



UNIVERSITY OF DELHI

B.A. (Programme) | Political Science | Semester I

INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY

MINOR PAPER | DSC-2B

Post-Independence Era | Study Notes and Question Answers

Determinants of Foreign Policy | Non-Alignment Movement

UNSC Reform | India-China Economic Relations

Cross-Border Terrorism | Nuclear Policy

WTO | SAARC | Indo-US Strategic Partnership



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UNIT 1: DETERMINING FACTORS OF INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY

Introduction

The formulation of India's foreign policy in the post-independence era is not merely a collection of diplomatic decisions but the result of a calculated sum of national interests and the resources deployed to achieve them. Understanding these determining factors is crucial because they provide the framework through which India navigates an increasingly uncertain, complex, and challenging 21st century environment marked by power asymmetries and multidimensional security challenges.

Following its independence in 1947, India had to re-establish itself in a bipolar world while simultaneously addressing deep-seated colonial scars that had shattered its economy and social fabric. This evaluation covers domestic determinants as well as international determinants like the shift from bipolarity to multipolarity and the rise of global challenges such as terrorism and climate change.

A. Domestic Determinants

1. Philosophical and Civilizational Foundations

India's foreign policy is deeply rooted in its rich civilizational legacy and the desire to be an aspirational power, often encapsulated in the idea of Bharat as a Vishwa Guru (World Leader). This vision implies leading the world based on spiritual and cultural values rather than just material power. A central guiding principle is Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (the whole world is one family), which encourages the pursuit of a shared destiny and has influenced India's advocacy for global development goals within the United Nations.

2. Geostrategic Positioning

Geography serves as a permanent determinant, with India occupying a central and asymmetrical position in the South Asian region. This unique geostrategic positioning has acquired greater significance in contemporary times, allowing India to act as a 'net security provider' and a 'swing state' capable of altering the global power hierarchy. Its long coastline and proximity to critical maritime routes like the Malacca Strait further dictate a foreign policy that prioritises maritime domain awareness and a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific.

3. Economic Development and Resources

The pursuit of economic growth has necessitated several paradigm shifts in foreign policy. In the initial decades, India followed a policy of import substitution and a state-regulated license-quota-permit raj. However, the fiscal crisis of 1991 forced a transition toward liberalisation, privatisation, and globalisation (LPG), leading Indian diplomats to engage more deeply with Western markets. Today, India is the 5th largest global economy, and its trade priorities in the G20 and BRICS are vital determinants of its external engagements.

4. Political Leadership and Institutional Framework

The nature of India's parliamentary democracy places the responsibility of making and implementing foreign policy on the executive branch, led by the Prime Minister and the Ministry of External Affairs. Different leadership eras have defined distinct phases:

- **Nehruvian Phase (1947-1962):** Characterised as the idealistic phase, focusing on non-alignment (NAM), decolonisation, and Asian solidarity.
- **Realistic Shift (1962-1991):** Post the 1962 India-China war, policy shifted toward self-help and military modernisation, exemplified by the 1974 nuclear test and the 1971 Indo-Soviet treaty.
- **Pragmatic / Modi Phase (2014 onwards):** Defined by the Panchamrit approach: Samman (dignity), Samvad (dialogue), Samridhi (prosperity), Suraksha (security), and Sanskriti (culture).

B. International Determinants

1. The International System

External realities, such as the nature of the international system, significantly shape India's choices. During the Cold War, India navigated the bipolar rivalry between the US and USSR through the Non-Alignment Movement to preserve its independence. In the post-Cold War era, the emergence of a multipolar world has allowed India to pursue strategic autonomy, enabling it to maintain special and privileged partnerships with Russia while simultaneously becoming a strategic partner of the US.

2. Global Security and Alliances

External threats, including border disputes with China and Pakistan and the rise of international terrorism, have forced a shift toward military modernisation and self-help posturing. India now actively participates in defence forums and bilateral agreements to ensure territorial integrity.

3. Multilateral Institutions

India's active role in forums like the UN, G20, BRICS, and the QUAD allows it to voice claims for global governance reform, such as a permanent seat on the UN Security Council. These forums serve as platforms to advocate for a rules-based international order.

