

# IMPACT OF FOREIGN POLICY ON DAILY LIVES IN INDIA



*Two Essays*

GURJIT SINGH  
CHINTAMANI MAHAPATRA

Indian Council of World Affairs  
Sapru House, New Delhi

2023





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# FOREWORD

Foreign policy was earlier seen as an activity confined to the realms of politics and diplomacy far removed from the daily lives of citizens. However, the fact remains that foreign policy decisions taken by Governments have a profound impact on daily lives of citizens. In the words of the External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar, “decisions we make in our foreign policy affects your lives everyday...if we had not done a good foreign policy, the petrol price would be much higher, the cooking oil price would be too and the price of your next iPhone will be higher too. Today what we do with other foreign partners actually impacts your lives”.

How India’s foreign policy touches everyday life of its citizens, in terms of practical benefits, in diverse areas such as fuel, food, fertilizers, monthly budget, education opportunities, health, transport, jobs, investments, technology, student and worker mobility is a subject that is rarely discussed in academic and policy circles. In the last decade, the nature of Indian foreign policy has changed in the way it is carried out, who is involved and how it affects. The outreach of Indian foreign policy to the public has increased in diverse areas and likewise people’s interest in Indian foreign policy goals, priorities and achievements has grown because of an increased understanding of the bearing it has on their daily lives.

This Special Publication explores and examines how Indian Foreign Policy impacts day-to-day lives of its citizens. It includes papers by two distinguished Indian experts. Ambassador Gurjit Singh in his paper titled ‘*The Gentle Touch of Foreign Policy on Lives of People*’ covers several areas where India’s foreign policy impacts lives of people, Indian passport system, education and study destinations, labour mobility, evacuation of its nationals, transfer of technology, FDI, Trade and FTAs among others. He also argues how foreign policy and its achievements are not only a projection of power, but an achievement of a public good. Prof Chintamani Mahapatra in his paper titled ‘*Impact of Foreign Policy on Daily Lives in India*’ argues that country’s foreign policy is not and cannot be “foreign” to citizens of a country. He discusses how India’s diplomatic engagements with major powers, neighbouring countries, economic partners and fellow developing countries deeply impact people’s lives, shape their perception and affect their economic activities.

ICWA hopes this publication would be useful in enhancing understanding of how Indian foreign policy touches many aspects of everyday life of Indian citizens and act as an impetus for further study on this subject.

**Amb. Vijay Thakur Singh**

Director General

Indian Council of World Affairs

Sapru House

November 2023



# THE GENTLE TOUCH OF FOREIGN POLICY ON LIVES OF PEOPLE



Amb. Gurjit Singh



One of the features of the last decade relating to Indian foreign policy is the intense engagement of the people at large with foreign policy objectives and achievements. India's Presidency of the G 20 in 2023 was perhaps a lesson in how it was a people's presidency. There was a very intense and successful effort to involve many states and cities and consequently people into the G 20 process by spreading out the official meetings, the parallel meetings and the like across the country. This was different from what any other country had done as a G 20 Presidency.

The Indian establishment was keen to bring an understanding of what it was doing globally to people across India. While many of the subjects were strategic, complex economic matters, or dealing with functional issues of climate, and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), there was nevertheless a verve in each city. I have travelled to many such cities around the time of the G 20 meetings and I saw the festive atmosphere, the involvement of many sections of the city

and it was like developing a whole of country approach to the G 20.

This approach of engaging the people with India's foreign policy achievements and objectives created a sense of pride and its responsibilities upon the Ministry of External Affairs and its agencies in the main.

While everything which has happened during the last decade, in foreign policy, which impinged on the lives of ordinary people, perhaps may not be unprecedented, but its realization is definitely a new factor. Today many people, more than ever before, see India's foreign policy as a major objective which impacts their own lives.

This can be gauged in a variety of ways. This paper attempts to look at some areas where Indian foreign policy manifested expectations and realizes their fulfilment for sections of the people of India.

At the end of the Cold War, the enhancement of the Indian economy, the advent of globalization were factors in expanding the reach of Indians globally. This in turn led to them experiencing and

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becoming aware of what other countries were doing. What benefits could ensue from the opportunities that opened up under globalization and for better servicing of their expectations from the Indian establishment?

## THE DIASPORA

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The Indian diaspora consists of both People of Indian Origin and Non-Resident Indians. Among the PIOs there are large communities, which moved from India some generations ago, and maintain a relationship with India, even though they are citizens of another country sometimes over three generations.

There are however PIOs, who are first generation migrants and have very close connections with India through family, culture and economic interface. The NRIs are those who remain Indians but live overseas mainly for economic reasons. The nature of these NRIs and PIOs over the last decade has changed. Today many more live overseas, working for international corporations, civil society organizations and often even for foreign companies which are domestically rooted in their countries of origin. Thus, this large expatriate population from India has expectations because they have strong links to India and travel home frequently and, NRIs especially, have an

allegiance to India since they have not given up citizenship.

The problems and aspirations of the Indian diaspora are always a concern but attention paid to it over the last decade has been immense in many ways. The leadership of late External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj, ably continued by the present External Affairs Minister Dr. S Jaishankar, has put the Indian diaspora ahead in their interaction with countries and in resolving their issues. While doing so, they have brought the Indian diaspora into political play. When PM Modi travels overseas, he always addresses large diaspora gatherings which often come as a surprise to the host country.

The success of such events in the US, in the UK, in Australia, Japan, Indonesia, and in many European countries is well noticed. This raises the manifestation of the diasporic allegiance to India and its objectives and they are often advised to be good Indian ambassadors. At the same time, it raises their expectations of how the Indian establishment will react to them.

The Indian diaspora has largely been loyal to India, though there are aberrations of unhappy and disgruntled elements. But the diaspora expects Indian foreign policy to achieve a better stature for them in the countries that they live in. They believe that over the last decade this has



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In recent years, Indian foreign policy engagement, in a more open and omni-directional manner, while searching for multipolarity, has given the Indian diaspora a rising stature globally. Today they are indeed noticed more and seen positively by the countries that they live in. This they consider a great asset for themselves.

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been better achieved. Today they are looked upon with much more respect particularly in European and North American countries than before.

In this way, in recent years, Indian foreign policy engagement, in a more open and omni-directional manner while searching for multipolarity, has given the Indian diaspora a rising stature globally. Today they are indeed noticed more and seen positively by the countries that they live in. This they consider a great asset for themselves.

Related to this are three sub issues. The first is opportunities to study and work overseas. There is a great desire in many states of India to send people overseas in search of better pastures. All these ambitions lead to migration though not always in the same way. There are places from where people have an ambition to go to the Gulf countries as blue-collar workers. There are others who would like to send educated IT personnel to Europe, North America and Japan. In many other cases, there is a tag: Punjab families have great admiration to go to study in Canada or Australia with the hope that this will

lead to a localization and absorption in the workforce.

To this end, the Indian people particularly in these areas, seek government facilitation to ease their transition into such countries. In the case of the Gulf, for instance, the demands are for more avenues, better protection from exploitation, and easier repatriation in case of trouble. Some states in India have set up dedicated cells to deal with such temporary though numerous migrants.

Secondly, in other countries, particularly the developed ones, the demand is for easier access to work visas, more equitable administration of their social security laws and better access to family visas.

This requires some understanding. Many Indians who have studied IT-related subjects are gladly offered assignments by both Indian and foreign companies in Europe and North America. However, their transition has problems relating to visas for their wives and children, for their family members and the frequency with which such visits can take place.

This is where the cultural gap is noticed. European countries in particular do not understand why dependent daughters or parents need to stay with a working son or daughter since that does not happen in their society. This takes persuasion from Indian embassies in those countries as well as in various dialogues, which have been established to discuss such matters under consular matters.

