

Main Elements of Indian Foreign Policy

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Abstract: Foreign policy of a country generally means its relations with other countries regarding all issues of international relevance like peace, disarmaments, climate change, human rights developments, justice etc. A state tries to control the behavior of other states through its foreign policy. If we study the foreign policy of India firstly we need to know the background conditions or the fundamental determinants which provide the foundations for objectives and principals of foreign policy of India. This paper is examines and analyses the major basic factors which affects the Indian Foreign policy. Foreign policy making is a dynamic process. Normally change of governments does not change the fundamentals of the foreign policy of state. All of them interact and determine the foreign policy. India is the second most popular country and the world's most popular democracy. The basic important determinants shaping Indian

foreign policy will be discussed in detail in this paper

Keywords: Foreign Policy, Sovereignty, Domestic, Integrity, Public Opinion.

Determinants of Foreign Policy: Foreign policy is that part of national policy which the states adopt in relation to other sovereign states. All these states are the components of the international system. They are sovereign, independent and to a large extent cling to the idea of Nationalism. Thus,

- ☐ the sovereignty of the states,
- ☐ their inter-dependence, and
- ☐ their domestic and international circumstances

Are the three elements which generate and determines the foreign policy and its direction. The first element is the sovereignty of the state which determines the principle of safeguarding the territorial integrity of the states. The element of interdependence necessitates the principle of bargaining in

foreign policy as the states endeavour to achieve the maximum possible advantage under all circumstances. The third element, the domestic and international circumstances adds the factor of realism. The foreign policy of all states is based on these three principles.

Principles of Safeguarding the Territorial Integrity: This is the primary duty of a state to protect the property of its citizens and to safeguard their interests whatsoever they are. This duty also involves the concept of security of national boundaries and if necessary to occupy other alien parts of the territory. The state's aiming at the protection of their own territory pursues the policy of status quo. The state's aiming at subjugating occupied or non-occupied territory may be named as pursuing the revisionist policy. The policy of safeguarding the interests of the citizens inside or outside the state is known as policy of "prestige".

Theory of Bargaining: Inter-dependence of the states is an important phenomenon in international politics. All the states big or small are dependent on one another for one or the other reasons. This inter-dependence may result in conflict or cooperation so the

states under these stresses endeavour to create a situation under which international behaviour may not be broken completely. Foreign policy strives to create such a balance with bargaining.

Specific Determinants of Foreign

Policy: The foreign policy of each state is determined by the above mentioned general principles, but it cannot be denied that the states have their own specific interests which necessitate upon the states to adopt different types of foreign policies. These specific interests are termed as factors which help in shaping and moulding foreign policy.

Internal Factors: The internal factors can be divided under the following sub-categories-

- ☐ Historical and National Values
- ☐ Geography
- ☐ Public-Opinion
- ☐ National Capacity
- ☐ The Structure of Society
- ☐ The Political Organization

Public Opinion: Public opinion shapes the foreign policy, provided it is clear and well shaped. It could be significant factor only in developed state. In developing or underdevelopment states either it does not

reflect on foreign policy issues or it is too naïve to play a significant role. Studies of public attitudes conclude that the vast majority of people even in highly literate societies are unknowledgeable, uninterested and apathetic with regard to most issues of world affairs. Other studies suggest that government, university and private programmes that have sought to create wide public knowledge and appreciation of the complexities of international politics have seldom met with success.

The strong opposition of the American public to the government's policy on Vietnam led Nixon to adopt a policy of gradual withdrawal of US forces from Vietnam. With Lord Strong, who was Permanent Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, we may say that the public ventilation of issues of foreign policy, often at awkward moments, hampers the flexibility, resourcefulness and imagination with which diplomatic relations might otherwise be more fruitfully conducted¹⁶.

National Capacity: National capacity means the military preparedness of state, its technological advancement and modern means of communication. The economic

development and enlightened political institutions are also associated with the national capacity. National capacity is the pivot of foreign policy. It determines as well as implements it. In fact, the foreign policy is directly associated with the national capacity. If the state increases its national capacity its foreign policy will need a big change. It will strive to achieve a status of distinction in international relations; if it decreases the state will have to compromise with its poor status. For example, at the end of Second World War Britain became a less powerful state in Europe as well as in the world. This change in national capacity has brought overwhelming diversions in British Foreign Policy.

