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CHAPTER 10

FOREIGN POLICY
AFTER 1990*Transformation through
Incremental Adaptation*

C. RAJA MOHAN

INTRODUCTION

THE scale and scope of the changes in India's foreign policy since the end of the Cold War have been truly impressive. Yet, there has been little conscious articulation of the logic and purpose of India's changing new foreign policy orientation either by the political leadership in power or the permanent bureaucracy. This is due, in part, to Delhi's strategy of incremental adjustment rather than revolutionary transformation. Unlike Deng Xiaoping who defined a set of national and international objectives and strategies for China in the post-Mao era, the Indian leadership at the turn of the 1990s could not and did not discard the inherited political legacy. It moved with great caution and much aversion to any significant risk. India's improved economic performance and the international expectations of commercial opportunities in a globalizing India provided Delhi the much-needed incentive, time, and space to reconstruct its foreign policy after the Cold War.

Despite much uncertainty in domestic politics, differences in ideology, strategy and tactics of adapting to changed circumstances at home and abroad, and variations in the diplomatic style of successive governments, India's foreign policy evolved in a relatively stable manner under several prime ministers heading different coalition governments in Delhi since 1989. These slow and incremental changes over a quarter of a century represent an unmistakable transformation of Indian foreign policy. Many of the innovations in India's foreign policy in this period, it must be noted, were initiated in the 1980s as Prime Ministers Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi sought to ease the many rigidities that accumulated in India's foreign policy. New outreach to the United States and China, the attempt to normalize relations with Pakistan, and the engagement with Israel.

name a few, preceded 1990. So did the first steps towards economic liberalization and the demonstration of India's potential as a regional power taken in the 1980s. Although India conducted nuclear tests and declared itself a nuclear weapons power in 1998, Rajiv Gandhi had ordered the building of the bomb in 1988 (Subrahmanyam 1998).

Rajiv Gandhi's successors were under much greater pressure to initiate a root-and-branch overhaul of India's foreign policy. The end of the Cold War had dramatically altered the external environment demanding that India examine all the core assumptions of its foreign policy. But unlike Rajiv and Indira Gandhi, the prime ministers who followed them did not command massive parliamentary majorities. All of them had to work within coalition governments. India's severe balance of payments crisis at the turn of the 1990s, coinciding with the fall of the Berlin Wall, demanded significant policy change on both economic and foreign policy fronts. The 1990s also saw profound disturbances in India's frontier states—Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir, and the North East. The heartland was in tumult as caste and religion emerged as major sources of conflict. Addressing any one of these was difficult enough, but Delhi had to cope with all these challenges—economic, political, and national security—simultaneously and in retrospect did so reasonably well.

This chapter focuses on three themes in India's foreign policy evolution since 1990—re-engagement with the major powers after the Cold War, rediscovery of the extended neighbourhood in Asia, Africa and the Indian Ocean, and an attempted redefinition of its ties to immediate neighbours in the subcontinent. It concludes with a brief discussion of the enduring debate in India on the concepts of non-alignment and strategic autonomy.

RE-ENGAGING GREAT POWERS

As India's familiar international universe collapsed along with the Soviet Union in 1991, repairing relations with the West, especially the United States, became one of the urgent priorities for Delhi. Three important factors facilitated the new engagement with the West. Thanks to Rajiv and Indira Gandhi, some difficult ground had already been cleared in the 1980s. India's economic reforms opened the space for India's commercial engagement with the West that had shrunk so significantly during the era of state-led socialism. Finally, the disappearance of the Soviet Union freed India to reinvent its major power relationships. While seeking better ties with the West, Japan, and China, Delhi refused to abandon post-Soviet Russia. Delhi held on to the relationship despite Moscow's new focus on the West, insisted on a new treaty of friendship to replace the 1971 pact, offered generous financial terms on phasing out the rupee-ruble trade, and sustained defence cooperation amidst the disruptions created by the economic turbulence and the break-up of the Soviet Union (Pant 2013).

If India was eager to deepen ties with the West, it was also rather wary of the unipolar world dominated by America. Delhi faced a number of obstacles in deepening ties with the United States and the West. Many in the developed world were deeply sceptical of India's ability to undertake structural reforms to realize its full economic potential.