Therefore, thirdly, the increase in consular dialogues and the subjects that they discuss, which India has with many developed countries, have increased. These become more important because the demands of Indian people to rectify some of the problems that they face in fulfilling their ambitions need government redress. This includes

the issue of social security, which was often not transferable, and even Indians working in Europe for short terms and then returning to India had to pay for this with no chance of recovery. In the case of the US, the entire gamut of H1 B visas and related visas for spouses and children, and the delay in green cards has been a major issue with which government has been engaged gently over a period of time.

## EDUCATION MATTERS

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There is a great desire among Indians to go abroad for education. While earlier the priorities were the US and a few European countries, this has rapidly expanded to Australia, Canada and other countries. Many of the countries where Indians go



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Post-pandemic India has issued record number of passports per annum. From May 2014 to May 2022, the MEA issued a record 8.81 million passports, according to statistics available from the Ministry of External Affairs. Of these, 7.87 million were issued in India and about 1 million in overseas embassies and consulates. The annual record was achieved in 2018 when 1.15 million passports were issued. The systems have vastly improved to cope with public demand for facilitating their travel.

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to study often do not come into attention unless there is a crisis. For instance, during the Ukraine crisis, suddenly it was found that there were 20,000 Indian students in Ukraine. Similarly, there are very large numbers of Indian students studying medicine among other subjects in Central Asia, East Europe, China and related subjects in Southeast Asian countries. At any given time, there are

a large number of Indian students and when crisis evacuations are organised, they emerge for evacuation in larger numbers than expatriates.

## INDIAN PASSPORT SYSTEM

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They have been facilitated by a far more efficient Indian passport system than ever before. Today, for an Indian citizen



to get a passport is a matter of relative ease. Whereas, in 2000 when I was the Director of Passports, I remember it was an onerous task. India issued about 25 lakh passports at that time. Post-pandemic India has issued record number of passports per annum. From May 2014 to May 2022, the MEA issued a record 8.81 million passports, according to statistics available from the Ministry of External Affairs. Of these, 7.87 million were issued in India and about 1 million in overseas embassies and consulates. The annual record was achieved in 2018 when 1.15 million passports were issued. The systems have vastly improved to cope with public demand for facilitating their travel. Maharashtra, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and Gujarat among them comprise half the Indian passports issued showing the interest of people of their States to travel abroad.

In 2000, a pilot program for machine readable passports had started at the RPO in Delhi. It was to be slowly expanded, so that ultimately all Indian passports would be machine readable and therefore compatible with ICAO requirements. Now, this is an important expectation of Indian people, that their travel documents should be as widely acceptable as possible under international requirements. In those days, the handwritten, laminated passports caused many problems

to Indian travellers. If immigration authorities overseas felt that the passport had loosened, its lamination or the writing had been smudged they treated it with suspicion.

Around 2000, a major effort was made by the CPV division of MEA, to computerize the data base of all passports issued. It was not possible to issue machine readable passports and have a database of earlier issued passports which was entirely handwritten, because then, older passports could not be read overseas. So alongside issuing machine readable passports, MEA generated a database which could be read by Indian missions anywhere for authenticating passports. All older passports had to be brought online for the passport database to be complete.

I recall with pride that in those days, we spent about a year to have old records of passports scanned in every one of the nearly 25 passport offices all across India, including in Srinagar, Guwahati, Jammu and Kozhikode. This had been an onerous task requiring a big budget, which had been sanctioned, but due to the sheer challenge of the logistics, had progressed slowly. Through this effort, what happened was that any Indian who lost his passport or his passport faced rejection, now did not have to await the Indian Embassy referring his matter

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In 2022, more than 13,00,000 Indian students were studying in 79 countries worldwide. The rush of Indians going to new destinations to study has shifted the onus from issuing passports to obtaining visas in time.

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to the police for verification in their home state. Through this database, a verification of the passport details could be obtained online, making it much easier for passport renewals, replacements and quick facilitation.

Over the last decade, this old handwritten data base has become redundant because all those passports have outlived their life. New passports are now all issued in machine readable formats making them internationally compatible. Therefore, servicing of passports, obtaining a passport, replacing a lost passport and renewing a passport have all been important concerns of the Indian people and these have been very efficiently met by the MEA in a public private partnership.

Normally, MEA officers would frequently get calls for helping out people in a hurry to get their passports. Now, these have reduced because the system has eased the problems that people earlier faced. This is perhaps among the most effectively addressed issues among the direct impact of Indian foreign policy establishment on the people.

## NEW DESTINATIONS

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In 2022, more than 13,00,000 Indian students were studying in 79 countries worldwide. The main aggregations were in countries which have gained preference among Indian students particularly the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Australia, Canada, Ireland, the United Arab Emirates and Germany. Post pandemic medical students looked at Russia, Poland, China, Ukraine, Philippines, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Georgia, Mauritius, Lithuania, Latvia and Armenia among others. The Ukraine crisis altered this list again.

The rush of Indians going to new destinations to study has shifted the onus from issuing passports to obtaining visas in time. Just as MEA officers were being relieved of the trouble which people faced in getting their passports, the pressure on officers to intervene with foreign embassies to issue their visas in time so that students admitted to universities could reach there in time for their semester rapidly increased.



In 2022, India became, for the first time, Asia's highest source of international travellers. More than 1.8 crore Indians travelled abroad in 2022, compared to 77.2 lakh in 2021, data from MHA's Bureau of Immigration (BoI) showed. Increase in outbound tourism has fuelled the demand for tourism facilitation and visa-free or visa-on-arrival arrangements.

This was mainly because many Schengen countries had reduced their staff during the pandemic and were unprepared for the high numbers which sought visas after the pandemic was over. The responses have been slow, and have not kept pace with political decisions bilaterally reached to increase the number of students going to their countries.

Indians felt aggrieved that many countries invited Indian students, accepted their fees, gave them admission and then their embassies and high commissions would delay their visas interminably. Quiet action by the MEA and the foreign policy establishment led to some improvement. The number of tweets from Western missions about how many visas they are issuing shows that the reassurance factor is at work even though the pace of delivery and the numbers are yet to match the expectations of the people.

These are new tasks for Indian foreign Policy establishment.

## **TOURISM FACILITATION**

There is also an explosion of tourism and even if foreign tourists to India have not increased at the same pace, the number of Indians traveling overseas sees a huge increase post pandemic. In 2022, India became, for the first time, Asia's highest source of



international travellers. More than 1.8 crore Indians travelled abroad in 2022, compared to 77.2 lakh in 2021, data from MHA's Bureau of Immigration (BoI) showed. Increase in outbound tourism has fuelled the demand for tourism facilitation and visa-free or visa-on-arrival arrangements.

There are several factors at work here, through which Indian foreign policy efforts allow Indian tourists to travel with ease. First among these is India's good relationship with a very large number of countries. Secondly, sometimes reciprocal and sometimes unilaterally, India works with these friendly countries to have visa free or visa on arrival for Indians. In two of the countries that I was the Ambassador, Ethiopia (2005-2009) and Indonesia (2012-2015) I remember this as my signature achievement. The fact that you don't have to apply for a visa beforehand and you can go to the country without visa hassles has increased tourism to many Southeast Asian countries including Indonesia.

Thirdly, the introduction of the e-visa system by India in 2014 has been a great asset. Originally it was created for countries where India had no resident mission and covered 43 countries initially, now covering 156. I recall that since we had no mission in Dili, in Timor Leste, the people there had to travel almost two

days in advance to the Indian consulate in Bali, Indonesia, to get a visa before flying to India. Once the e-visa was introduced this reduced their travel time and expense.

