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Introduction

Over the past sixty-odd years, much has been written on India's foreign policy by Indians and on occasion by foreigners. Some of the latter, such as Strobe Talbott, have documented with great flair and depth certain episodes of India's recent international relations.[1] Surveys of Indian foreign policy in the form of linked and unlinked essays have been committed to the page quite recently, including that of Rajiv Sikri.[2] But many Indian books on the topic, even those rare surveys, tend to assume a level of knowledge of India's history, its civilizations, its neighbourhood, and its politics that non-Indians, even ones interested in both the country and the topic, do not often possess.[3] Hence, an outside eye to such a subject may be helpful from time to time.

India is a huge, boisterous nation bursting with optimism for its future, and reaping some early fruits of its profitable engagement with globalization, while struggling to reduce the severe poverty afflicting hundreds of millions of its citizens. Like the USA, India is primarily inward-oriented. Goings on within India, of great local interest and often of some international significance given India's growing weight, could readily absorb the sum total of attention that Indians devote to public affairs. Indeed, K. M. Panikkar, an early practitioner and historian of Indian diplomacy following independence, argued that India has, throughout history, had trouble arousing much interest in the world beyond its borders.[4] This self-absorption, if his analysis is correct, arose in part from the Himalayan range that appears to protect India from the north (although several invaders from the north have accessed India through Afghanistan) and perhaps, a sense that India sufficed onto itself.[5]

But today, we witness an India reaching out: its private sector is doing so aggressively, carving out markets for itself globally, investing widely and taking over industrial and service icons abroad. Nonetheless, corporate India faces frustrations within its home country particularly with regard to business conditions and barriers to effective inward investment, as steel magnate Lakshmi Mittal (of Arcelor-Mittal) and Ratan Tata, leader of the Tata conglomerate, often emphasize with asperity.[6]

I was fortunate to be resident in India during the years in which its striking economic success, albeit displaying sharp inequalities (as was the case with economic growth elsewhere during these years), increasingly drew the attention of the world. The joke in foreign policy circles was that India had been emerging for so long that one despaired of it ever completing the process. But the rise of major powers is always a progressive business—as is their decline—accelerated at times by tectonic shifts in relative global power and influence, of which the economic crisis of 2008–10 may prove to be one.

The size and population of India is now complemented by sufficient economic progress as to guarantee it a place at the global high table of influence. With the elevation of the Group of 20 to the level of leaders in 2008 as the key assembly of globally significant countries, India was offered an opportunity to play a major role. Even earlier, it had joined Brazil, China, Mexico, and South Africa as a 'dialogue partner' of the Group of Eight, the forum for policy discussion among leading industrialized countries. While at the G-8, India and the other guests playing a subsidiary role found their unequal status grating, if not insulting. In contrast, at the G-20 they were not only equals, but clearly mattered more than a number of the Western participants in economic global discussions. For India, this was particularly so during the sharp global financial and economic downturn of 2008–9 because the Indian Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, a distinguished economist, was internationally recognized as the man who had led India's major economic reforms initiated in 1991 that sparked its higher growth. At the G-20 table, when Dr Singh spoke, in his understated manner, all listened.

Thus, it was India's economic significance that lent weight to the country's international profile. Its foreign policy, regional concerns, and geostrategic views were largely unknown to the rest of the world, as they are to most Indians, who remain overwhelmingly preoccupied with the struggle for improved conditions within their own country.[7]

However, as of 2008, its international relations mattered more (at least to non-Indians). In that year India escaped from the partial international purdah into which its 1974 nuclear test and to a lesser extent its 1998 tests had consigned it, thanks to multilateral acceptance of its nuclear cooperation agreement with the USA. Thus, the timing of this volume, and others by authors more accomplished than I, in the months ahead, several of them Indian, might make it somewhat more than normally useful.

Methodology

This volume's methodology is rooted in a review of the literature, both academic and more general. It is informed by an awareness of some of the

scholarly theoretical debates of our time in the discipline of International Relations and how they have been applied to India, but this volume offers no theoretical arguments or frameworks of its own. India's development has successfully defied so many historical burdens and challenged so many long- and comfortably held assumptions that theoretical straitjackets are unlikely to fit this particular case. The volume is both historical and empirical in its roots and inquiring in its aims. Its conclusions are tentative (as those of any contemporary chronicler need to be).