The Structure of Society: National morale is recognized to be an important element in the power of a state and, therefore, in the successful conduct of foreign policy. It is evident that a homogeneous society makes stronger national unity and morale than a heterogeneous one, sharp division in society-divisions between rich and poor, divisions on the basis of religion, regional imbalances make it difficult for a government to count on

that immediate and nation-wide cooperation from society.

The Political Organization: The internal political structure of a country has an important impact upon the country's approach to international affairs, as is evident from a comparison of the decision-making processes in an absolute monarchy or a dictatorship on the one hand and in a parliamentary democracy on the other. A despotic government has greater power, through censorship and the promulgation of regulations, to prevent the expression of undesirable opinions than a free government does. Indeed, the distinguishing mark of a free government is the very freedom allowed the citizens to express their opinions on public policy, domestic or foreign. There are besides, established institutions such as an elected parliament, political parties and a free press for the expression of opinion.

External Factors: External factors are of two types-

- ☐ Flexible: International Environment, International Organizations, World Public Opinion
- ☐ Rigid: Reaction of the States

International Environment: The establishment of friendly and cooperative relations between nations is the aim of a sound foreign policy, the complexity of task arises from the very nature of international politics. The multiplicity of attitudes and their interactions apart the difficulty of conducting foreign policy arise from the fact that a state has no sure means of controlling the behaviour of other sovereign states. It can persuade, promise or deny economic and military aid, it can threaten another state with the use of force and, nevertheless, it cannot be certain the state will act in the way it desires. There is another source of difficulty. The world is continuously changing, new events and personalities create fresh foreign policy problems for all concerned. To select instances at random, the impact of the October Revolution of 1917, the rise of Communist Power in China in 1949, the rise of De Gaulle to power in France in the fifties and the emergence of new states in Asia and Africa since Foreign Ministers of the time. Yet it has been rightly said that there is both continuity and change in the foreign policies of all states, for every nation also has its history and its traditions. The statesman who

not only merely reacts to events but also acts on his own, anticipating events, has a certain limited advantage over another who is caught by events.

International Organizations: The international organizations have started playing important role in foreign policy formulation. The states have to take a note of international law, treaties and contracts so that their violation may not jeopardize the policies. The Communist China, for a long time, showed utter disregard of these factors and consequently could not secure its due position in the field of international relations. Only after 1971 she recognized their importance and that move on the part of Communist China have introduced new dimensions in international politics.

World Public Opinion: World public opinion is very dynamic element. Like a flicker of light it influences the foreign policies only too occasionally. Only if the domestic public opinion supports the world public opinion it becomes an important determinant of foreign policy. The establishment of democratic institutions, the increase in the standard of living, the scourge of First World War and expansion of education dare pursue

the interests contrary to world public opinion. At least they will pursue only those interests which are not opposed to world public opinion. The opinion is a factor which faces many obstacles in crystallization. The first and foremost is the ideological division of the world in which the acting good or bad of one part become naturally adverse to other part. The role of propaganda, absence of free press and economic backwardness of a large number of states thwart the evolution of a real public opinion.

Reactions of the States: The states have to take notice of the interests of other states while formulating their policies. They will never endeavour to pursue those interests which are totally opposed to the fundamental interests of other states. Hitler in 1939 committed a blunder when he refused to be guided by the British reactions and events ahead with his Polish invasion. The result is well known. Japan's failure in assessing American reactions in Pearl Harbour incident again brought disaster to Japanese policy which had intelligently avoided offending the USA up to that period.

Policy Making Factors: In the formulation of foreign policy, the statesmen including all

other policy makers play a decisive role. As the final shape of foreign policy is the handiwork of these elites, the impact of their views and personality is but natural. Policy makers define the situation not only in terms of conditions abroad, but also in terms of what is feasible bureaucratically. They receive information from various government agencies and the alternatives they consider are often alternatives that have been drafted and debated by lower officials of various government departments

The dictators generally try to change the public opinion in their favour through a controlled press. Leaders like Mussolini, Hitler, Mao-Tse-Tung and Ayub Khan have done the same. Generally the policy makers have to consider internal problems, public opinion, external circumstances and reactions of other states. In these tasks they are assisted by a number of departmental experts.

