
UNIT 1 – EVOLUTION OF INDIA’S FOREIGN POLICY

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1.0 OBJECTIVES

The present Unit maps the trajectory of the evolution of India’s foreign policy – its values, norms and practices – over the years. After reading this Unit, you would be able to

- Understand the genesis of India’s foreign policy including its roots in the freedom movement;
- Appreciate the evolution of Indian foreign policy through different phases; and
- Critically examine the working of Indian foreign policy over the years

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The story of the evolution of India’s foreign policy begins with the pre-independence period when Indian National Congress decided in 1932 to have a foreign policy department under the chairmanship of Jawaharlal Nehru with Ram Manohar Lohia as its secretary. As a matter of fact, no country in the world can afford to have an isolationist policy preference in its dealings with rest of the world given the complex nature and working of international relations. Such a situation holds more true in the case of countries like India that have always looked upon themselves as active

participants in the global affairs with the objective of not only serving their national interest but also as conscience-keepers of collective wisdom and the pursuits towards the well-being of humankind. Moreover, in the case of India, there have been a number of factors that seems to have persuaded the country to evolve a definite and comprehensive foreign policy. For instance, sheer size of the country, its rich diversity, historical and cultural relations, existence of a large number of countries in the near and not-so-distant neighbourhood as well as expectations of a majority, if not all, of the countries from Asia and Africa to provide a formidable voice to their concerns along with the global vision and outlook of its leaders – have all tended to make the country an important player in the international politics.

In analysing the evolution and working of India's foreign policy at different periods of time, two inter-related tendencies could be identified that acted as its signposts. One, in providing for the evolutionary framework of India's foreign policy especially during its formative years in the post-independence period, moralistic overtones and global concerns seemed to have taken precedence over the sheer imperatives of national interests. In other words, the idealist rather than the Realist perspective of international politics has been at the core of India's foreign policy during its early phase. In its urge to provide leadership to the mass of newly-independent countries of Asia and Africa, India tended to mould its foreign policy in quite ambivalent mode than having a sharply focused perspective aimed at serving national interests at any cost. The disastrous impact of such a foreign policy in terms of both losing a decisive war as well as other compromises on national interests is apparent to see. Two, in the post-Nehru years, the conduct of India's foreign policy has been underpinned by harsh realities of national and global politics, apart from the personal preferences of the leaders at the helm of country's foreign policy at a particular period of time. For instance, though Non-alignment has been the core of India's foreign policy ever since the country gained independence, it was compromised to a large extent, if not shelved altogether, by signing of the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Peace and Friendship in 1971. Thus, despite the permanence of national interests of the country, the foundational principles and operational dynamics of India's foreign policy of India has not showed that degree of permanence and consistency.

1.2 GENESIS OF INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY

During the long years of British rule in India, the colonial government did not hesitate to push India in the vortex of global politics in order to serve the national interests of Great Britain. In other words, despite not having much at stake in the working of international relations during the first half of the twentieth century, India was invariably made a party in the international relations ostensibly with the purpose of strengthening the British position on vital issues. The interesting fact in this context is that

quite often the professed position of British rulers articulated on behalf of India appeared to be in contravention with the conventional wisdom and philosophical moorings that have characterized India's vision of world since a long time. Hence, after initial inhibitions, Congress appeared convinced to create a department of foreign affairs in its organizational structure in order to take a definite and considered stand on important issues and challenges facing the international community at that time. This may be considered as the first step towards evolution of India's foreign policy as Jawaharlal Nehru started articulating stand of the Congress on important international issues independent of the announcements of the colonial government. With the strengthening of national movement and greater involvement of Congress in running the affairs of the country, the stage appeared set for enhanced role for the country in international relations. An important example in this context may be seen in the case of India's participation in deliberations at San Francisco towards finalization and signing of the United Nations Charter in the wake of the conclusion of Second World War.

Towards the end of colonial rule in India when Jawaharlal Nehru was made the interim Prime Minister of the country, his foreign policy perspectives became more sharp and categorical. For instance, in a broadcast on 7 September 1946 on basic guiding principles of India's foreign policy in the years to come, his idealistic vision was at its best. He tried to synchronise the basic elements of national interests of the country with the pressing issues of the international politics of the time in such a way that national interests appeared hyphenated to the more important challenges such as end of colonialism, imperialism, racism, apart from Non-alignment from the power blocs and greater friendship and solidarity amongst the newly emerging nations of Asia and Africa. He went to the extent of evolving a one sided plan of close friendship with neighbours especially China even without caring for matching reciprocity on the part of the giant neighbour. Lofty idealistic principles became so pronounced in Nehru's vision of India's foreign policy that he tended to forget that the arena international politics is just like a jungle while mighty and ambitious nations devour their neighbors even without an iota of remorse or regret for their sinister designs.

1.2.1 Indian Freedom Movement and the Foreign Policy Values

India's civilizational values, its philosophy and culture and the history and heritage of the past several centuries, all have contributed to the formation of an Indian world-view. Of courses, there are paradoxes and puzzles in this long philosophical and intellectual heritage about the place and role of India in the world.

