It was also required to strengthen democracy and freedom in the country
- iii) In order to gain financial resources and technology from both blocks and to concentrate her energy on the development, India opted away from the power bloc politics, which was the defining feature of Cold War international politics.
- iv) The foreign policy practice of India also reveals its two other objectives:
 - a) Elimination of colonialism and racial discrimination
 - b) Protection of the interests of people of Indian origin abroad.

An official statement of the Ministry of External Affairs (2010) notes that India's foreign policy seeks to safeguard her enlightened self-interest.

Its primary objective is to promote and maintain a peaceful and stable external environment in which the domestic tasks of inclusive economic development and poverty alleviation can progress rapidly.

Thus, India seeks a peaceful periphery and works for good neighbourly relations in her extended neighbourhood. India's foreign policy also recognizes that issues such as climate change, energy, and food security are crucial for India's transformation. Since these issues are global in nature, they require global solutions.

India-China Relationship:

The rise of India and China as two major economic and political actors in both regional and global politics has caught global attention. The two emerging and enduring powers representing two modes of civilization signify a complex and dynamic relationship in world politics. The Wuhan meeting (April 2018, "informal summit") between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping is being hailed as a 'new chapter' in relations as the two countries engage in the wake of post-Doklam rhetoric.

- A) For thousands of years, Tibet was the buffer that kept India and China geographically apart and at peace. It is only after China invaded and occupied Tibet in 1950, the two countries are sharing a common border.
- B) The extensive mutual historical experience was not there between the two nations and each country had a poor understanding of the psyche and system of the other.
- C) Before the mid-20th century, India-China relations were minimal and confined to some trade and exchange of pilgrims and scholars. Interactions began after India's independence (1947) and the Communist revolution in China (1949).
- D) Nehru's views supporting an independent Tibet gave rise to Chinese mistrust.
- E) Nehru and Zhou signed the Panchsheel treaty on 29 April 1954 to lay the roadmap for stability in a region (Hindi-Chini Bhai-Bhai) as India acknowledged Chinese rule in Tibet: Mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty; Mutual non-aggression; Mutual non-interference; Equality and mutual benefit; and, Peaceful co-existence.
- F) As China tightened its grip on Tibet, India gave asylum to the Dalai Lama (1959).
- G) In 1962, China's People's Liberation Army invaded India in Ladakh, and across the McMahon Line in the then North-East Frontier Agency. After the conflict, relations were in a freeze.
- H) Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's landmark visit in 1988 began a phase of improvement in bilateral relations. India-China relations normalized through the regular exchange of high-level visits.

India's China Policy

China is India's largest neighbour and therefore developing friendly cooperation with China is one of the priorities of India's foreign policy. With frequent high-level exchanges... the process of building trust and understanding has gained momentum and ...relations have diversified across a wide range of areas. India ties with China have reached a certain degree of maturity where India is determined to build upon our existing commonalities and identify newer area of mutually beneficial cooperation. At the same time India striving to address our differences in a proactive and purposive manner, without allowing them to affect the comprehensive development of Indo-China relationship.

1. India has adopted a two-pronged policy for dealing with China. The *first prong* involves continued engagement, both bilaterally and in multilateral forums such as BRICS, SCO and the Russia-India-China trilateral, in order to maintain overall stability, deepen economic ties, and foster diplomatic cooperation on regional and international issues. Thus, during the Doklam crisis, India not only insisted on a diplomatic settlement based on a return to the status quo ante but did not let the crisis come in the way of scheduled bilateral visits and meetings despite China's state-controlled media warning India of a repeat of the 1962 war and more troubles.

India has also sustained efforts to enhance its military and deterrent capabilities as the *second prong of policy*.

2. There is an emerging *third prong* in India's China policy in the form of new external balancing effort. The evolution of India-US relations in particular but also of India's relationships with Japan and Australia as well as the quadrilateral cooperation among them indicates a growing convergence in their views regarding stability in the Indo-Pacific region particularly with respect to China's intentions in laying territorial claims to more than 80 per cent of the South China Sea as well as to the sovereign territories of India and Japan.

The conflict between two countries takes away from the prospects of the Asian century that their leaders speak of a regular pattern of more informal summits between the leaders of the two countries is needed.

Conclusion:

Finally, coming to the need for a rethink over our policy towards China, is it not necessary to take a long term view of national interest and strive for a relationship with our largest and most important neighbour based on the stakes we have in the relationship? We would also hope that China in its own interest would do the same. Both sides have everything to gain from improved bilateral ties, which will also be a bargaining chip in dealing with threats to our security. The problem of mutual suspicion must be addressed concretely and substantially both.

To conclude, the future of Sino-Indian relations, '...the picture is a complex mix of cooperation and competition. As both China and India continue their thrusts toward economic growth and military modernisation at different speeds, and are accorded progressively higher status by other powers, the outcome of their interactions is unpredictable. It is unlikely to be as dismal as some fear or as bright as others would hope.

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