What is meant by foreign policy?

Foreign policy is a policy pursued by a State in its international interactions, world affairs and in its foreign relation. These policies are made in context with the external environment. Foreign policy is basically both a policy and a course of action. Foreign policy connotes a greater degree of rational procedure, and a type of planning involved in a step-by-step progress to a known and defined goal. It is a relatively rational answer to prevailing external conditions. Though there are certain constraints, national and international, to any such well thought out planning, yet an endeavour is invariably made, and will continue to be made.

Any Foreign policy contains three elements-
- Goals and objectives,
- Policy and plans
- Actual course of action undertaken by a State in its external relations.

Foreign Policy of any nation is always conditioned by certain factors which are known as determinants. Determinants include factors like history, geography, social and economic system, economic and military capability, domestic and international environment and many more. It is these determinants which makes one foreign policy different from one another. But one common factor in every foreign policy is that every foreign policy is guided by the national interest and is influenced largely by their leadership. Leadership plays a very important role as they come with their own world view, perceptions and with their own personalities. Leaders basically shape the whole foreign policy. Thus we witness certain continuities and changes in the Foreign Policy of any nation in due course of time.

Thus, Foreign policy, according to Hartmann,” is a systematic statement of deliberately selected national interest.”

Principles of India’s Foreign Policy

The Constitutional Principle

Article 51 of the Indian Constitution lays down some Directive Principles of State Policy on Promotion of International Peace and Security. The state shall endeavour to-
- Promote international peace and security.
- Maintain just and honourable relations between nations.
- Foster respect for international law and Treaty obligations in the dealings of organised people with one another,
- Encourage settlement of international disputes by arbitration

Panchsheel

Panchsheel, or the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence, were first formally iterated in the Agreement on Trade and Intercourse between the Tibet region of China and India signed on April 29, 1954, which stated, in its preamble, that the two Governments “have resolved to enter into the present Agreement based on the following principles: –

1. Respect each other’s territorial integrity and sovereignty,
2. Mutual non-aggression,
3. Mutual non-interference,
4. Equality and mutual benefit, and
5. Peaceful co-existence.
Non Alignment
Non-alignment has been an important feature of India’s foreign policy. The aim of Non-alignment was to maintain national independence in foreign affairs. Non-alignment was neither neutrality nor non-involvement nor isolationism. It was a dynamic concept. Furthermore, Non-Alignment gained popularity in the developing countries. Consequently, the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) was created and founded during the collapse of the colonial system and the independence struggles of the peoples of Africa, Asia, Latin America and other regions of the world.

Anti Colonialism
India has always opposed colonialism and racism. When injustice happened, India raised voice against it, for instance-
- in favour of Indonesia’s nationality fighting the Dutch colonialism in 1947,
- against South Africa’s illegal occupation of Namibia
Consequently, India was the staunch supporter of the decolonization process. These are testimonials to the fact that India opposed colonialism.

Afro Asian Unity
India established good relations with other newly independent states in Asia and Africa, throughout the 1940s and 1950s.
Notably, Nehru was an ardent advocate of Asian Unity. As a result, Under his leadership, India convened the Asian relation conference in March 1947.
As stated earlier, India also made honest efforts for the early realisation of freedom of Indonesia from the Dutch colonial region. Also, India convened an international conference in 1949 to support the freedom struggle of Indonesia.
Furthermore, the Asian conference held in the Indonesian city of Bandung in 1955 commonly known as the Bandung conference marked India’s engagement with the newly independent Asian and African Nations. Later, the Bandung conference led to the establishment of the NAM.

Anti Racism
India firmly believes in the equality of all human beings. Her policy is aimed at opposition to all form of racial discrimination. India firmly opposed the infamous apartheid policy in South Africa. Not only India had cut off diplomatic relations with South Africa in 1949 but also used her influence in the application of comprehensive sanctions (later) against the white minority racist Regime of South Africa.

