

***How India Sees the World. Saran, Shyam. India:
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Shyam Saran's book *How India Sees the World* attempts to explain the Indian foreign policy outlook, the sources of its foreign policy and how the ongoing rapid changes in the international political environment should be interpreted by the Indian leaders. Part memoir, part study of the Indian foreign policy, the author seeks to explain the Indian world view and how it has influenced its actions and stances abroad. The author comes with the wealth of experience as a career officer of the Indian foreign office for 40 years culminating as foreign secretary in 2006. He also served as key advisor to the former Indian Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, on nuclear and climate change issues till 2010.

The book is divided into three sections and an epilogue that cover 13 chapters. The text of the book is very engaging and the narration simple enough to be understood by ordinary readers as well. The arguments and the connectivity of chapters

The first section contains three chapters that cover the traditions and history of the Indian foreign policy. Its first chapter discusses the sources of the Indian foreign policy and the impact of ancient Hindu texts over it. Saran traces the sources of the Indian foreign policy to ancient writings by Kautilya, Kamandaki and Mandala. He then goes on to describe the geographical advantages and impediments confronting India. He explains that the overall Indian objective is to transform the South Asian subcontinent into its image by making the border irrelevant.

The second chapter deals with definitions of foreign policy, diplomacy and national interests and how diplomacy is different from foreign policy. Rhetoric is no substitute for policy substance, Saran maintains. The author then goes on to explain how "Non-Alignment" and "Strategic Autonomy" was developed during the Cold War and influenced India's political and

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military interventions in the South Asian countries. The author dwells into the complexity of challenge posed by both China and Pakistan to the Indian position in the region.

The third chapter details the Indian foreign policy after the end of the Cold War and how it has tried to balance between all major powers for maximise the benefits. The author contends that it is getting increasingly difficult for India to maintain that balance as the US' 'unipolar moment' is over and other multiple power centres are emerging and competing with the American power. Saran also details about the Indian economic and foreign policy reforms after the fall of iron curtain and how these reforms helped India get closer to the victorious Western bloc. He contends that new hurdles are emerging due to increasing nationalistic and protectionist trends globally and the Indian economy does not enjoy the advantage that China did during the 1990s.

The part two is divided into 5 chapters that deal with the challenges of neighbourhood, the Pakistan puzzle, relations with China and Nepal. In explaining the geographical challenges, Saran argues that the lack of sufficient border connectivity and infrastructure in the Indian border provinces has created hurdles with integration of the Indian economy with regional economies. He maintains that India should sustain an efficient and cost-effective trade and emerge as a transit hub for the subcontinent. Saran rightly points out that India has been historically suspicious of the South Asian Association Organisation (SAARC).

On the challenge, that Pakistan is facing Saran examines the history of Pakistani role in the Indian foreign policy. He is of the view that India-Pakistan relations are prisoner of partition and its bloody memory. Saran is of the view that Pakistan was fully supported by the US and China during the Cold War and overlooked its nuclear proliferation activities. Saran goes on to describe his own experience in dealing with Pakistan during President Musharraf's rule there. He recalls official meetings regarding Kashmir dispute and about Sir Creek and Siachin Glacier, where he was part of top level official deliberations.

Saran is of the view that back-channel dialogue is important to reasonably improve ties between the two countries. He recalls that India had offered Pakistan a joint dialogue in Afghanistan but she did not respond.

Saran recommends that India should raise its presence in Afghanistan and enhance its soft interactions such as people-to-people contact and easing visa regimes with Pakistan. He explains that India should chip away from hostility with Pakistan as it constrains her potential and keeps it bogged down in south Asia.

In the next chapter, Saran explores India's relationship with China. He starts with the historical linkages of Buddhism with China and Tibet. Saran then goes on to explain the Chinese way of thinking and subtle deception in its foreign policy conduct. The author's main point is that ancient hierarchical order still plays an important role in the Chinese thinking. This order stipulates that China is the centre of civilisation and is surrounded by subordinate states. Thus, the Chinese outlook towards India is challenging and hostile even as both countries cooperate on certain global issues at international forums. Saran then briefly explains the history of India-China border dispute, its origin and possible solutions.

The second section of the book relates to India-Nepal relations. Saran explains the role of India in shaping domestic politics of Nepal and notes with concern about the recent Chinese inroads and overtures in Nepal.

Last section of the book deals with the Indian dealing with important international issues like nuclear deal with the US, Nuclear Supplier Group (NSG) waiver, Climate Change diplomacy and coping with changing global political order. The chapters on India-US nuclear deal, Climate Change and the NSG diplomacy are insightful as author, who was the lead Indian point man, shares his personal accounts of interactions with the senior US officials. Saran explains that the pursuance of difficult negotiations with patience for nuclear deal and the NSG was correct because India came out of decades of nuclear isolation and access to high tech nuclear market will make it possible to quantitatively improve India's nuclear programme that would have otherwise taken much longer time.

The book concludes with the chapter on the evolution of the existing global order and what it means for the Indian foreign policy. Saran favours a multipolar order where no single power is able to act as a global hegemon and that such an order will create space for an important country like India to emerge as a global player. He also briefly touches upon the relative

decline of importance of diplomacy in the face of rising importance of social media platforms as an alternate medium.

The strength of the book is its simple text and coherence of the arguments. Saran has aptly described the Indian world view and future challenges to the Indian diplomacy in an age of great uncertainty and collapsing global order. His analysis on changing international situation and state of power play among major powers is fascinating.

Some sections of the book, however, does require more balanced approach and details. For example, on India-China relations, Saran squarely points to the Chinese behaviour as a source of problem while underestimating India's own role in allying itself with the US to contain China as an additional source of tension if not 'the' source of tension. Moreover, regarding nuclear diplomacy, author has not mentioned the politics of nuclear liability law and how did this created obstacles for the US companies to engage in nuclear commerce with India.

In the overall analyses, this book is a must read for those who want to understand India in more depth and dispassionately.