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Political Science & Int. Relations [PSIR] Notes

for

UPSC-CSE Mains & State PSCs

Paper 2 Section B India & the World



Part 1
Topics: 1,2,3

SAMPLE

Table of Contents

Topic	Pg.No.
1] Indian Foreign Policy	
1.1] Determinants of Foreign Policy	5
1.2] Institutions of Foreign Policy Making in India	12
1.3] Continuity and Change in Indian Foreign Policy	21
2] India and Non-Alignment	
2.1] Non-Alignment Movement	26
2.2] Non-Alignment as Foreign Policy	33
3] India and South Asia	
3.1] SAARC and BIMSTEC	37
3.2] India ASEAN Relations	44
3.3] India Bhutan Relations	54
3.4] India-Nepal Relations	63
3.5] India Pakistan Relations	72
3.6] India Bangladesh Relations	86
3.7] India Sri Lanka Relations	96
3.8] India Maldives Relations	102
3.9] India Afghanistan Relations	106

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1.1] DETERMINANTS OF FOREIGN POLICY

1] INTRODUCTION TO FOREIGN POLICY

2] DOMESTIC FACTORS SHAPING INDIAN FOREIGN POLICY

A] HISTORY

B] NATIONAL IDENTITY AND CULTURE

C] POLITICAL STRUCTURE OF NATION

D] POLITICAL LEADERSHIP

E] SIZE AND NATURE OF ECONOMY

F] DOMESTIC PUBLIC OPINION

3] EXTERNAL / SYSTEMIC FACTORS SHAPING FOREIGN POLICY

A] INTERNATIONAL POWER STRUCTURE/CONFIGURATION

B] MILITARY STRENGTH

C] ALLIANCES AND COALITIONS

D] GEOPOLITICAL LOCATION/REGIONAL SITUATION

E] GLOBAL PUBLIC OPINION

1] Introduction to Foreign Policy

Foreign Policy denotes the strategy or approach adopted by the national government to achieve its goals in its relations with external entities. The idea is, that every country or state should have a foreign policy. While foreign policy may or may not be coherent or in an organized form, it always exists.

From the early days of recorded history, Indian thinkers have written on the significance and importance of foreign policy in governance. We see a codified approach towards political and diplomatic strategy in the Arthashastra of Kautilya, who strongly believed that nations act in their political, economic and military self-interest. Similarly, the contemporaneous Thirukkural has an entire chapter outlining the essential attributes of an envoy in the conduct of foreign policy and diplomacy.

The purpose of foreign policy is to safeguard and promote its national interests, in the conduct of its relations with other countries, bilaterally and multilaterally. Thus, national interest, which can be explained with the help of the country's political, economic, social and military objectives, forms the basis of foreign policy.

Multiple internal and external factors influence the foreign policy of a nation. Some thinkers give primacy to certain factors over others. For example, the English geographer Mackinder emphasizes the importance of land-based power. On the other hand, Alfred Mahan, an American historian emphasises the importance of naval power in international relations. There are always multiple factors at play, and the relative importance varies from geography to geography (spatially), and from time to time (temporally).

Internal/domestic factors that shape foreign policy

- History
- National identity and culture
- Political structure of the nation
- Political leadership
- Size and nature of the economy
- Domestic public opinion

External/systemic factors shaping foreign policy

1. International power structure/configuration
2. Military strength
3. Alliances and coalitions
4. Geopolitical location/regional situation
5. Global public opinion

We'll discuss both the internal and external factors. First from a neutral standpoint, followed by its relevance in the Indian context.

2] Domestic Factors Shaping Indian Foreign Policy**A] History**

The history of a nation plays an important role in shaping foreign policy. Nations often draw important lessons from history. History also shapes the national perception and the national identity. And while one cannot make foreign policy solely based on historical knowledge, it is not wise to ignore history.

In the Indian case, history explains a lot about its foreign policy. The colonial experience, which created a lasting suspicion against Western hegemony, was largely responsible for the Indian foreign policy post-independence. This was reflected in India leading the NAM and then siding with Russia at the time of crisis in 1971. This history also explains India's relations with Pakistan, and the disputed border issue with China, a legacy of British rule.

It is also not necessary that the present will continue along the lines of past. e.g. France & Germany were historical rivals in WW I and WW II. However, the EU formation was led primarily by these two nations. Thus, if other factors are in favour of countries – then historical antagonism may not stand in between.

B] National Identity and Culture

National identity denotes the self-perception of a nation in the global order of things. While a superpower like the USA or China will have a different approach, a middle power like India or Brazil will go for different means.

