



INDIAN FOREIGN POLICY UNDER NARENDRA MODI (2014-17)

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ABSTRACT

After gaining victory in the Indian General Elections in 2014, Narendra Modi has become Prime Minister of India. He is icon of Hindutva for his activities as member of Sangh Parivar, BJP and as successful Chief Minister of Gujarat for continuous 14 years (2001-2014). Modi as profounder of democracy visited many of the countries. His 'Act East' policy is aimed to establish peace, mutual cooperation and progress in Asia. For this purpose, he has made many of the strategic and defence agreements with China, Myanmar, Bangladesh, Japan, etc. Further, he dreamt to develop India as global power and for this purpose, he extended strategic relationship with the United States. Terrorism is major problem faced by India and various countries and he has also made efforts to curb terrorism. The paper described the principles, facets and activities that are revealed by Modi's Foreign Policy.



KEYWORDS : Indian General Elections , facets and activities , Modi's Foreign Policy.

INTRODUCTION

Narendra Modi, who was Chief Minister of Gujarat and his contribution towards industrial and economic progress of Gujarat is much appreciated. Later, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) under the leadership of Narendra Modi has achieved recorded victory in the General Elections of 2014. The 2014 election manifesto of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) clearly carried his personal stamp, proclaiming a determination to 'fundamentally reboot and reorient the foreign policy goals, content and process, in a manner that locates India's global strategic engagement in a new paradigm'¹. Narendra Modi has unique personality, who has dreamt stronger and tougher India and also his wish is to strengthen India against other countries in Asia. This has turned his attention towards stronger foreign policy. Though Modi has been criticized as aggressive face of Hindu nationalism, his policies are based on strong India and not based on any particular religion or caste.

PRINCIPLES OF MODI'S FOREIGN POLICY:

Modi and his government wish to make India a *vishwaguru* and a 'leading power', but on the whole, as Hindu nationalists opposed to Congress political ideas and policies, they reject the normative agenda set out by Nehru. Instead, they seek an alternative grounded in the Hindu nationalist tradition of thought². Modi's first foreign policy outlook were revealed during the run up for the Prime Ministerial candidature in his party in 2013 when he in a Network 18 program called 'Think India, dialogue forum' had outlined the following points³:

- Improving relations with immediate neighbours would be his priority as peace and tranquillity in South Asia is essential for realizing his development agenda.

- Significantly he pledged to introduce the concept of para diplomacy in India where each states and cities would have liberty to forge special relation with countries or federal states or even cities of their interest.
- Bilateral trade going to dominate the relations with most countries except few important global powers with which India shares a strategic partnership.

To strengthen India economically, the Indian Prime Minister has launched many of the popular schemes and programmes such as Jan Dhan Scheme, Digital India, Make in India, etc. The Modi government has formulated its own foreign policy doctrine labeled Panchamrit. Panchamrit's five pillars are "dignity, dialogue, shared prosperity, regional and global security and cultural and civilizational links". The Modi government's areas of soft power emphasis are linked to the century old Indian ideals such as India's role as a "vishwaguru" or the world's teacher or the notion of "vasudhaiva kutumbkam" which implies that the whole world is a big family. The four broad categories of the display of soft power are ancient heritage or civilizational ties, democracy, economic aid and Bollywood⁴. Modi has ordered that 'Look East' be turned into 'Act East'; instructed the Foreign Service to concentrate more on India's economic interests and the promotion of his Make in India scheme; exhorted the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) to get on with the business of integrating the region; renewed and broadened the strategic partnership with the United States, while signing on to become a stakeholder in China's Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and a full member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization; and, last but not least, signalled some change in India's stance on global economic governance and climate change.