The success of the e-visa system led to extension of coverage to countries where missions existed and for certain common purposes, foreigners could take an e-visa and come to India. This greatly helped improve the image of India's tourism promotion and led to several countries accepting to create reciprocal facilities like visa on arrival or visa free arrangements.

It is these arrangements which are counted under the strength of the Passport Index which shows that Indians can access 59 countries visa free. The rising strength of the Indian passport is a matter of pride and facilitation for the people of India. This strength rises as India works out more visa free or visa on arrival arrangements.

## **STUDENT AND WORKER MOBILITY AND TECHNOLOGY TRANSFERS**

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The concept of student and worker mobility both for blue collar and technically trained staff is an important issue for sections of Indian people who expect Indian foreign policy to open avenues for them, secure them

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The current generation of Indian entrepreneurs don't often realize the hard road through which Indian diplomacy has traversed to reach this stage of access to foreign technologies through extensive dialogue, confidence building measures as well as the opening of the Indian economy.

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and facilitate ease of availing these opportunities. As regards labour mobility, in recent years, India has been putting in place bilateral labour manpower and migration and mobility partnership arrangements to facilitate safe, orderly and regular migration.

Related to this is the issue of technology inputs. Often Indians who study overseas or work abroad want to continue there but, in some cases, Indians do want to return and utilise technology transfers to set up businesses in India. In the past there have been hindrances to the transfer of technology because there was a suspicion attached to particularly dual use technology even in simple things like CNC machines. There was much energy which had to be expended by the MEA and by embassies abroad in concerned countries including Japan to almost argue on a case-by-case basis for exceptions for dual use technologies.

However, India has come a long way since then. India's accession to the technology control regimes – MTCR regime, the Wassenaar Agreement, the Australia

Group, the support it has received for the Nuclear Suppliers Group, the Chemical and Biological Weapons Conventions, helped this process. The lifting of suspicions that came with the nuclear tests of 1974 and 1998, and the resultant lifting of sanctions assured the success of India foreign policy. This ensured that India is seen as a responsible member of the international community which abides by its international obligations and is respected. This makes it easier for technology transfers to take place.

There remain some questions about sensitive defence technologies in countries like Germany, for instance, but where civilian and dual use technologies are concerned, the path has become easier. Israel and the US are leading cooperative efforts with India on such high technologies. The current generation of Indian entrepreneurs don't often realize the hard road through which Indian diplomacy has traversed to reach this stage of access to foreign technologies through extensive dialogue, confidence

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Indian Outward FDI requires government support particularly for three aspects: Double Taxation Avoidance Agreements, updated Bilateral Investment Protection Agreements and local finance at competitive rates.

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building measures as well as the opening of the Indian economy.

## INDIAN FDI OVERSEAS

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Indian FDI is a favourite among many Indian companies particularly in the MSME sector. RBI figures show that most Indian overseas investment particularly in Africa, and in parts of ASEAN actually comes from MSMEs. These companies are small and need a guiding hand but they are entrepreneurial and adventurous, venture into markets where they see opportunity and challenges, but are ready to take the risk. Most such entrepreneurs who I have met in ASEAN countries and in Africa came on their own, grasped the challenge and often made a success and then multiplied it.

Indian Outward FDI requires government support particularly for three aspects. First is a Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement. This saves the Indian entrepreneur a lot of taxation, either in their host country or in India. Second, is the existence of a revised Bilateral Investment Protection Agreement (BIPA). This has been an issue since

India allowed existing BIPAs to lapse and worked to revise them. While broader CEPA agreements with some countries include BIPA provisions, those with developing countries particularly in Africa do not and, therefore, these need to be separately negotiated.

Mauritius has been an exception where the old DTAA was replaced by the CEPA but this was more in the nature of replacement due to other factors not as a facilitator for Indian FDI. This matter needs to be looked at because under the FDI rubric we can see that Indian investments in ASEAN and Indian investments in Africa are both rising and are well respected. Under the Africa Continental FTA and under RCEP arrangements, Indian investments in Africa and ASEAN will have much easier cross border movement and benefits. Therefore, these investments need to be facilitated through the necessary DTAA and BIPA arrangements.

Thirdly, according to a survey carried out in a recent book “The Harambee Factor” on Indian investors in Africa and among Indian businessmen looking at



ASEAN, the availability of local finance on competitive rates to the Indian entrepreneur is an issue. This is more so in Africa than in ASEAN. Can the Indian government use some of its grant provisions to create a fund which will support lowering the cost of finance in select African countries where Indian companies prioritize their investments? This could be a unique way to support such ventures which in turn will lead to an increase in Indian project exports.

## TRADE AND FTAS

Whenever we talk of Free Trade Agreements, normally, we think of India getting a bad deal and people protesting in different parts of India. But there are some aspects of FTAs which bring benefits to the people of India. We have above discussed labour and student mobility. These are important elements of current FTA discussions between India and the EU, India-UK and others. Therefore,

Indian efforts under FTAs do help the people of India achieve their ambitions of mobility but there is another aspect which actually brings to India items of their requirements.

This, of course, includes things like oil, gas, fertilizers, whose international prices vary and cause discomfort to consumers at large. Indian foreign policy to that extent can only ensure that food security and energy security is maintained without being able to necessarily control the prices.



Looking at pulses and oilseeds, where India has a huge consumption but a much lower production, there is always the need to import. If there are shortages of lentils overseas, it causes the price to rise impacting ordinary people's lives.

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This, of course, includes things like oil, gas, fertilizers, whose international prices vary and cause discomfort to consumers at large. Indian foreign policy to that extent can only ensure that food security and energy security is maintained without being able to necessarily control the prices. Looking at pulses and oilseeds, where India has a huge consumption but a much lower production, there is always the need to import. If there are shortages of lentils overseas, it causes the price to rise impacting ordinary people's lives.

India enunciated at the first India Africa Forum Summit in 2008, a Duty-Free Tariff Preference (DFTP) scheme, which, is a WTO compliant unilateral facility for the least Developed Countries, 33 of which are in Africa.

Several LDCs, particularly Myanmar, Mozambique and Tanzania, are in the forefront of now supplying pulses to India under the DFTP scheme. This is because

there is concentrated investment by locals and by Indians into the development of pulses in these countries knowing that there are export opportunities to India. With Mozambique and Tanzania, India has entered into minimum purchase agreements so that the contract farmers are not left in the lurch. In turn, this provides a kind of food security for the pulses sector in India by importing from friendly Least Developed Countries under a duty-free tariff. Of course, at present the largest exporters of lentils to India are countries like Canada and Australia, but the fact that initiative was taken to work these out with friendly LDCs is a success of Indian policies.

## CULTURAL IDENTITIES AND LINKAGES

We have discussed the growing Indian diaspora in many countries is much more than before. The depth of maintenance of their cultural identities and linkages to India are an important part, both for India and for the diaspora communities. Where the diaspora is small an Indian Association is adequate to deal with



them. On my first assignment in Japan, all the Indians in the greater Tokyo area could meet in one hall for Diwali since they were only about 400 people. Now there is no hall that can hold all the Indians in the greater Tokyo area. Consequently, they tend to form regional and professional associations. This has happened in many countries. This raises the profile of the Indian embassies and the Indian Council of Cultural Relations in supporting the cultural identity of these groups by providing them support, sometimes financing, bringing in cultural troupes of interest to them.

