ISSN No. 0974-035X

An Indexed, Refereed & Peer Reviewed Journal of Higher Education

Towards Excellence

UGC-HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT CENTRE,
GUJARAT UNIVERSITY, AHMEDABAD, INDIA

NEW INDIA INITIATIVE: ADVANCEMENT OF INDIA'S LOOK WEST POLICY

**Mr. Kashyap Kotecha
&
Dr. Mukesh Khatik**

Abstract:

During the Cold War era, after the independence of India, India went ahead with a two-point program. First, India politically backed Arab; Second amplified the relations with their leaders who committed with secularism and socialism. India backed the NAM movement for a peaceful resolution between Arab and Isreal clash. Later on, after the Nasser's idea of Pan-Arabism failed and it provided cushion for religious extremism in the West Asian region. India realised the significance of the Islamic world. Due to the oil-based relationship between India and Iraq, India wanted to support Iraq during the Iraq-Iran war in 1980. Somehow India adopted the keep-distance approach with Israel during that period. So, during Cold War India espoused heedful approach.

After the end of the Cold War, the balance was started to shift from normative flux to realistic flux, and India acknowledged the importance of remittance from its Indian diaspora in the Gulf. Indian commenced providing consultancy in advanced fields like the management, information technology and pharmaceutical sectors rather than old unskilled labour engagement. In 2005 India's Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh asserted the West Asia as their extended neighbourhood. He sought an advanced economic relationship with the West Asain region.

After 2014, With a new government at the centre, India extends the previous government Look West Policy and ventured to add more substantial dimensions to the former one. Newly elected Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi acknowledged the importance of engagement with West Asia with more considerable interest. At one hand in India de hyphenated its foreign policy from Israel and Palestine never-ending geopolitical flux, Government showcased a sheer amount of courage by establishing an open relationship with Israel. If one could make an attempt to understand this step through a glass of national interest, it could be considered as a significant step towards India strategic autonomy, while in another hand India grabbed the opportunity to engage more with West Asian countries especially after the turmoil of Shale revolution and oil price crisis. Additionally, he recognised the importance of Indian diaspora as a strategic tool. The Indian policymakers have striven for a delicate balance between Iran, Saudi Arabia and Israel while supporting Palestinians. Such strategic autonomy has provided India with ample space to exercise in the region with ease. Indian policymakers assert that India's interests in the Gulf Cooperation

Council nations are linked with its national interest, energy security, employment and for Indians and remittances.

Keywords: Think West Policy, Look West Policy, Strategic autonomy, de hyphenation, Soft power, New India

Overview: Advancement of India's strategic dimensions towards West Asia

One could classify India's Foreign policy towards East Asia in three distinctive epoch. First, apex priority had been to Arab countries in terms of Indian foreign policy. Before independence, India and Israel shared good relations historically. In 1920 some of the Indian leaders supported the Palestinian cause against the British rule. Of course, it was against the British imperialism. Such incident established a link between the Indian and Arab leaders. Later first Prime Minister of India Nehru understood the division between Palestine and Israel as divide and rule policy of the British empire, Nehru envisaged Palestine as the whole federal State without considering the separate Jewish State claim. Due to such policy stance, the Indian leaders never supported the Zionist movement. Even in the United Nations several times India supported federal Palestine with autonomous status for the Jewish People. Also, this issue could be traced by Indian domestic political situation and demography, because Indian Prime Minister Nehru's successors did not want to antagonise the Muslim minority at home. Second, till 1992, and after the disintegration of USSR, former Prime Minister recognised the importance of the Indo-Israel relations and visited Israel.

After revising faulty stance of the Nehru's successors towards India's Foreign, Narsimha Rao commenced reasonable diplomatic relations with Israel. On another side of the coin, it is to be claimed that India was mostly dependent on Arab countries for India's energy needs. Rao government enhanced strong trade relations with Israel, especially in the field of software and agriculture. By considering India's historical stance, the domestic political situation of India and future energy resources need, both countries had a sheer amount of reluctance to proclaim their relations publically. Again it was intermediate and safe stand from India when it comes to power balance in the West Asian region. So India had never had that strategic autonomy with bilateral relations with Israel in the West Asian region before 2014. Third, After the most significant political leadership change in India India has been attempting to establish a real sense of strategic autonomy where bilateral relations with one country does not make an impact on relations with other country or countries. If one attempts to sum up a broad picture of India's new foreign policy, could easily conclude the substantive strategic empowerment in its policies.

