

Indian Diplomacy: The study of India and neighboring country



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ABSTRACT

Despite all its diverse regional contradictions it is often acknowledged that India holds together a unique Indian integrity. The paper looks at the evolution of Indian diplomacy in close connection with ancient history and literature of the land. It attempts to bring out the psyche of Indian approach towards the foreign through the years and tries to analyse the reasons that has made the country 'adaptive' in the treatment of foreigners and her origin - rulers. It summarises on three-core focal points shaping the growth of India's cross-border dealings after the country's independence and 'democracy'.

As diverse as the myriad colours of the land the Indian socio-political vision is essentially pluralistic in nature, leaving a strong influence in her secular diplomatic conduct. Diplomacy in India can be traced back to Aryan epic times of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, which laid firm literary foundations to Hinduism. Infact the sacred book of the Hindus The *Bhagavat Gita* is

perhaps one of the finest examples of diplomacy. It is interesting to note that the text is wholly based on the battlefield dialogue between Arjun, the noble warrior and Krishna, the illustrated Vishnu-incarnate who has taken the role of his chariot driver.

Before delving more into the aspects of the conversation that exemplifies the various forms of social diplomacy it is worth noting what Hinduism is in its real context. Much before being an iconoclastic term that full of religious embellishments and beliefs in divinity, it is rather an accumulation of 'idealistic' thoughts spoken in verses by Krishna to Arjun about the inevitabilities of life (combining the micro and the macro) and the rights and duties of an ideal person. The word Hindu rather than any religious sect originally meant people of Hind or Hindustan another name for *Bharatvarsha* or India.

As universally witnessed that it is characteristic of any ancient civilisation to bask in the misconception before explorations had begun that the world comprises only of its state (being supreme), besides which there are heavenly deities and the fallen underworld of the evil causing good or harm in direct relations to it. Though its a rather sketchy remark but the concept gives an ironic indication of the universal the three-worlds theory in politics through the ages, only to be interpreted in different ways with the changing agenda in international relations! Thus Hinduism or the ethics of the Aryan Hind formed a logical linguistic outcome of the Bhagavat Gita that essentially spoke of moral truthfulness, happiness in work without attachment and acting dutifully on life's stage as the situation calls. In two terse lines of the heavily extended discourse of righteous action Krishna offers timeless advice on how one speech should be marked by the following qualities, in ordered priority: 'it should not disturb the mind of the listener; it should be precise with correct use of language; it should be truthful, if possible, it should be pleasing to the listener; and again if possible, it should be of utility to the listener.' Truthfulness is not presented as the highest virtue, overriding other qualities. Rather, the premier place goes to the requirement of not causing distress to the listener. Precision and good linguistic craftsmanship

are rated as another high quality, which is followed by, the penultimate truth. What more can feature the qualifications of an apt diplomatic dialogue? The ancient book of human rights the *Manusamhita* or Laws of Man transcribed this pithy advice as a good speaker must: "Speak the pleasant but not the untruth; speak the truth but not the unpleasant".

Infact it is interesting to note that like any other ancient civilisation diplomacy is well exemplified in Indian mythology, more specifically in Hindu Polytheism, which is an impressive example of hierarchical representation amongst Gods. The proximity of cosmic forces/deities to kings, influencing and guiding them in the affairs of state, to make important political changes and bring Diplomacy is thus ingrained in the Indian psyche from time immemorial and has over centuries developed a distinct habit of tolerance inherent in Indian philosophy and tradition. The tradition stresses on tolerance and peaceful conciliation, which forms the fulcrum of Indian diplomacy.

Perhaps that explains why it has so strongly sustained dynasty or regime changes through out history. The group mind psyche that is the idea of commune has governed the spirit of the people from the Aryan age, reflective in its arts, aesthetics, literature, architecture, drama and even in the ethics of its socio-cultural construction. It is embedded in the Indian people to react instinctively to community claims, thus it can be easily understood how people spontaneously adapted to changes brought about by the distinct dynasties like the Lodis, Rajputs, Moguls, Marathas etc. Perhaps this tolerant outlook indulged the people towards equalitarianism and social content of communism. Another important aspect of thought, which has come down through the ages, is a means to achieve ends according to the moral law. The second century Tamil classic, *Kural* frames the notion 'Avoid at all times action that is not in accordance with the moral law. Success achieved without minding the prohibition of the moral law brings grief in the wake of achievement.

