

Indian Foreign Policy: Determinants & Institutions

Day 39 of your revision. Every determinant, every institution and every scholar from the Foundation & OGP class, compressed for fast recall. **Revise → write a little → don't break the chain.**

Exam load on this topic: 10 × 10-markers · 3 × 15-markers · 3 × 20-markers.

"Foreign policy of a country is a statement of what it stands for and the role that it takes upon itself and projects to the world at large." — J.N. Dixit

A THE DETERMINANTS

Nine factors — the permanent ones give continuity, the dynamic ones give change

I Foreign Policy — meaning, objectives, and where it comes from

Foreign policy does not emerge from a vacuum. It is a settled course of action, and a set of principles, through which a state defines its relations with others.

Working definition

Foreign policy is the course of action and set of principles a government adopts to define its relations with other states, and to set forth its positions on international issues.

- It may reflect broad national objectives, or a narrow, specific response to one situation — a combination of **principles, interests and objectives** through which a country conducts its external relations.
- In general it aims to fulfil the **national interest**. **Hans Morgenthau**: its primary object is the protection and enhancement of national interest, rooted in power.

Objectives

Sovereignty & integrity Economic development Political stability National interest Influencing international relations

- Sovereignty and integrity** → territorial integrity and the security of the people; manifests as security concerns, military build-up and alliances.
- Economic development** → trade agreements, investment, access to resources. Economic might is the lifeblood of scientific, military and soft-power endeavours.
- Political stability** → within the country and abroad — supporting stable governments, mediating conflicts, promoting rights.
- Influencing international relations** → shaping the world order and the behaviour of others; part of soft-power projection.

Who and what shapes it

- Harsh V. Pant** → a nation's foreign policy flows from several sources: the international system, its domestic political imperatives, the cultural factors underlying its society, and the personal characteristics and perceptions of individual decision-makers.
- Some factors are **permanent / static** (geography, natural frontiers); the domestic and external environments **change with time**. Permanent factors impart **continuity**, dynamic factors cause **change**. Policy is seldom static, yet certain factors remain significant over long periods.
- David Malone, C. Raja Mohan and Srinath Raghavan** → foreign policy is shaped, powered and constrained by four factors — **history, geography, capability and leadership**; identity runs through all of them.
- Teresita Schaffer** → the Indian identity of a peaceful, non-violent country is reflected in No First Use, Panchsheel, and exceptionalism in global negotiations.
- The relative weight of these factors keeps shifting with **time, place and personality**.

Geography History Culture Social structure Economy Leadership Domestic milieu Defence & security International situation

Permanent factors carry continuity · dynamic factors carry change



Relative weight of each factor shifts with time, place and personality

The four-factor frame, applied to India

- History** → the claim of an ancient civilisation, and a lasting suspicion of the West; anti-colonial ethos feeding non-alignment and support for self-determination.
- Geography** → insecurity along the borders; the Himalayas and the Indian Ocean shaping strategy; the largest littoral state of the Indian Ocean.

- **Capability / economy** → the contradiction of an emerging economy advanced in nuclear and space science, yet dependent on energy and defence imports.
- **Leadership** → Nehru's idealism, Indira Gandhi's realism, Vajpayee's projection of scientific prowess, Modi's fast-paced diplomacy.
- **Domestic milieu** → coalition politics and the centre-state dynamic (Teesta, CHOGM 2013). **Social structure and culture** → shared ethnicity in the neighbourhood; soft power through Yoga, Bollywood and the classical arts.

UPSC 2016 · 10m Which determinant factors play an important role in making India's foreign policy? Illustrate with examples.

2 Geography as a Determinant

Foreign policy experts hold geography to be one of the most important, permanent and stable factors. Its constituents → topography, soil, fertility, climate, mineral resources, frontiers, neighbours — and above all, **location**.

"Any country's foreign policy is determined by its geography." — Napoleon Bonaparte

- Geopolitical scholars — **Spykman**, **Mackinder** and **Alfred T. Mahan** — stressed geography, especially location. The **Mackinder–Mahan debate** frames the role of location.
- **Alfred T. Mahan** → naval power and location build great powers (Britain); he identified **strategic choke points** whose control commands the sea — Suez, Malacca, the Persian Gulf.
- **Mackinder** → whoever controls the **"heartland"** controls the world.
- England's location, surrounded by water, gave it strategic advantage; Afghanistan's location made it the centre of the 'Great Game'. The English Channel built British naval and imperial power; 19th-century US **isolationism** rested on favourable geography.
- Landlocked states, tropical states and those bordering a superpower are less self-sufficient than those with warm-water ports or temperate location.
- Geography's importance has **declined** with technology and communication — large water bodies are no longer absolute barriers — but it still shapes foreign policy deeply.
- **Daron Acemoglu** and **James Robinson** → geography is not a permanent, unchanging factor, nor is technology the key to dominance; it is not even a good predictor of wealth or power. South Asia is the least economically integrated region in the world — not because of geography or technology, but owing to many other factors.

Geography and Indian foreign policy

- Ambassador **Rajiv Sikri** → both "India" and "Hindustan" have a geographical origin — named after the people beyond the River **Indus (Sindhu)**.
- Blessed with abundant resources, India was a self-contained, self-satisfied, rich civilisation with nothing to gain from foreign forays → a **defensive mindset**; it did not craft a strategy to tackle foreign threats.
- Hence **George Tanham** argues India lacks a 'strategic culture' or a 'grand strategy' like the US or China. Tanham linked geography and strategy, but was largely repeating the criticisms of Indian isolationism and exceptionalism described by **K.M. Panikkar**.
- Long coastline and the **Indian Ocean** → a strategic edge to naval power; the busiest sea lane of communication; the shift of the global theatre to the **Indo-Pacific**; India can become a **"net security provider"** with a blue-water navy.
- Land boundaries with Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bhutan, China, Nepal, Bangladesh and Myanmar → frosty relations with China and Pakistan shape regional policy (SAARC, BIMSTEC, Neighbourhood First).

"One can change one's friends, but not neighbours." · "We can change our history but not our geography." — Atal Bihari Vajpayee

- India connects South Asia with West, Central, South-East and East Asia → opportunities for trade, and security challenges from terrorism and instability.
- **K. Subrahmanyam** → a **strategic equalizer** can be achieved through advanced technologies — which the West has denied India — against those who claim that power and national security rest essentially on geographic factors.
- Duqm Port (Oman) and Sabang Port (Indonesia) secured in 2018; US naval presence at Diego Garcia; India and France in Djibouti — the contest for choke points.
- **K.M. Panikkar** and **Shivshankar Menon** → geography compels engagement with neighbours, management of border conflicts, and a strong naval presence. Proximity to Pakistan and China drives use of **Kautilya's Mandala** logic — strategic convergence with Afghanistan, outreach to counter China.
- Peninsular projection and control of the Indian Ocean → maritime security, Act East, and the aspiration of net security provider. The National Movement and geography together balance idealism with pragmatic regional considerations.

UPSC 2017 · 10m Examine the Indian National Movement and geographical location of India as determinants of India's foreign policy.

3 History as a Determinant · Panchsheel

History has a prominent impact because officials rely, consciously or unconsciously, on their understanding of the past to address the present. Used properly, historical knowledge helps understand other peoples, gives perspective, and grants access to the wisdom of predecessors. Policy cannot be made on history alone, but it would be foolish to ignore what history offers.

- **David Malone**, **C. Raja Mohan** and **Srinath Raghavan** → history explains a good deal of Indian foreign policy — not only in the post-independence period, but even today. India's location at Asia's crossroads and its peninsular projection made it a natural transit point of trade.
- India **never mounted aggressive campaigns** for territorial expansion, even after being targeted by repeated invasions → a **pacifist outlook** expressed through the **Panchsheel** principles.
- Bitter experience with imperialism and colonialism bred lasting suspicion of *Western hegemony* (now led by the United States), and predisposed **Nehru** towards **import-substituting industrialisation** in a public-sector-dominated mixed economy.

Panchsheel — the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence

First formally enunciated in the Agreement on Trade and Intercourse between the Tibet region of China and India, signed on **29 April 1954** (Jawaharlal Nehru and Zhou Enlai).

1. Mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty
2. Mutual non-aggression
3. Mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs
4. Equality and mutual benefit
5. Peaceful co-existence

History and Indian foreign policy

- The legacy of an ancient civilisation → **Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam** (the whole world is one family), drawn from the scriptures and from figures like **Swami Vivekananda**. The values that shaped policy: tolerance, non-violence, universal brotherhood.