Approach to the literature

Much of the Western literature on Indian foreign policy is self-referential: Westerners citing other Westerners, as if most work of value were written outside the region and countries involved. It is a habit of mind in the West that those whose opinions matter are to be found in the leading Western capitals, universities, and publications. Although there are indeed books, chapters, and articles of great relevance and acuity touching or centred on Indian foreign policy authored in the West, the writing most influential in the formulation of Indian foreign policy and in shaping Indian views thereof is, of course, Indian. Most of it is available in fluent, elegant, and lively English. Thus, one of my objectives from the outset has been to draw mainly on Indian authors and policymakers in the drafting of the chapters that follow. Likewise, I sought out research assistance principally from brilliant young Indians, and, of course, was richly rewarded—they not only thought differently from me, but better, and came to different conclusions, often more interesting ones. Engaging my topic mainly through Indians, on the page and in person, has been a tremendous education for me.

The number of Indians writing authoritatively in English on Indian foreign policy is relatively small (perhaps twenty or so, with valuable occasional contributions from others). These include Indian practitioners (nearly always retired ones), Indian scholars teaching in Indian and Western institutions, members of several leading Indian think-tanks, and, to a larger extent than I had anticipated, several Indian editors and scholar-journalists. As well, Indian historians, economists, legal scholars, and practitioners, and some leading private sector voices, have a great deal of value to contribute to the discussion of Indian foreign policy. Many of these are cited in the pages that follow or included in the bibliography (which I have limited for reasons of space to core texts and more recent books of which the reader may not yet be aware). As I was concluding my work on this volume, a tremendous and now indispensable resource for all those interested in the domestic setting for India's international relations was published in the form of the *Oxford*

Companion to Politics in India, edited by Niraja Gopal Jayal and Pratap Bhanu Mehta. It can be warmly recommended to experts and neophytes alike, and contains excellent chapters on India's foreign relations and its defence policy by Kanti Bajpai and Sumit Ganguly respectively.[8]

To this number of persuasive Indian writers on their own foreign policy should be added a number of other non-Indian voices that command a degree of attention within India. But the number is small.[9]

In the era of internet transmission and instantaneous e-mail communication, debate among analysts of Indian foreign policy, some of them dotted around the world, is constant, illuminating, and exciting. They read each other's ideas and riff off them frequently.[10] With these friends, it was a huge relief to be able to discard my diplomatic guise.

Of course, the frenzied pace of information exchange and the immediacy of opinion published the world over today creates a risk that the urgent will trump the important, and that event-driven analysis will displace identification of trends and in-depth ideas developed painstakingly over time. I have tried to circumnavigate these pitfalls by taking my time, over three years, before concluding this manuscript. But it is still much influenced by recent events and doubtless suffers from the myopia of contemporary history.

While many of the ideas and events I cite are drawn from scholarly work, Indian journalism is so astoundingly prolific and its editorial and commentary pages sufficiently stimulating, that I have also drawn on them quite often.[11] India offers the reader a dozen or so high-quality dailies in English and others in the country's many vernacular languages, some national in ambition and distribution, others more regional (such as Chandigarh's excellent *Tribune*). However, as any other, the Indian media also suffers from limitations: it engages only fitfully with the rest of the world and tends towards analysis on issues international strictly in terms of India's perspectives and interests. Raju Narisetti, founding editor of an exciting new economic and business-oriented daily in India, *Mint*, from 2006 to 2008, and earlier Editor of the *Wall Street Journal Europe*, today Managing Editor of the *Washington Post*, comments:

> Much of the coverage, often in editorial pages and columns, is rooted in extreme navel-gazing and significantly influenced by a small coterie of sources among New Delhi bureaucrats and suffers from a lack of dispassionate analysis of India's influence. Even among the few writers based outside India providing copy to major Indian media organizations, much of the sourcing is based on officials at Indian embassies and, in recent years, on Indian trade and advocacy groups. The notion that to be critical of India's foreign policy, with a few obvious exceptions, is to be negative, even downright unpatriotic, is widely shared among correspondents and editors focused on India's foreign affairs.[12]

Despite this, and the fact that quality, aims, political orientation, and presentation of each newspaper vary, several tremendously impressive editors (and perhaps a half-dozen powerful publishers) bestride the profession as a whole. To read a hard copy of *The Hindu*, the *Indian Express*, or the *Asian Age* in the days when M. J. Akbar still held sway there, is to marvel at the creativity, intelligence, and skills that a superb editor can display, as opposed to the more mundane satisfactions available online when merely organized and presented by a web-master. Leading Indian newspaper publishers of ambition allied with editorial flair include Shobhana Bhartia of the *Hindustan Times* and Aveek Sarkar of the Kolkata-based *Telegraph*. Editors of singular achievement include N. Ram at *The Hindu* and Shekhar Gupta at the *Indian Express*, each of whom displays tremendous substantive range.