Indian cultural centres also perform a role in dealing with these growing Indian

diaspora associations, particularly of first-generation migrants. The main role that Indian institutions perform is to support the retention of cultural identity of these institutions. Often, they conduct language classes, dance lessons, related to their own cultural preferences

I recall that in Kenya, the North Indian temples would like to celebrate Dussehra by having an effigy of Ravana burnt on the day. While they could produce a tall effigy, its proportions and size did not give the impression of a fearsome, large Ravana. As the numbers of that community grew, they approached the Indian High Commission in the late 1990s to bring in an expert to build a Ravana for

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them. Perhaps this was the first such time that a request had been received of this nature. Both we at the High Commission and in the Ministry and ICCR were a bit perplexed. It came out that all the India-based Ravana making experts were terribly busy in the months leading up to Dussehra since they had a huge number of orders to cater to. Since we could not help the temple committee in that year, we worked out a system whereby the Ravana maker would come to them three months in advance of Dussehra, make the Ravana effigy which would be kept in safekeeping till the appropriate day.

This is an example of how cultural festivals, identities, traits are expected to be supported by our Embassies abroad. This is of course, not to avoid giving credit to many cultural associations which raise their own funds and bring in priests, idol-makers, dance groups, bhajan singers and the like to make their cultural festivities more delightful.

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## **PROTECTION BY INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY ESTABLISHMENT**

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It is the expectation of every Indian now that, when they are abroad, they will have the protection of India's foreign policy establishment. They have the confidence that given any trouble the Embassy will help them out. The rising numbers of Indians overseas including in countries which we would think are remote like Libya and Yemen, it is often surprising to see the numbers of Indians who turn up seeking assistance at a time of crisis.

It is the duty of the Indian Embassy and often India's Army, Navy and Air Force to evacuate Indians from troubled zones. Three of the most famous evacuations, carried out in the current century have been from Libya after the fall of Gaddafi, Lebanon after the Israeli invasion, and when the Yemen civil war broke out there. In all seriousness, most analysts would not even know that there were

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so many Indians in Libya, Lebanon and Yemen. And yet, from these countries 1000s were evacuated. In 2015 Operation Rahat evacuated 6700 people from Yemen. In 2011, 15000 were evacuated from Libya and under Operation Sukoon in 2006 about 3000 were evacuated from Lebanon.

The Indian Ambassadors in Libya and Lebanon at the time were both ladies, Ambassador Manimekalai and Ambassador Nengcha Lhovum who did an admirable job in arranging an orderly transfer of so many Indians towards Indian ships and aircraft, which were coming in as and when the security situation allowed. It is no surprise that both of them were given the Prime Minister's award for their exemplary service. I have already mentioned the evacuation following the Ukraine crisis and most recently from Israel following the revival of the Israel-Hamas War in October 2023.

While the Indian diaspora growth is very high in different parts of the world, it is unfortunate that crisis also seems to grow in a rapid manner from civil wars, invasions, and cataclysmic climate events, all of which lead to the Indian embassy reaching out to arrange rescue and evacuation. One problem associated with this is that in most countries, Indians who are coming to work study and the like do not find it prudent to register with the embassy. This means that when the

embassy makes contingency plans, it has no real idea of actually how many people there are. In this the role of socio-cultural organizations is important because they can be used to register people but, in many countries, Indians are actually reluctant to register.

I recall in Germany, whenever I went to any town, I would meet the students over there most of whom were postdoctoral fellows. They would not take my suggestion seriously about registration, saying that we are sure you already know that we are here. They did not know the difference between registering for a visa and immigration in Germany and registering with their own embassy or consulate nearby.

Realizing this problem, we supported a group of enthusiasts from among the students who were very helpful to new students and decided to assist them organize themselves like a federation of student's bodies. From the Embassy, we helped them to create a portal where students could register to help each other and we could use that database not only for crisis management, but also for finding out people who were working on areas of interest to us. This got a good response as it was seen as an initiative of students themselves.

There is this reluctance on the part of the diaspora to follow the rules, but they do expect to be rescued when things go

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For the vast majority of Indians, undoubtedly in the current period, it can be said that the Indian foreign policy establishment and its achievements are impacting the lives of common Indian people directly and indirectly. In many ways, efforts like the G 20 across the country help in bringing this understanding to the wider Indian populace who will then understand why foreign policy and its achievements are not only a projection of power, but an achievement of public good. This takes the impact beyond consular matters, passports and evacuations.

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wrong. It is to the merit of the Indian foreign policy establishment that they never leave any Indian behind. I think it was in Yemen, where when the last plane was finally leaving there was a hectic persuasion of a group of nurses that they must leave. They had their own reasons not to leave and continue their service. Therefore, expectations of Indians from the foreign policy establishment often differ.

For the vast majority of Indians, undoubtedly in the current period, it can

be said that the Indian foreign policy establishment and its achievements are impacting the lives of common Indian people directly and indirectly. In many ways, efforts like the G 20 across the country help in bringing this understanding to the wider Indian populace who will then understand why foreign policy and its achievements are not only a projection of power, but an achievement of public good. This takes the impact beyond consular matters, passports and evacuations.

# IMPACT OF FOREIGN POLICY ON DAILY LIVES IN INDIA



Prof. Chintamani Mahapatra



## **INTRODUCTION: FOREIGN POLICY IN AN INTERCONNECTED WORLD**

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We all are living in a globalized world. It is densely interlocked in physical, digital, economic and even in social and psychological dimensions. Events taking place in one part of the world influence every other part of the globe. People in millions move around from country to country as diplomats, government officials, academics, traders, investors, and even as tourists. The Internet or the World Wide Web represents a highly networked cyber space where people in villages, towns, cities, and countries now cannot endure without remaining connected.

In an inter-connected world, no country can stay isolated and relations among nations are certain to impact daily lives of people in every country. Foreign policies of countries not only include relations

among them but also deal with issues linked to global commons and global challenges, such as climate change, space race, outer space weaponization, maritime competition, small arms proliferation, international terrorism, cross border crime and many other such issues. Inter-state conflicts, wars, economic downturns and different kinds of man-made and natural disasters too touch day-to-day lives of people.

The current war in Ukraine, for instance, is between Russia and US-backed Ukraine, but it has created huge crises of fuel, food and fertilizer for scores of people in hundred plus countries in the developing world. It has also disrupted the energy flow to Europe and has spawned fear psychosis in countries bordering Russia. The energy crisis of the 1970s and the 1980s caused near universal economic distress. The global warming similarly intimidates nearly every nation on earth. When natural disasters strike

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a country, the effects are never confined to that country and lack of response and assistance from other countries produces spill-over effects on other countries. Terrorism used as an instrument of policy by a country requires international response to be tamed or terminated. Therefore one can easily deduce that foreign policies of nation states are not a matter between governments alone and people's lives benefit or suffer from consequences of government-to-government dealings and interactions.

## **FOREIGN POLICY IS NOT 'FOREIGN' TO PEOPLE**

A country's foreign policy is not and cannot be "foreign" to citizens of a country. Traditionally, foreign policy was considered esoteric, elitist and beyond the comprehension of common citizens of a country. When people go to vote in a democratic polity during local and national elections, foreign policy of an incumbent government run by a political party does not influence voting behaviour<sup>1</sup>. Moreover, political parties, while featuring foreign policy choices and strategies in their respective

party platforms, rarely make foreign policy a major campaign issue. Bread-butter issues, such as unemployment, inflation, law and order and other issues concerning the lives of common people dominate election campaigns and news headlines or prime time television discussions. In authoritarian countries popular responses to foreign policy is nearly absent.