Pacifism is "the deliberate acceptance of a method of approach to foreign policy problems which emphasised reconciliation, and the temper of peace, as opposed to a spirit of revenge and hatred." — **A. Appadorai**

- British rule had a **two-fold impact** (**A. Appadorai**): the national freedom movement led to support for the freedom of colonial peoples — championing **de-colonisation** in Africa and a strong stance against apartheid; and the British practice of racial inequality committed India to rooting out racial discrimination.
- **Socialist and communist strands** within the national movement helped India appreciate ideologies beyond liberalism → cooperation with liberal democracies without opposing the socialist countries.
- **Non-alignment** flows from the ideals of the freedom struggle, with philosophical foundations in the **Buddhist Madhyam Marg** (Golden Mean). Freedom-struggle ideals also produced the co-founding of NAM, solidarity with the Afro-Asian world, and continued support for a two-state solution on Palestine.
- India inherited **treaties, agreements and boundaries** and treated them as sacrosanct — both India and Pakistan accepted the obligations of **627 treaties** signed by the British.
- India also inherited the foreign policy establishment and British notions of neighbourhood relations. The neighbours' perception that India plays the **role of big brother** in South Asia is a British legacy too.
- The baggage of legacy persists → some border tensions with Pakistan and China are British legacies; geography, ethnicity and economic viability were ignored in drawing the boundaries.
- Ancient scholars like **Kautilya** left a realist legacy — *raja mandala siddhant*, *shad-gunya siddhant* — still guiding India's protection of national interest. Nehru used force to expel the Portuguese from Goa (1961); **Indira Gandhi's** realism was visible in the creation of Bangladesh (1971).
- Even today India seeks **strategic autonomy** over alliance with any major power.

4 Culture as a Determinant

Culture is a relatively new entrant in foreign policy debates. Realists — **Hans Morgenthau, Kenneth Waltz, John Mearsheimer** — accorded it little importance. It gained prominence only after the **Gramscian** focus on hegemony and **Joseph Nye's** emphasis on **soft power**.

- Culture has a subtle but powerful impact on how states and leaders behave → it provides ways of thinking, seeing and interpreting the world; cross-cultural settings such as foreign policy-making carry the potential for clashes.
- The **strategic culture** of a country bears the imprint of its civilisational values — India's pacifism owes to a civilisational legacy of not being an invader, and a spiritual orientation towards non-violence in Jainism and Buddhism.
- A state with a unified culture and shared history can pursue an effective foreign policy through consensus; cultural and historical cleavages weaken it.

Culture and Indian foreign policy

- **Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam** → tolerance, non-violence, universal brotherhood. **A. Appadorai** → pacifism and non-violence come from an emphasis on reconciliation and peace over revenge and hatred.
- **Pluralism and tolerance** → a preference for sovereignty and caution in condemning the internal actions of other states — scepticism over condemning Russia's actions in Crimea, a calibrated stance on Syria and Yemen; occasional intervention to secure the diaspora.

"Some of the characteristics and practices of Hindu civilization have a very noticeable influence on Indian attitudes and policies today. Among these are a kind of otherworldly attitude towards life and emphasis on non-material factors, and a 'spirit of tolerance, detachment and meditation and compromise which perhaps is best exemplified in Buddhism.'" — **N.D. Palmer**

- Ideals of **liberty, equality, democracy and socialism** entered nationalist leaders through Western education and the Soviet experiment.
- India's **spiritualistic view of politics and power** in **Gandhi, Aurobindo** and **Tagore** → world peace, peaceful means, keeping aloof from power-politics and military alliances; internationalism.
- Culture as a **tool** of foreign policy (soft power) → PM Modi's success in having the UN mark an **International Day of Yoga**.
- Caution → culture as a means must not become chauvinism and hatred, as under the Pan-German concept that culminated in the World Wars.

Philosophical foundations — the settled list

- Moored in civilisational beliefs of peace, tolerance and **One World** (**Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam**); guiding principles → Panchsheel, pragmatism, and the pursuit of national interest.
- Inspiration from **Gandhi's** non-violence, moral behaviour and Satyagraha, and from the teachings of the Buddha and the Vedic tradition.

- **Non-alignment** → maintaining independence by not joining any military bloc; philosophical roots in the Buddhist *Madhyam Marg*.
- **Anti-colonialism and anti-racism** → support for Indonesia, opposition to apartheid, backing China's inclusion in the UN.
- **Peaceful settlement of disputes** → enshrined in the Directive Principles; reflected in India's stand on the Ukraine war.
- **Foreign economic aid and a just world order** → decolonisation, UN peacekeeping, disaster relief (Nepal, Turkey), vaccine support during the pandemic.
- Later expressions → the NAM doctrine, the Gujral Doctrine, Neighbourhood First, No First Use, South–South cooperation.

Peaceful co-existence as the cornerstone — and the counter-view

- The primary task of foreign policy → the country's security, territorial integrity, and a peaceful external environment. At its heart lies *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*, guided by the values of Buddhism and Gandhian non-violence.
- **Panchsheel** (Sino-Indian Agreement, 1954) → the Five Principles later became the basis for non-alignment and gave concrete expression to the UN Charter.
- Even amid persistent aggression from China in the Himalayas and the Indian Ocean, India has sought amicable resolution. With Pakistan, India has consistently used UN platforms and democratic means to highlight cross-border terrorism.
- Independent and rational stands despite pressure — the **Ukraine crisis** — reflect peaceful co-existence with strategic autonomy; a constructive role in bringing rival blocs and countries together, and global good during the pandemic.
- **Critical view** → peaceful co-existence now coexists with a firmer, more risk-taking posture, showing continuity of principle alongside pragmatic adaptation.

UPSC 2021 · 10m Explain the philosophical foundations of India's foreign policy.

UPSC 2022 · 10m Peaceful co-existence remains the cornerstone of India's foreign policy. Comment.

5 Social Structure as a Determinant

Social structure characterises the nature of social relations among sections of society and the degree of conflict and harmony between them. It influences foreign policy indirectly, and changes in it change policy over the long term.

- A state with racial, religious, linguistic, class or ethnic cleavages struggles to secure cooperation from all sections. A **homogeneous society** produces a more coherent, even aggressive, foreign policy — Britain stood as one under **Churchill** in the Second World War because of social solidarity.
- **Nehru** → the foreign policy of a nation is an extension of domestic policy. Civilisational values imbibed in society guide the objectives and the means — non-alignment, Panchsheel, and the rise of soft power.

Shared ethnicity — distrust rather than strength

- The **Tamil factor** → rough patches with Sri Lanka; it even prevented the PM's CHOGM visit.
- The **Madhesi factor** → distrust and anti-India feeling in Nepal; impact on constitution-making.
- India's **Palestine policy** → shaped by the sentiments of minorities. **Talmiz Ahmad** counters that domestic determinants should not be exaggerated — it was **energy, rather than ethnicity**, that shaped India's West Asia policy.
- The Muslim connection with West Asia; a large migrant population in the Gulf (the Kerala–Gulf link); the Sikh and Punjabi community in Canada — India–Canada relations embroiled in pro-Khalistan protests.
- Social structure is not the only determinant — world order, the structure of international politics, and the legitimacy enjoyed by the political elite also matter. India's young demography pushes a focus on trade, investment and employment.

6 Economy as a Determinant

As per **Sanjay Baru**, economic performance and capability are a necessary — though by no means sufficient — foundation of political, diplomatic and military power. The implosion of the Soviet Union under economic failure, and the rise of China on rapid growth, both bear this out.

- A **weak economy** leads to dependency and loss of sovereignty; a **strong economy** gives a strategic edge and soft power (China's *chequebook diplomacy*). India and others run **ODA** programmes to build soft power.
- Industrially advanced countries show **complex interdependence** (**Robert Keohane** and **Joseph Nye**) through high trade value; big pockets (US, China) fund external aid, military ventures and diplomacy.
- Economically developed countries possess greater military capability and exert greater influence. China's ascendancy is challenging US hegemony → talk of **Cold War 2.0** and the **Thucydides Trap**.

The Indian economy and foreign policy

- **Sanjay Baru** → from its inception, Indian foreign policy was shaped by two potentially contradictory imperatives: addressing India's developmental needs, and the urge to inspire anti-colonial struggles and play a leadership role in the developing world.
- As a poor, agrarian society desperate to industrialise, India needed good ties with capital-surplus industrial economies → the architects combined the 'idealism' of a post-colonial republic with the 'realism' a backward economy's developmental needs demanded.
- Post-independence India adopted a **mixed economy**; heavy dependence on oil brought focus on **West Asia**; economic conditions pushed advocacy for easing disparities at the WTO and World Bank, and **South–South cooperation**.
- **Economic compulsions** → India–China bilateral trade reached an all-time high of about **US\$125 billion in 2021–22** despite border tensions and frosty relations.

The neoliberal outlook — how far has it gone?

- Neoliberal foreign policy → states minimise regulation and facilitate seamless trade; through **complex interdependence** (Keohane and Nye), peace is sustained.
- Indian foreign policy began with Nehruvian idealism and economic isolation; the **1991 LPG reforms** forced the private sector to look for markets abroad (**Andres Velasco**).