To seek to further the welfare of the state by enriching it through frauds and falsehood is like storing water in an unburned mud pot and hoping to preserve it.¹ This is not to indicate that Indian rulers have always conformed to ethical precepts. The illustrious fourth century B. C. political analyst and economist Kautilya² for instance in his *Arthashastra* (Science of Material Gain), a textbook that outlined governmental administration and political strategy recommended that the adoption of state craft should be done according to the circumstance and that what produces unfavourable results is a bad policy; a policy is to be judged by the results it produces, for him diplomacy was an art not to be concerned with ideals but achieving practical results for the states.

Going back to epic times it would be worth noting that character of Krishna the first and one of the best social diplomat India has ever produced, as we see him advising the legitimate truth to kings and being instrumental in building or controlling many events. One can't but appreciate the tact and polish involved when Krishna acts as a special envoy of the Pandavas to the Kauravas before the battle of *Kurukshetra* in an attempt to get the opinion of the other. Though he did not succeed in averting war, his mission showed that like any adept diplomat he had genuine inclination to avoid war and prove that the Pandavas were right. 'Going thither I will remove the doubts of all men who are still undecided as to the wickedness of Duryodhana. Thither in the presence of all kings I will enumerate all those virtues of thine that are not to be met in all men, as also the vices of Duryodhana...I will also recite the vices of Duryodhana before both citizens and the inhabitants of the country, before both the young and old of all the four orders that will be collected there. And though I ask for peace no one will charge me as sinful while all Chiefs of the earth will censure the Kurus and Dhritarashtra...' ³ The quote is rather important to understand the essence of Indian diplomacy as Krishna's politicness still influences the many procedures as India continues to pay the attention to the world opinion.

Indian history holds unique examples of international as well as inter-state diplomacy, where the divergent reigning clans at times defended their interests by social, cultural or religious diplomacy. India's first contact with the Europeans started with Alexander's Indus campaign in 326 BC which resulted in a unique cultural diplomatic fusion between several Indo-Greek elements-especially in art, architecture, court administration and numismatics. Since then the Indian courts had heard regularly from the Greek ambassadors and vice-versa.

Following the Greek invasion was in 322 BC, Magadha, under the rule of Chandragupta Maurya, began to assert its hegemony over the neighbouring areas. Chandragupta, who ruled from 324 to 301 BC, was the architect of the first Indian imperial power—the Mauryan Empire (326-184 BC)— whose capital was Pataliputra, near modern-day Patna, in Bihar. Situated on rich alluvial soil and near mineral deposits, especially iron, Magadha was at the center of bustling commerce and trade. The capital was a city of magnificent palaces, temples, a university, a library, gardens, and parks, as reported by Megasthenes, the third-century BC Greek historian and ambassador to the Mauryan court. Chandragupta's success was due in large measure to his chancellor Kautilya who designed the highly centralized and hierarchical government. There was a regulated tax collection system, the government officials almost formed a cabinet ministry structure that saw to trade and commerce, industrial arts, mining, vital statistics, foreign affairs, maintenance of public places including markets and temples, and prostitutes. A large standing army and a well-developed espionage system were maintained. The empire was divided into provinces, districts, and villages governed by a host of centrally appointed local officials, who replicated the functions of the central administration. Indubitably the Mauryan Empire is considered to be the golden age in Indian history with its enormity of territory and time.

Emperor Ashoka (3rd Century BC) the third monarch of the Mauryan dynasty is a remarkable figure to study as he attained 'greatness' by religious diplomacy after having invaded the muchwanted land of Kalinga (present day Orissa). On witnessing the ruthless bloodshed and

horrific killings of the Kalinga war he was so guilty that he became a Buddhist and preached non-violence through the rest of his life restoring peace to his state of affairs and the blood drenched kingdom espousing a theory of rule by 'righteousness'. He never fought a single war more in his reign and eventually won the hearts of many ready to acknowledge his supremacy by sending sombre convoys. He also sent his son and daughter to spread the word of Buddha as ambassadors to Ceylon (Srilanka) and Burma (Myanmar).

