

3 CHAPTER

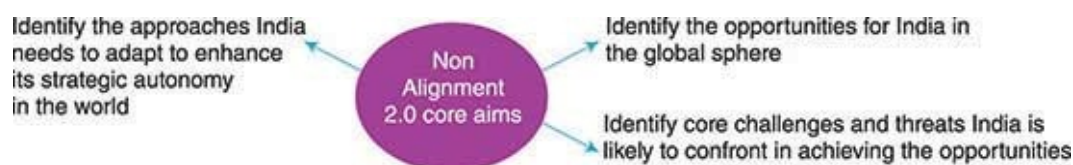
Foreign and Strategic Policy of India

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

- Introduction
- India and Asian Theatre from China to Central Asia
- India in International Institutions in Relation to the Great Powers
- India—Hard Power Tools and Internal Security

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to lay down a framework of opportunities that India should follow in the future to maximise its strategic autonomy and assume its rightful place in the world. To do the same, India needs to revive the Non Alignment and initiate a second generation of Non Alignment- Non Alignment 2.0.



The term non-alignment does not lead to any regression in Indian foreign policy in the twenty first century because it remains important for India due to its continuous quest for strategic autonomy.



We have argued on multiple occasions that India's non-alignment as articulated by Nehru did not imply a passive India. It has been seen throughout the book that despite its low economic and military profile during the Cold War, India was able to assert an active role in the world affairs since its independence. The instances of India asserting its voice at the UN against apartheid in South Africa, to the global movement for a nuclear disarmed world to playing a positive role in Korean issue are a testimony to the fact. Thus, arguing that India remained disengaged from the world order due to NAM till the 1990s is

largely a distortion. India adopted an inward-looking strategy during the Cold War in contrast to the popular foreign investment strategy but it still advocated an equitable financial system. If today, India plays the same assertive role at the WTO while asking for an equitable trade regime, then it is due to a confluence of India's tradition of global engagement and its growing global profile. It is in this context that NAM 2.0 strives to explore the opportunities that India will take to transform the global terrain and pursue its own destiny.

INDIA AND ASIAN THEATRE FROM CHINA TO CENTRAL ASIA

We have already discussed as to how India has historical ties with different regions starting from West Asia to Africa, from South East Asia to Central Asia. In the contemporary era, India has expanded its ties to the entire Asian region in a much bigger way. The idea of an Asian theatre was for the first time championed by Nehru when, in 1947, he convened at the Asian Relations Conference in New Delhi, which was followed by the 1955 Afro-Asian conference in Bandung. This idea of an Asian theatre is now a reality of Indian Policy. India now has decided to look upon the Asian zone as a zone of economic opportunity. The commencement of the Look East policy to the announcement of the latest Act East Policy has clearly asserted the zeal with which India wishes to seize the economic opportunities in the world. Asia has emerged as a new theatre of institutional innovation with a modest beginning in 1967—the creation of ASEAN to the BRICS Bank/NDB and AIIB. India has seized the opportunity to be a part of all these institutions. Asia also witnesses strategic rivalry. In different chapters of the book we have made mention of new military flash points like the South China Sea and the eruption of the Taiwan issue after the coming of Donald Trump in the US. Many Asian states are looking for a hedge against a great power and some even advocating that India play an important role in the fray. However, India has not fully responded yet as its response is slowly emerging from several ground realities. There is a growing realisation amongst Indian policy makers that India can emerge as a net security provider in South East and East Asia along with the Indian Ocean region.

At this level, an analysis of China is warranted. China, since 1978, has expanded its presence drastically in the economic and strategic sphere. China has emerged as a powerful player which is aggressively building up its military profile and this is likely to cause a power differential with India. In order to maintain a clear line of thought, it is imperative for India to expand the edge it has on the maritime frontier. As the Sino-India border dispute is not going to be resolved soon it is important that India build up its maritime capabilities.

India continues to engage with South Korea. As far as North Korea is concerned, India knows that Pakistan and China have provided vital support to the country. In the eventuality of a regime collapse in North Korea, if with US support, South Korea expands over to the North and unifies Korea, a democratic reunified Korea will any day prove more beneficial for India than the hegemonic North Korea is now.

INDIA IN INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN RELATION TO THE GREAT POWERS

With the advent of globalisation, India has realised that its integration with the world

economy will be beneficial for its own prosperity. The foundation of India as a global power depends upon the economic footprint India is striving to leave upon the world.



The major economies like Japan and Europe internally will face challenges, including that of an aged population. In Japan, Shinzo Abe has resorted to Abenomics. As explained in the chapter on India–Japan relationship, Abenomics has led to an easy immigration policy for Indians and Japan is inviting skilled population from nations like India to revive the Japanese growth story. It is important for India to take opportunities available in foreign states and capitalise upon them over the next one decade. To continuously support economic liberalisation at the global level, India has been entering into multilateral agreements. At present, India’s focus is on bilateral free trade agreements. India is trying to promote a rule bound international order. This has to be done to not only to keep a check on China by compelling it to focus on a fair multilateral system but also because an absence of India at multilateral agreements will have adverse effects on the entire system. Thus, a right balance of international multilateral and bilateral agreements are being struck by India. India has expressed its willingness to be a part of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) and its ongoing negotiations are a step in the right direction. India has geared up its diplomacy to serve a larger commercial role in the future. At this stage, it is important for India that it has established a vision as to how it would integrate with the global economy. The interaction that India intends to undertake with international economic institutions is driven by a defined set of policies. Thus, when India interacts with the international order, it will follow the following core objectives as it has always done.