- Neoliberal markers → **Look East (1993)**, India–Africa Summits, mending ties with the US, use of the WTO for services, FTAs, and the creation of the **NDB** and **AIIB**. Deeper trade architecture → DTAAs, transfer-pricing agreements, Act East and Connect Central Asia.
- Continuities that qualify the shift → South–South cooperation, and egalitarian positions at the WTO, the UN and climate forums.
- The realist streak persists → surgical strikes, Doklam, Galwan; caution over **RCEP** and **BRI**; multi-alignment and strategic autonomy.
- **Kanti Bajpai** → despite realism and idealism, the neoliberal position predominates in India's pragmatic foreign policy.
- **Verdict** → the neoliberal outlook is increasingly visible but is not the single decisive factor; India cannot be a prisoner to one stream of thought.

UPSC 2018 · 10m Do you agree with the view that Indian Foreign Policy is increasingly being shaped by the Neoliberal outlook? Elaborate.

7 Leadership as a Determinant

Structural realism neglects the personality factor, but it was soon recognised that **actors** significantly influence how foreign policy is conducted → **neoclassical realism** brought actor-level analysis back in.

- **Thucydides** in the *Peloponnesian War* contrasted the cautious, pragmatic **Pericles** with the reckless adventurer **Alcibiades**, who abandoned Pericles's plan and led Athens to ruin.
- **Machiavelli** (*The Prince*), **Sun Tzu** (*The Art of War*) and **Kautilya** (*Arthashastra*) all show how individual action secures the success of the state.
- **James Rosenau** → personality, or *idiosyncratic factors*, has a deep influence on the planning and execution of foreign policy.
- Leadership is constrained by governmental and social structure; its role is more significant in less industrialised nations. **Laura Neack** → a political leader is motivated by two goals: to retain political power, and to build and maintain policy coalitions.

The Indian experience

- **Jawaharlal Nehru** → internationalist in outlook, an enlightened rather than self-centred approach; commitment to world peace and disarmament, with Panchsheel as its typical expression.
- **Indira Gandhi** → strong and decisive, pragmatic and sensitive to national interest → a reorientation towards **realism** (Bangladesh, non-accession to the NPT, ties with the USSR).
- **Atal Bihari Vajpayee** → the reputed qualities of a moderate shaped engagement with Pakistan and the United States.

8 Domestic Milieu as a Determinant

The domestic milieu — the nature of the governing system, political culture, party policies, public opinion, tradition, and the structure of government and leadership — is an important determinant.

- The most important factor in decision-making is the **political environment** in which the head of government operates; the political system fixes the head's scope and power.
- The nature of **legislature–executive relations** bears heavily on foreign policy — harmony is a source of strength, discord a hindrance; the party system, elections and the electorate also matter.
- The **organisation and structure of government** shapes policy — in a centralised, authoritarian system, foreign policy often remains isolated from the domestic environment.
- **Devesh Kapur** → public opinion is the least understood factor: largely acquiescent (latent) or implicitly supportive, but it can be 'primed' and strategically manipulated. The information revolution has raised its importance.

Domestic milieu in India

- A syncretic culture of 'unity in diversity'; a **parliamentary democracy** giving representation to divergent groups; foreign policy a prerogative of the executive, yet Parliament influences it on occasion.
- **National consensus** cuts across parties → non-alignment as a core principle for all.
- Differences persist → Parliament was vocal on the China boundary and the Goa question in the late 1950s, and pressed the government to deplore the American action against Iraq in 2003.
- Parties, national and regional, take positions in their manifestos → **DMK**, **AIADMK**, **MDMK** (Sri Lanka), the **National Conference** (Pakistan).
- The **Civil Nuclear Deal of 2008** → anti-US Left Front parties threatened to withdraw support.
- The **Public Diplomacy Division** was created within the MEA in 2006 to shape public opinion.

9 Defence and Security as a Determinant

Since the **Treaty of Westphalia (1648)**, sovereignty has been central to international politics. The sanctity of territorial borders is the most respected principle → nations build preponderant military capability. **Hans Morgenthau** treats security as a **core and permanent national interest**.

- A **credible military capability** acts as a **deterrent** → nuclear weapons, alliances, **collective defence** (NATO), intelligence networks and counterterrorism cooperation.
- Questions of defence and security form part of a country's **strategic culture**. **Harsh V. Pant** → cultural elements of the domestic environment shape national security interests and policies.
- The incessant acquisition of power can create a '**security dilemma**' and an arms race, reducing security.

Security and Indian foreign policy

- Both external military threats and internal challenges are core concerns; the weight of security in Indian foreign policy has varied with individual, domestic and systemic factors.
- **Harsh V. Pant** → India's behaviour has confounded observers by deviating from the 'norm' set by other major powers; Indian foreign and security policy

has been deemed **incoherent and inconsistent**; Indian elites treat '**strategic autonomy**' as central, with non-alignment as an instrument towards it.

George K. Tanham — the six policies India evolved for its strategic dilemmas

1. Prevent small neighbours from soliciting hostile external support.
2. Deny Pakistan the potential to challenge Indian predominance on the sub-continent.
3. Develop resources to fight a two-front war and achieve "power equivalence" with China.
4. Close relations with the Soviet Union to counter China and Pakistan.
5. Naval capabilities to deny any extra-regional power a meaningful presence in the Indian Ocean.
6. Approach world-power status through nuclear and missile capabilities and a blue-water navy, while seeking recognition as a great nation rather than a superpower.

- Tanham wrote in 1992; **Harsh V. Pant** holds that not much has changed in strategic thinking, and that India needs clearer strategic thought.
- The **concept of security has changed** → with a focus on **human security**, newer dimensions have entered: climate, food, energy, counterterrorism and the global commons.
- **Kanti Bajpai** → India's national security strategy must include the global commons; its priorities should be (i) the safety of the planet, (ii) arresting climate change and preventing epidemics, (iii) stabilising the global economy, and (iv) global political stability, non-proliferation, the demilitarisation of outer space and freedom of the high seas.
- **Internal security** → cooperation with the US, Israel, Japan, France, and institutions like the UN and INTERPOL.

The historical trajectory of security

- Nehru's ideational foreign policy gave little consideration to the security dimension → Tanham's charge of a missing strategic culture.
- **Sumit Ganguly** → the commitment to non-alignment limited high defence expenditure; India's policymakers ignored systemic constraints and chose an explicitly ideational policy with mostly disastrous consequences, leaving India unprepared for the **1962 war** with China.
- Pakistan allied with the USA in **1954** to balance India → India's tilt towards the Soviet Union.
- After 1962 → a realistic turn; under **Indira Gandhi**, a strategic partnership with the USSR, and close ties with Britain and France.
- The 1990s → weakened ties with newly formed Russia; India began looking East and West; matured relations with Israel.
- **Nuclear weapons policy** → 1974 (peaceful) and 1998 tests with sanctions; by 2008, the Civil Nuclear Deal and the NSG waiver; India is reconsidering **No First Use** in response to Pakistan's tactical nuclear arsenal.
- **Net security provider** → the Quad, a blue-water navy, BIMSTEC, Project Mausam, IORA; the pivot to the US (LEMOA, the 2015 US–India Joint Strategic Vision), while pursuing strategic autonomy and **multi-alignment** (the S-400 deal despite US unease).

Pakistan after Pathankot — the shift

- **Stephen P. Cohen** → the India–Pakistan conflict is a "**paired minority conflict**" — each side views itself as threatened and vulnerable, which drives their respective postures.
- Since the January 2016 attack on the Pathankot air base, India has held that **talks and terror cannot go together**, asking for credible action against terror groups.
- Post-Pathankot → **surgical strikes** after Uri; **pre-emptive non-military strikes at Balakot** after Pulwama → a shift from a principle-based to a more transactional trajectory.
- **Harsh V. Pant** → India has shattered the myth of Pakistani nuclear capability and opened the possibility of a limited conventional war, putting the onus of escalation back on Pakistan.
- Beyond military measures → the **International Court of Justice** and the **Financial Action Task Force** used to build pressure.
- PM Modi has infused Indian foreign policy with a measure of **risk-taking**, unlike the risk aversion of the past. Foreign policies rarely alter radically with a change of government, but the assumptions that had governed India's engagements have been fundamentally challenged.
- **Critical view** → **Neelam Deo** argues the hawkish stance towards Pakistan is yet to show any enduring gain.

UPSC 2016 · ISm Discuss the shift of India's foreign policy towards Pakistan in the light of the Pathankot incident.

10 International Situation as a Determinant

The broad currents of international politics have a direct bearing on foreign policy. The **nature of the power structure** in the international system influences every state's policy; the difficulty is that states cannot control the behaviour of others.

- Inter-war years (1919–39) → the quest for French security, and the rise of fascism, Nazism and militarism.
- The **Cold War** (1945–90) → a **bipolar order** with ideological confrontation; the **domino effect** and **containment** (the Truman Doctrine, NATO, SEATO).
- End of the Cold War and the disintegration of the Soviet Union → a **unipolar** order; socialism receded.
- **Complex interdependence** under globalisation, MNCs and IGOs; rising sensitivity to terrorism, human rights and self-determination.
- The 21st century → a shift towards a **multipolar order** with many regional hegemons (China, India, Russia, South Africa, Brazil).