One of the most exemplary rulers in world history Ashoka's symbol of authority built in his Lion Capital at Sarnath near Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh still stands today as the National emblem of India. Sarnath was chosen by Ashoka to commemorate Buddha's first sermon there of peace and emancipation to the universe. The national emblem is thus symbolic of contemporary India's reaffirmation of its ancient commitment to world peace and goodwill. The four lions (one hidden from view) – symbolising power, courage and confidence- rest on a circular abacus. Four smaller animals- guardians of the four directions gird the abacus: the lion of the north, the elephant of the east, the horse of the south and the bull of the west. The abacus rests on a lotus in full bloom, exemplifying the fountainhead of life and creative inspiration. The motto '*Satyameva Jayate*' inscribed below the emblem in Devanagari script means 'truth alone triumphs'. The British historian H.G. Wells has written: "Amidst the tens of thousands of names of monarchs that crowd the columns of history ... the name of Ashoka shines, and shines almost alone, a star." His toleration for different religious beliefs and languages reflected the realities of India's regional pluralism. Ashoka's numerous inscriptions chiselled on rocks and stone pillars located at strategic locations throughout his empire--such as Lampaka (Laghman in modern Afghanistan), Mahastan (in modern Bangladesh), and Brahmagiri (in Karnataka)--constitute the second set of datable historical records. He sent diplomatic-cum-religious missions to the rulers of Syria, Macedonia, and Epirus, who learned about India's religious traditions, especially Buddhism. Ashoka's Greek and Aramaic inscriptions found in Kandahar in Afghanistan also reveal his desire to maintain ties with courts outside India. By the end of the sixth century BC, India's northwest

was integrated into the Persian Achaemenid Empire. This integration marked the beginning of administrative contacts between Central Asia and India.

After the disintegration of the Mauryan Empire in the second century BC, South Asia became a collage of regional powers with overlapping boundaries. India's unguarded north-western border again attracted a series of invaders between 200 BC and AD 300. As the Aryans had done, the invaders became "Indianized" in the process of their conquest and settlement. Also, this period witnessed outstanding intellectual and artistic achievements inspired by cultural diffusion and syncretism.

After the Mauryas it is worth noting how India held its first diplomatic conference during the Kushana dynasty. The Kushana Kingdom controlled parts of Afghanistan and Iran, and in India the realm stretched from Purushapura (modern Peshawar, Pakistan) in the northwest, to Varanasi (Uttar Pradesh) in the east, and to Sanchi (Madhya Pradesh) in the south. The Kushana Kingdom was the crucible of trade and diplomatic ties with the Persian, Chinese and Roman empires and controlled a critical part of the legendary Silk Road. Kanishka, who reigned for two decades starting around 78 AD, was the most noteworthy Kushana ruler. He converted to Buddhism and convened an International Buddhist council in Kashmir. Besides Sanskrit literature, the Kushanas were patrons of a diplomatic art form called the Gandharan, a cultural synthesis between Greek and Indian styles.

Similarly the amity maintained between the Mughal Emperors and the Rajput Kings of Rajasthan in spite of being Islamic and Hindu clans respectively is noteworthy as the diplomatic interventions besides war were often seen to be resolved with marriages and pompous social festivals like the traditional *Rakhi* ceremonial, tying the knot of fraternity among states. Another way of extending friendliness among states were in the form of exchanging valuable artists or courtiers, it is well acknowledged that Raja Mansingh Tomar of Gwalior gave the legendary classical singer Tansen as 'a gift of appreciation' to the Mughal emperor Akbar along with his

ambassadorial convoy to the Delhi durbar. One can't deny that it was the Raja's pride in showing how culturally enriched he was than the Emperor.

With the onset of western explorations India's xenophile nature and tolerance got enhanced as it embraced the initial setting up of trade relations and missionary activities of the Portuguese, Danish, Dutch, French and the British, later conferring them with administrative powers for ruling their own settlements or colonies which ultimately resulted in 200 years of British rule till India got its Independence in 1947.

