

BJP's Foreign Policy – An Overview

—S.K. Arora

The foreign policy of the BJP has been inspired by the Hindu philosophy of universalism, liberalism, respect for the views of the other individuals and entities, and the concept of peaceful co-existence. The BJP, therefore, visualised the need for a peaceful international environment in which to pursue the goal of India's all-round development. It also realised that the rapidly shrinking world necessitated an extensive interaction with other countries and, therefore, prepared its plans for a pragmatic non-doctrinaire foreign policy.

Within the parameters of this broad vision, the BJP persuaded on foreign policy rooted firmly in principles of national interest, national integrity and national security. A good policy, according to Kautilya, must achieve four things: to acquire what the nation does not have, to preserve what it has, to enhance what is preserved, and to use for the welfare of the people what is enhanced. Foreign policy, too, has to serve these ends. To achieve these objectives, the state needs power. As Kautilya says, "Power is the only means to ensure friendly relations with other nations." The BJP has been guided by this fundamental precept in its foreign policy.

Ever since its formation in 1980, the Bharatiya Janata Party has taken keen interest in foreign affairs and clearly expressed its views on foreign policy issues in numerous resolutions passed and the statements issued on various occasions. It clearly spelled out its foreign policy goals while it was in the opposition. And then went out to implement those policies when it formed its own Government along with coalition partners. The party was

fortunate that one of its foremost leaders, Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee took special interest in foreign affairs. He, more than any other in the political arena, realised the importance of foreign policy in the overall development of the nation. Rapid scientific and technological developments were turning the world into a global village and a large number of issues of national concern were acquiring a foreign policy dimension. Atalji gave expression to the party's views on national affairs in the numerous interventions he made in Parliament and in his addresses at different party functions.

The extent to which the BJP attached importance to the safeguarding of the national interest is reflected in several party resolutions over the years. The party reacted sharply to instances of the previous regime's tendency to overlook national interest in the pursuit of pet theories or doctrines. It has been the party's view that our national interest is best served by creating an environment of peace and harmony in our neighbourhood. But this can only be done on the basis of mutual benefit and cooperation. Right from the time of its inception, the party has emphasised the need for closer interaction with all our neighbouring countries and after coming into power, the BJP-led Government made a special effort in this regard. Our concerns, however, go beyond our neighbourhood and our national interest requires a much broader range of interaction with major powers across the globe.

National security is another subject that has agitated the minds of the leaders of the party. A strong and prosperous India cannot be built without developing the capacity to defend the country against external threats. Our security concerns make it imperative that unless all countries agree to a time-bound programme of disarmament, India must have a minimum credible deterrent. That was the rationale for the series of nuclear tests in May 1998. The party manifestos of 1996 and 1998 had clearly stated the party's resolve to exercise the nuclear option and induct nuclear weapons into our security system. The BJP-led National Democratic Alliance Government successfully met the diplomatic challenges in the aftermath of the nuclear tests.

BJP has always believed in the inherent strength and capability of India to emerge as a strong entity in the international arena.

It visualises a multi-polar international scenario in which India must play a significant part. During the cold war period, the BJP supported the policy of genuine non-alignment but its ideological affinity with western democracies was quite apparent. The party also appreciated the need for cordial and mutually financial relationship with the Soviet Union. The party, however, expressed dismay over the unnecessarily pro-Soviet stand of the Congress Party.

Economic affairs have become an inseparable part of modern diplomacy and foreign policy formulation. BJP took note of this trend and developed its own views on economic issues. The party has shed some of its earlier conservatism and has extended support to the emerging new trends in a globalised world. The party has always advocated a strong economic dimension to our diplomacy and continues to lay special emphasis on economic interaction, especially in our neighbourhood, by participation in appropriate regional economic entities.

The BJP has been a consistent advocate of close contacts with the people origin settled abroad. Many of them have become citizens of other countries but practically all of them maintain some contacts with the mother country. It has taken the view that India should extend all possible assistance to them so that they remain in touch with their cultural roots. During the time that the party was in power, it made special efforts to involve the Indian Diaspora in close contacts with India. Besides the cultural connection, the political and economic cloud enjoyed by the Indian community in certain countries has created new linkages, which have been of considerable assistance to India.

Aware of the fact that foreign policy has now acquired a variety of new dimensions, the BJP has taken a very broad approach to foreign policy issues. An increasing number of issues from human rights and environmental issues, to gender questions and child labour, are rapidly acquiring an international character. The proper understanding of the foreign policy of a political party has become much more important today than was the case a few years ago.

THE JANA SANGH PERIOD

The foreign policy orientation of the BJP has been influenced very largely by the policies of its earlier incarnation, the Bharatiya Jana Sangh. The BJS was established in 1951 by Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookerjee, an erstwhile member of the Union Cabinet, to provide an alternative to some of Jawaharlal Nehru's views with which he strongly disagreed. There is a widespread but erroneous impression that he formed the new political party to promote the sectarian and community interests of the Hindus and to protest against the extreme indulgence shown to the Muslim population by the Congress Party. There may be some truth in the impression that the Hindus reacted strongly to the over-protective policies of the Congress towards the Muslim community but that was certainly not the only reason for Dr. S.P. Mookerjee to promote a new party. He strongly disagreed with Jawaharlal Nehru on the following foreign policy related issues:

1. Relations with Pakistan and handling of the Kashmir issue.
2. Socialist policies and relations with the communist countries.
3. Status of Tibet and policy towards China.
4. Handling of matters relating to the Hindu minority in the East Pakistan.

The Bharatiya Jana Sangh was a very small but significant political entity in the 1950's. But its voice was heard because of the stringent criticism it made of some of the policies pursued by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and because of widespread impression that the party represented the views of a large number of people. Even as small a party in the 1950's, the Bharatiya Jana Sangh developed its own views on foreign policy issues. The party expressed firmly its views on important issues of that period through the statements made by its leaders and resolutions passed at the Working Committee of the party. One of the major questions taken up by the Bharatiya Jana Sangh in the 1950's was the policy pursued by the Government of India towards Pakistan. It strongly criticised the manner in which matters relating to the State of Jammu and Kashmir were being handled. The Jana Sangh launched a campaign

for the abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution and wanted Jammu and Kashmir to have the same status as that of any other state in India. It was highly critical of the Government of India's decision to take the issues to the United Nation's Security Council. In a Resolution passed by the Working Committee of the party on November 24, 1957 it stated that:

"The recent developments at the UN Security Council regarding Jammu-Kashmir have demonstrated once again that the UNO has got itself involved in power politics so much that it would be futile to expect justice and fair-play from it."

"The Central Working Committee, therefore, feels that no useful purpose can be served by keeping the question open for discussion at the UNO. It urges upon the Government to withdraw the Kashmir issue from there and desist from wasting any more money, time, and energy in trying to convince those who are determined not too be convinced. It further urges upon the Government to take all immediate effective steps to recover possession of the Kashmir territory now aggressively occupied by Pakistan. Kashmir is essentially a domestic issue and must be tackled as such with the cooperation of all-sections of the Indian opinion who are united on this vital national issue."

"The Committee further feels that time has now come when the temporary distinction between Jammu-Kashmir state and the rest of India as envisaged in Article 370 of the Indian Constitution be removed once for all and the Jammu-Kashmir state be brought in line with the rest of India in all respects. This, the Committee is convinced, is essential to bring about the emotional integration of the people of that state with their co-citizens of the rest of India and checkmate the designs of separatist and anti-national elements within and outside Kashmir, who have been exploiting these distinctions to the detriment of the wider interests of India including Kashmir."

The Bharatiya Jana Sangh strongly believed that in order to establish India's position in Kashmir and to guard against separatism, it was essential to take steps for complete emotional, cultural and administrative oneness between Kashmir and the rest of India. This could not be achieved. If distinctiveness was manifested through separate Constitution, separate Flag, separate

President, separate Election Commission and separate Law on citizenship for the State of Jammu and Kashmir. The party stressed that Jammu and Kashmir must be made an integral part of India.

Relation with China

On the question of relations with China, the Bharatiya Jana Sangh, while expressing a desire for good relations with the big neighbour, expressed utter dismay at the treatment meted out by the Chinese to the Tibetans. It maintained that communist China took over Tibet by sheer force of arms and imposed an agreement upon the Tibetan Government of his holiness, the Dalai Lama under duress, effecting the subjugation of Tibet and conceding here only a semblance of autonomy.