India is opposed to Export of Ideologies and Change of Regimes
India believes in and supports Democracy; however, India does not believe in the export of ideologies. India has therefore endeavoured to deal with the government-of-the-day, be it a democracy, monarchy or military dictatorship. India believes that it is best left to the people of the country to choose or remove their leaders and retain or change the form of governance. By extension of the above principle, India does not endorse the idea of regime change or violation of territorial integrity in a particular country by use of force or other means by another country or a group of countries. (Ex. US interventions in Iraq, Libya, Syria or Russia’s intervention in Georgia, Ukraine etc.)
At the same time, India does not hesitate in promoting democracy wherever potential exists; this is done by proactively providing assistance in capacity building and strengthening the institutions of democracy, albeit with the explicit consent of the concerned Government. (Ex. Afghanistan)
India DOES NOT ENDORSE UNILATERAL SANCTIONS /Military Actions

India does not endorse the idea of imposing sanctions/military action against any individual country by another country or a group of countries unless these sanctions/ military actions have been approved by the United Nations as a result of international consensus. India therefore contributes only to such Peace-Keeping military operations which are part of the UN Peace-keeping Forces. (India has contributed nearly 195,000 troops, the largest number from any country, participated in more than 49 missions and 168 Indian peacekeepers have made the supreme sacrifice while serving in UN missions. India has also provided and continues to provide eminent Force Commanders for UN Missions.)

Interference: NO; Intervention: YES
India does not believe in interference in the internal affairs of other countries. However, if an act - innocent or deliberate - by any country has the potential of impinging upon India’s national interests, India does not hesitate in quick and timely intervention. Mind it: intervention is qualitatively different from interference, particularly when the intervention is made at the request of the country concerned. (Examples: Bangladesh 1971, IPKF in Sri Lanka (1987-90), Maldives (1988).

CONSTRUCTIVE ENGAGEMENT OVER AGGRESSION
India advocates the policy of constructive engagement over aggression. It believes that violent retaliation and confrontation can only complicate the matters. War is no solution; after every war the conflicting Parties ultimately come to negotiating table by which time much damage has already been done. This applies in particular to Pakistan- the origin of State-sponsored terrorism targeted at India.

The policy of engagement is not allowed, however, to be misunderstood as India’s weakness. Strong and loud messages emanate from India each and every time our patience is tested. The Surgical strike to target terrorist –launch pads in Pakistan occupied Indian territory in September 2016 is one such example. Air Strike at terrorist camps in Balakote in February 2019 in retaliation to Pulwama terrorist attack is yet another example.

STRATEGIC AUTONOMY: PARTNERSHIPS-YES, ALLIANCES:NO
Independence of decision making and strategic autonomy are yet another significant features of India’s foreign policy. India thus believes in Partnerships and shuns Alliances, particularly military alliances.

GLOBAL CONSENSUS ON ISSUES OF GLOBAL DIMENSIONS
India advocates a global debate and global consensus on issues of global dimensions such as world trade regime, climate change, terrorism, intellectual property rights, global governance.

Determinants of India’s Foreign policy
J.N. Dixit has rightly said, “Foreign Policy of a country is a statement of what it stands for and the role that it takes upon itself and projects to the world at large.” Determinants of foreign policy are the factors which condition the foreign policy. Some of these factors are static or of unchanging nature whereas others are in a state of flux and their dynamics are continually adjusted to the changing circumstances. They are always engaged in interplay amongst each other while we cannot say which factor is more important as it depends on various situations. Determinants are classified into two factors- internal and external factors.
Internal Factors

- Geography

Napoleon once stated that any country’s foreign policy is determined by its geography. Country’s size, location, topography etc. are basic determinants of any country’s foreign policy. In 1903 Lord Curzon, the then Governor General of India, predicted that the geographical position of India would more and more push it into the forefront of international affairs. In 1948 Nehru spoke of India as the pivotal centre of South, South-East, and Western Asia. It is a sort of Asian bridge (Fadia, 2014). Further its northern borders are generally protected by the mighty Himalayas. It has a vast sea coast on three sides. This factor cannot be ignored in foreign policy making. India’s coastline is vital for its foreign policy. Indian Ocean was used as a route for penetration into India during 17th - 19th centuries by the French, British, Dutch and the Portuguese. Most of the foreign trade of India goes through the Indian Ocean. India School of Distance Education India’s Foreign Policy Page 6 has been supporting the demand of Indian Ocean as a zone of peace because that is essentially vital for India’s security (Khanna, 1997). India has common land frontiers, at places, with Pakistan, Bangladesh, China, Myanmar (Burma) Nepal and Bhutan. The former Soviet Union was also very near to the State of Jammu & Kashmir. Until the Chinese aggression in 1962, the Himalayas were known as the defenders (prahari) of India. That is no truer. The air forces of all countries have changed the security perspective all over the world. India’s vast coastline necessitates not only a powerful navy, but also friendly relations with other naval powers present in the Indian Ocean (ibid).