For this reason, I have gone on subscribing to hard copies of these newspapers and several of India's often very impressive English-language magazines, notably *Frontline*, *Outlook*, and *Tehelka*, the latter an admirable insurgency against the complacencies of the urban elites. As well, many rewards are to be found in India's iconic and historic *Economic and Political Weekly*, to which several of my friends, notably Sanjaya Baru, contribute. But as its impressive editors make few concessions to the casual reader, serious engagement with this publication is reserved mainly for those with time and commitment on their hands. To be distant from India is to miss out on the frequently excellent television talk-shows focused on public policy, and quite often on foreign affairs, with such well-informed hosts as Karan Thapar and Barkha Dutt.

The Relevant Indian actors

This volume draws on the voices of many Indian protagonists, some of them quoted from the media, others consulted directly. During my tenure in Delhi, I was fortunate to have access to many of the country's leading figures in politics, public service, business, the academic world, media, civil society, and the arts, and most remained available to me during the years I was developing this volume. They fall, very broadly, within the following categories.

The politicians

As highlighted in the next few chapters, Indian politics are dominated by domestic concerns, including internal security. Both houses of the Union parliament sometimes participate in major debates on international matters, generally in relation to neighbourhood issues (including often vexed relations with neighbours such as China and Pakistan). Occasionally, they debate

issues relating to India's relations with a great power, as was the case, with high drama, in 2008 on India–USA nuclear cooperation.[13] A number of individual parliamentarians, several of them cited in these pages, through inclination or because of current or past professional engagement, are deeply knowledgeable on the world at large, and India's web of ties to it.[14] But they represent a small fraction of India's political class, even more so when state-level politicians are factored in. Only a limited number fully master English, and thus, international interaction is difficult for many.

Most Indian Prime Ministers holding office for more than a few months have stepped on to the world stage, but only the first among them, Jawaharlal Nehru, really bestrode it.

With India's role in international relations growing, this may change. Dr Singh, the current Prime Minister, enjoys significant international credibility on economic issues, and his determination to see through India–USA negotiations on nuclear cooperation between 2005 and 2008 caught many a foreign analyst's eye. But it is too early to pronounce on a tenure not yet completed, and some critics wonder whether his attention to international relations has come at the expense of policy innovation within the country itself.[15] In domestic politics, Dr Singh operates largely in the shadow of the Congress Party leader, Sonia Gandhi, the widow of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, initially derided by her opponents as an Italian-born neophyte but who has seen them all off with, to date, a sure-footed and consensual style. Doubtless the most powerful woman in the world today, she focuses resolutely on the Indian internal sphere, occasionally receiving visiting foreign dignitaries, sometimes travelling abroad, but always signalling that foreign policy is not her game.[16]

For Indian politicians, by and large, as in other great nations, foreign policy pales relative to domestic political and security concerns.[17] Indeed, the historian and political analyst Mahesh Rangarajan notes that security and identity are the foreign policy issues of greatest resonance in wider Indian politics. This plays out in different ways with respect to relations with two important neighbours:

> In the case of Pakistan, the key ideas in conflict relate to a state constituted along religious lines versus another with a plural idea of nationhood. With China, it is less an issue of identity than one of who will be the premier power in Asia. Rivalries with each involve pride as much as security.[18]

Indian Foreign Service and other officials

Foreign policy professionals in India, like their counterparts abroad, love to believe that they control the foreign policy game, the intricacies of which only

they sometimes master completely. In fact, as in most democracies, it is political leaders who rightly make the key decisions. This is nowhere more true than in India, where the knowledge and skills of professionals are a considerable public asset, but where the political class dominates on key files, as was the case with Nehru sixty years ago and as is today, with Sonia Gandhi and Manmohan Singh sharing power, the former preoccupied with domestic politics, the latter more with the realm of policy.

Because India's domestic economic and social concerns are so urgent and daunting, only a small number of other Cabinet members (and occasionally Ministers of State) devote serious time to foreign policy, and generally only do so because their portfolio requires it. The foreign minister, when a strong figure, as so often has been the case, is involved in many key decisions, as are, less frequently, the Defence, Finance, and Commerce ministers.[19]

In recent years, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) has built up a staff of its own to formulate and conduct, in partnership with the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) but with more power than the latter, India's foreign policy. A number of the advisors in the PMO, several of them retired MEA mandarins, have achieved enviable influence. Others have hailed from the intelligence agencies or the defence establishment. Neither of India's most recent two Prime Ministers (Singh and Vajpayee) came to office with much experience of foreign policy, although Dr Singh had led a peripatetic and distinguished life abroad as an economist. But both men took key foreign policy decisions and were prepared to stake their reputations thereon (regarding the USA and Pakistan respectively).

