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Introduction

In November 2008, the financial capital of India, Mumbai, was struck by terrorists who the Indian (as well as the American and the British) intelligence later confirmed had received extensive training from the Pakistan-based group, Lashkar-e-Toiba, or Army of the Pure. Given the sophistication of planning and execution involved, it soon became apparent that this was a commando-style operation that possibly had the involvement of a state actor. As physical evidence mounted in terms of satellite phone calls, equipment and boats used for the attack, Pakistan's hand was seen as smeared all over the operation. Though India conceded that probably the newly installed civilian administration in Islamabad of Asif Ali Zardari was not behind the attacks, the army and the Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) were seen as the main culprit.[1]

The public outcry after the Mumbai attacks was strong enough for the Indian government to consider using the military option vis-à-vis Pakistan. But it soon turned out that India no longer had the capability of imposing quick and effective retribution on Pakistan and that it no longer enjoyed the kind of conventional superiority vis-à-vis its regional adversary that it had enjoyed for the past five decades.[2] This was a surprising conclusion for a nation that the international community regarded as a major global economic and military power, pursuing a defense modernization program estimated to be over US$50 billion over the next five years.

A year earlier, in another incident that confounded observers, India's Cabinet Secretary sent a note to all the ministers of his government advising them against attending a function organized by the Gandhi Peace Foundation on behalf of the Dalai Lama.[3] A number of reasons were alluded to for such an action. Perhaps the Prime Minister wished to assuage the concerns of the Indian communist parties, then part of the ruling coalition, that the Indian foreign policy was tilting toward Washington in order to send the message that India desired to preserve the upward trajectory in Sino-Indian ties. Yet outside observers remained perplexed about the goals of the Indian government, since it contravened India's long-held position that the Dalai Lama is a not a mere political dissident

but a spiritual leader widely revered in India. Indeed some argued that India's genuflection to Chinese concerns about the Dalai Lama were probably not even in India's national interest. The Indian government's position neither lived up to the ideals that India often claims it stands for nor clearly enhanced India's strategic interests vis-à-vis China. When the Chinese authorities subsequently cracked down on the Tibetan protests in Lhasa and elsewhere during the Olympic torch relay, the Indian government could not even bring itself to forcefully condemn the Chinese behavior.[4] For the Indian government, it seemed a tough balancing act but for the rest of the world it was a supine foreign policy posture by a state that wants to be recognized as an emerging great power.

These episodes are symptomatic of the fundamental crisis facing Indian foreign policy at the beginning of this new millennium. As India's weight has grown in the international system in recent years, there's a perception that India is on the cusp of achieving "great power" status. It is repeated ad nauseam in the Indian and often in global media and India is already being asked to behave like one. There is just one problem: Indian policy-makers themselves are not clear as to what this status of a great power entails. At a time when the Indian foreign policy establishment should be vigorously debating the nature and scope of India's engagement with the world, it is disappointingly silent. This intellectual vacuum has allowed Indian foreign policy to drift without any sense of direction and the result is that as the world is looking to India to shape the emerging international order, India has little to offer except some platitudinous rhetoric that does great disservice to India's rising global stature.

As India makes its ascent in the global inter-state hierarchy, two issues have emerged as significant in defining its future trajectory. One, India will have to exploit the extant structure of international system to its advantage. Structural constraints are the most formidable ones a state encounters in its drive toward the status of a major power. Yet, Indian foreign policy continues to be reactive to the strategic environment and the constraints it imposes rather than trying to shape the strategic realities. While such an ad hoc response to the structural imperatives carried little cost when India was on the periphery of global politics, this can have grave consequences now when Indian capabilities have risen to a point where it seems poised to play a significant role in global politics. A second related constraint that India faces is its discomfort with the very notion of power and in particular its wariness of the use of "hard power." All major powers throughout history have demonstrated an ability to skillfully use military as an effective instrument of national policy. India's reluctance to evolve a more sophisticated understanding of power and of military power in particular will continue to underline the strategic diffidence that has come to be associated with Indian foreign and security policy.

