



## India's changing Foreign Relations with South Asian Countries

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### ARTICLE INFO

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RECEIVED 29 MARCH 2021

ACCEPTED 29 MAY 2021

PUBLISHED 1 JUNE 2021

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### ABSTRACT

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India with her fast development, emerging as an important player and contributor to world political affairs. Though it has its own significance but in certain field of diplomatic relation India needs to maintain a healthy and cooperative relation with its neighbouring countries which at present seems lack. Reasons for such decline in relation are based on political, economic and security concern. In one hand India is rising as a strong power and gradually holding an important position in world affairs but on the other hand somewhere India is losing its regional cooperation with its neighbouring countries which cannot be a good sign for India's long term influence in world politics and also regarding security concern. This article is an analysis about the changing foreign policy of India since independence.

Keywords: Emerging, Diplomatic Relation, World Affairs, Security, Foreign Policy.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The moment India got independence in 1947 and became a sovereign state the country starts international politics and relations with other countries. In the year India became a republic country and the first prime minister of the country told that India stood not only for progressive democracy in our country but also the other countries it's consistently been a part of our foreign policy. Factors that influenced the basic principles of India's foreign policy can be summarized as bipolarization, cold war, arm race, nuclear competition, liberalization globalization privatization, border conflict etc.

## **INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY AS AN INDEPENDENT COUNTRY**

The external affairs ministers remarks at the 2014 Geneva II peace conference to address the Syrian conflict, "India believes that society cannot be re-ordered from outside and that people in all countries have the right to choose their own destiny and decide their own future" (Ministry of external affair 2014), the extend of financial assistance towards democracy, assistance reflects the India's concern.

India apart from being known as the world's largest democracy is also known for her dynamic foreign policy over a period of time. India in many ways can be considered as a rising power in world political and economic scenario. Parrallelly it develops a strong diplomatic relation as a part of foreign policy with other countries. More specifically India's relations with developed countries like never before catch the eye of everyone. India though having conflicting relation with its neighbouring countries, China and Pakistan maintain the diplomatic relation in a very manageable way. Though India always give her best to maintain a good relation with its neighbouring countries due to some reasons the relation always in an uncertain position.

India as a Non - align country

After independence India chose to be a non - align country when the world was



divided into two polar of capitalism and socialism. Nehru's chief contribution to India's foreign policy as well as international relations is the concept of nonalignment. Nehru had dreamt of India as one of the great power which was of the factors that weighted with him in initiating non alignment movement.

From non-alignment era to the moment when India elected as a nonpermanent member of United Nations Security Council in 2020 for the 9th time, India's perspective towards nation's foreign policy has been changed with time, situation or we can say opportunity.

When India adopted non-alignment in 1948 to achieve this objective, India's then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru took necessary measures to bring technological and industrial revolution in the country with foreign assistance from both East and West blocks. In such context India sometime fall in such situation where Nehru reassured to America that there was no chance of India lining up behind the Soviet Union. Even after such clarification America refused to end arm embargo which was imposed on India by America regarding Kashmir issue with Pakistan. With the failure of second attempt to received arm from America when the then India's defense minister H. M. Patel returned with empty hand. India finally received arms in 1949 after the Kashmir issue subsided.

The Chinese aggression in 1962 shocked India and necessitated a sincere reevaluation of its foreign policy and its whole outlook towards the issue of national security and foreign relation. Regarding to this situation of India's foreign relation palmer and Perkins observed:

*"The political and military and psychological humiliation that she suffered at the hands of the Chinese notably reduced India's prestige and influence in world affairs. This has been specially true among nonaligned states and Asia generally. The loss of her great leader, Jawaharlal Nehru deprived India of her chief international spokesman."*



Since then India's foreign policy based on Non-align ideology has been changed in many ways over a period of time. Often question arises if India still following Non-align policy? Does this ideology loss its relevance?

Beyond so many challenges in foreign policy India cope up with the changing international scenario and ensure that it emerge as a rising power to world politics. At one point many international actors also recognized India's emerging growth as never before. It will be not that tough to understand when we have a look over India's engagement with world's influencing organizations where India's contribution is appreciated by world leading nations.

India's perspective towards its neighbouring country can be certainly expressed in "Gujrals doctrine" of 1997 named after the then prime minister I. K. Gujral where India considered herself as a big brother in the region. The doctrine sought to restrain coercive impulses in India's engagement with its neighbouring countries and advised in favor of accepting their internal quirks and flaws. But the nature of Indian foreign policy has been changed with her neighbor countries.

### **INDIA'S POSITION WITH STRONG POWER TO MAINTAIN THE STATUS QUO**

India and QUAD

India's strong position in international relation can be seen in relation with China. India's states create the conflicting situation between the two states such as Doklam conflict in 2017 and in Galwan Region, where without firing Indian and Chinese soldiers engaged in a bloodshed which led to the deaths of at least 20 Indian soldiers in the month of June 2020 is under pressure. But the way India deal with China which sent a strong message that now India will not go to knee down in front of China for any kind of threaten.



The QUAD was initiated in 2007 by the then US Vice president Dick Cheney and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe with the then Australian and India's Prime Ministers John Howard and Monmohan Singh .The group claims that it is established with respect to the international law. India's membership in this group undoubtedly put the country in a strong position of cooperation to stand against china's aggressive behavior in indo pacific region.