Coming to more modern times, the British colonial rule did shape India's world-view in several important ways: First, leaders of the freedom struggle perceived India's own freedom as being an intrinsic part of the freedom of all other colonized people in Africa and Asia. It was strongly

believed that India must become catalyst for the freedom of all other colonial people. India's own freedom would remain under threat so long as colonialism and racism dominated rest of Asia and Africa. Secondly, Indian freedom movement was based on the values of *ahimsa*, *satyagraha*, and *swadeshi*. Its foreign policy could not have betrayed these articles of faith. Thirdly, India's freedom struggle was a popular movement. The struggle for freedom had brought people – different castes, linguistic groups and communities – into a single unifying national movement. The partition of Bengal in 1905 had greatly agitated the masses. Leaders like Sri Aurobindo Ghosh, Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi viewed freedom movement as popular movement. Over decades, millions participated in protests and resisted the repression and brutalities of the British administration. Fourthly, out of this long struggle emerged certain values, which the entire nation continues to cherish even today: these are the values of equality, non-discrimination, freedom, social justice and development for all the peoples and the nations. Mahatma Gandhi had witnessed racism and apartheid work in South Africa; he was witness to the racial discrimination and inhuman conditions in which Indian indentured labour worked and lived in South Africa. The values that came out of the freedom movement became the guiding principles of Indian foreign policy.

Broadly outlined, such were the circumstances and perceptions which made Mahatma Gandhi and others consider India's struggle as being part of the larger struggle of all the colonized and subjugated people for freedom and independence. "We are particularly interested," proclaimed Jawaharlal Nehru on 7 September 1946 while outlining India's world-view, "in the emancipation of colonial and dependent countries and peoples." He highlighted yet another principle of India's evolving world-view – principle which remains a central norm of Indian foreign policy since independence. Nehru said: "We repudiate utterly the Nazi doctrine of racialism, wheresoever and in whatever form it may be practiced." The world-view developed during the freedom movement was not one of isolation but of active engagement with all on grounds of equality, freedom and sovereignty. Nehru laid yet another principle of foreign policy when he said that independent India will not sever all of its links with the British Commonwealth. An underdeveloped Indian economy could not have cut off all its ties with Great Britain and other English-speaking countries. These economic and trade ties were more than one hundred year old; and independent India needed support of the other Commonwealth for its economic development. In addition, India had close defence ties with Great Britain. Nehru told the Constituent Assembly: "Largely our military apparatus has been influenced by these considerations and we have grown up naturally as something rather like the British Army..... If we break away completely, the result is that without making sufficient provision for carrying on in a different way, we have a period of gap...."

1.2.2 Indian National Congress and the Evolution of India's World-view

British colonial state apparatus, judicial system, an all-India civil service and administrative structure, the census system that enumerated different caste and religious identities, introduction of railways, postal system, a taxation system, introduction of new agricultural crops and setting up of textile mills and factories – all had a unifying effect on India. These changes contributed to the rise of the 'Indian' consciousness and the idea of India as a nation. Indian National Congress itself was the outcome of this growing national consciousness.

Indian National Congress regularly took up international issues for deliberations in its annual sessions. Over time, there evolved the idea of India's world-view about nationalism and internationalism. In 1919, Mahatma Gandhi had come out in support of the restoration of Khilafat in Turkey. Mahatma Gandhi combined an international issue viz. the demand to restore the Caliph of Ottoman Empire with the Non-Cooperation movement which was launched in opposition to the British repression such as the Rowlatt Act and the massacre at Jalianwallah Bagh. In 1920, during the Nagpur Session of the Indian National Congress, Mahatma Gandhi linked the proposal of *Swaraj* with the Khilafat demands; and adopted the non-cooperation plan to accomplish the twin objectives.

As far back as 1921, the 36th Annual Session of the Indian National Congress, held in Ahmedabad under the presidency of Hakim Ajmal Khan, had decided to have a resolution on international developments. Mahatma Gandhi said on the occasion: "Indeed, while we are maturing our plans for *Swaraj*, we are bound to consider and define our foreign policy. Surely, we are bound authoritatively to tell the world what relations we wish to cultivate with it."

The 1938 Hariपुरa Session had resolved to enunciate and incorporate the two cardinal principles viz. universal disarmament and collective security as part of Indian foreign policy at a time when the country was still about a decade away from full freedom. These two principles continue to remain the cornerstone of Indian foreign policy. The Resolution read: "The people of India desire to live in peace and friendship with their neighbours and with all other countries, and for this purpose wish to remove all causes of conflict between them.... A free India will gladly associate itself with such an order and stand for disarmament and collective security." The Resolution went on to note that neither universal disarmament nor collective security is possible under conditions of colonial domination and imperialistic hegemony. The resolution noted that "In order, therefore, to establish world peace on an enduring basis, imperialism and exploitation of one people by another must end."

The 55th Session held in Jaipur in 1948 had the Resolution which declared that Indian National Congress is committed to the goals of promotion of world peace, freedom of all the nations, racial equality and the ending of imperialism and colonialism. After India became independent, the ruling Indian Congress continued to pass resolutions in its annual sessions on India's world-view and

international developments.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) Discuss the genesis of India’s foreign policy.

