



THE GLIMPSES OF INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY IN THE WAKE OF THE COVID-19

Aadil Ahmad Shairgojri

Department of Political science and Public Administration
Research Scholar of Annamalai University Tamil Nadu, India
E-mail: aadilhassan1995@gmail.com

Abstract

The Covid 19 pandemic affected people worldwide, and its effects continue to be felt today. The pandemic's impact and consequences vary depending on one's personal and social status. COVID-19 in India was a flop. An outbreak of coronavirus illnesses and deaths in 2021 plunged India into a humanitarian crisis. In order to reduce global vaccine inequity, India needs to use its world-renowned pharmaceutical manufacturing capabilities to provide COVID-19 vaccines to low-income countries. It should force India to rethink its domestic and foreign policies. With China's rise and India's national interests in a more dangerous world, the COVID-19 disaster forced India to rebuild its humanitarian reputation. This article contains in-depth information on the changes that have been implemented in India's foreign policy as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Keywords: Foreign Policy, Covid, Vaccine, Ban and Relations etc

1. INTRODUCTION

A state's foreign policies are broad goals that help it decide what to do and how to act when it meets other states. People, policies, and the actions of other countries all play a role in the development of foreign policy. In India, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is in charge of this job. For example, it has the 4th largest army in the world, the 5th largest GDP in real terms, and the 3rd largest GDP in PPP. Apart from its nuclear capabilities, it is a global power and a potential superpower. It is a Commonwealth of Nations member as well as a member of BRICS, an acronym for Brazil, Russia, China, South Africa, and India. India founded the Non-Aligned Movement and is a supporter of SAARC's "Neighbourhood First" and "Look East" policies, which seek to strengthen economic and strategic ties with other East Asian countries. India had already exported vaccines to 92 countries and received foreign aid from 27 countries prior to Vaccine Maitri. India's regional hegemony was also based on historical ties, material assistance, and political strength.

2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- ✓ To analyse and explain the role of India's foreign policy during Covid 19 pandemic.

3. METHODOLOGY

When it comes to supporting its claims, the article is both descriptive and analytical in nature. It makes extensive use of secondary sources to do so, including newspaper articles, magazine articles, and investigation reports, among other things.

4. DISCUSSION

The Covid-19 pandemic presented new challenges to the international system in 2021-22, which was still grappling with them in 2021-22. The increase in COVID-19 cases in India has resulted in economic turmoil in both the domestic and international income markets. The death toll had risen dramatically since the outbreak of the third wave and the Omicron virus. As a result of this surge, the country was forced to accept foreign assistance for strategic economic initiatives. The second wave of Covid-19 and the agonising consequences that followed have prompted India

to accept foreign aid for the first time in 17 years. As a result, the country of India will almost certainly face far-reaching strategic repercussions from this decision.

Experts say that if the pandemic doesn't stop, India's claim to be the most important country in the region could be damaged. It will be because of this that India's foreign policy in the next few years will be affected by these things. India has long been the most powerful country in the region, but it was built on a foundation of material help, political power, and strong historical ties. Because of the Covid-19 agreement, India will not be able to help its neighbours, so it will not have as much power. History alone may not be enough to keep India's regional power in the long run. Using chequebook diplomacy, China already wants to get into India's strategic space, the Indian subcontinent, which is a big part of the country.

It has been accelerated by the second wave of Covid-19, as India's ability to stand up to China in recent years has been significantly weakened, both in terms of material power and balance of power considerations, as well as political will. Covid-19 will be implemented to halt military spending and modernization, as well as to divert the country's attention away from global diplomacy and regional geopolitics. Due to decreased military spending and decreased diplomatic attention given to regional geopolitics, India's role in the development of the Quad is in question. In spite of the importance of India to the Indo-Pacific project, India's inability to lead and China's success in courting smaller states in the region will lead to a shift in power in China's favour in the long run. Economic distress, a drop in FDI and industrial production, and an increase in unemployment have all contributed to Covid-19's negative impact on India's long-term strategic ambitions.... India's foreign policy after Covid-19 will likely be described as a holding operation.

The United States and China's relationship: To normalise relations with China, it may be necessary to deal with India's Covid-19-related issues. As a result of the events of September 11, India may be forced to be more accommodative toward China in addition to the devastating return of COVID-19 and the damage it has caused. Relationship between India and the U.S.: In the wake of COVID-19, India may find it more difficult to resist calls for a closer military ties with the United States

There was some progress in the first wave of the pandemic. Covid-19, on the other hand, will open up new opportunities for regional cooperation, especially through the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). People in India should use the term "regional health multilateralism," which means working together with other countries when there is a health emergency like this one. Traditional geopolitics in South Asia should be put on the same level as health diplomacy, environmental issues, and regional connectivity, just like they are now.