India's prime concerns while considering the foreign policy for West Asia

While considering the policy towards the West Asian region, India is supposed to address domestic concerns of the region. Currently, the West Asian region is dealing with lots

of instability. With due respect to all the geopolitical and other factors in West Asia, for instance, unstable Iraq, Libyan crisis, refugee crisis, Israel-Palestine conflict, Arab Spring, emergence and influence of ISIS, Civil wars in Yemen and Syria and Iran-Saudi Arabia Cold War on Iran nuclear deal new leadership of India got success in establishing bilateral tie across the region. New Prime Minister Modi led government precisely analysed and shaped India's foreign policy to induce the balance among the GCC countries, Iran and Israel. Even India adopted the hands-off approach towards upgoing Arab Spring issue in that particular region by adopting the tactful strategies like Non-Interference in that region, ensure the safety of Indian diaspora, evacuate the Indian diaspora if required.

India's requirement of energy supply

Ensuring the long-term crude oil supply is the fundamental concern for India in the West Asian region. Recently, India is the fourth-largest consumer of oil among all consumers in the world. By considering the growth of the population and its demand, India might upgrade its rank soon in the consumption of the energy. Gulf countries are principal suppliers to India. Saudi Arabia holds the top position in that list by supplying 14,049.15 million tonnes. While Iran is supplying 10,193.27 and UAE is supplying 5448.84 million tonnes. Due to expansion and growth in industries, India always would have to build a reasonable strategic relationship with West Asian countries. However, by promoting the electric vehicle at the domestic level, the new government is seeking to square-off that dependency on West Asian countries.

Strategic Partnership with West Asian region

India and Israel have been sharing long term defence and agriculture technology trading and strategic partnership since 1992, Current government have appended new pages in that account by dealing in new edge defence technology. India shared its aspiration to become a permanent member of the United Nations's Security Council with gulf nations. India is looking forward to sharing a long term strategic and mutual advantage with the Islamic world in West Asia. The core elements of India's engagement in West Asia under the Modi government are economy, counter-terrorism and defence. Due to slack in Oil market West Asian countries are looking east not just as the market of oil, but also to form new defence partnership with India. India – Saudi Arabia and India – UAE policy depends on looking at each other. GCC also adopts the approach called 'Look at India' due failure of West to emerge as a trusted partner.

Defence and military synergy

Both India and West Asia are facing similar issues when it comes to Islamic extremism. Apart from that, maritime piracy became the prime concern for both India and some of the West Asian countries. India has inscribed the defence cooperation deal with Qatar, UAE, Oman and Saudi Arabia. Such defence agreements are designed towards assisting joint military exercise, as well as military medical services and research and

manufacturing of sophisticated military hardware. Indian Navy always performs joint maritime exercises with that region. In September 2008, Indian Airforce performed jointly with Oman's Eastern Bridge at Royal Airforce of Oman, Thumrait.

Securing the interest of Indian diaspora

More than five million diasporas have been spread and settled in the Gulf region for livelihood. Securing their interest is a prime concern for any Indian government. Indian labours are not protected by any labour laws. India has considered this issue and discussed their interest with the corresponding government in that region. India has inscribed the agreement with such gulf countries to protect the diaspora. Also, Indian diaspora at West Asia, especially in Gulf, major foreign currency supplier to India. As per the report of the World Bank, India received the US\$ 55 Billion remittances in 2010 from their diaspora and migrants. As per the report of the RBI (2007-2010), the diaspora settled in the Gulf was accounted for approximate 27% of remittance inflow to India. Former Minister of External Affairs (India), Sushma Swaraj, while attending the 9th ministerial meeting of the GCC in 2015 in New York, pushing for a GCC – India Free Trade Agreement (FTA) asserted that the Gulf was an “*extended part of our (India) neighbourhood*”. Modi government's outreach over the last five years towards West Asia, especially the Gulf region, is commonly observed as the government's most prominent diplomatic victory saga.