India's rise

If the global balance of power is indeed shifting from the Atlantic to the Pacific, then the rise of India, along with China, is clearly the indisputable reality that few can dare to dismiss any longer. As a consequence, India is now being called upon to shoulder global responsibilities from the challenges of nuclear proliferation to the instability in the Persian Gulf and is increasingly being viewed as much more than a mere "South Asian" power. From a nation that was mortgaging its gold reserves in 1990 to one whose foreign exchange reserves are overfull, from a nation that was marginal in the global distribution of economic might to one that is increasingly emerging as one of the centers of modern global economy, India has indeed come a long way. Its economy is one of the fastest growing in the world; it is a nuclear weapon state (NWS), a status that is being grudgingly accepted by the world; its armed forces are highly professional, on the way toward rapid modernization; and its vibrant democratic institutions, with the world's second largest Muslim population, are attracting global attention at a time when the Islamic world is passing through some turbulent times.

According to the assessment of Goldman Sachs, by 2040, the four largest economies will be those of China, the United States, India, and Japan.[5] India will overtake the G-6 economies faster than earlier expected and India's GDP, in all likelihood, will surpass that of the United States before 2050, making it the second largest economy after China. After decades of marginalization due to the vagaries of the Cold War, its own obsolescent model of economic management and the seemingly never-ending tensions with Pakistan, India is starting to display flashes of self-confidence that come with growing capabilities. Its global and regional ambitions are rising and it is showing an aggressiveness in its foreign policy that had not been its forte before. Yet it remains far from obvious that in line with these trends the India of today is also crafting a foreign policy that is in tandem with its rising stature in the international system. The costs of ignoring the structural imperatives will only rise in the future as India continues its ascent in the global inter-state hierarchy.[6]

A nation's foreign policy flows from several sources: from the international system to its domestic political imperatives to the cultural factors that underlie its society to the personal characteristics and perceptions of individual decision-makers. Like most nations, India's foreign policy is also a result of these varied factors at different levels of analysis interacting and transforming each other. But as a nation's weight in the global balance of power rises, it becomes imperative to pay greater attention to the systemic constraints. As has been pointed out:

> rising states have choices about whether to become great powers. However, a state's freedom to choose whether to become great power is in reality tightly constrained by

structural factors. Eligible states that fail to attain great power status are predictably punished. If policy-makers of eligible states are socialised to the international system's constraints, they understand that attaining great power status is a pre-requisite if their states are be secure and autonomous.[7]

States do not emerge as great powers because they excel in one or another kind of capability. They have to rely on their combined capabilities in order to serve their interests. Therefore, the economic, military, territorial, demographic, and political capabilities of a state cannot be weighed in isolation of each other.[8] Great powers dominate and shape international politics and their behaviour is largely a product of their external environment. It is the structure of the international system that more than anything else shapes the foreign policies of great powers.

By any objective measure of material capability, India is a rising power in the international system and the consequences of an India that is rising are very visible in the international system. India is not a great power yet though it is most certainly a leading contender for great power status. India's rising wealth and large population are its latent power that India is and will be using to build up its military might.[9] As a result, it is not at all surprising that India is being asked to step up to the plate and shoulder global responsibilities in consonance with its rising global stature. What is less clear is whether Indian foreign policy is up to the task and whether Indian policy-makers are willing to make the right kind of choices.

Indian foreign policy: Cold War and after

Throughout the Cold War period, India was concerned about getting entangled in the superpower rivalry. It made sense to make a choice in favor of a non-aligned foreign policy posture that at least in theory preserved India's decision-making autonomy in the realm of international affairs. Behind all the rhetoric of the so-called Third World solidarity, there was a very cool-headed calculation that was aimed at protecting vital Indian interests, interests that were fairly limited in scope, given India's relatively limited economic and military capabilities. Pakistan's security strategy was India's most immediate threat and India's obsession with Pakistan was not all that surprising. But beyond Pakistan, there was little clarity, something that was vividly brought home in the stunning defeat at the hands of the Chinese in 1962. And even on Pakistan, there is little evidence to suggest that India had a coherent strategy.

