



“A STUDY ON INDIA’S FOREIGN POLICY DURING THE PRIME MINISTER OF ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE”

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Abstract:

This study analyzes the “Indian foreign policy under Atal Bihari Vajpayee's” tenure through the lens of realistic pluralism. The argument posits “that since the 1998 nuclear test,” India has adopted a nuanced approach to its foreign policy, characterized by a focus on realism, to pursue its fundamental objectives. It is distinguished by an emphasis on actively addressing current issues such as neoliberal globalization, terrorism, disarmament, adapting to the evolving “international order, the weakening of multilateral institutions, and the emergence of new regionalism,” among others. India has embraced a pragmatic approach of pluralism to address these challenges, which focuses on its economic progress and safeguards its security concerns. Additionally, this approach aims to elevate India's position as a rising global force by consistently advocating for its core principles. This study elucidates the process by which a political party espousing a rightist ideology assumes control at a period when the Congress party cannot fulfill the desires and ambitions of the populace. The article examines the primary arguments offered in this framework and how Bajpayee implemented them. The text finishes by evaluating the techniques used by Bajpayee and their potential impact on Indian foreign policy in the future.

Keywords: Realism, Diplomacy, Foreign Policy, Pluralism, Security Interests.

1. Introduction

During his three periods in office, “Atal Behari Vajpayee served as prime minister of India.” He served a brief 13-day tenure in May 1996, another 13 months from March 1998 to April 1999, and a full five years as head of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) from 1998 to 2004 in his third term. Being the first non-Congress leader to occupy this esteemed position, he stands tall as the head of the biggest democracy. His political savvy and diplomatic finesse have taken India's foreign policy to new levels throughout his tenure as prime minister.

For the uninitiated, his decisions to detonate a nuclear bomb in May 1998 to cultivate amicable relations with neighbors, to ink “the historic Lahore Declaration with Pakistan on February 20, 1999” to advance Sino-Indian relations to strengthen Indo-US relations etc. However, his realism pluralist ideas for navigating “India's foreign policy” more methodically and “pragmatically” have a rationale behind each action.^[1]

Vajpayee has been associated with European strategists from the 19th century, such as Metternich and Castlereagh, according to a large amount of literature, including an essay published on the Mint website Vajpayee's by Abhijnan Rai. “Manoj Joshi's piece on Vajpayee's foreign policy in The Wire describes it as charming. Similarly, the Economic Times' Dipanjan Roy Chaudhury” painted Bajpayee's foreign policy as a factor in India's rising international profile. In her paper for Modern Diplomacy, Arunima Gupta argues that Vajpayee's foreign policy laid the groundwork for India to become a responsible and influential player on the international stage.^[2]



However, there is a change in this document. This dissertation seeks to comprehend Atal Bihar Vajpayee (an anomaly compared to his predecessor) use of realistic pluralism in formulating India's foreign policy. This thesis contends that Bajpayee's administration put into practice the three interrelated components of realistic pluralism.^[3] These include: 1) “maintaining a strong national power to enhance national security;” 2) using strong, “soft power cards” to accomplish economic growth and other strategic goals; and 3) multi-aligning to avoid allies at the regional, sub-regional, and extra-regional levels. The fourfold goals are the end goal of all the practice. First, strengthening “national security and Hindu national power; second, improving relations with the US; third, building friendly ties with India's neighboring countries and aligning with regional, subregional, and extra-power to speed up India's social, economic, and strategic development agenda;” and fourth, promoting Indian traditions and values on the global stage to project India as a leading power. Indian foreign policy has always been grounded in reality. Indira Gandhi had done it before him in 1971 when Bangladesh first appeared on the world scene. When it comes to strategy, nevertheless, “Atal Bihar Bajpayee's implementation of realistic pluralism” marks a fresh start. Consequently, we should look at various parts of his programs that were seen as a pioneering attempt or a bearer of hope for elevating Indian foreign policy. To comprehend Bajpayee's endeavor to actualize each specific foreign policy maneuver, it is necessary to describe and analyze various occurrences. This document is structured as follows to provide extra details: The article begins by dissecting the paradigm shift that occurred under the leadership of Atal Bihari Bajpayee and how it shaped India's foreign policy. He demonstrates intelligence, moderation, and caution by tying economic growth to security. The next part will evaluate the increasing role of economics in determining international relations. The change gave his development plan the much-needed boost it required. Ultimately, in the end, we evaluate his foreign policy initiatives and how they affect India's future possibilities.^[4]