Nourishing Soft Power

Joseph Nye coined the term soft power, according to Nye, “power is the ability to alter the behaviour of others to get what you want.”

India and West Asia have been sharing the age-old civilisation and social bond. India always has a traditional link with West Asia, since Indus Valley society. Adequate clues are available about Indian merchant present in ancient contexts. Indeed, Indian traders had merchandise relations with West Asia even before the dawn of Islam. After British conquered India, West Asia worked as a critical transportation link between India and the British empire. Somehow it had been ebbed after independence. The West Asian regime was influenced by the Zionist movement and The Nationalism in the Arab world. After the end of the second world war, the British transferred their mandate of Palestine to U.N. During the discussion of UN special commission on Palestine (UNSCOP) India supported the minority plan instead of the idea of partitioning Palestine.

Apparently, During Modi's regime, India seems to resurrect age-old cultural links again. The Modi government's ideas of soft power are linked to the age-old Indian ideals such as India's role as a “vishwaguru” means the world's master. The concept of “vasudhaiva kutumbkam”, which entails that the entire earth is a family. Modi government utilised the age-old ancient Indian art yoga as a cultural tool to connect with the world. The four broad types of the exhibit of soft power are ancient heritage, democracy, economic assistance and Indian film industries known as Bollywood.

The real example of Modi's soft power diplomacy is The iconic Teen Murti Chowk; it displays how the government restores the historical link with Israel. The Teen Murti Marg in New Delhi was renamed, It would be known after the Israeli city Haifa. The New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) had approved their renaming ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the Jewish nation in 2017. As per government's statement, released after Prime Ministers of India and Israel visited the cemetery,

"The three bronze statues at Teen Murti represent the Hyderabad, Jodhpur and Mysore Lancers who were part of the 15 Imperial Service Cavalry Brigade. The brigade carried out the victorious assault on the fortified city of Haifa on 23rd September 1918, during World War I."

Epilogue

After 1992 India has been displaying a much-matured approach towards the West Asian region. All the governments after 1992 attempted to restore the more integrated approach towards that region. Before 2014 India's foreign policy was supposed to reciprocate in more proactive involvement by putting various factors into consideration. Subsequently, New Indian government identified vulnerable points in old policy parameters and rehabilitated them. If one attempts to assess the recent policy, could still find the scope of enhancement in bilateral relations in that region. India should opt for mutually beneficial and proactive trade relations with Israel to utilise its technical expertise for the manufacturing and agriculture sectors in India. Additionally, India should explore more mutual options in the West Asian region to extirpate the global terrorism issue. India still needs to stick with a classical long-term perspective, like protect its energy concerns, the safety of the Indian diaspora, Islamic extremism and terrorism concerns. Still, there is a sheer amount scope exists for the betterment of relations in the West Asian region.

References

- https://idsa.in/system/files/IB_IndiaLookWestPolicy.pdf
- <https://thekootneeti.in/2018/05/01/looking-west-indias-energy-requirements/>
- <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/sanjaya-baru-writes-the-sprouting-of-the-look-west-policy/article7554403.ece>
- <https://www.gktoday.in/gk/indias-look-west-policy/>
- <https://byjus.com/free-ias-prep/indias-look-west-policy/>
- <https://www.hindustantimes.com/opinion/look-west-policy-modi-s-three-nation-west-asia-tour-was-significant-historic/story-390v04QaV3t5tWtyYIKTmL.html>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BYG4L9JUikg>
- <https://www.dailypioneer.com/2016/columnists/modis-emerging-look-west-policy.html>
- <https://www.dailypioneer.com/2016/columnists/modis-emerging-look-west-policy.html>

Mr. Kashyap Kotecha
&
Dr. Mukesh Khatik