The absence of a great power challenger to the United States meant there was no political rationale in Washington to warm up to Delhi—in the manner that the US drew close to Deng Xiaoping at the height of the Cold War. On the ideological front, India's democracy was a valuable virtue at a time when the West was celebrating its victory over communism; but it was not enough to bind India to the West. A new international agenda centred on the humanitarian imperative in the West focused attention on some of the problems bedevilling Indian democracy—from human rights violations in Kashmir to child labour—and was deeply disturbing to the Indian political elite proud of its democracy and concerned about territorial sovereignty. Finally the growing Western focus on preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction after American liberation of Kuwait from Iraqi occupation (1990–1) ran headlong into India's traditional policy of keeping its nuclear weapons option open and the refusal to accept any constraints on its atomic energy and missile programmes. This was not a problem just with the West, but with Russia and China as well (Paul 1998). When India conducted five nuclear tests in May 1998, the United Nations Security Council unanimously passed resolution number 1172 demanding that India and Pakistan (which conducted six tests of its own at the end of May 1998) roll back their nuclear and missile programmes. Although the resolution was adopted under Chapter 6 and not the mandatory term Chapter 7 of the UN charter, India's nuclear isolation seemed absolute.

Nevertheless, India's nuclear tests provided a basis for an intensive engagement with the United States and an opportunity to resolve the extended disputes with Washington on non-proliferation issues that began with the emergence of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in 1970 and the negative international response to India's 'peaceful' nuclear test in 1974 (Talbot 2004). India successfully accomplished this objective by 2008, thanks to a fundamental change in the US approach to India's nuclear weapons programme under the administration of George W. Bush. In a bold initiative with Bush in July 2005, Singh agreed to separate India's civil and military nuclear programmes, bring a significant portion of its civil programme under international safeguards, and actively support the global non-proliferation regime. In return, Bush agreed to carve out a nuclear exception for India within US law and the international conventions for atomic commerce. Bush had to expend much political capital convincing sceptics at home and abroad on the importance of modifying the non-proliferation regime in favour of India during 2005–8 (Mohan 2006; Chari 2009).

India's engagement with Bush not only helped India end its prolonged nuclear isolation. It also facilitated the de-hyphenation of US relations with India and Pakistan. If Bush was willing to locate India in the great power framework rather than view Delhi through the distorting prism of Pakistan. If Clinton focused on reducing the dangers of a 'nuclear flashpoint' in Kashmir between India and Pakistan, Bush emphasized India's importance to the world as a large democracy, and its potential contribution to a stable balance of power in Asia amidst the rise of China (Tellis 2008). As part of his conviction that America must assist India's emergence as a great power, Bush was also willing to remain neutral in India's disputes with Pakistan and defer to Delhi's leadership elsewhere in the subcontinent and strongly back India's role in East Asia and the Pacific.

Although not everyone in the Democratic Party's foreign policy establishment was convinced of the Bush logic, Obama largely walked along the path cleared by his predecessor, although with a lot less fervour towards India. The political drift in India during the second term of the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government saw the relationship plateau out after Obama's visit to India at the end of 2010. Although there were multiple disappointments on both sides on the pace of progress in bilateral relations, India's relationship with the United States has never been as broad and as deep since independence.

The new growth in ties with the United States facilitated stronger cooperation with US allies in Europe and Asia. But it also complicated India's relations with China as Beijing began to contemplate the strategic logic behind the American outreach to India in the Bush years. Since Rajiv Gandhi's visit to China 1988, there had been a steady improvement of their important but brittle relationship. The disputed boundary remained peaceful and the two sides agreed for the first time in 2005 on a set of guiding principles to settle the territorial dispute. On the economic front, China emerged as the largest trading partner in goods with India. This happy trend of improved relations began to break down by the latter part of the 2000s, amidst greater friction on the border, Beijing's hardening stance in the boundary negotiations, the widening trade deficit in China's favour, and Beijing's rising profile in the subcontinent and the Indian Ocean (Garver 2000; Smith 2014).

