

INDIA IN THE CHANGING WORLD: FROM STRATEGIC AUTONOMY TO SYSTEMIC RESPONSIBILITY

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Abstract:

The research is an attempt to analyse the emerging dynamism in Indian foreign policy perception in changing global economic and political landscape. The emergence of India as a stable and successful democracy, twisting just around double digit economic growth rate, a de facto nuclear power status, increased expertise in science and technology have all contributed to redefine the role, identity and interests of the Country in 21st century international affairs. The Indo-US nuclear deal and the voting in IAEA on the issue of Iran clearly demonstrate the fact that New Delhi desires high visibility in systemic regulation and transformation in contemporary world affairs. India, along with People Republic of China (PRC) could emerge as the real incubator to galvanize the world economy from the post global financial recession and ongoing Euro Zone crisis. India desires more constructive role in international relations not only to pursue her essential national interests but also to work for a more equitable, non-discriminatory and rule based global institutional mechanism. More importantly, the economic decline of the west demonstrates both challenge and opportunity to emerging powers to redefine and reconstruct the hegemonic vacuity in world affairs.

Keywords: Emerging trends in world affairs, India reconfiguring its hard and soft power apparatus, global economic recession, Euro-Zone Crisis

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Introduction:

The post-Cold War period ushers in a new era of peace, stability and development in international milieu. The emergence of United States of America (USA) as global Hegemon marked the end of many regional conflicts and wars essentially inflamed by the two cold war combatants, USA and USSR for their strategic and political interests.

The US power preponderance succeeded to ensure systemic stability and peace in world affairs which essentially resulted into greater economic interactions among the nations. Consequently, the world has transformed into a new height of economic growth and political cohesiveness. The traditional security issues, power diplomacy, and high political issues are being overshadowed by economic cooperation and multilateralism.

The unprecedented growth in the domain of science and technology has overpowered the spatio-temporal barriers and set the ton for uninterrupted interactions and cooperation among the people of different parts of the worlds. The emergence of new economic powers and their search for global market has transformed the world into greater interactions among the community of nations. The rise of China, India, Brazil and South Africa as possible futuristic economic powers has added complexity to the global interdependence. The growing economic cooperation among the nations has not only contributed to their economic development but has also added to world peace, cooperation and harmony in recent years. The growing economic interactions among the nations have contributed to peace, stability and progress in international milieu.

However, the challenges are equally wide and varied. In spite of the phenomenon economic development the world has made, there is still persistent poverty, famine and hunger that hounds many regions of the world today. The wretched conditions in Sub Saharan Africa and many parts of Asia have extensively diluted the prosperity of globalization. The growing civil wars and internal cleanses in Africa and lately in West Asia are the reminder of the fact that economic globalization has its limitations which seeks corrective measures to match the aspirations of the poor nations and people on the earth. The venomous expansion of non-conventional security threats such as; terrorism, sea piracy and drug trafficking are equally challenging.

Moreover, the issue of global justice is the need of the hour which seeks a much just, fair and equitable share of global wealth and natural resources. The developed nations continue to control, regulate and run the global economy from the forefront. The hegemonic stance of developed nations which reflects in the form of protectionism, trade related Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs), trade monopoly, and interference to the internal affairs of poor nations through Bretton Woods institutions.

Restructuring Indian Foreign Policy Orientation in the Changing World:

India, as many strategists hold, is a super power in waiting and a predictable player in the global political and economic decision-making process. The country has made phenomenal progress in the post economic reforms period, (1990) and has ascertained high visibility in global affairs in recent years. India is actively engaged to redefine its role and identity in world affairs. The world's largest democracy, de-facto nuclear power, growing expertise in the domain of science and technology and above all, one of the fastest growing economies (progressing at the rate of 7 to 9 per cent in last five years (Economic Survey, 2010-11) are some of the major elements that has added to the strategic depth in Indian foreign policy in pursuing its essential national interests in international affairs.