Immediately at Independence, before any sort of foreign policy framework could be established, India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, was required to address the inter-related problems of Kashmir and relations with Pakistan, which have remained an important strand in Indian foreign policy ever since. Yet there is little evidence to suggest that India has ever

evolved a coherent policy for countering Pakistan's security strategy, still less for resolving the Kashmir problem. Instead, India has reacted to events. The wars with Pakistan kept coming and India kept fighting them without ever apparently making an assessment of whether a policy could be crafted to obviate the need for war. It is instructive to note how for the last six decades India has struggled to deal with the malevolence of a single hostile neighbor one-eighth its size.

More generally, Nehru wanted to construct a distinctive Indian approach to foreign policy issues, taking a certain distance from the views of the former colonial power. For almost two decades his concerns about getting entangled in the superpower rivalry found expression in support for the non-aligned movement (NAM) that, at least in theory, preserved India's decision-making autonomy in the realm of international affairs. The NAM was started when newly decolonized nations that did not want to join either of the two military blocs got together to assert their autonomy, their plea for disarmament, and greater development aid. The NAM did have a certain weight in the era of decolonization, yet mere reiteration of their non-aligned credentials did not prevent individual nations from having close relations with major powers such as the United States, the erstwhile Soviet Union, and the United Kingdom. For all their pious declarations on global peace, the non-aligned nations have rarely shared significant convergence of interests and have even fought among themselves. The NAM was an impotent observer to the eight-year Iran–Iraq conflict and several other direct and indirect conflicts among its member states. India's rhetoric about solidarity with the Third World was largely a function of India's limited capabilities and commensurate interests.

In 1962, the limitations of this policy were vividly brought home by the stunning defeat at the hands of the Chinese, which virtually spelled the end of the Nehru era in Indian politics. But there was no real change to the direction of Indian foreign policy and, in 1971, India was again forced to reckon with global forces, in the run-up to the war with Pakistan over Bangladesh. Since the very beginning Pakistan had been a close ally of the United States, thereby balancing Indian preponderance in the subcontinent rather effectively. When it became clear that the West, especially the United States, would not support India against Pakistan, Indira Gandhi was forced to court the Soviet Union to make sure that she would be able to carry forward her war without any involvement from the great powers. Thus, even though the United States dispatched the USS *Enterprise* to the Bay of Bengal as a show of support for Pakistan, India, with the Soviet Union on its side, successfully prosecuted its war against Pakistan and Bangladesh was born.

The one arena of foreign and security policy where India has had a long-term perspective is its approach to the nuclear question. Though at times the overall policy was contradictory and its various strands at cross-purposes, India was able to carve out a coherent policy that served

its needs with great efficacy. The Chinese exploded their nuclear device in 1964. Coming on the heels of Indian defeat in 1962, this explosion shook the Indian foreign policy elite and gave a sense of urgency to the Indian nuclear program. The first option that Indian government went for was the support of the West, essentially seeking a nuclear umbrella. When the Indian efforts were rebuffed, there was no option but to consolidate its own indigenous nuclear weapons program. India's efforts in the nuclear realm culminated in what the then Indian government rather disingenuously termed the Peaceful Nuclear Explosion in 1974. Immediate sanctions were imposed by the international community on India and India was left out of the global high-technology regime, with long-term consequences for its economic and technological development.