FOREIGN POLICY OF NARENDRA MODI:

At the beginning itself to his swearing-in ceremony, Narendra Modi has invited all the political representatives and leaders to neighbouring countries, especially South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) countries. As such, the ceremony function featured with Guests from neighbouring countries, especially, Navin Ramgoolam of Mauritius, Hamid Karzai from Afghanistan, Tshering Tobgay from Bhutan, Abdulla Yameen from Maldives, Sushil Koirala from Nepal, Nawaz Shariff from Pakistan, Mahindra Rajapaksa from Sri Lanka, Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, Parliamentary Speaker on behalf of Sheikh Haseena from Bangladesh and Lobsang Sangay, the Tibetan Government-in-Exile. Narendra Modi has been appreciated by many of the international leaders and political representatives for his vision, charisma, passion for Hindu culture, extraordinary oratorical skills, good communication skills and self-confidence.

When he was ruled Gujarat State as Chief Minister for more than 14 years (2001-2014), he travelled to Japan and China to attract investments for the industries located in his state. Japan has agreed to invest \$35 billion in Gujarat and China agreed to invest \$20 billion.

Within initial two years of Prime Ministership, as described by Madalina⁵, Modi intended to create and expand diplomatic relations with a multitude of states, with the stated purpose of maximizing the benefits and minimizing the risks, in the process of fulfilling the Indian objectives of foreign policy. This is how India's participation in a series of multilateral and cooperation forums, such as BRICS, engaging in diplomatic relations with all the countries in the P-5 group (including the development of the traditional bilateral relation with Russia or use of the India-China-Russia triad) must be regarded.

When the Prime Minister Modi's foreign policy is analyzed, it is found that, his main priorities include Counter terrorism, Cyber Security, Trade, Industrial Development and Power Partnerships. He has realized that to counter terrorism, there is need for international defence cooperation with joint military exercises and training. For the purpose of industrial development, there is need for investment for the industries in India. As the energy is scarce, he concentrated on development of renewable energy sources.

Another important feature of his foreign policy is 'Act East' policy and he taken up diplomatic visit to Afghanistan, Bhutan, Nepal, Myanmar, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka and his approach was "the Three Cs" (Connectivity, Cooperation and Contact). His slogan for Indian was Sab Ka Saath, Sab Ka Vikas has also

worked with neighbouring countries as he has assured loans and financial assistance to development projects in neighbouring countries.

Consequent to 'Act East' policy, Sushma Swaraj, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, visited a series of countries such as Myanmar, Singapore and Vietnam; she participated in the East Asia Summit, the Regional ASEAN Forum, the India-ASEAN meetings of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs; she also met with the Ministers of Foreign Affairs from Australia, Brunei, Indonesia, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea, Thailand and Vietnam. Other visits (to China, Australia) aimed at improving the relations required for India to become an active player in the Asia-Pacific area, a key area for the entire global order of the 21st century. To implement this policy, the Ministers from the federal states of India were also encouraged to develop relations with the states in the region (ministers of the Indian federal states West Bengal, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu, being encouraged to visit Singapore)⁶.

Modi has also strengthened relations with Australia, Japan and China through series of visits. It is highlighted that for the first two years, of the total 61 interventions such as interviews, speeches, press conferences, dialogues and interaction with media, etc on foreign policy, only 14 were took place in India and the remaining taken place in other countries. His role in presentation of Indian ideas in SAARC meetings (Summit), the UN meetings, the South-East Asia Group Summit, the G20 Group, BRICS, the India-Africa Summit at Antalya, etc were much appreciated by international leaders.

In response to earlier experiences of China's threat (1961), Narendra Modi realized that there is need to build strong military power in Asia to face threats may be posed by China and Pakistan. For this purpose, Modi has strengthened military linkages with the United States, Japan and others in response to China's aggressive posture in disputed seas, but this activity has been largely limited to military exercises and is in any case an extension of what previous governments had been doing⁷. The defence cooperation with different countries such as Japan, United States, Russia, Vietnam, etc is to keep away China and Pakistan away and also ready to face any security challenges from these countries in future.