Exam Tip: When answering questions on this unit, link domestic stability and economic growth to India's ability to alter the power hierarchy of nations. For comprehensive notes, visit claritywire.in.

UNIT 2: NON-ALIGNMENT IN THE POST-COLD WAR ERA

Introduction

The formulation of non-alignment as a core objective of India's foreign policy was a direct response to the bipolar world of the Cold War, intended to preserve India's newly acquired independence by avoiding entanglement in superpower rivalries. Following the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the subsequent shift from bipolarity to a complex multipolar order, the relevance of this principle has come under intense scrutiny.

Understanding whether non-alignment has diminished or simply evolved is vital because it explains how India now navigates as a 'swing state' capable of altering the global power hierarchy.

Arguments in Favour of Diminished Relevance

1. End of Bipolar Logic

The primary systemic constraint that necessitated non-alignment was the rivalry between the US and USSR. With the Cold War's end, the fundamental question became: non-alignment against whom? The original rationale has ceased to exist in its classical form.

2. Shift Toward Pragmatism

In its third and fourth historical phases, India's policy has become increasingly pragmatic and realistic, moving away from the idealistic phase associated with the early NAM era. Trade-offs are now made based on national interest rather than ideological solidarity.

3. Issue-Based Alignment

In the contemporary world, India's foreign policy is shaped more by functional needs and mutual gains rather than rigid bloc memberships. The shift toward issue-based alignments with like-minded states allows India to engage in forums like the QUAD and SCO simultaneously, which would have been seen as a compromise of traditional non-alignment.

4. Strategic Partnerships

The paradigm shift in relations with the United States, recognizing India as a strategic partner and natural ally, indicates a move toward deep bilateral cooperation that transcends the Cold War-era distance maintained by NAM.

Arguments Against Diminished Relevance

1. Adaptation to New Challenges

Rather than fading away, the Non-Aligned Movement has adapted by focusing on 21st century issues such as climate change, poverty alleviation, and global governance reform. NAM now serves as a platform for collective advocacy by developing nations.

2. Voice for the Global South

NAM remains a successful platform for India to provide moral and political support to postcolonial and newly independent countries, helping them resist foreign interference. India's leadership in the Global South narrative is a direct extension of NAM values.

3. Transition to Strategic Autonomy

The core spirit of non-alignment has been rebranded as strategic autonomy: the ability of a state to pursue its national interests without being constrained by other states. This allows India to maintain a special and privileged

partnership with Russia while being a strategic partner to the US.

4. Mediator Role

India's stance in the Russia-Ukraine conflict, where it refused to take sides or join sanctions, demonstrates that the principle of not being a party to great power conflicts remains a realistic security strategy and a hallmark of the non-aligned spirit.

Conclusion

While the traditional form of non-alignment as a Cold War-era bloc has arguably diminished, its underlying objective remains highly relevant as the foundation for modern strategic autonomy. India has successfully navigated from being a dependent actor to a swing state that uses its civilizational ethos of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam to foster a stable, multipolar world.

Exam Tip: Justify how India continues a realistic foreign policy positioning without abandoning the values of democracy and non-violence that originally defined the non-aligned movement. For more resources, visit claritywire.in.

UNIT 3: UNSC REFORM — INDIA'S STAND

Introduction

The structure of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is a frequent subject of critique in contemporary international relations, as it largely reflects the geopolitical realities of 1945 rather than the complex, multipolar environment of the 21st century. Following the end of the Cold War, the shift from bipolarity to a more fragmented global order has exposed significant power asymmetries within international institutions.

India, as an emerging swing state and the world's largest democracy, views the current structure as an outdated mechanism that lacks representativeness and democratic legitimacy.

The Argument for Contemporary Reality

India argues that for the United Nations to remain effective and solve multidimensional security challenges such as international terrorism and climate change, its governing bodies must reflect the current distribution of global power. As the 5th largest global economy with a rich civilizational ethos, India is a legitimate candidate for permanent membership. By excluding India, the UNSC fails to incorporate a significant net security provider that represents nearly one-sixth of the global population.

Diplomatic Strategy: The G4 and Multilateralism

To address the structural imbalance, India has adopted a strategy of issue-based alignment and multilateralism. A primary implementation of this is India's role in the Group of Four (G4), alongside Japan, Germany, and Brazil. These nations collectively voice their claims for permanent seats, arguing that the Council's expansion is necessary to make the UN fully democratic and representative.