INDIA—HARD POWER TOOLS AND INTERNAL SECURITY

If India wants to achieve the set political objectives of being a global power, then it needs to ensure a complete stability of its immediate strategic neighbourhood. The ‘Neighbourhood First’ policy is a step in that direction. A disturbed neighbourhood may, in an extreme case, require India to use hard power if it witnesses a threat from external

agents. India has, since independence, followed a defensive stance, but, as the threats persist and continue to challenge the sovereignty and stability of India, it has signalled a shift to defensive–offensive approach. In the chapter on India’s National Security Policy, we have already noted that India primarily witnesses external challenges from Pakistan and China, in terms of hostile land border relationship. It is important for India not only to protect its land frontiers but, also use the Indian Ocean to project power. For India to develop its military power, a major focus is now put upon the maritime dimension.

There are strategic objectives as to why India is trying to establish itself as a maritime power. With time, it is gradually becoming clear that Pakistan shall mostly remain engaged in dealing with its own internal troubles. As for China, it is busy with its power assertion tactics in the South China Sea while trying to create an economic environment to sustain growth in the midst of economic slowdown through its Belt and Road Initiative. While both China and Pakistan are occupied with their own issues, India has a small window of opportunity. Firstly, India is using the window to align its hard power capabilities with its political objectives. To achieve this, India is reallocating some resources from the Indo–Pakistan border towards the Sino–Indian border to build up defensive capabilities on that side. Secondly, India is using the window to allocate resources to develop maritime capabilities especially at a combat level. To manage Pakistan, India, under the new Modi Government has signalled a new enthusiasm for maritime development. With respect to its stance to Pakistan, India has been defensive majorly because of its awareness that any armed conflict could escalate at the nuclear level. Whenever Pakistan has launched cross border attacks, India has tried to defend itself without aggressively retaliating. However, India’s new National Security Advisor and India’s most decorated IPS officer, Ajit Doval, has signalled a shift from defensive to defensive–offensive strategy. In the new strategy, India has now decided to work towards exploiting the vulnerabilities of Pakistan. At the soft level, in defensive–offensive strategy, India has resorted to globally isolating Pakistan for its adventurism and its open support to extremism. At the diplomatic level, India has increased the pitch to brand Pakistan as a sponsor of terrorism. With the promotion of Anil Kumar Dhasmana as the Secretary of Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), India has diplomatically started taking up the issue of human rights violations in Baluchistan to counter constant references of Pakistan to Kashmir. Dhasmana is known and revered as an expert on Pakistan and especially Baluchistan. Under the new strategy, India has also carried out cross border surgical strikes in September, 2016 to eliminate terrorist camps. Thus, the signal India has conveyed to Pakistan is that it will no longer persist in its earlier defensive mode anymore and shall retaliate on provocation. The new strategy of India is a shift from being Defensive to now being Defensive-Offensive. In Defensive-Offensive strategy, India will go to the site of origin of the Offense and retaliate. India, however, will not shift to outright offensive mode due to the possibility of nuclear retaliation as also because undertaking outright provocation shall stand against the policies it espouses.



The border between India and China had been largely tranquil, but since 2010, India has been witnessing regular transgressions and incursions by China in the western sector of the Line of Actual Control (LAC). There is a possibility in the future of the China–India diplomatic ties deteriorating, leading to Chinese assertion in Arunachal and Ladakh. To tackle this, India has decided to first resort to maintaining status quo. With a better army, infrastructure and manpower, China will certainly have an edge over logistics. India has started building up both defensive and offensive capabilities along the LAC. The recent decision in 2016 to station the Brahmos missile alongside the border is a testimony to the fact, India would use the developed capabilities to resort to quid pro quo where any land grab by China along the LAC is likely to be met by a counter land grab by India on the Chinese side. In areas where operations and tactical advantage lie with India, development of capabilities for a possible quid pro quo tactic will help. India has already earmarked the exercise of marking out areas along the LAC to launch limited offensive operations if needed in the future.



While we assess the threats we may witness from China and Pakistan, there is a need for India to make some structural changes in its defence and security structures.



It is also important to note at this juncture that India's global capabilities could be

affected if its internal security challenges proliferate. India needs to have a developmental model that will be used to support the Asian developmental story, which may get adversely affected if its internal security challenges are not addressed. Every internal conflict basically manifests in a particular way and de-escalation depends upon the political skills that are applied to handle such conflicts. How the political elite of a society chooses to engage with people makes a conflict manifest in the way it does. At the strategic level, there is a need to evolve political conditions which may defuse such conflicts in advance. Though we cannot afford to discuss the internal security challenges in detail in this chapter of the book, we can identify a few areas of failures of the state that have given rise to challenges in internal security. It is important to address these state failures as they inflict a huge opportunity cost in our quest for global power.



The best way to tackle the threats of internal security is to take advantage of the institution of democracy. If people develop faith on the state and the state hears them and addresses their grievances, the violence and alienation that communities face would automatically reduce. For instance, secessionist movements can become virulent when governments refuse to adopt democratic participation and try to be authoritarian in their approach. India has to build a culture of federalism where it incorporates democratic values as a distinctive strength. We have to ensure that we create a state and a society where citizens have faith in the power of democracy. In Kashmir and the North-East our policies till date have created a Machiavellian state which is a state neither feared nor loved.

