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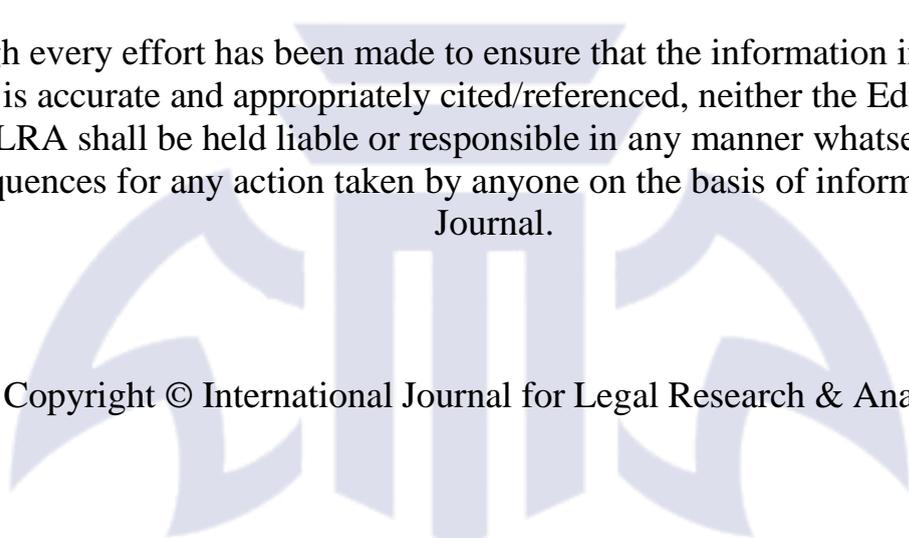
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THE INDIA WAY - STRATEGIES FOR AN UNCERTAIN WORLD BY S. JAISHANKAR: A BOOK REVIEW

Authored By- Niraj Kumar Seth

The India way is an insider look at how the Indian foreign policy has evolved since independence, what global events and disruptions shaped it to its current form and how resilient it has been to challenges over seven decades of post-independent history of India. It also spells out possible policy responses. It throws light on the new direction that Indian diplomacy has taken after 2014 and provides a detached analysis of the rationale for such a reorientation. The book provides a refreshing perspective about India's foreign policy options, beyond the traditional dogmas of the cold war era. By drawing analogies from the legends of the great epic, Mahabharata, the author explains the various components and tools of diplomacy. The book recommends the future course that Indian diplomacy should take, drawing lessons from India's own culture and traditions, enriched by works such as Arthashastra, Mahabharata, etc. The book was written by the author in the course of the last two years through a series of events and lectures given by him at think tanks, conferences and business forums. The book dispassionately appreciates global developments as an overarching context, including the coronavirus epidemic, which in the author's view is the harbinger of change that the world will now experience.

The author, S. Jaishankar has had an illustrious career as a professional diplomat for more than four decade that culminated with a three-year tenure as the Foreign Secretary of India from 2008 to 2011. He is currently the External Affairs Minister of India and is a Member of Parliament in the Rajya Sabha from the state of Gujarat. As an Indian Foreign Service (IFS) officer he has served as the Indian Ambassador to the countries like the United States, China, and Singapore. He holds a PHD in International Relations on nuclear diplomacy from Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi. He was a recipient of the Padma Shri award in 2019.

The first chapter titled as "The lessons of Awadh, the dangers of strategic complacency" deals with the theme of Indian self-absorption, since the time of British East India company during 17th century to the emergence of China in the present century. The author coins another term for this old

Indian trait as “the Panipat syndrome”, by which he means the default option of playing defence in the face of invasions and a mindset that does not comprehend or anticipate external events. Therefore, he recommends India to do in Rome as Romans do and adopt the ‘sabka saath, sabka Vikas, sabka Vishwas’ in foreign policy also to engage with the world more comprehensively. According to him, the pandemic has allowed India to project itself as the pharmacy of the world and can contribute to its Brand building, the same way as IT did.

The second chapter titled “The art of disruption, The United States in a flatter world”, deals with the issues around erosion of alliances, withdrawal of the USA from major international commitments and the Sino-US competition. In his view, China has been winning without fighting, while the US was fighting without winning in the last two decades. International relations, according to him is an exercise of both forging convergence and managing divergence. The closer parity between US and China today has diluted convergence, the same way as it happened with US and USSR in 1948. Today, global supply is perceived as an economic threat and immigration as a cultural one in author’s view. Control over key disruptive technologies like big data, artificial intelligence, biotechnology, advanced computing, etc. is part of the new contestation for the influence of the world. The disenchantment with globalization has led to the electoral success of nationalist candidates. In this disrupted world, the author recommends that India must exploit power differentials, forge more contemporary ties, manage differences and find stability in a changing dynamic. Friends who differ and competitors who cooperate are the notable traits of this emerging scenario, referred to as “frenemies” by the author.

The third chapter titled “The Krishna’s choice, the strategic culture of a rising power” draws analogies from the Mahabharata, the great Indian epic, to distill the Indian thought on statecraft. He draws a parallel between the crisis of confidence that Arjuna undergoes in the battlefield against his own kinfolk with the ‘soft state’ nature of Indian power, unwilling to do what is necessary. Arjuna’s choice of an unarmed Krishna over his army (leveraging asymmetric capabilities like artificial intelligence, robotics, etc.), killing of Jarasandha of Magadha at Krishna’s instance (Regime change), the house of lac conspiracy by Kauravas (Strategic deception), etc. are some other examples from the epic that teach important lessons in diplomacy. Building ties, accessing technology of others, leveraging external environment, ability to shape and control narrative, ethical positioning, brand building, use of asymmetric tactics, alliance discipline, etc. are some other lessons in diplomacy that India can learn from the Mahabharata.