The Indian Foreign Service (IFS), a much fabled institution, feared and respected in equal measure—and loathed by some—is, along with the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), perhaps the proudest embodiment of India's public service, both as an ideal and in performance. However, the MEA is comparatively small in its number of authorized positions at home and abroad. Its headquarters staff work punishing hours, not least preparing the visits of the many foreign dignitaries laying siege to Delhi in ever growing numbers as India's importance has expanded. Perhaps because of these pressures and also because even many thoughtful people dislike grand schemes, India's foreign policy has tended to be reactive and formulated incrementally, case-by-case, rather than through high-minded in-depth policy frameworks.

The MEA is one of the world's few foreign ministries to remain genuinely powerful within the wider bureaucracy. It is consulted by other ministries and retains significant blocking power. But due to staffing constraints and the press of daily business, its capacity to mobilize the rest of the Indian senior bureaucracy to support its own goals (where these have been articulated) is limited.

The quality of the IFS personnel is among the highest in the world, along with that of the UK and, increasingly, China.[20] Indian professionals, like their Brazilian counterparts, train hard and compete fiercely for entry into their Foreign Service and must perform spectacularly in order to advance to the greatest heights (although lingering Indian notions of seniority by years in service for intermediate promotions baffle many outsiders). US diplomacy, often supported by remarkable professionals and political appointees alike, is sometimes undermined by appointment of otherwise ill-prepared political campaign contributors, some of whom reflect very little credit on Washington.[21] Russian foreign policy professionals are often breathtakingly knowledgeable, and equally often amusing in private, but their purpose is sometimes less clear than their competence. France has been very well served in India by professionals with a strong sense of French interests and admirable realism about France's place in the Asian world view and how to make the most of it.[22] Australians, more narrowly harnessed to the promotion of economic interests, are often very effective.[23]

Of course, individual personalities vary as much in India as elsewhere. The outside view of Indian diplomats in vogue thirty years ago as hard-working, well-informed, and sometimes brilliant but also often sour, superior, and antagonistic, has given way today to a more cosmopolitan, entertaining, self-deprecating if still highly intelligent and hard-working cadre that is displacing remnants of the earlier order. The MEA, thus, is a microcosm of India at its best, in all of its variety, although innocent bystanders will occasionally be stung by the withering contempt of its denizens for those deemed unworthy of higher consideration.

Warm tribute is paid here to the large and distinguished cadre of retired IFS officers, including former Foreign Secretaries, such as Salman Haidar and Krishnan Srinivasan, who have contributed greatly to scholarship.[24] Many of them are quoted and cited in the pages that follow. Particularly in the absence of a sizeable contingent of younger foreign policy scholars until recently, they have largely shaped the received wisdom on independent India's foreign relations, while greatly enriching the record of events in days gone by.[25]

The defence establishment

India harbours a large and proud defence establishment, in many ways more committed to and successful at defending and upholding their 'corner' of the government apparatus than their IFS counterparts. For one thing, there are many more retirees of the Indian Armed Forces and others with deep knowledge of defence issues. As well, the various Defence colleges and training institutes provide occasional and permanent employment for many younger individuals as well as retirees, often winning them over to Defence and wider

security perspectives. India's Armed Forces, admirably and in sharp contrast with those of several neighbouring countries, have always remained under civilian control. However, perhaps in exchange, India's government has allowed the Armed Forces to look after themselves in enviable style. (The military cantonment is generally by far the most impressive quarter of any secondary Indian town, bespeaking the traditions and standards that the Indian military likes to uphold.) The real estate holdings of the Indian Armed Forces, if sold, would raise a pretty penny.

That said, beyond the ceremonial realm and the international peacekeeping in which India has generally distinguished itself, there is much debate about the actual competence and the effective levels of training of junior ranks of India's Armed Forces. Their performance under pressure in India's northeast and in Kashmir has frequently been criticized by the Indian media and by human rights organizations. The Air Force and, particularly, the Navy rather than the Army are seen as the star performers. The Navy displays internationally the best of India's military traditions allied with entrepreneurship, flair, fine training, and a keenness to engage foreign counterparts in friendly (if sometimes competitive) joint manoeuvres. And it is the Navy that is carrying India's standard forward internationally in an ever wider radius.

India's Defence establishment projects its influence into public debate through a number of think-tanks and institutes, frequently onto the commentary pages and into television coverage, in spite of the modest overall resources India devotes to defence. (India's official defence expenditure is restricted to 2.6 per cent of GDP).[26] As elsewhere, many of those commenting on public affairs from a security perspective adopt hawkish views (for example, on Pakistan and China). But this is not universally true, as Commodore (Ret.) Uday Bhaskar and the still youthful Colonel (Ret.) Ajai Shukla, a noted television and print media personality, illustrate in their frequent public interventions. Some security commentators take a dim view of virtually all foreign powers in terms of the compatibility of their policies and interests with those of India. The articulate and incisive Brahma Chellaney, an equal opportunity critic of the USA, China, and Pakistan (with a curious soft spot for Russia), springs to mind under this heading. Others seem mainly to fear that specific threats are being ignored. G. Parthasarathy, an accomplished former Indian envoy to Pakistan and to Myanmar, for example, is a frequent and sharp critic of Delhi's response to security threats from China and Pakistan.[27]

Underpinning much of the commentary is the belief that the Indian government simply does not give enough attention or priority to India's internal and international security. Certainly, most observers would agree that this has been true at least with respect to internal security.