Yet, foreign policy goals and their implementation are innately correlated with the lives of people and often impact their everyday activities. Conventional foreign policy concepts, theories, analyses and discussions do underline the fact that foreign policy of a country is nothing but the extension of domestic politics. There is an element of truth in this formulation. As US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken once stated: "We've set the foreign policy strategy of the Biden Administration by asking a few simple questions: "What will our foreign policy mean for American workers and their families? What do we need to do around the world to make us stronger here at home? And what we need to do at home to make us stronger in the world?"<sup>2</sup> These three questions amply explain the organic

Conventional foreign policy concepts, theories, analyses and discussions do underline the fact that foreign policy of a country is nothing but the extension of domestic politics. There is an element of truth in this formulation.

relations between domestic and foreign policy. Unless people in a country make their contributions, nation states cannot stand tall in the community of nations. Thus domestic policies on production, distribution, agriculture, manufacturing, jobs, health, education etc. aim at empowering citizens, among other things, to make the country strong. And what a government does with the rest of the world primarily aims at achieving national interests, which include bringing health, wealth, peace and happiness and security to its people. But adequate research is lacking to explain in greater details of how foreign policy influences every day lives of common people. The Indian Council of World Affairs deserves kudos for taking the initiative to encourage scholarly debate, deliberations and research in this field.

## HOW INDIAN FOREIGN POLICY IMPACTS COMMON CITIZENS

How has the Indian foreign policy over the decades impacted individual citizens in the country? First of all, one of the primary goals of foreign policy is to

maintain a kind of relations with other countries in the international system that can safeguard national security and, by implication, provide safety and security to every citizen in the country. Foreign invasions, even if confined to border areas, do make people feel insecure psychologically as well as affect their life styles materially. India has faced multiple invasions from the neighbouring countries starting from the early months of independence from the British rule in late 1940s. A few months after India became independent in 1947, the Indian military had to ward off Pakistani invasion over Kashmir. Unfortunately, since the first war over Kashmir in 1947-48 Pakistan continues to occupy a part of Indian Territory in Jammu and Kashmir till date. China invaded India in 1962 and yet again inflicted severe damages on India that was not confined to occupation of Indian territory. Taking advantage over India's low morale, Pakistan soon made strategic friendship with China and committed aggression in Jammu and Kashmir in 1965. While Pakistan did not succeed in gaining any more territory in Kashmir, its anti-people policies in

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East Pakistan indirectly forced India to intervene and fight yet another war with Pakistan to liberate East Pakistan in 1971. With India's help East Pakistan gained independence and renamed itself as Bangladesh, but impact of all these wars on people's lives was palpable.

It is believed that war is foreign policy by other means. Such an understanding is clearly applicable to countries that commit aggression to serve their interests. But even for victims of aggression, foreign policy, of course, besides the military, is a powerful means to counter aggression. During all these years of wars Indian military did its best to give a fitting response to invaders. But people did question the lack of strength to prevent aggression. The government then is under pressure from people to build up military strength to prevent future challenges from the aggressors. The war has direct impact on the way people rate the performance of the government. On the other hand, the government is compelled to face the economic challenges caused by the war to ensure that people's daily lives are not adversely impacted. The

opportunity cost of fighting wars is huge. The war expenditure eats into the budget for developmental activities that affect citizens directly and the after effect also demands more expenditure to expand and strengthen the military to deter future aggression. The consequences of the Chinese invasion of India in 1962 are still debated and failures and shortcoming are pointed out. Why did the government fail to anticipate the Chinese aggression?<sup>3</sup> Why were the Indian forces not well equipped? All wars cause death and destruction and its impact is felt in the families of the military personnel as well. The victory over Pakistan and rather crushing defeat of Pakistan in 1971 war, on the other hand, had a different impact. It boosted the morale of the Indian people and made them feel proud of the Indian military. Publications numerous books, journal articles, newspaper analyses, cartoons, movie productions are indicative of people's desire to know how the government conducted relations with other countries and air views on successes and failures of diplomacy; and of course the costs and benefits of war.

Pakistan today has been internationally isolated partly because Indian diplomacy was able to expose its nefarious activities and protection and promotion of terrorist outfits.

## CO-RELATION OF DIPLOMACY AND CONFLICT

While strengthening the national defence was a foremost step in this regard, skilful diplomacy was a force multiplier to safeguard India's territorial integrity and uphold national security. Pakistan today has been internationally isolated partly because Indian diplomacy was able to expose its nefarious activities and protection and promotion of terrorist outfits. All efforts by the Pakistani Establishment to use terrorism to destabilize Kashmir have been physically foiled and India has not only succeeded in exposing Pakistan's bluff but also has legitimately made Kashmir a normal state by abrogating the Article 370. The people of Kashmir had to pay a heavy price, both in lives and properties, because of Pakistan's cross border terrorism for decades since late 1980s. Families of security officers across the country,

including Kashmir, lost their loved ones and significantly earning members of their families. Common people in Kashmir lost their jobs and earning from tourism industry, students in hundreds of thousands could not complete their education in peace and time. Taxpayers across India had to bear the huge financial burden of the government in fighting cross border terrorism. These were the tangible impact of low intensity conflict and but for the astute diplomacy in handling cross border terrorism, the cost in lives and economy would have been unimaginably higher.

While Pakistan is currently paying for its anti-Indian activities, China poses a different kind of threat to India. It has grown enormously in terms of its economic power and military capabilities. India tried to improve relations with China since late 1980s by signing key agreements for peace and tranquillity along the border and forging closer trade ties. While the theory of peaceful rise was

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The state of Sino-Indian relations do affect many people in different ways. China's claim over the entire state of Arunachal Pradesh does create certain amount of uncertainty; people who live along the Sino-Indian borders can either have the benefit of cross border trade or get deprived of the benefits;

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tempting for most countries, including India, its assertive policies in the Indo-Pacific and aggressive moves along India's border poses the greatest challenge to India's security. As a highly ambitious country that aspires to challenge the US primacy in world affairs, China seeks to establish its hegemony in the Indo-Pacific region and slow peddles the moves to resolve the territorial dispute with India.

The state of Sino-Indian relations do affect many people in different ways. China's claim over the entire state of Arunachal Pradesh does create certain amount of uncertainty; people who live along the Sino-Indian borders can either have the benefit of cross border trade or get deprived of the benefits; China's building of bridges over rivers, such as Bramhaputra, threatens livelihood of several people in various parts of India where such rivers flow. However,

India too has emerged as an economic powerhouse and global player. India has successfully strengthened its military prowess, acquired credible nuclear and missile capability, and ready to deter a repeat of 1962 experience. More recently, when Chinese army flexed its muscle in Doklam and exhibited its aggression in Galwan Valley, the Indian army sturdily repelled the Chinese military personnel. In addition to the physical resistance to Chinese belligerence, equally significant was India's diplomatic skill in handling the Chinese behaviour by building constructive ties with several major powers, including the United States, Russia, Japan and some European countries, many of which have had similar interest in countering the Chinese pushy and bellicose behaviour. Improved ties with the United States, new strategic partnership with Japan, continuation of defence and security ties with Russia and

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Today the Indian people have confidence that India would not allow China to be a bully in the neighbourhood or threaten India's territorial integrity.

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Besides the political and geopolitical issues, India's economic policy, trade policy, energy policy, environmental policy, education policy both in terms of bilateral and multilateral engagements directly impact various sections of people in their daily lives and activities.

being a part of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue with Australia, the US and Japan certainly have had psychological pressure on Beijing. Today the Indian people have confidence that India would not allow China to be a bully in the neighbourhood or threaten India's territorial integrity.