These sanctions were also a result of India's opposition to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) that India had argued was fundamentally discriminatory in nature by creating a two-tiered state system of nuclear haves and have-nots. The five states that were allowed to keep their nuclear programs had all become nuclear powers before 1968 while the remaining states were not to pursue nuclear weapons programs. India argued that only global and comprehensive nuclear disarmament was acceptable, and that in its absence it would not be willing to give up its right to pursue its nuclear weapons program if its security interests so demanded. India viewed the NPT as an instrument of the NWS to get their nuclear stockpiles legitimized by the comity of nations and therefore a tool to perpetuate their nuclear hegemony. It was a very *realpolitik* approach to the global nuclear politics and India successfully played this card until such time as it developed an indigenous nuclear weapons capability which it demonstrated to the world in 1998. Today, when India has emerged as a de facto nuclear weapons state, it wants to be a part of the same "hegemonistic" security architecture that it once decried so vociferously. The two mainstream political parties, the Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), have had a similar approach on nuclear issues ever since the former Indian Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, initiated weaponization in the late 1980s. Traditionally, only the communist parties have not supported the Indian nuclear weapons program but they have generally been marginal in Indian national security decision-making.

The Bangladesh War was the beginning of twenty years of a close relationship between India and the Soviet Union, so close that India did not even dare to criticize the Soviet misadventure in Afghanistan in 1979. But India's balance of power approach, though skillful, was essentially reactive in nature, not based on any strategic assessment of its long-term foreign policy priorities. Though the era of decolonization had largely come to an end, the principles of the NAM were still upheld, and India's self-identification with the colonized found expression in Rajiv Gandhi's criticisms of Margaret Thatcher's policy on Rhodesia/Zimbabwe. In the mid-1980s Indian policy-makers seem to have been attracted by a more assertive policy

toward India's neighbors, though this "Regional Gendarme" role had mixed results. The economic blockade of Nepal certainly helped bring down the absolute monarchy, but the intervention in Sri Lanka caused more problems than it solved, while incidentally leading to Rajiv's assassination. But, as it happened, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the consequent collapse of the Indian economy soon occupied center stage. In some ways, the end of the Cold War came as a blessing in disguise as Indian policy-makers were forced to adapt to the new global political and economic realities. The economic crisis that India faced in the early 1990s forced it to move away from the dominant Nehruvian socialist paradigm toward economic liberalization and a greater integration into the global economy. At the same time, the demise of the former Soviet Union changed the nature of the international system.

Many of the central assumptions of Indian foreign policy had to be reviewed in light of changed circumstances. The shape of the world changed, signaling the possibility of a new Indian foreign and national security strategy. A rapidly shifting geo-strategic landscape confronted India as it made its way up in the inter-state hierarchy. At the beginning of the new millennium, India is poised on the threshold of achieving the status of a major global power, emerging as an indispensable, albeit reluctant, element of the new global order exemplified not only by its growing economic and military might but also the attraction of its political and cultural values. But even as India's rise in the inter-state global hierarchy continues steadily, its policy-makers continue to act in the international arena as if India can continue to afford the luxury of responding to foreign policy challenges on a case-by-case basis without any requirement for a long-term strategic policy framework. The same ad-hocism that had characterized Indian foreign policy in the past continues. The problem, however, is India no longer has the luxury of time on its side and the issues that have gone unresolved since India's independence need a long-term resolution. Whatever the merits or otherwise of NAM, it is clear that the Indian foreign policy establishment continues to rigidly hold on to the concepts and intellectual frameworks which may have had some utility when they were developed but which have become outmoded in the present strategic context.

Power and interest

How states respond to their relative material rise or decline has long been central to understanding the forces that shape international politics. Structural constraints force states toward a particular set of foreign policies in line with their relative position in the international system. And as that position undergoes a change, so will change the foreign policy of that state. A state, therefore, will become more ambitious in defining the scale and scope of its foreign policy as its relative material power capabilities increase

and vice versa. Indian policy-makers will have to make some crucial and necessary choices in the realm of foreign policy as India reaches a turning point in its relations with the rest of the world, the most important of which will deal with how best to exploit the extant structure of the international system to their nation's advantage.

