Chapter - III

Indian Foreign Policy: Developmentalism as Freedom

Indian foreign policy has been traditionally used as a tool to remove the anomalies of colonialism, while working at the same time towards consolidating the newly-won freedom. As a result, developmentalism became the central plank of Indian foreign policy makers. The adoption of modernist developmental agenda by the postcolonial Indian ruling class is often attributed to their elitist vision acquired and imbibed during the long span of colonial rule.

The idea of freedom is a contested concept, as there is no one singular all-encompassing idea which can be said to be representative in character. Different versions have been offered by different scholars and statesmen. However, the Indian ideas of freedom are radically different both in content and form from that of the western concept.\(^1\) It has a strong historical legacy firmly rooted in the Indian national movement. Gandhi, who had been a prominent figure of the Indian national movement, championed the idea of free play of action in every aspect of human life. Anthony J. Parel argues that Gandhi’s understanding of freedom is based on the following four elements: national independence, political freedom of individuals, economic freedom of individuals, and self-rule. In the words of Parel “To pursue one aspect of freedom without simultaneously pursuing the other aspects was [for Gandhi] to distort the meaning of freedom and to interfere with the process of human development”.\(^2\) Thus Gandhi identified freedom with the overall development of human beings.

\(^1\) The western liberal tradition that revolves around the philosophy of individualism put liberty of the individual at the first place whereas the Indian ideas of freedom put equality before liberty for the better realization of freedom.

After independence, India embarked on the path of progress and development with a view to translating its vision of economic freedom of individuals into reality. Jawaharlal Nehru, India’s first Prime Minister and architect of Indian foreign policy, stressed the need for removal of the scourge of socio-economic backwardness in accordance with the Gandhian understanding of freedom. Both believed that economic freedom of the individuals is ineluctably linked to the essence of human freedom.

Nehruvian model of development

The biggest challenge confronting Nehru as the first Prime Minister of India was to meet the daunting task of poverty alleviation, without which he believed political freedom could at best only be viewed as sham freedom. Acknowledging the gravity of the problem, he thus remarked:

> Any system which produces misery and poverty in a country has failed somewhere. We may differ as to the cause of that failure but the fact of failure — the fact of poverty, the fact of unemployment — stares us in face. Now, if this is so, we have to find out the remedy for that. We have to find out what objectives to aim at, apart from any ‘isms’, socialism or capitalism or anything. It may be thought that an immediate variation of the present capitalist structure might meet our demand and help us to get rid of the poverty of the Indian people. If so, let us experiment with it. If not, then inevitably and all the more logically, scrap it and try something else because the essential thing before us is how effectively and fairly rapidly to solve this problem of poverty.3 4

Inspired by the two leading ideological schools of thought on development — capitalism and socialism — and wary of emulating any one of these in totality, he came up with his own model by fusing the core values of the two, which later came to be known as “mixed economy” model of development. As he observed himself:

> Call it what you like — ‘mixed economy’ or anything else. It brings us to doing things in such a way as to continually add to the wealth of the country and to add not only the wealth of the country as a whole but to the distribution of that wealth in the country and gradually arrive at a stage

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4 Proceedings of the annual general meeting of the associated chambers of commerce, maintained by the ASSOCHAM. SWJN, Vol. 4 (II Series), pp. 557-70, as quoted in Ibid., p. 48.
Nehru was very clear about the kind of economic development he wanted for India. His most immediate concern was to ensure faster and speedier growth which could provide the much needed boost to the Indian economy. While he was clearly inclined towards state-led socialist control mechanisms in certain key industries, he was not averse to allowing private capital a crucial role in the nation-building process. The positive aspect in both the isms that found merit in Nehru’s view was the reliance on science and technology for economic development. An avowed believer in the power of new ideas and scientific discoveries, he deeply believed that high growth rate could not be ensured without access to such modern means of development. As he observed, “Even looking at it from purely economic point of view ... it seems to me that conditions in India today, as in many other parts of the world, are conditions of such rapid change that old ideas and methods cannot possibly be applied without them being changed...”

