

The India Way: Strategies for an Uncertain World by S. Jaishankar

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“One Trend Four Shocks” is a phrase that comes in the preface of the book *The India Way: Strategies for an Uncertain World* written by Dr. S. Jaishankar, former foreign secretary and the current foreign minister of India. One Trend in the phrase talks about the budding multipolarity in the international order, stating the transformation and dynamism of the world order. While the four Shocks as mentioned are 2008 global financial crisis, coronavirus pandemic, development in Afghanistan and the Ukraine conflict. These are very significant events not only for the countries directly involved but for the globe. This book gives an insight of foreign policy of India from the perspective of a diplomat and at the same juncture analyses the foreign policy and international relations of India from the perspective of an academician. The book is divided into eight chapters and one epilogue. Each chapter talks about different aspects of the global affairs. This provides a near comprehensive understanding of the world affair and the India way of sailing through it.

About the author, the book has been written by Dr. S. Jaishankar. He was born in the family of K. Subramanyam, who himself was a prominent strategic affairs analyst, commentator and civil servant. Jaishankar holds his bachelorette in Chemistry from St. Stephen's College, University of Delhi. Later on, he obtained a master's degree from Jawaharlal Nehru University in Political Science and International Relations followed by M.Phil. and P.hD in international relations. His P.hD thesis focused on nuclear diplomacy. He joined Indian Foreign Service in 1977 and served in key positions. He served as the third and second secretary in the Indian mission to USSR from 1979-81, where he studied Russian language. He served as the political advisor to the Indian Peacekeeping Force (IPKF) in Sri Lanka. After which he served as the commercial counsellor in Budapest. His first ambassadorial position was in Czech Republic in 2000. He also served as the joint secretary of America division in MEA, New Delhi. The most important positions he served were High Commissioner to Singapore, ambassador to PRC and to USA. He was the longest serving ambassador to PRC. Jaishankar then gets on to become the foreign Secretary of India, the highest position in the ambit of Indian Foreign Service and retired in 2018. After retirement, Jaishankar joined Tata sons as the president of the Global Corporate Affairs. In 2019, Dr. S. Jaishankar joined the Council of Ministers, becoming the Foreign Minister of India – a cabinet minister – succeeding late Sushma Swaraj. He holds a very long career of nearly four decades in diplomacy and foreign affairs while serving several key positions. Mr. Jaishankar has authored several books and one of them is *The India Way: Strategies for an Uncertain World*.

The name of the first chapter of the book is “The Lessons of Awadh”, he says “International relations may be about other nations, but neither unfamiliarity nor indifference lessen its consequence.” This chapter examines India's historical carelessness regarding greater global events in the contemporary periods. Where he talks about Panipat syndrome and strategic complacency of India. He says that India should adopt a realist stance in greater power politics of the planet, which he says were misjudged by political romanticism of the political leadership. India's agonistic posture in the larger international order had huge repercussions. In this chapter Jaishankar advocates for the advancing of national interest by identifying and exploiting opportunities created in the international order. He suggests that India should opt for its brand differentiation which is very important for rising aspirational power by utilizing India's historic record and global credibility of democratic practices through “Make in India, Make for the World” adopting “Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas” in its foreign policy from the domestic one.

The second chapter of this book is titled “The Art of Disruption.” Author says “the upholder of international system turned revolutionary. And China the rising power, finds itself defending the status quo.” This statement alone gives us the insight into the chapter. Jaishankar in this talks about the dynamics of international

order with multipolarity as its outcome – a transformation of old unipolar world order into a new multi-polar world order. Where, the previous unipolar power is trying maintain its position in the international order even if it requires disrupting the order itself. He also presents the concerning side of growing multipolarity saying “as distribution of power broadens and alliance discipline dilutes.” We see a nationalistic approach to international relations which he says will weaken multilateral rules in many domains. Acknowledging China’s influence on the world stage, was achieved by running trade surpluses, not by shedding blood.

I have been pondering over the question that why is it that India postures itself as a responsible power? I got my answer after reading this chapter, name of it is “Krishna’s choice.” In this chapter Jaishankar talks about what shall be the choice of a rising power. He gives a comparative understanding of current Indian situation with the one with the Pandavas in Mahabharata. On the first page of this chapter, author talks about a question, “As India rises, question will naturally be asked as to what kind of power it will be?” The answer to this is as comprehend by the Mahabharata situation is “Serial violators are given little credit even when they comply, while an occasional disruptor can always justify the deviation.” He says, it was always expected of India to maintain strategic restraint which was the victim and not the perpetrator same as the pandavas and pandavas also adopted various deceptive methods to save themselves and India shall do the same.

The title of the fourth chapter reads as “The Dogmas of Delhi” which is about India’s reluctance to change its postures with the ever changing geo-politics and the new overcoming of it. He cautions to avoid obsessing over consistency and asks for a revisit of assumptions and calculations of foreign policy. He recognizes India’s break with its past when the situation requires it to. Jaishankar divides history of Indian foreign policy in six phases i) era of optimistic non-alignment (1946-1962) ii) Decade of realism and recovery (1962-1971) iii) Era of greater regional assertion (1971-1991) iv) Era of unipolar world (1991-2000) v) India as balancing power (2000-2014) vi) Era of disruption and increased multi-polarity (2014 onwards). He exemplifies each phase with relevant examples.