India and the international environment

- **Non-alignment** → a direct response to Cold War polarisation.
- **Nuclear disarmament** → arising from the threat to human civilisation; the tests of **1974 (Smiling Buddha)** and **1998** answered an international order that dismissed disarmament and sanctified an inequitable nuclear hierarchy.
- The Soviet disintegration → less enthusiasm for NAM, accommodation of American concerns, full ties with Israel, and an economic emphasis in relations.

- Post-Cold War → terrorism and human rights forced adjustments; J&K-related allegations caused difficulty in global forums.
- 9/11 → an opportunity to push India's anti-terror policy and pressure Pakistan. **Covid-19** → vaccine diplomacy as soft power.
- The **Russia–Ukraine war** → policymakers walking a tightrope, balancing the US (an emerging strategic partner) and Russia (a reliable partner).

External determinants of any state's foreign policy

Foreign policy is not shaped in isolation: it results from interaction with, and reaction to, a multitude of external factors — the **system level of analysis**, where the international system is the cause and state behaviour the effect.

External determinant	How it works
Power structure	Multipolar, bipolar and unipolar systems each have their own dynamics; the 'either with us or against us' unipolar logic drew marginal states into the Global War on Terrorism.
International organisations	The UN and others modify state behaviour and act as independent actors; pressures of the NPT, CTBT and WTO decisions bear on every foreign policy.
Reaction of other states	No state can act unilaterally — India and the US must reckon with Pakistani interests in Afghanistan.
World public opinion	Soft power constrains: the US was made to change its Vietnam policy under hostile world opinion.
Alliances and treaties	The post-1945 alliance systems, used by both the US and the USSR, shaped every nation's policy.
Location, MNCs, liberation movements	Who one's neighbours are; corporations as instruments of influence; movements (Hamas, Fatah, the PLO) attracting external sympathy and aid.
Economic interests and global challenges	Trade agreements (India–Australia ECTA), the 'soft containment' of China, and responses to climate change, pandemics and terrorism.
Technology	Advances in communication and information technology influence diplomacy, intelligence and warfare.

UPSC 2023 · 20m What are the external determinants of the Foreign Policy of a State?

B THE INSTITUTIONS OF POLICY-MAKING

Diffused, actor-specific, leadership-driven — and steadily broadening

II Who Actually Decides

The common perception is that foreign policy is made by the MEA, the PMO or the PM. In reality, **no single institution or personality** can complete the complex task alone.

- At different times one actor may dominate, but several contributing actors collectively build India's **Foreign Policy Consensus**, backed by the political leadership across ruling and opposition ranks.
- Conventionally, European foreign policy was made by the Foreign Office in secrecy, with no role for public opinion or the legislature.
- As a **parliamentary democracy**, India must be considerate of the people's will; decision-making is **highly diffused** and it is difficult to say who decides and at what level.
- Indian foreign policy is finalised by the **Council of Ministers headed by the Prime Minister**.

"India's foreign policy was always a leadership function and more often than not did not command a consensus." — K. Subrahmanyam

- The process is **actor-specific** and **leadership-driven**, with personality and charisma playing central roles.
- The most important instrument is the **Ministry of External Affairs**; other agencies — the Cabinet, MoD, Ministry of Commerce, NSC, PMO and Parliament — contribute, as do non-government bodies: media, pressure groups, universities and think-tanks.



12 Parliament

"I am entirely in the hands of the House." — Jawaharlal Nehru, March 1948

- As per **Rudra Chaudhuri**, the Indian Parliament has demonstratively placed limitations on the executive in international affairs — but it does not dictate policy like the German Bundestag; the Indian system resembles the **UK**, with **no legal requirement for parliamentary approval** on foreign policy. Parliamentarians have grown more outward-looking over the years.

- The defining role was largely left to the Constitution → under **Article 246 (Seventh Schedule)** foreign policy is a Union subject; under **Article 253** treaties may be entered into without a parliamentary vote, and war may be declared without formal authorisation — unlike the US, where senators wield a powerful voice.

Mechanisms available to Parliament

- No legal mechanism compels endorsement, except extreme measures such as a **vote of no confidence**.
- The **Standing Committee on External Affairs** exercises limited **financial control**, comments on the MEA budget, and can originate studies that shape opinion; committees cannot reshape policy but can press the government to explain itself.
- Members use **motions and resolutions** to push the government to justify its decisions.
- A paradox → a government with a large majority sometimes cedes to a weak opposition: Nehru accepted some demands of the Bharatiya Jan Sangh, which held only 3 **seats**. Nehru acknowledged that “external affairs will follow internal affairs.”

Actual working experience — the record

- **1949** → Parliament scrutinised the resolution for continued **membership of the Commonwealth**, with criticism from within the Congress and the opposition; Nehru was only lightly checked.
- **1954** → the **US–Pakistan Mutual Defense Pact**; pressure from the Right and the CPI-led Left pushed Nehru to sharper statements against the pact and America.
- The **PRC** and Aksai Chin-for-NEFA → the government failed to win Parliament’s confidence; Nehru placed his correspondence with Zhou Enlai and a **white paper** before the House.
- After the **1962 war** → Western pressure to negotiate on Kashmir was resisted because of opposition in Parliament, led by **Vajpayee**, who warned the US and UK against interfering.
- The exchange of enclaves with Bangladesh and the **Land Boundary Agreement** required a constitutional amendment, passed in **2015**.
- The **Civil Nuclear Deal (2008)** → four Left parties threatened to withdraw support from the UPA (the BJP also opposed), leading to a no-confidence motion. While passing the **Nuclear Liabilities Bill**, the opposition pushed sections **17(b)** and **46** to allow action against suppliers — the value of parliamentary oversight and the Standing Committee.

Parliamentary diplomacy

- Parliamentary diplomacy → the involvement of legislators in international affairs, extending beyond executive-driven foreign policy through delegations and dialogues.
- **Shashi Tharoor** → parliamentarians bring a more democratic and representative dimension, bridging political divides and building bipartisan support.
- Parliamentary committees on foreign affairs and defence allow MPs to scrutinise and influence policy in line with national interest; it projects India’s democratic values and pluralistic ethos on the global stage.
- Engagement with the **Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)** and the **Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA)** demonstrates India’s commitment to multilateralism.
- **C. Raja Mohan** → such participation amplifies India’s voice and cultivates bilateral and regional relationships. Interaction between Indian MPs and their counterparts promotes mutual understanding on climate change, terrorism and development.
- **Assessment** → it integrates democratic oversight and adds to soft power, while remaining underutilised because of executive dominance.

UPSC 2019 - 10m Examine the role of ‘parliamentary diplomacy’ in India’s foreign policy.

13 The States’ Impact on Foreign Policy

Under the Seventh Schedule, foreign relations lie wholly within the Union’s power — yet the states are not absent from policy-making.

“Apart from pressures at the national level, Governments at the centre find themselves susceptible to domestic compulsions in cases where state legislatures and regional political dynamics shape Foreign Policy priorities... regional preferences appear to have become that much more important to the executive at the centre.” — Rudra Chaudhuri

- Under coalition governments, regional demands cannot be wished away: PM **Manmohan Singh** did not attend the **CHOGM (Colombo, 2013)** owing to opposition from Tamil Nadu (AIADMK, DMK); the **River Teesta** accord (2012–13) could not be finalised because the West Bengal Chief Minister opposed it.
- There is no constitutional provision to accommodate such demands, but coalition politics and the regionalisation of the party system secure them a hearing at the Centre.
- **Economic liberalisation** and **coalition governments** together created an environment for states to engage the Centre on issues affecting their interests.
- States adjoining neighbours have a major say → the **Ganges Water Sharing Treaty** and the enclaves settlement needed West Bengal and Meghalaya; UP and Bihar are key for Nepal; J&K, Punjab and Gujarat for Pakistan.
- **Tamil Nadu** → a disproportionate influence on Sri Lanka policy (the Tamil factor); **Kerala** → active on NRI and Gulf issues; the north-eastern states → engagement with Myanmar.
- **Tariq Karim** blamed India’s cooperative federalism for the lack of progress on water-sharing.
- **John Kincaid** coined “**constituent diplomacy**” (1990) — the international activities of local governments; **para-diplomacy** strengthens federalism (sister cities such as Kyoto–Varanasi).
- The MEA has set up a dedicated **States Division** as its interface with the states; Heads of Missions are encouraged to visit relevant states.
- Efforts remain **ad hoc**; they need institutionalisation, with the principle of collaborative sub-regionalism trumping cooperative federalism on matters of core national interest.

14 The Cabinet

In parliamentary systems important decisions are taken by the cabinet. As per **Tanvi Madan**, the Cabinet is the political body ultimately responsible for foreign policy-making.