During the Cold War, India's foreign policy was designed to cope with the dangers of confrontation and occasional collusion between America and Russia. Two and a half decades later, India now finds itself unsettled by the emerging dynamic in the relations between Washington and Beijing. Delhi has no desire to see a revival of the Cold War between America and a rising China; it is equally apprehensive of a potential Sino-American condominium in Asia. India's past navigation of great power relations might not necessarily be a good guide to its future policy, for Delhi's own weight in the regional and international system has grown. The substantive expansion of its economy since 1990 has produced a solid if still modest commercial relationship with all the major powers. Its political and security cooperation with the United States has acquired much traction. Yet, India's strategy of engagement of all powers is coming under some stress thanks to a number of factors. These include the rapid rise of Beijing, the widening strategic gap between Delhi and Beijing, the unfolding uncertainty in US-China relations, and the breakdown of the post-Cold War understandings between Washington and Moscow. While India no longer has the luxury of unhindered engagement with all the great powers, its potential role as a 'swing state' that could shape the regional and global balances gives it a kind of leverage that it did not enjoy in the past.

RECLAIMING THE EXTENDED NEIGHBOURHOOD

After India's initial enthusiasm for Asian unity and Afro-Asian solidarity, the depth and breadth of Delhi's relationships in the critical regions abutting the subcontinent steadily

diminished during the Cold War era. India's emphasis on the non-aligned movement (NAM) gave its foreign policy the illusions of international leadership but was accompanied by the hollowing out of its regional primacy established in a century and a half of British rule in the subcontinent. By the end of the Cold War, India's once robust commercial links with Africa, the Middle East, and South-East Asia had frayed significantly thanks to India's policies of import substitution and economic self-reliance. Its political interaction with the leaders of the neighbouring regions was increasingly limited to NAM and G-77 meetings. Although India's leadership on countering apartheid in Africa had won it much good will in the continent, its ties had little economic content (in spite of the long-standing presence of Indian trading communities along much of Africa's coastline and the presence of a large Indian diaspora in South Africa). India's engagement with the Middle East, defined in terms of anti-imperial solidarity, began to face great stress as the regional contradictions started to unfold as in the Iran-Iraq War and Saddam Hussein's occupation of Kuwait. In the East, economic marginalization was accompanied by India's identification with the Soviet Union on regional security issues. Delhi paid a high price for supporting Vietnamese intervention to save Cambodia from the genocide perpetrated by the Khmer Rouge that enjoyed support in China.

The end of the Cold War and the launch of economic reforms gave India the opportunity to recast its regional relations. The new logic of economic globalization meant India learning the grammar of regionalism in Asia. As India reformed its economy, it first turned to the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) as a benchmark for its own liberalization and sought to initiate engagement with the regional grouping. This was reflected in the Look East policy articulated by Prime Minister P. V. Narasimha Rao in 1992, which eventually turned out to be one of the most successful Indian diplomatic initiatives after the Cold War. After the breakdown of the Soviet Union, Rao also quickly established diplomatic ties with all the new republics in Central Asia. In the early 1990s, Rao also took an important decision to change a long-standing policy towards another vital region—the Middle East. After much internal consultation, Rao decided to establish full diplomatic relations with Israel, bringing to a close the Indian policy of limiting its engagement with Tel Aviv in presumed solidarity with the Arab nations. The peace process in the Middle East and the relaxation of tensions between Israel and the Arab states made Rao's decision easier (Dixit 1996). Rao's tenure also saw the first fresh look at regional cooperation with Africa and the founding of the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC). By the turn of the millennium, all of the subcontinent's adjoining regions acquired a new prominence for India's foreign policy.