Ever since India attained her independence to form the parliamentary executive, the vital decisions of foreign policy as in all governments fell on the Cabinet Minister in charge of foreign affairs. Initially Jawaharlal Nehru served as the Minister of foreign policy, besides being the prime minister primarily because of his influential foreign contacts and personality, that was even instrumental for securing the India's independence. In pre-independent India, Nehru guided the Congress Resolutions which catered to set the framework of India's foreign policy and being a leader in the government as well as holding leading positions in the party made him an authoritative speaker in the international forum as he worked closely with his illustrious political advisors Dr. S.Radhakrishnan, V.K.Krishna Menon and Sir Girja Shankar Bajpai, the founder of Indian Foreign Service (IFS).

In his lecture on September 26, 1946 Nehru emphasised the need to promote international peace and security in co-operation with the UN and maintain friendly relation among all nations especially in Asia. Over the years India has adopted three chief strategies in her diplomatic efforts:

- Non-alignment
- Peaceful Negotiation
- Appeal to the World opinion

Nehru openly stated, “purely from the point of view of opportunism, if you like, a straightforward honest policy, an independent policy is best”.

Following the epoch of global perestroika, the anti-colonial ideology of the third world, India, emerged during the Cold War years ready to combat with Western imperialism and imperialist Bolshevism. Clearly the policy of non-alignment with the capitalist or communist bloc has always formed a basic structure of India’s foreign policy, best reasoned in Nehru’s speeches: ‘By aligning ourselves with any one power, you surrender your opinion, give up the policy you would normally pursue because somebody else wants to pursue another policy. I do not think it’s the right policy to adopt. If we align ourselves we would only fall between two stools. We will neither be following the policy based on our ideals inherited from our past or the one indicated by our present nor will we be able easily to adapt ourselves to the new policy consequent on such non-alignment.’⁴ The psyche prevails that though non-alignment doesn’t necessarily cater to reach the right or ideal situation it however establishes an impartial attitude that helps to make solutions possible.

The essence of India’s approach has been significant with regard to international disputes basing on a reconciliation and negotiation such that neither of the parties suffer a huge loss even after conflict or best before that. The technique essentially that of non-violence (*ahimsa*) is Gandhinian in nature and seems to be a modern presentation of the ancient principle of the Mahabharata. As Krishna was about to proceed with negotiations between the Pandavas and the Kauravas, he summarised the object of his mission: “Yes, I will go to king Dhritarashtra, desirous of accomplishing what is consistent with righteousness, what may be beneficial to us and what also is for the good of the Kurus.” India’s chief diplomatic tactic of peaceful negotiation is closely linked with non-alignment, though it isn’t always seen being implemented with the recent rise in cross border terrorism and religious fundamentalism in the northwest and eastern frontiers, but

evidences of its non-aligned position can be well-witnessed earlier during the cold war especially with regard to Egypt Vietnam and Korea. The policy helped India not befriend any party during the cold war but to wait for the right opportunity to help the parties together to talk over issues. The strategy of non-alignment helps “to establish an attitude and approach that makes these solutions possible. It is not our intention to be a part of the third bloc or tell the world how to achieve peace. In our circumstances, in the light of our history and in the great traditions of man who made our national independence possible, we think it is always necessary to seek the basis of reconciliation and negotiation. Even after conflict, negotiation becomes necessary.”⁵ Though open claims have been made to resist the concept of third world in Indian diplomatic view, the ‘Third World’ modelled by Alfred Sauvy on the French concept of Third Estate, was much in use even before the Bandung conference in 1955, before the entire third world gained its political independence. Making the third bloc an inevitable diplomatic ideology based on recognisable structural differences.

Nevertheless the approach has helped India in her diligent efforts to have Peking admitted into the United Nations, her willingness to vote on the resolution naming China an aggressor, her warning to the western powers not to cross the 38th Parallel and her efforts to achieve a negotiated settlement on Korea, Indo-china and Suez crisis. Opining on “open diplomacy” Nehru said: “I sometimes think it would be a good thing if all the foreign ministers remained quiet for some time. I think more trouble is being caused in foreign affairs by the speeches that the foreign Ministers or their representatives deliver in their own respective assemblies or in the United Nations. They talk about open diplomacy and I suppose in theory most of us believe in it. Certainly, I have believed in it for a long time and I cannot say that I have lost that belief entirely.