Tibet

In the Resolution passed on July 8, 1959 in its governing council the party stated that for the tragedy that had overtaken Tibet, the Government of India could not escape her share of responsibility. In fact with the weak-kneed and short-sighted policy followed by the Nehru Government had encouraged China in her aggressive policy in Tibet. It felt that India should take immediate and an effective steps to bring an end to the Chinese aggression in Tibet and for the withdrawal of her armies of occupation from Tibet. The Jana Sangh accordingly proposed that:

1. India herself should move the United Nations to take up Tibet's case. In fact, the Tibet issue had been raised in the UN when China overran her about 9 years ago, but it was at India's request and insistence that the matter was shelved and practically dropped. Now that China has gone back upon her pledge of respecting Tibet's autonomy, and her words have proved undependable, India owes it to herself to raise the Tibetan issue at the UN.
2. India should approach the Free Nations of Asia (outside Communist orbit) on the issue of China's aggression in Tibet so that they might make common cause in support of Tibet's independence. Already, China's aggression in Tibet has caused apprehension in Eastern Asia; and people there are beginning to feel that the occupation of Tibet is

only the first step of China's ambition towards imperialistic expansion. The banding together of the Free Nations of Asia in an attitude of protest may produce some sober effect even on the ruthless and ambitious rulers of Communist China who may yet pause in their predatory activities. Even at this late stage, China may care something for Asian opinion.

3. In the meantime, full facilities should be given to his holiness the Dalai Lama to function in India on the political plane as the Government of Tibet. If Tibetan independence is to be striven for and secured, it will not do simply to grant him asylum and to keep him in a sort of enforced retirement free to function only in his spiritual capacity, but he should be allowed in India to work for the cause of Tibet's independence.

Further, apart from all other considerations, from the point of view of India's own safety and security alone, it is essential that China must clear out of Tibet, and that Tibet should become an Independent State. India should, therefore, direct all her efforts towards securing Tibet's Independence.

In a later Resolution passed by the party after the Chinese invasion on October 1962, the party called upon the Government to extend help to the Tibetan freedom fighters. It was of the view that the Indian Government must recognise the sovereignty of Tibet and the Dalai Lama's emigre Government.

In this Resolution passed on October 31, 1962, at the Central Working Committee of the party, the Bharatiya Jana Sangh viewed with grave concern the situation created by the Chinese invasion in Ladakh and NEFA. It accused the Government of being totally unprepared in terms of both the strength in numbers and the quality and the quantity of equipment. It charged that this had been due to the wrong appraisal of China's intentions, preparations and former intrusions into Indian territory.

Support to Democracies

The Bharatiya Jana Sangh did not approve of the policy of the Government of India to befriend communist countries at the cost of our relationship with other nations. It noted with grave concern

the assertion of the totalitarian trends in Russia and its growing stronghold on the satellite countries of Eastern Europe. The party expressed itself in favour of true democracy based on freedom of individual and equality of opportunity to all, irrespective of caste, creed or colour and the right of all people to decide freely about the form of the Government that they would like to have. In a Resolution passed on April 5, 1963, the party stated that the “Bharatiya Jana Sangh is a firm-believer in democracy and wants it to succeed so that the world might be saved from the rising tide of totalitarianism and demands that while professing to pursue an independent policy of non-alignment, Government of India should not create the impression – even by implication – that they are inclined towards one camp or the other. Such an impression if it is allowed to grow is neither in the enlightened self-interests of India nor of peace and democracy in the world as a whole.”

JANA SANGH EVOLUTION OF NEHRU’S POLICIES

The Jana Sangh Party was the formative stage of the Bharatiya Janata Party’s policy. During the four years since Independence before Jana Sangh came into the picture, the ruling party had already outlined the broad contours of the country’s foreign policy. Prime Minister Nehru’s forays into international diplomacy had earned him accolades from his countrymen but while appreciating his contribution to the development of the India’s foreign policy, the Jana Sangh did not failed to notice some chinks in his armour. It was pointed out that Nehru had failed the country in his policies towards Pakistan and China, that he had been taken for a ride on the issues of Kashmir and Tibet, that his fascination for socialism was pushing him towards close relations with the communist countries, at the cost of India’s friendship with western democratic countries, and that he failed to recognise that morality and fair play had very little relevance in international relations.

In his second speech in the Lok Sabha, Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee outlined the views of his party on various foreign issues. He charged that Nehru’s policies had failed to win friends for India. He felt that the Prime Minister was so occupied with international issues in other countries that he had forgotten to safeguard the interests

of this country on matters that were important from India's point of view. He remarked, "We help some countries and try to solve their problems, but even those countries are not extending their firm support to the Indian cause over the Kashmir issue."

Emphasising the need for pursuing pragmatic policies in the pursuit of national interest, he strongly advocated a change in India's approach. His views on this subject as stated in his above mentioned speech are quoted ahead:

"In this respect there is another aspect that has become clear. It is that international politics does not work on the basis of morality. There is no place for selfless dedicated work. We may burn our hands while performing '*havan*' (part of worship of Hindus) and also create now policy needs to accord with the realities of international politics but this is to be done carefully in view of the current situation, when we badly need the cooperation, help and support of all countries. As regards Indian policy of not aligning with any bloc, we fully support it. As far as my party, Bharatiya Jana Sangh is concerned, we agree with the policy that we should not join either the American or the Russian block, as doing so is in the interest of the country."

During the 1960's, the Government of India's policies with regard to China and Pakistan came under the severe attack from the Jana Sangh. Prime Minister Nehru himself admitted failure of his China policy and it gave an opportunity to the Jana Sangh to demand reorientation of foreign policy. It also demanded that India should not recognise China's sovereignty over Tibet and the Government should accord recognition to the Dalai Lama as a head of Tibet émigré Government. The relevant extract from the Resolution passed on December 30, 1962 quoted below:

"The failure of the Government of India's China-Policy is a pointed manifestation of the fact that in the realm of international affairs, our policies have lacked a substratum of realism and have ignored the need to safeguard the enlightened self-interests of the nation. Despite our advocacy of non-alignment, in practice, our policies have tended to lean towards the Soviet bloc. Besides, we have been indifferent to the imperative concomitant of this policy of non-alignment, namely, the building up of adequate military-strength. A re-evaluation and reorientation of our foreign policy

with a view to ensuring effectively the country's security has, therefore, become essential.

Our policy of not aligning ourselves with either of the power-blocs has in no way impeded procurement of military assistance from friendly countries nor does it prevent us from endeavouring to build up an association of peace-loving countries in order to contain Chinese expansionism.

"It is necessary for India to strengthen its relations with the countries who have helped us against communist China and at the same time to strive to secure the support of other countries too. It should be our endeavour also to see that nations which for any reason are not prepared to support us do not line up with China either. Let us refuse to recognise China's authority over countries it has forcibly enchained and extend all support we can, to help them regain their independence. Dalai Lama should be recognised as Head of Tibet's émigré Government."

"The Jana Sangh welcomes improvement in Indo-Nepalese relations that has lately been evident. To enhance this cordial turn we ought to make a conscious attempt to eliminate any misunderstandings that may still be subsisting between the two."

India's conflict with China resulting in a humiliating defeat encouraged Pakistan to adopt a stringent approach towards India, the signing of the Sino-Pak agreement under which Pakistan ceded a portion of the Pak-occupied Kashmir to China was the beginning of a long-term bilateral friendship. Pakistan began to put pressure on India, especially through the United States to resolve the issue of Kashmir. Pakistan thought that this was an excellent opportunity to compel India to handover the valley to Pakistan. When the Government of India entered into negotiations with Pakistan, the Bharatiya Jana Sangh felt that the Government of India's policy towards Pakistan, smacked of imbecility. The resolution passed on December 30, 1963 had the following to say on the subject. "It has been the considered view of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh that Pakistan by its very genesis and nature is destined to treat India as its enemy No. 1, so long as it exists. Hostility to India and Hindus is the only prop, which keeps going this artificial state of two parts separated by a thousand miles of Indian territory. Its continual adventures against India, the continuous anti-India and anti-Hindu population,

which has been deprived of even its basic human rights and which is being steadily decimated through physical extermination, their conversion and forcible expulsion from Pakistan and encouragement of Naga hostiles are manifestations of a set policy of keeping at the highest pitch the anti-India and anti-Hindu frenzy in Pakistan at all times. It would be wrong to hope that Pakistan would change its attitude if Kashmir question was solved, to its satisfaction because the so-called Kashmir problem is just a facet of Pakistani policies. Pakistan will always whip-up some problems or the other even if the existing ones are settled to her entire satisfaction to keep that frenzy on.

“Jana Sangh does not consider it a matter to gloat over, that this analysis of Jana Sangh about Pakistan’s attitude towards India has been vindicated by the actual course of events, particularly since the Chinese invasion of India, and is now being gradually accepted at all hands.”