But a fundamental quandary that has long dogged India in the realm of foreign affairs and that has become even more acute with India's ascent in the international order is what has been referred to as India's lack of an "instinct for power." Power lies at the heart of international politics. It affects the influence that states exert over one another, thereby shaping political outcomes. The success and failure of a nation's foreign policy is largely a function of its power and the manner in which that power is wielded. The exercise of power can be shocking and at times corrupting but power is absolutely necessary to fight the battles that must be fought. India's ambivalence about power and its use has resulted in a situation where even as India's economic and military capabilities have gradually expanded, it has failed to evolve a commensurate strategic agenda and requisite institutions so as to be able to mobilize and use its resources most optimally.

India faces a unique conundrum: its political elites desperately want global recognition for India as a major power and all the prestige and authority associated with it. Yet, they continue to be reticent about the acquisition and use of power in foreign affairs. This ambivalence about the use of power in international relations where "any prestige or authority eventually rely upon traditional measures of power, whether military or economic"[10] is curious as the Indian political elites have rarely shied away from the maximization of power in the realm of domestic politics, thereby corroding the institutional fabric of liberal democracy in the country.

In what has been diagnosed as a "mini state syndrome," those states which do not have the material capabilities to make a difference to the outcomes at the international level, often denounce the concept of power in foreign policy-making.[11] India had long been a part of such states, viewing itself as an object of the foreign policies of a small majority of powerful nations. As a consequence, the Indian political and strategic elite developed a suspicion of power politics with the word power itself acquiring a pejorative connotation in so far as foreign policy was concerned. The relationship between power and foreign policy was never fully understood, leading to a progressive loss in India's ability to wield power effectively in the international realm.

Inability to use force effectively

A nation's vital interests, in the ultimate analysis, can only be preserved and enhanced if the nation has sufficient power capabilities at its disposal. But not only must a nation possess such capabilities, there must also be a willingness to employ the required forms of power in pursuit of those interests.

India's lack of an instinct for power is most palpable in the realm of the military where unlike other major global powers of the past and the present India has failed to master the creation, deployment, and use of its military instruments in support of its national objectives.[12] Nehru envisioned making India a global leader without any help from the nation's armed forces, arguing, "the right approach to defense is to avoid having unfriendly relations with other countries – to put it differently, war today is, and ought to be, out of question."[13] War has been systematically factored out of Indian foreign policy and the national security matrix with the resulting ambiguity about India's ability to withstand major wars of the future.

Few nations face the kind of security challenges that confront India. Yet, since independence military was never seen as a central instrument in the achievement of Indian national priorities with the tendency of Indian political elites to downplay the importance of military power, India ignored the defense sector after independence and paid inadequate attention to its defense needs. Even though the policy-makers themselves had little knowledge of critical defense issues, the defense forces had little or no role in the formulation of defense policy until 1962.[14] Divorcing foreign policy from military power was a recipe for disaster as India realized in 1962 when even Nehru was forced to concede that "military weakness has been a temptation, and a little military strength may be a deterrent."[15] A state's legitimacy is tied to its ability to monopolize the use of force and operate effectively in an international strategic environment and India has lacked clarity on this relationship between the use of force and its foreign policy priorities.

Marginalization of the military

Indian politicians after independence in 1947 viewed the Indian Army with suspicion as the last supporters of the British Raj and did their best to isolate the military from policy and influence. This attitude was further reinforced by the views of two giants of the Indian nationalist movement, Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. Gandhi's ardent belief in non-violence left little room for accepting the role of the use of force in an independent India. It also shaped the views on military and defense of the first generation of post-independence political leaders in India. But more important has been the legacy of Nehru, India's first Prime Minister who laid the institutional foundations for civil–military relations in India. His obsession with economic development was only matched by his disdain and distrust of the military, resulting in the sidelining of defense planning in India.[16] He also ensured that the experiences in neighboring Pakistan, where military had become the dominant political force soon after independence, would not be repeated in India by institutionalizing civilian supremacy over the country's military apparatus. The civilian elite also did not want the emergence of a rival elite with direct access to political leadership.