Open diplomacy is good enough, but when that open diplomacy takes the form of very open conflicts and accusations a strong language hurled at one another, then the effect, I suppose, is not to promote peace.”⁶ India has always had an appeal to the world public opinion and has

indulged in listening to ideas from alliances while changing policy. She has always sought close co-operation with Asian and African Countries in her diplomatic efforts, thus convening the Asian conference on Indonesia in New Delhi 1949 and co-sponsoring the Bandung conference, 1955. Addressing common problems such as underdeveloped industries, colonial issues and trying to devise policies good for all 'in conformity with the charter of the United Nations'.

Besides having an appeal to the world order India has also made an attempt for voicing the colonial rights with the formation of the Arab-Asian bloc. India is vitally interested'. The reliance upon ideas to influence policy of other states is exquisitely expressed in the Prime Minister's collective speeches called *Panch Shila* focused on international issues rendered in Parliament, other public platforms while voicing India's external publicity services and in press gatherings when receiving statesmen and delegates from other countries. In one of his speeches Nehru said:

" The Honourable members may think that we should try to flood foreign countries with facts and figures in the nature of propaganda. I do not think that it is desirable for us to do so or that we can, infact, do so. I do not think our approach should be pure publicity or advertisement approach. We cannot do it because the way to do this would be to spend far vaster sums than we can ever afford. But my main reason for not desiring to do so is...that approach tends inevitably to become a tendentious approach, and while it may, perhaps create an impression now and then value of it lessens progressively when people realize that it is excessive propaganda of a particular type. I would much rather place facts before the public here in India or outside...and allow other people to judge ".7 India's non-military approach to international issues stems clearly

from a realisation of the horrors of the atomic warfare. It has been India's strong commitment to the changing circumstances of diplomacy that encourages the view that in the 'one world' of

today ideas such as anti colonialism and racial equality, properly developed and conveyed, do exercise an important influence in shaping world's opinion towards the desired end.

With SEATO formation, Nehru's relations with Zhou of China, Tito of Yugoslavia, Nasser of Egypt and Sukarno of Indonesia, that focused much on the containment of communism and trying to influence his planned finely balanced 'socialistic' mixed economy between state monopoly and private enterprise left a strong Nehruvian legacy to India's Ministry of External Affairs. India's diplomatic endeavours with three contexts, Vietnam, Korea and Kashmir, are important. With Vietnam India wanted the independence of Indo-china, namely, Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos as peace was vital to her interests in the area. Besides trying to influence settlement through nonmilitary intervention she also made it clear that the problem should not entail any partition, knowing the consequences from her own experiences. Following the Berlin Conference (Jan 1954) India made a public appeal on Feb 22 1954 for a cease-fire "without any part giving up its position or whatever it might consider its rights", which was well received by the Canadian prime minister then on a visit to Delhi. On 24 April Nehru suggested a six-point plan for the solution of the crisis: promotion of peace and negotiation and dissipation of suspicion and of the atmosphere of threats, cease-fire through constituting a cease-fire group of actual belligerents and giving priority to the cease-fire on the Geneva conference agenda; a clear commitment by the government of France to the independence of the Indo-Chinese states; direct negotiations between parties immediately and principally concerned; non-intervention a solemn agreement between the United States, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom and China to deny direct or indirect aid for the purposes of war; and finally keeping the United Nations informed of the progress of the conference.

The Colombo conference (April 28-May 2,1954) formed the next diplomatic attempt to gain support from the Asian nations for the six-point plan. On April 29 while the Geneva conference was on Britain assured three commonwealth governments of India, Pakistan and Ceylon,

assuring them that Britain would not be a party to any agreement at Geneva in conflict with the legitimate aims of the Asian countries and asked whether they would be ready to participate in guarantee to secure the freedom of Indo-China. India replied that she would be willing to be associated if invited by parties on both sides. Consequently Krishna Menon continued his informal discussions with foreign ministers at Geneva privately and Nehru even threatened in the French parliament that he would resign if he did not secure a cease-fire in Indo-China and by July 20 the Geneva agreement was signed. By unanimous agreement India chaired the International Armistice and Supervisory Commissions of which Poland and Canada were the other members.