Nevertheless, one significant shift emerges from several chapters of this volume: after years of selective engagement with, and studied indifference

to a number of multilateral forums (including several Asian ones thought to be dominated by the USA), India today is engaging on all fronts in all regions.[28]

India's international economic team

Until recently, India's sway in economic diplomacy was mainly on display through the individual efforts of Indians and Indian émigrés providing yeoman service within such multilateral bodies as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and various agencies and programmes of the United Nations, current Prime Minister Singh being one such in decades past. Now and then, an Indian diplomat would provide strong leadership on a multilateral economic negotiation, as did T. P. Sreenivasan in the run-up to the Earth Summit on the environment in Rio de Janeiro in 1992.

But today, as India spreads its wings in economic as in wider diplomacy, names hitherto familiar only to small bands of specialists are becoming more widely known. Kamal Nath, Minister of Commerce and Industry of India, 2004–9, emerged as one of the key figures of the Doha Round of trade negotiations under the umbrella of the World Trade Organization (WTO), as detailed in Chapter 11. During many of these years, India's Commerce Secretary, Gopal Pillai, was regarded internationally as a model of the self-effacing but tenacious and highly knowledgeable negotiator.[29] Indian Executive Directors at the IMF and the World Bank, while laying claim to a greater role for India, have also increasingly contributed to key policy development processes. For example, the Deputy Governor of India's central Bank (the Reserve Bank of India—RBI), Rakesh Mohan, working with a Canadian colleague, Tiff Macklem, played an important role in fleshing out policy options on issues of regulation and transparency during the depths of the 2008–9 global economic crisis. They produced a report that was much praised by ministers and officials of G-20 countries. India's 'Sherpa' (the personal representative of a national leader) in the G-8 and G-20 processes, unusually one enjoying Ministerial rank, Montek Singh Ahluwalia, was recognized as singularly qualified and effective. Thus, India's profile in multilateral economic diplomacy has already risen and will continue to do so.

Others

Mixing in with the actors above are a number of influential commentators (often either academics, members of India's leading think-tanks, or retired officials), retailing their opinions with flair on editorial pages and on television screens. Many of these are cited in the pages that follow.

Scope and organization of the material

The scope of the topic is vast and daunting. This may explain the few scholarly attempts at surveying Indian foreign policy of late. Most authors, even memoirists, tackle one or a few of the themes of Indian foreign policy of interest to them, often ones that were particularly salient during the period covered. Picking just a few angles is, in many ways, easier than attempting to order the features of Indian foreign policy as a whole. The latter allows for the inclusion of many issues and relationships but requires the exclusion of others, a painful business, particularly for an author having delved into more than can be conveyed in a book of reasonable length.

Inevitably, this volume slights a number of India's partners, in an attempt to avoid the deadening effect that a cataloguing of bilateral relationships or Indian involvement in a myriad of multilateral institutions would produce. Hence, the following chapters, in both what they include and exclude or touch upon only tangentially (for example, my own country Canada), represent a debatable set of choices of the countries, forums, and diplomatic processes that have mattered the most to post-independence India, do so today, or are likely to emerge as dominant in the near future.[30] Accordingly, India's relations with Latin America and the Caribbean as a whole are not discussed at length (in spite of strong Diaspora links with the Commonwealth Caribbean and increasingly meaningful economic links with Brazil, Mexico, and Chile). Likewise, India's relations with much of Africa, long seen through the prism of Indian trading communities spread around the continent, particularly along its shores, are addressed mainly through the prism of India's growing anxiety about its access to the natural resources for which its economy will increasingly hunger.

While the pages of this volume develop only a few major themes, each chapter ends with some conclusions deriving from its earlier paragraphs, a drafting device more helpful perhaps to the author than to the reader.

A discussion of contemporary Indian foreign policy would make little sense without situating it within the wider flow of Indian history (throughout which certain key Indian characteristics relevant to foreign policy emerge), and this is attempted in Chapter 2. Chapters 3 (on Indian domestic politics and security drivers in relation to foreign policy formulation) and 4 (on India's economy and its role in shaping India's contemporary international relations) both contain significant historical sections that cover much of the post-1947 ground, some of which is also attempted in the chapters on individual and regional partners and on India's approach to international organizations and groupings.

