

## Book Reviews

Jaishankar, S. (2020). *The India Way: Strategies for an Uncertain World*. New Delhi: Harper Collins Publishers India, 240 pages.

The book is a blend of theoretical concepts and contemporary reality in the field of International Relations. It emphasizes on importance of International Relations as an autonomous subject and not as a subset of domestic politics. The beauty of the book lies in its titles of chapters where problems and solutions are given in 3 words each. It is enriched with professional experiences of author in the International Relations as a diplomat. It provides a detailed history of International Relations events at global and regional level post India's independence. It further links those events with changing Indian foreign policy. It's temporal range is as broad as India's ancient history to post-colonial turbulences to current COVID-19 challenge. It's unit of analysis is how domestic polity of India has shaped it's foreign policy, it's role in global events and vice versa. It amalgamates India's past with India's present to pave a way for India's future foreign policy. The book is wide in its approach to have inculcated political, economic, technological, environmental dimension in International Relations and India's foreign policy. The book is divided into 8 chapters discussing major burdens of past in India's foreign policy, a new emerging plurilateral picture of world politics, relocating statecraft in Indian tradition, analysing relations with important stakeholders like USA, EU, China, Japan, ASEAN at regional and global level, nationalism etc in individual chapters.

Problematizing existing foreign policy along with prescribing changes for future foreign policy is the writing style of the author. It is in this line Mr. Jaishankar emphasizes on strategic autonomy where India defines itself rather than the world defining India. He prescribes global relevance and realism for India's foreign policy. The point of contest to put forward is - India was always globally relevant since its independence like NAM and has glimpses of realism like demanding US assistance in 1962 war with China,

Russia's assistance in 1971 war with Pakistan. Though, these points are present in the book, but are not adequately emphasized. The book sounds confusing over using historical method to find loopholes in past, descriptive method for present and prescriptive method for future. The important concepts of IR like balance of power, multipolarity, plurilateralism, collective security is used vaguely as suited to context without any intellectual investigation.

The author divides post-independent India's foreign policy in 6 phases ranging from an era of optimistic non-alignment (1946-1962) to a decade of realism and recovery (1962-1971) to greater Indian regional assertion (1971-1991) to dissolution of the USSR and the emergence of a 'unipolar' world to India reaching out to US to fifth phase to India acting as balancing power in sixth phase of post 2014 with an energetic diplomacy. The ingenuity of relocating statecraft from western window to India's tradition and citing learnings of Mahabharat and Bhagavad-Gita era in modern era like strategic deception over strategic restraint, power, realpolitik over ethics are the most innovative reflection of Indian foreign policy. Dealing with individual important stakeholders in India's foreign policy- the conundrum associated with China is presented well. Yet, the book did not bring in any new insights or prescribe any sustainable solution except strategic maturity in dealing with the Dragon. The authors follow a hard-line realism led approach for Pakistan but refrain to suggest same for China. He demands urging behaviour on behalf of Japan for economic collaboration with India. His approach lacks detailed regional level analysis where India faces complacent relationship with Russia, increasing China and Pakistan's hostility, proxy wars in Afghanistan, RCEP exit etc.

The book is lucid and informative but lacks connectivity between paragraphs within a chapter. Also, in the given process it is sounding confusing at times; for example-stressing on hard power but prescribing solutions of soft power like brand building for global relevance by assisting in disaster management in neighbourhood. In its journey for a comprehensive coverage, the

book loses the linkages and misses clear stand required for better understanding. Another major shortcoming is uncritical evaluation of current foreign policy and presenting it as a mechanism to correct past mistakes while not admitting clearly it as mistakes but calling them as burden for example- delayed economic reforms, prolonged exercise of nuclear option. Despite these shortcomings, the book is one of the most elaborative work on Indian foreign policy with a new insight of close corroboration of global events and national politics. The epilogue in the final segment of the book delineates a space for India in changing International Relations during COVID-19 pandemic through self-reliance. The author desires to fill up the loopholes of foreign policy with a realistic and deterministic national polity, atmanirbhar economy and making Indian virtues like Namaste global.

*Smriti Shukla*

Research Scholar

Department of African Studies

University of Delhi