Jawaharlal Nehru’s policies on the Kashmir issue were to remain the subject of very strong criticism from the Bharatiya Jana Sangh. In Resolution passed specifically on the Kashmir problem on May 25, 1964, just before the death of Prime Minister Nehru, that party stated that Kashmir had been an integral part of India historically, geographically, culturally all three aegis. The formal accession state of India on October 1947 by the Ruler gave legal and constitutional sanction of that historical fact. It accused Jawaharlal Nehru of committing several blunders in the handling of the Kashmir issue. In this regard, the Resolution stated:

“But unfortunately, Shri Nehru who has been handling Kashmir question on behalf of Government of India and treating it almost as a personal affair, began his bungling from that very moment. He readily fell into the trap of Shri Jinnah, who finding his plan of military conquest of the state and presenting the world with the *fait accompli*, foiled by the accession of the state of India and arrival of Indian army on the scene, decided to politicalise the issue. The unilateral and illegal offer of plebiscite and its continuous repetition, appeal to the UNO, failure to explicitly name Pakistan as aggressor in the original complaint to UNO, failure to send right men to plead India’s case there, ordering of cease fire when the Indian troops were advancing on all fronts, failure to settle Hindu

refugees uprooted by Pakistani invaders, in Kashmir in spite of their repeated requests, failure to exercise effective check on Kashmir administration and incorporation of temporary Article 370 in the Indian Constitution to appease Sheikh Abdullah's ambitions were series of the early blunders committed by the Nehru Government in regard to Kashmir."

TASHKENT DECLARATION

The Bharatiya Jana Sangh felt that the Tashkent Declaration that emerged from the Indo-Pak Summit hosted by the Soviet Union had caused deep disappointment in the country. It was of the opinion that the Declaration was no assurance of stable or real peace between India and Pakistan. It was pointed out that Pakistan had refused to agree to any categorical no-war pact. Pakistan's argument for the rejection of the no-war proposal clearly showed that it was in no way prepared to renounce use of force until the Kashmir Problem was settled. The BJS went on to warn that the Government of India would be indulging in self-delusion if it thought that the Tashkent Declaration meant the end of Pakistan's aggressive intentions.

In a Resolution passed on July 2, 1966, the BJS Central Working Committee demanded, among other things, that defence preparations in the country must be stepped up and immediate steps must be taken to increase the strength of the defence forces and develop an independent nuclear deterrent. It also demanded that India must make it clear to Pakistan and the world at large once for all that Kashmir was not negotiable.

Bangladesh War and Shimla Agreement

The Bharatiya Jana Sangh had consistently raised the question of treatment of minorities in East Bengal and particularly the treatment meted out to the Hindus living in the East Pakistan. When the Bangladesh war began, the party, extended full support to the aspirations of the Bangladeshis in East Bengal. It also lent full support to the liberation movement. The Bharatiya Jana Sangh accorded a qualified welcome to the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation. It hoped that the treaty will help to counter the continued American arming of Pakistan and the

Chinese intervention in Indo-Pak affairs. The party, however, was not prepared to extend uncritical support to the treaty and wished to judge it only by the contribution it would make to the freedom of Bangladesh. It also expressed its firm conviction that if the treaty was to work to the equal advantage of both countries, India must grow in strength to become an independent power centre. It also emphasised that for this purpose, the development of a nuclear capability is of the utmost importance.

The Shimla Agreement signed in June 1972 was described by the Bharatiya Jana Sangh as a complete sell-out. The party of the view that India had given into all demands of Pakistan without getting anything in return.

It maintained that India had lost the opportunity to settle once for all the question of Kashmir. The party demanded the immediate scrapping of the Shimla Agreement.

Arab-Israeli Conflict

At the time of the Arab-Israeli war in 1967, the Bharatiya Jana Sangh disapproved of the partisan policy pursued by the Government of India in regard to the West Asia conflict. It believed that India should have exerted its influence to check any eruption of hostilities between the Arabs and the Israelis and that after the war had broken out, India should have tried to restore peace. Instead, Government of India had extended outright support to the Arabs. In a Resolution passed on June 30, 1967 the Central Working Committee of the party said, "Bharatiya Jana Sangh demands that the Government of India must revise its West Asia policy with a view to winning the friendship of both Arabs and Israelis and creating stable peace in the region. In this context the Jana Sangh wishes to reiterate its demand that the Government of India must take steps to establish full-fledged diplomatic relations with Israel."

In a resolution passed by the party in November 1973 after the 1973 West Asia crises, the party criticised the Government of India for its inept handling of the West Asia situation. It says, "By taking sides in a most blatant manner, it has ruled itself out of any mediatory role in an area crucial to our vital national interests. By going more Arabian than Arabs, New Delhi has neither served national interest nor promoted the cause of peace. In this connection it is revealing that New Delhi's over enthusiastic support to the

Arabs notwithstanding, Saudi Arabia has decided to cut its oil supplies to India. It is obvious that New Delhi's West Asia policy is conditioned by the ruling party's obsession with the communal vote." The party called upon the Government of India to overhaul its West Asia policy. It suggested to the Government that it should work for friendship with both sides and, as a first step in that direction, normalise its relations with Israel by establishing diplomatic ties.

Dissolution of Bharatiya Jana Sangh

A state of emergency was declared by the Government of India in June 1975. Most of the prominent leaders of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh, along with many of other political parties were arrested for a period of 19 months. No political activity by Opposition parties was permitted during this time. In March 1977, when the General Elections were held, several Opposition parties combined to form the Janata Party and won a landslide victory. The Bharatiya Jana Sangh had also merged with the new party and nearly 100 of its members were elected to the Lok Sabha. The party's leaders, Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee was given the post of Minister of Foreign Affairs by Prime Minister Morarji Desai. During the rather short tenure of 2½ years, the Janata Party introduced some subtle changes in the foreign policy orientation of the country. The policy became more pragmatic and non-doctrinaire. The policy of good relations with the Soviet Union was maintained but without the euphoria of the preceding years. Attempts were made to establish a new equation with the United States and West European countries. The External Affairs Minister, Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee paid special attention to the development of close relations with all neighbouring countries. It is now recognised that the relations between India and Pakistan improved dramatically during the time when Shri Vajpayee was guiding the foreign policy of the country.

Janata Party experiment was rather short lived and it split into its diverse constituents in the middle of 1979. The members of the erstwhile Bharatiya Jana Sangh decided to establish a new party and it was named the Bharatiya Janata Party. It came into being on April 6, 1980.

THE 1980's

The decade of 1980's was a period of regrouping and

reconstitution for the Bharatiya Janata Party. It had a comparatively much lower representation in Parliament as compared with the preceding years but its numbers in the Lok Sabha rose dramatically from a mere two in 1984 to more than 100 in 1989. It was necessary and it indeed quite logical for the party to concentrate on domestic issues during the early years of newly established organisation. The party, however, did not delink itself from the ideology of its previous incarnation, namely, the Bharatiya Jana Sangh. On foreign policy issues, therefore, there was a fair amount of continuity. The party expressed its views frequently on a wide verity of developments related to foreign affairs.

Some of the prominent events that took place soon after the formation of BJP were the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, turmoil in the non-aligned movement, the Iran-Iraq war and the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. On all these issues, the Bharatiya Janata Party expressed its views through the party resolutions, comments by its spokesmen, speeches of the party president and other senior leaders and during the debates in Parliament.

Afghanistan

The BJP viewed the developments in Afghanistan as a setback to global détente and as an accentuation of superpower rivalry. It considered the Soviet military intervention, which later resulted in virtual occupation as a violation of the UN charter and as a blow to the aspirations and the ideals of the non-aligned movement. It was, in the party's view, a contravention of all canons of international law and behaviour. The party criticised strongly the attitude adopted by the Indira Gandhi Government on this issue. The Indian Government's support to the Soviet action had resulted in the lowering of India's prestige in the eyes of the world and in isolating us from our neighbours. In a Resolution adopted on September 5, 1980, the BJP recalled, "The Janata Government had succeeded in deepening and strengthening the bonds of Indo-Soviet friendship. A programme of long-range cooperation in the economic field was drawn up in those days. Indo-Soviet friendship was strengthened on the basis of equality and mutual cooperation. The Bharatiya Janata Party would like to see further strengthening of Indo-Soviet ties."

“The party, however, does not believe that the bonds of Indo-Soviet friendship are so fragile as to be shattered merely by calling a spade a spade. The continued presence of Soviet armed forces in Afghanistan is totally unjustified and India’s determination to pursue an independent foreign policy demands that words should not be minced in this matter.”

In a later Resolution BJP attributed the Soviet occupation to the questionable concept of spheres of influence. It thoroughly criticised the concept and expressed the view that it had vital short-term and long-term consequences for India as a nation. The BJP called upon the Government of India to take the lead for a regional, non-aligned initiative to ensure that Afghanistan regained its independent status. It also expressed its regret that the non-aligned movement had failed to come up with any new initiative for a resolution against the continued presence of Soviet troops in Afghanistan.