- It decides on external security in consultation with the MHA, MoD and MEA; on trade and investment with Commerce, Finance and the MEA.
- Tanvi Madan** → the role of any minister other than the Foreign Minister varies with the power and personality of the PM and the issues involved. **Nehru** only informed the cabinet of decisions taken; even so, members expressed views — **Sardar Patel**'s differences with Nehru on China are well known.
- Under **coalition governments**, the views of cabinet members representing coalition partners have gained importance, especially on neighbourhood policy (Teesta, CHOGM).
- Multilateral trade negotiations cut across ministries → **specialised cabinet committees** resolve inter-departmental conflict.
- The **Minister of External Affairs** is a member of four cabinet committees — **Economic Affairs, Parliamentary Affairs, Political Affairs and Security**. The **Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS)** gives final shape to vital foreign policy and security issues, for example the surgical strikes.
- In emergencies, *ad hoc* committees are set up — the "Emergency Committee" after the 1962 war, and the committee on WTO matters.

15 Ministry of External Affairs

The MEA had a humble beginning in 1947 as the **Ministry of External Affairs and Commonwealth Relations**, to steer Nehru's vision of an independent foreign policy.

- Pallavi Raghavan** → the ministry set up under Nehru was not fit to reflect India's newly independent status, because its antecedents and traditions had been fashioned to serve the British Empire. Notable individuals who shaped early foreign policy → **Sir Girija Shankar Bajpai, Y.D. Gundevia, Krishna Menon** and **K.M. Panikkar**.
- The MEA affects policy primarily at the **individual level** → the personality factor matters most.
- Tanvi Madan** → the MEA is the lead ministry and the main instrument for formulation and implementation; it is expected to provide intelligent, accurate answers and is the storehouse of expert knowledge. It works as the **foreign policy secretariat**, channelling options to the Cabinet and implementing decisions.

The External Affairs Minister

- A political appointee and Cabinet member, not necessarily an expert; policies recommended by the ministry are cleared or modified by the minister before implementation.
- Sitting PMs — **Nehru, P.V. Narasimha Rao, Vajpayee** and **Manmohan Singh** — have held the office.
- Relative power varies with the PM's preferences → under Nehru, a marked influence of his individual worldview; the trend continued under Indira Gandhi, leading to inadequate institutional development and low salience of foreign policy in public opinion.
- Many EAMs were "little more than relay systems" for their bureaucrats → with few exceptions they never emerged as autonomous sources of policymaking, vacating the arena to the PM.

Structure and composition

- The **Foreign Secretary** is the senior-most bureaucrat, responsible for supervision and coordination, and an important adviser to the minister.
- The MEA is largely staffed by the **Indian Foreign Service**, selected through the UPSC.
- MEA importance varies with the PM's interest, and has been losing ground to the **PMO**. Under Nehru — PM and EAM at once — the Prime Minister's Secretariat became the centre of decision-making.
- Since the late 1980s → **economic diplomacy** capabilities: the Economic Diplomacy Division, Multilateral Economic Relations, and centres for ASEAN and BIMSTEC.
- The **Policy Planning and Research Division** collects inputs from missions, the IDSA and ICWA, CII, FICCI and ASSOCHAM, academia and specialists.

Challenges before the MEA

"In this emerging new world, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) can no longer maintain its Cold War-era institutional infrastructure." — **Harsh V. Pant**

Challenge	What it means
Shortage of diplomats	A little over 900 — far fewer than Brazil (1,200), the UK (6,000) and the US State Department (over 20,000).
No institutionalised policy planning	Policy is largely Prime Minister-centric.
Separate cadres not absorbed	Career diplomats handle everything; the Commerce and Environment ministries have sought separate cadres of commercial and environment counsellors.
Overloaded circuits (Kishan S. Rana)	The ministry handles a couple of major challenges at a time; areas like Africa and South-East Asia slip in priority.
Hierarchical subculture	Decision-making is delegated upwards; junior officers exercise far less power than Western counterparts.
Lack of accountability	The 2nd ARC noted that "the present multi-layered organizational structure with fragmented decision-making leads to a culture of alibis for non-performance."

Improper coordination

The **Shashi Tharoor** committee urged that MEA–Defence–Finance coordination be encouraged, not seen as an encroachment of turf; it recommended lateral entry and language expertise.

The 2020 overhaul

Seven Additional Secretaries empowered along verticals (culture, trade and development), with experts drawn from the private sector. **Harsh V. Pant** → the multilateral vertical must coordinate with other ministries and federal units for synergy.

16 The Indian Foreign Service · the Pillai Committee

The IFS is the **permanent bureaucracy** of career diplomats, working with the PMO, the NSC and others in the formulation and implementation of foreign policy.

- Selected through the UPSC; the **Foreign Secretary** is the permanent head. Embassies collect information not openly available in the host country.
- India is served by the **smallest diplomatic corps of any major country** — the fewest among the BRICS. An official source puts the corps at around **1,750 officers** (roughly 750 IFS Grade-A, 250 Grade-B, plus attachés).
- India's corps is roughly equal to tiny Singapore's; its numerical strength for projecting influence befitting an emerging power is questionable.

"India is served by the smallest diplomatic corps of any major country, not just far smaller than the big powers but by comparison with most of the larger emerging countries." — Shashi Tharoor

The Pillai Committee (1965)

- PM **Shastri** appointed a committee on the foreign service headed by **N.R. Pillai** in **1965** to review structure, recruitment, training and service conditions. Most of the ills it examined remain relevant.
- Four weaknesses** → the corps is not large enough and lacks wide professional experience; poor coordination among officials; limited and inadequate professional training; weak inter-ministerial coordination.
- Suggestions** → increase the manned force and select older professionals; revive the post of **secretary-general**; improve coordination, training and specialisation; strengthen economic and commercial expertise through **lateral entry** — climate change needs scientific expertise that generalists cannot provide.
- Shashi Tharoor** → frugal staffing reveals a country punching well below its weight.

"IFS and MEA have strengths in terms of the individual level competences of its officers but also a range of weaknesses particularly at the organisational and systemic levels, the most tractable and remediable weaknesses being at the organisational level." — Kanti Bajpai and Byron Chung

17 The Prime Minister's Office

A parliamentary form of government often works like a **prime ministerial** one, in which the PM and the PMO are decisive. The PMO includes officials on deputation from the MEA.

- Structure** → the principal secretary, the NSA, an additional PS, a secretary, two additional secretaries, five joint secretaries and others.
- Under **Nehru** (1947–64) the Prime Minister's Secretariat had a low profile — he retained the MEA and handled policy himself. **Shastri**, less acquainted with foreign affairs, brought the Secretariat to prominence.
- PMO dominance became evident under **Indira Gandhi** → the PMO absorbed functions previously with other ministries, giving the PM greater control over both domestic and foreign policy.
- No PM can decide every issue alone → only issues vital to security, foreign policy goals, economic development or the party's standing are decided in the PM's office. The PM can appoint **special envoys** (climate change, the India–US nuclear talks, Af–Pak, disarmament); Indira Gandhi used an envoy for the **India–Soviet Friendship Treaty (1971)**.
- Major initiatives have come from a leader's political capital → Indira Gandhi's realism and USSR ties; Rajiv Gandhi's liberalisation and the reversal on the China border; the **Gujral Doctrine**; Manmohan Singh's emphasis on a 'multi-polar Asia' and India as a 'responsible' great power; Narasimha Rao's strategic weapons programme; Vajpayee's economic liberalisation; Modi's **Neighbourhood First** policy.
- The role of the **NSA** and principal secretaries has grown → **Brajesh Mishra** functioned as NSA even before the formal role, provoking reactions that the NSA was overshadowing the EAM.
- Harish Kapur** (*Foreign Policies of India's Prime Ministers*) → since independence the MEA has largely remained secondary to the PMO, as India never had a charismatic Foreign Minister powerful enough to leave an imprint.
- NSA **Ajit Doval** holds a similarly powerful position today → Act East and Neighbourhood First were initiated by the PM and PMO and coordinated by the MEA, and the Pakistan policy of **Offensive Defence (the Doval Doctrine)** is shaped by the NSA.

18 Media and Pressure Groups

Media — print, electronic, internet and social — performs both **information aggregation and dissemination**: it conveys public demands to the leadership and carries policy to the masses, while the government seeks to build consensus.

- Against the **realist** view that downplays non-state actors, **liberalism** and **constructivism** value media and pressure groups in constructing perceptions and exerting soft power.
- The MEA's **Public Diplomacy Division** and **External Publicity Division** manage what has been called India's 'media diplomacy', 'soundbite diplomacy', 'instant diplomacy' and 'real-time diplomacy'.
- Media–policy relations are a **two-way street** → the government guides information; the media nudges policy through reportage and commentary.