India's neighbourhood policy similarly impacts lives of people, particularly in states bordering South Asian countries. While border trade constitutes an important segment of economic activities, illegal migration contributes to social instability and economic challenges. In order to safeguard the borders, Army and Paramilitary forces have been deployed, but the borders are long and porous and it is not viable to erect border walls all along. Therefore, besides the security arrangements, Ministry of External Affairs uses diplomatic tools and engages with its counterparts in the neighbouring countries to discourage, prevent or manage illegal migration. India's peaceful and constructive relations with the neighbouring countries, cross border trade and commerce and people to people contacts eminently exemplifies how foreign policy impacts common people.

When considered from the larger perspective, India's decision to adopt a non-aligned foreign policy after Second World War and in the midst of ravaging Cold War was in the best interest of the country and the people as well. The non-aligned strategy of Indian foreign policy facilitated India's relations with countries from both the sides of the Cold War divide and kept India free of foreign entanglements, and made it relatively easy to receive different kinds of assistance from both the Soviet and the American bloc. Indian businessmen could trade with both the blocs and foreign investments created job opportunities in various parts of India. In order to protect domestic industries the government of India adopted an import substitution policy and also prevented imports of agricultural goods that could have had devastating impact on Indian farmers.

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## FOREIGN ECONOMIC POLICY

No country can follow an autarchic economic policy. While international trade, commerce, technology transfer, foreign economic and technological assistance have been there for ages, the rapid globalization has brought new opportunities, challenges and difficulties for countries to ensure that economic relations with other countries do not adversely affect different sections of people.

The foreign trade and investment policies, export and investment promotion initiatives, apposite handling of foreign aid or external loans, both bilateral and multilateral, protection of industrial

and agricultural sectors from unfair competition from foreign companies, encouraging international collaboration in research and development with other countries have co-relation with the daily lives of people—farmers, manufacturers, exporters, workers, and even common people who are affected by market conditions in terms of commodity and consumer prices.

Government of India follows a strategy in its foreign policy approach that seeks to shield small and medium scale industries from unfair and imbalanced competition with foreign products. While making relevant regulations and putting necessary restrictions on foreign donors and companies, the government also provides subsidies and tax incentives



to assist Indian companies and entrepreneurs to export their products. After independence, in the backdrop of a backward agriculture and limited industrial capacities, the Government of India had to take numerous measures to safeguard the agriculture and industrial sectors from unequal foreign competition. The United States of America that had emerged as a superpower on the world stage was promoting free trade and there was no way India was in a position to accept that. The economic policy of the US was less government interference and more freedom to private sectors for conducting their production and business activities. The US-led international economic and financial architecture, including institutions like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund also were determined to disseminate those capitalist economic practices and it was hard for India to protect the domestic producers and consumers in a world where unbridled capitalism ruled. The Soviet Union, People's Republic of China and the Soviet-backed regimes

in Eastern Europe, on the other hand, were champions of State-led economic growth. The Government of India was not prepared to accept the communist/socialist mode of economic system. Like in the field of politics and security, India adopted a middle course. The State would support those economic activities that would affect the masses and at the same time would adopt policies that would promote private domestic economic activities and encourage innovation and modernization. The Indian economic policy was thus characterized as mixed economy. Some described it as socialistic pattern of economic model. The Indian economic foreign policy was crafted as per this model of mixed economic policy. In hindsight, such an economic foreign policy was in the interest of the Indian people during formative decades of India's independence. The farmers and the industrialists required shelter from foreign free traders. However, with passing time, it was realised that excessive state interference in economic activities stifled growth and innovation.

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India's economic foreign policy is partly responsible for the massive change in India's economic status in the world. Today India is not only the fifth largest economy in the world with a GDP larger than that of UK, France, Italy, and Canada—members of the Group of Seven wealthiest countries, but also is regarded as an IT superpower.

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New Delhi's foreign economic policies seek to safeguard the interests of both Indian producers and consumers.

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Protectionist policies discouraged competition and, hence, inhibited modernization. By late 1970s and early 1980s, the Soviet and the Chinese models of economic growth were also discredited and the Western capitalist system appeared to have been a better model for overall economic growth. The end of the Cold War with the Soviet collapse and the success of Chinese reforms initiated in late 1970s and implemented expeditiously after the Soviet disintegration in the 1990s led to spread of principles derived from Washington Consensus which emphasized neoliberal economic policies. India began a mini-economic revolution months before the Soviet disintegration in view of new global political economy and liberalized its economy.

Today's success story of the Indian economy is rooted in the economic liberalization of the early 1990s. There is

little doubt that India's economic reforms not only boosted manufacturing and goods production but also generated huge employment opportunities for the masses. As the middle class began to expand rapidly in India, foreign investors and traders entered Indian market in large scale to make business. In the meantime, India's constructive ties with the Persian Gulf countries also facilitated large scale employment of skilled as well as unskilled labourers from India to work in the Gulf countries. These labourers in millions were able to remit money to their families in India that led to a big social change and economic empowerment of hundreds of thousands of families.

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New Delhi's policies to promote physical, digital and people to people connectivity with foreign countries have direct bearing on people's lives. As pointed out by India's Minister of State for External Affairs Rajkumar Ranjan Singh, India's connectivity projects in its neighbourhood, such as Maitri, Mitali and Bandhan Express between India and Bangladesh give "a fillip to better people-to-people and trade ties."

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India's energy policy at home and its engagements with oil and gas producing countries are inter-linked. By maintaining friendly ties with hydrocarbon resource rich West Asian, particularly Persian Gulf countries, Indian government seeks to provide affordable and uninterrupted access to energy to Indian people.

larger than that of UK, France, Italy, and Canada—members of the Group of Seven wealthiest countries, but also is regarded as an IT superpower. Indian professionals and service industries have prospered and Indian investment in foreign countries has been rising fast. Yet the challenges from abroad remain and India has been careful in its economic relations with the outside world to insulate Indian people from harmful effects.

For example, India today has become a major producers of milk, livestock and various agricultural products in the world, yet subsidized farms sectors from Western developed countries, unless checked, can outperform Indian products in the domestic market and, thus, New Delhi's foreign economic policies seek to safeguard the interests of both Indian producers and consumers.

Secondly, India has refrained from signing indiscriminate free trade agreements and, when it has concluded such deals with South and South East Asian countries such as SAARC and ASEAN, the goal has been to empower Indian producers and consumers. One of the reasons why India

has not signed the RCEP and CPTPP is their potential adverse impact on various sections of Indian people.

At the same time, New Delhi's policies to promote physical, digital and people to people connectivity with foreign countries have direct bearing on people's lives. As pointed out by India's Minister of State for External Affairs Rajkumar Ranjan Singh, India's connectivity projects in its neighbourhood, such as Maitri, Mitali and Bandhan Express between India and Bangladesh gives "a fillip to better people-to-people and trade ties." India currently is working to bring more linkages, including Agartala and Akhaura and has also developed Rail and Road connectivity networks with Nepal and energy links with Nepal and Bangladesh. His following observations capture the impact of foreign policy on people: "Better connectivity helps in boosting trade, attracting greater investments, as well as in bringing down business transaction costs and time. It also leads to structural reforms, increased movement of skilled professionals, development of Global Value Chains (GVCs), enhancement of

Climate change, need to have clean energy to ward off global warming and even reduction of dependence on imported energy are major goals of Indian foreign policy.

the role of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) and reduction of various disparities. Particular focus has also been placed on the North Eastern Region of India in lieu of its centrality in connecting India to its neighboring Countries. India's foreign policy priorities, reflected in its 'Act East' and 'Neighbourhood First' policies, also bring the northeast into focus as a connectivity gateway to the wider Indo-Pacific".<sup>4</sup>

## ENERGY POLICY

India is a net energy importer. Billions of dollars are spent annually in importing oil and gas for running factories, industries, transportation network, fuel in the kitchen and many more. Affordable energy and easy access to energy sources are key to not only mega economic activities but also indispensable for individuals and household.