- History and Political Tradition

India’s foreign policy is a by-product of history and tradition. As Nehru said, ‘a country’s foreign policy ultimately emerges from its own tradition, usages, and objectives and more particularly from its recent past.’ Palmer and Perkins point out that the roots of Indian foreign policy are to be found in her civilization, the heritage of British policies, the independence movement and the influence of Gandhian Philosophy (Fadia, 2014). It’s true that India advocates pacific settlement of disputes based on the Gandhian Philosophy of non-violence. Since independence India always stood and support for independent movement all over the world based on her colonial past.

- Economic Development

Country’s economic dependency is another factor determining foreign policy. If a nation’s economy is economically sound, that nation will be able to interact with other nations without any obligations. Most of the nations are dependent in one way or another with other nations. As a developing nation India’s development is not possible without the financial and technical assistance from others. India implanted certain steel plants like Rourkela (German Collaboration), Bokharo (with Soviet assistance) etc. with the help of other countries. Since 1990, India follows Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization for the development. As a result, govt. of India was compelled to reduce the rules and rules and regulations and opened up market for other countries’.

- National interest

It means interest of a nation want to protect and promote while interacting with other nations. H. J. Morgenthau stated that any foreign policy which operates under the standard of the national interest. Jawaharlal Nehru declared that ‘to the interests of India, for that is my first duty’. Another occasion he said’ whether a country is imperialistic or socialist or communist, its foreign minister thinks primarily of the interests of that country’ (Fadia, 2014)
Nature of Leadership

The personal qualities of leaders guiding the destiny of a nation at a given time tend to shape that country’s foreign policy in a particular direction. Who can deny the role of, for instance, Woodrow Wilson in shaping the foreign policy of the United States in the early decades of the 20th Century or that of Mikhail Gorbachev in making the Soviet policy in the closing years of the same century? Similarly, in the case of India too, the personality of the incumbent prime ministers has come to be identified in certain measure with a particular flavour given to the country’s foreign policy. The country’s first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, who steered India’s policy for more than one and a half decades, was widely regarded as internationalist in outlook, with a preference for enlightened, rather than narrow or self-centred, approach to problems. He was indeed regarded as among the tallest of visionaries in his times. Understandably, therefore India’s foreign policy during his tenure was more committed to the collective good of the comity of nations in relation to concerns like world peace and disarmament. Panchsheel was a typical representation of the Nehruvian outlook to approaching problems with other countries. Quite contrasting is the case of the influence of his daughter, Indira Gandhi. By nature she came out as a strong and decisive personality. Her proclivity to be pragmatic and sensitivity to the imperatives of vital national interests left an imprint on reorienting the foreign policy along the lines of realism, more than idealism. This is how India’s policy with reference to the liberation of Bangladesh, non-accession to Non-Proliferation Treaty, and strengthening of ties with the former Soviet Union may be viewed. Again, the reputed qualities as a moderate of Atal Behari Vajpayee are said to have influenced the policy of engagement with Pakistan and the United States. And lastly, Narendra Modi’s Act East policy was widely lauded. His foreign trips during his first tenure was criticised but it fetched results for India’s prestige all around the globe.

Defence Needs and Strategy

We are witnessing a dramatic shift in the locus of global power with relative decline of the United States and the spectacular rise of China. The rise of China and India will alter the geopolitical landscape and the nature of the global system in the coming two decades. Despite growing economic interdependency between China and the United States, trends suggest a potential for great power conflict in the Asia-Pacific region which will have consequences for our security. India's enhancement of power and influence should continue to be for the defence of our sovereignty, territorial integrity and promotion of global peace. Indigenous development and manufacturing of defence equipment is weak. Therefore, the Government has had to focus on defence preparedness through proactive strategic dialogues with key partners, like Russia, France, USA, Israel, UK, Italy, etc., India has been working together with these partners to acquire and develop modern defence platforms for the armed forces. In the context of nuclear weapons, India has strictly adhered to all anti-nuclear proliferation measures, though it has not signed the NPT, because the latter is discriminatory towards states which were not declared as nuclear weapons states under the Treaty. India has always supported global nuclear disarmament. The Indian nuclear weapon programme is purely a self-defence measure given the security and strategic situation in our neighbourhood. We have pledged non-first use of our nuclear weapons and not to use them against non-nuclear states. The Indian defence forces and our diplomatic apparatus are manifestations of our national purpose of defence and development.