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1.3 NEHRU’S PERIOD

Jawaharlal Nehru is considered the architect of India’s foreign policy. As the Prime Minister and first foreign minister of the country for a fairly long period of time, he gave such doctrinal as well as operational shape to the niceties of country’s foreign policy whose impacts are felt even after seventy years of independence. There is a view that Nehru was an idealist to the core. And, therefore, the foreign policy that he visualized for the country appeared to be more in sync with his moralist world vision than suited to meet the core national interests of the country. Since Nehru had already asserted India’s strong commitment for Afro-Asian solidarity amidst the onslaughts of the West, the natural corollary of such a stance would surely have been anti-imperialism, anti-colonialism, and greater cooperation amongst the newly independent countries of Asia and Africa. At the same time, when India became independent, international politics was beset with the dark clouds of Cold War which had started engulfing more and more nations. In such a situation, Nehru obviously joined hands with other nations, particularly Egypt, Indonesia and Yugoslavia to evolve the policy of Non-alignment. Non-alignment, conceptually, stands for independence of the developing countries in taking autonomous decisions vis-à-vis global issues and challenges irrespective of the positions taken by either of the two power blocs. Thus, with regard to international relations, Non-alignment, along with its concomitant features, became the doctrinal foundation of Indian foreign policy. Apart from that, staunch belief in the virtues and capabilities of the United Nations as the conscience keeper of international peace and security, in addition to provide for pacific resolution of international disputes, also formed an important aspect of India’s foreign policy. The decision to refer the Kashmir issue to

the UN Security Council in 1948 was taken in accordance with that conviction on the part of Nehru. As far as India's relations with her neighbours are concerned, India's foreign policy during Nehru's period was underpinned by the doctrine of '*panchsheel*'. This policy stands for five cardinal principles which would govern India's conduct with its neighbours. These principles are: respect for each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity; non-aggression towards each other; non-interference in the internal affairs of each other; mutually beneficial relations based on equality; and peaceful co-existence. For Nehru, *panchsheel* was an article of faith and he believed that the neighbours of India, particularly China, would also adhere to the principles of *panchsheel* in letter and spirit. Such an understanding of China's behaviour on the part of Nehru did cost India dearly when she lost her war with her giant neighbour in 1962. Thus, during its formative years, India's foreign policy was more influenced by personal idealism and socialist commitments of Nehru than an unrelenting urge to safeguard the national interests of the country amidst the harsh realities of international politics.

1.3.1 'Nehruvian Consensus'

Scholars and experts on Indian foreign policy do talk of 'Nehruvian Consensus'. 'Nehruvian Consensus' was built around the ideals and principles that had developed in the course of India's struggle for freedom. Anti-racism, anti-apartheid, anti-imperialism were the values that came from Gandhian world-view. Mahatma Gandhi had taken the struggle for freedom beyond mere political freedom: for him political freedom was the tool to attain moral and cultural freedom and regeneration of Indian society and civilization. Nehru had imbibed these Gandhian values and aspirations and combined them with the idea of a modern India – sovereign and independent on the course of rapid economic development to emancipate its people from poverty and hunger and an India that would occupy its rightful place in the comity of nations. Strengthening of multilateral institutions and international law, collective security, diplomacy and dialogue in place of war and coercion, peaceful settlement of disputes, disarmament, non-intervention and respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of a nation were, among others, the principles that came to guide India's relations with other countries. Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhash Chandra Bose and Rabindranath Tagore all had closely watched the intense ideological and political struggle between democracy, socialism and fascism in the period between the two world wars. International relations were being governed between the two world wars by the use or threat of use of brute force; Nehru came to reject this brand of brute power politics. Nehru understood early that the end of the Second World War meant living with the same norms of power politics and use of brute force to settle international matters. He foresaw the working of the same norms behind the unfolding Cold War rivalry between the US and the Soviet Union – hence Nehruvian insistence on pursuing the path of Non-alignment.

While some scholars describe Non-alignment as idealism and empty moralism. Many others regard Non-alignment as based on hard-headed Realism. It was the Realist response of a large-sized country capable of providing leadership to the developing world but which did not have the material capabilities of a great power as yet. India was one country which had refused to bow to the Cold War exigencies of the two super powers and refused to join their ideological blocs and military alliances. In the midst of Cold War, the Nehruvian Non-alignment was the voice of reason and independence where the two superpowers were asking the developing countries to choose sides. Non-alignment was the rejection of power politics, bloc politics, proxy wars, military alliances and arms race.

It remains a matter of debate among scholars to view Nehru as an idealist who sought to base Indian foreign policy on certain ideals; or as a Realist who accorded high importance to diplomacy in order to circumvent the dangers of Cold War and a bipolar world. By grounding Indian foreign policy into the concept of Non-alignment, Nehru had called for changes in the way international system worked and simultaneously guarded India's perceived national interest. Non-alignment ensured autonomy in foreign policy – a precept India continues to hold dearly.

Be that as it may, the 'Nehruvian Consensus' dominated Indian foreign policy in terms of its goals and tools as well as India's world-view for nearly two decades after independence. In an age of bloc politics, arms race, spheres of influence and proxy wars, it was the Non-aligned perspective that guided Indian world-view. The Nehruvian perspective gave India a fairly comprehensive and coherent a view of world affairs and India's place therein.