The major threat as identified by India is from China as observed from past experiences. Realizing this, Modi met China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi during BRICS summit at Brazil in 2014 and later President Xi Jinping visited India in September 2014. It has been agreed by both the leaders to establish two industrial parks in India with an investment of \$20 billion in the forthcoming five years in industrial and infrastructure and projects and also agreed to extend cooperation in the development of Indian Railways. With negotiation, it was also agreed by China to withdraw troops from 5 Km of Indian territory occupied by China's army. Though there is complicated relationship with China, the trade between India and China raised from \$791 million in 1991 to \$72.22 billion in 2015.

Under the leadership of Modi, India developed distinct diplomatic relations with Iran and Israel for investments and encourage trade, enhanced relations with Russia and United States in defence equipments and weapons. There were also extended cooperation with Turkey and the Great Britain especially in trade and economic relations.

India has reserved \$1.6 Billion as foreign aid during 2015-16 by creating Indian Agency for Partnership in Development (IAPD), which has allotted 63% of the budget to Bhutan to support hydropower sector, which would consolidate India's regional power status. The aid has also been given to Afghanistan (\$1 billion) and Bangladesh (as Line of Credit \$2 billion) for different development projects. After Earthquake in Nepal, as a relief measure, Narendra Modi Government has released \$67 billion. During his visit to Vietnam, Modi has also presented \$500 million as defence Line of Credit.

In his speech to the UN General Assembly in late September 2014, Modi drew attention to what he called the 'surge to democracy across the world', referring specifically to Afghanistan, Bhutan and Nepal, but also to the Arab Spring. In late September 2015, his opening address to the G4 summit of aspiring permanent UN Security Council members (which includes Brazil, Germany and Japan as well as India) argued that their claims flowed not just from their being 'locomotives of the global economy', but also from their status as 'the world's largest democracies'. In sum, Modi has clearly endorsed the notion that democratic

government is the preferable form of government not simply for developed states, but also for developing ones.

Modi has also played significant role in cultural diplomacy at the international level. After successfully lobbying at the United Nations General Assembly, Modi managed to institutionalize an annual International Day of Yoga, the first of which was 21 June 2015. Modi claimed that yoga was India's gift to the world and it led to a peaceful harmony of the body and the mind and helped "discover the sense of oneness with yourself, the world and the nature"⁸.

Social media have also become one of Modi's instruments of choice for conveying his messages to the countries he visits. He would even communicate to people in other countries in their own language. "Social media is one way (not the only way) of telling the better story about India and the policies of its government. As such, it remains a valuable arrow in the Indian diplomatic quiver"⁹.

To sum up, the principles of Narendra Modi's foreign policy are¹⁰:

- ❖ Prioritizing an integrated neighbourhood; "Neighbourhood First."
- ❖ Leveraging international partnerships to promote India's domestic development.
- ❖ Ensuring a stable and multipolar balance of power in the Indo-Pacific; "Act East."
- ❖ Dissuading Pakistan from supporting terrorism.
- ❖ Advancing Indian representation and leadership on matters of global governance.

CONCLUDING REMARKS:

To conclude, when it is analyzed, it is found that, 'Look East' policy of the then, Indian Prime Minister Narasimha rao has become foundation to 'Act East' policy of Narendra Modi. It is highlighted that Narendra Modi's foreign policy is aimed to maintain peace, mutual cooperation and security in the Asia in particular and in the world in general. For this purpose, he has emphasized democracy as form of Government for all the countries. Further, he wished that India should become global power and kingmaker in the world. For this purpose, he has put much effort to gain a permanent seat at UN Security Council. Another facet which has associated with the Hinduism is 'Islamophobia' manifested by its abrasive stance towards Pakistan. Such Islamophobia has become root to terrorism all over the world. Many of the news reports have analyzed that Pakistan is constantly increasing terrorism. To counter terrorism, Modi turned his attention to Muslim countries such as Turkey, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, etc and the concept behind such friendly relations with Muslim countries is to isolate Pakistan in Islamic world. By doing so, terrorism sponsored by fundamental groups in Pakistan may be controlled. Further, Modi's foreign policy towards Asian, European countries, Russia and United States are aimed to get economic security, trade relations, economic stabilization and defence strength at the international level.

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