Domestic Milieu

No country’s foreign policy can be immune from the influence of the dynamics within. Indeed it is an important determinant of foreign policy. The domestic milieu refers to, inter alia, the nature of governing system, the political culture including the policies of political parties, public opinion, etc. tradition, structure of government and enlightened leadership. Independent India is a living
example of ‘unity in diversity’. Having won freedom from British after non-violent struggle, India chose a democratic system that could offer adequate representation to diversities of all kinds—regional, religious, and cultural. The executive is accountable to people’s representatives who are chosen in periodical exercise of franchise. India’s political system was based (and is still based) on Westminster model of parliamentary democracy. However much the executive would like to view foreign policy as its prerogative, parliamentary control over the executive has opened channels for influencing the country’s foreign policy. In general, fortunately, India’s foreign policy reflected the national consensus cutting across political differences between the ruling side and the opposition. Non-alignment policy is a clear example here. This, however, is not to say that the parliament and prime minister always looked eye to eye on all foreign policy issues all the time. Even during the time of Nehru, who had exercised more discretion than any other prime minister, parliament sought to assert itself in respect of his policy vis-à-vis the boundary dispute with China and the Goa question in the late 1950s. Recently in 2003, again, India’s approach to the Iraq problem was very much dictated by the sentiments articulated in parliament in as much the government agreed to become party in “deploring” the American military action against Iraq. The political parties too at the time of elections take positions on foreign policy matters in their respective manifestoes. There are varied views expressed by the BJP at one end and the Communist Party (Marxist) at the other concerning globalisation, World Trade Organisation and several other issues. Similarly, some of the regional parties like those in Tamil Nadu (DMK, AIADMK, MDMK, etc.), and Jammu and Kashmir (the National Conference) for instance have come to determine the country’s policy toward Sri Lanka and Pakistan respectively. Public opinion ventilated through media and other channels and the activities of interest/pressure groups like the friendship societies or the business associations have gained importance as determinants of India’s foreign policy. The role of ISCUS or of CII cannot be denied, for example in the context of relations with the Soviet Union and the United States respectively. The print and lately the visual media have been influential determinants of the policy. The two most notable examples of the role played by the television and print media in making India respond the way it did related to the hijacking of Indian Airlines plane to Kandahar in 1999 and the official announcement of decision not to accede to the United States request for sending troops to postwar Iraq.

External Factors

- International Trends

The broad currents of international politics at any given point of time have direct bearing on foreign policies. The difficulty in conducting the foreign policy arises because states do not have sure means of controlling the behaviour of other states. During the inter-war period (1919-39), the quest for French security, followed by the rise of Fascism in Italy and Nazism in Germany and militarism in Japan had their impact on foreign policies. The US changed its policy towards the Soviet Union and recognised it because, in 1933, Hitler’s emergence in Germany posed a threat to the world order created after the War. The Japanese aggression in Manchuria (China) in 1931 provided a common threat to USA as well as USSR in the Far East. The two Powers gave up their hostility. The Cold War era (1945-90) has determined in a big way the foreign policy of most countries. The fear of nuclearised United States brought the countries of Eastern Europe under the control of the Soviet Union, with the result that all those countries adopted socialism and came under the Russian wings. The entire policy of containment of communism adopted by the US was evident in its setting up of NATO, SEATO and such other military alliances/arrangements. India’s efforts in expounding the policy of non-alignment were directly a response to this emerging polarisation in the international environment. The Cold War was the defining characteristic of world politics for nearly 45 years. Arms race, especially in the nuclear field, typically represented the height of suspicion and the impending disaster. India’s policy to take up nuclear disarmament emanated from the imminent and perpetual threat to human civilisation if those weapons were to be accidentally or deliberately used. Related
to nuclear field, India’s successful testing in 1998 of nuclear weapons was justified as a necessary response to the fast changing international environment that sought to dismiss the demand for nuclear disarmament and sanctify the inequitable hierarchy between the nuclear weapon powers and non-nuclear weapon powers. After the sudden end of the Cold War followed by the disintegration of the Soviet Union, India’s foreign policy underwent appreciable shifts on numerous counts—lack of enthusiasm towards the non-aligned movement, eagerness to accommodate the American concerns, resumption of full diplomatic ties with Israel, emphasis on economic aspects of relations with Europe, Southeast Asia and even South Asia. Again, in the post-cold war era, the increasing sensitivity in international quarters to the issues of terrorism and human rights (along with the widely spread claims of self-determination) impelled necessary adjustments in India’s foreign policy. During the 1990s, the critical observers of India’s foreign policy have noted the government’s preoccupation with the question of Jammu and Kashmir in its contacts with major countries and in global forums. The 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks on American targets in New York and Washington presented new opportunities to India to push its anti-terrorist foreign policy with greater conviction.

