

India's Look West Policy

India and West Asia

Introduction of Look West Policy

India's Look East Policy has achieved considerable attention around the world. India also has Look West Policy which has not been highlighted in media or otherwise. Recently PM has called for "Link West Asia" Policy.

- Do you think India has a strategic vision w.r.t. West Asia.
- What are the key pillars of India's West Asia Policy?
- It is said that India's W.A. Policy has been subjected to complex pool of pressures, convergences and divergences. Explain.
- To what extent domestic factor has been a constraint in India's Look West Policy?

Meaning of policy

- Policy is different from decisions.
- Decisions are taken within the framework of policy.
- Policy reflects long term vision rather than adhoc responses.

Significance of W.A. for India

- W.A. / Middle East has been the hotspot of int'l politics.

India is greatly impacted by any political turbulence in this region. W. Asia is in India's extended neighbourhood, has a critical importance for India's security in a comprehensive sense - strategic, regional, internal, energy & economic security.

Comparison betⁿ Look East & Look West

- Look East is too much highlighted that India's interaction with W. Asia gets neglected.
- India - ASEAN bilateral trade for 2015 is expected to reach \$100 billion and the target is to reach \$200 billion by 2020 whereas India's trade with GCC countries has already crossed figure of \$160 billion.
- West Asia has been the principle source of hydrocarbons.
- 7 million Indians live in West Asia and is a source of huge remittances.
- India has defence partnership with Oman, Qatar, Israel.
- India also has strategic partnership with Saudi Arabia.
- The Riyadh Declaration of 2010 is an agreement betⁿ the 2 countries against terrorism.
- All these achievements are not less significant. In this way India's relations with W. Asia have been more important materially than with East Asia. However we can't say that India has been able to achieve the optimal.

Reasons for less than optimal performance

- Lack of strategic vision in New Delhi's approach toward the region.
- The problems linked to the region itself. It is one of the most polarised region in the world. I
- It does not have a pan regional organisation like that of ASEAN, African Union (AU) or even like SAARC.
- Hence there is a limited scope of institutionalised relations.

Look West Policy

- It was announced by former PM Manmohan Singh at a meeting with the members of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in 2004.
- Present PM also talks about the "Link West policy".
- The focus of Link West Policy is on
 - 22 members Arab League
 - Strengthening relationship with GCC countries
 - Improving relations with Iran, Israel, Turkey and countries of North Africa

India and Palestinian issue

- India's position on Palestine impacts India's relations with Israel.
- Palestinian issue was one of the earliest issues where India had to express its approach.
- India did not support the creation of Israel in 1948 on the ground of its opposition to 2 nation theory or partition of a country on the ground of religion.

Arab world itself did not have problem with recognition of Israel.
Domestic concern, lack of trust on minority.

Arab nations

unconditional support - no bargain.

Once relⁿ with Israel started - we got bargaining leverage.
Also relations with Arab nations continued to be same.
Total miscalculation by India.

- India expressed solidarity with Arab world. However in 1950 India granted recognition to the state of Israel.

Israel
Surrendering &
Surrendering
Soviet weapons.

However India did not have full diplomatic relations with Israel until 1992.

India
Love affair
but not made
in public.

- India continued to give unconditional support to the Palestinian issue. India even did not oppose the suicide bombers or Palestinians fideyeens. Even India justified such protests as an expression of genuine concern of Palestinian right to self determination.

similar
acts were
in Kashmir
India opposed

Analysis of India's policy

- India's policy towards Israel & Palestine shows India's lack of confidence and miscalculations.
- India preferred not to establish full diplomatic relations with Israel considering 2 factors.
 - The sentiments of Muslims in India.
 - How Muslim countries like S. Arabia, Iran will react to India's closeness towards Israel.
- During Cold War India's dependency on Israel was also not as great as in recent times.
- The strongest aspect of India - Israel partnership is defence and security.
During Cold War India's defence and security needs were fulfilled by USSR alone.
- India also had consideration of the large no. of

Indians living in Gulf countries, proximity of the region to India as well as India's energy security.