Foreign Office and Other Services: In the state characterized by a highly developed foreign affairs bureaucracy, there are also unlimited possibilities for foreign officers, military organizations or intelligence agencies

to take actions formulated independently by the top political leadership. In theory, the ministers make the policy and the permanent official merely execute it, but in practice the officials formulate the policy and the ministers are only advice-sender. Neville Chamberlain clashed with the foreign office over his policy of Appeasement, he removed Lord Vansittart from his post of Under Secretary. Nevertheless, where policies are less firm and clashes less pronounced the advice of the officials carries much weight. Foreign policy is not conducted by diplomacy alone, it relies heavily on the scientists who supply them with up to date weapons, on economists and also especially today, on intelligence and propaganda services. In the world of today the weapons are not used, on the contrary, they are produced only to deter. Here the scientists start playing an important role. In the same manner, the governments have to rely upon the information rendered by the intelligence agencies. The role of Central Intelligence Agency of the USA is now open secret. We know from the newspaper revelations that this agency was responsible for the Coup in Chile, invasion of Cuba in 1961, the U-2

reconnaissance flight over Soviet Union and murder of many heads of the government of hostile states.

National Interests & National Values:

National interest is the big concept in foreign policy. These are the aspirations of the state, which are to be achieved through foreign policy. The policy makers are governed by their respective national interests. National interests are the governing factors which loom large in diplomatic conferences, bilateral or multilateral. The interests of one nation necessarily not opposed to the interests of other states. States, in pursuing their national interest are bound to take into account universal ideals and principles of internal national law and morality, such as peace, justice, keeping the nation's word, the sanctity of treaties and non-intervention in other nation's affairs, freedom and a decent standard of living for all men.

Foreign Policy Objectives: The concept of objective, which is essentially an "image" of a future state of affairs and future set of conditions that governments through individual policy makers aspire to bring about

by wielding influence abroad and by changing or sustaining the behaviour of other states. If all the objectives of foreign policy are to be explained by one single word, that word is undoubtedly the 'National Interest', but this word is too ambiguous to lead us to any clear understanding. In principle, the foreign policy is always formulated on the basis of national interests but in practice the policy may drift far off from these goals under the pressure of international environment and power pattern. Policy makers in our era assume that the most essential objective of any foreign policy is to ensure the sovereignty and independence of the home territory and to perpetuate a particular political, social and economic system based on that territory. After self-preservation and defence of strategically vital areas, another prominent "core value" or interest is ethnic, religious or linguistic unity. Irredentist movements, subversion and sometimes racial warfare are often the products of frontiers that divide ethnic, language or religious groups.

Economic Development: The promotion of economic interests of a nation is the fundamental goal in foreign policy as this is

directly associated with state's existence. So the state would always strive to adopt a course of action which brings economic prosperity there by making its armed forces well equipped, citizens much relaxed and state significant factor in international politics. It will be no exaggeration to mention that the national interests are more economic than political and foreign policy more guided by economic factors than by political one.

Conclusion: Given the literacy and poverty of a vast majority of India's population, it is not possible for them, by and large, to get the benefits of the press or parliamentary debates and policy statements. Further, the fact that foreign policy decisions cannot be taken without a reference to the reactions they produce elsewhere and disagreement among various sections of press regarding foreign policy issues restrict the role of press in India's foreign policy making. Lastly, audio-visual means of socio-political education like television, until the eighties being controlled by the state, lacked credibility and could hardly be a satisfactory basis for the effective influence of public opinion on foreign policy

making. Public opinion thus played a reinforcing role in the making of India's foreign policy. Not only the broad strategy of non-alignment, but also all issues relating to imperialism, racialism and military alliances have received the specific support of the Indian people. Thus, for example, India's struggle in the UN against South African apartheid since 1946 received strong support from the domestic public opinion.

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