

## **The India Way in Foreign Policy: Shaper&Net Security Provider/Unpacking the India Way in Foreign Policy - By Manish Chand**

Purposeful, Pragmatic, and Proactive. Shaper, not an abstainer; stabiliser, rather than a disruptor; a net security provider and a dispenser of global good. India's foreign policy has found a new vocabulary and framework, as articulated with masterly precision by the country's External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar at the 5<sup>th</sup> edition of the Raisina Dialogue held in New Delhi recently.

In foreign policy words matter, and hence this new lexicon of a rising India fittingly encapsulates the current form and trajectory of the country's foreign policy in a world undergoing unprecedented transformation. Purposeful pursuit of national interests, pragmatic issue-based alignments with countries, big and small, and proactive diplomatic outreach have come to characterise and configure India's foreign policy and diplomacy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Powering diverse strands of India's foreign policy is the overarching goal of transforming lives of over 1.3 billion people living in the country and spurring the country's rise as a leading power in an increasingly multipolar world.

### **Shaper & Stabiliser**

A new India is emerging in the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, which is proactively shaping the international agenda on a wide array of cross-cutting issues, including climate change, sustainable development, counter-terrorism, maritime security and the reconfiguration of global governance architecture. This new India, with its around \$3 trillion economy and surging aspirations of over 1.3 billion people, is poised to reclaim its place under the global sun. In a wide-ranging conversation on The India Way at the Raisina Dialogue, Dr Jaishankar illuminated key features of a new foreign policy for a new India. "The India way would be to be more of a decider or a shaper rather than an abstainer," he said while stressing that India has made a difference in the last few years on issues like climate change or connectivity. Most important, he fleshed out the kind of power India will be in the next few years. "It is not the India way to be a disruptionist power internationally, we should be a stabilizing power. It's also not the India way to be self-centred and to be mercantilist. The India way would be a country which brings its capacities to bear on the international system for global good," he said.

Driven by the ethos of mutual empowerment, India has shared funds, technology and expertise with countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe. This development cooperation, channelized through Lines of Credit and grants, includes assistance in capacity building, training and enhanced cooperation in education and health. In the spirit of South-South solidarity, India has committed around \$29 billion in Line of Credit for a host of development projects in 160 countries.

### **Diplomatic Outreach**

As India's global stature rises, the Indian government has also embarked on an unprecedented diplomatic outreach to mobilise global support for national resurgence. Cutting across hemispheres, the last few years have seen a record number of high-level incoming and outgoing visits at the level of President, Prime Minister, Vice-President, External Affairs Minister and ministers. PM Modi alone has travelled to over 70 countries in the last five and a half years. In an evolving multipolar world, India has chosen the path of multi-alignment which entails forging issues-based alignments with like-minded countries and major power centres, without getting into 'us versus them' zero sum games.

## **Diplomacy for a New India**

What animates this multifarious diplomatic outreach is the mantra of diplomacy for development which seeks to promote national resurgence. With the Indian government setting an ambitious target of creating a \$5 trillion economy, the foreign policy is being directed to harness the network of partnerships with all friendly countries to create a 'New India' by 2022, the 75th anniversary of India's independence, as promised by PM Modi. Development-focused diplomacy is seen in the interweaving of flagship schemes of national renewal like 'Make in India', 'Smart Cities', 'Skill India' and 'Stand-up India' with India's diplomatic outreach. Forging robust and sustainable partnerships in technology, innovation and start-ups will be crucial to creating a New India, and making India count on the global stage. Doubling GDP to \$5 trillion economy is not possible without a conducive international environment and supportive external partnerships.

## **Shaping Global Agenda**

Looking ahead, with its growing global stature and rising expectations the world has of a resurgent India, PM Modi has advocated reformed multilateralism to create a new world order that reflects the ongoing shift of power and realities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. India has also taken the lead in combating climate change by fulfilling its commitments under the Paris accord and taking a series of initiatives for promoting a low-carbon economy. In a recognition of New Delhi's leadership role in this area, more countries are joining the International Solar Alliance that seeks to usher in a white revolution for a clean and green world. India has launched a new international initiative called the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure, which is finding greater global support.

## **Brand India**

In mapping the way ahead, cultural diplomacy and civilizational values will acquire a greater salience in India's foreign policy. Home to all major religions and diverse cultures, the idea of India as a vibrant pluralistic society has struck a chord making the world more amenable to India's aspirations. This cultural connect is reflected in myriad ways, ranging from the worldwide celebrations of the International Day of Yoga and the designation of Kumbh Mela as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO.

In building a New India, the 25-million strong Indian diaspora, spread across different countries and continents, will play an important role. As Dr Jaishankar puts it: "The India way would be really Brand India. Brand India in terms of what is unique to us as a power," he said while alluding to the extraordinary Indian diaspora and Indian culture and heritage. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has encapsulated the essence of Brand India. "All our endeavours are centered on 1.3 billion Indians. But the dreams that these efforts are trying to fulfil, are the same dreams that the entire world has, that every country has, and that every society has. The efforts are ours, but their fruits are for all, for the entire world," said PM Modi in his speech at the United Nations General Assembly in New York this year.

Going forward, as it scripts its global ascent on its own terms, India will have to relentlessly assert its strategic autonomy as it navigates geopolitical rivalries to make independent decisions that benefit people of the country. This will entail dovetailing diplomacy with development and interweaving foreign policy with an unclouded vision of India as a leading power with a unique voice and narrative in a rapidly transforming world order.

**(Manish Chand is Editor-in-Chief of India and the World magazine and India Writes Network, a portal focused on global affairs).**