Furthermore, India utilizes its leadership in forums like the G20, BRICS, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) to advocate for the reform of global governance institutions.

Impediments to Reform

- **P5 Politics:** The existing Permanent Five (P5) members often engage in power politics to maintain the status quo and protect their veto power.
- **Charter Provisions:** The legal requirements for amending the UN Charter make the expansion process inherently difficult.
- **Regional Rivalry:** Disagreements regarding the size and nature of expansion are often fueled by regional competitors who oppose the rise of their neighbours.
- **Lack of Consensus:** There is a persistent disagreement among member states on the specific proposals for expansion.

Conclusion

The UNSC structure fails to reflect modern global politics. India views the current Council as a relic of a bygone era that must be reformed to include emerging powers to ensure a rules-based and stable international order. India's quest for a permanent seat is not merely an act of national ambition but a principled demand for Good Governance through the vision of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam.

Exam Tip: Highlight the transition from cold-war bilateralism to contemporary multipolar forums, showing how India leverages its status as a swing state to influence these reforms. More notes at claritywire.in.

UNIT 4: INDIA-CHINA ECONOMIC RELATIONS

Introduction

The economic dimension of the bilateral relationship between India and China has emerged as a primary driver of their engagement in the post-Cold War era, attempting to provide a stabilizing counterweight to long-standing territorial and strategic rivalries. Following the reconciliation that began in the 1980s, both nations prioritized commercial ties as a means to foster common interests.

This shift represents a move from high politics focused purely on security and border demarcation to low politics, where economic interdependence is expected to mitigate conflict. However, the relationship remains deeply contested, defined simultaneously by a massive trade deficit, critical sectoral dependencies, and a persistent trust deficit fueled by border transgressions such as the Galwan incident.

Economic Transformation

Definition of Goals and Diplomatic Style

The primary goal of intensifying economic relations was to create a development partnership where mutual growth would lead to peace and harmony. By granting each other Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status in 1984 and signing a Double Taxation Agreement in 1994, both governments sought to integrate their economies into the global supply chain while managing their regional competition.

Key Statistics

Indicator	Details
Trade Volume Growth	From approx. US\$ 3 billion in 2000 to US\$ 92.68 billion in 2019
Electronic Components	China provides approx. 70% of India's electronic components
Pharmaceutical Ingredients	China provides approx. 79% of India's active pharmaceutical ingredients
Trade Deficit	Stood at US\$ 56.77 billion in 2019, raising concerns about dumping

Policy Shifts Post-Galwan (2020)

- **Boycotts and Bans:** The Indian government cancelled major infrastructure deals with Chinese firms and banned numerous Chinese apps including TikTok.
- **Atma Nirbhar Bharat:** India introduced anti-dumping duties on Chinese products and prioritized indigenous production in pharmaceuticals and toys.
- **Strategic Alternatives:** India aligned with like-minded nations (US, Japan, Australia) to suggest alternatives to China's One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative such as the Asia-Africa Growth Corridor.

Conclusion

While the thrust of economic relations has transformed the relationship by creating a layer of complex interdependence, it has not rendered the traditional security-centric rivalry obsolete. The relationship is in a reconstruction phase where economic gains are increasingly weighed against national security interests. The persistence of border disputes demonstrates that trade alone cannot resolve deep-seated psychological and territorial barriers.

Exam Tip: Evaluate whether better economic relations can resolve historical issues like the border dispute. Emphasise that while trade is a central pillar, it has not replaced military preparedness and strategic autonomy. More resources at claritywire.in.

UNIT 5: CROSS-BORDER TERRORISM IN INDO-PAK RELATIONS

Introduction

Cross-border terrorism has emerged as the most significant and persistent challenge in the bilateral relationship between India and Pakistan, fundamentally altering the security architecture of South Asia. Since the partition in 1947, the relationship has been defined by territorial disputes, but the post-1990 era witnessed a paradigm shift where terrorism became a tool of proxy warfare.

Understanding this challenge is critical because it has not only claimed thousands of lives in regions like Jammu and Kashmir but has also stalled regional cooperation mechanisms like the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).