- Cold War also impacted India's Israel policy. Israel was in US bloc and India was in Soviet bloc.

Views of Critics

- India's policy did not bring optimal results. Despite unconditional support to Palestinian cause, Arab world never supported India's point of view on Kashmir.

- India wanted membership in OIC (Organisation of Islamic Countries).

At that time India was representing 2nd largest Muslim population in the world.

Not only this, OIC passed a resolution condemning India's actions in Kashmir.

- Muslim countries supported Pakistan in its wars against India.

- If India had established full diplomatic relations with Israel much earlier, it could have got a bargaining edge.

- India should have made its support for Palestinian cause conditional.

- India should have established relations with Israel at least in 80s. By this time

the 12 prominent countries of Arab world -

(12) Egypt & Jordan (90s).

- From mid-80s India has been suffering from cross border terrorism. Saudi Arabia has been

Camp David
Agreement
1972.

the major financier of Pak based terrorist groups propagating Wahabi ideology; orthodox version of Sunni ideology.

India - Israel relations since 1990s

- In 1990 India established full diplomatic relations with Israel. Since then there have been significant movement in India's relations with Israel.
- Reasons for change in the policy
 - Disintegration of USSR / End of Cold War gave greater flexibility to India to go for multiple alignments.
 - Indian pro-Arab policy had not benefited India.
 - There were some signs coming from Middle East that showed some possibility of reconciliation betⁿ Arabs and Israel, specifically after war on Iraq.
 - The critical factor was India's security concerns. USSR disintegrated and was in a position, either to supply new hardware or to provide servicing to the existing weapons.
 - Israel has expertise in servicing of Soviet weapons.
 - Israel also has expertise in defence technology, can supply much cheaper weapons.
 - India may compete with Western weapons of quality.
 - Willingness to share technology with India.

↳ Israel does not put conditions like that of USA.

Why Israel also wanted closer partnership with India?

- Israel's Defence Industry.

• Defence industry is key source of Israel's economic needs. Israel does not have trade relations with neighbouring countries. India being leading, now the largest importer of conventional weapons.

- Israel does not want to be solely dependent on USA as USA also have very close relations with Saudi Arabia.

- Lot of goodwill exists at popular level towards Israel in India.

- India represents 3rd largest Muslim population. So in a way it is also acceptance of Israeli's legitimate existence by significant no. of Muslims in the world.

Present status of the relations

- Today India has multidimensional engagement with Israel though defence and security remains the core, we have cooperation in agri, space technology. Bilateral trade has also increased.

Former PM of India Atal Bihari Vajpayee called Israel as India's "Natural Ally" in 2003.

- Today there is a consensus among the political parties, atleast in the 2 major political parties, to have close relations with Israel.

challenges?
being ~~proportionate~~ pragmatic?

Change in India's approach towards Palestine

→ Officially

→ India continues to support the Palestinian cause.

- The change is India now condemns the terrorist attacks by Palestinians against Israel.

- India also condemns the ^{excessive} use of force by Israel against Palestinians.

Our approach is more balanced and pragmatic.

Re

Recent crisis in Gaza and India's response

- Indian Parliament was very vocal in condemnation of Israel. Opposition demanded India take categorical stand against Israel.
- India should raise matter in U.N.
- India should suspend military purchases from Israel.

- Response of Foreign Minister in Parliament

- India's relations with Israel & Palestine at present is a legacy of previous govt.
- Indian law makers should encourage both sides to come to negotiating table.
- India opposes the use of terrorism in all of its forms.

- India's response at UNHRC

- The very next day after Foreign Minister's stand in Parliament, India voted in favour of UNHRC resolution condemning Israel and seeking probe for Israeli offensives in Gaza.

