

Concept Note of the Seminar

Re-conceptualising Indian Foreign Policy: Emerging Challenges and Opportunities

(To Be Organised by the Dept. of Political Science, Banaras Hindu University)

Proposed Dates: 30 April - 1 May, 2015

The Department of Political Science, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi proposes to organize a two day National Seminar on the theme “***Re-conceptualising Indian Foreign Policy: Emerging Challenges and Opportunities***” on 30 April- 1 May, 2015 at Varanasi. The objective of the seminar is to assess and analyze emerging challenges and opportunities of India’s foreign policy particularly in Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s regime. Whether there is going to be continuity or change in India’s foreign policy will form a major part of the debate and discussion. The discussion will be centered specifically in exploring the ways and means by which India can maximize its national interests and raise its stature in the community of nations. Different styles of Modi’s functioning have changed the way in which Indian foreign policy is being conceptualized, articulated and executed.

The new government is likely to put greater emphasis on economic and commercial diplomacy. Unlike the previous govt., national security issues are being pursued aggressively. Modi is also committed to exploit India’s enormous soft power to raise its profile among nations. Economic diplomacy will be supplemented by cultural diplomacy to market India as a popular tourist destination. India’s vast cultural heritage and particularly his own constituency Varanasi have immense potential to put India and Varanasi among top global tourist destinations. With this view in mind, Modi has facilitated the signing of Kashi-Kyoto agreement to develop Varanasi as a heritage city on the pattern of Kyoto. These developments indicate a major shift from the previous Government. Modi Govt. is re-examining and re-conceptualizing the old foreign policy objectives and making it more muscular. Look East has been upgraded into Act East policy to make India more assertive and articulate in Southeast and East Asia. Growing proximity of India with Southeast and East Asian countries, which constitute our extended neighborhood, will form a part of the debate during the National Seminar. How Modi’s India will view the world and its neighbourhood needs to be analysed and assessed among the specialists and the members of the strategic community. The Department of Political Science, B.H.U. would provide a platform to the academic, diplomatic and strategic community to exchange views on the identified themes in a free and frank manner.

Formulation of the Theme

The end of Cold War did not bring peace, security and stability as civil wars broke out in different parts of world. Al Qaeda challenged the sole superpower. Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Syria, etc. became a laboratory of regime change. Rise of China resulted in its flexing muscle in its neighbourhood. Each of these events cast long shadow over the emerging global order. These dramatic changes in the global order have brought new challenges and opportunities. India’s response and strategy to these emerging challenges is crucial in the shaping of its foreign policy.

The expanding and deepening Indian democracy has brought challenges and opportunities that have significantly altered the political landscape. Amartya Sen's "Argumentative Indians" seems true about the public discourse on foreign policy issues, such as the unfolding economic reforms, Sri Lanka's treatment of the Tamil issue, Pakistan's conduct in the matter of State/non-State actors exporting terrorism to India, China's periodic assertive postures on McMahon line and some Western countries' critical stand on human rights in India.

Foreign policy is an expression of a country's perception of and projection to the world of its national interest. India has always had a conspicuous element of moral values in the formulation of foreign policy. Thus, even if India promotes self interest, it is an enlightened one. However, there is a mix of pragmatism and idealism, best reflected in its decisions to abstain from joining the NPT and CTBT, while remaining committed to non-proliferation and a nuclear free world. While taking steps to weaponise its nuclear programme, India proclaimed unilateral moratorium on further tests as well as no-first use. India took unambiguous positions when NPT signatories such as Iran and North Korea seemed to depart from their international commitments.

India can enrich existing debates by offering alternative ideas such as 'Responsibility while Protecting' (RwP) alongside 'Responsibility to Protect' (R2P), 'development partnership' rather than 'economic aid' and 'engagement' rather than 'confrontation or containment'. These formulations/reformulations help infuse existing concepts with sensibilities/sensitivities that are in tune with the needs of India. However, Indian perspective involves not just revisiting existing debates and issues, but also re-conceptualising them. Some such conceptualising/reconceptualising emanating from India includes the notion of non-violence, Satyagraha, non-alignment, Panchasheel, human development/security and the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities.

Does India postulate any theoretical framework to understand the changing concepts (power, conflict, sovereignty, order, democracy, equity, justice); issues (security, trade, development, climate change, globalisation, nuclear disarmament, proliferation, terrorism, cyber security) and actors (state, non-state, trans-national, inter-governmental, sub-national, supra-national) that constitute the fluid matrix of international political life? It is imperative to comprehend how India redefines the existing themes, specific areas/regions in international politics?

Another significant aspect of Indian foreign policy relates to how India views and responds to the processes of globalisation. India could no longer hope to continue growing in isolation from the world. Integration with the globalised world is an imperative as well as an opportunity for greater growth. While India may not necessarily determine the nature, degree and direction of globalisation, India often is at the receiving end. The changing contours of the Indian economy need to be understood in the context of significant shifts in global economic power. Instead of India merely replicating others, there is an urgent need to revisit global monetary and fiscal best practices and develop alternative New Delhi Consensus to the dominant Washington/Beijing consensus. The leading role that India has come to play in the global economy is demonstrated in the WTO multilateral trade talks and in the debates over the reform of the global financial architecture. On other issues such as climate change, human rights and terrorism, the predominant view of India cannot be ignored by the international community while attempting to re-conceptualise the evolving global and regional orders. How does India accommodate

hegemonic United States, rising China and assertive neighbours will have profound impact upon India's foreign policy?

Whether Indian foreign policy lacks strategic content? Whether it can at best be described as tactical? Whether India has proactive or reactive foreign policy? What are the epistemologies and ontologies of India's foreign policy? Is it possible to enrich the normative conceptualisation of Indian foreign policy by drawing from the historical past? Is there room for ancient thinkers such as Kautilya and others in the re-conceptualisation of Indian foreign policy? These are some of the major questions and themes, which seminar aims at addressing and discussing.

In this context, the proposed two day seminar seeks to critically reflect on a variety of issues revolving around the broader theme of Indian foreign policy, having a bearing on the emerging challenges and opportunities. The seminar would provide an occasion to bring a diversity of views and themes related to Indian foreign policy for critical deliberation.

Objectives of the National Seminar

Seminar would explore the challenges and prospects for India's foreign policy. What would be the specific focus of India's foreign policy especially in the context of promoting India's national interest will form a major part of discourse. The discussion will centre on the following sub-themes:

- Basic Tenets and determinants of India's Foreign Policy;
- India's external and internal challenges and its linkages with foreign policy;
- Assessment of various theoretical debates on India's Foreign Policy;
- Role of the New Regime in Orientating India's Foreign Policy;
- Structural Constraints and India's Foreign Policy;
- Strategic Culture in India;
- Understanding India's Immediate and Extended Neighbourhood;
- Analysis of India's Policy towards its Neighbour;
- India and the Great Powers;
- India and the World;
- Articulation of India's Growing Challenges in Managing the Region and the World.

Above sub-themes are indicative and not exhaustive. Scholars can formulate their own theme within the broader framework of the seminar.

Important Dates:

Abstract Submission: 31 March, 2015 (Word Limit 500 words)

Intimation of Acceptance of Abstract: 05 April, 2015

Full Length Paper: 15 April, 2015 (3000-5000 words)

Mail ID for communication & paper submission: polscseminar.2015@gmail.com

Convener of the National Seminar

Dr. Tej Pratap Singh, Professor, Department of Political Science, will be the Convener for the National Seminar.