Along with Nehru, another civilian who left a lasting impact on the evolution of civil–military relations was V.K. Krishna Menon, India's Minister of Defense from 1957 to 1962. During his tenure, which has been described as the most controversial stewardship of the Indian Defense Ministry, he heralded a number of organizational changes that were not very popular with the armed forces.[17] Despite any military experience, Nehru and Menon were actively involved in operational level planning before the outbreak of Sino-Indian war of 1962. They "directly supervised the placement of individual brigades, companies, and even platoons, as the Chinese and Indian forces engaged in mutual encirclement of isolated outposts."[18] As a consequence, when China won the war decisively, the blame was laid at the doors of Nehru and Menon. Menon resigned while Nehru's reputation suffered lasting damage. It also made it clear, both to the civilians and the military, that purely operational matters were best left to the military. Some have argued that since then a convention has been established whereby while the operational directive is laid down by the political leadership, the actual planning of the operation is left to the chiefs of staff.[19]

Stephen Rosen, in his study of the impact of societal structures on the military effectiveness of a state, argues that the separation of the Indian military from the Indian society, while preserving the coherence of the Indian army, has led to a reduction in the effective military power of the Indian state.[20] While India has been successful in evolving a sustained tradition of strict civilian control over the military since its independence, unlike its immediate neighbors, India has been unable to evolve institutions and procedures that would allow the military to substantially participate in the national security decision-making processes. This has significantly reduced the effectiveness with which India can wield its military as an instrument of national power.

Strategic culture deficit

A state can promulgate law and pursue strategy once it has not only achieved a legitimate monopoly on violence but also when it is free of the coercive violence of other states.[21] It is no surprise therefore that India's ability to think strategically on issues of national security remains at best questionable. George Tanham, in his landmark study on the Indian strategic thought, pointed out that Indian elites have shown little evidence of having thought coherently and systematically about national strategy. He argued that this lack of long-term planning and strategy owes largely to India's historical and cultural developmental patterns. These include the Hindu view of life as largely unknowable, thereby being outside man's control, and the Hindu concept of time as eternal, thereby discouraging planning. As a consequence, Tanham argued that India has been on the strategic defensive throughout its history, reluctant to assert itself except within the subcontinent.[22]

India's former Minister for External Affairs, Jaswant Singh, has also examined the evolution of strategic culture in the Indian society and in its political decision-making class, with a particular reference to post-independence India. He also finds Indian political elites lacking in the ability to think strategically about foreign policy and defense issues though he trains his guns on India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, pointing to his "idealistic romanticism" and his unwillingness to institutionalize strategic thinking, policy formulation, and implementation.[23]

It is ironic, however, that even when Jaswant Singh was the External Affairs Minister, there was little evidence that anything of substance really changed in so far as the strategic dimension of India's foreign policy was concerned. For all the blame that Singh lays at Nehru's doorstep, even he and his government did not move toward the institutionalization of strategic thinking, policy formulation, and implementation. Perhaps, the Indian strategic culture became too powerful a constraint for even him to overcome.

Lack of institutionalization

A major consequence of the lack of any Indian strategic culture worth its name is a perceptible lack of institutionalization of the foreign policy-making in India. At its very foundation, Indian democracy is sustained by a range of institutions from the more formal ones of the executive, legislative, and the judiciary to the less formal ones of the broader civil-society. It is these institutions that in large measure have allowed Indian democracy to thrive and flourish for more than fifty years now despite a number of constraints that have led to the failure of democracy in many other societies. However, in the realm of foreign policy, it is the lack of institutionalization that has allowed a drift to set in without any long-term orientation. Some have laid the blame on Nehru for his unwillingness to construct strategic planning architecture because he single-handedly shaped Indian foreign policy during his tenure.[24] But even his successors have failed to pursue institutionalization in a consistent manner. The BJP-led National Democratic Alliance came to power in 1999 promising that it would establish a National Security Council (NSC) to analyze the military, economic, and political threats to the nation and to advise the government on meeting these challenges effectively.

