

3 CHAPTER

Issues Related to Indian Foreign Policy

After reading the chapter, the reader will be able to develop an analytical understanding on the following:

- India's policy options for Afghanistan
- India's policy options for Iran
- India on North Korea Nuclear Testing
- Newness in India's China Policy
- Relevance of NAM in the 21st Century

INTRODUCTION

This chapter will be used for concluding the debates on Indian Foreign Policy where we shall emphasise upon possible challenges that India's foreign policy is likely to witness in the future. By using an issue-based framework we shall analyse some issues confronting Indian Foreign Policy at large.

ISSUE-1: INDIA'S POLICY OPTIONS FOR AFGHANISTAN—2018, 2019

In the chapter on India–Afghanistan relations, we have discussed how Afghanistan stands as a litmus test for India's quest for regional power. India always had a theoretical policy of extending influence in the neighborhood. However, it was only after it embraced globalisation that India began to use its rising economic power as a tool to fulfill its ambition of emerging as a great power. Afghanistan stands to be a step in India's global quest. The Indo–Afghan relationship chapter has explained the security, economic and strategic components of diplomacy used by India in Afghanistan. For India, a stable Afghanistan is very crucial as it will avert the spread of extremism to Kashmir. More importantly, India feels that Afghanistan also is a land bridge to resources-rich central Asia region. Thus, for India, Afghanistan is not only strategic due to security concerns but also crucial for achieving the economic resurgence of India. A long-term interest of India therefore, is a stable and peaceful Afghanistan. In this regard, the chapter of India–Afghanistan relations has explained the initiatives of India to develop infrastructure, health and education in Afghanistan, India has contributed to develop Afghanistan internally by providing capacity building to Afghans at all levels, from the army to police to healthcare, under the agreement on strategic partnership signed by the two sides in 2011.

In the recent times, India has gradually begun to support the integration of tribal fighters who are willing to abjure violence. In early 2017, India has started sending feelers

to the Afghan government especially after the Afghan government achieved success in negotiating a deal with Hekmatyar. India has declared support to an Afghan led and Afghan owned peace process in the future, as it is quite aware of the possibility of the return of Taliban to Afghanistan. As India has remained committed to soft power play and has supported Afghanistan in its development, there is a rising call by Afghan government to seek military support from India. One reason why India has remained reluctant in providing military hardware (as requested by Afghanistan since 2013) is because it feels that such a support could probably provoke the Taliban and instigate Pakistan to increase hostilities with India. India feels that military support would probably also dent India's image as an aid provider to Afghanistan. Many in Afghanistan, however, have perceived India's lack of support at military level as a myopic decision. As Taliban leadership undergoes a change, any hardliner at the helm of the Taliban will be detrimental to the security interests of India. For India, a key challenge in Afghanistan in future would be China. China has not only enhanced its economic footprint in the region, but has taken a more pro-active interest than India in initiating a dialogue with Taliban. Though Chinese foray into Afghan security is driven by its own fear of a spillover of extremism to its western borders; but it poses a risk to India for the fear of being isolated.



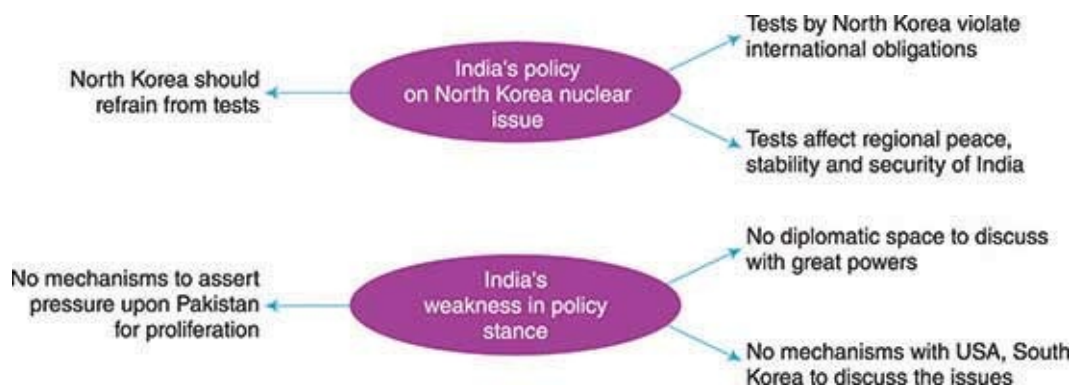
ISSUE-2: INDIA'S POLICY OPTIONS FOR IRAN—2018, 2019

After Iran concluded the nuclear deal with the US, India began to rework its priorities with Iran and immediately revived its plans to work upon energy, infrastructure and investments with Iran. Even though India may now not witness any external pressure on its diplomacy with Iran, regional rivalries could test India's ability to maintain a balance between the Shia, Sunnis and the Jews. Indo-Iran relations prospered during the regime of the Shah but the subsequent Iranian revolution in 1979 and Iranian decision to run its foreign policy based on Islam took India and Iran on divergent paths. The visit of Narasimha Rao in 1993 brought about a resurgence of India-Iran ties. The ties witnessed a downswing due to the Iranian nuclear issue but the Iran-US deal has again opened up a new space for cooperation. The main interest of India in Iran is to develop relations with Iran for energy security and a land bridge to central Asia. India feels developing infrastructure in Iran can help India access the resource rich central Asia. India, as explained in the chapter on India-Iran relations, has initiated the development of the Chabahar port for economic and security reasons. There is an emerging view that India could station its navy in the Chabahar port, which could also be used to keep a check upon the activities in the neighboring Gwadar Port.