Things can't change in Middle East unless there is true democracy ~~in~~ there.
elections?

Analysis

- Initially Palestinians expressed their displeasure & then Israelis also expressed their displeasure.
- It shows lack of long ^{term} vision and confidence.

Do you think Israel is India's 'natural ally'?

- Former PM described Israel as India's Natural Ally. However political analysts warned that India should resist the temptations of labeling any country as natural ally. India's external & internal security environment, its geographical location does not give liberty to India. Multiple alignment is the best course of action. We do not have perfect congruence of interest with Israel, though we do share significant concerns.

Constraints which India faces in dealing with Israel.

- The domestic political environment.
 - India has a competitive party system and the significant no. of muslims.
- India also shares deep interest with Iran and Saudi Arabia with which Israel has problematic relations.
- In context of crisis in Afghanistan, India-Iran relations have become equally critical. Iran is the only practical land route for India to reach Afghanistan and Central Asia.
- Israel's support in counter terrorism is important. But Saudi Arabia's support is equally important.

- Israel & China defence partnership is also increasing.
- Israeli use of force against civilians also create problematic situations for India.
- It is suggested that India should resist the temptation of using such strong words.
- India should not give an impression of Jewish-Hindu axis.
- India should strengthen its relations with Israel without sacrificing the core national interest in the region.
- India should have proper hedging strategy w.r.t. any possibility of development of China-Pak-Iran axis.
- India should facilitate the earliest resolution of Palestinian issue.

India - Iran

- The key inflection points in India-Iran relations.
- US factor in India-Iran relations.

Importance of Iran for India

- Geostrategic location of Iran in Persian Gulf.
- India has 2nd largest population of Shia Muslims in the world.
- Iran is also a regional power.
- Earlier Iran was the leading source of oil to India.
- Iran has a critical place in India's Afghanistan policy and India's Central Asia policy.

Phases in India-Iran relations

- India and Iran share civilizational affinity of exceptional level.
- There have been civilizational and trade linkages since ancient times.
- India's relations with Iran got blocked because of British policies.

After independence

- Uptil 1979 (Islamic Revolution in Iran).
- Shah of Iran was an ally of U.S.A. and India was in Treaty of Peace & Friendship with U.S.S.R.
- India and Iran had trade relations India was importing oil from Iran.

- Iran supported Pakistan on Kashmir issue. However during wars India did not cut supply of oil to India.
- Even Iran's stand in 1962 war was pro-India.

After Islamic revolution (1979)

- Iran wanted to establish itself as the leader of the Muslim world. Iran's support for Kashmir became more vocal/stronger. However Iranian support for Islamic radicalism has not been as problematic as Saudi Arabia's actions.
- Iran condemned demolition of Babri Mosque.

From 2001 - 05

- In 2001, A.B. Vajpayee visited Iran, resulted into Tehran Declaration.
- Significance of Tehran Declaration
- It condemns acts of terrorism and states sponsoring terrorism.

Note: India-Iran rapprochement began because of Taliban coming to power in Afghanistan & Taliban killing Shias and Iranian diplomats. India & Iran supported Northern Alliance.

- 2003: Iranian President Khatami was made the Chief guest of Republic Day.
- Significance of the visit.
- Same year U.S.A. was contemplating attack against Iraq. India wanted to show displeasure.

25/11/14

to U.S.A. as U.S.A. took Pakistan as the frontline state in war against terrorism. India also wanted to show its strategic autonomy from U.S.A.

India & Iran expressed their desire to take their relationship to the strategic level. They expressed desire to explore cooperation in defence, peace pipeline & against terrorism.

2005 — 2009

- In Aug 2003 RAND Corp. has brought a report warning U.S. President about the development of New Delhi-Tehran axis which may impact U.S. Geopolitical objectives in Middle East. U.S.A. had

increased its pressures on India. Maybe one of the factor for 2005 Indo-US Civil Nuclear Agreement

Hide Act
could have gone for hard bargain

- Sep 2005

In July 2005 Civil Nuclear Agreement was finalized and in Sep 2005 India voted against Iran at IAEA. India supported the resolution which says that Iran violated NPT.