Among the basic decisions attending the planning of this book was whether to devote a chapter to Pakistan or to fold Pakistan into a wider discussion of

India's neighbourhood. I chose the latter course. Any country's preoccupations nearly inevitably involve immediate neighbours. The amount of space devoted to Pakistan, in this volume, may slight both the importance of and interest in this subject and, to a degree, the acuity within international relations writ large of its relationship with India. Yet, as India has been growing, particularly in the economic sphere, and as it has trained its aspirations on wider Asian and global ambitions, the place of Pakistan in its preoccupations has shrunk somewhat. Of course, India itself contributed significantly to shrinking Pakistan in 1971 when its military intervention allowed the emergence of an independent Bangladesh from the wreckage of East Pakistan. The cautious nature of India's military engagements with Pakistan since then, particularly India's carefully calibrated and low-key response to Pakistan's adventurism on the Kargil heights in 1999, suggests that an uncontrolled full-scale war between the two countries is today less likely than ever (barring the accession to power in Pakistan of radical individuals or groups).

Three major preoccupations and an important partner

A discussion of Pakistan along with India's other neighbours brings out several characteristic Indian pathologies when dealing with neighbours—some already fading into history, others still topical. This accounts for a long Chapter 5 on India's immediate neighbourhood, the first of its three major foreign policy preoccupations. It raises questions not just about India's management over time of its subcontinental links with such often resentful and sometimes unhelpful neighbours as Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka, but also how it has factored in historically and geostrategically important ties with Afghanistan and Burma. The relative paralysis of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), a forum created largely by India, suggests the absence of an overall plan and a largely reactive approach to regional developments. However, the chapter notes a much gentler approach to managing regional bilateral relations today than was evident in the 1980s.

Its second major preoccupation, China, warrants a Chapter 6 of its own. It outlines the history of ties and conflicts dating back to the emergence of the Communist regime in China and Nehru's early quest for comity with other developing countries. Against this backdrop it touches on tensions over border issues along the McMahon line in the east and the Aksai Chin area further west that precipitated war in 1962; friction over Tibet; China's support for Pakistan; and the ebb and flow of mutual suspicion and preoccupation with the motives and aims of other powers in the region (notably the Soviet Union and the USA). In doing so, it sketches a relationship defined more by economic cooperation and competition today (although the degree of geostrategic and regional rivalry between them also remains relevant, and at times disturbing).

With reference to Indian policy, M. J. Akbar writes:

> The principal element of India's strategic thinking should be built around an analysis of the ideological struggle on the subcontinent against democracy and secularism being waged by those who believe in theocracy and split-personality governance (half obedient to the citizen, and fully obedient to a partisan view of God). The success of the Indian model of nation-building, around democracy, secularism, gender equality and economic equity, will influence events in the region, compelling those who believe in alternative models to work for the destruction of secular democracy by war against its vulnerable aspects. India's wider foreign policy merges seamlessly into such a regional policy, since similar tensions are visible elsewhere too. It is not accidental that China, a party dictatorship, is inimical to the Indian model, and finds a partner in Pakistan, which is trapped in uncertainty between fundamentalism and democracy.[31]

Not only is China a direct neighbour, but it constitutes Delhi's only convincing rival in Asia and is currently more successful economically and more powerful militarily than India. Further, India's unexpected border war with China in 1962 yielded outright defeat for Delhi (unlike its more successful military engagements with Pakistan). The relationship today is complex—growing fast economically, but contentious in other spheres. Outright military conflict of any serious proportions seems highly unlikely, as both governments are focused on economic expansion, and, in any event, quite prudent by nature, but their competition with each other touches on many other countries (and several continents), and spurs policy innovation by both. Nevertheless, Indian resentments linger and may prevent India from 'taking a page out of China's book' on some issues, even where it could do so to its own advantage.[32]

The third major preoccupation of Indian foreign policy decision-makers and analysts of late has been its emergence as a major actor on the global stage, offering a development model that for some years now has been strikingly successful and has achieved sufficient economic heft to matter significantly in the world economy (a judgement reinforced by India's strong performance during the recent global economic and financial crisis).

India's effort to establish a meaningful partnership with two other leading democracies in the developing world, each a dominant actor on its own continent, under the banner of the new IBSA (India, Brazil, South Africa) group, working hard to build content into the concept, is an imaginative way to give practical expression to the idea of South–South cooperation, too long an empty vessel. Its emphasis on democratic kinship within this formation, which might be taken as a dig at China, should perhaps also be seen as an effort by India to develop a 'soft power' component to its diplomacy, moving beyond India's civilizational pull and recent economic success as its principal

calling cards in its relations with other developing countries. However, placing many bets on different playing fields, India has also courted the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), participated in BRIC Summits, and formed groupings of convenience. Indeed, India's international interests suggest that it can be useful, at times, to draw in partners as diverse as Australia and Mexico.[33]

This third preoccupation, with India's wider role in international relations, runs through the book but comes into focus in Chapter 11, which seeks to cover aspects of India's 'emergence', or, more appropriately, re-emergence to the prominence it used to enjoy among key powers in the centuries before colonization. It does so by weaving into the story of India's approach to international organizations since independence an account of its efforts to make a mark on several specific issues, including UN Security Council reform, multilateral trade negotiations, and international discussions on climate change. These themes return also in the volume's conclusions, in Chapter 12.