The role of culture in shaping foreign policy is often explained by the use of the term 'soft power'. In the era of globalization assisted by the ICT revolution, there are many carriers of this culture. The

movies, books, art forms etc. are all agents to project the culture and help in the generation of soft power. In the case of India, the ancient practice of yoga, the medicinal practice of ayurveda and rich philosophical and religious literature and practices, all contribute to its soft power, and in turn, also affect its foreign policy.

Gandhian philosophy of non-violence and satyagraha also remains an integral part of Indian foreign policy. It should also be noted that Gandhian philosophy was itself rooted in India's moral and philosophical traditions such as the Vedas, and epics like Ramayana, Mahabharata. Gandhiji understood that India's freedom was linked to that of other Asian and African colonies. Therefore, it is not surprising that the defining characteristics of India's foreign policy in the first few decades after Independence were non-alignment, anti-colonialism, anti-racialism, non-violence, and disarmament.

C] Political Structure of Nation

Based on historical preferences, there are a variety of government structures across the world. The decision-making process is quite different in democracies than in authoritarian regimes. Even in a democracy, there are factors like whether govt. agency handling the foreign policy is democratically elected or not, does it consist of specialists or generalists, whether the power relations are centralized or free and open, the nature of the executive-legislature relationship etc. These factors vary and shape the foreign policy accordingly.

As **democratic peace theory** explains, the incidences of war between two democracies are much lesser than between democracy and non-democracy. In democracy, the leadership is responsible for justifying its action, which becomes difficult when the adversary is also a democratic nation. This delays the decision-making and thus gives time for other stakeholders.

D] Political Leadership

Among other factors, leadership plays an important role in the foreign policy of a nation. In one of the oldest examples of foreign policy analysis, Thucydides highlights how fundamentally important the nature of individual leaders and their styles were and how it contributed to the outcome of the Peloponnesian War. He contrasts the noble Pericles (who cautiously designed a winning military strategy against Sparta) and his successor, the reckless Alcibiades (who abandoned Pericles's plan and favoured military adventurism, eventually leading Athens to ruin).

Similarly, the writings of Machiavelli also illustrate how the 'individual leaders' are so important in international relations. His entire treaty, *The Prince*, is designed as a guidebook to young rulers, giving them, in essence, a template to guide their individual actions to help ensure their success. Closer at home, we also have the Saptanga theory by Kautilya, in which he treats the king as a Nabhi (navel) of the entire state apparatus.

In the case of India, soon after independence, India's Pakistan policy had a lot to do with Gandhi's idealism, who although didn't assume office, was the leader (father) of the nation.

Under Nehru's leadership, we witness his personal traits in Indian foreign policy. The early decades carried on the idealism in Indian foreign policy and was evident in India's NAM and advocacy for decolonization in Africa and elsewhere. While NAM is certainly a legacy to be proud of, and it is

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difficult to tell which other course would have been better, the overall pacifist policy did not serve India well in solving the Kashmir issue and Indo-China border dispute.

The period of Nehru was followed by Indira Gandhi, who, many have claimed, was a strong leader. The highlights of Indira Gandhi's foreign policy are India's approach to the Bangladesh War of Liberation, the treaty of 'Peace, Friendship and Cooperation, 1971' between India and Russia, and the progress in India's nuclear program.

With Rajiv Gandhi at the helm of affairs from 1984-89, for whom politics was not the first choice, the leadership was marked by the failure of Indian foreign policy in Sri Lanka and his unfortunate assassination. However, the unorthodox approach of Rajiv Gandhi did help in easing India's relations with China, when the nations decided to separate the border issue from other bilateral issues. (1988)

Fast forward to the contemporary period, we see a remarkable difference in Indian foreign policy since the NDA government. Keeping politics aside, scholars across the gamut have agreed that there has been a change in India's global image since PM Modi assumed office. There is a change in the narrative, as **Harsh V Pant suggests, "the story has moved from a balancing power to a leading power."** India has shown a willingness to exercise military power with Pakistan, it has been able to manoeuvre its relations with antagonistic partners like Russia and the USA, or Israel and Arab countries, and even the soft power has been leveraged to enhance India's global position. The recent success of Indian foreign policy includes India achieving consensus in the G20 declaration despite differing positions of members over the Ukraine War.

We can sum up with Kautilya, who suggests that if the leader is smart, he can convert all other elements into favourable ones. If the king is weak and lacks courage, other elements will not be able to play an important role.

E] Size and Nature of Economy

The role of economy in foreign policy has increased with globalization. As suggested by proponents of **complex interdependency theory** (Joseph Nye and Robert Keohane), globalisation has led to economic interconnectedness, which has created complex interdependence among nations. As a result, there are numerous stakeholders in nation-to-nation relations and this has made the conflicts less likely among states.