Thus India's energy policy at home and its engagements with oil and gas producing countries are inter-linked. By maintaining friendly ties with hydrocarbon resource rich West Asian, particularly Persian Gulf countries, Indian government seeks to provide affordable and uninterrupted

access to energy to Indian people.

Since the international energy market is highly volatile and ups and downs in energy prices create instability and uncertainty, foreign policy is geared to handle potential or real energy shortages at the time of geopolitical crisis, natural disasters and interstate wars or internal political upheavals in oil and gas producing countries.

History is replete with examples of energy crisis, but the prominent ones that affected India are the oil embargo by the OPEC countries in 1970s, energy crisis of 1980s, challenges posed to availability of oil and gas during the Gulf War 1991, the US sanctions on Iran over the nuclear programme and the impact on energy prices by the continuing war in Ukraine and the crisis in the Middle-East. The Ministry of External Affairs had to tackle all these crises skilfully to ensure secured energy supply to India. It was often a daunting task due to geopolitical polarizations, as for example; the current situation where India buys oil from Russia despite the US led sanctions against Russia over the issue of Ukraine War.

Ensuring energy security is a key plank of Indian foreign policy. Climate change,

India supports international student mobilization, both inbound and outbound, as part of an exercise to promote international understanding and friendly relations.

need to have clean energy to ward off global warming and even reduction of dependence on imported energy are major goals of Indian foreign policy. India's role in global climate conferences, leadership in International Solar Alliance, energy research collaborations with the United States to develop energy efficient mechanisms are some of the examples where the foreign policy directly and extensively impacts daily lives of masses.

Significantly, the life style and efficient use of energy by masses also facilitates or poses challenges to India's energy policy. Given the inter-linkages between environment and energy consumption, the Modi government has proposed LiFE mission that aims at making it a mass mission to promote healthy consumption patterns and at the same time safeguard global environment.

## **INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN EDUCATION SECTOR**

While there is no designated foreign education policy, most countries do forge educational cooperation with other countries. The Ministry of External Affairs

of India has an educational and cultural wing, the Indian Council of Cultural Relations (ICCR) that promotes cultural, including educational cooperation with several countries around the world.

Hundreds of thousands of Indian students go abroad for higher education in multiple fields and Indian universities have students from above 160 countries enrolled in different courses in various degree programmes.

India supports international student mobilization, both inbound and outbound, as part of an exercise to promote international understanding and friendly relations. ICCR provides scholarships to foreign students to study in India and the Ministry of Education also floats different programmes to encourage foreign students to study in India and provides scholarships to Indian students to study abroad.

The Ministry of External Affairs in coordination with the Ministry of Education promotes bilateral educational exchanges and joint research activities with higher educational institutions of many countries. Holding of international seminars, conferences, workshops are also



Digital technology of India has tremendous outreach to common people to ensure health security and several other services, such as digital transactions, direct bank transfer and India is now able to share this technology with rest of the world. UPI and DPI have the potential to create jobs and promote business for Indian technicians and software professional abroad.

encouraged by the Ministry. Thus a large number of students, faculty members and researchers benefit from Indian foreign policy and also contribute towards India's soft power and promote positive images of India abroad.

India is currently President of the G20 and one of its agendas is related to education and the goal is to make it an important element in fostering international cooperation and understanding. The emphasis is on expanding scientific and technological research and enhancing innovation and developing appropriate technologies for solving societal problems, particularly in India and the developing world or Global South. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, while addressing the Voice of Global South Summit, proposed that India will be a hub of scientific innovation and scholarships

will be given to students from across the Global South to come to India and study.

## **TWO-WAY PROCESS**

It is significant to note that Indian foreign policy impacts daily lives of people, but achievements of Indian people also enhances India's soft power. As Prime Minister Narendra Modi proudly said in his address to the US legislators during his address to the Joint Session of the US Congress in June 2023: "India is an ancient nation with a youthful population. India is known for its traditions. But the younger generation is also making it a hub of technology. Be it creative reels on Insta or real time payments, coding or quantum computing, machine learning or mobile apps, FinTech or data science, the youth of India are

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a great example of how a society can embrace latest technology. In India, technology is not only about innovation but also about inclusion.”<sup>5</sup>

More significantly, India now desires to share the achievements in Digital Public Infrastructure with the rest of the world. This message has been conveyed to hundreds of leaders from the Global South during the Global South Summit. Digital technology of India has tremendous outreach to common people to ensure health security and several other services, such as digital transactions, direct bank transfer and India is now able to share this technology with rest of the world. UPI and DPI have the potential to create jobs and promote business for Indian technicians and software professional abroad. According to Minister of State for External Affairs Ranjan Singh, “Digital connectivity with our neighbours include the India – Bangladesh Internet link which would improve the internet quality in North Eastern states of India by commissioning international bandwidth for internet connectivity through Cox’s Bazar in southeast Bangladesh. India is also energetically rolling out its Digital Public

Infrastructure which is revolutionizing everyday life by wide adoption of DPI for public service delivery in India.”<sup>6</sup>

However, a lot can still be done to craft a new education diplomacy to internationalize Indian university campuses and promote international understanding. Although more than 160 countries send their students to India, vast majority of them are from South Asia and especially from Nepal. Sources of foreign students can be expanded. The US, UK, Canada, Australia and many countries have active policies to draw foreign students to their campuses. It brings all round benefits to the country, including to the academic communities in those countries. At the same time, education is fast emerging as a national security issue similar to securitization of food, water, energy and other issues. High priority should be given by the government to discuss, deliberate and evolve policies to make education an important aspect of diplomacy.

While ICCR has been active for decades, new steps should be invented and taken to stimulate international cooperation through education sector. India Chairs

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set up in multiple countries can be better strategized in the light of 21st Century requirements. In the globalized world, global markets demand newer skills. International market place has become too competitive and dynamic with every innovated newer technology. India should make its education system more attractive to draw international students in large numbers. Benefits of such a policy would be diplomatic, educational and even economic.

## RECENT INITIATIVES

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Modi Government's initiatives on certain global issues have direct co-relation with what it does at home and how it affects daily lives.

1. The climate change was largely an academic matter and a debatable issue among environmentalists. The serious warnings issued by experts rarely boiled down to policy formulations. Fossil fuel companies lobbied very hard to stay afloat. Alternative to oil and gas were not commercially viable yet. But off late global warming and devastating manifestations have become more discernible and global initiatives to tackle global warming have taken more positive turns. Heat waves in the US, Europe, and east Asia; wild fires in Canada, USA, Australia,

Indonesia; devastating floods, enhanced frequency of hurricanes, storms, cyclones and typhoons make it an imperative to preserve the environment.

While Kyoto Protocol, Paris Climate Accord, and several other global initiatives are in place, implementation has always encountered road blocks. The Modi Government has “put forward a “vision of anchoring...actions on the individual level on a Lifestyle for Environment” or LiFE approach. In other words, India is pushing for a “global movement” that can shape the “consumption pattern and habits” of masses. What is proposed for other countries need to be practiced at home and thus the government has implemented the LiFE initiative “to support 100 million households to migrate from solid fuel to LPG through the Ujjwala Yojana” programme that has brought about better health and has contributed towards “prevention of deforestation.” This foreign policy initiative thus has domestic dimension and the result is expected to be Green Development in India.<sup>7</sup>

2. One of the key foreign economic policies of India has been providing foreign assistance to developing

countries. It is noteworthy that India has adopted and implemented a policy of extending technical help and economic aid for decades. While this policy apparently is to help sister countries of the Global South, it also brings benefits to Indian manufacturers, businessmen, technical manpower and others. At the moment India has about 600 “Development Partnership projects in 78 countries and the completion rate of such projects is about sixty per cent”<sup>8</sup>.