Resolution demanded punitive actions against Iran. India broke rank with NAM countries. Russia & China abstained.

Reaction of Iran

Iran strongly reacted against India's act. It also impacted India-Iran-Pakistan (IPI) Pipeline gas negotiations and Iran started demanding higher price and Iran started demanding much lower than what Iran wanted.

TAPI
Turkmenistan
Af
Pak
India

- Feb 2006

India again voted against Iran.

- Jan 2008

India launched a spy satellite of Israel which aimed at surveillance and aiding attack against Iran.

Iran's response

Strongly condemned & held that such action is not expected from any wise country.

- Nov 2008 Mumbai Terror Attack

Iran held that India, US & Israel were responsible rather than Pakistan.

- Nov. 2009

India voted against Iran for the 3rd time.

- Mar. 2010

Riyadh Declaration

Condemned Iran's nuclear programme, asked Iran to remove the doubts of intⁿ community about its nuclear programme.

India & Iran oil trade also declined because of U.S. Pressures. At the same time many other U.S. allies like Pakistan, Egypt & even S. Korea continued to strengthen trade & investment relations with Iran. China also made huge investment in Iran.

2010 — uptil now

Dec. ~~2009~~²⁰¹⁰ London Conf. on Afghanistan was an eye opener for India.

At London Conference, U.S.A. accepted Pak theory of reconciliation with "good Taliban" which actually means anti-India section of Taliban and their reintegration. India realised that U.S. has no concern for India's security. India also realised the importance of Iran in addressing the challenges emerging in Afghanistan post 2014. India started rapprochement with Iran. Despite U.S. pressures, Indian PM participated in NAM Conference at Tehran in 2012, condemned unilateralism, supported negotiated solution for Iran. India also declared its interest for massive investment in Iran's Chabahar Port.

Presently India is in the mood of rapprochement with Iran. Iran also needs India to counter its isolation. Iran expressed

desire for defence partnership & to go for multidimensional economic engagement beyond oil.

India - Saudi Arabia

Uptil 2006

- India did not have significant political & diplomatic relations with Saudi Arabia.
- In 2006 Saudi King visited India as a chief guest of Republic Day.

Reasons

- India realised the importance of S. Arabia in tackling Pakistan.
- India wanted to make its West Asia Policy more balanced.
- Saudi Arabia had also shown interest in India from the perspective of investments.
- Improvement in India-US relations also brought improvement in relations with Saudi Arabia.

Uptil now India hyphenated its relations with Saudi Arabia in context of Pakistan-S. Arabia relations.

Since US pressures on India against Iran were increasing, India has to move closer to Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia is also the leader in Islamic world.

India's rapprochement aimed to counter Pakistan's influence.

Significance of Saudi Arabia

- 1.5 Million Indian workers form the largest expatriate community in Saudi Arabia.
- Leading producer of oil.

Challenges in the relations with

- India's relations with Israel & Iran.
- Saudi Arabia's relations with Pakistan & Saudi Arabia's involvement in promotion of Salafi form of Sunni Islam & financing the terrorist groups.

Challenges in India - Iran

- India's relations with Israel, S. Arabia, U.A.E.
- Possible development of China - Pak - Iran axis

god but not god.
book Shia-Sunnar

Afghan: Place of Great Games, Heart of Asia Region

Taliban
Pak.
S. Arabia
UAE

Pak's policy. strategic dept - govt. completely controlled by Pak.
in Afghan.

more guy may.

India - Afghanistan

friends - don't value you.
enemies - don't fear you.

- India's policy towards Afghanistan
- India's options in Afghanistan post 2014.

Challenges which India has in Afghanistan

& Indian options.

