



Indian Council of World Affairs

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Message

by

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at the National Conference

on

**“India in the 21st Century: Governance and Foreign Policy
Imperatives”**

at

Mumbai

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The Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA) is delighted to collaborate with the Jadavpur Association of International Relations (JAIR) and the Department of Civics and Politics, University of Mumbai to hold this important conference on 'India in the 21st Century: Governance and Foreign Policy Imperatives'. It is our effort at the Council to encourage the study of international relations and India's foreign and security policies across the length and breadth of our country. India is a major participant in the evolution of international relations and yet regrettably the study of international relations in our universities is still not commensurate with our current and prospective role in the international arena. We thus hope that JAIR and other Indian Universities will attach greater focus to the independent study of India's foreign policy and international relations.

We live in a complex and dynamically evolving world. The certainties of the Cold War era are long gone but a new era of international governance, of equilibrium, has yet to be put in place. Change is constant, be it in the economic, security, political, environmental, scientific and technological sectors. It is in this complex and difficult environment that India is charting its foreign policy path. Interestingly, events of the last few decades have only enhanced the validity of the core principles of foreign policy and global governance that India has enunciated and adhered to for long. These include independence of decision making, adhering to the policy of multilateralism and multipolarity, democratization of international relations and global development and disarmament.

The objectives of Indian foreign policy are sound and include defence of India's sovereignty and territorial integrity, providing the wherewithal for India's equitable socio-economic development, adhering to value criteria such as India's focus on pluralism, tolerance and democracy and contributing to international peace, security and development. It bears recalling that the Directive Principles of State Policy of the Indian Constitution specify, inter-alia, that 'the State shall endeavour to promote international peace and security' & 'maintain just and honourable relations between nations'.

It is clear that the challenges facing Indian foreign policy are multi-faceted and complex. They range from the challenges to defence of national sovereignty and territorial integrity, to the fight against terrorism, to ensure cyber security, to mitigate and adapt against climate change, to battle the phenomenon of fundamentalism and extremism, to challenge the growing belief in large sections of the developed world that the system of plural democracy as it has been practiced so far may have run its course, that inequalities between the North and South and within nation States have reached unacceptable proportions and to challenges posed by rapid technological innovation. Piecemeal efforts are being made to address these challenges but there is little doubt that existing international structures are proving to be inadequate to meet these challenges. Hence, the need to reform the instruments of global governance and make them more in tune with contemporary reality and relevant for future common prosperity.

It is not simply international governance structures that need change. Domestic structures also need to be updated and modernized to be able to tackle not simply the current challenges but also the growing expectation of peoples across the world for an equitable, sustainable and just international order. It is in this context that the deliberations at this conference assume importance. The India of today is very different from that at the turn of the last century. We have great expectations of ourselves and for our role not only in the Indo-Pacific but in the world community at large. The world too has great expectations of India. We have demonstrated that a very diverse and complex, extremely populous, relatively poor developing country can not only sustain plural democracy, coupled with tolerance and respect for diversity, but also sustain very high growth rates while being environmentally responsible. Yet much more needs to be done and it is in this context that the deliberations at this conference will be of great interest to practitioners and students of Indian foreign policy both in India and abroad.

We wish the conference a productive exchange of views and a successful outcome.