Non-alignment

During the tenure of the Janata Government when Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee was the Foreign Minister, the Janata Government had asserted that it would pursue a policy of genuine non-alignment without tilting towards any superpower. The Bharatiya Janata Party believed that this policy had brought dividends for India and that our image abroad had brightened. The party regretted that within a year of the new Government taking over, distortions once again crept into matters concerning our foreign policy. The party believed that India should not only remain non-aligned, but should also appear to be so. The BJP also criticised attempts by Mrs. Gandhi and her companions to drag India’s relations with other countries into the domestic election controversies. These attempts had given a serious setback to the process of evolving a consensus-based foreign policy. The party strongly believed that it was only by sincerely adhering to the principle of genuine non-alignment that the country would be able to contribute its mite towards freedom peace and progress in the world. In a Resolution adopted on April 23, 1981, the party noted with concern that—“The erosion that is being permitted by the present Government to the original principle of non-alignment. India’s voice no longer commands the respect that

it once did in the comity of nations. Ambivalence, not independent views, has come to represent us. Our stand on Afghanistan and recognition of Kampuchea has served neither our national interests nor any principle. We have in the process alienated large and significant sections of the non-aligned. The BJP is appreciative of the commonality of ties with USSR. We would work towards further strengthening of these ties on the basis of equality and mutual benefit. We are, however, constrained to observe that never before in the past 34 years of our independent history has an Indian Prime Minister taken on the role of a spokesman and interpreter of the strategic perceptions of a superpower." A few years later, the then President of BJP, Shri L.K. Advani pointed out that it was the Janata Party Government that correctly pursued the non-aligned policy. He made the following comments at the National Council meeting on May 9,1986:

"In Mrs. Gandhiji's days, India's friendship with the USSR was always viewed with suspicion by the Western blocks. Our declarations of non-alignment were distrusted. The Janata Government during its brief tenure tried to dispel this distrust. And it succeeded remarkably. While our warm and close ties with the Soviet Union continued as ever, a very good rapport was built up also with the West. India's non-alignment acquired credibility. Unfortunately, in recent months while in the Western block the earlier distrust has returned, particularly with the Libyan incident, there is some cooling off even in the Soviet block. When recently Secretary General Gorbachov presented his report to the CPSU, he conspicuously omitted even a reference to India. This is a pointer, whose significance cannot be missed."

IRAN-IRAQ CONFLICT AND PALESTINIAN PROBLEM

The BJP viewed the unfortunate continuation of Iran-Iraq war as being inimical to larger Arab interests and as likely to divert world attention from the crucial aspect of a final settlement of the Palestinian question. The party believed that the gulf countries had become the core of multiple tensions heightened by a clash of superpower interests. It called upon the non-aligned movement to

play a crucial role in assisting towards a resolution of the problems of the region.

On the Palestinian question, the party held the view that the solution to the problem can be found through UN Resolutions on the subject. It also believe that the right of Palestinian's to home land cannot be denied. Israel had the right to exist but not as an expanding regional power, with freedom to define its own concept of secure frontiers.

Sri Lanka

The Bharatiya Janata Party was gravely concern about the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. In the opinion of the party, the Government and the people of India could not but be concerned with the unfortunate developments in so close a neighbouring country. In a Resolution adopted at the National Executive meeting of the party on May 6, 1986, the party stated the following:

“The sorry condition of a large number of Tamilian citizens and residents of Sri Lanka, the hostile discrimination persistently practiced against them in various matters such as education, employment under the state, economic opportunities and land settlement, and their ruthless suppression by the instrumentalities of the state inevitably evoke sympathy of the people of India and cause ripples of resentment and anger. The Government of India cannot forever remain insensitive to the acute social tensions that are building up inside India. Apart from the historic ties of ethnic origin and affinity and blood relationships that fully justify Indian involvement in the destiny of Tamil Lankans, no civilised Government can turn a Nelson's eye to widespread, persistent and organised violation of basic human rights of fellow human beings in any part of the world more so in a country only a few miles away from ourselves.”

The BJP believed that the conflict in Sri Lanka was a multidimensional one. It involved a sharing of political power between the majority Singhala and the minority Tamils, equal economic opportunities for both the communities and peaceful co-existence among different religious communities. The Bharatiya Janata Party at the same time warned the Tamilian groups that they should not take recourse to violence and not do anything to

affect the integrity of Sri Lanka. In its above-mentioned resolution, the party stated:

“The Bharatiya Janata Party has also a caution to utter to the Tamilian groups involved in the conflict. If they practice violence and murder on one another, any justification for protest against state violence disappears. Internecine quarrels and squabbles must inevitably hurt their cause. They must, therefore, close their ranks and speak with one voice to carry weight and credibility.”

“The Bharatiya Janata Party while being aware of the provocation for violence cannot condone or approve of its use. Nor can the Bharatiya Janata Party encourage a movement to dismember a sovereign state, which a member of the United Nations and the Commonwealth. The Bharatiya Janata Party, while striving to secure complete justice for the Tamilians, has inevitable limitations, which, as a responsible political party in a responsible country, it cannot overlook or breach.”

South Asian Cooperation

The BJP has always been of the view that the countries of South Asia must engage in continuous economic cooperation. The party felt that deteriorating economic conditions in the world were threatening political stability of developing countries and the only way out was cooperation with each other. It urged the Government of India to make the beginning towards economic recovery of the countries of the region by working for South Asian Region Cooperation for trade and commerce. The party believed that this effort could eventually lead to South Asian common market. It may be noted that BJP was one of the earliest and a strong supporter of the idea of South Asian Regional Cooperation.

BJP EMERGES AS A STRONG FORCE

During at the second-half of the 80's and early 90's, there was considerable turmoil in the international arena. The Bharatiya Janata Party took a position on a variety of issues ranging from the end of the Cold War and UN reforms to the nearer home issues of Pakistani nuclear ambitions, cross-border terrorism and infiltration of Bangladeshis into India. The party also questioned the manner

in which the foreign policy of the Government of India was being conducted by the Congress Party Government. It strongly criticised the *ad hoc* manner in which the foreign policy was being executed. In a scathing criticism of the Government, the then President of the party, Shri L.K. Advani stated at the National Executive meeting of the party in 1988:

“A principal plank to Rajiv Gandhi’s early pronouncements on foreign policy was the establishment of a more stable relationship with our neighbouring countries. Now, three years into his unhappy premiership, one finds that never since independence have our relations with our neighbours been as strained, and as sour, as they are today. Starting from a personalised foreign policy of foreign jaunts in which, in the first 28 months of his premiership, Rajiv Gandhi engaged in ‘Vishwa Darshan’ by jetting, at enormous expense, to 35 countries, our country has by now been reduced to a status of almost regional inconsequence.”

“Our bilateral relations are currently strained with Pakistan, the People’s Republic of China, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. The Socialist Republic of Burma has rejected our amateurish attempts at inviting them into the non-aligned fold. Face to face with prospects of Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, we search on telephone for an Afghanistan policy, and by an ill-thought-out initiative with President Zia. Never since the days of the Islamic Summit of Rabbat, in the sixties, has the nation suffered as humiliating a diplomatic rebuff as this juvenile telephone diplomacy of Rajiv Gandhi.

“This Government sadly lacks a proper conceptual framework of foreign policy. What is more worrisome is that it totally fails on the front of execution of policy as well. Our foreign policy has become episodic and *ad hoc*. We combat apartheid by flamboyant ministerial statements in Parliament, while on the ground, the obscenity of racial discrimination proliferates. We play tennis with Israel one day, and do not one another, and call it policy, while China occupies our soil we talk only of improving relations, but not of freeing our territory of foreign occupation. While President Ershad announces his decision to convert Bangladesh into an Islamic Republic, we sit silently unconcerned about the fate of 15 million Hindus there; our only response is to cancel a cricket tour. In the context of the West Asian imbroglio and persecution

of Palestinians, Rajiv Gandhi demonstrates irrelevance in South East Asia, particularly Kampuchea, inconsequence.”

“As if to cover up all these monumental failures, recourse is then taken to festivals, in the USA, UK, Sweden, France, USSR and now in Japan, all in the name of cultural diplomacy!”

At the same meeting Shri Advani had also some comments on the irresponsible manner in which the Government was responding to the mounting evidence of Pakistan’s nuclear weapons programme. In his view, the Government had failed to adopt a strong policy on the need for developing nuclear weapons. This, he believed, was a very significant failure of the Rajiv Government.