2. Core Principles of Indian “Foreign Policy”

“Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India” after gaining independence, had a crucial role in formulating India's foreign policy during its early years. He strongly supported the principle of nonalignment. After gaining independence, India was seen as materially deficient and had several developmental obstacles throughout the nation-building process. After gaining independence, “Jawaharlal Nehru was India's first Prime Minister during the Cold War era.” Consequently, it maintained a neutral position between the two major powers while promoting its dedication to causes such as the end of colonialism, opposition to imperialism, and disarmament. It also aimed to promote the idea of a unified world as a symbol of advocating “idealism in international relations through a strategy known as non-alignment. Non-alignment, as a strategic approach,” entails adopting India's autonomous political and economic policies while advocating for global peace and international collaboration.^[5]

Following “Nehru's death in 1964 and the India-China conflict of 1962, Indira Gandhi, who served as the Prime Minister of India from 1966-1977 and 1980-1984,” adopted distinct methods. According to her, nonalignment represents a power imbalance that does not serve India's interests as a country. It fails to fulfil national security requirements and provides no opportunity to promote global peace. “Stephen Cohen” used the term “militant Nehruvian” to describe how Indira Gandhi fostered a practical commitment to non-alignment within the framework of her foreign policy. Indira Gandhi's strong emphasis on prioritising the national interest, her belief in India's greatness as a country, and her readiness to use military force to counter any threats to its independence. Subsequently, the Janata administration, led by Morarji Desai, assumed power and prioritised non-alignment measures, with



significant influence from Atal Bihar Bajpayee, the foreign minister. Subsequently, “Indira Gandhi and her son Rajiv Gandhi” cultivated better ties with the United States, but their policies remained unchanged.^[6]

In the late 1980s, India had a balance of payments problem due to its "political and economic policies" being undermined and its foreign policy being significantly affected. This was all due to a crisis of governability. The Soviet Union's collapse triggered this crisis since it cut off India's financial help and caused its economy to collapse. To speed up India's economic development, the country's previous prime minister, P.V. Narasimha Rao, redirected "Indian foreign policy toward East Asian" countries to attract commerce and investment. Rao also instituted the 'Look East' strategy, bringing economic change—had an outbreak of governability, according to Atul Kohli, particularly in the late 1980s. A crisis in India's balance of payments occurred because the country's political and economic policies had shaky bases, significantly impacting the country's foreign policy. When the Soviet Union collapsed, it cut off financial help to India and drained its economy, setting the stage for the current crisis. During this crucial period, the "Look East" strategy and the monetary reform known as LPG (liberalisation, privatisation, and globalisation) were put into place by "P.V. Narasimha Rao, the former prime minister of India." The goal was to speed up India's economic development. Thus, the Indian government shifted its foreign policy to focus on luring East Asian countries for commerce and investment.^[7]

During that period, two significant shifts occurred in India's global and local arenas. “The dissolution of the USSR resulted in the conclusion of the Cold War. Simultaneously, as Rajani Kothari said, the Congress system, in which the Congress party had the dominant position in controlling India, diminished.” This transformation ushers in the age of coalition politics when numerous p when numerous parties establish coalitions and rule together at the centre.

3. The Foreign Policy of Atal Bihar Vajpayee

A fundamental change in perspective or approach. He has innate leadership qualities and excels as a strategic thinker, fostering a culture of practicality in the field of statecraft. In his renowned book "Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace," Morgenthau, a prominent scholar of international affairs, posits that realists conceptualize power in relation to self-interest. According to Aathasastra, similar to the teachings of Chanakyas, the primary objective of a monarch is “to enhance the potency of his kingdom, extend the empire, and annihilate his adversaries. Therefore, the notion of power is mostly seen as having a compelling force in both Western and Indian customs. Furthermore, national power is characterized by the capacity to modify the conduct of others in order to achieve desired outcomes.”