- **Noam Chomsky** → we live in webs of deceit, in an indoctrinated society; the principal role of media is to “**manufacture consent**” for foreign policy. **Piers Robinson** → media influences policy only when the policy is uncertain and coverage is framed to advocate a particular course.
- **Hurdles** → lack of expertise in reporting, poor editorial supervision, and the distortion of news to attract an audience.

Indian media and foreign policy-making

- **Manoj Joshi** (*The Media in the Making of Indian Foreign Policy*) → two phases: **1947–1990**, state-controlled dissemination; **1991 onwards**, ownership diversified alongside LPG and the internet, and open criticism of policy became possible.
- The **Kargil conflict (1999)** → private cable journalists bypassed controls, triggering a wave of nationalism and beginning the empowerment of the media.
- The **26 November 2008 Mumbai attack** → uncontrolled, near real-time coverage aided the terrorists’ actions.

Evaluation

- The “**CNN effect**” → the ‘accelerant effect’ of a 24-hour media environment that presses on decision-making and impairs both intelligence-gathering and response formation.
- Bombardment of information and the chase for TRPs can compromise operational security (WikiLeaks and classified information).
- Media shapes the domestic image of foreign countries — the negative image of Pakistan and China. Indian media depend on foreign news agencies, buying footage and using stringers.
- With the **end of consensual foreign policy** (the Indo-US nuclear deal), media became an **arbiter** rather than a **reporter** among contending views.
- Media provides a forum for the diaspora (remittances, lobbying) and has become an autonomous business player, sometimes adopting contrarian positions.

Pressure groups

- Pressure groups are **normally weak** in influencing foreign policy compared with domestic policy, yet they sometimes matter.
- Friendship societies (the Indo-Soviet Friendship Society) maintain contacts in the MEA and Parliament.
- India delayed diplomatic relations with Israel from **1948 to 1992** owing to the activities of certain interest groups.

19 National Security Council

Indian national security policy-making has suffered from two drawbacks → it is highly **ad hoc** and lacks **effective coordination**.

- **Dinesh Singh** (EAM under Indira Gandhi) → much of foreign policy involved responding to others rather than proactive determination; the reason was the personality factor, as PMs like Nehru, Indira and Rajiv Gandhi believed they had answers to every crisis. A minister can never be an expert like a trained foreign service officer.
- The flaws of the ad-hoc setup showed in the **1962 war**. **K.P. Mishra** and **K. Subrahmanyam** were among the earliest to suggest a **National Security Council** — Mishra also urging an Expert Advisory Committee and policy planning.
- Measures were initiated by PMs **V.P. Singh** and **Narasimha Rao** in the later 1990s, but the NSC took final shape under **Vajpayee**.
- **Shivshankar Menon** → foreign policy is **MINIMAXING**: minimising risks and maximising benefits; the NSC is central to protecting India’s security and strategic interests.

National Security Council — the three tiers under the Prime Minister

NSC — chaired by the Prime Minister

Ministers of External Affairs, Defence, Home and Finance · NSA (Secretary, rank of Cabinet minister) · Deputy Chairman, NITI Aayog



SPG

Strategic Planning Group — headed by the Cabinet Secretary; topmost decision-making body at the bureaucratic level; formulates and implements strategic policy; arbitrates between ministries

NSAB

National Security Advisory Board — professionals, academics, scientists, administrative experts, retired bureaucrats; long-term analysis and perspectives

JIC

Joint Intelligence Committee — inputs from the IB, R&AW and military intelligence directorates; highest intelligence assessment organisation; inter-agency coordination

Deliberative, created by executive action — the executive body is the CCS

- **Mandate** → advise and assist the PM; formulate national security strategies, the basis for national military strategy; integrate strategic information from agencies, the armed forces and think-tanks — as in the Balakot response.
- **Growing importance of the NSA** → advising on external affairs and security, balancing foreign policy and security interests, opening new channels of intelligence, and arbitrating between ministries.

Issues with the NSC

- **Absence of a National Security Doctrine** → the NSAB drafted national security strategy documents on four occasions, but a lingering worry about a ‘commitment trap’ delayed publication.
- The NSC **rarely meets** → it is an **advisory** body, while the **CCS** is the executive body.
- **P.V. Narasimha Rao** found the NSC pointless in India, holding that its concept suited a **presidential** system, whereas in India the cabinet is supreme.

Assessment

- **Suggestions** → the NSC should have **legislative backing** (as in the USA) for accountability and independence; the JIC should be one unit under an administrative body rather than a central decision-making unit.

- The NSC has brought in expert and non-official views; strategic thinking is now **institutionalised**; the NSAB provided support such as the **draft nuclear policy of 1999**.
- With external terrorism, two antagonistic neighbours and internal threats, the role of the NSA and NSC is significant — but the body needs to be more empowered by legislation and more inclusive. Final decisions rest with the PM and the CCS.

UPSC 2020 - 10m Describe the structure and function of the National Security Council of India. What role does it play in the formulation of Indian foreign policy?

20 Think-Tanks and Universities

Think-tanks and universities aid policy analysis through research papers and briefs. These non-governmental, non-profit bodies carry a **blend of theory and practice**, staffed by researchers, former diplomats and practitioners.

- **Amitabh Mattoo** and **Rory Medcalf** → although India's think-tanks and universities have shaped policy at decisive moments, they have generally been **less influential than expected** in a democracy; their research often lacks the rigour of Western counterparts.
- The overarching reasons → **government apathy and secrecy**; a powerful bureaucracy that guards the policy reins; and the **impracticability of scholars** who have distanced themselves from the hard realities of foreign policy.
- India has notionally the **4th largest number of think-tanks** in the world, after the US, China and the UK — but most do not significantly influence policy, and quality is mixed and often below world standards.
- Constraints → the **Official Secrets Act**, no systematic timeline for declassification, and the reluctance of bureaucrats to speak candidly. **Sanjay Baru** → most organisations offer little in the key area of middle-level intellectual leadership; funding is another challenge.

The hubs of 'second-track' diplomacy — increasingly undertaken by the CII

- **ICWA** — Indian Council for World Affairs: the oldest, established **1943**; hosted the **Asian Relations Conference (1947)**; explored the 'Indo-Pacific' construct (2013).
- **IDSA** — Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses: founded **1965**; India's leading think-tank on strategic issues.
- **ORF** — Observer Research Foundation: funded by Reliance; a partner of choice for high-level second-track dialogues.
- The government increasingly recognises their expertise → the MEA convenes dialogue with scholars, and the NSAB engages external experts.

Universities

- **Kanti Bajpai** → during the Nehruvian era domestic academia feared Nehru's aura and knowledge on International Relations and remained trapped in an **intellectual vacuum**, believing they could not engage him as equals → state policy was rarely analysed objectively, and academics rationalised the official position.
- Nehru was also an **institution builder** → under his patronage **Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru** founded the **ICWA (1943)**, which helped set up the **Indian School of International Studies (1955)** at the University of Delhi — later the **School of International Studies, JNU (1970)** — the Department of African Studies at Delhi, and the Department of International Relations at Jadavpur (1956). International Studies is now taught in about **150 universities**.
- **Mattoo** and **Medcalf** → individual scholars of excellence exist across India but operate solo; the scholarly activity has yet to produce the **scholar-practitioners** who enrich US debates.
- Indian scholars are still not able to question the state's external policies; those with a different view fear sanction and professional disadvantage; a secretive bureaucracy withholds data, and weak infrastructure leaves India under-supplied with policy analysts.

21 The Private and Business Sector · the Diaspora

As per **Rajiv Kumar**, in the first three decades after independence — until the mid-1980s — the role of the private and business sector was **marginal**.

- **Reasons** → a closed, **autarkic** development model; the predominance of public-sector enterprises; a smaller private-sector share, leaving FICCI, CII and ASSOCHAM marginal; the socialist and non-aligned stance during the Cold War; and the sector's own existential struggle.
- **Post-liberalisation** → with Rajiv Gandhi and the reforms the private sector sought an increased role, aided by multilateral trade negotiations, engagement with SAARC and ASEAN, and FTAs.
- **Current status** → the sector is still finding its place, with limited tangible influence except where it converges with the official stance. It needs higher norms of self-regulation; its protectionist and mercantilist tendencies sit uneasily with the government's thrust towards openness.

The diaspora

- Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) and Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs) have a growing role. The government treats the diaspora as an asset for promoting India's priorities globally, and seeks to put its **remittances, lobbying and representative power** to work.
- Successive governments have attempted to harness the diaspora's influence in host states.

C CONTINUITY, CHANGE AND THE DEBATES

Evolution, not rupture — and the arguments UPSC keeps returning to

22 Continuity — what has never changed

Permanent factors (geography, history, culture) impart **continuity**; dynamic factors (domestic and geopolitical change) cause **change**. Foreign policy evolves gradually, not in sharp breaks with the past.