End of the Cold War

With the Bharatiya Janata Party welcomed the end of the Cold War and the process of détente among major power, which replaced the hostile and ideologically competitive ideological relations with the spirit of cooperation and argument on various international and regional problems. The party congratulated the President of United States and the President of the Soviet Union for their wisdom and statesmanship on ending the Cold War and beginning the process of nuclear disarmament, which would diminish the threat of nuclear holocaust. The party welcomed the consequent end of communalism and advent of democracy in the Soviet Union. The party also recognised that the changed international situation was characterised by the emergence of one super alliance, the Euro-American Alliance, which also included the Soviet Union or Russia among its partners. It was also realised that the changed environment had brought new challenges before India and that the Government of India must take immediate steps in the fields of defence and foreign affairs to protect its vital interests.

The BJP appreciated the need for a review of India’s foreign policy options in view of the rapid changes in the international scenario. The failure of the Government to face the realities there committed upon by the party President, Shri Murli Manohar Joshi at the meeting of the National Executive on April 6, 1990. He said, “The Congress (I) Government, has also failed to appreciate the fast changing international scene. Its responses to the happenings in Eastern Europe and Russia have demonstrated the perfunctory

attitude to international affairs. There is an urgent need to redefine India's foreign policy particularly when the arms race and cold war politics have lost their relevance. The recent cut in nuclear weapons is a welcome step but the BJP would like to have a fresh assessment of its security environment. Relations with neighbours should be constantly reviewed with a view to settling outstanding disputes. It is high time that the party should demand full diplomatic relations with Israel. In the new emerging international scene it would be the strength of a country's economy, which would determine its place in the comity of nations, and, therefore, it is imperative to take urgently measures for strengthening the economy of our country."

There were lots of expectations from the changes emerging after the Cold War. But the new era did not really bring about any significant changes. It was hoped that the end of the Cold War would usher in an era of peace, cooperation and all-round development of friendly relations among the nations of the world. This hope was belied and there was still conflict and tension in many parts of the world. The Bharatiya Janata Party expressed the view that the attempt to impose a new world order based on military and economic strength had vitiated in the international atmosphere. The political and economic dominations by some affluent countries was reminiscent of the colonial and imperialist era prevalent before Second World War.

One of the negative developments soon after the disintegration of the Soviet Union was the eruption of the Gulf War. It was widely seen as America's war for exploitation of energy resources of the Gulf region. The BJP took serious note of this development and called for protection of the country's economic interests by suitable adjustment of its foreign policy. Quoted below are the views of the President of the Bharatiya Janata Party at the National Council meeting held on February 1, 1991:

"The Gulf war will have a worldwide impact. The biggest of questions it has raised is, who will control oil? This is the latest example of the struggle for control over sources of energy. In the new international politics, economic diplomacy will acquire as much importance as political and strategic diplomacy. India must pay serious attention to its economic interests. It is the opinion of Bharatiya Janata Party that along with good relations with

neighbouring countries protection of the country's economic interests should form an integral part of our foreign policy."

UN Reforms

The Bharatiya Janata Party had often commented upon the need of reforms in the UN system. It felt that the United Nations in its current form could not be the instrument to bring about a just order in the world. It emphasised the imperative need to reform the UN so as to democratise the world body in order to make it an effective instrument to bring about a new international order based on equality of nations. In its manifesto before the General Elections in 1996, the party stated, "The BJP will launch a vigorous campaign for a permanent membership for India in the UN Security Council." During the time that party came in power it did indeed campaign vigorously but unsuccessfully to secure for India a permanent place in the UN Security Council. The efforts are still continuing and, hopefully, India will get its well-deserved position in the UN system.

THE DECADE OF 1990's

The disintegration of the Soviet Union, the end of the cold war and the emergence of the variously defined New World Order brought about an entirely new international scenario. The non-aligned movement lost quite a bit of its shine and some new ideas began to emerge. The role of the United Nations and the concept of national sovereignty were questioned. Many erstwhile national issues began to acquire an international character. Environmental issues, human rights questions, gender equality, labour-related matters, etc. (The list is actually quite long) acquired an international dimension. The BJP took note of all these developments and refashioned its views accordingly.

It was around this time that the Foreign Affairs Cell of the party was reconstituted and strengthened with the induction a number of retired Ambassadors. It was headed by a very distinguished diplomat, Shri Brajesh Misra. A Defence Cell was also established with two outstanding officers of the Indian Army, Lt. Gen. K.P. Candeth and Lt. Gen. F.R.J. Jacob joining this cell. The Foreign

Affairs and Defence Cells worked in tandem and under the guidance of Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Shri L.K. Advani formulated the party's views on foreign affairs and national security related issues.

Beginning with the manifesto for the 1991 General Elections, the BJP began the process of evolving policies which it was to implement in some form or the other during the six years that the party was in power from 1998 onwards. The manifestos identified national interest, national integrity and national security as the principal elements of BJP's foreign policy goals.

The party noted that with the sudden disappearance of a bipolar divide of 45 years, the USSR and the US were no longer adversaries but partners. The curtains had finally been drawn over the Cold War that had dominated the world for most of the 20th century. International equations were changing fast. In the post Cold War period, neither the USA needed Third World countries to counter communism nor did the USSR have any use any more for its so-called natural allies in the developing world. As a result, the non-align movement, which was created against the backdrop of the bipolar world, had lost its relevance.

The party came to the conclusion that the new situation was a challenging one and at the same time with several fresh opportunities for a larger Indian's role in global affairs. But only economically healthy, militarily strong and progressive India could carve out a niche for itself. As long as India went around with a begging bowl around the world, her voice in the international affairs will not be heard with respect. The party, therefore, concluded that Indian must be militarily strong and economically powerful to assert itself. To this end, the party proposed a number of steps to strengthen India's position in the international arena. These included the following:

1. Work for a stronger South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation in view of the old bipolar world giving place to all a uni-polar world.
2. Promote the idea of a Common Market of all SAARC states.
3. Develop friendly and cordial relations with the countries of South-East Asia, with whom we have ancient cultural bonds.
4. Stand by persons of Indian origin abroad in defence of their legitimate rights.

5. Give dual citizenship to Indian citizens abroad.
6. Strive to strengthen the United Nations in view of the fact that in the changed situation the world powers are more inclined to work through the UN. Strive to make India an autonomous power in the world with a permanent seat in the UN Security Council.

It must be noted that in the proposed steps numerated above, there were some which were put forward for the first time and later became an important part of the Government of India's policies like the Look East Policy, closer contacts with the Indian Diaspora abroad and the idea of seeking a permanent seat in the UN Security Council.

ISLAMIC CONFERENCE

The BJP has always viewed with utmost concern the binding together of countries on the basis of religion. "It is deplorable that the organisation of Islamic Conference takes its political decisions on the basis of religion. Its resolutions on the Kashmir issue are an example of decisions dictated by religious sentiments. This is a tendency, which promotes disharmony in international relations, and the party believes that this needs to be discouraged. The OIC has also been used by Pakistan not only to get resolutions passed on Kashmir, but also in several other ways to damage India's interests in the international arena by propagating its anti-Indian views in the deliberations of the OIC."

Nuclear Threat from Pakistan and India's Nuclear Option

The BJP had often warned the Government of India of the emerging nuclear threat from Pakistan and it had also clearly expressed its view that India must exercise its nuclear option. The continued inaction of the Government of India prompted the party to issue a strongly worded statement at its National Council meeting on June 2, 1992. It said:

"The gravest threat to the security of India is from the emergence of Pakistan as a nuclear weapon country. Pakistan - aids and abets terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab and Assam and promotes infiltration into Gujarat, Kutch and the border districts of

Rajasthan and also engages in smuggling and trafficking in drugs. Two years ago, the President of Pakistan referred to Kashmir as the unfinished business of the partition. Early this week, the same President declared that Kashmir belongs to Pakistan and Pakistan will not rest until it takes over Kashmir.”

“Pakistan will come to terms emotionally with India only when it clearly perceives that continued hostility towards India will bring about its own destruction. Unfortunately, for over four decades India’s foreign and defence policies have been lacking in clarity and are devoid of understanding of objective conditions of the world. India did not wake up when China, after humiliating her in 1962, went on to become a nuclear weapon power in 1964. Even now in the light of Pakistan emerging as a nuclear weapon state, while the BJP has demanded that India must exercise its nuclear option so as to meet any threat to its security, there is evidence that the Government of India is under heavy pressure to give up the option. The BJP would like to alert the nation about the perfunctory approach of the Government of India in this matter.”

The resolution quoted above went on to make the following comments on India’s nuclear option:

“The BJP has been known and respected for its no-nonsense approach to the preservation of India’s unity and territorial integrity which means *inter alia* security from external threats. The BJP calls upon the Government of India not only not to give up the nuclear option under any circumstances but to exercise the option immediately. Further there must be no delay in the testing and development of the ‘Agni’ missile.”

