

# Diplomat Prime Minister I.K. Gujral - His Foreign Policy and Gujral Doctrine

## Abstract

Foreign Policy is a system of activities for changing the behaviour of other states and foreign policy involves all the activities by which all states try to fulfil their own national interests in International scenario. Indian Foreign Policy has achieved a lot in the last over seven decades. Since independence (Nehru's era) to the present Modi's Govt. Indian foreign policy has gone through from different stages

**Keywords:** Scenario, Nehru's era, Gujral Doctrine, Rao Govt., National Interest, Stalin's era, Soviet Union, Look East Policy.

## Introduction

The most significant part of Indian Foreign Policy in the pre independence period was the Congress Resolution adopted in the Haripura Session in 1938 which asserted the Indian people's desire to live in peace and friendship with neighbours and in 1946 Pt. Nehru said that we hope to develop close and direct contacts with other nations and to cooperate with them.

It may be noted that Indian foreign policy has not been static and has undergone changes according to time and requirements in National and International Scenario.

## Aim of the Study

The main aim of the paper is to focus on the various internal and external factors which shaped Indian foreign policy since independence. This paper also examines the role of Indian foreign policy makers and political leadership that is instrumental at different stages in the strengthening of Indian status at international level from Nehru's era to I.K. Gujral.

## Nehru's era and Foreign Policy

After independence Pt. Nehru became the Indian Prime Minister (with foreign affairs portfolio) and he had a vision of the high profile role that India could play in world politics. Nehru was totally free in setting goals in external affairs and he selected only those ambassadors who carried out his wishes even after the death of Nehru. His successors also followed almost the same principles in foreign affairs. The policies of Nehru were also carried on by Non-Congress Prime Ministers like A.B. Vajpaae and Mr. I.K. Gujral also.

"The personality factor is being increasingly recognised as a crucial dimension in foreign policy making, perhaps as crucial as the established institutions. It is thus increasingly argued that to understand the foreign policy of a nation, it is necessary to understand the decision maker, his background, his education, his perceptions, his biases and prejudices etc; for they all are, in many ways, vital inputs responsible for a decision."<sup>1</sup>

A sober politician Inder Kumar Gujral belonged to the elite class of Intellectuals who made a mark in the Indian foreign policy and he was not from the family of popular brands. Yet he had a full grasp of Indian politics. Born on Dec 4, 1919 in Jhelum (now in Pakistan), he belonged to a family of freedom fighters. He was educated at DAV College, Haily College of Commerce and Former Christian College, Lahore (now in Pakistan). When our father of nation Gandhiji launched Quit India Movement in 1942, he was jailed at the age of 23 years.

After the partition of India he was moved to Delhi from Lahore and he made his first appearance in political scenario when he became the Vice-President of the New Delhi municipal committee in 1958 and formally joined Indian National Congress. Mrs Indira Gandhi gave him a ticket from Rajya Sabha and this was the period when his long inning started both at national level and diplomatic arena.

He served several portfolios as Minister of Communication, Parliamentary affairs and Housing but when in 1975, emergency was imposed that time he was the Broadcasting Minister of Press Censorship



**Rajiv Kumar Sharma**

Assistant Professor,  
Deptt. of Political Science,  
A.S. College, Khanna

and due to his differences with the govt. He was sent as Indian Ambassador to former Soviet Union (then Super power). He served this job even during the Successive Prime Ministers Morarji Desai and Chaudhry Charan Singh and he left Congress and joined newly formed Janta Dal.

When Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990 he made visit to Iraq for the safe evacuation of Indians from Kuwait and he committed blunder when he was photographed being hugged by the Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussain.

He had another stint as an External Affairs Minister in the United Front govt. (1996-97) under H.D. Devegowda and later replaced as the Prime Minister after the congress withdraw support in April, 1997.

His tenure covered the period from April, 1997 to March, 1998. At that time he was the second P.M of India who came from Rajya Sabha and the first one was H.D. Devegowda. Later on P.M Dr. Manmohan Singh was also from Rajya Sabha. Gujral was the only Indian P.M who wrote "**Matters of Discretion: An Autobiography**"

#### **Gujral and Indian Foreign Policy**

Gujral is always known as a liberal in foreign policy (diplomatic) circles. Man of determination, who maintained Candle Light Visits in the Indo-Pak border as a sign of friendship between two countries. His specialised area was Indian Foreign Policy. Once he was interviewed by Veteran Journalist Hari Jaisingh on Doordarshan, then he (Gujral) asked Hari Jaisingh to 'Stick to foreign Affairs' and thus interview is now a part of Doordarshan Archive.

I.K. Gujral was well versed with the realities of Pakistan. He was well aware of the fact that the Control of the power in Pakistan was held by uncle Sam (USA), ISI and the Pakistan Army. Old timers believe that he did have the courage to speak out. His comment on Britain as a third rate power became very famous when the British foreign Secretary Robin Cook made an offer on the Kashmir issue.

He took many initiatives like Composite dialogue process with Pakistan and he played a key role in transforming India's relationship with the then Soviet Union.