Summary
The multifarious objectives of India’s foreign policy achieve a blend of national and international interests. India has sought to achieve its security and socio-economic advancement while at the same time working for peace, freedom, progress and justice to all nations and peoples. Nonalignment, adherence to peaceful procedures for settlement of differences, support to the initiatives for disarmament, and active participation in international bodies constituted notable principles that flow from the objectives of the country’s foreign policy. As elaborated, among several determinants of foreign policy, the relevance of factors like India’s geographical size, location, its historical experiences and traditions, the state of economy, the nature of political institutions and structure, and the personality of the country’s leadership have played significant role in shaping the country’s policy with countries in its neighbourhood and outside. Moreover, the impact of the changing international environment—be it the cold war politics, or the post-cold war trends—too is something not to be missed while understanding shifts in our foreign policy. All in all, India seems to have done pretty well in formulating and implementing a foreign policy behind which the nation stood united and which projected the country as a peace loving, mature, democratic, and law abiding country in the realm of world affairs.

Foreign Policy in India’s Recent History

Views of early Indian thinkers on the significance and importance of foreign policy were based on the ancient treatise Arthashashtra, a masterpiece on governance and diplomacy. Leaders like Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose, among others, took an active interest in securing external support for the Indian independence movement, particularly with India’s traditional diplomatic partners in Asia, Africa and parts of Europe. Efforts were also made to solicit US support, particularly in the period between the two world wars, when Britain’s strength was ebbing and that of America rising.

In the pre-Independence period, when the Indian National Congress was the dominant political force in an undivided India, the focus of our national struggle leaders was primarily on how to deal with the great powers of UK, USSR, USA, Germany and Japan. There were sharp differences between the mainly Hindu leadership of the INC and the Muslim League on how to address the grievances of Muslims of the sub-continent and their relationship with larger Islamic world. The Khilafat Movement in Ottoman Turkey and developments in the Middle East in the early 20th century; the use of Indian military forces to to assist the British war effort outside India; and the creation of the
Indian National Army (INA) by Subhas Chandra Bose and its alignment with the Japanese in WW II, were subjects of intense debate and differences among Indian nationalists. INC leaders, particularly Nehru were active in organizing the Asian Relations Conference in New Delhi in 1947, a precursor to the 1955 Afro-Asian Relations Conference held in Bandung, Indonesia, which was the beginning of the NAM movement. In this period, majority of Indian independence movement leaders supported anti-colonial liberation movements in other parts of the world, opposed racial discrimination and imperialist wars, and condemned the US atomic bombing in Hiroshima.

Following India’s Independence, foreign policy making was largely influenced by a strong leader like Prime Minister Nehru, who retained the External Affairs Ministry portfolio. He personally interviewed and appointed most of the Indian Ambassadors posted abroad. Panchashila or ‘The Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence’, was the cornerstone of Nehru’s foreign policy initiatives and formed the basis of India’s bilateral relations with Burma, Cambodia, China, Laos, Nepal, Vietnam and Yugoslavia.

Following Nehru, Prime Ministers Lal Bahadur Shastri, Indira Gandhi, Rajiv Gandhi, P. V. Narasimha Rao, I. K. Gujral, Atal Behari Vajpayee, Manmohan Singh and Narendra Modi have each initiated measures signifying their unique contribution to the making and execution of foreign policy in modern India.

Among the major recent successes in foreign policy we could count India’s Look and then Act East policy, post-Pokhran diplomacy, the Civil Nuclear Initiative with the US, the Gujral Doctrine in relations with neighbours, particularly Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal and Sri Lanka, Diaspora Diplomacy which has been ramped up considerably by Prime Minister Modi, and reaching out to distressed Indian citizens abroad mainly using social media, which has been the hallmark of EAM, Sushma Swaraj.