Nehru did not want to be bound by the traditional ideas and approaches, which might hinder the desired economic growth of India. As he noted:

> How do the millions of India benefit or prosper? – that is the real test of any policy, economic, political or otherwise, that we may put forward. I should have personally thought, apart from the immediate problems that face us, that one of our urgent needs was to develop and encourage, to put into operation, these various big schemes and projects in India which would give us greater power, electrical power, more land under irrigation and more power generally for industry etc... these schemes are investments and we must find money for them. If necessary we must borrow money in India or abroad and we must get them through. For unless we do that we cannot increase the productive capacity of India very greatly. That I would give first place; and for the rest, at the present moment I believe that the increase of production in every field of activity is most important.”

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1. Speech in the Constituent Assembly (Legislative), on a motion regarding the industrial policy of the Government, 7 April 1948, as quoted in Gopal and Iyengar, no. 3. p. 64.
2. Ibid., p. 49.
3. Ibid.
For Nehru, thus, it was not possible to ensure the development of the much needed strong industrial base and high economic growth rate at the same time without the inflow of foreign capital, foreign aid, and technical assistance.

**Tools of Foreign Policy**

Determined to pursue such objectives, Nehru adopted the policy of non-alignment as an integral part of Indian foreign policy. As he observed, “...our policy will continue to be not only to keep aloof from power alignments, but try to make friendly co-operation possible...So we approach the whole world on a friendly basis and there is no reason why we should put ourselves at a disadvantage... by becoming unfriendly to any group.” He however clarified that aloofness from power politics does not preclude the possibility of maintaining close relationship with one’s perceived friends and partners in the international system. The magnitude of the relationship between two countries will be determined by the nature of assistance that is ultimately extended in the economic and political areas. This is endorsed by A. P. Rana who maintains that “important economic objectives have been influential in confirming her general strategy in foreign affairs.”

Nehru himself said, “Ultimately, ‘foreign policy is the outcome of economic policy, and until India has properly evolved her economic policy, her foreign policy will be rather vague, rather inchoate, and will be groping.”

India through the adoption of this policy in international relations tried to gain foreign aid both in the form of capital and technical assistance from both the power blocs. The establishment of non-aligned movement was, therefore, not only a political move but also an intelligent economic calculation on the part of Indian foreign policy makers. A.P. Rana in his analytical work on non alignment argues, “… India’s economic backwardness … could be shown as capacities converted by a nonaligned strategy into capabilities, compelling the super power to ‘respect’ such weakness instead of

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10 Nehru, no. 8, p. 24.
taking advantage of it, as great powers in international affairs had invariably done in the past.”

In his endeavor to muster support of the international community on various issues ranging from domestic to international, Nehru actively participated in the activities of United Nations Organization (UNO). In fact, India’s interest in the international affairs dates back to its pre independence period. India became original member of the UNO and affirmed its strong belief in this nodal body over the period of time. Nehru in his speech to the United Nations General Assembly in Paris on 3 November 1948 maintained that:

I should like to state to this General Assembly, on behalf of my people and my government, that we adhere completely and absolutely to the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter and that we shall try, to the best of our ability, to work for the realization of those principles and purposes.12

Nehru reaffirmed his belief in the UN system in yet another message broadcast by the United Nations Radio network. He observed, “It is true that the high hopes with which United Nations Organization was started have not been fulfilled. At the same time, there can be no doubt that the mere fact of its existence has saved us from many dangers and conflicts.”13 Nehru believed that the specialized agencies of UNO could solve all the outstanding international issues including poverty, underdevelopment and backwardness of Asian and African countries. In his inaugural speech at the ninth general conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), he maintained that:

The General Assembly of the United Nations came to represent the mind of the world community and its desire for peace. If the General Assembly mainly faced political problems of the world, its specialized agencies were charged with work of equal, if not greater importance in the economic, educational, scientific and cultural sphere.14