The party also commented very strongly on the extension and ratification of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. The party refused to accept the theses that while national security of some countries required the continuation of nuclear tests, the others would not be allowed to do so. The party categorically rejected this philosophy of ‘Nuclear apartheid’. In his address at the plenary session of the party on November 10, 1995, Shri L.K. Advani said:

“We regard the NPT and its recent extension and ratification as an iniquitous arrangement. We believe that a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty can be arrived at but not through the creation of ‘nuclear apartheid’. We cannot recognise that thesis which advocates

different treatment for the national interests of one, and a totally different yardstick for others.”

“Whilst the BJP reaffirms its commitment to a global and total eradication of all weapons of mass destruction, till such time as such an arrangement can be convincingly brought about, India must reserve to itself the right to take all such decisions as are in the interest of the nation. We urge upon this Government, therefore, to join with us in giving expression to precisely this thought from the sovereign platform of our Parliament.”

“So far as the BJP is concerned, it would like to reiterate its view that against the background of both China and Pakistan having become nuclear powers, national security warrants that India, too, must develop a nuclear deterrent of its own.”

In view of the continued pressure on the Government of India by the United States and other major powers to give up its nuclear option, the BJP took up this question in December 23, 1995 meeting of the National Executive. The party reiterated its conviction that India’s security could not be assured without the possession of nuclear weapons. The party resolution stated:

“The BJP deplores the tendency of the US Administration to pressurise India to give up its sovereign rights and meekly submit to foreign interests. It is India’s sovereign right to determine what is necessary to assure its security, unity and territorial integrity.”

“The BJP demands that Government of India clearly state that it will not accede to a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) nor agree to a fissile materials cut-off for weapons purposes nor accept the provisions of the discriminatory Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) until and unless a treaty is established for the total elimination of nuclear weapons universally within a stipulated time-frame. For the Government of India to do otherwise would mean accepting the concept of nuclear apartheid with the BJP vehemently rejects.”

Bangladesh Infiltration

The BJP has always viewed the large-scale and continuing infiltration of Bangladeshis into India as a serious threat to peace and harmony in our polity. The party considered it most unfortunate that the Government of India and that of West Bengal had not taken adequate action to put an end to this silent demographic invasion.

It noted that their interest lied like in using Bangladeshis to enlarge their vote-bank. The BJP called upon the nation to take serious note of the problem and force the authorities to look at it from the angle of national security rather than political expediency. The BJP repeatedly drew attention of the Government and the People of India to the threat that Bangladeshis infiltration posed to the security of India.

In a resolution adopted at the National Executive meeting on September 8, 1992, the BJP said that the Government in West Bengal had admitted large-scale infiltration after pretending for years that there was none. The Government admitted this only when infiltrators in Calcutta turned out in a procession in large numbers demanding citizenship. The party regretted they were not lover arrested. The party resolution went on to make the following significant remarks:

“Communal organisations like Jamat-e-Islami and Islamic Sewa Sangh have very strong clout with these infiltrators. These outfits are constantly injecting the communal virus in the social fabric of North-Eastern India. Virulent propaganda to aid and abet the secessionist forces is continuously carried out by these elements. Literature supporting the formation of an independent ‘Greater Bang’ including Bangladesh, West Bengal, Assam, North-Eastern states and parts of Bihar and Orissa is being circulated. Bangladeshi leaders are openly advocating the demand of a ‘labensraum’. Reports of ULFA making a common cause with the United Minority Front of Assam – a political party founded by the pro-infiltrator lobby under the leadership of Golam Osmani have widely appeared. After Bangladesh proclaimed Islam as the State religion the plight of Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists and Christians became miserable. They were denied all civic and cultural rights and were forced to leave their homes in order to save their lives and honour. Under the United Nation Commission on refugees, these persons taking refuge in India are to be treated as refugees. While infiltrators have been given all facilities, these refugees. While infiltrators have been given all facilities, these refugees. While infiltrators have been given all facilities, these refugees are denied even ration cards. The Government of India has miserably failed in seeking protection for them in Bangladesh and has never raised

this question of violation of human rights either in the international forums or even with Begum Khalida Zia when she visited India. The Government has bungled on this issue of continued influx of infiltrators by not raising this subject during the discussions with the Bangladeshi Prime Minister. Such is the perfunctory attitude of the Central Government on this question affecting our security.

“The BJP expresses its grave concern at the total indifference of the Government of India as well as the State Governments of West Bengal, Assam, Tripura, Manipur and Bihar towards this problem, which could be ignored and evaded only at national peril.”

United States and Pakistan

The BJP expressed its shock and resentment that despite the end of the Cold War there continues to be a pro-Pakistan tilt in the American Policy towards the Indian sub-continent. At one time, there were some indications that the United States was getting ready to put Pakistan on its watch list of promoters of terrorism. But this cannot come about and the United States supported Pakistan's designs on Kashmir by declaring that the whole State was disputed territory. In a resolution adopted at the National Executive meeting on June 9, 1994, the BJP charged that the United States adopted pro-Pakistan and anti-Indian postures. It said:

“The US is preparing to reward Pakistan for its development of nuclear weapons of which the US intelligence agencies were fully aware, by supplying dozens of F-16 aircraft which, with some modification, can bombard large parts of India with nuclear weapons. At the same time, it threatens India with dire consequences if it continued to retain its nuclear option and proceeds with the development of the ‘Agni’ missile and deployment of ‘Prithvi’ missiles.

“No wonder Pakistan feels it can come to no harm by continuing to aid and abet the terrorists in Jammu and Kashmir. At the same time, despite its dismal performance in Geneva at the annual session of the UN Human Rights Commission held earlier this year, Pakistan has not abandoned its efforts to internationalise the Kashmir question in the guise of protection of the human rights of the people of Kashmir. There are credible reports to suggest that Pakistan will once again attempt in the UN General Assembly

to pass an anti-Indian resolution. The reports also suggest that Pakistan will attempt to debate the question in the UN Security Council before the end of the year. Thus, the instigator of terrorism, Pakistan, will attempt to put the victim, India, in the dock in various international fora.”

Israel

The BJP welcomed the establishment of diplomatic relations with Israel in 1992. The party had maintained for a long-time that India must establish ties with Israel, as that would be beneficial to India for several reasons. The party had repressed in main that it did not serve India’s diplomatic interests to shun Israel while extending full support to the Palestine cause. There was room for India to build the country that they can have both sides to resolve their differences. The party believed that maintaining and good relations with Israel will help India in developing both relations with the United States.

MANIFESTOES OF 1996 AND 1998

BJP’ Foreign Policy Goals

After 15 years of its existence, the BJP had a clear vision of its objectives in the sphere of foreign policy. In the manifestoes of 1996 and 1998, the party clearly reflected the targets it wished to achieve. These two documents became the basis of the policies subsequently pursued by the party when it came to power in April 1998. The earlier period of two weeks, in 1996, when Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee became Prime Minister for a fortnight was too short for any significant policy moves.

The party noted that in a post-Cold War world, India would be confronted by many new challenges and opportunities. It expressed its readiness to meet those challenges and in doing so, it was determined to abide by the human values of peace, equality and cooperation.

The BJP felt rather strongly that in the preceding years, India had not been able to assert its position in the comity of nations. It said in its 1996 manifesto – “The BJP holds that as a departure from the recent past, Indian diplomacy should be conducted in tune

with India's position as a strong power and a major player in the world arena. A billion people, who do not depend upon anyone for feeding or clothing themselves are a power, which cannot be ignored. Our nation needs to regain its lost pride and the BJP alone can undertake this task. While we believe in partnership with everyone, we reject the very thought of patronage by anybody." Likewise, the 1995 manifesto included the following statement:

"In the recent past, we have seen a tendency to bend under pressure. This arises as much out of ignorance of our rightful place and role in world affairs as also from a loss of national self-confidence and resolve. A nation as large and capable as ourselves must make its impact felt on the world arena. BJP Government will demand a premier position for the country in all global fora."

The BJP expressed regret and dismay on the unfortunate neglect of matters relating to national security. It clearly stated its intention to establish a National Security Council to constantly analyse security, political and economic threats and render continuous advice to the Government. This Council will undertake India's first-ever Strategic Defence Review to study and analyse the security environment and make appropriate recommendations to cover all aspects of defence requirements and organisations.

The BJP had maintained for a long time that production of nuclear weapons by India was absolutely essential unless the nuclear weapon powers agreed to an international treaty to reduce and eventually abolish all nuclear weapons. Since there were no moves in this direction, the party was considered opinion that India should have its own nuclear deterrent. The party manifesto of 1998, therefore, very clearly stated that the party would re-evaluate the country's nuclear policy and exercise the option to induct nuclear weapons. At the same time, the party also pledged to expedite the development of the 'Agni' series ballistic missiles.