Under Vajpayee and Singh, India's engagement with the extended neighbourhood widened and deepened. As the size and character of the Indian economy changed, commercial links with all the neighbouring regions grew rapidly. As its trade with East Asia overtook that with America and Europe, India signed Comprehensive Economic Partnerships with Singapore, South Korea, and Japan. It also signed a free trade agreement with ASEAN as a whole and is part of the negotiations on a broader trade liberalization agreement called the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership. Signing these free trade agreements, despite their limited and shallow nature, was not easy, given the difficult domestic dynamic. As in trade politics around the world, significant

constituencies in the country were opposed to trade liberalization. Sections of the Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party too were wary of free trade for ideological reasons. Both Vajpayee and Singh had to expend much political capital in winning domestic support for trade integration with East Asia. In the West, the free trade talks with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) made little progress, but the Gulf began to acquire much greater salience for India's foreign policy. India's growing hunger for energy imports and growing exports to the Gulf made the GCC one of India's top trading partners. Further afield, African economies boomed in the new millennium, which raised the continent's share in India's international trade and encouraged India to intensify political and diplomatic engagement with Africa. India began to rediscover its extended neighbourhood in the post-reform phase with its Look East policy. It soon followed up with a 'Look West Asia' policy, a 'Connect Central Asia' policy, and a more dynamic engagement with Africa and the Indian Ocean littoral (Wadhwa 2014).

The emergence of Asia, Africa, and the Middle East as major destinations for India's exports and sources of vital raw materials had significant strategic consequences. First, as India recognized its deepening interdependence with the extended neighbourhood, restoring historic physical connectivity and building new trans-border transport and energy corridors—to the Persian Gulf, Central Asia, and South-East Asia—became an important priority for Delhi. Second, India devoted considerable diplomatic energies to participation in the new regional institutions that had sprung up in its extended neighbourhood. For a country that was once contemptuous of regionalism, India has spent much energy since the early 1990s on becoming a full participant in the regional institutions led by ASEAN. In Central Asia, it had won observer status in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. In the West, India has begun to convene regular summit meetings with African leaders on a biennial basis since 2008. India also took the initiative in 2011 to revive the moribund IOR-ARC and give it a new lease of life. Third, as China's economic profile began to rise in the Indian Ocean littoral, Delhi began to revamp and intensify its own outreach in the region. This involved significantly raising India's economic assistance delivered to countries ranging from Cambodia in the East to Senegal in the West and the setting up of a Development Partnership Administration to bring greater purposefulness to its regional economic diplomacy (Chaturvedi 2013).

Finally, the unfolding competition with China was not limited to the economic domain, but involved the realm of security as well. Partly driven by demand and partly from the supply side, there has been significant expansion of what we may call 'military diplomacy' on India's part. India signed a range of defence cooperation agreements all across the extended neighbourhood and set the stage for high level military exchanges, naval manoeuvres, defence dialogues among the civilian establishments, military training, and supply of arms and non-lethal equipment. India, which consciously shunned the legacy of the British Raj in the first decades after independence, is now rediscovering the virtues and vices of becoming a regional security provider. Not surprisingly the idea that India's security interests stretch from 'Aden to Malacca' inherited from the Raj gained a fresh lease of life in the years of Vajpayee and Singh who began to create capabilities for the projection of India's military power and deepening security cooperation

all across the extended neighbourhood (Scott 2009; Wadhwa 2014). The idea of India as a 'net security provider in the Indian Ocean and beyond' began to gain considerable ground both within Delhi and other capitals. As relative tranquillity after the Cold War to the East and West of the subcontinent comes to an end, there is growing demand for India to take a larger role in stabilizing its extended neighbourhood and contribute to the maintenance of the regional order. In developing a credible and sustainable framework for a larger regional security role, India might have to look beyond non-alignment and Third World solidarity and reclaim in some measure the kind of role that the Raj played in the vast Indian Ocean littoral (Metcalf 2007).

SECURING SOUTH ASIAN PRIMACY

While the extended neighbourhood was open to India's new regional role, Delhi challenges in the subcontinent were far more demanding at the turn of the 1990s. The 1980s had demonstrated the difficulties of ensuring India's much-vaunted primacy in the region. The military intervention in Sri Lanka launched in 1987 was brought to a close in 1990 with no one in Colombo, Jaffna, Chennai, and Delhi ready to thank the Indian armed forces for the difficult task they performed in Sri Lanka. Rajiv Gandhi's pressure tactics on Nepal created deep resentment in the Kathmandu elite, and in Bangladesh there were few friends speaking up for India. Pakistan's army triumphal after helping America oust the Soviet troops from Afghanistan and acquiring nuclear weapons with Chinese help, turned the new instrument of jihad against Indian Kashmir. As India faced one of the worst moments after independence, its foreign policy evolved to cope with the new and extreme challenges in the subcontinent (Dixit 2001).