The fourth chapter titled, “The dogmas of Delhi, overcoming the hesitations of history” begins with what the author calls ‘the theory of insanity’, on the lines of Albert Einstein’s ‘Theory of Relativity’. It refers to the tendency of doing same things over and over again and then expect the same results. At this moment in world politics, our long-held beliefs no longer hold true and if the word is different, we need to think, talk and engage accordingly. Past cannot be an infallible guide to future in all circumstances in his view. The author opines that we need to overcome our hesitation of history with rigorous debates and diligence. Risk-taking is an inherent aspect of diplomacy and thus according to him, a low-risk foreign policy is only likely to produce limited rewards. Such risk-taking foreign policy did yield benefits in past, for instance, the 1971 Bangladesh war, willingness to expand the initial conflict beyond Kashmir in 1965, the 2005 Indo-US Nuclear deal, etc. Therefore, he suggests that the starting point for our new journey into the world of convergence is to put the dogmas behind.

The fifth chapter titled, “Of mandarins and masses, public opinion and the west” is centered around the conflict between nationalism and globalization that our world is witnessing today. The offshoring of manufacturing, extension of global supply chains and expansion of immigration flows are driving greater nationalism and insularity in the west and fueling an anti-globalizations narrative. As the US is increasingly turning inwards, the glue which hitherto bound the Atlantic alliance is threatening to come unstuck. However, to discount west would be a serious folly as still the major markets are in the west, and so are capital needed for growth. West continues to be the main source of technology and innovation, even if the leads are eroding. Global institutions and standards are set by the west even today. Defence budgets are heavily dominated by the western expenditure and the US and Europe still remain the leading suppliers of military and dual-use technologies. Therefore, in author’s views, stronger partnership with the west will lead to considerable economic, technological, and political gains to India.

The sixth chapter titled as “The Nimzo-Indian defence, managing China’s rise” deals with the future of Indo-Chinese relationship. The ‘Indian Defence’ is a popular opening for those who play black in chess. In chess, the one who plays white makes the first move before the black as a rule. The author opines that playing black has been the standard Indian strategic posture as Indian foreign policy has been reactive for most of its history. The two countries shared a tradition of strong intellectual, religious and commercial contacts in the ancient era of the real silk road. The author highlights deep cultural association between the two ancient civilizations. The bottom-line

according to the author is that peace and tranquility on the borders must prevail for a more settled Sino-Indian relationship.

The seventh chapter titled as “A delayed destiny, India, Japan and the Asian balance” deals with the future of Indo-Japanese relation and India’s evolving Act East policy with ASEAN in the center. Preoccupation with China, a difficult immediate neighbor (Pakistan for India and North Korea for Japan) and historical events driven by the West (Partition of India and defeat of Japan in World War 2) led to a harmonious but distant co-existence of the two Asian giants. However, gradually the two countries came closer as the two have a shared commitment to democracy, tolerance, pluralism and open society. The civil nuclear energy cooperation, Delhi Metro Rail Project, Logistics Exchange Agreement of 2019 are some of the recent fruits of this reinvigorated partnership. India decided to look more to the east after 1991 in correction of its foreign policy that was hitherto obsessed with the West - both the US and USSR were faces of the Western world, even if they represented competing force. Since then, India’s interface with South-East Asia and East Asia has grown steadily. Its economic collaboration with Japan, South Korea and China has expanded under all governments.

The last chapter, titled as “The Pacific Indian, a re-emerging maritime outlook” entails with the evolution of the idea of the ‘Indo-Pacific’ and India’s outreach to the Indian Ocean region. The trigger for the Indo-Pacific may have been the change in the American stance and the rise of China, but for India, the author believes, it is the logical next step beyond Act East. India’s location jutting into the center gives it a unique attribute. The Malabar exercise, SAGAR (Security and Growth for all in the region), Project Mausam, Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), anti-piracy operations, EEZ surveillance, Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) are some of the collaborative and joint forums that India has initiated and leads in the region. Strengthening the sense of extended neighborhood on the basis of a stronger connectivity is part of India’s reclaiming of its history. A common rule-based order, equal access to global commons under International Law, freedom of navigation, unimpeded commerce and peaceful settlement of disputes are its other attributes.

Finally, the author in his Epilogue discusses a post-corona future of the world. Corona nationalism is the version of nationalism that is playing out before us in the form of pursuance of health goals by nations with little regards to welfare of others. For India, the author recommends that both the national circumstances and global situations call for a much greater emphasis on self-reliance (Atmanirbharta), greater innovation and creativity and greater emphasis on Make in India, not just

for Indians but for the world. He believes that Atmanirbhar Bharat does co-exists with Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (the world is a family).

The India way is like a cookbook of foreign policy and diplomacy, wherein the author, a master chef of diplomacy reveals his secret recipes about the future course of India way of engaging with the post-corona world. His optimism about the new course that the Indian diplomacy has taken after 2014 is backed by hard facts that only a top diplomat of his stature can experience. He brings in unique perspectives and makes remarkable suggestions about the Indo-Chinese and the Indo-American ties. The chapter that draws analogies from the Mahabharata to explain different facets of diplomacy and statecraft is the most outstanding illustration of his unique approach. The book is as relevant to the students of diplomacy as for those involved in policy making. For readers, aspiring for a career in diplomacy or foreign services, the book provides them with a comprehensive view about the basic tenets of Indian foreign policy since inception and its evolution overtime. It wouldn't be an exaggeration to state that this book is a window to the future of India's foreign policy and its relevance will only increase in future, as the author holds the reins of Indian diplomacy, as its current foreign minis