The fifth chapter of the book is “Of Manderins and Masses” this chapter is about the public opinion and the relevance of west. This chapter talks about the how states under the influence of nationalism is approaching the international relations with nationalist outlook. Jaishankar gives various examples of that such as Brexit, or China dream or American protectionist policy of America first. He says that gatherings such as G20 or BRICS is a phase in the evolution of nationalistic approach to IR for a rebalanced. He states that a nationalistic foreign policy outlook will probably approach the world with more realism. Stating history as proof he says that rise of nationalism across regions should impact the westernization of the world. But Jaishankar also recognizes the fact that the most impressive growth stories of the last 150 years have all been with the participation of the west. He advises India that it has a long way to go.

Global politics is as complex as the chess, and the sixth chapter is named on one of the defense moves of the game that is “The Nimzo-Indian Defence.” This chapter inspects the bilateral relation between India and China from the ancient to the first two decades of twenty-first century, from the origin of the popular saying “Chinese who do good in this lifetime would get reincarnated in India in the next” to assisting India’s sworn enemy Pakistan in making it a nuclear power and everything in between. But at the same time, they also converge for all their issues with each other, India or China have at the back of their mind a feeling that they are also contesting an established Western world order. They have converged on various issues such as on climate change, western world order and through various platforms such as AIIB, BRICS and G20. And this political convenience is served by positive recollections of the past. The key issue of Sino-Indian relation is “realism v optimism” and “bilateralism v globalism.”

The seventh chapter of the book is “A Delayed Destiny.” This chapter examines the Indo-Japanese relation and the greater role of Japan in Asian balance. Japan used to be the hub of Indian revolutionary during the British era. But the strategic withdrawal of Japan skewed the power balance in the continent. India and Japan harmoniously coexistence but distantly. Until the challenge of a volatile world created shifting balance of power. And the reason behind that was, since 1945, Japan has tailored its strategic outlook to the requirements of its American alliance. But multipolarity in Asia will only come with the participation of Japan. And both the countries are coming together to maintain a balance of power in Asia against China through various mechanisms such as Quad with Australia and USA and Trilaterals.

The last chapter of the book is “The Pacific Indian” which delves into the history of Indo-Pacific and it’s modern maritime outlook. India has been trying to establish itself in Indian ocean and for that it has articulated multiple policy and mechanisms such as SAGAR (Security And Growth for All in the Region), re-energizing of

SAARC, BIMSTEC is another option. India has also been doing agreements with its neighbors like Sri Lanka, Maldives, Mauritius and Seychelles for an integrated view on trade, tourism, environment, blue economy and security. The cooperation agenda today covers white shipping, blue economy, disaster response, anti-piracy, counter terrorism and hydrographic. India has also developed a naval symposium thirty five nation. IORA is another aspect of it. And for the Indo-Pacific, the importance to ties with Japan ASEAN and Australia can not be underestimate.

The book ends with an epilogue namely “After the Virus.” This summerzes the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the Indian foreign policy. Coronavirus pandemic has been one of the most important incident since the end of second world war. When the countries turned inwards India came on the world forum to provide vaccines to the 120 countries establishing it'scredential not only as pharma of the world but a health securityresponder. The author is very optimistic about the potential of India as balancing power and capability in shaping multipolarity. Jaishankar believes that India's relation with global south is critical in ensuring that developmental priorities and natural justice are not disregarded.

The book provides a comprehensive account of evolution of the foreign policy of India and the initiatives taken, enriching our understanding of whys and what's of foreign policy. This provides answers on various aspects of our foreign policy of India. It discusses from historical mistakes to acceleration to the changing world order after COVID – 19 pandemic and everything in between. Author talks about, the preserver of the order turning rebellious, why a country shall be seen as responsible power and how countries are looking up to India. And how India is trying to be responsible be it through anti-piracy mission in the ocean or promotion of dialogue and diplomacy and democratic values. It's attempt to re-energize SAARC or IORA or BIMSTEC, or forming Quad or Trilaterals. It also covers on the necessity of Japan in balancing the power equilibrium in continent and necessity of west in developing the Indian economy. This book has been enriching to mind and stimulating the brain.

But, some certain policies and limitations of India has not been discussed in the book. For example, the author talks about how India has been recognized as the pharmacy of the world but it lacks innovation in medicine, it's value compared to it's volume is very less; it does not talk on the issue of very large gap in imports and exports which creates deficit; it does not discuss how Quad and the Trilaterals are not functioning up to the mark, it also seems to be ignoring it's rebellious neighborhood who are making close ties with PRC. The text lacks words on the nuclear policy of India and possibilities of change in it; cyber policy of the country. The essay on Indian pursuence of a permanent seat at UNSC is also absent.

The book answer various questions of the reader on Indian foreign policy from an Indian perspective. The book covers a range of topics providing a comprehensive understanding. His vast experience in diplomacy and knowledge of international relations is visible in the book. This book shall not only be read because of his career in diplomacy but for the in-depth analysis of the subject. The India way: Strategies for an Uncertain World is a welcome is the growing literature about Indian foreign policy and is a must read.