Delhi recognized that stabilizing the relationship with Pakistan was an absolute necessity, and resisted frequent calls for a confrontation with Pakistan from sections of the strategic community and the media. Despite unending provocations from Pakistan's army, in the form of cross-border terrorism, Delhi sustained the engagement with Pakistan. This approach helped India manage the nuclear transition in the subcontinent, limit the war to reverse Pakistani aggression across the Line of Control in the Kargil sector, persuade Islamabad to occasionally order a pause in support to cross-border terrorism, expand economic interaction with Pakistan, institute a set of military and civilian confidence-building measures, including in Kashmir, and fend off the temptations in the West to intervene in Kashmir. The Indian leadership also explored and came close to clinching settlements to long-standing bilateral disputes, like Siachen and Sir Creek. Above all, Vajpayee began and Singh continued a back channel negotiation with Pakistan on resolving the Kashmir question (Coll 2009). With the settlement of major issues remaining and the prospect for normalization of bilateral relations receding, some have speculated on the India-Pakistan conflict lasting for a century and beyond (Cohen 2013). A more optimistic perspective, however, might argue that the two sides

have traversed the terrain of possible settlements, the knowledge of which might come in handy to strong leaders in both countries ready to move forward.

If India had trouble making up with Pakistan, its engagement with the smaller neighbours turned out to be lot more productive. While Rao sought to calm things down after the muscle-flexing by Rajiv Gandhi, Gujral articulated a new framework for India's regional policy that would replace what was often called the 'Indira Doctrine'. Mrs Gandhi was only affirming India's primacy in the subcontinent—a tradition that goes back to the British Raj (Embree 1989). If the Partition and the Cold War limited India's influence in the subcontinent, Gujral had seen the diminution of India's power vis-à-vis the smaller neighbours and growing ire among the neighbouring elites against Delhi. Gujral outlined a doctrine that discarded the old emphases on bilateralism and reciprocity, underlining India's willingness to walk more than half way to resolve the existing bilateral disputes with the neighbours. He acknowledged that as the largest power in the region, India had to take greater responsibility for promoting peace and prosperity in the subcontinent. All he sought in return for a generous approach to the neighbours was that they not allow their territories to serve as springboards for hostile activities against India. The Gujral Doctrine generated much approbation in the region and in the West—but there was much criticism in India, especially on the right, that it was all about appeasing the recalcitrant neighbours. However, Gujral's stint in power was too short and his hold on power too tenuous to deliver much to the neighbours.

His successor, Vajpayee, despite heading a party that advocated a muscular regional policy, in practice took no issue with Gujral. In fact, as Foreign Minister during 1977–9, under Prime Minister Morarji Desai, Vajpayee had put special emphasis on good neighbourly policy. Vajpayee's commitment to regional peace was not driven by idealism. His foreign policy ministers and advisers, Jaswant Singh, Yashwant Sinha, and Brajesh Mishra, understood that a peaceful neighbourhood was critical to achieving a larger Indian role in the world. On the economic front, Vajpayee signed a bilateral free trade agreement with Sri Lanka and concluded the South Asian Free Trade Agreement some months before he left office in 2004. But it was under Manmohan Singh that the Gujral Doctrine came into its own. As India's economic conditions significantly improved, Singh extended Gujral's generous approach to the realm of trade. Singh offered unilateral tariff reductions for the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) neighbours and underlined the importance of connectivity and promoted trade facilitation. While South Asia remains poorly connected within itself and remains the least integrated region in the world, the last quarter of a century has seen a steady expansion of regional economic cooperation although it is way below potential (Menon 2012).

On the political front too, India's vision of the immediate neighbourhood began to extend beyond the formal membership of the SAARC. As developments in Afghanistan from the late 1970s began to shape the security dynamic in the subcontinent, Delhi had to pay more attention to Kabul. India successfully campaigned for Afghan membership in SAARC, which was approved in 2005. In the East, neighbouring Burma acquired a new importance for India and Delhi's bilateral as well as multilateral engagement with

it intensified through such newly created institutions as the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation. And as China developed its western regions, its provinces of Xinjiang, Tibet, and Yunnan began to re-emerge in India discourse on regionalism.