#### **Gujral Doctrine**

Twice a foreign minister Gujral authored a foreign policy doctrine called the "Gujral Doctrine" (**A set of principles of conduct of foreign relations with India's immediate neighbours**) and this doctrine was highly appreciated not only in India but also at international level. He (Gujral) was of the firm opinion that India rise as a power also depended on having strong relations with its neighbours. Gujral Doctrine was a five point roadmap which sought to build trust between India and neighbours.

In his famous Chatham House speech in London in September 1996, Gujral outlined his approach towards the neighbours and stated:

"The United Front Government's neighbourhood policy now stands on five basic principles: First, with the neighbours like Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives and Sri Lanka, India does not ask for reciprocity but gives all that it can in good faith and trust. Secondly, no South Asian country will allow its territory to be used against the

interest of another country of the region. Thirdly, none will interfere in the internal affairs of another. Fourthly, all South Asian countries must respect each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty. And finally, they will settle all their disputes through peaceful bilateral negotiations. These five principles, scrupulously observed, will, I am sure, recast South Asia's regional relationship, including the tormented relationship between India and Pakistan, in a friendly, cooperative mould."Gujral reiterated these five principles later in another speech at Bandaranaike Centre for International Studies (BCIS), Colombo in January 1997. Such policy of accommodation was called 'Gujral doctrine' by noted Indian journalist Bhabani Sen Gupta in his article.<sup>2</sup>

Gujral Doctrine also argued that India, with its size and resources, did not need reciprocity in all of its dealings with the likes of Bhutan, Bangladesh, Maldives and even Pakistan. Gujral further said that no country in South Asia should allow its territory to be used to harm another and importance is given to sovereignty, integrity, bilateral negotiations and peace process. Gujral Doctrine is one of the most important chapters in the history of Indian Foreign Policy. In this doctrine, focus is given on Indian sub-continent. This doctrine was highly appreciated not only in India but also outside India as well.

This is a doctrine which sought friendship on the basis of sovereign equality and non-interference.

#### **Criticism**

Gujral Doctrine had its critics who felt that India would be surrounding intelligence assets in neighbouring Countries. Interestingly, Pakistan did not feature in the list of countries Gujral Identified in his speech for non-reciprocal treatment. A.G. Noorani analyst of South Asian politics argued that such measures are 'Cosmetic' and 'deceptive' and said Pakistan is excluded from 'Gujral Doctrine' and this is not a whole hearted effort to generate trust with all neighbours.

#### **Gujral's Contribution**

During his brief tenure as Indian Prime Minister his significant Contribution was the signing of the Ganga Water accord with Bangladesh. He also tried his best in the improvement of India's relations with Pakistan and he made personal appeal to Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. He left a lasting impression on Indian Politics, with particular regard to India's relations with smaller countries (through Gujral Doctrine).

Though his period as Indian PM was brief but he left two legacies first as PM Gujral resisted signing of CTBT (comprehensive Test Ban Treaty) which helped the next govt. in conducting of nuclear explosions at Pokhran and the second contribution was the Gujral Doctrine to Indian Foreign Policy. According to Former Foreign Secretary K. Raghunath, who closely worked with Gujral as a diplomat in Russia and then as the foreign secretary during his tenure as the Prime Minister, "Gujral was a good person to work with and made a significant contribution to our foreign policy."

"He was well read and had a good understanding of foreign policy."<sup>3</sup> Even though many believed that given the cussed attitude of many of India's neighbours, his doctrine only worked partially,

Raghunath believes that Gujral put national interest at the core of India's foreign policy.

#### **His Last Days**

In 1998, he (Gujral) contested the Lok Sabha election from Punjab with the support of SAD (Shiromani Akali Dal) and this was the Last time when he Contested Lok Sabha elections and in 1999 the Lok Sabha was dissolved and he decided to be retired from the active politics. During his retirement period he wrote Urdu poems. In the last years of his life he devoted his time in writing on Indian Foreign Policy and through these writings promoted his liberal view point. On his death, Indian Parliament was adjourned and tributes were paid to Late Prime Minister Mr. I.K. Gujral.

I remember I.K. Gujral, not as a former PM or Cabinet Colleague, More than a politician, Gujral was a progressive intellectual in the tradition of the followers of Jawahar Lal Nehru and he was committed to the cause of democracy and international peace. However, when it came to diplomacy, he was realist. Even in his pursuit of peace, he never lost sight of what was achievable and where the national interest lay...We shared a working relationship based on shared Ideals and mutual respect.<sup>4</sup>

At present Modi's doctrine is a mix of political calculations, a complete control over diplomacy by the willingness to 'front' far the western world.

#### **Criticism**

Gujral govt. faced severe criticism when his govt. recommended president's rule in U.P. on the insistence of Samajwadi Party Leader Mulayam Singh Yadav, then President K.R.Narayanan (who was educated in London School of Economics and student of Prof. Laski) refused to sign it and sent it back.

I.K. Gujral faced severe criticism when he was Indian PM and he transferred CBI Director Joginder Singh who was investigating Fodder Scam and many people felt that PM is favouring the Lalu Yadav and his own party Janta Dal.

#### **References**

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