While it did set up the NSC in the late 1990s and defined its role in policy formulation, it neglected the institutionalization of the NSC and the building up of its capabilities to play the role assigned to it, thereby failing to underpin national security with structural and systematic institutional arrangements. Important national security decisions were taken in an ad hoc manner without utilizing the Cabinet Committee on Security, the Strategic Policy Group (comprising of key secretaries, service chiefs, and heads of intelligence agencies), and officials of the National Security Advisory Board. Moreover, as has been rightly pointed out, the way the NSC is structured

makes long-term planning impossible, thereby negating the very purpose of its formation and its effectiveness remains hostage to the weight of the National Security Advisor (NSA) in national politics.[25] The NSA has become the most powerful authority on national security, sidelining the institution of the NSC.

While the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance came to power in 2004 promising that it would make the NSC a professional and effective institution and blaming the National Democratic Alliance for making only cosmetic changes in the institutional arrangements, it too failed to make it work in an optimal manner whereby the NSC could anticipate national security threats, coordinate the management of national security, and engender long-term planning by generating new and bold ideas. An effective foreign policy institutional framework would not only identify the challenges but it would also develop a coherent strategy to deal with it, organize and motivate the bureaucracy, and persuade and inform the public. The NSC, by itself, is not a panacea particularly in light of the inability of the NSC in the United States to successfully mediate in the bureaucratic wars and effectively coordinate policy. But the lack of an effective NSC in India is reflective of India's ad hoc decision-making process in the realm of foreign policy. If there is any continuity in India's approach to foreign policy and national security, it is the inability and unwillingness of policy-makers, across political ideologies, to give a strategic vision to their nation's foreign policy priorities.

The myth of a debate

For long, there was a myth propagated by the political elites in the country that there has been a general consensus across political parties on major foreign policy issues. Aside from the fact that such a consensus has more been a result of intellectual laziness and apathy than any real attempt to forge a coherent grand strategy that cuts across ideological barriers, this is most certainly an exaggeration as until the early 1990s, the Congress Party's dominance over the Indian political landscape was almost complete and there was no political organization of an equal capacity that could bring to bear its influence on foreign and security policy issues in the same measure. It was the rise of the Hindu nationalist BJP that gave India a significantly different voice on foreign policy. But more importantly it is the changes in the international environment that have forced Indian policy-makers to challenge some of the assumptions underlying their approach to the outside world.

In debating the nature and scope of its engagement with the world India will have to bring its commitments and power into balance or, as Lippmann suggested in a different context of the United States, "its purposes within its means and its means equal to its purposes." India's foreign policy elite

remains mired in the exigencies of day-to-day pressures emanating from the immediate challenges at hand rather than evolving a grand strategy that integrates the nation's multiple policy strands into a cohesive whole to be able to preserve and enhance Indian interests in a rapidly changing global environment. The assertions, therefore, that India does not have a China policy or an Iran policy or a Pakistan policy are plain irrelevant. India does not have a foreign policy, period. It is this lack of strategic orientation in Indian foreign policy that often results in a paradoxical situation where on the one hand India is accused by various domestic constituencies of angering this or that country by its actions while on the other hand India's relationship with almost all major powers is termed as a "strategic partnership" by the Indian government.

Moreover, the period of stable major power relations might also be coming to an end and soon difficult choices will have to be made and Indian policy-makers should have enough self-confidence to make those decisions even when they go against their long-held predilections. But a foreign policy that lacks intellectual and strategic coherence will ensure that India will forever remain poised on the threshold of great power status but won't be quite able to cross it.

The Modi factor

Since coming to office in May 2014, the Narendra Modi government has been successful in gradually dismantling India's default foreign policy legacy of non-alignment. Moving beyond ideological rhetoric, Modi is busy engaging confidently with all major global powers without inhibitions. The foreign policies of nations do not alter radically with changes in governments, but with the backing of the Indian electorate's decisive mandate, Modi has an opportunity to bring about a realignment of Indian foreign policy priorities and goals.