Being a realist, he possesses an understanding of the significant influence that power holds in influencing the dynamics of international relations. Power has a different degree of influence on states, hence altering political outcomes. The outcomes of a country's foreign policy, both positive and negative, are mostly determined by its level of power and how it effectively employs that power. Analysts have described the change in Indian foreign policy under Vajpayee's tenure as a transition from idealism to pragmatism, which they liken to "crossing the Rubicon"^[8] “Indian policy makers contend that it diverges from Morgenthau's depiction of political reality since it incorporates a normative principle. However, Vajpayee's approach to realism is extensive and may be described as realistic pluralism, which encompasses three key elements: 1) Hard power refers to the use of military



force or economic coercion to achieve objectives. 2) Soft power refers to the ability to influence others by attraction and persuasion, rather than force or coercion.” 3) Multi-aligned and not alliance creation means maintaining relationships with other countries without forming formal alliances.

3.1. Promoting and maintaining a robust national power

The Around the World “Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) was ratified permanently and unconditionally in 1995. India, a staunch advocate of total nuclear disarmament, declined to sign the nuclear non-proliferation treaty due to the exclusive power granted to the P-5 members of the UN Security Council to possess and use nuclear weapons. Conversely, the P5 does not prioritise achieving total disarmament. In response to this, the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (P-5) suggested the creation of a new treaty framework called the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) in 1996.” However, this proposal included a controversial section about the conditions for the treaty to take effect. China requested the inclusion of this paragraph, which states that if “New Delhi does not sign the CTBT by 1999,” it would be subjected to trade restrictions imposed by the United Nations, similar to those imposed on Iraq.^[9]

Following the formation of the Bajpayee-led United Front administration in May 1996, “the realistic policies and their influence on foreign policymaking were evident within a few weeks. In June 1996, Arundhati Ghosh, India's delegate to the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva over the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), said that India objected to the CTBT due to concerns about the country's security. India recognised that the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) are biased. The launch of Pakistan's Gauri missile on April 6, 1998 put India in a dilemma, forcing it to decide whether to get or relinquish a nuclear weapon. In May 1998, Bajpayee took a momentous decision.”^[10]

3.2. Nuclear Test in May 1998 “(Hindu National Power)”

The BJP-led coalition government made two major decisions on May 11 and 13, 1998. The first thing it did was tell its military experts to test five nuclear devices—including a thermonuclear weapon—at Pokhran. The second point is that India has abandoned its 1974 pledge to maintain a peaceful nuclear program. The Hindu nationalist Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) used the nuclear test of 1998 to promote the event as a sign of Hindu pride and power. According to the Rastriya Swyam Sevak Sangh's (RSS) ideology, this is the way to go. Leading RSS figure M.S. Golwalkar had previously said that India's nuclear weapons development and production were of the utmost importance. This is the cornerstone idea that Bajpayee used to build India's foreign policy. "Hindu Rastra" refers to the Hindu nationalist ideology that RSS has long supported.

Nevertheless, there are two considerations to contemplate in this context: 1) What were the motivating factors behind Bajpayee's “decision to conduct a nuclear weapons test in 1998,” and 2) What were the reasons for the delay in India's decision to carry out the test? James Chiriyankandath states that the primary objective of addressing “the first question is to establish India's position as a prominent player in the international order after the Cold War. Bajpayee explicitly said that due to the lack of a universal and non-discriminatory disarmament program,” they cannot support a system that would establish an artificial distinction between those who possess nuclear weapons and those who do not. India asserts that each country has the inherent authority to choose its own highest national interest and exercise its sovereign decision-making.



Following the Cold War, some events emerged that raised concerns about the erosion of nation-state sovereignty. “These included discriminatory disarmament regimes like the CTBT and NPT, as well as the influence of globalization driven by neoliberal ideology,” which prioritizes market forces in determining outcomes. India did not use the non-alignment approach aggressively in international institutions like the “UN Security Council (UNSC) or the World Trade Organization” to pursue its objectives. Additionally, India did not depend on Russia to address matters concerning weapons and other concerns.

Another contributing factor is the increasing menace presented by neighboring nations like China (covertly imparting nuclear expertise to Pakistan) and Pakistan (a hotbed for terrorism), compelling India to reassess its stance on national power. Bajpayee expressly communicated to US President Bill Clinton that the increasing strategic risk posed by China was the reason for his justification for conducting nuclear testing.

India obtained a research reactor with British assistance in 1956 and carried out “a peaceful nuclear explosion in 1974. However, it did not advance to weapon grade due to financial, strategic, and moral constraints.”