The debate on 'Nehruvian Consensus' remains unresolved. For some, India's Non-aligned stance in the 1950s and 1960s was highly pragmatic and strongly Realist. This was the best a developing country, saddled with the tasks of national integration, a pluralist democracy and planned economic development could and would have achieved. Votaries of Non-aligned framework argue that Nehruvian approach secured for India autonomy in external affairs and successfully contained the threat of Cold War engulfing India. A Non-aligned stance allowed India to seek US help in India's industrialization and in meeting food shortages while building good relations with Soviet Union. India maintained relations with Pakistan without compromising its stance on the issue of Jammu & Kashmir at a time when Pakistan was a key member of the US-led Baghdad pact. With China, Nehru worked out the *panchsheel* principles and the period of *Hindi-Chini bhai bhai* served national security interests. By rallying the developing world in UN and other international organizations, India was able to impact the way international system worked and brought significant changes in international norms and values. Critics however continue to identify the shortcomings of the 'Nehruvian Consensus'. They say it idealistic and cut off from the harsh realities of international

relations. Nehru ignored national security and led India into defeat in the 1962 India-China war. By 1970s, there were significant changes in the international landscape. For one, the international space that allowed existence of Non-alignment and Nehruvian global diplomacy had shrunk. Cold War had become very intense and nuclear build-up had given birth to the threat of ‘mutually assured destruction’ (MAD). The two super powers themselves were looking for some sort of reduction in their mutual hostility and antagonism through détente. India’s domestic capabilities had also changed by the 1970s. Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi was more of a pragmatist and a practitioner of Realism. She found that times have changed; it was the world of ‘realpolitik’ in the 1970s. More noteworthy, India’s capabilities had grown in terms of military, economic and strategic capabilities. It was a more confident India that went ahead with the signing of the Indo-Soviet defence treaty in 1971; followed it up with the liberation of Bangladesh and, finally, the Pokharan nuclear tests of 1974. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi had changed the mental world-view of India. In a show of diplomatic and political dexterity and acumen, she was able to enlist the support of the entire Non-alignment Movement and the Soviet Socialist bloc in the cause of Indian foreign policy. These changes brought the curtain down on the ‘Nehruvian Consensus’ on India’s foreign policy. The consensus on India’s international outlook and foreign policy choices broke down in the 1970s.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the Unit for tips for your answer.

1) Describe and discuss ‘Nehruvian Consensus’.

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1.4 INDIA’S FOREIGN POLICY DURING COLD WAR

This section covers the evolution and development of Indian foreign during the major period of Cold War in the post-Nehruvian era. During this period, India’s foreign policy was conducted under the

overall guidance of five Prime Ministers – Lal Bahadur Shastri, Indira Gandhi, Morarji Desai, Charan Singh and Rajiv Gandhi. After the passing away of Nehru, Shastri became the Prime Minister of India. Though Shastri's term as Prime Minister was too short to leave any lasting mark on the march of India's foreign policy, his tenure was eventful enough to be missed out in discussing the evolution of India's foreign policy. Similarly, given that Shastri was part of Nehru government that had steered India's foreign policy by that time, conjecturally, it might be argued that he would not have effected major changes in the foreign policy of the country even if he had stayed as Prime Minister for longer times. Anyway, loss of India in the Indo-Chinese war had given an impression, especially in Pakistani army circles that India had turned terribly weak after the war. Therefore, a skirmish that erupted between Indian and Pakistani forces in the Rann of Kutch was escalated to a full-fledged war by Pakistan in 1965. In such a situation, Shastri showed exemplary courage to boost the morale of somewhat demoralized Indian army that eventually resulted into decisive victory of India in the war. Though post war peace parleys at Tashkent did not go well for India and Shastri passed away on the foreign soil, his formidable leadership of India during a period of crisis makes him a heroic figure in both domestic and foreign affairs of the country.

Indian foreign policy witnessed major breaks with the 'Nehruvian Consensus' including Non-alignment and *panchsheel* during the reign of Indira Gandhi. Initially, after succeeding Shastri as Prime Minister of India, Indira Gandhi continued with the traditional format of conducting India's foreign relations. But the limitations of Nehruvian mores of Indian foreign policy became acutely apparent to her during the disturbances in the then East Pakistan and India's tactical response to those circumstances. Mrs. Gandhi was quite clear that India's socialistic preferences had already created apprehensions in the minds of the Americans, especially Nixon Administration. In such a situation, she was apparently left with no option than to compromise, if not shelve altogether, the policy of Non-alignment and align with the Soviet Union. Eventually, India signed a Treaty of Peace and Friendship with the Soviet Union in 1971. In accordance with the provisions of this Treaty, Soviet Union came to rescue of India both in times of Indo-Pakistan War as well as in the UN Security Council. Thus, Indira Gandhi carried out a paradigm shift in the foreign policy of India by attuning it to serve the national interests of the country; and moved it away from Nehruvian idealism. After the Indo-Pakistan War, she signed the Shimla Agreement with her Pakistani counterpart Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and tried to bring the Kashmir issue back from the purview of UN Security Council to that of bilateral negotiations between the two countries. She also went on to dismantle perceived Nehruvian utopia of India remaining a non-nuclear nation for the sake of international peace and security. Accordingly, she valiantly witnessed India exploding her first nuclear device at Pokharan in 1974 to give a message to the world and her neighbours, especially China that India could no longer be taken

as a nation in slumber. Thus, India's foreign policy during the tenure of Indira Gandhi, for the first time, exhibited the traits of Realist premises of foreign policy in which the national interests of a nation matters most, over and above any other consideration, local or global.