Before we conclude, it would perhaps be in order to take a peek at what might the major initiatives and challenges for Indian foreign policy in the near future. India will need access to modern technologies in health, energy, agriculture and industry, and also adopt new media platforms. We will need to keep pace with myriad changes in the global political, security and economic scenario, avoid getting into a situation India cannot handle on its own, and not simply be co-opted into the existing international order, but to be in a position to change the rules of the game. Foreign policy will have to focus on market and investment needs of India, particularly to ramp up our deficient infrastructure and low levels of human development index. In the long run India needs to be everyone’s friend and partner, without tilting to any particular country or bloc.

Global and Regional Challenges for India’s Foreign policy

How should India protect and promote its interests in today’s world, which is in flux and full of uncertainties? Global power equations are changing. The relative weight of the US has diminished and it is less self-assured and more inward looking. Europe is grappling with Brexit, the rise of right-wing nationalism, and a flood of immigrants. China is the new pretender that relentlessly pursues its ‘China Dream’ of Asian, and eventually global, domination. Russia has regained much of its self-confidence and seeks to reclaim the Soviet Union’s erstwhile global stature. We see a more activist and less inhibited Japan is playing a greater role in Asia matching its economic and technological strength. The entire region from Pakistan to Morocco is in upheaval, with rampaging terrorism, fundamentalism, sharp regional rivalries, as well as many so-called ‘failed’ and ‘failing’ states. In this shifting kaleidoscope, a more self-confident and ambitious India under Narendra Modi is seeking to develop a new paradigm for India’s foreign policy where India would not be a mere ‘balancer’ or ‘swing state’ but a ‘leading state’ that seeks a place at the global high table. This will not be easy, since power is never given, always taken. It will have to be ready to take risks and at times pursue conflicting goals. Many other countries will work to keep India down. That is why India must leverage its strengths have diversified foreign policy options, and remain alert and flexible.
Like all previous Indian leaders, Prime Minister Modi too seeks to preserve India’s independence of action and autonomy of decision-making in foreign policy. Earlier, the creed was “non-alignment.” As a policy option for India, as distinct from the Non-Aligned Movement, this meant resisting pressures to join rival camps during the Cold War and examining foreign policy options on merit. Various factors, including our sense of pride and self-worth based on a rich heritage of civilization and culture, our past achievements, and our multi-faceted successes as an independent nation, impel Indians to cherish strategic autonomy. India is too big, self-respecting, and steeped in the anti-colonial tradition to become anyone’s camp follower. India may not have been an aggressive, expansionist power. But it has not been a passive power. India fought against colonialism and apartheid. It resisted pressures to join blocs. It did not accept the iniquitous nuclear regime of the NPT. Today, India has a more positive agenda. It seeks greater influence in global governing structures. Already, it has a much greater voice in the WTO, and is a member of the G-20 and East Asia Summit. Over time, it hopes to join the Nuclear Suppliers Group and become a Permanent Member of the UN.

It has been rightly said that nations have no permanent friends or enemies, only permanent interests. Broadly this holds true for India too. India’s relationships and priorities have changed over time. For example, during the Cold War, India’s interests were best served through a close relationship with the Soviet Union, which gave India much needed political and diplomatic support on key issues in the UN, as well as valuable economic and defence assistance. Today, the relationship is not as effusive as it used to be. By contrast, India’s relations with the US were quite strained throughout the 20th century. Today, however, India and the US have, as PM Modi put it, "overcome the hesitations of history,” and there is a much greater congruence of interests. Similarly, India-Japan relations that remained low-key and insubstantial for many decades are now very vibrant and dynamic. On the other hand, "Hindi-Chini bhai-bhai" has given way to a relationship of much greater suspicion and mistrust. Other examples are the Commonwealth, NAM and the G-77, all of which were important for India in the early decades after Independence but no longer today, whereas the Persian Gulf region and ASEAN, which earlier occupied a minor place in India’s foreign policy, are now extremely high priority regions.