The Modi government has defied many expectations and confounded his detractors and supporters alike. But on the foreign policy front, remarkably for a politician who was considered provincial before elections, Modi hit the ground running from the very first day. On the security front, there is a new purposeful response against China with a focus on more efficient border management and defense acquisitions. Modi has reached out to the United States, despite his personal grievances over a visa denial by Washington when he was the chief minister of Gujarat, and there is a refreshing focus on immediate neighbors.

With India's immediate neighbors, there are certainly signs that there is a new dynamism in bilateral ties as New Delhi is putting renewed emphasis on revitalizing its regional profile. India's neighbors, barring Pakistan, are certainly looking at India with a new sense of expectation. New Delhi now

has to operationalize the aspirations that have been articulated. Recognizing that the implementation phase has always been a problem for Indian credibility, the Modi government is focusing on completing projects in its neighborhood that are already in the pipeline rather than announcing new ones.

The biggest strategic challenge for India remains managing China's rise. The Modi government has concluded that the need of the hour is the right balance between enhancing economic and trade ties with Beijing while building a deterrent military might. Modi is confident of India's ability to emerge as a significant global player, allowing him to leverage ties with China and the United States to secure Indian interests. He has followed a dynamic foreign policy, developing closer ties with the United States and strengthening military cooperation with Australia, Japan, and Vietnam while working to regain strategic space in the Indian Ocean region. Modi's visits to Mongolia and South Korea after China in May 2015 signal that New Delhi remains keen on expanding its profile in China's periphery. To counter Chinese presence in the Gwadar port in Pakistan, which many in India view as a potential Chinese naval hub, India is building a port in Iran's Chabahar to gain access to Afghanistan. India has given a green light for collaborating with the United States on construction of its largest warship, the 65,000-ton aircraft carrier INS *Vishal*. For years, New Delhi was labeled as the obstacle to normalizing Sino-Indian ties. Modi has deftly turned the tables on Beijing by signaling that he is willing to go all out in enhancing cultural and economic ties, but the onus of reducing strategic distrust rests with Beijing.

Modi seems to be redefining the terms on which India is likely to engage with the world in the coming years. Pragmatism coupled with a more confident assertion of Indian interests has been his hallmark. He is not shy about reaching out directly to new constituencies such as the Non-Resident Indian and business communities in other states. For India's friends, a new outreach is in the offing. For India's adversaries, new red lines are being drawn.

Most significantly, Modi is gradually, but surely, marginalizing the idea of non-alignment as the bedrock of Indian foreign policy. He has indicated that he is willing to work with anyone and everyone to secure Indian interests, the most important of which for him is to take India on the path of rapid economic growth. For Modi and his government, however, the biggest challenge will remain to move away from an overly personalized foreign policy toward a more institutionalized foreign policy and national security decision-making, a weakness that previous governments have failed to tackle.

It would indeed be a tragedy if history would describe today's Indian policy-makers in the words Winston Churchill applied to those who ignored the changing strategic realities before World War II: "They go on in strange paradox, decided only to be undecided, resolved to be irresolute, adamant for drift, solid for fluidity, all-powerful to be impotent." India today, more than any other time in its history, needs a view of its role in the world

quite removed from the shibboleths of the past. Despite the enormous challenges that it continues to face, India is widely recognized today as a rising power with enormous potential. The portents are hopeful if only the Indian policy-makers have the imagination and courage to seize some of the opportunities.

It is in this rapidly evolving context that this book provides an overview of Indian foreign policy landscape as it has evolved in recent times. The focus is on the twenty-first century with historical context provided as appropriate. It is an introductory book on Indian foreign policy and is not intended to be a detailed examination of any of its particular aspects. It examines India's relationships with major powers, with its neighbors and other regions, as well as India's stand on major global issues, underlining that with a gradual accretion in its powers, India has become more aggressive in the pursuit of its interests, thereby emerging as an important player in the shaping of the global order in the new millennium.

Notes

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