Significance of Afghanistan for India

- At present, Afghanistan has become the most important concern for India's security.

It is predicted that Taliban will be able to reestablish itself in Afghanistan.

Establishment of Taliban as a Govt. of Afghanistan may be detrimental to India's security.

Signals from U.S.A. are not encouraging.

U.S.A. has gone ahead with Pakistan led approach of reconciliation with Taliban.

- India faces various constraints in dealing with Afghanistan. India can be an imp player subject to the conditions we have a strategy that can address our concerns.

Because of geographical constraints, India is not a primary player. The extent to which

India can play role in Afghanistan depends on numerous factors.

- India - Pakistan relations

- India - U.S. relations

- India's relations with countries in region & their willingness to co-opt India.

Policy options for India

1- Masterly Inactivity

The policy followed by British of not involving themselves in Afghan affairs. Regarding Afghanistan it is said that it is a place where even angels fear to go and only fools enter.

One of the reason for disintegration of U.S.S.R. and decline of U.S. hegemony.

We can't say that U.S.A. has achieved its objectives in Afghanistan.

India followed masterly inactivity policy when Taliban was in power. However, it cost India dearly and has been a source of embarrassment. (Hijack of IC814 from Kathmandu to Kandahar).

Masterly inactivity policy is not an option today. India has to actively safeguard its interest in Afghanistan. India can't leave Pakistan to have complete freedom to get its desired "strategic depth" and to use Afghanistan as a safe havens for anti-India terrorist groups. India has increased its stakes in Afghanistan. India has provided \$2 billion as an aid.

India has made investment in Hajigak iron ore mines in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan is also significant for Indian interest in Central Asia.

The current situation in Afghanistan doesn't seem to be favourable to India. The present President of Afghanistan is closer to Pakistan. At the recent Heart of Asia Conference in Beijing, the present President has given

5 circles of nations as an order of importance for Afghanistan.

1. 6 immediate neighbours of Afghanistan
2. Islamic countries
3. Western countries
4. Other Asian countries
5. International organisations.

It resembles former President Karzai's earlier approach where he called Pakistan as 'twin brother' and India as a friend.

The reason is Pakistan's role is crucial to bring stability in Afghanistan.

However it is not certain that Pakistan will be in a position to address Afghan President's concerns and it is also not certain that Pakistan is in a position to dominate Taliban completely. This also opens a cause of optimism for India.

Maybe in future the present govt. will also take Karzai's way. & However in a situation Taliban coming back to power.

India requires extraordinary creative policy of reconciliation with Taliban.

2 - India continues its soft power diplomacy.

However it is suggested that it is a less than optimal choice. Nice guy image doesn't help. It doesn't help because neither friends trust or enemy fear.

Simply good-will is not enough. Our

investments in Af should have got some assurance of India's security. India followed soft power approach under the dictates of U.S. which imposed what Pakistan wanted. India realised the limitations of this approach, finally concluded strategic partnership with Af in 2011, became the first country to have a strategic partnership with Afghanistan. India showed its willingness to go beyond development and go for security cooperation. India even accepted some of the demands of former President of Afghanistan, agreed to deliver military hardware through Russia and to enhance the training & capacity building of Afghan National Army. However Present President has cancelled delivery of weapons from Russia.

3- Work with regional actors like China, Iran, Russia & C. Asian countries.

Here also scenario is not very optimistic.

So far there is no plan proposed by SCO for future of Afghanistan.

4- Normalization of relations with Pak

Doesn't seem workable because of unwillingness of Pakistan.

5- Influence U.S.A. so that U.S. can put pressure on Pakistan because stability in Afghan is also in U.S. interest.

Scholars suggest increasing military footprint in Afghanistan. Until and unless India considers Afghanistan as a important as its borders & doesn't consider as 1st & foremost security threat, we won't be able to safeguard our interest in Afghanistan.