Bajpayee, a statesman who adhered to “realism in statecraft, believed that India's national security was primarily guaranteed by a robust national defense.” The phrase “strong national defense” implies a robust ability to prevent potential threats, which includes the use of nuclear weapons and aligns with the latest breakthroughs in military technology. Bajpayee believes that security and growth are closely linked. According to him, “Without security, there can be no development; without development, our security is incomplete.”^[11]

Bajpayee's decision to adhere to actual politics and personally oversee the nuclear test in 1998 was influenced by the aforementioned factors. However, Bajpayee skillfully maintained a nuanced approach in formulating “India's foreign policy” by conducting bomb tests and asserting Hindu nationalist influence, while yet acknowledging and including religious minority groups. In his presentation to the parliament on May 27, 1998, after the May 1998 nuclear test, Vajpayee referred to the Nehruvian stance advocating a world without nuclear weapons. “He said that our leader had also recognized that a world without nuclear weapons would not only improve India's security, but also the security of other countries. Disarmament is a significant component of our foreign policy.”^[12]

While exerting India's military and economic might, Vajpayee also took steps to improve ties with Pakistan and China. Therefore, his “foreign policy of realism” is a nuanced equilibrium between caution and self-control. There are many clear pieces of evidence supporting this perspective. The first occurrence of this event took place after the nuclear test conducted in May 1998. Doubt and uncertainty surround concerns over the safety of nuclear weapons. Some analysts believed that the emergence of a new nuclear power may potentially behave irresponsibly, leading to small conflicts that could escalate into a state of “crisis instability in the South Asian area.”

Nevertheless, “Bajpayee resolves the nuclear uncertainty by implementing two stabilizing measures:” 1) A temporary halt on conducting more nuclear tests in an unofficial manner; 2) India declares a preliminary nuclear policy, affirming its determination to refrain from initiating a nuclear attack. The informal suspension of testing serves as evidence of India's previous denial of the condition included in



“the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT)” that was agreed upon. In regards to signing the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty “Jaswant Singh, the foreign minister of India, engaged in negotiations with the US government to remove penalties and end the prohibition on the transfer of advanced technology. This occurred after India conducted a nuclear test in May 1998, which resulted in the imposition of sanctions by the United States.”^[13] Regarding "No First Use," different strategists see it as evidence that India is a responsible nuclear state. India will adhere to a policy of "credible minimum nuclear deterrence" to ensure its security, and it will use nuclear weapons only when the survival of our country is at risk.

3.3. Establishing a formal framework for the organization and structure of national security:

India, a country with nuclear weapons, is facing a growing security danger; Vajpayee has created a new institutional structure to deal with this. To help India make decisions on the use of nuclear weapons, a body known as "the National Security Advisory Board (NSAB)" was formed. In August 1999, the NSAB released its first nuclear doctrine, and in January 2003, India established the Nuclear Command Authority. The position of the Bajpayee administration on India's nuclear posture is characterized by Ashley Tellis as a "force in being." As deterrence, this tactic entails dispersing usable weapon parts but keeping them close by and ready to put together in an emergency.

Another example of “Bajpayee's restrained demeanour was shown during the Kargil War in 1999.” India firmly said from the beginning that it would not give up any land or agree to a truce until Pakistan's soldiers had left entirely the Kargil peak. However, he explicitly directed “the Indian Air Force (IAF) to refrain from crossing the Line of Control (LoC).” Experience his groundbreaking ideas for enhancing India-Pakistan ties as he makes a historic visit to Lahore, Pakistan. Despite “the terrorist attacks on the Indian parliament in December 2001, the Kargil War of 1999, the incident in Kandahar and the collapse of the Agra summit, Bajpayee travelled to Pakistan” to establish positive and cooperative ties between neighbouring countries, which would result in peace and economic growth in the area. By using back-channel diplomacy, “the use of track two channels provided impetus to the India-Pakistan peace process by sticking to the composite discussion.” On November 3, 2003, Pakistan proposed a truce along the Line of Control (LoC), which India agreed upon.

Similarly, under Bajpayee's leadership, India achieved nuclear parity with China in 1998 and established diplomatic relations with Beijing in 2003. The purpose of the journey to China was twofold: 1) India officially recognised the Tibet Autorecognition as a component of China's mainland. 2) Using back-channel diplomacy, “a Special Representative (SR) mechanism was established to address and resolve the border problem.”