3. Influence of foreign policy on domestic developments is not a one-way road. Domestic developments too sway foreign policy. This is better mirrored in a “revolutionary change” brought about in India to empower people, make policies inclusive, combat corruption and deliver services directly to people. India’s success in digitalization will bring business dividend to India. India has offered its success in UPI and DPI to other countries. At the same time, Prime Minister Modi has called for “democratization of technology” to “help bridge the data divide in the world”.<sup>9</sup>
4. External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar has rightly observed: “Bold, decisive actions on

fostering Data for Development and Digital Public infrastructure which are needed around the world to jumpstart innovations at the grassroots level. India’s own experience with these innovations has transformed our societies and governance in less than half a decade.”<sup>10</sup>

## CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

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There are domestic roots of foreign policy of India. India’s civilizational experiences, political history—both colonial and post-colonial, social structures, political system, and economic performances play critical role in formulation and implementation of foreign policy. Likewise, India’s diplomatic engagements with major powers, neighbouring countries, economic partners and fellow developing countries deeply impact people’s lives, shape their perception, guide their political behaviour and affect their economic activities.

A feature of the Indian foreign policy during the early decades after independence was that, though it impacted the society in multiple ways, common people were less interested in it and majority of them were unaware of global developments. The emergence and spread of cable TV, later Internet and

subsequently social media has certainly helped in raising awareness among the masses about India's engagements with the outside world. The role of audio-visual media in connecting people with Indian foreign policy cannot be

underestimated. Even the illiterate people do watch television and listen to radio; and their lack of formal education does not come in the way to increase their knowledge, awareness, and consciousness about India's foreign policy.



## Endnotes

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- 1 “Systematic analyses of the role of parties in foreign and security policy are rare beyond the specific case of the United States.” For details see Tapio Raunio, Wolfgang Wagner, “The Party Politics of Foreign and Security Policy”, *Foreign Policy Analysis*, Volume 16, Issue 4, October 2020, Pages 515–531, 26 September 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1093/fpa/oraa018>
- 2 Anthony Blinken, “A Foreign Policy for the American People,” Speech by US Secretary of State, 3 March 2021, <https://www.state.gov/a-foreign-policy-for-the-american-people/>
- 3 An example can be found in the book authored by Brigadier Amar Cheema, “The Crimson Chinar: The Kashmir Conflict: Politico Military Perspective (New Delhi, Lancers, 2014). Numerous books and articles on India’s war with China and Pakistan are testimony to impact of the war on Indian people. The debates over war and diplomacy are never ending. It suggests how people are affected by the way Indian conducts its diplomacy and defends the nation.
- 4 [https://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/36639/Remarks\\_by\\_Minister\\_of\\_State\\_for\\_External\\_Affairs\\_Dr\\_Rajkumar\\_Ranjan\\_Singh\\_at\\_the\\_India\\_EU\\_Connectivity\\_Conference](https://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/36639/Remarks_by_Minister_of_State_for_External_Affairs_Dr_Rajkumar_Ranjan_Singh_at_the_India_EU_Connectivity_Conference)
- 5 ([https://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/36714/Address\\_by\\_Prime\\_Minister\\_Shri\\_Narendra\\_Modi\\_to\\_the\\_Joint\\_Session\\_of\\_the\\_US\\_Congress](https://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/36714/Address_by_Prime_Minister_Shri_Narendra_Modi_to_the_Joint_Session_of_the_US_Congress))
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# ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS



## AMBASSADOR GURJIT SINGH

Ambassador Gurjit Singh is a former Ambassador of India to Germany, Indonesia, Ethiopia, ASEAN and the African Union.

He chaired the CII Business Task Force on Trilateral Cooperation in Africa including the Asia Africa Growth Corridor with Japan. His report on such cooperation in 2019 focused on private sector engagement to make Trilaterals successful.

He is associated with the social impact investment movement and is working on expanding it in Africa along with other trilateral initiatives, including with Japan, for B2B engagement. He is an independent director of companies achieving social impact. He is also associated with civil society efforts through the Aavishkar Foundation and the Advisory Council of Nobel Peace Laureate Kailash Satyarthi.

He comments on current events on TV and in journals.

Ambassador Singh is an avowed cinema buff having an interest in Indian cinema, which is both academic and historical. He is very fond of sports, including cricket and is a qualified umpire from the Kenya Cricket Association. He enjoys travelling, experiencing different cultures and cuisines and meeting people. His commitment to enhance outreach programmes in every assignment and to enlarge the agenda of engagement is well-known. He is considered a business-friendly developmental diplomat. He is married and has two children.



## PROFESSOR CHINTAMANI MAHAPATRA

Prof. Chintamani Mahapatra is currently the Founder and Honorary Chairperson of Kalinga Institute of Indo-Pacific Studies.

He is a Member of the Academic Council of Mizoram University and Chandigarh University, Member of the Governing Council of VPM Centre for International Studies, Mumbai, Member of the Board of Management and Planning of Manipal Academy of Higher Education, Manipal, Karnataka, and Member of the Board of Management of Vir Surendra Sai University of Technology, Burla, Odisha.

He was a Professor of International Studies at the School of International Studies of Jawaharlal Nehru University

Prof. Chintamani Mahapatra served as Rector (Pro-Vice Chancellor) of Jawaharlal Nehru University from March 2016 for about six years.

Prof. Mahapatra was also the Editor of Indian Foreign Affairs Journal, published by the Association of Indian Diplomats.

He has held positions, such as Member, UGC Review Committee, Area Studies Programme, Member, Fellowship Expert Committee, ICSSR, Member, Editorial Board, Strategic Analysis, Institute of Defense Studies and Analyses, Member, Editorial Board, Diaspora Studies and Member, Committee on Studies, Academy of International Studies, Jalia Millia Islamia.

Recently, he was Tagore Chair Professor at Yunnan University of China. He has conducted research in several US Presidential Libraries and US National Archives; and British Public Record Office in London.

Prof. Mahapatra has authored four books, edited four volumes, and has contributed chapters to above 30 edited books. He has published above 70 research articles in reputed journals.

He has guided 26 PhD scholars and 51 M. Phil Degree scholars.

He has chaired and presented papers in numerous national and international conferences.

He has a wide range of exposure to international academic institutions in the US, UK, France, Israel, Australia, Sweden, China, Vietnam, Singapore and Austria.

He has been awarded a number of international fellowships, such as Fulbright Fellowship, Commonwealth Fellowship, and Visiting Fellowships to undertake research in the US, UK, Austria, Australia and many other countries.

He has been a visiting faculty in several UGC-run Academic Staff Colleges, the Foreign Service Institute of the Ministry of External Affairs, National Defense College, Army War College, Naval War College and the College of Air Warfare.

He is also a regular commentator in newspapers and on audio-visual media on international affairs.

## ABOUT ICWA

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The Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA) was established in 1943 by a group of eminent intellectuals led by Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Dr. H.N. Kunzru. Its principal objective was to create an Indian perspective on international relations and act as a repository of knowledge and thinking on foreign policy issues. The Council today conducts policy research through an in-house faculty as well as through external experts. It regularly organizes an array of intellectual activities including conferences, seminars, roundtable discussions, lectures and brings out a range of publications. It has a well-stocked library, an active website, and publishes the journal *India Quarterly*. ICWA has over 50 MoUs with international think tanks and research institutions to promote better understanding on international issues and develop areas of mutual cooperation. The Council also has partnerships with leading research institutions, think tanks and universities in India.