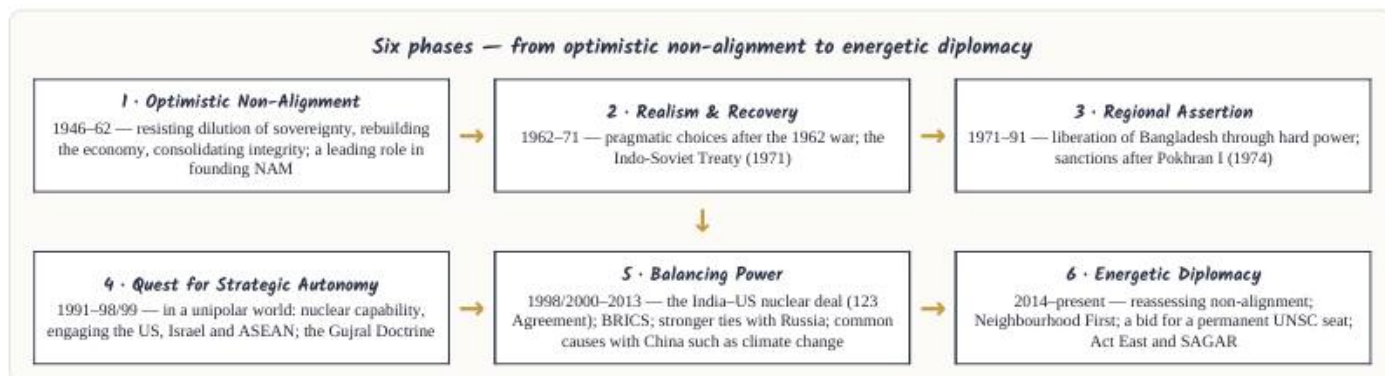
Enduring interests, values and objectives → preservation of territorial integrity and independence, promotion of international peace and security, and economic

development. The core continuing values:

- **Non-alignment** → independence from military blocs; abstentions from Cold-War-era votes and again on Russia–Ukraine.
- **Multilateralism** → active participation in the G20, BRICS and the SCO.
- **Strategic autonomy** → independent decision-making; refusal to join alliances like NATO; balanced relations with Russia and the US.
- **Development cooperation** → the ITEC programme and concessional lines of credit as soft power.
- **Democratic principles and peaceful co-existence.**

23 Change — the phases of India's foreign policy

India's foreign policy has evolved through distinct phases, following **S. Jaishankar's** classification.



Is 'energetic diplomacy' a justified label?

- Each earlier phase has a neat description; the current one is harder to categorise because India is still in the early phase of a major transition, with the near future not yet clear.
- Jaishankar rests the present phase on **Indian aspirations** and the goal of emerging as a **leading power**, recognising a world of convergences and issue-based arrangements.
- The India Way → treat the world as a **'transactional bazaar'** and major powers as **'frenemies'**, basing partnerships on interests, not idealism.

"Engage America, manage China, cultivate Europe, reassure Russia, bring Japan into play, draw neighbours in, extend the neighbourhood and expand traditional constituencies of support." — **S. Jaishankar**

- Markers of energetic diplomacy → leadership of the **Global South**, a refined Indo-Pacific strategy, and plurilateral activism (BRICS, G20, SCO); the goal of **Viksit Bharat by 2047**.
- **Critical view** → the label registers greater activism and risk-taking, but core objectives — autonomy, security, development — show strong continuity; the government has run ahead of Track-II (media, think-tanks, academia).
- **Overall** → the phases show adaptability and pragmatism; 'energetic diplomacy' is a justified description of intensity and ambition, though it is an evolving and still-contested category rather than a settled doctrine.

UPSC 2025 · 20m Critically analyse the different phases of India's foreign policy since independence. How justified, do you think, is S. Jaishankar's classification of the current phase as the phase of 'energetic diplomacy'?

24 The Three Change Debates — qualitative shift, post-Cold War turnaround, Nehruvianism to Neoliberalism

A. Qualitative shift from previous regimes

- PM Modi has claimed to make India a **leading power** — a qualitative step beyond India's earlier role as a **balancing power**.
- Institutional and strategic markers → the rise of the **Quad**, the **JAI trilateral**, Act East, foundational agreements with the US, and **SAGAR** in the Indian Ocean.
- **Ronak Desai** → India no longer sees the Palestine conflict in zero-sum terms. **Harsh V. Pant** → India's West Asia engagement has jettisoned the traditional balancing approach, with deeper ties with the UAE and Saudi Arabia.
- A firmer posture → the Doklam stand-off, surgical strikes, and pre-emptive strikes in Pakistan.
- Continuities that qualify the shift → Gandhian idealism, the Gujral Doctrine with some neighbours, strategic autonomy, and South–South cooperation.
- **C. Raja Mohan** (*Modi's World*) → Modi's foreign policy heralds the **"Third Republic"** — after the Nehruvian era and the Manmohan era of economic reform.
- The change is one of **pace, ambition and risk-appetite** more than a wholesale break with core national interests; qualitative shifts are real, but they build on continuities of strategic autonomy and civilisational identity.

UPSC 2018 · 10m "India's current foreign policy marks significant qualitative shifts from that of previous regimes." Discuss.

B. The post-Cold War turnaround

- The turnaround arose from **systemic shocks, domestic economic stress, and a reframed doctrine** that recast older ideals for a new order.

“The collapse of the Soviet Union and the concomitant end of the Cold War...forced India’s policymakers to make drastic changes” · “nonalignment ceased to have much meaning.” — **Sumit Ganguly**

- The **1991 fiscal crisis** — oil prices after Kuwait’s invasion, mass repatriation from the Gulf, loss of remittances → abandoning import-substituting industrialisation and dismantling regulations.
- **Nirupama Rao** → the quest for strategic autonomy was driven by sustained economic growth, energy and maritime security, and access to technology, achieved by forging well-rounded relationships with all major powers.
- The post-Nehruvian discourse **translates non-alignment into strategic autonomy** and favours **multi-alignment** in a polycentric order.
- **Shivshankar Menon** → sovereignty and territorial integrity remain the foundation of the international system — revealing limits in adopting coercive norms like R2P.
- Outcome → the **Indo-US civil nuclear agreement**, a recognition of India’s emerging great-power potential.
- **Critical view** → crisis-driven liberalisation combined with strategic autonomy and identity-based continuities, even as tensions between sovereignty and universalist claims persist.

UPSC 2022 · 15m Critically examine the major factors responsible for a turnaround in the trajectory of India’s foreign policy in the post-Cold War period.

C. Nehruvianism to Neoliberalism

- **Nehruvian foreign policy** → non-alignment, anti-colonialism and peaceful co-existence; leadership of NAM; refusal to join NATO or the Warsaw Pact. **Rajiv Sikri** → Nehru sought sovereignty and strategic autonomy while supporting global peace and disarmament.
- **Transition** → the **1991 economic liberalisation** marked the beginning of a shift where economic growth, globalisation and pragmatic engagement took centre stage.
- The **US–India Civil Nuclear Deal (2008)** → a symbol of the shift from a non-aligned posture to a pragmatic strategic partnership.
- **C. Raja Mohan** and **Harsh V. Pant** → India began to prioritise economic and strategic interests in an interconnected, multipolar world.
- Neoliberal markers → economic diplomacy, the WTO, multiple FTAs, and **Act East** deepening ties with ASEAN and Japan. Strategic partnerships → **LEMOA** with the US, the **Rafale** deal with France, and participation in the **Quad**.
- Continuities → caution about fully aligning with any power; strategic autonomy; South–South cooperation; egalitarian stands at climate and trade forums.
- **Shyam Saran** → strategic autonomy remains the guiding principle, but the means have changed. **Ashley J. Tellis** → India’s approach is flexible, forming partnerships without rigid ideological commitments.
- **Conclusion** → India is moving towards a neoliberal outlook, but realist factors defining its national interest will continue to dictate the pace; it is not a prisoner to any single stream.

UPSC 2024 · 20m Would you concur with the view that of late, India’s foreign policy has been in a transition mode from Nehruvianism to Neoliberalism? Support your answer with the help of suitable examples.

D. Major features of the 21st-century policy

Feature	Content
Multi-alignment	Strategic autonomy alongside strategic partnerships with the US, Russia, France, Japan and ASEAN (C. Raja Mohan).
Neighbourhood First	Peaceful co-existence, connectivity and development cooperation with immediate neighbours.
Act East	A strategic shift from Look East, deepening ties with South-East and East Asia to balance China’s influence.
Economic diplomacy	Make in India, Digital India, FTAs and regional trade arrangements (Harsh V. Pant).
Multilateralism	The UN, BRICS, G20 and SCO; reform of institutions and a UNSC bid (Shashi Tharoor).
Security and counterterrorism	The Quad, maritime security, and cooperation against state-sponsored terrorism (C. Uday Bhaskar on defence modernisation).
Healthcare and climate	Vaccine diplomacy and the International Solar Alliance.
Diaspora and narrative	Soft power and constructs like the Indo-Pacific.