Around two years of Janata Party rule under the Prime Ministers Morarji Desai and Charan Singh remained, by and large, uneventful insofar as foreign policy of the country was concerned. After coming to power, though Desai government asserted its opposition to the pro-Soviet tilt in the policy of Non-alignment, it could not carry out any major modification in the Indian foreign policy. Likewise, it was promised that Non-aligned policy will be replaced with 'genuine' Non-alignment, nobody ever described the term 'genuine'. Similarly, during the Soviet intrusion in Afghanistan in 1979, Charan Singh government failed to take any decisive stand on the matter as the stability of his government itself was in doubt. So, probably by default, conduct of Indian foreign policy during the Janata years continued on the same lines outlined during the government of Indira Gandhi. Naturally, after returning back to power in 1980, Indira Gandhi's foreign policy did not experience any break from her previous tenure.

Indian foreign policy was up for certain cosmetic changes with the arrival of Rajiv Gandhi as Prime Minister after the assassination of his mother in 1984. As a matter of fact, Rajiv Gandhi seemed to have had a penchant for resolving long standing ethnic conflicts both within the country and its immediate neighborhood. Thus, while internally, his tenure has been noted for peace agreements such as Assam Accord, Mizo Accord and the 1985 Rajiv-Longowal accord to restore peace in Punjab etc.; on the external front, his most adventurous move that eventually cost his life, was the Sri Lankan Peace Accord. Such an overtly interventionist twist in the Indian foreign policy had been introduced for the first time in the history of India's external relations. In accordance with the provisions of the Peace Accord, India sent its military contingents to Sri Lanka in the name of Indian Peace Keeping Forces (IPKF) to maintain peace in the northern part of that country. This was taken as an assault by India on the liberation movement of Tamils in Sri Lanka, the sole responsibility of which was attributed to Rajiv Gandhi. While IPKF did not fully succeed in achieving the objectives for which it was sent to Sri Lanka, its operations in that country cost lives of a large number of Indian soldiers. Thus, developments in the realm of Indian foreign policy during the tenure of Rajiv Gandhi were quite distressing and harmful to the national interests.

1.5 INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY DURING 1990S

1990s have been a decade of momentous transformations in the international scenario having significant implications for the evolution for Indian foreign policy. It began with the disintegration of

Soviet Union and transformation of international political scenario from bipolar to unipolar. The disintegration of Soviet Union did not provide sufficient time for its close friendly nations to resettle their geopolitical orientations in order to adjust to the novel realities of a unipolar world. India had, indeed, been one of those countries that were taken off guard in the wake of Soviet disintegration. In such a scenario, two cardinal bases of Indian foreign policy – policy of Non-alignment, and Indo-Soviet Treaty of Peace and Friendship – stood the chance of being questioned as irrelevant. Above all, India would have to realign the focus of its foreign policy to meet the challenges of rapid transformations in international arena.

Indo-Soviet treaty had provided a security shield to India. With Soviet Union gone, the government of P V Narasimha Rao came under heavy US pressure to dismantle its nuclear and missile programmes. Thus, during the tenure of Narasimha Rao, Indian foreign policy remained under continued pressure of the US to which it buckled down more often than not.

Amidst these uncertain and fluid circumstances, India faced a severe domestic economic crisis. Simply, India did not have enough foreign exchange to pay for its imports. Rao government launched liberalization of the Indian economy; it was a great shift away from the state-centric strategy of economic development that India had followed since independence. The process of globalization had become universal; countries were liberalizing their economies and allowing greater play to market forces through the process privatization. For India, there was no other way but to move the economy by following liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation (LPG).

In the area of foreign economic policy, Rao government took a major step by announcing the 'Look East' policy. In the age of economic globalization, a liberalizing Indian economy needed to integrate closely with the dynamic economies of South East Asia and East Asia. He opened diplomatic relations with Israel. Importantly, it was under Rao that India began to formulate policy to fight cross-border terrorism and raised it as a security threat in international forums.

An economically weak government faced external pressure. The US, not being the sole super power, resorted to arms-twisting and put pressure on India to open its economy to American exports and business firms. India also came under pressure to roll-back its nuclear programme. India joined the US in co-sponsoring the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and Fissile Material Control Treaty (FMCT). Rao tenure is important as the doors opened, for the first time, for defence cooperation between India and the US.

The second half of the decade of 1990s was the period of coalition governments in India. The general election held in May 1996 produced unstable coalition governments under three prime ministers. Usually, such governments are not in a position to bring about any radical transformation in the foreign policy of the country given the lack of formidable majority with them to defy the existing

consensus on the broader contours of national interests. So, this phase might be argued to be a phase of remarkable continuity in the foreign policy of India. Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee formed a government in May 1996 which lasted only 13 days. United front governments headed by Prime Ministers Deve Gowda (June 1996- April 97) and I. K. Gujral (April 1997- March 98) lasted less than two years. Arguably, they lacked insight or natural acumen to bring about any creative transformation in the foreign policy of the country. Foreign policy moved on the routine outlines demarcated in the past keeping in view the national interests of the country.

However, Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral had vast experience and sharp acumen in understanding international affairs and foreign policy nuances. As Prime Minister, he introduced a novel idea in the realm of Indian foreign policy which is euphemistically called ‘Gujral Doctrine.’ The core of the ‘Gujral Doctrine’ was extension of benefits to neighbours, excluding Pakistan, on non-reciprocal basis. The doctrine had five principles: (i) To neighbours, like Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Maldives and Sri Lanka, India would not ask for reciprocity but would give all it can in good faith. (ii) No South Asian country would allow its territory to be used against interest of another country of the region. (iii) No country would interfere in the internal affairs of the other country. (iv) All would respect each other’s territorial integrity and sovereignty. (v) All disputes would be resolved through peaceful bilateral negotiations.

1.6 INDIA’S FOREIGN POLICY UNDER NDA – I

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government, headed by the veteran parliamentarian Atal Behari Vajpayee came to power in 1998. In a short span of time, Vajpayee led three NDA governments. He had first become the Prime Minister on 16 May 1996 only to resign 13 days later after he lost the majority on the floor of Lok Sabha. Vajpayee became Prime Minister for second time in 1998 but just 13 months later in 1999 he lost the no confidence motion by just one vote. After the fresh elections were held in 1999, Vajpayee took the oath as Prime Minister of India for the third time on 13 October 1999 and remained Prime Minister until the general elections held in May 2004. Thus, NDA ruled with Vajpayee as PM three times in 1996, 1998-99 and 1999-2004. The second phase of the NDA rule began in 2014 with Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the helms and continues after its victory in the general election held in 2019.

In view of the fact that the ideological and philosophical foundations of the Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP) have been laid on the alternative vision of India as compared to Congress, it is natural that the BJP-led NDA governments’ perspectives on various internal as well as external policies would differ from that of the Congress. Yet, it also needs to be kept in mind that foreign policy of a country is, ordinarily, a product of consensus amongst different stakeholders of the country in such a way that

change of government need not effect substantive change in the foreign policy. Nonetheless, the change of guard in the form of the NDA government headed by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee brought in some very significant changes in India's strategic outlook and its practice. Leaving aside the short spell of 13 days, the two distinct terms of Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee would be known for bringing about significant transformations in the foreign policy of India keeping in view the ideological predilections of the party. From the day one, Vajpayee government was in favour of a close cooperation with the United States, apart from maintaining good ties with the Russian Federation. Similarly, the government also tried to pursue a policy of good neighbourly relations with the countries of South Asia, in particular with Pakistan. Finally, Vajpayee's period would always be known for India conducting nuclear explosion at Pokhran in May 1998.

Atal Behari Vajpayee became the PM second time in 1998 leading a coalition government consisting of 13 political parties. But the government could not last beyond 13 months. In the election held in October 1999, the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance was elected again to power with absolute majority.

Nuclear Test: During the first Vajpayee rule for 13 months, NDA gave a push to two initiatives – go nuclear and build closer relations with Pakistan. The BJP has been a great exponent of India going for nuclear weapons. On 11 May 1998, India conducted three nuclear tests at Pokhran in Rajasthan. With Pokhran – II, India declared itself a nuclear weapon state. Soon followed India's 'nuclear doctrine' which had three important principles: voluntary moratorium on further tests; 'no first use'; and 'minimum credible' deterrence.

Analysts have reported that India had first tried to test nuclear weapons in 1982 under Mrs. Indira Gandhi; later Narasimha Rao tried to test nuclear weapons in 1995 but on each occasions, American intelligence found out and put pressure to stop the testing. It goes to the credit of the first NDA government that India did successfully experiment nuclear devices and declared itself a nuclear weapons state; and thereafter has sought to join the nuclear power club as a responsible nuclear state. There was a strong international reaction against nuclear tests but credit to Indian political leadership and the diplomacy that it was able to successfully withstand these criticisms and sanctions which came in the wake of the tests.

Indo-US Relations: There were many developments during the tenure of Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee. After the Pokhran II, India engaged US in a dialogue for improved relations with that country. There was a better understanding on the part of US leadership towards India's growing strategic importance. US President Bill Clinton came to India in March 2000. India was able to convey to the US and other powers its complex strategic scenario which had prompted it to go nuclear. US also showed better appreciation of India's security situation especially in the context of

cross-border terrorism emanating from Pakistan. Besides, a liberalizing Indian economy offered tremendous opportunities to American firms for trade and investment. US also better understood the rising strategic importance of India in the context of the rise of China. India could anchor US in Asia and help in the 'peaceful rise' of China.

Relations with US gained a new strategic dimension after the terrorist attacks in US on 11 September 2001 (9/11). US became aware of the danger of international terrorism emanating from Pakistan-Afghanistan border region. India assured its support to US in the fight against international terrorism. Then came the terrorist attack on the Indian Parliament on 13 December 2001 which further highlighted before the world the threat of cross border terrorism and use of terrorism as a tool by Pakistan against India. Bush administration began considering India a strategic partner for the peace and security in Asia and the wider Indian Ocean region. The large-sized India with its growing economic and military capabilities could anchor US in Asia and the Indian Ocean region as a partner for regional peace and stability. Under Bush, US began a strategic dialogue with India. There were three core issues in the dialogue: civilian nuclear technology; space shield; and trade in dual use technology. Bush administration also lifted several of the sanctions that had been imposed in the wake of the Pokhran – II though other restrictions remained in force. In February 2003, India and US signed a framework agreement to boost trade in high technology area. The dialogue also included aspects of nuclear safeguards and other technology-related safety issues. Then came the civil nuclear energy agreement in 2005 under the next UPA government headed by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