In spite of the truce the Vietnam issue remained unsettled as the political implication of the agreement were not fully appreciated but nevertheless marked the success of Indian diplomatic strategies to have peace in that quarter.

Indian Diplomacy in the Korean Crisis was most intense in relation to crossing the 38th parallel by the United Nations troops. She particularly warned that the crossing by the forces might bring China into war, which Nehru clearly stated.⁸ The warning was initially disregarded by the west as her consistent appeal to Mao-Tse-Tung to halt 'volunteers' who were driving UN forces beyond the 38th parallel, that it was not desirable that a military solution to the problem of the unification of Korea be attained. India's appeal of not achieving political solution by military means was however later accepted by all parties only after much bloodshed.

As the Security Council accepted that a UK resolution calling the Chinese representatives to appear before it, Nehru worked in close communications with Attlee and welcomed his decision of meeting President Truman. Finally on December 12 1950 the thirteen nation Arab-Asian group with the support of the US and UK submitted a draft resolution requesting the president of the general assembly to constitute a group of three persons, that was India, Iran and Canada to determine the basis on which a satisfactory cease-fire and withdrawal of foreign troops from

Korea could be arranged. And as it is known after a debate with resolutions with India, Soviet Union and Canada, Truman dismissed Macarthur from the post of the commander of the UN forces, which were followed by cease-fire negotiations in July 1951.

India's non-aligned diplomacy often suspiciously looked at times questions how far could such a non-military approach be effective especially when it comes to securing her own borders and gaining sympathy from the world for her interests? The question is vital with regard to Kashmir a Swedish diplomat aptly commented in regard to the issue "the implementation of international agreements which had not been achieved fairly speedily may become progressively more difficult because the situation with which they were to cope has tended to change..." The problem of cross-border terrorism has often made India resort many times to extreme military action, as one witnessed very recently in Kargil. India's attempt to defend -the line of control has had a long history of diplomatic negotiations, which took quite a turn since 1999 with renewed channels of communications and transport as the Sada-e-Sarhad, the New-Delhi-Lahore bus service was launched. The nation watched the Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee travel the historical journey between Delhi and Lahore to sign the Lahore Declaration to resolve disputes, including that of Kashmir. This included the discussions on reducing the risk factors for the unauthorised use of nuclear weapons. The Lahore Summit occurred a year after the nuclear tests carried out by the two countries. Further striking was President Pervez Musharraf visit to Delhi in July 2001 for landmark summit in Agra over the Kashmir issue. As a peace initiative, India also proposed a further increase in the staff strength of the high commissions in Pakistan to 75 from 55, lifting restrictions on High Commission personnel. After a gap of two years, Pakistan and India formally opened their skies to each other's flights in 2003 and the foreign secretaries met to facilitate the next Saarc conference.

By 2003 peace-making attempts between India and Pakistan begun in earnest as a group of Pakistani parliamentarians set the ball rolling by crossing the Wagha border in early June. Their

message of peace was soon reciprocated by an Indian parliamentary delegation visiting Pakistan in the third week of June imparting a fresh impetus to such goodwill missions and track-two diplomacy initiatives.

The India-Pakistan *Neemrana* initiative has served as a forum in which former diplomats, military personnel and academics have regularly met, twice a year, to discuss contentious issues, ranging from Kashmir, confidence-building measures and trade to more benign ones such as media and cultural issues, visa and communication difficulties and science and technology. Other examples of track-two diplomacy include efforts made by the India-Pakistan Friendship Society, the Peoples Asia Forum, the Pakistan-India Forum for Peace and Democracy, the Women's Initiative for Peace in South Asia and the Pakistan-India People's Solidarity Conference. In addition, there are multilateral initiatives like the Network of South Asian Writers, the Citizens Commission of South Asia, the Coalition for Action on South Asian Co-operation, the South Asia Media Association, the South Asia Network of Economic Research Institutes and the South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation Chambers of Commerce and Industry.