QUAD summit were organized on March 12, 2021with a focus on China's growing threat and their predatory actions in the region and around the world. Along with other representatives from United states of America, Australia and Japan the Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi also participated where he talked about unity of democratic values and commitment for free ,open and inclusive indo pacific region among the mentioned countries .He also mentioned positive vision of India's ancient philosophy "Vasudeva Kutumbakam" regard the world as the family. He also mentioned that the countries will work together closer than ever before for achieving our shared values and will promote a secure stable and prosperous indo pacific region.

India may be in a safe position in world politics at present but the growing extensive nature creates threats to its boundary. Over and over again we were ducted about the sources of suspicion and mistrust that are preventing the budding bilateral tries from blossoming .Some of the issues about border dispute may be the claim of china to the Indian state Arunachal Pradesh.

China as other countries considers Kashmir issue as a disputed are between India and Pakistan and the same must be resolved bilaterally by the two country. China's official position is that Kashmir is an issue left over from the history between India and Pakistan and should be left to the two countries to resolve among them. This much is clear and reiterated statement (the Indian Expression, 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2010) but the present



scenario does not represent the china's view once they reveal about the issue and china creating a picture of interested third party to the Kashmir issue related to India and Pakistan.

### **INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY WITH NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES**

India's relation with Afghanistan

Traditionally India has great threat from western part of its boundary. The ruling system in Afghanistan was never in India's favor. But the geographical location of Afghanistan makes Indian government to give thought regarding a friendly relation with the country. Keeping behind all, India emerges as one of the leading donor to Afghanistan by investing in development schemes in Afghanistan with a focus on rural development, education, health. The country is also providing training and financial assistance in the field of cultural, economic, research in agricultural field etc. India needs to invest in Afghanistan to maintain and develop a friendly relation which will help India regarding security concern.

India's relation with Bhutan

Bhutan geopolitics and geostrategic importance to India as a buffer to China makes it one of the most important countries in India's attempt to reach out to its neighborhood. During the independence time India develops a good relation with its neighbouring countries through a Treaty of Friendship with Bhutan in 1949 and Treaty of Friendship with Nepal in 1950. But with the passing of time the friendly relation with Nepal become little conflicting due to border dispute.

In 2014-15 the extended aid of Rs 3,260 crore was down from the 3,926 crore in 2013-14 financial year. In 2015-16 the amount was 5,368 crore. For next two financial years 2016 -17 and 2017-18, it was 3,441 and 2,590 crore respectively. The revised estimate for



2018-19, the aid remains at 2,510 crore and has a slight increasing up to 2,615 crore in 2019-20 financial year. India has been being actively involved in financing much of Bhutan's five year plans. In 2018 India's financial assistance to Bhutan was 68% of the total assistance received by Bhutan from external resources.

Traditionally Bhutan was never lilt to china but it's a growing diplomatic relation between the two countries with sharing of tourisms, Chinese support to Bhutan's students and the Bhutan's growing economic growth may convinced them to go for China's friendship. India needs to enhance its relation with neighbouring South Asian countries and Bhutan cannot be an exception.

India's relation with Nepal

Even with a bird eye we can certainly say that India and Nepal's relation was once considered as one of the most reliable one. Over few years Indian government noticed Nepal's influence by china. The Medhesi crisis( Nepal has accused India of imposing an undeclared blockade triggered by Indian concern about changes to Nepali Constitution, violent ethnic conflict and Nepal's increasing cooperation with China) and boarder dispute between the two countries the relation falls down . India's financial assistance to Nepal spent 1,322.53 crore between 2014-15 and 2017-18 in the country. The aid has not seen any change except a government change in New Delhi. Even in such situation India provide a amounts of 700 crore in 2019-20 to rebuild the relation. The India ministry of external affair declared that India is aiming to develop grassroots infrastructure and in the field of water resources, education and rural community development.

The recent border dispute between the two countries may raise an issue regarding the diplomatic relation between the two countries. India needs to work more on the bilateral relation with Nepal.



## India's relation with Myanmar

Under the NDA government India has renewed its diplomatic policy towards South East Asian countries under the motto of Act East Policy. The aim of the policy is to connect India with South Asian countries. Under infrastructure and connectivity, India is investing on some important projects such as India-Myanmar Thailand trilateral highway and Kaladan Multi modal transit transport project. The project is aiming to connect Kolkata to Sittwe in Myanmar and then from Myanmar's Kaladan river to India's north eastern part.

For the security of the country India need a good relation with Myanmar. China connects with gulf countries (oil reach countries) through the Bay of Bengal and Andaman Sea, so the region became an important point for maritime competition between china and India. The recent development in diplomatic relation between China and Myanmar is noticed with the visiting of China's Prime Minister Xi Jinping to Myanmar after a long break in January 2020. The journey alerts a new geopolitical chapter in the region when China signed 33 agreements with Myanmar. China already signed a project to build China Myanmar corridor by which the country will connect her Yunnan province to Myanmar's southern coast along with Rakhine state. India spent her investment in Myanmar to the field of education, health, capacity building, agriculture, digital connectivity. Between 2014 and 2019, around 1,286 crore was fixed for such developments. Though India is investing in many projects but the implementation process is very slow. India's diplomatic relation with Myanmar needs a boost to counter the geopolitics and geo-economics in the region with China.

## CONCLUSION

India needs to maintain a good diplomatic relation with other countries especially with neighbouring countries. This will help the country to strengthen the security and to



develop an influential soft power. Trade, investment in various fields can be factors which will lead to strong partnership. China's aggressive and coercive steps towards India can be limited to some extent when India will hold a strong position in the region and a good relation with neighbouring countries. At the same time, India's foreign policy needs to be dynamic and liberal.

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