ISSUE-3: NUCLEAR TESTS BY NORTH KOREA AND INDIAN POLICY

On 9th September, 2016, North Korea conducted a nuclear test for the 5th time and again defied international pressure. India criticised the test and advised North Korea to refrain from such tests in the future. India also described the tests as a matter of grave concern as such tests affect the stability and peace of the entire region. The statement issued by India on North Korea's nuclear tests expressed serious concern about India's national security due to the proliferation of nuclear technology and missiles around it. Pakistan–North Korea ties go back to the times of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Bhutto visited North Korea in 1976 and Pakistan purchased Long Range Missiles from North Korea and, in reciprocity, decided to help North Korea with nuclear enrichment technology. In January, 2016, during a nuclear test by North Korea, India's MEA observed the proliferation links between India's neighbours and North East Asia. India's MEA asserted that such ties are well known to the USA and South Korea and both have resorted to use UN sanctions as a mechanism to isolate North Korea. Both have repeatedly urged North Korea to give up its nuclear programme but have failed to create the needed deterrents. The main concern of India is that although the international community acknowledges and condemns the nuclear programme of North Korea, it does not acknowledge the network that North Korea and Pakistan have established, which, in future, is likely to emerge as a threat. India is concerned about the ability of North Korea to manufacture plutonium, which is being used to make miniature plutonium bombs. It is also quite likely that Pakistan, which failed to conduct a plutonium test device in 1998, can today develop miniature weapons grade plutonium devices, since it has had help from North Korea. India has condemned all nuclear tests done by North Korea in 2017. India has urged all countries to resort to peaceful resolution of North Korea issue.



ISSUE-4: NEWNESS IN INDIA'S CHINA POLICIES AND OTHER ISSUES

India has now followed a more realistic policy with China. India has started asserting its national interests with a new self-confidence vis-à-vis its more powerful neighbour. This is

also reflected in the way India has embraced Taiwan. China is now willing to cooperate with India in Afghanistan as well. As the ISIS threat looms large over China, it has found cooperation with India and Russia more fruitful in the process. In the backdrop of Chinese refusal to designate Masood Azhar as terrorist and its refusal to allow India's accession to the NSG, India has decided to work upon the insensitivities of China. The invitation of the Dalai Lama to Arunachal Pradesh in 2017 is a testimony. India is leveraging the Dalai Lama as under its new Act East Policy, India is eager to use the tool of Buddhism as a connector. India's relations with the Dalai Lama has been viewed by China as a violation of its core interests.

In the 21st century power transition, China is not exactly attempting to overthrow the USA as a dominant power but wants to establish its credentials as a parallel global power. China is aiming at multipolarity and does not wish to breakdown mechanisms that exist. The Asian infrastructure investment bank (AIIB) of China is an effective example. As the economic benefits were immense, India joined the AIIB. The Maritime Silk Road (MSR) has given Chinese some space in the Indian Ocean. They have increased their economic imprint in the island states through port construction. The Chinese have converted their debts in island states into equities. This has, in turn, raised concerns for India. There are strategic angles attached to the MSR and India needs a coherent strategy to tackle the same. As no clarity exists on structures and rights, responsibilities and stakes in MSR, India has shown reluctance in joining the same. Under the One Belt One Road (OBOR), China is constructing the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC as explained in the chapter of issues related to China). India's official position is that as the CPEC passes through Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK), which is a disputed territory, it is actually passing through illegally obtained land. India asserts that China has not shown any understanding of India's sovereign claims and thereby it will not be part of OBOR. In May 2017, China organised a Belt and Road Initiative Summit (BRIS), where India refused to participate. India has asserted that China has to clarify through a statement that it is not supportive of any Pakistani claims over Kashmir. India feels that OBOR is a national initiative of China to enhance its connectivity all over to ensure that it is able to sustain its low-cost manufacturing programme (which is declining due to rising domestic wages in China) by integrating itself to global value chains. India has to decide carefully whether it should allow its political differences with China to prevent an effective economic interaction or not.

ISSUE-5: RELEVANCE OF NAM IN THE 21ST CENTURY

NAM emerged during cold war to support decolonization and maintain world peace and security the 1955 Bandung Conference became the antecedent to NAM and it led to adoption of Ten Principles of Bandung. In 1961, the First conference summit in Belgrade legitimized the movement.



Hamlet Without the Prince of Denmark

In the 17th NAM Summit in Venezuela in 2016, the Indian PM did not participate and Indian Vice President was sent as the key Indian delegate. The absence of PM in

2016 Summit had a political message to convey. Since 2014, India has embarked upon a transactional diplomacy with a new quest for selective alignments in sync with Indian developmental and security needs. However, it needs to be remembered that NAM, for India, was never completely about alignments but about strategic autonomy. Some scholars have been critical about NAM as they observed that India never received support from NAM members in conflicts 1962 and 1965. These scholars miss the point by failing to appreciate that the NAM was about the unification of the global order and not the addressing of member-specific issues. By relegating NAM as a core 'heritage' of the Indian foreign policy, we have failed to appreciate the important role it can play at present. In future, NAM can be used as a platform for intensifying economic cooperation and promotion of a regional constituency of influence. India needs to reclaim the NAM ideology and make it into a more powerful multilateral forum.