

PART-G

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CHAPTER

The Concept of Middle Powers

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

- Concept of Middle Powers
- India and Middle Powers diplomacy

The term middle power is applied frequently in the discourse of international politics. The origin of the term, however, in the modern context, goes back to the World War–I. The initial mention of the terminology is visible in the Paris Peace Conference and the League of Nations with respect to allocation of seats in the League. But the actual usage of the term happened during the creation of the UN after the World War–II. During this period, we see the application of this term to some countries like Canada, Australia, and so on. They used the term middle powers to distinguish themselves from other foreign powers that were relatively small in power and in influence. The application of the term by Australia and Canada was done at the UN level to assert that they would exercise more influence than smaller players in world politics. Although they demanded extra privileges, the great powers refused to grant exclusivity to the middle powers. The term did become popular in the discourse of international governance, but could not come to stand for more assertion vis-à-vis the great powers.

The subsequent period of the Cold War saw some change. The middle powers now began to play a different role and their recognition was based on the ability of a middle power states to mediate on international disputes, their military power, the size of territories and populations they possessed, and so on. Thus, during the era of bipolarity, the middle powers resorted to differentiate themselves from the other two big powers based on the points mentioned above. When the Cold War ended, the term came to be used to signify how a country undertakes diplomacy on soft issues. In the post-Cold War period, human rights, environment, and conflict management have emerged as new concerns. Today, the middle powers use their diplomacy to advocate on these soft issues and the way they address themselves gives them the leverage to distinguish themselves from other powers. Thus, today, we broadly see that middle powers are those that do not possess substantial military power but are still powerful enough to exercise influence in the world using persuasion and cooperation. In our study with respect to the Indian foreign policy in this book, we shall analyse three broad-range middle powers, namely, Britain, Iran and Canada, and their relations with India.