More importantly, India is actively engaged in constructing regional, sub-regional and global ties to effectively harvest the advantages of globalization. The relevance of economic diplomacy was well defined by the first Prime Minister of India, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru as he said in the Constituent Assembly in December 1947, "Talking about foreign policies, the House must remember that these are not just empty struggles on a chessboard. Behind them lie all manner of things. Ultimately, foreign policy is the outcome of economic policy (Baru, 2006)." India has made a very profound and powerful presence in international financial market. The country's GDP at current prices increased from US\$ 278.53 billion in 1991 to an estimated US\$ 1209.69 billion in 2008. Similarly, India's total global trade was worth US\$ 37.38 billion in 1991 which increased into US\$ 459.17 billion in 2008 (Nawani, 2010). The fastest growing Indian economy needs to create a more congenial atmosphere to construct a powerful cloud in international financial market. Indian economic diplomacy is vigorously trying to peruse Free

Trade Agreement (FTA) with European Union (EU), Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) East Asian Summit and South African Custom Union (SACU), on the line of ASEAN countries (Nawani, 2010)

Currently, India is one of the fastest growing economies (inspite of present global financial crisis and recession) of the world with all the possible potential to emerge as an economic super power in time to come. India presents a huge market to foreign investors with abundant of natural resources and highly skilled manpower. New Delhi is actively engaged with many regional and global bilateral and plurilateral forum to carry forward its essential national interests in conformity with global peace, progress and goodwill.

Moreover, the rise of India, presents a new hope especially, to the developing nations, to successfully place the interests of poor nations before the developed nations and work toward a more fair and harmonious global order. India has been a staunch champion of international peace, prosperity and development based on mutual trust, goodwill, non-aggression, non-interference, de-militarization and disarmament right from the independence and even in the freedom movement era in the early twentieth century. After independence the much adored global statesman, the nation's first Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru successfully placed not only the interests of India but the entire developing countries even in the dens fog of cold war rivalry between two super powers loaded with the horrific weapons with total assault capability. India made its strong presence under the aegis of Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), Afro-Asian unity and other important bilateral and multilateral forum. India has fearlessly voiced against colonialism, imperialism and racial apartheid in all parts of the globe.

The country has also worked for international peace, cooperation and resolution of all conflicting global issues through peace, justice and goodwill. The country has also made and is continue to exude its strong presence in United Nations Organization (UNO) through delivering its promises in international peace-keeping missions in various parts of the world. India is also at the epicentre of North-South economic cooperation, New International Economic Order (NIEO) and trade related deadlock between developed and developing nations.

Similarly, India is constantly working for a more just, equitable and rule based institutional mechanism as, present international financial system is based on the consequences of Second World War which need to be restructured to meet and match present economic

realities. India is actively engaged to establish a non-discriminatory, equitable and statutory global financial mechanism. The country is performing a very constructive role in the post-GATT global trade agreement encapsulated under WTO negotiations to redirect and reconstruct international trade and commerce in more just, equitable and mutually consented pathway where developing countries would also feel their presence in sharing the fruit of globalized economy through mutually trusted and interested measures. India has repeatedly raised the concerns of developing countries before the global community and stood powerfully against the discriminatory, protectionist and self-centred trade related statutory provisions practiced and perpetuate by the developed nations. The initiative to convene a mini-Ministerial meeting of WTO members in September 2009 at New Delhi reflects India's commitment to establish a more democratic, participatory and legitimate international institutional arrangement (Chaudhry, 2010).

Of late, the emerging crisis in global financial market after the 2008 economic recession has further signified the importance of India in pulling out the global economy from its present morbid ambiance. In spite of global financial slowdown Indian economy is rising at the annual growth rate of 7 to 9 per cent annually (Kapila, 2008-09) that puts the nation in global high profile economic performance index. India along with BRICS nations grouping, presents the possibility of a new political and economic power structure in global arena which is presently regulated, guided and directed by G-7 under the aegis of USA, the present global Hegemon.

The most promising feature of India's foreign policy perception amid ongoing internal and external political, economic and strategic scenario is to maximize its essential national interests through active engagement with both North (USA, EU and G-7 etc.) and South through bilateral and multilateral engagement. India's rising strategic and economic rapprochement with Washington would essentially multiply its decision-making capacity in the global high table. New Delhi's growing strategic and economic profile with West would definitely ensure a much powerful role in the present global political and economic power setting. Similarly, India's active engagement with global South, through plurilateral forum most notably; IBSA, BRICS and ASEAN would not only bolster their mutual trade relationships but would also enhance their collective capabilities to influence international decision-making process to work for a more just, non-discriminatory and stable world order.