A strong economy is a prerequisite for a strong military, which in turn is the most important factor that shapes foreign policy. We can say that India's limited economic capability at independence also contributed to its orientation with NAM, a non-military approach.

The economy also determines the ability of a country to offer aid or to extend soft loans to other nations, influencing foreign policy choices.

The economic model also matters, as post-independence India was closer to Russia with its socialistic model of economy and stayed away from the Western bloc and capitalism. Post 1991, with LPG reforms, there was greater integration of the Indian economy with the USA, leading to closer relations between the nations.

F] Domestic Public Opinion

Public opinion can be said to be the collective preference of the nation's population, gauged through traditional and social media, polling data or other such measures. There is a debate on the role of public opinion in shaping foreign policy. The realist tradition treats the public as unaware of the nuances of foreign policy decision-making and suggests it to be the domain of elites. Further, they also fear the compromise on 'rationality' in foreign policy, if public opinion is considered. Liberal tradition, on the other hand, suggests that public opinion plays an important role in foreign policy, just like it influences the domestic policies of government.

We can see the disapproval of India's China policy by people post-1962 war, which set the public sentiment against the Chinese. The relations improved only with Rajiv Gandhi's visit to the nation in 1988, where it was decided to pursue the border issue separately.

We also see the influence of strong public opinion in support of the Sri Lankan Tamil issue in Tamil Nadu. The public sentiment forced India to side with the Tamils in Sri Lanka and led to the 1987 India-Sri Lanka accord.

Further, it also becomes difficult to make any concessions in foreign policy due to vote bank politics. For example, China has offered to settle the border issue since 1961, by giving up its claim on the NEFA region, if India is willing to secede Aksai China to it. The issue has not yet been settled since it will affect the domestic politics.

3] External / Systemic Factors Shaping Foreign Policy

A] International Power Structure/Configuration

The international power structure can vary with time. The Cold War period was characterised by a bipolar world order, and countries were forced to choose from either of the blocs. India innovated the option of NAM since it didn't want to compromise its sovereignty. By pursuing NAM India performed a leadership role, especially for the global south or newly independent countries (NICs).

Post-Cold War was characterised by American hegemony and the unipolar world order. India rapidly had to adjust to this shift. From Vajpayee to, Manmohan to PM Modi, India's US relationships have improved to a large extent. Or they have '**overcome the hesitations of history**' as PM Modi remarks. The major achievements include Indo-US Nuclear Deal 2008, and the agreements in defence cooperation (GSOMIA, LEMOA, COMCASA, and BECA). While the USA is important for India to counter China, India also matters to the United States for the same purpose.

The current period, as **Prof Sreeram Chaulia** remarks is an '**emergent multipolar world order**', and thus we see India exercising the option of multiple alliances or '**issue-based alliances**' in the words of S Jaishankar.

B] Military Strength

The powers across the globe can be classified in three categories i.e., great powers (like USA and China), middle powers (India, Brazil, Indonesia etc.) and small powers (Qatar, Malaysia etc).

Great powers are aware of their position in global hierarchy. The main aim of foreign policy for these powers is to maintain the status quo and prevent the rise of other nations. The whole world is backyard for such powers, and their foreign policy is truly global. These nations often go for unilateralism and there is moral deficit in their actions. Such countries engage in competition and conflict with other great powers, what Mearsheimer describes as ‘**the tragedy of great power politics.**’

The middle powers are neither in the strong or weak zone, but there is strong aspiration to become a great power one day. Such states seek policy of making themselves stronger and behaving toughly even if it is seen as provocative by the world because it is “better to err on the side of being too powerful than not being powerful enough.” The sphere of influence for such powers is typically the geographical region, not the whole world. They seek smaller but steadily extending sphere of influence and such powers are not unilateral since they’re not economically or militarily strong enough.

Weak states or **small powers** have to strike a “balance between security and independence.” Survival is the biggest concern for such nations and band-wagoning to a great power or playing off one great power against another, is their strategy. Such powers are less ambitious. For the authoritarian states, there is also an additional concern of regime security (North Korea). They have to be creative and innovative and often go for unorthodox means and unconventional pursuits.

C] Alliances and coalitions

The present era is marked by globalization and regionalization. Consequently, there are numerous regional, global, military and trade alliances that countries participate in. These institutions have a significant influence on foreign policy.

Being a part of the grouping, the choices of member states are often limited. As in the case of NATO, EU, ASEAN, or OPEC, the member countries try to achieve consensus, to project themselves as a cohesive union. This involves aligning foreign policy in a manner that such consensus is possible. While the powerful members do try to influence the agenda of such grouping, they can only do it to a certain degree. For smaller members, the choices are often constrained in such forums.