Definition of the Problem and State Role

India views cross-border terrorism not as an isolated phenomenon but as a strategy used by the Pakistani state to gain political mileage and domestic support. This has transformed traditional military confrontation into a low-intensity yet high-impact conflict that targets not just the military but also police and innocent civilians.

Historical Context and Major Incidents

The tentacles of terrorism have spread across various parts of India over the last three decades, with the financial capital Mumbai and the national capital Delhi being primary targets. Key historical examples include:

- The 2001 attacks on the Kashmir Legislative Assembly and the Indian Parliament on 13 December 2001.
- Jammu and Kashmir has been the primary site of extremist problems for three decades, leading to the loss of countless lives.
- India has faced four direct wars with Pakistan (1947-48, 1965, 1971, and 1999), but the current phase is defined by the consistent promotion of terrorism.

The Role of Major Powers and Hyphenation

The Indo-Pak relationship has historically been hyphenated by the United States. During the Cold War, the US chose Pakistan as a geostrategic ally, providing military aid that was often detrimental to India's security. Following the September 11 attacks, the US again made Pakistan an ally in the war on terrorism for geographical reasons.

However, a paradigm shift occurred as India's economy grew and Pakistan's internal stability dwindled, leading the US to recognize India as a natural ally and strategic partner.

India's Multifaceted Response

- **Military and Intelligence:** The Indian military and intelligence agencies have focused on pushing back, utilizing better equipment and logistical support.
- **Regulatory Frameworks:** Stricter state laws and policing have been implemented in border areas to manage terrorism and related issues like narcotic drug trafficking.
- **Diplomatic Isolation:** India has successfully leveraged its status as a swing state to voice concerns in forums like the UN, G20, and BRICS.

Conclusion

Cross-border terrorism remains the worrying factor that prevents the normalization of Indo-Pak relations. It has moved the conflict from a zero-sum territorial game to a complex security challenge involving non-state actors supported by state machinery. India's contemporary leadership is in a much better position to face these challenges through a blend of military preparedness and a robust strategic autonomy in its foreign policy.

Exam Tip: Analyse how cross-border terrorism from Pakistan impacts regional stability and how India's neighbourhood first policy navigates these frictions while maintaining national integrity. Visit claritywire.in for additional notes.

UNIT 6: INDIA'S NUCLEAR POLICY SINCE INDEPENDENCE

Introduction

India's nuclear policy since independence represents one of the most complex trajectories in its foreign policy, oscillating between deep-seated civilizational idealism and the harsh realities of global power politics. India's transition from a postcolonial state advocating for universal disarmament to a 'responsible nuclear power' that uses its arsenal as a cornerstone of national security reflects this duality.

Following independence in 1947, India faced a unique dilemma: it possessed the scientific ambition to harness atomic energy for development but maintained a moral aversion to the destructive nature of nuclear weapons.

Evolution of India's Nuclear Policy

Early Goals and Style

The primary goal of India's early nuclear policy was scientific advancement for economic development, particularly to alleviate entrenched poverty through atomic research. Under Prime Minister Nehru and scientist Homi J. Bhabha, India publicly opposed nuclear weapons while building a robust nuclear infrastructure. India consistently criticized international treaties like the NPT and CTBT as discriminatory and monopolistic.

Justification for Strategic Shifts

The shift from a purely peaceful program to a security-oriented one was justified by geopolitical shocks. The 1962 war with China and China's subsequent nuclear test in 1964 altered the military balance in Asia. India realized that in a competitive global world, a militarily weak nation was not respected, and nuclear capability became essential for providing security and building national prestige.

Key Milestones

Event	Year	Significance
Pokhran I (Smiling Buddha)	1974	India's first nuclear test, termed a Peaceful Nuclear Explosion (PNE). Led to global
Pokhran II (Operation Shakti)	1998	Five nuclear tests in May 1998. Catapulted India onto the world stage. Triggered ec
Nuclear Doctrine	2003	Formulated doctrine based on credible minimum deterrent and a No First Use polic
Civil Nuclear Agreement	2008	India-US Peaceful Civil Nuclear Cooperation Agreement ended India's global nucle

Has Weaponization Enhanced National Security?