If India seemed quite willing to project itself forcefully within its neighbourhood in the 1980s, by the 1990s it had now come to terms with the limits to its regional power. After the failure of its military intervention in Sri Lanka and the shrinking benefits from an assertive policy, Delhi learnt that its primacy in the region cannot be enforced by mere diktat and that it would have to comprehensively recast its policies. India renegotiated in 2006 the 1949 treaty with Bhutan, replacing its unequal provisions. Vajpayee had also signalled India's willingness to review the 1950 treaty with Nepal; revising the treaty, however, would be far more complex than the one with Bhutan. While recasting the old hegemonic treaties, Delhi had developed a new template for strategic and economic cooperation with its neighbours. The strategic partnership agreements with Kabul, and framework agreements for strategic and economic cooperation with Bangladesh and Maldives—all signed in 2011—pointed to the unfolding restructuring of the treaty system that Nehru had inherited from the Raj (Mohan 2012).

India's regional diplomacy, however, continued to face a number of challenges, some of which have become more acute in recent years. One perennial issue has been the question of intervention in the internal affairs of the subcontinental neighbours. India might be a champion of 'non-intervention' on the global stage, but its record of interventions in the region is a long one. Its sense of primacy and high stakes in regional developments precluded India from adopting a non-interventionist approach in the region. At the same time, post-Sri Lanka, India had to evolve a more tempered approach. On the one hand, it continued to nudge its neighbouring countries to do what India thought was right and contributed its own bit to facilitate the positive evolution of regional conflicts. In Sri Lanka, it pressed Colombo to give the Tamil minority its due; in Nepal, it brought the Maoists and the political parties together and facilitated the transition from monarchy; in Bhutan, it strongly encouraged the democratic transition.

The construction of a carefully balanced policy towards the neighbours, however, was premised very much on Delhi's ability to limit the impact of its own domestic politics or the conduct of its foreign policy towards the neighbours. While strong leaders like Indira and Rajiv Gandhi, with massive parliamentary majorities, could handle these pressures with some ease, the coalition governments since the 1990s have found the task much harder. But no government has seemed as weak as the UPA-2 coalition (2009–14), which was ready to yield ground at the slightest sign of opposition. UPA-1 (2004–9), which had helped Colombo win the war against the Tamil Tigers during 2008–9, seemed unwilling to resist pressures from the important Indian state of Tamil Nadu during its second term (Destradi 2014). The greatest failing of UPA-2 was its inability to sign the agreements on Teesta water-sharing with Bangladesh and to secure parliamentary approval for the Land Boundary Agreement that it unveiled in 2011. Together the two had been intended to symbolize a dramatic transformation of Delhi's relations with Dhaka. The

domestic political calculations of the Congress leadership in West Bengal played a key role in Delhi squandering a historic moment with Dhaka.

Keeping the great powers out of the subcontinent has been an important geopolitical priority inherited from the British Raj. However, India was not very successful as the US–Soviet rivalry enveloped the region and India's own relative position weakened. India seethed with resentment against the US alliance with Pakistan from 1954 onward and was rather wary of the Anglo-American influence elsewhere in the region. However, the post-1990 years gave rise to some interesting changes. Delhi did not allow the renewed US–Pakistan ties after 9/11 to get in the way of improved ties with Washington. Delhi was supportive of US intervention in Afghanistan and saw it as a plus in the fight against terrorism based in Pakistan. While its hopes were not realized on the latter score, and India remained deeply worried about the manner in which the United States would end its intervention in Afghanistan, Delhi's concerns have increasingly focused on the rapid expansion of the Chinese presence in the subcontinent (Padukone 2014). China's engagement with the rest of India's neighbours has grown. Delhi recognizes that it cannot build a great wall against Beijing's economic influence in South Asia at a moment when India is seeking greater economic collaboration with China. At the same time, India is unlikely to give up its effort to limit China's future military presence in the region. China's mounting regional challenge could emerge as the greatest spur for India in making its South Asian policies more dynamic and effective.