Although implementing track-two diplomacy for a decade hasn't produced any dramatic breakthroughs on the Indo-Pak deadlock, nor has it brought any qualitative transformation in the calculus of bilateral co-operation. The channels of communication between track-one (official) and track-two (non-official) negotiations continue to be informal, ad hoc and of a personalised nature. Foreign policy bureaucracy in India has traditionally been the only institution groomed in the task of foreign policy-making with the institutional hurdle of the absence of lateral entry into key bureaucratic positions, has resulted in often thick and impermeable barriers between officials and public - an iron curtain dividing those "inside" the establishment and those "outside", i.e., civil society. It is the same story in Pakistan, except the character of its establishment continues to be military-dominated.

However India took a conscious decision to exclude bilateral and contentious issues by “positional bargaining” with her neighbours and move forward at a pace comfortable to all, forming the South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation (SAARC) in December 8, 1985 to expand co-operation covering new areas of common interest like agriculture, trade, technology, environment, rural development, culture, sport, education, tourism, prevention of drug trafficking and abuse, food security, population and women’s development, each country has a separate centre of Saarc activities; India holds the SAARC documentation centre. Since its very inception there has been a constant attempt to reduce hostility, combating terrorism and greater interaction amongst media personnel encouraging free flow of news. Economic diplomacy seemed well carried out with the operationalisation of the South Asian Preferential Trading Arrangement (SAPTA) in December 1995, following ratification of the SAPTA Agreement by all SAARC countries has evoked much interest. Achievement of a South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) has also become a part of the SAARC Agenda. A modest beginning of SAPTA Negotiations with tariff was made in the concessions exchanged on 484 Tariff-Lines for intra SAARC trade, envisaging a SAARC economic union by 2020. A SAARC Visa Exemption Scheme was initiated in 1988 with a view to promote closer and frequent contacts among the people of the SAARC region, which became operational from March 1992. The Scheme has been progressively expanded to cover twenty-one categories of people eligible for visa free travel in the SAARC Region. SAARC has also signed Memorandum of Understanding and co-operation with several UN agencies including UNDP, UNCTAD, ESCAP, UNDCP and UNICEF, and with the Colombo Plan, EU and the International Telecommunications Union.

Over the years the Indian Foreign Service (IFS), has survived through many stages of public, multilateral and bilateral diplomacy. One of the strong features of the IFS was an early shift to economic diplomacy as the first oil shock of 1973 delivered a body blow to the Indian economy when it had barely recovered from the disastrous droughts of the late 1960s and from the Bangladesh War of 1971. Economic diplomacy became a matter of survival for India, practising

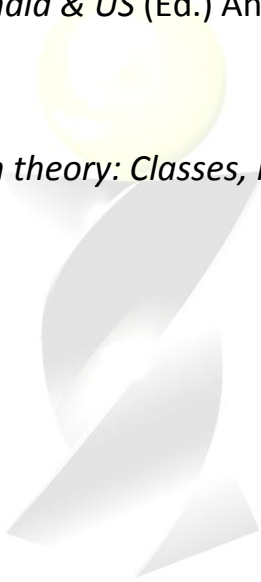
integrated diplomacy by blending political and economic objectives. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) Economics Division, demonstrated that being proactive involved a vast amount of internal diplomacy with the other ministries and agencies, but reliably produced results. They mobilised public-private partnerships at home and gained consultancy contracts in the Gulf region, to win placement for Indian technicians.

Stephen Cohen has aptly titled a chapter in his thesis "The India That Can't Say Yes." His arguments being Indians are intent on establishing the moral and political equality of the two sides and are especially touchy over "status"; they are patient and will wait till the terms improve; they negotiate for information; and have a good institutional memory, better than the Americans. He also speaks of "a defensive arrogance and acute sensitivity to real and perceived slights," and concludes that India seems to relish "getting to no." Cohen points out that MEA has tight control over foreign negotiations and is difficult to bypass. His ideas about "Indian Negotiating Style" emerge from India-U.S. relations of the pre-1991 era, when India's South-centred diplomacy of the NAM, G-77 produced inevitable confrontation with much of the West. After the Sept. 11 attacks, India finds proof of the battle it has long waged against terrorism, as well as the opportunity to pursue new relationships in Central Asia and elsewhere that move beyond a fixation with Pakistan. As a service, the IFS has no political bias, it is well harnessed in the pursuit of national goals as it incrementally engages in producing results the "Indian way".

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