- **Deterrence:** Possession of nuclear weapons provides a credible deterrent against adversaries, effectively preventing large-scale military incursions.
- **Strategic Autonomy:** Weaponization allowed India to make independent choices without being constrained by other states or discriminatory global norms.
- **Diplomatic Leverage:** The 1998 tests eventually led to a paradigm shift in relations with the United States.
- **Regional Stability:** India's nuclear triad allowed it to thwart incursions, such as the 2020 Galwan standoff.
- **Critique:** These strategic decisions initially derailed economic growth due to sanctions and led to a persistent arms race in the region.

Conclusion

India's nuclear policy has evolved from an idealistic pursuit of peace to a realistic strategy of deterrence that reflects its status as an emerging global power. India has maintained its moral position through the No First Use doctrine while simultaneously building the material capability necessary to defend its territorial sovereignty in an uncertain 21st century world.

Exam Tip: Contrast India's ethical foundations (Gandhian non-violence) with its realistic nuclear posture to demonstrate a nuanced understanding of the policy's complexity. For detailed notes, visit claritywire.in.

UNIT 7: SHORT NOTES

1. India at the World Trade Organisation (WTO)

India has been a significant contributor to the global trading system since its inception, having served as a founding member of the WTO's predecessor, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), in 1948. Since the WTO was established in 1995, India has used the forum to voice its concerns regarding agriculture subsidies, market access, and food safety standards.

As a primarily agricultural nation where nearly 30 percent of the population lives below the poverty line, the Indian government prioritises the improvement of living standards and frequently defends the minimum support price for its peasants against international pressure. While India's exports have increased from 0.6 percent in the early 1990s to 1.7 percent in 2016, its diplomats continue to struggle for a fair and predictable global trade environment.

Today, India's voice is influential in trade negotiations, and it often leverages its status in other forums like the G20 and BRICS to advocate for reforms in international financial institutions.

2. Recent Developments in India-Maldives Relations

India-Maldives relations occupy a significant place in India's neighbourhood first policy and the broader framework of its Indian Ocean strategy. The Maldives, an archipelago of strategic importance in the Indian Ocean, has historically maintained close ties with India as the primary security and development partner.

Recent developments have been characterized by the oscillation of the Maldives between India and China within a broader geopolitical competition. Under different administrations, the Maldives has at times sought to diversify its foreign partnerships, leading to tensions over Indian military presence and development projects. India has continued to engage through humanitarian aid, infrastructure support, and security cooperation to maintain its strategic foothold in the region.

3. India's Role in SAARC

India played a central role in the formation of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) in 1985 with the objective of fostering regional integration and a shared identity. However, SAARC has largely failed to meet its objectives due to a persistent lack of cooperation in the economic sphere and the belligerent behaviour of Pakistan.

Consequently, instead of the scheduled 37 summits, only 18 have been held, and the organisation has not met for the last seven years. India's response to this deadlock has been a shift toward issue-based alignments and sub-regional groupings like BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) and BBIN (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal).

This pivot allows India to pursue its neighbourhood first policy and regional connectivity without being stalled by the tensions that have traditionally plagued SAARC.

4. India-United States Strategic Partnership Post-9/11

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, served as a watershed moment that eventually led to a paradigm shift in Indo-US relations. While the United States initially made Pakistan an ally in the war on terrorism for geographical reasons, the relationship with India soon intensified.

Recognising India as a natural ally and a strategic partner, the US shifted its priorities to use India as a counterbalance to a rising China. Key implementation milestones include:

- 2005 Defence Framework Cooperation Agreement.
- 2008 Peaceful Civil Nuclear Cooperation Agreement, which ended India's global nuclear isolation.
- 2016 designation of India as a Major Defence Partner.
- Deepening cooperation in the QUAD framework alongside Japan and Australia.

India now exercises strategic autonomy to engage deeply with the US while maintaining its independent choice in other global matters, exemplifying the transition from Cold War-era distance to a comprehensive global partnership.

Exam Tip: Distinguish between high politics (security) and low politics (trade) to show how India navigates complex interdependence. WTO and SAARC relate to Unit IV and Unit III of the DU syllabus respectively. For comprehensive study material, visit claritywire.in.

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