The BJP categorically rejected the motion of nuclear apartheid and stated that it will actively oppose attempts to impose hegemonic nuclear regime by means of CTBT, FMCF and MTCR. It asserted that it would not be dictated to by anybody in matters of security requirements and in the exercise of nuclear option.

Among other things, the BJP foreign policy agenda included the following prominent objections:

1. To give India a role and position in world affairs commensurate with its size and capability;
2. To promote sovereign equality among nations, the BJP rejects all forms of political and economic hegemonism and is committed to actively resisting such efforts;
3. To vigorously pursue endeavours for India to become a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council. We believe that the existing arrangements in the UN are tilted in the favour of certain countries to serve their narrow interest.
4. To re-orient Indian diplomacy to our economic and commercial goals and to ensure that our missions abroad play a more active and supportive role in meeting these;
5. To promote greater regional and civilisational relationship and strive for Asian solidarity in general and the development of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation in particular.
6. To place relations with the USA on a more even platform based on mutual respect, shared values and congruence of interests. We expect the United States to be more sensitive to India's security and economic interests;
7. To take active steps to persuade Pakistan to abandon its present policy of hostile interference in our internal affairs by supporting insurgent and terrorist groups. The BJP affirms unequivocally India's sovereignty over the whole of Jammu and Kashmir, including the areas under foreign occupations;
8. To improve relations with China by seeking speedy resolution of the outstanding border problem. Even while doing so we will seek greater cross-border trade and cooperation in other areas. We are also concerned about China continuing transfer of advanced weapons and technologies to Pakistan as this has a vital bearing on our ties with China;
9. To maintain the unique, warm and friendly relations with Nepal with which India has the closest cultural, religious and historical ties.

THE NDA REGIME

The exemplary conduct of foreign affairs was a major success story of the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance Government during the period 1998-2004. Under the dynamic leadership of Shri Vajpayee, the fossilised foreign policy of the preceding Governments was transformed into a vibrant instrument for the promotion of India's vital interests in the international arena. Because of the foreign policy achievements of that period, India today enjoys a much higher status in the world community than it ever did since Independence.

India's international standing had fallen abysmally low during the 1990's. A few instances would suffice to recall the pitiable state of India's international status at that point of time. India failed to win an election to one of the non-permanent seats in the Security Council and could muster only 42 votes despite the massive campaign launched to win the election. The organisers of the Europe-Asia summit did not consider it necessary to invite India to this international gathering. Even our neighbouring countries cared very little for India's interests and some were actually quite hostile. This was happening despite the so-called Gujral doctrine, essentially a very noble idea of making concessions to smaller neighbours in the hope of improving relations but in fact it led to quite the opposite. Smaller neighbours began to interpret this as India's weakness and tried to take undue advantage.

India's defence forces at that time were suffering from lack of proper equipment and resources. Nuclear policy was in shambles. Some attempts to develop nuclear weapons were thwarted by the nuclear powers using various means. The unstable Governments of the 90's had buckled under pressure and threats of economic and other sanctions.

One of the first major actions of the Vajpayee Government to strengthen India's national security was to exercise the nuclear option. India had this option for many years but no Government could muster enough courage to turn this option into reality. The BJP had maintained that in the given international situation, development and induction of nuclear weapons into our security system was absolutely essential.

The nuclear tests were conducted on May 11 and May 13, 1998. The National Executive of the BJP hailed the successful nuclear tests conducted by the BJP-led Government as a bold and decisive step in the right direction. Pokhran-II had not only demonstrated that India's indigenous talent is second to none but also provided the nation with a nuclear deterrent. The BJP's views on nuclear policy were expressed in the resolution adopted at the National Executive of the party on August 21. It said:

“The BJP subscribes to the view that lasting global peace can be achieved and the threat of nuclear war eliminated only when nuclear weapon states adopt and implement a time-bound programme to dismantle their weapons of mass destruction. But so long as these states continue to stockpile weapons, it serves so long as these states continue to stockpile weapons, it serves little purpose and works against India's security interests to renounce nuclear deterrence capability.”

“As expected, economic measures have been taken against India for daring to challenge discriminatory arrangements. But India's spirit cannot be broken by sanctions or by initiating punitive steps like the expulsion of Indian scientists working in research establishments. India has the strength and the capacity to withstand and survive economic sanctions.”

“The National Executive welcomes the unilateral moratorium on further tests but urges the Government to review this decision if future developments jeopardize national strategic and security interests. We urge the Government to bear in mind that India stayed out of the CTBT in 1996 because of national security concerns and the discriminatory character of the Treaty. The same principle should guide any dialogue on India becoming a signatory to any multilateral control regime.”

“We also welcome the Government's post-Pokhran diplomatic initiative that has enabled many foreign Governments to realise that India has genuine security concerns and that these concerns need to be addressed. India, contrary to what the BJP-led Government's critics claim, is neither isolated nor cornered following the tests; India has emerged as a confident sovereign state, sure of its place in the comity of nations.”

As mentioned earlier, national security, national integrity

and national interest are the three main planks that continue to shape the BJP's foreign policy. Considerations of national security necessitated the development of a nuclear deterrent. The initial adverse international reaction was handled with great aplomb. A sustained dialogue with the major players convinced the international community that Indian security concerns required the acquisition of a viable minimum deterrent. Within a short span, we were able to transform the strained relationship with major powers into friendly, cooperative and meaningful relationship.

The NDA Government evolved a nuclear doctrine, which clearly lays down that India's nuclear weapons are only for defensive purposes and that India will adhere steadfastly to the concept of no first use of nuclear weapons. Similarly, India will continue to abide by accepted international norms on non-proliferation of nuclear technology. India has clearly emerged as a responsible nuclear power.

Neighbouring Countries

The second most important foreign policy issue before the Government was relations with the neighbouring countries. The well-meaning Gujral doctrine has proved to be quite inadequate to convert hostility into friendship. It was felt that bilateral relations with the neighbours must be based on some kind of mutuality of interests and must have an element of reciprocity.

The NDA Government was able to normalise and improve relations substantially with all the neighbouring countries except Pakistan and to some extent with Bangladesh. The large-scale influx of Bangladeshis into India became a major irritant in Indo-Bangladesh relations. But the more serious concern was the increasing evidence of Islamic Jahadis crossing border from Bangladesh into Indian territory for engaging in terrorists activities.

Pakistan

A major initiative was taken to improve relations with Pakistan when Prime Minister Vajpayee travelled to Lahore in a bus to have a dialogue with Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. This peaceful gesture, however, failed to convince the Pakistani rulers of the need for normalisation of relations between India and Pakistan. They responded, instead, by launching an aggression in the Kargil

region in Jammu and Kashmir in May-June 1999.

Two years after, the Kargil conflict, Prime Minister Vajpayee, invited Gen. Parvez Musharraf for the Agra Summit. This was an act of statesmanship, reflecting of India's policy of establishing peaceful and normal relations with Pakistan. The Bharatiya Janata Party has always believed that India and Pakistan cannot live in perpetual hostility. The BJP's views on relationship with Pakistan at that point of time were clearly reflected in the following extract from the resolution adopted by the National Executive on July 29, 2001.

"The BJP believes that efforts to improve relations with Pakistan should continue. However, it must be clearly understood that no meaningful dialogue with Pakistan can be conducted as long as the 'jehadi' mentality dominates the Pakistani establishment. There are elements in Pakistan, who interpret India's friendly gestures as a sign of weakness and a proof of the success of the Pakistani-sponsored cross-border terrorism. The BJP would like to such people to know that India's friendly overtures are indicative of our overwhelming and oft-demonstrated strength and also of our innate desire for peace and friendship with all our neighbours. If Pakistan continues to adopt a negative posture, the Government of India should draw appropriate conclusions and plan for the future accordingly."

Several attempts were made, thereafter, to continue to engage in a dialogue with Pakistan. The Pakistani insistence on raising the Kashmir question as the core issue at every opportunity was not helpful at all. Attempts were made to convince the Pakistanis that India will not agree to any further map-making in the sub-continent. Even Pakistani commentators began to point out to President Musharraf that Pakistan who failed to wrest Kashmir from India despite several wars. The UN Resolutions also had not been of any help to Pakistan. Pakistan's attempts to involve third parties into the conflict as an arbitrator had failed and that cross-border terrorism in which Pakistan had engaged for bleeding India had not affected India's progress. But, it had, in fact, ruined Pakistan's economy and brought down her international standing. The Indian side had repeatedly suggested that the two countries should engage in interaction in various fields of activity and put

aside the Kashmir question for resolution at a later date. Attempts were made to impress upon the Pakistani interlocutors that once Indo-Pak relation develop in a variety of spheres, a conducive atmosphere will be created for resolving the Kashmir problem. The example of the European Union shows that when countries involve themselves in diverse interactions, the borders began to lose much of their significance. The example of Indo-China relationship was also given. Both countries continue to discuss the border issue, but do not allow it to come in the way of a wide-ranging relationship in all spheres.