Resources India needs both human and material resources to achieve its foreign policy goals. The first pre-requisite is to have good leaders – with political will, resolve and vision. Fortunately, Prime Minister Modi is indeed a strong and determined leader who wants change the traditional ‘chalta hai’ attitude of Indians and has set into motion a long and difficult process to make India a strong, modern country. There is a rise in general public interest in foreign policy issues because foreign policy matters because these affect people’s lives as never before. In any case, in a democracy like India, public understanding and support of foreign policy is essential. Thus, the Government has to take on board multiple stakeholders such as parliamentarians, political parties, businessmen, industrialists, the media, academia, and other sections of the intelligentsia. Many Indian States, particularly those that have land and/or maritime borders with neighbouring countries are deeply interested in what’s going on there and how the policies of these countries could affect them. The most important tool of foreign policy is diplomacy, the traditional method to regularly grease the wheels of relations with other countries. Embassies abroad and the Ministry of External Affairs are principally responsible for this. Other Ministries and Departments of the Government also play a role in matters relating to trade, investments, energy and so on. Soft power, exercised through cultural and people-to-people contacts (be it tourists, students, businessmen) plays an important role too in shaping India’s image abroad. The role of the Indian diaspora, from among whom many have gone on to become heads of global corporations, is extremely important and is being systematically leveraged by Prime Minister Modi. India’s official technical and economic assistance as well as private sector projects in Asian and African countries, particularly India’s neighbours, also send a powerful positive message about India.

It is only when diplomacy fails that a country generally resorts to coercion and use of military means.
This too India has done on many occasions. The most notable example is India’s assistance in the creation of Bangladesh in 1971. But coercion was certainly used in ensuring the incorporation of Pondicherry, Goa and Sikkim into India, in sending an Indian Peace Keeping Force to Sri Lanka, as well as in relation to Nepal on more than one occasion. Thus an effective foreign policy needs credible military capabilities to buttress diplomatic influence. This requires both economic strength and a self-reliant defence industry. We must recognize that much work remains to be done in both areas. It will take time to build India’s infrastructure, create indigenous defence capabilities, and create a healthier and skilled work force. India’s own resources may not be enough. They will have to be supplemented by foreign investments and technology. Prime Minister Modi’s extensive interactions with leaders and investors across the world, particularly from developed capital-surplus countries, have certainly created a new interest in India. These will translate into concrete results only if there are proper policies in place. Implementation of stated policies is the key to success. One cannot underestimate the constraints on resources for defence and security, since the demands of development are enormous. In the early years after Independence, Nehru focused more on economic growth than defence. The result of this neglect was the humiliating outcome of the 1962 border war with China. The choices are difficult. In the traditional argument of guns versus butter, a judicious balance will have to be found.

Recent Challenges

The principal challenges to India’s national security emanate from China and Pakistan. Their strategic collaboration has deepened. A virtual combined China-Pakistan front has emerged. Pakistan’s dependence on China has increased. In this way the threats and challenges have become more serious. Here are some illustrative developments:

- Chinese soldiers are present in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan in the guise of workers;
- China-Pakistan defence, nuclear and missile cooperation has strengthened;
- China gives open support to Pakistan on Kashmir;
- China is giving cover to Pakistani terrorist activity and terrorists like Masood Azhar.
- The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which is the most prominent and geopolitically significant project of Xi Jinping’s One-Belt-One-Road (OBOR) scheme, makes it abundantly clear that Pakistan will remain pivotal in China’s strategy for Asia.

Seeing Pakistan’s actions since the middle of 2016 (Kashmir, Uri, Kanpur) it is unlikely that Pakistan’s visceral hatred of India and its determination to bleed and weaken India will go away. Thus, it is vital for India’s national security that the China-Pakistan nexus is broken, and that Pakistan is isolated internationally as much as possible. Is a strong, stable Pakistan in India’s interest, as many seem to think? Not really, if Pakistan remains a state that is trying to weaken and split India.

How do we tackle this challenge? India should be prepared to fight its own battles, without necessarily counting on the support of other countries. Outside support will come if other countries have sufficiently large stakes in India and they see that India is able to effectively execute its chosen policies.

The surgical strike in response to Uri should not remain a one-off event. Should there be continuing provocations, India should definitely retaliate, but our response should be unpredictable. India necessarily has to be cautious in dealing with a nuclear adversary. Perhaps one should look at non-military options. Fortunately, we appear to have done so. Some of steps taken are:

- By taking a forthright public position that India will not be satisfied with the status quo on Pakistan-occupied Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan, and by raising human rights issues in Baluchistan, the Prime Minister has warned Pakistan that it should not remain complacent about the situation in these regions. This is also a clear indication to China that it should not assume an obstacle-free clear path for its China-Pakistan Economic Corridor project, which starts from Gilgit-Baltistan and ends in
Prime Minister Modi has given the signal; now it is up to the system to flesh out and implement the stated policy.