RETHINKING NON-ALIGNMENT

Despite substantive changes in India's foreign policy—towards the major powers, extended neighbourhood, and the subcontinent—some core ideas seem to have endured over the last quarter of a century. The idea of non-alignment and its more recent variant, 'strategic autonomy', continue to hold considerable salience in the Indian foreign policy discourse. The idea of non-alignment over the decades has acquired a variety of meanings, not all of them originally envisaged by the founding fathers of India's foreign policy. Non-alignment arose in the context of the Cold War rivalry that was unfolding as India became independent in the middle of the last century. In his first address on foreign policy on 7 September 1946 after taking over as the vice chairman of the Viceroy's Council, Jawaharlal Nehru affirmed that India would not join either of the competing blocs and declared that India would work for the creation of a 'world commonwealth and for free cooperation among free peoples' (Nehru 1961). While Nehru took positions on international issues that clashed with both of the superpowers, he presided over expansive engagement with all the major powers. It was after Nehru that the concept of non-alignment acquired a decisively anti-Western orientation. As India improved its relations with the United States and the West over the last 25 years, the argument that India was abandoning its non-aligned moorings was common among foreign policy traditionalists and left liberal intelligentsia. From a different perspective

though it can be argued that India's relationship with the great powers today is similar to that of the 1950s, when India engaged widely but avoided aligning with any power. But the scale and scope of India's international dialogue and cooperation is far more intensive in the early twenty-first century.

As China rises and its relations with the United States enter an uncertain phase, the question of India's attitude towards a potential rivalry or collaboration between the two has become an important challenge for India's foreign policy (Centre for Policy Research 2012). India's strategy to cope with the dynamic between the United States and China must necessarily be very different from the one between America and the Soviet Union that India dealt with in the Cold War. That China is the second largest economy of the world and a neighbour whose power potential is growing at a rapid pace makes it difficult to envisage a policy of formal or de facto neutrality or equidistance. As in 1962 India's commitment to non-alignment, even a rhetorical one, is likely to be severely tested by a military confrontation between China and any of several possible opponents including, of course, India itself. As the strategic gap between India and China widens in favour of the latter, any strategy of balancing China would involve substantive security cooperation with the United States, Japan, and the West. Defining the boundary conditions for such cooperation to avoid either becoming a junior partner to Washington or being dragged into a direct confrontation with Beijing has emerged as a major task for Delhi's political and foreign policy elites.

ENVOI: SOME FUTURE POLICY CHALLENGES

In his 1946 address, Nehru also underlined India's commitment to promoting decolonization and combating racialism. Even as he led the charge on these issues, Nehru did not allow himself to become anti-Western in any fundamental sense. Nehru was not willing to yield to leaders like Sukarno demanding a prolonged confrontation between the 'new emerging forces' and the West. He was also opposed to conceiving of the non-aligned movement as a third bloc. At the first and only non-aligned summit in 1961 that he participated in, Nehru emphasized the importance of global peace and nuclear arms control rather than confrontation with the West. Yet, the non-aligned movement became radical in the 1970s and embarked on grandiose projects of transforming the global order dominated by the West. By the turn of the 1990s, of course, the project of a new international economic order had collapsed and India, like many other developed countries, had to adapt to the 'Washington Consensus'. While India was a hesitant reformer, it had begun to benefit immensely from globalization. Nevertheless, managing the tensions with the international economic system on the pace and direction of India's reforms became a central challenge for Delhi. Beyond the trade and economic, new issues like climate change began to test Delhi's statecraft. The government has made attempts to navigate between domestic resistance to change and the external pressures for adaptation of policies on climate change.