The India–USA relationship, addressed in Chapter 7, is a historically contentious and counterproductive one that has been largely transformed in recent years, an improvement pregnant with potential implications for both countries and also for other regional and global actors. India today is concerned that the Obama Administration may not be taking it as seriously as did the George W. Bush and Clinton Administrations before it.[34] But, with the relationship having graduated to a new level of mutual understanding (although perspectives and interests still conflict at times), Washington has needed to tend to other, more urgent or disturbing issues. And, while welcoming improved ties with India, some in the Obama team may well consider them yesterday's news, if no less useful for that.

The chapter documents the difficult path towards this rapprochement, marked by a degree of anti-imperialist prickliness on India's part, and a large dose of condescension in Washington during the Cold War. This was further complicated by the US penchant for Pakistan, a puzzling choice in hindsight (although a rational one in the narrow terms in which it was framed during the Cold War). In engineering the unshackling of India from its nuclear pariah status, imposed after its nuclear test of 1974, the USA needed to overcome aspects of the non-proliferation regime it had itself set in place to punish India and to discourage any further proliferation. These were ultimately an unsuccessful set of arrangements as demonstrated by subsequent developments in North Korea and Pakistan—and perhaps soon in Iran. The negotiations were thus difficult on both sides, as India could neither renounce its nuclear capabilities nor its historic decision to seek strategic parity with China after the 1962 war; nor could the USA lightly cast aside non-proliferation arrangements it had earlier deemed essential. Thus, talks first engaged between

Washington and Delhi under President Clinton and Prime Minister Vajpayee in the late 1990s (after further nuclear tests by India, followed by an echoing set in Pakistan) only came to full fruition a decade later, in 2008, at the tail end of the tenure of President Bush and of the first term of Prime Minister Singh. US motivations may have been as much commercial as geostrategic (American companies having taken early note of India's budding economic renewal as of the mid-1990s), but the political rewards for India, and perhaps also for the USA, have significantly altered the positioning of players on the global chessboard, contributing to India's quest for a place among the great powers of the twenty-first century.

Some other relationships

Chapter 8 deals with what is mostly referred to as the Middle East, but which Indians think of as West Asia, a regional designation making clear that this geostrategically critical area also lies in India's own extended region. During the years of non-alignment, India's diplomacy cultivated Iran (not least as a counterweight to Pakistan), and those Arab countries already independent. India's focus on Iran has not wavered, but as economic change and various conflicts in the region reshaped regional alliances (official and *de facto*), India's policy evolved strikingly as of the early 1990s, with the establishment of diplomatic relations with Israel, soon followed by the development of very meaningful economic and military procurement ties with that state. The chapter charts India's nimble adaptation to changes in a region it could do little to affect directly, and concludes with India enjoying positive relations with virtually all countries of the area, no small achievement. For reasons of authorial convenience, this chapter also briefly discusses Indian ties with the Maghreb countries which are both African (rather than Asian) and Arab, as well as its important ties with Egypt, the Gulf, and (historically) Iraq.

On India's other side, Chapter 9 examines India's relationship with the rest of East and Southeast Asia, touching on robust economic ties with South Korea, a cordial but substantively sub-par relationship with Japan in spite of complementary economic strengths, complex and rapidly developing relations with several of the countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), including several Free Trade arrangements and 'strategic partnerships', and occasional references to Australia and New Zealand. In spite of India's 'Look East' policy launched under Prime Minister Narasimha Rao in 1992, the development of substantive ties with its Asian partners to the east for nearly a decade thereafter remained largely episodic and improvised, perhaps due in part to India's cautious approach to multilateral entanglements (for example, initially with respect to ASEAN and to the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum). Nevertheless, today, Indian diplomacy in Southeast Asia

in particular is firing on all cylinders. However, India initiated its serious courtship of ASEAN countries well after China, and is now playing catch-up as best as it can.

Chapter 10 covers India's historically important ties with both the Russian Federation, earlier the Soviet Union, and Western Europe.