3.4. Utilization of “Soft Power:”

The term "soft power" was introduced by “Joseph S. Nye Jr., an American researcher, in 1990. He defined power as the ability of one nation to compel other countries” to comply with its desires. The author states that power may influence the behavior of others via three methods: coercion, money, and attraction (also known as soft power or co-optive power).^[14] “Hard power relies on the use of force or coercion, while soft power” is the capacity to create influence by seduction. Nye Jr. also argued that in the contemporary day, power is mostly expressed by military means, but this approach is becoming less effective compared to other elements “such as technology, education, and economic development, which have more importance in the international” arena Shashi Tharoor, in his analysis of soft power,



states that relying only on hard power may lead to the creation of negative feelings and hostilities, while relying solely on soft power might be seen as an admission of vulnerability.

An analysis is conducted here on some of the most notable occasions when Bajpayee effectively employs his soft power strategies. Following the nuclear test, the United States imposed economic penalties on India. In addition, a total of fourteen nations, including Japan, Germany, Australia, Canada, Sweden, and Denmark, imposed sanctions on India and Pakistan by suspending their bilateral assistance programs (Morrow and Carriere, 1999). During this era, India experienced complete isolation due to the imposition of pressure by global powers. However, India steadfastly rejected succumbing to “the dictates of global power and instead chose to confront the challenge in the form of sanctions.”

Consequently, there was a decrease in the amount of money flowing into the country. India managed to offset the initial decrease in capital inflows by selling “Resurgent India Bonds to non-resident Indians. The issuance of this bond generated more than \$4 billion in revenue. By October 1998, the total reserves surpassed the level recorded in April 1998.”^[15]

Examining the significant role played by “the Indian diaspora in mitigating the economic crisis after India's nuclear test and subsequent sanctions imposed by the US. Atal Bihar Bajpayee said that India would commemorate Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD). Since 2003, the Indian community's contribution to the development of India has been commemorated annually on January 9.” According to C. Raja Mohan, the Indian diaspora population in India is considered a source of soft power, which India has been using in its foreign policy since 2003. Furthermore, India's soft power is bolstered by its cultural and civilized abundance, democratic system, unrestricted media, autonomous judiciary, and dynamic civil society. The Indian diaspora significantly contributes to India's impact across Asia. During the 1990s, Southeast Asia housed around 6.7 million individuals of Indian descent, who sent back remittances that played a role in India's growth.

The Indian diaspora, acting as a kind of cultural influence, offered significant assistance in strengthening India's diplomatic ties with the United States. Furthermore, India employs democracy as a kind of soft power to attract the many groups inside the country, countering authoritarianism and the threats posed by terrorism. The researcher Malone and Mukherjee (2009)^[17] propose that closer India-US ties may be achieved by rediscovering the shared ideal of democracy. Consequently, India has been a participant in many global forums that aim to promote democracy. One such forum is “the Community of Democracies, in which India has been a founding member since 2000. In 2001, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee said that the achievement of pluralistic democratic countries in eradicating the ideology of prejudice and hate that fuels terrorism would define the new international order.”

3.5 The use of multiple alignments and the avoidance of forming alliances in Vajpayee's foreign policy

Raghavan argues that in the post-Cold War era, nations like China, Russia, Japan, and India adopted a policy of multi-alignment. However, none of these countries has enough strength to establish a multipolar global order where the United States would no longer be the only superpower. India forged connections with several nations, both developed and developing, at all levels of engagement. This



intricate network included cooperation, coordination, and competition, aiming to form a coalition of countries with similar objectives.

“India's multi-aligning policy is not just another treaty alliance.” It is a unique strategy that goes beyond fulfilling military needs. Consider the examples of "the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO), the South East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO)," and so on. The primary objective of these alliances was to protect member nations against external acts of aggression. In contrast, as described by Dr., a treaty alliance, multi-alignment, is intended to fulfil military needs. Consider the examples of "the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO), the South East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO)," and so on. The primary objective of this alliance was to ensure the protection of member nations against external acts of aggression. Multi-alignment, as described by Dr S. Jaishankar, is a strategy aimed at including a wide range of international stakeholders and partners, according to the current External Affairs Minister. This approach is “based on India's own political, strategic, and economic considerations.” It has a more lively and interactive quality.