India-Pakistan Relations: Prime Minister Vajpayee said, 'you can change friends, not neighbours'. Realizing this geographic fatalism, he took unprecedented initiative to improve relations with Pakistan. He went on a bus trip to Lahore to meet his Pakistani counterpart, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. After the meeting in Lahore, the Pakistani PM said that it would be the year of decision on the vexed issue of Kashmir. But then came the set-back. In May 1999, Kargil war broke out when Pakistani troops were found occupying heights in Kargil region. Kargil was the first military confrontation between two nuclear-armed countries. There was change of guard in Pakistan. Pakistan Army Chief, General Pervez Musharraf overthrew the elected government of Nawaz Sharif in October 1999. Prime Minister Vajpayee made another attempt at normalization of relations when he invited Pervez Musharraf to Agra in early 2001. The effort did not bear fruits as Pakistan continued to insist on first resolving the 'core' issue of Jammu & Kashmir. On 13 December 2001, came the attack on the Indian parliament. Thereafter, relations deteriorated for a long period. Meanwhile, India became closer to US and sought a strategic partnership.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1. Evaluate India's foreign policy under NDA – I

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1.7 INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY DURING UPA

For ten years (2004-2014), Congress led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) under Prime Minister Manmohan Singh was the custodian of Indian foreign policy. Given the fact that foundational contours of Indian foreign policy have been ordained by Congress governments at different periods of time, there would have been lesser chance of any radical break from the conventional mores of the external affairs of the country. Interestingly, sentimental attachment to a number of foreign policy relics from the past had gone to make the government reiterate its commitment for those features despite their perceived redundancy in the change milieu of international politics. A prominent example of such relic of the past might be said to be the policy of Non-alignment. Thus, it would have been beyond imagination to expect any marked departure from the established norms of Indian foreign policy during the reign of the UPA. However, the long period of UPA rule cannot be said to be uneventful as far as Indian foreign policy was concerned. So, what the UPA government did was to introduce newer elements in the traditional framework of Indian foreign policy to make that in sync with the changing dynamics of global politics. While majority of the creative interventions of the UPA government are novel in nature, a few of them really exhibited certain signs of break from the past in order to make the foreign policy meet the objectives of national interests effectively. Let us examine some of these marked continuities from the past and new departures made in the Indian foreign policy.

One of the major reorientations brought about by the UPA government in the foreign policy of India was the shift of focus from geostrategic to economic goals. In a globalizing world, economic

relations had gained the top priority in foreign policies of all countries, UPA government was no exception; it also sought to use foreign policy as a tool of augmenting India's economic interests in different parts of the world. High rate of economic growth on sustained basis was the bedrock of India's claim as an emerging power. Two remarkable examples bearing testimony to such reorientations might be seen in the policy measures such as the 'Look East' policy and membership of powerhouses like BRICS. While the 'Look East' policy aimed at leveraging India as one of the partners in the spectacular growth stories of the East Asian economic tigers, forums such as BRICS tried to mount a collective effort on the part of non-Western countries to reform the architecture of global governance.

Apart from the economic considerations, Indian foreign policy during the UPA regime made outstanding forays in the arena of restrictive technology regimes to get the country access to these regimes.

Indian foreign policy has become deeply institutionalized since the 1990s. A number of mechanisms and departments do facilitate formulation of policy on long term basis. In a world which is fluid and uncertain, ad hoc approaches or personal choices cannot decide foreign policy decisions. The exigencies of international affairs and unforeseen developments expect foreign policy establishment to remain agile. A large and emerging power needs an agile statecraft to respond to international developments and secure its national interests. Foreign policy under UPA showed a continuity from the previous NDA governments in terms of India's relations with the neighbours and the big powers including the US and Russia. There were several significant foreign policy developments during the ten years of UPA rule.

India-Pakistan Relations: Prime Minister Manmohan Singh met the Pakistan President General Pervez Musharraf on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly session in September 2004 in New York. The two leaders reiterated their commitment to peaceful solutions to all the problems including Kashmir. India's Prime Minister said that in a globalised world, borders should become irrelevant. Several confidence building measures (CBMs) were agreed upon to ease the tension on the border. It led to troop reduction in Kashmir in 2004. Important CBMs in nuclear sector were also agreed upon. The two sides also agreed to discuss their differences over the boundary in the Sir Creek area, where they have a maritime boundary dispute, and the Wular Barrage and Tulbul navigation project. On the negotiation table were also issues such as the demilitarization of Siachen and the Baglihar dam. Among others, the two countries also agreed to bus service between Sri Nagar and Muzaffarabad. Besides, there was the Samjhauta Express train service from Wagah to Attari and later the Thar Express between Rajasthan and Sindh. In 2005, yet another bus service was launched from Amritsar to Nankana Saheb,

A notable feature during this period was popular support on both sides for normalization of relations and resolutions of bilateral differences and disputes. The strong public opinion however could not reduce the trust deficit between the two countries. A number of terrorist incidents put a spanner in the peace process. The summit of the Non-Aligned Movement in Havana in 2006 gave another opportunity for the two leaders to have a summit meeting where they agreed to push the process of dialogue and peace forward.