The Soviet Union having been India's only ally during the Cold War years, the relationship inevitably had to evolve towards a less exclusive one, more rooted in mutual economic benefit, after the fall of the Berlin Wall. This has happened, with Russia enjoying a significant profile in India (for example, with President Putin invited as Guest of Honour for Delhi's famous Republic Day parade in January 2009) and retaining a strong role in India's defence, science, and some other leading economic sectors. But each side has needed to adjust to the other's reinterpretation of its own economic and foreign policy interests. And the process has not always been smooth, as other economic relationships have grown and outstripped this one. Even in the defence sphere, the Indian Armed Forces clearly hanker after the best that the West (and Israel) have to offer, while accepting that they need to hedge their bets by continuing to deal with Russia on some key procurement items in which it may still be competitive (for example, AWACS aircraft, in a triangular partnership with Israel, the first of which was delivered to India in 2009).[35]

With the exception of the Russian Federation, Europe is a conundrum in Indian foreign policy. Western Europe remains an important economic partner for India, particularly the UK, France, and Germany. It is also to these three countries that India gives clear priority among European Union members, although Germany is dealt with in a less prominent way by India's foreign ministry than are France and the UK (both deemed to warrant Security Council Permanent Member treatment under the direct oversight of India's Foreign Secretary). Italy, and to a degree Spain, are admired as bastions of culture and civilized living. Indeed, overall, Europe is often thought of mostly by India's wealthier middle classes as a holiday destination and by its business community as host to potential corporate acquisitions.

Beyond the sphere of trade policy and multilateral trade negotiations, where its competence is universally recognized, the EU's pretensions to significance privately mystify many Indians, and this even before the rough weather several European economies experienced in 2010. Indeed, the European Commission's insistence on being taken seriously as a dialogue partner by the Indian Government, for now, mostly induces yawns in Delhi. It is hard for Indians to discount the vigorous competition displayed by the leading European countries with each other in vying for Indian favour (mainly in the economic sphere), and the lack of priority these same EU countries accord the EU and its machinery when dealing with India bilaterally. This could change, but only if the EU manages to develop a much more convincing,

cohesive, and coherent institutional personality than has been in evidence in India for some years now. With often harsh colonial treatment now largely overtaken in forward-looking Indian minds (if not forgotten), and economic trends promising, it should be possible to develop more meaningful political dialogue in years ahead.

As noted above, the penultimate Chapter 11 addresses India's multilateral diplomacy, which Indian MEA veterans think of as a sphere of particular accomplishment for India over the years. The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) that Nehru played such a large role in bringing about and shaping was a useful placeholder for India at a time when its leaders needed to devote the bulk of their time to pressing internal challenges. Indeed, Nehru is credited with coining the term 'Third World' to describe those states uninvolved in, indeed seeking to stand apart from, the Cold War ideological conflict—although, as Paul Krugman points out, it rapidly, because of their modest levels of development, morphed into a term connoting backwardness or poverty, hardly Nehru's intent.[36]

Non-alignment, in theory, also allowed India to play the two superpowers and their related blocs off against each other, although after the 1950s, India was not successful in doing so. Moreover, India cut a wide swathe at the UN early on, and subsequently only by fits and starts. The actual achievements of India's multilateral diplomacy are open to question and it is perhaps to this sphere (rather than to that of bilateral diplomacy, in which India has often been remarkably successful) that Indian policymakers and analysts need to devote more thought as India gains access to the most coveted multilateral forums, such as the G-20 and the key negotiating groups in the WTO.

India has innovated creatively by devoting real effort to the new IBSA forum. Chapter 11 explores whether it might want to bring more of this positive, self-confident spirit to bear on multilateral economic and regional forums towards which, in the past, it displayed mainly suspicion. Further, now that resentment is less and less warranted in light of India's economic success, its representatives may want to devote more consistent effort to making friends, rather than impressing the gallery, in the multilateral world. India has been very good at this in world capitals. Why not now on the multilateral stage?

The volume's final Chapter 12, offering some conclusions, reflects on what India's emergence on the global stage requires of the country (including on its internal dispensation, on several key economic challenges that will hamper its rise unless tended to, and in its approach to neighbouring countries)—and to what uses India might put its new status and potential. Whether yet great or not, whether yet fully emerged rather than still emerging, what kind of a world power, with what aims, and in partnership with what others, will India seek to be? And will it need to share global burdens or can it continue for some

time as a free rider on issues it is not yet ready to tackle in internationally binding ways? The chapter reverts to India's identity nationally, regionally, and internationally (both in terms of self-image and of the opinion of others). It touches on how an India with global reach can increasingly develop its own 'soft power' beyond the attractions of its culture, including through the Indian Diaspora.[37] Finally, the chapter includes reflections on that perennial chestnut of Indian foreign policy analysis, the country's lack of clear strategic and other conceptual frameworks.

But for now, on to some relevant Indian history.