India is a member of multiple such organizations. It has sought membership in SCO in the recent past, to keep close with China. It has stayed away from the coalitions that don’t serve its interests and would constrain its foreign policy choices. e.g. NPT, APEC.

Further, being a member of certain alliances also influences the foreign policy of other nations towards it. The security umbrella of NATO has served as a deterrent against Russia for decades, serving all the member countries. And Russia is fighting hard to ensure that Ukraine is not engulfed by NATO, which will limit the foreign policy options of Russia.

D] Geopolitical location/regional situation

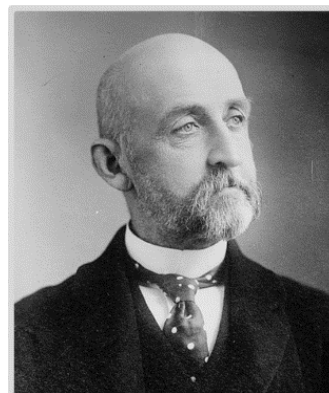
India’s geopolitical location has been a major factor shaping its foreign relations for millennia. With a tall Himalayan barrier to the north and east and a vast coastline to the south, a large part of India remained immune to foreign invasions for centuries.

Further, geopolitical location also determines the neighbouring countries, which in turn influences foreign policy choices. It is said that while we can choose our friends, we cannot choose our neighbours. Being surrounded by neighbours like Pakistan and China, it doesn't leave many options for India. India's closeness with the United States should be particularly seen from this perspective.

We can also see the case of Israel, which had to go for a nuclear program since it is surrounded by a harsh militant region. India's relations with Latin America owe a lot to the inter-alia, the geographical distance between the regions.

Further, being a landlocked country also leads to dependence on neighbouring sea-bordering countries and a compromise on sovereignty. This can be seen in cases of Nepal, Bhutan etc.

Mackinder and Mahan are two prominent scholars who talk about geography and foreign policy. Alfred Mahan, the American historian emphasizes the importance of being a sea-based power. He gives an example of Britain, which in the 18th and 19th centuries, was a global power due to its supremacy in naval power. The spirit is reflected in contemporary politics with nations acquiring bases across the globe through military arrangements. (Chinese string of pearls strategy, The US-UK naval base at Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean, France, USA, China having naval bases in Djibouti, India having a naval base at Duqm (Oman) and Indian efforts to develop the naval base at Sabang in Indonesia etc.)



Alfred Mahan



Halford Mackinder

Mackinder, the English geographer, on the other hand, emphasizes the importance of land-based power. He gives example of Russia, which enjoys a stronghold in Eastern Europe. He suggests that East Europe is centre of the world. It is a 'heartland'. One who controls the heartland will control Rimland (the Rest of Europe) and will control the whole world. Attack on Eastern Europe is possible only via land thus it's important to be a land-based power.

Geography also determines the resources at disposal of the nation, and the dependence on others. India's relations with the middle east are largely based on its need of crude oil from the region. On the other hand, we see the indifference of USA to the region post discovery of shale gas, and reduction in import of crude oil from middle east.

E] Global Public Opinion

With global communication becoming quicker, public opinion across the globe has become important factors influencing foreign policy. We see either solidarity across the globe or sometimes even dissonance on certain issues. Since global public opinion matters for the soft power, states do care about global public opinion. Countries like China tightly control the flow of information to the outside world, and often create narratives to woo the global audience. However, since sovereign nations are not answerable to the global citizens, we see that the role of global public opinion in foreign policy is limited.

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1.2] INSTITUTIONS OF FOREIGN POLICY MAKING

1] INTRODUCTION

2] FORMAL INSTITUTIONS

- A] MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (MEA)
- B] NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL (NSC)
- C] PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE (PMO)
- D] CABINET / CABINET COMMITTEES
- E] PARLIAMENT
- F] STATES (PARA DIPLOMACY)

3] INFORMAL SECTORS

- A] MEDIA
- B] PRESSURE GROUPS AND NGOS
- C] DIASPORA
- D] THINK TANKS
- E] PRIVATE SECTOR

1] Introduction

No single institution or personality can be attributed with having exclusive rights or influence in the arena of foreign policy. There are several contributing actors, who collectively build up India's foreign policy consensus and at different times, one or the other actors play a dominant role. The sectors/institutions influencing Indian foreign policy can be broadly categorized into two sectors i.e., formal and informal sector.

Formal Sector

1. Ministry of External Affairs (MEA)
2. National Security Council (NSC)
3. Prime Minister's Office (PMO)
4. Cabinet
5. Parliament
6. States (para-diplomacy)

Informal Sector

1. Media
2. Pressure groups
3. Diaspora
4. Think tanks
5. Private Sector