Therefore, the emergent India has the potential to work toward a more just, equitable, and mutually benefited economic order. Indian economy has demonstrated a lot of prospects and promises in recent years even in the ambience of global economic recession and slow-down. India presents a huge market for global investors along with sufficient raw material and highly skilled workforces. In the sense, Indian economy is in high-take of position and can extend leadership to global economy along with other rising economies most notably; People Republic of China, Brazil and South Africa. These economies, collectively, can work for an international economic order free from all form of discriminatory and hegemonic stances and to ensure a world with plenty and perfection.

India: From Strategic Autonomy to Systemic Responsibility in World Affairs:

The major challenge before Indian foreign policy remains to secure a place of respect, responsibility and persuasion in global political and economic affairs. Indeed, the entire cold war period reflects India's growing quest for strategic autonomy in global affairs in which a non-polarized and non-hegemonic international system could serve as the most visible options in this context.

However, the post economic reform period, visualised the phenomenon rise in the role, identity and interests of New Delhi essentially rooted in the bourgeoning of domestic economy and expansion of Indian business umpire in global market. Similarly, India's growing strategic and economic partnership with US, G-7 and European Union (EU) is vital to enhance its hard and soft power capabilities and capacity (Bava 2007). India seeks more predominant role in institutional and systemic domain to ensure a much stable, non-discriminatory and rule based world order.

The growing Indo-US strategic ties exudes India's quest for a much more dominant role in the changing world political and economic scenario. The growing Indo-US strategic proximity has been a defining feature of Indian foreign policy in recent years. Traditionally, India has been sceptical to structure any reliable strategic and economic alliances with US in particular and west in general basically on two defining reasons; first, in the individualistic term, the growing strategic proximity with US could jeopardise India's independent foreign policy discourses in

international affairs. In the sense, it could badly obstruct the essential national interests of the country. Secondly, in a more wider and collective sense, it would considerably erase the leadership image of New Delhi among the developing more broadly, Third World Countries. The first reason continues to carry weight as no nation can compromise with their essential national security interests. It is a new realist reality (as new realist theorists holds) that India has to interact cautiously with global community for the expansion and growth of its essential strategic and economic interests.

Furthermore, the rapidly changing global political and economic landscape invokes both challenges and opportunities to India. The nation needs to refurbish its foreign policy orientations with dynamism, pragmatism and realism. India needs a more aggressive and pragmatic diplomacy to carry forward its prospects of a global power in the rapidly changing global scenario. As for as second reason is concerned, India still need to come out of its idealistic stance and place its essential national interest firmly before the changing global political and economic setting. India needs not only to carry forward its leadership position among the third world countries but to further energize its presence and influence to enhance the shared interests of these countries through effective bargaining with developed countries.

The recent political tsunami in the Arab world (Arab Spring) demonstrates the growing concerns of New Delhi to secure its enlightened national interests while dealing the chaos and humanitarian crisis in countries like, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt and more bafflingly in Syria, a oil and natural gas rich country, where all major powers has their strategic and economic interest. India has been reluctant to any cynical and regime change agenda which goes against the low of the land and the will of the sovereign people. Indeed the entire Arab region serves around 60 per cent of India's energy supply and id home to over 6 million people belonging to Indian Diaspora (The Hindu 2012).

Indian could effectively put forward its soft power apparatus to ensure high visibility and earn a place of influence in world affairs. The country could utilize its mammoth food reserve as important diplomatic tools to unleash its soft power through assisting the hungry neighbour most notably Bangladesh, Nepal Afghanistan etc. and drought and famine hit African countries. According to the Food Corporation of India, the country has a reserve of 54.8 million tonnes food grains which is 30 million tonnes more than its buffer-plus-strategic reserve required to

hold and sustain similarly, India is liberally contributing financial aids (which is going to be around \$3 billion per years) to poor nations of Asia and Africa (Jha 2012). However the diplomatic and strategic gain of its soft power demonstration is far less effective than the western countries and even China and Brazils do have. India therefore needs to manoeuvre more rational, pragmatic and innovative foreign policy to carry forward its concerns for global commons with plan and purpose.