Equally significant have been India's problems with the expansive new humanitarian agenda that the US and Western governments adopted—from international intervention to protect populations against their regimes to preventing human trafficking and from promotion of democracy and human rights to enforcing labour standards. India's initial reaction to the new agenda was a defensive one, fearing that any attempt to undermine state sovereignty would severely complicate India's unfinished task of nation-building at home. Over the last quarter of a century India has adapted in multiple ways. Thanks to external pressures, Indian democracy began to pay greater attention to human rights issues at home. Whether it was the establishment of the National Human Rights Commission in 1993 or the encouragement of the armed forces to adapt their counter-insurgency tactics, India's practice moved beyond the sterile emphasis on defending India's sovereignty against Western pressures. On democracy promotion too, India has found a balance of its own, ready to share its experiences with other states but refusing to support its forcible imposition on others. If Vajpayee got India to join the Community of Democracy initiatives in 2000, Singh extended strong support to the Bush initiative to build a democracy fund at the United Nations. In reaffirming India's identity as the world's largest democracy, Vajpayee and Singh were breaking from post-Nehruvian Third Worldism.

Finally, over the last quarter of a century, the concept of 'strategic autonomy' has largely replaced 'non-alignment' as the moniker of India's foreign policy. A closer look at the concept, however, reveals some difficulties. 'Strategic autonomy' is often presented as a uniquely Indian attribute of foreign policy; yet it is not very different from the proposition that all states seek to maximize their 'autonomy' in the international system to the extent that they can. Large states after all have greater resources and political ambitions with which to pursue strategic autonomy than do small and weak states. India's economic weight in the international system has grown significantly between 1990 and 2014 and as a result its foreign policy has much greater room for manoeuvre in the early twenty-first century than the middle of the twentieth when the concept of non-alignment was invented. Delhi's obsessive focus on 'strategic autonomy', then, can only be explained by the huge lag between India's growing power resources and potential on the one hand and the inertia of its strategic discourse on the other.

Two structural changes are bound to contribute to how India sees itself and its place in the world in the coming years. First, despite the slowdown of the Indian economy since the late 2000s, India is on its way to becoming a major power itself. Many of India's policies were designed to cope with its relative weakness in the international system. Delhi must eventually come to terms with its emerging strengths. The second is the huge change in the nature of India's economy after two and a half decades of accelerated growth. Nearly 50 per cent of its economy is now linked to international trade, including both imports and exports. The Indian economy is thus a very different beast in the early twenty-first century than what it was at the turn of the 1990s. 'Strategic autonomy' was the flip side of the economic autarky that India pursued in the Cold War. India now needs a very different policy to deal with the logic and reality of its critical economic interdependence with the rest of the world (Kumar 2010). The main task of India's

foreign policy can no longer centre on preventing the rest of the world from impinging on it. It must focus instead on shaping its regional environment, influencing the global order, and thus proactively creating conditions for India's sustained growth and prosperity. This new external task can be summed up as the 'quest for strategic influence'.

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CHAPTER 11

INDIA'S NATIONAL SECURITY

SUMIT GANGULY

THE LEGACIES OF COLONIALISM AND PARTITION

INDIA'S emergence in the global order was part of the early wave of the European decolonization process. It came about both as a consequence of the growth of the Indian nationalist movement as well as the inability of the United Kingdom to sustain colonial rule in the wake of its exhaustion as a consequence of the ravages of the Second World War. The country also became independent at a time when the fleeting and exigent cooperation between the United States and the Soviet Union during the Second World War came to a close and the international order witnessed the beginning of the Cold War. As early as July 1947, a month before India's independence, the noted American diplomat George Kennan had pseudonymously published his famous article, 'Sources of Soviet Conduct', a document that would soon become the intellectual basis of the US strategy of containment directed against possible Soviet expansionism.

Deft Pakistani diplomacy designed solely to balance India's greater capabilities and perceived threat, helped focus American attention on the region. The forging of the US-Pakistan alliance in 1954 was to have significant adverse consequences for India's national security and would also contribute to the estrangement of the two countries (McMahon 1996).

It is important to underscore this politico-strategic backdrop because it had a significant impact on the evolution of India's security policies. The United States focused on possible Soviet designs on Western Europe and East Asia, paid scant attention to India. The Soviets, still under Stalin's grip, saw India through the lens of a doctrinaire ideology, and thereby attached little significance to the country in their strategic calculations (Donaldson 1974). Indeed, it was not until his demise that his successors shifted their perspective on India's position in the Cold War international order.