India-China Relations: UPA government maintained the momentum from the previous government, even gave a push, to the bilateral ties with China. In 2005, Prime Minister Wen Jiabao visited India. The joint statement issued stressed on strengthening economic and trade relations in particular. Wen Jiabao's visit was followed by the visit of President Hu Jintao. India's Defence Minister, Pranab Mukherjee went to China in 2006 where the two countries agreed to improve military cooperation as part of the bilateral CBM process. In 2006, the two sides also agreed to open the trade route at Nathu La pass in Sikkim. Trade was becoming the engine carrying forward the bilateral relations; and in the next few years, China emerged as India's No. 1 trade partner. It remains so in 2019 also. Energy security appeared to be another area of mutual cooperation and for a while in 2005-06, India had its 'oil diplomacy' when the view was that India and China, being leading energy consumers, could jointly seek access to global oil and gas resources.

India-Russia Relations: Leaders of India, China and Russia had an important meeting on the sidelines of the G-20 summit in St. Petersburg in 2008. The process meant gradual convergence of viewpoints on significant global issues such as the need to change international financial architecture and bring other changes in the US and other multilateral institutions so as to reflect the changed power equations in the first decade of the twenty-first century. This strategic convergence led few years later to the formation of the BRIC grouping comprising Brazil, Russia, India and China – the four emerging powers and fast-growing economies – later joined by South Africa making it BRICS.

India-US Relations: India-US relations gathered steam under UPA government. Suffice to say here, the ten year rule of the UPA would always be remembered for the fundamental changes and developments that took place in the Indo-US relation. Significant level of cooperation had already been established between the armed forces of the two countries during the NDA rule. The two sides continued to build during the second phase of the Next Step in Strategic Partnership (NSSP). Under the NSSP, the two countries had concurred that implementation of the NSSP would result in considerable economic benefit for both of them and would also lead to improvement in regional and global economic security. Under the NSSP, the two countries had agreed in January 2004 to expand cooperation in areas of civil nuclear energy; space research; and trade in high technology areas.

A path-breaking initiative in this regard happens to be the India-US Civil Nuclear Deal of 2005 that

was to allow India to join the elite group of countries having open access to cutting edge technologies and supplies in the field of nuclear technology. Implicitly, the deal amounted to US recognizing India as a nuclear weapons state. Indo-US relations became thick though cooperation in the area of civilian nuclear energy remains unrealized. India has not bought as yet even one nuclear reactor under the deal. Thus, Indian foreign policy underwent subtle but significant transformations during the ten years of UPA rule that made it come out of the shadow of Cold War. As a result of the UPA initiatives, foreign policy turned out to be a major instrument of economic cooperation, without losing its primary focus of serving the geostrategic interests of the country.

Check Your Progress Exercise 4

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) Discuss the important landmarks in the evolution of India's foreign policy under UPA regime.

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1.8 INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY UNDER NDA – II

Indian foreign policy seems to have scaled newer heights during the period of the current government headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. After Nehru, probably Modi would have been the only Prime Minister of India who has shown so much of interest and readiness to pursue a vigorous foreign policy. Not only has he used his foreign policy structures including his foreign minister to help execute his vision of an active role of India in the wider international community, he has taken upon himself the responsibility of visiting as many countries of the world as possible in pursuance of his policy of active engagement with all the countries. Probably no other Prime Minister would have visited as many countries on official assignments as visited by Modi.

During Modi's tenure, reputation of India in the international community has surely increased manifold. India's relations with many of the countries such as Japan have marched from routine to

strategic one. India's foreign policy has indeed been able to cut much ice with her neighbours such as China whose top leaders have preferred to visit India frequently. Modi has been successful to harness hitherto untapped supporters for India such as the grand Indian diasporas in so many countries. He has proved his mettle in using soft power to the greatest advantage of India to seek and obtain support of large number of countries in the world.

1.9 LET US SUM UP

Evolution of India's foreign policy has really been a story of reinvention of India's interactions with the rest of the world. Operating within the confines of the domestic and international determinants, Indian foreign policy has been able to help country tide over all sorts of difficulties and challenges facing it as an independent nation. Right from the gripping circumstances of cold war to the contemporary scenario of multi polar world, Indian foreign policy has helped the country serve its national interests to the extent possible. Barring the solitary failure of India's foreign policy in averting the defeat of the country in its war with China, dynamism of India's foreign policy has always secured a respectful place for the country amidst tightest of the situations in the international politics. It must be acknowledged as the contribution of India's foreign policy that the country is now reckoned as one of the major powers in the world whose voices need to be heard on all the major issues of global concern.

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1.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

- 1) Your answer should include the colonial tendency to involve India on foreign soil, creation of department of foreign affairs by Congress, Nehru's penchant for Afro-Asian solidarity, values that emerged out of the freedom movement and articulation of viewpoints on global issues by the Indian National Congress. Your answer should be based on Section 1.2.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

- 1) Highlight the idealism of Nehru, principles that underlined his foreign policy, marginal space for country's national defence. Also, identify the key principles of and the debate around the 'Nehruvian Consensus'. Your answer should be based on Section 1.3.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

- 1) Point out the reorientation in geostrategic outlook of the government of Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, and major breakthrough in Indian foreign policy under his rule. Your answer should be based on Section 1.6.

Check Your Progress Exercise 4

- 1) Discuss the orientation, goals and achievement in the foreign policy realm under the ten years of UPA government. You need to highlight aspects of relations with Pakistan, China, Russia and the US. Your answer should be based on Section 1.7.