During the period after “the end of the Cold War,” India focused its efforts on attaining economic growth and ensuring security. After India became a nuclear power, this approach provided India with more opportunities to pursue it with greater intensity. According to Walter Andersen, India's emphasis on economic growth posed a lesser danger to Pakistan until it established connections with other parties, namely after the departure of Soviet troops from Afghanistan. Furthermore, the United States ceased supplying weapons to Pakistan, as it had done before. This was accompanied by the breakup of the USSR and the improvement of China-Russia ties, both of which contributed to the diminishing strategic importance of Pakistan. These positive outcomes highlight the effectiveness of India's multi-aligning policy.

India is adjusting its foreign policy to prioritise non-traditional security concerns, such as “attracting foreign direct investment, gaining access to advanced technologies,” and expanding its presence in the global market. A reduced emphasis on conventional security threats drives this shift. India's goal to harness its economic potential and achieve economic and social development domestically prompted it to engage in several “global, regional, and sub-regional forums as part of a multi-align strategy.”

Therefore, this multi-align strategy prioritises India's interests by enhancing connections with nations such as “the United States, Israel, France, Germany, and China, and multi-regional alliances like the European Union, IBSA, ASEAN, and others.” Bajpayee's regular trips to various countries provide evidence of all these occurrences.

4. Assessment

Atal Bihari Vajpayee's decision to carry out a nuclear detonation in 1998 resulted in India redefining “the geopolitical landscape of post-Cold War Asia. It took a choice at a time when India lost a significant ally (the collapse of the USSR) that might have offered a protective nuclear security shield, which led to uncertainties.” China's military cooperation with Pakistan in the neighbourhood has posed new security difficulties for India. India's complex and unsettled relationship with the United States, the influence of globalisation, and “China's increasing economic and military might compel India to reassess its foreign policy to achieve optimal national security.” The following are the favourable consequences of nuclear testing.



At first, this assisted India in demonstrating to the global community its capability to influence the emerging international framework substantially.

Secondly, it marked the conclusion of a year-long nuclear indifference.

Thirdly, it does not adhere to a nuclear-veto-nuclear non-proliferation policy.

Fourth, it corrects “the power imbalance between China and India by undermining China's belief that it is the only legitimate nuclear power in Asia, effectively demonstrates its hard and deterrent power against the countries (Pakistan and China), and responds to the sponsorship of terrorism;” and

Five, the Asia-Pacific region's power dynamics are shifting, and South Asian states are increasingly adopting nuclear confidence & security building measures (CSBMs) (Malik, 1998).

Sixth, by offering a command-and-control infrastructure, India also eliminates any doubt over the usage of nuclear energy.

Finally, nuclear testing also enables India to have tight security ties with the United States. The United States finds it appealing that India has transitioned from a non-aligned stance to a more assertive one, effectively demonstrating a willingness to safeguard its security interests.^[18] This resulted in strengthening Indo-US ties via establishing strategic alliances, which included the exchange of “advanced technology, defence agreements, and other financial transactions. India also cultivated stronger strategic partnerships with Israel, a US ally, which may assist India by using the Israel lobby and exerting influence on the US.” India expanded its defence needs during the post-Cold War era when it relied only on the USSR.

Similarly, India used its soft power to navigate a path of progress. Initially, it effectively managed the sanctions imposed by Western countries after its nuclear test in May 1998. During such circumstances, the Indian diaspora plays a pivotal role in helping India surmount a financial crisis. Furthermore, India established a strategic alliance with the United States by promoting democratic principles globally. India's commitment to democratic ideals has also led to its prominent role as a vital “member of the communities of democracy established in 2000.” These elements contribute to India's justification for seeking permanent United Nations Security Council membership, with the right to veto decisions.

Implementing a multi-align approach fosters stronger ties with “regional, sub-regional, and extra-regional powers.” Bajpayee's solid diplomatic connections with the United States and his growing alliances with the European Union and nations like the United Kingdom, France, and Germany growth patiently influenced India's development path. Expanding the scope of the neighbourhood strategy, both in “the short term and in the long term,” results in enhanced economic and security collaboration. Extended neighbourhoods were of “extended neighbourhoods” were first introduced in “the Ministry of External Affairs Annual Report for 2000–2001.” This report advocated that India has significant influence as a major power. Specifically, the emphasis was on geo-economic collaboration and cooperation in the energy sector, which eventually expanded to include security.