- A very important move initiated by the Modi Government is to take steps to fully utilize its entitlements under the Indus Waters Treaty, both on the Western Rivers and the Eastern Rivers. A high-powered committee has been set up to handle this matter. Even though it would take a few years for the proposed projects to fructify, the intent is clear. Even a small reduction in the flows of the river waters to water-stressed Pakistan could create serious economic and political difficulties for Pakistan. In addition to the above, India should also work with the Afghan government to build small dams and barrages on the Kabul River (which is not covered by the Indus Waters Treaty) that flows into the Indus.

- India should consider working with Afghanistan to question the legitimacy of the Durand Line between Afghanistan and Pakistan, which no government in Afghanistan has accepted. Pakistan has to be made to understand that if Pakistan follows policies that undermine India’s territorial integrity, India can pay back Pakistan in the same coin.

From China, India faces challenges at three levels – globally, regionally, and as a neighbour. At the global level, China is using its economic clout, and its status as a Permanent Member of the UN Security Council and a NPT-recognized nuclear power to thwart India’s rise in every possible way, be it to block India’s bid for Permanent Membership of the UNSC, entry into the Nuclear Suppliers Group. It is certainly not prepared to treat India as its co-equal in any way.

In view of the current power differential between China and India, it would be prudent to try to keep the admittedly uneasy relationship with China stable. It will take time to reduce the current power gap between India and China. That will depend on how rapidly we can develop our economy and indigenous defence capabilities, and whether the Chinese economy and polity falter. For now, India needs friends and partners to deal with China. India must raise the costs for China of its current policies. To start with, India must not lose the psychological war against China. China’s weaknesses must be highlighted and exploited. These include its fragile economic model; its failure to build an integrated polity with justice for minorities like the Tibetans and Uighurs; its excessive dependence on foreign trade for its growth; its desire to exploit the Indian market; its irresponsible attitude towards the environment especially in Tibet; its expansionist and hegemonic policies; its selective approach to fighting terrorism, and so on.

At the regional level, so far China has been using Pakistan as a pawn to keep India tied down in South Asia and to prevent India from becoming a serious challenger to China’s ambitions to dominate Asia. China is also using its deep pockets and newfound strategic confidence to get a firm foothold in India’s traditional sphere of influence in South Asia and the Indian Ocean region. It is enticing India’s South Asian neighbours into its economic and military orbit, expanded its naval presence in the Indian Ocean, and established de facto control over the South China Sea. With US President Trump trashing the Trans-Pacific Partnership (which had a strong political objective), China may be expecting that its strategic space in Asia will grow.

It is vitally important for India to prevent this from happening. India is rightly working closely on the security front with the US, Japan, Vietnam, Singapore, Australia and, potentially, Indonesia, all countries that are deeply troubled by China’s policies. US President Trump has signaled possible changes of US policy in Asia, such as questioning the ‘One China’ policy, having an open mind on Japan acquiring nuclear weapons, and the determination to take measures to reduce US trade deficit with China. If followed through, these could create serious problems for China.

Bilaterally, there is little trust between India and China. China now aggressively claims Arunachal Pradesh and has ruled out an early border settlement. Periodic border incidents put psychological pressure on India, which cannot lower its guard. India is already taking much-needed steps to reduce
the military gap with China, such as the development of the Agni-V and Agni-IV missiles, acquiring nuclear submarines, raising a mountain strike corps, and upgrading border infrastructure like roads and airfields. One hopes there are plans in place to target China’s weak spots along the border and on the seas in case of a conflict. Cyber capabilities and security must be enhanced. Economically, India has to diversify its imports of critical inputs like active pharmaceutical ingredients and rare earths to reduce its excessive dependence on China. In the border negotiations, our strategy should be not merely to defend what we possess, but also lay claims to places like Kailash-Mansarovar that have been linked by faith to India over several millennia.

Tibet remains a key and sensitive issue in bilateral ties. The situation will get more complicated in a post-Dalai Lama scenario, and a crisis could well break out in India-China relations. India has rightly shed inhibitions about high-level contacts with the Dalai Lama who was recently received in Rashtrapati Bhavan. We are encouraging his visits and those of foreign diplomats (most notably the US Ambassador) to Arunachal Pradesh including Tawang. The US Ambassador was in Arunachal Pradesh recently. Perhaps India should think of similarly nuancing its ‘One-China’ policy by linking it more closely, as Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj had hinted some time ago, with China following a ‘One-India’ policy.