As a result of repeated attempts, interaction began to take place between India and Pakistan, in a number of fields and the atmosphere had become much more relaxed. The major gain for India was the signing of a joint statement during Prime Minister Vajpayee's visit to Islamabad in January 2004 under which Pakistan agreed to ensure that Pakistani territory was not used by terrorists for engaging in cross-border terrorism.

International Issues

Soon after the nuclear tests, the NDA Government faced prospects of a very hostile reaction from various quarters. Besides the United States, which was most vociferous, the European Union, Japan, China, Australia and many other countries expressed views highly critical of India's action. Several countries individually issued sanctions against India and some of them called upon the international agencies to impose strict sanctions. This was a difficult period, but the Government handled the situation admirably. Special envoys were sent to many countries and all Indian diplomatic missions were galvanised to project the Government of India's main point. Within a year, things began to change and most countries accepted that India had genuine security concerns. The International Community began to recognise India's importance as a political and economic power and did not wish to jeopardize their own interests by lowering the level of interaction with India. The era of sanctions, therefore, there was of a very short duration. India's international diplomacy had been a great success.

Terrorism

India had faced terrorist activity for several years before the September 2001 terrorist attacks on New York and Washington. The 9/11 attacks led to universal awareness of the danger from 'jehadi' terrorism. India and United States pledged to fight the scourge of terrorism together. The UN Resolution on the means to fight terrorism was welcomed by the Government of India. India, accordingly strengthen its laws to fight terrorist activities. India also offered its help to the United States to deal with the jehadis forces of Al-Quada. India supported the US action in Afghanistan against Al-Quada and Taliban. The Vajpayee Government, however, had some strong reservations about US attack on Iraq. The Government felt that unilateral action of the United States was deplorable and that this should have been done with UN approval.

The successful foreign policy of the Vajpayee Government was noted by the Bharatiya Janata Party in its National Executive Resolution of November 26, 2004 in the following words:

“Among the many sterling achievements of the Vajpayee Government, the successful conduct of foreign policy was the most outstanding. The Vajpayee Government, guided only by supreme national interest, conducted nuclear tests soon after coming to power in 1998. Therefore, it successfully overcame the opposition of leading global powers to this move. It also resolutely and successfully met the challenge of economic sanctions imposed by these countries. Its diplomacy was so consummate that the end of its tenure in 2004. India was on the high table of all international gatherings was widely respected and several important and new initiatives were taken on all fronts. The most notable, of course, were the initiatives to resolve the outstanding issues with China and Pakistan, the establishment of a healthy and fruitful relationship with the USA, the EU, Russia, Japan, ASEAN and other countries. It initiated determined steps to improve and intensify its relationship with its neighbours. The peace initiative with Pakistan, was a particular, of historic significance as was the Joint Press Statement issued after Prime Minister Vajpayee's meeting, with President Musharraf, in Islamabad, on 6th January, 2004.”

The Vajpayee era of 1998 to 2004 witnessed a very substantial transformation of Indian foreign policy. The old era of the pursuit of outdated ideologies had given way to the pursuit of national

interest. Pragmatism, practicality and reason played the dominant part in determining Indian relations with other countries. As the National Security advisor stated at an international conference: “India takes decisions on the basis of national interest and no longer accepts unquestioningly the doctrines of non-violence and non-alignment”. Those policies were grounded in strict rationality and real politic. They were not relevant any more. India had moved on from idealism to pragmatism. This transformation necessitated a change in India’s relations with the outside world. Rapid economic development was essential to make India a strong and prosperous nation. This necessitated a new stress on economics in the making of foreign policy. The socialist era had come to an end and a sustained engagement with the capitalist world was called for. A good example was the India-US dialogue, which helped change bilateral relations steadily and quite deeply. Similar dialogues were mediated with a number of major players.

The BJP Government gave a new and healthy direction to Indian foreign policy.

Looking at the Future

The 21st century, they say, is going to be Asia’s century just as the 19th century was a European century and the 20th century was an American century. Japan has already moved into the big league and both China and India are not far behind. With the Asian countries taking a leap forward, Asian resurgence is very much on the horizon. However, for the near future, the United States and Europe are expected to dominate the international scene. Despite its present, dominating military and economic prowess, the US is unlikely to wish away a multilateral world. The BJP expects a multipolar world to emerge in the near future with India as one of its important poles. The International Community cannot do away with a United Nations structure but the institution needs a restructuring in which India must play an important part. The world is rapidly becoming a global village and many issues which were hither to considered a national concern are now acquiring an international character. We must create an awareness among our people about the need for a broad-minded approach to a variety of issues and to take greater interest in international affairs.

Terrorism has emerged as a major threat to the civilised world. The BJP would like India to collaborate with all nations to root out this evil from the international scene. Islamic nations must be persuaded to find ways and means of controlling elements which engage in terrorism in the name of Islam.

With the world recognising India as an emerging power, our foreign policy has to become far more active, creative and sure-footed. The NDA Government had launched a number of bold initiatives during its regime and there is an urgent need to build upon those policy innovations. Unfortunately, the UPA Government has reversed some of those steps and we hope that correction will be applied soon.

BJP's foreign policy vision of the coming years includes the following:

1. Strengthening the forces of multilateralism. The United Nations Organisation needs to be strengthened and restructured. The realities of the present day international situation must be taken into account while giving shape to this august body. India must play an important role in the UN and other multilateral institutions, both international and regional.
2. Carrying forward vigorously the Look East Policy pursued by the NDA Government. Previous Governments have tended to neglect this region, which should in fact, be part of our extended neighbourhood. More vigorous interaction with the Asian countries, China and Japan will enable us to strengthen Asian solidarity.
3. Raising the level of interaction with the European Union. The EU has emerged as an economically strong and powerful entity. There is a continuing and regular interaction between India and some countries of the EU as also an annual Indo-EU Summit. This has proved to be very beneficial for India's economic development and our politico-strategic interests. The BJP would like to see the development of stronger bonds with the EU as a whole as also with individual members of the European Union.
4. Forging closer relations with the United States in all spheres. In recent years, India and the US have moved away from

the past estrangement to a very positive engagement. The BJP believes that India and the US are natural allies and that cooperation and understanding between these two largest democracies in the world would not only promote their mutual benefit but will also contribute towards peace and prosperity in the world.

5. Developing extensive contacts with countries of Africa and South America. The BJP recognises that there are various kinds of impediments in establishing a meaningful relationship with these countries, but strongly believes that the difficulties can be overcome to create new linkages. The developing countries have had a raw deal in the past and must look for new arrangements and new organisations for protection of their economic and political interests.
6. Refashioning the traditional relations with Russia and the Central Asian countries. During the Soviet era, our relationship with these countries was quite extensive and we have developed links which can be used for mutual benefit in the coming years, especially in the economic sphere.
7. Carrying forward the dialogue with Pakistan to normalise relations between the two countries. We believe that India and Pakistan must work together to build a bright future for the South Asia region. A continuous dialogue and a step-by-step approach will help in resolving all outstanding issues between India and Pakistan. Improved relations between the two countries will help in rejuvenating the SAARC. If Pakistan continues to adopt a negative approach, India should go ahead with sub-regional and bilateral economic cooperation with the other members of SAARC.
8. Paying special attention to the promising economic relationship with West Asian countries. We have historical links with this region. It is also an energy rich area and should be an integral part of our long-term plans for India's energy security.
9. Strengthening further the existing close-relationship with Nepal and Bhutan, our most intimate neighbours, for mutual benefit. They have helped India in combating

terrorist activities. We have assisted them in their economic development and will continue to do in future.

10. Watching carefully the developments in Afghanistan and Iraq. We have had an extensive relationship with both these countries in the past. The BJP is happy that India has been associated with the task of reconstruction of Afghanistan. We would be willing to render all possible assistance to Iraq. We would like to see Iraq emerge as a democratic and pluralist society.
11. Maintaining close contacts with people of Indian origin settled abroad. The NDA Government has already taken several steps to promote regular interaction with the Non-Resident Indians. January is being celebrated every year as 'Pravasi Divas'. Awards have been instituted for the people of Indian origin abroad. The demand of the PIOs for dual nationality has been agreed to. We will continue to take further measures to ensure that the PIOs get every opportunity to participate in India's march towards prosperity and strength.

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