4.1. India's Response to COVID-19

It is fair to say that the Vaccine Maitri initiative helped to strengthen India's position as the "pharmacy of the world." India's efforts to rapidly expand vaccine production and supplies at critical junctures in the pandemic have been publicly commended by world leaders. As of the end of the year 2021, India had provided more than 110 million vaccine doses to 97 countries around the world. To combat the catastrophic resurgence of the COVID-19 second wave, more than 25 countries have pledged financial assistance to the Indian government.

The United States' inability to approve raw materials for vaccine production in India resulted in the concept of Hobbesian realism being coined. This factor was superfluous in the context of Indian foreign policy. In his opinion, India had beaten the pandemic and had the potential to distribute vaccines throughout the world, according to Prime Minister Modi. He made a similar promise at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, in January 2021. PM Modi made a commitment to deliver 5 billion vaccine doses by the end of 2022 at the Group of 20 summit in October, which took place in Argentina. Covid-19 vaccines, which were manufactured in India and distributed to 18 countries in the region, assisted India in assisting friendly African countries in overcoming the pandemic in the region. To assist Bangladesh in its on-going efforts to combat the pandemic, India donated 3.3 million Covishield vaccines to the country in December.



This was the largest shipment of Covid-19 vaccines made in India that India has ever given to a foreign country. Assistance related to Covid-19 was also provided in 2021, with 400,000 doses of Covishield vaccine being sent as grant assistance to Bhutan in March of that year, according to the United Nations Development Programme. On May 11, 2021, the Prime Minister spoke with Bhutanese Prime Minister Lotay Tshering, in which he expressed solidarity in the countries' joint efforts to combat the Covid-19 pandemic, according to the Prime Minister.

The total amount of bilateral medical assistance provided by India to Myanmar in the fight against Covid-19 is approximately USD 2.3 million. Additionally, India has provided medical assistance to Myanmar in the amount of USD 200,000 through the ASEAN Centre for Humanitarian Assistance. Myanmar will receive a donation of 10,000 tonnes of rice and wheat from India, according to the government..

4.2. Support to India during COVID-19

The second wave of the pandemic, which occurred between April and June of 2021, placed enormous strain on our health-care systems. Medical supplies such as oxygen cylinders and concentrators were in short supply, causing widespread panic. In the Ministry, a Special Control Room that is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week has been established. Crucial supplies, such as Liquid Medical Oxygen (LMO), oxygen generation plants, concentrators, ECMO machines, vaccines, and essential medicines, were procured from a variety of sources throughout the world.

A total of more than 50 countries have shown their support for India during this difficult time by donating critical medical supplies. The Ministry worked with counterparts in the United States and Europe to make it easier to import pharmaceutical ingredients. The Ministry also collaborated with foreign regulatory agencies in order to expedite the approval of vaccines that were "Made in India." Covishield was approved by the World Health Organization in February 2021, and Covaxin was approved by the World Health Organization in November 2021.

5. CONCLUSION

Post-COVID-19 pandemic scenarios would limit Indian foreign policy in some ways. China's strategic autonomy could be challenged by India, which would make it more important in the future. India stood firm and set an example for recovery after the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunamis devastated Tamil Nadu and the Andaman Nicobar Islands, but India also offered assistance to neighbouring countries.

India's ability to maintain its position as the world's largest economy and a potential ally for its allies is a bright spot in the gloomy scenario of a pandemic. As part of a global effort to combat infectious diseases, Indian vaccine manufacturing capabilities should be utilised. As soon as the US-China standoff is over, we'll have to choose a side. Relations with Pakistan are expected to remain unchanged in the Covid scenario, and China's manufacturing model of going for the cheapest is expected to remain unchanged, as the global supply chain before the pandemic changes. Committees are expected to vet China's investments.

When it comes to taking sides in the US-China strategic competition, Evin Feigenbaum says that India should wait for the best opportunities to do so. Today, Nepal is embroiled in a border dispute with India at the behest of another country, China, five years ago, when China's rise was still a distant possibility. Until it can make use of the enormous pool of skilled workers it already has because of China's dominance, India will face an uphill battle.

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