India's growing economic clout in global financial market, it's ever expending domestic capital markets; fastest growing Foreign Direct Investment (FDI); emerging empire of Indian capitalists in global market and the need for energy import to carry forward the hope and aspiration raised by the emergent economy. Indian capitalists have made a powerful presence in international financial market and has emerged a major determinant in global capitalist system. The Marxist theoretic interpretation of international relations reflects the transformation of identity, interests and capability of India in global economic and political setting resulted from the high take-off stage in domestic financial market (Daddow, 2009). India is rapidly emerging a key determinant with in the international capitalist system. It is therefore, important to reassess and reconstruct the foreign policy priority of India in order to strengthen and secure its essential national interests.

Moreover, India needs US cooperation for both strategic depth and economic proactiveness in international milieu. Growing strategic and economic ties with Washington could ensure India a much powerful presence in systemic label through G-7, international financial institutions, WTO and United Nations. India also needs US cooperation to ensure permanent membership in the UN Security Council. Strategically, India also expects US cooperation in its quest to fight international terrorism. Terrorism has emerged a common threat to the national security of both the nations and a joint assault can work to curb the menace.

More importantly, energy security especially the effective supply of nuclear energy which was badly jeopardized after the 1998 nuclear test remains the core concern of New Delhi. Energy occupies a determinant role in the human endeavour toward a life full of plenty and perfection. In the sense, energy is an essential precondition to economic development and prosperity on the earth. India is world's sixth largest consumer of energy which accounts about 3.5% of the world's total annual energy consumption. According to the latest UNEP analysis,

India's energy growth rate would increase 3.4% from 2008-2035 which would be the fastest on earth (UNEP 2011). Though, present per capita consumption of energy in the country is only 631kwh as compared to world consumption of 2873kwh (GoI, MoP Annual Report, 2007-2008). More bafflingly, 44% of the total population of the country is still devoid to the use of electricity (GoI, NAPCC, 2007). Therefore, India needs a more dynamic and innovative relationships with global community to ensure an effective and uninterrupted supply of all possible energy sources including nuclear energy.

Similarly, climate change remains a major issue of concern before global community today. India is an important ally in international climate change governance and has been extremely sensitive to the climate change issues. Climate change is of much greater concern to India, as it is going to affect the economic growth, biotic quality and social development of the country. Any adverse impacts on the economic growth rate of the country has far-reaching ramification to the poverty alleviation campaign of a country where more than 40% of the population still figures as below poverty line. It is even more scaring to relate India's GHGs reduction campaign with social justice. The analysis of Parikh and Parikh (2002), demonstrates that, the annual emission reduction target to reduce 30% of the CO₂ over the period of 30 years would cost 4% slash in the GDP and increase 17.5% more impoverished people by 2030 (Parikh and Parikh, 2002).

Internationally, India has a very significant role in the multi-lateral climate change negotiations and agreements. Country's international climate change policy perception is hailed through some of the basic principles most notably: financial and technical assistance flow from developed to developing countries to strengthen adaptation and mitigation immunity in poor countries; a consensus based globally accepted shared vision to address the climate change crisis on the principle of universality and the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capacities.

Conclusion:

India's world perception and practice has gone through a see changes in recent years. The last two decades, especially, the advent of twenty first century has experience the arrival of new

trends in global political and economic settings. The strategic setting, economic needs and power paradigm of many global players are in the reorientation phase. The global power setting both political and economic is heading towards a new direction though, US power preponderances continue to dictate global affairs. India is fast trying to place its essential national interests through synchronising global peace, stability and development amid the emerging metamorphosis in the global financial and political setting.

Though, continuity and change is the salient feature of Indian foreign policy. The nation continues stand firmly on Nehruvian world vision firmly fitted with the cherished values of peaceful coexistence, mutual tolerance, non-aggression, non-interference etc. India continues to hold a place of respect among the developing countries in her pursuit to fight against global poverty, hunger and disease. India's quest for freedom and self-determination continue to influence international community. The recent speech made by the Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh in UN 66th General Assembly meeting reflects India's commitment for self-determination when Dr. Manmohan Singh expressed his solidarity with the people of Palestine and hold that the people has the inherent right to decide their future by their own and Palestine should be given recognition among the legitimate member in the community of nations. Indian foreign policy is therefore trying to evolve a more proactive and pragmatic intents to secure its essential national interests with proper harmony with world peace, prosperity and perfection.

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