Overall → a shift from a non-aligned, reactive approach to a proactive, multi-vector one, combining traditional principles with contemporary priorities.

UPSC 2023 · 10m Explain the major features of India’s Foreign Policy in the 21st century.

25 The Strategic Culture Debate

Jack Snyder coined ‘**strategic culture**’ in 1977 — the set of principles, conditioned emotional reactions and habitual behaviour a strategic community shares regarding strategy.

- **George K. Tanham** (*Indian Strategic Thought*, 1992) → India lacked a strategic culture, tracing this to four influences — geography, history, culture and the British Raj — plus the Hindu concept of ‘time’ discouraging planning, and Indians being kept out of strategic circles → foreign policy that is **reactive rather than proactive**.
- Rebuttal by **Shivshankar Menon** → India has always been an independent actor; it practises **frugal diplomacy**, economical in entanglements but not engagements; a pluralistic, secular, defensive security perspective.
- India’s contributions to strategic thought → the *Arthashastra*, non-alignment, Panchsheel, the Indo-Pacific vision; Nehru’s non-alignment drew on Kautilya’s

mandala of concentric circles.

- **Bharat Karnad** → the Chinese **Wei-qi** model scores over India's less-engaged, mandala-infused approach; strategic autonomy has led to strategic diminution.
- **David Malone** → the absence of a "grand strategy" has been advantageous — the ability to improvise fits a pragmatic international stance.
- The way ahead → **multi-sum security** (national, transnational, human, environmental, transcultural) replacing zero-sum games.
- **Shivshankar Menon** stresses the need for India's diplomatic-strategic-academic community to develop its own perspectives (**Raja Menon** and **Rajiv Kumar**, *The Long View from Delhi*).

Does India have a strategic culture? — the fault line

NO STRATEGIC CULTURE

reactive, not proactive — geography, history, culture, the Raj

George K. Tanham · **Bharat Karnad** — the mandala loses to **Wei-qi**; strategic autonomy has meant strategic diminution



A DISTINCT ONE

independent actor — frugal diplomacy, improvisation as advantage

Shivshankar Menon · **David Malone** — *Arthashastra*, non-alignment, Panchsheel, the Indo-Pacific vision

Snyder coined the term in 1977 · the way ahead: multi-sum security over zero-sum games

UPSC 2018 · 10m

"India is often said to have a rich strategic culture." Discuss.

26 Conclusion

- India's foreign policy is the outcome of many determinants — geography, history, culture, social structure, economy, leadership, domestic milieu, defence and security, and the international situation — interacting at different levels of analysis.
- Permanent factors impart continuity; dynamic factors bring change → the movement from Nehruvian idealism to a pragmatic multi-alignment is best read as **evolution, not rupture**.
- Policy-making remains **leadership-driven**, working through the dominant power base of the PMO and the influence of the Prime Minister over institutions such as the MEA. At the same time the institutional base is undoubtedly **broadening**, as India's expanding international interaction demands more disparate voices — Parliament and the states, the NSC, think-tanks and universities, business and the diaspora.
- Across every phase, **strategic autonomy** has remained the defining value, adapted to a vastly transformed international order.

27 Power Quotes

"Foreign policy of a country is a statement of what it stands for and the role that it takes upon itself and projects to the world at large." — **J.N. Dixit**

"Any country's foreign policy is determined by its geography." — **Napoleon Bonaparte**

"We can change our history but not our geography." — **Atal Bihari Vajpayee**

Pacifism is "the deliberate acceptance of a method of approach to foreign policy problems which emphasised reconciliation, and the temper of peace, as opposed to a spirit of revenge and hatred." — **A. Appadorai**

"I am entirely in the hands of the House." — **Jawaharlal Nehru**, March 1948

"India's foreign policy was always a leadership function and more often than not did not command a consensus." — **K. Subrahmanyam**

"India is served by the smallest diplomatic corps of any major country, not just far smaller than the big powers but by comparison with most of the larger emerging countries." — **Shashi Tharoor**

"In this emerging new world, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) can no longer maintain its Cold War-era institutional infrastructure." — **Harsh V. Pant**

"Nonalignment ceased to have much meaning." — **Sumit Ganguly**

"Engage America, manage China, cultivate Europe, reassure Russia, bring Japan into play, draw neighbours in, extend the neighbourhood and expand traditional constituencies of support." — **S. Jaishankar**

28 Scholar Index

Daron Acemoglu · Talmiz Ahmad · Alcibiades · A. Appadorai · Aurobindo · Girija Shankar Bajpai · Kanti Bajpai · Sanjay Baru · C. Uday Bhaskar · Napoleon Bonaparte · Rudra Chaudhuri · Noam Chomsky · Byron Chung · Churchill · Stephen P. Cohen · Neelam Deo · Ronak Desai · J.N. Dixit · Ajit Doval · M.K. Gandhi · Indira Gandhi · Rajiv Gandhi · Sumit Ganguly · Gramsci · Y.D. Gundevia · S. Jaishankar · Manoj Joshi · Devesh Kapur · Harish Kapur · Tariq Karim · Bharat Karnad · Kautilya · Robert Keohane · John Kincaid · Rajiv Kumar · Machiavelli · Mackinder · Tanvi Madan · Alfred T. Mahan · David Malone · Amitabh Mattoo · John Mearsheimer · Rory Medcalf · Krishna Menon · Raja Menon · Shivshankar Menon · Brajesh Mishra · K.P. Mishra · Narendra Modi · C. Raja Mohan · Hans Morgenthau · Laura Neack · Jawaharlal Nehru · Joseph Nye · N.D. Palmer · K.M. Panikkar · Harsh V. Pant · Sardar Patel · Pericles · N.R. Pillai · Pallavi Raghavan · Srinath Raghavan · Kishan S. Rana · P.V. Narasimha Rao · Nirupama Rao · James Robinson · Piers Robinson · James Rosenau · Tej Bahadur Sapru · Shyam Saran · Teresita Schaffer · Lal Bahadur Shastri · Rajiv Sikri · Dinesh Singh · Manmohan Singh · V.P. Singh · Jack Snyder · Spykman · K. Subrahmanyam · Sun Tzu · Tagore · George K. Tanham · Ashley J. Tellis · Shashi Tharoor · Thucydides · Atal Bihari Vajpayee · Andres Velasco · Swami Vivekananda · Kenneth Waltz · Zhou Enlai

29 UPSC Asked

- UPSC 2016 · 10m** Which determinant factors play an important role in making India's foreign policy? Illustrate with examples.
- UPSC 2016 · 15m** Discuss the shift of India's foreign policy towards Pakistan in the light of the Pathankot incident.
- UPSC 2017 · 10m** Examine the Indian National Movement and geographical location of India as determinants of India's foreign policy.
- UPSC 2018 · 10m** Do you agree with the view that Indian Foreign Policy is increasingly being shaped by the Neoliberal outlook? Elaborate.
- UPSC 2018 · 10m** "India is often said to have a rich strategic culture." Discuss.
- UPSC 2018 · 10m** "India's current foreign policy marks significant qualitative shifts from that of previous regimes." Discuss.
- UPSC 2019 · 10m** Examine the role of 'parliamentary diplomacy' in India's foreign policy.
- UPSC 2020 · 10m** Describe the structure and function of the National Security Council of India. What role does it play in the formulation of Indian foreign policy?
- UPSC 2021 · 10m** Explain the philosophical foundations of India's foreign policy.
- UPSC 2021 · 15m** How do the constituent states influence the foreign policy-making process in India?
- UPSC 2022 · 10m** Peaceful co-existence remains the cornerstone of India's foreign policy. Comment.
- UPSC 2022 · 15m** Critically examine the major factors responsible for a turnaround in the trajectory of India's foreign policy in the post-Cold War period.
- UPSC 2023 · 10m** Explain the major features of India's Foreign Policy in the 21st century.
- UPSC 2023 · 20m** What are the external determinants of the Foreign Policy of a State?
- UPSC 2024 · 20m** Would you concur with the view that of late, India's foreign policy has been in a transition mode from Nehruvianism to Neoliberalism? Support your answer with the help of suitable examples.
- UPSC 2025 · 20m** Critically analyse the different phases of India's foreign policy since independence. How justified, do you think, is S. Jaishankar's classification of the current phase as the phase of 'energetic diplomacy'?

30 Today's Practice — write before the evening

- UPSC 2025 · 20m** Critically analyse the different phases of India's foreign policy since independence. How justified, do you think, is S. Jaishankar's classification of the current phase as the phase of 'energetic diplomacy'?
- UPSC 2023 · 20m** What are the external determinants of the Foreign Policy of a State?
- UPSC 2020 · 10m** Describe the structure and function of the National Security Council of India. What role does it play in the formulation of Indian foreign policy?

Model answers to these three go up tonight on the Telegram channel — [@psirbyamitpratap](#). Write first, compare after — that is where the marks are made. **Don't break the chain.**

See you tomorrow with Day 40 — India & the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).