Vajpayee's approach to foreign policy may not be feasible in “an absolute sense. He believes that for a country like India, increasing national power requires not just military might but also the effective use of soft power.” The multi-align approach greatly aided in directing the nation's growth by extending its influence beyond its immediate South Asian neighbour to include neighbouring regions and distant countries. David Scott argues that Bajpayee's neighbourhood strategy emphasises “India's power projection capabilities derived from its military and economic might, soft power, and ideational stance.” Indeed, he incorporates all of these concepts in formulating his foreign policy.



Vajpayee's "foreign policy is often known as realistic pluralism. Essentially, his foreign policy effort acts as a beacon for India's future progress as a rising force in the view of the global world." India's participation empowers it to have a substantial influence in shaping the global geopolitical landscape. These efforts now result in significant benefits, such as assuming control of the G20 and a prominent position in addressing climate change, UN restructuring, and other interconnected global matters, including combating the pandemic and supplying COVID-19 vaccines.

5. Conclusion

Like any other strategic approach, "realism under Bajpayee" is based on a deliberate selection and clear expression of perceived interests and personal preferences, depending on the essential to any other strategic approach, realism under Bajpayee is based on a deliberate selection and clear expression of perceived interests and personal preferences, depending on the specific situation and circumstances at hand. In this scenario, Bajpayee believed it important to prioritise realism by exercising caution and self-control. This involved utilising a combination of both hard and soft power rather than fixating on non-alignment. Bajpayee suggested adopting a multi-align strategy, which would allow the country to safeguard its security interests while also creating a conducive environment for unhindered economic development. His primary objective was to stimulate the inflow of money via "foreign direct investment and enhance domestic infrastructure to entice investors to allocate their resources in India." In his pursuit of fostering India's robust economic growth, he is committed to safeguarding its security interests and upholding its cherished values. To achieve this, he demonstrates astute political acumen and diplomatic sagacity, prioritising security and the economy while vocalising the enduring importance of India's cherished values.

"Prime Minister Atal Bihari Bajpayee's foreign policy is now dealing with issues that have arisen since the end of the Cold War." These challenges are being faced on two different fronts. 1) India's dependence on Russia for defence matters has decreased, while its concern about terrorism has increased. Additionally, India finds disarmament regimes to be highly biased, and its non-alignment strategy did not offer the necessary support at that time; 2) The impact of globalisation has driven "India's neo-liberal, open economy to integrate with the global market." India faced increasing difficulties maintaining its interest in multilateral negotiating institutions like the WTO.

In 1998, India's decision to conduct a nuclear bomb test at a critical juncture while facing worldwide criticism while facing worldwide criticism contributed to enhancing its reputation as a significant global player. It is now necessary to critically examine Bajpayee's foreign policy, which has the potential to serve "India's future national interests best."

India must formulate its "foreign policy" to address its changing domestic and external security concerns. The Indo-US nuclear accord of 2008 was the culmination of a deeper strategic cooperation that Bajpayee oversaw as prime minister of India. In order to improve strategic military connections with the United States and other nations, it is necessary to match expectations with real cooperation. To combat China's growing influence in the area, geopolitical competition is heating up in "the Indian Ocean (IOC)," and governments that share similar views may be willing to work together.

Furthermore, as a strategic political move, leverage soft power resources such as "India's highly skilled workforce, Indian diaspora, traditional knowledge encompassing arts, crafts, and culture," as well as the democratic potential showcased through conducting transparent and impartial periodic elections, to attract and align diverse regions with India's national interests. Furthermore, implementing the multi-alignment approach enables India to carve out essential room for manoeuvre, expediting progress in



economic development and the pursuit of alternate pathways to ensure energy security in the foreseeable future. Show significant assistance to immediate and extended neighbours around a strategically important location based on common interests. Furthermore, the nations in “the South Asian region, including the Maldives, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan, are now hesitant to form alliances. Gaining their confidence necessitates investing in moral and physical resources throughout the short, medium, and long term.” To enhance its appeal to foreign capital and multinational investment, India must prioritise the establishment of openness and accountability, eliminate bureaucratic obstacles, foster a conducive business climate, and exercise caution to avoid antagonising religious minority groups. India should advocate for a global governance system founded on established rules and principles. An enduring and protected region around India fosters a favourable atmosphere for India to assume a more prominent position in global affairs.

These components contribute to India's ability to address future difficulties and redefine its long-term goals. Additionally, they position India as a prominent global power characterised by several centres of influence. India will play a significant role in shaping international norms and guiding global relations in the future.

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