11 Rana, no 9, p. 113.
12 Nehru, no. 8, p. 166.
14 Speech at the inauguration of the ninth general conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, New Delhi, November 5, 1956, see for details, Ibid. p. 170.
Therefore, India actively participated in the activities of all the specialized agencies of United Nations (UN). One such important agency towards which Nehru directed India’s foreign policy with all the skills to serve India’s developmental needs was the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), which is most commonly known as World Bank. The World Bank not only played the role of a creditor, but also of a mediator from time to time to influence the policy process of India, which was well accepted by her. The World Bank mediated between India and Pakistan to resolve their dispute over the Indus River System. On 19 September 1960 Pakistan, India and the World Bank signed Indus Waters Treaty in Karachi. Under this treaty, an Indus Basin Development Fund was created with Pakistan, Australia, Canada, Germany, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the US as contributors. The World Bank was endowed with the responsibility to administer the Fund.  

Under this treaty India accepted to bear the financial burden of construction of canals and other infrastructures in Pakistan and to replace supply of water from the allotted Indian rivers to the rivers allotted to Pakistan. India accepted these terms of agreement on the understanding that World Bank would give aid to India for the execution of other developmental projects. This became clear when Nehru in his reply to a debate on foreign affairs in Lok Sabha in September 1960 remarked, “…we are accommodating Pakistan to a considerable extent, [because] the World Bank has promised us aid for the construction of the Beas Dam”.  

Thus, the Nehurvian model of development was basically characterized by rapid industrialization and foreign investment in all those sectors which could accelerate the economic growth rate of the country. Indian foreign policy makers in the early years of India’s independence directed her foreign policy towards the goal of convincing world community, particularly the developed world, to take cognizance of developmental needs of India. The policy of nonalignment, third world solidarity, and platform like UN and its agencies were all used by the Indian foreign policy makers as tools to achieve development because they believed that it is only through development that they can maintain their freedom. However, the Indian foreign policy

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16 Nehru, no. 8, p. 481.
makers in their attempt to galvanize support for India’s developmental needs were confronted with a unique pressure from the developed world to liberalize India’s economy to accommodate their Multi National Corporations (MNCs).

Lack of Popular Consciousness on Environmental issues

In the initial years of India’s independence, environmental issues were not a subject matter of serious discussion for the Indian government in the near total absence of any critical voice which could question or challenge the rationale behind such ostensibly developmental endeavours. As a consequence, the developmental agenda was carried out fiercely and relentlessly, without any consideration for its impact on the environment. While tracing the historical roots of environmentalism, Ramachandra Guha dubs this period as representing The Age of Ecological Innocence, as it was marked by complete absence of any protest or resistance. It also came to be characterized as the period of recovery after World War II. According to Guha, the consequences of the end of World War II were much the same for both the north and south at least in one crucial respect:

In both contexts, the supreme task of governments was now to fulfill, and if possible to exceed, the economic expectations of their citizens. In North, intellectuals and politicians alike believed that the generation and distribution of wealth, more than anything else, would help wipe-away the memories of war. For the victory achieved in the far-flung battlefields of the Second World War was widely perceived to be a victory for technology as much as for democracy. With the conflict ended, the route to future salvation seemed to lie in the fruitful application of technology to the production process. As President Truman insisted in his inauguration speech of January 20, 1949, “greater production is the key to prosperity and peace.”

Thus, under such circumstances, there was no direct deliberation on environmental problems both at the national and international levels. The newly independent colonies of Asia and Africa had soon thereafter got themselves into a mad race for attaining western style development and modernization in order to wipe away the bitter memories of colonial period. The industrial countries of the north were

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18 Ibid., p. 64.
thoroughly engaged in the task of recovery from the losses of World War II to wipe away the horrified memories of war. India also did not perceive any international environmental challenge during the initial phase of her development since independence. At the domestic level too, there was no forum to pressurize the policy makers on that front. India faced only two challenges at that time. The first was to muster support from both the super powers for her developmental activities and second was to generate public support at home for her big developmental projects. India responded to the first challenge, as mentioned above, with the adoption of a foreign policy of non-alignment. The Indian policy makers successfully met the second challenge by creating a false consciousness among the public that these big projects were essential for removing poverty and underdevelopment.

The Indian policy makers did not take into consideration the ecological concerns while they framed policies relating to industry, nuclear energy, hydroelectric energy, forest, agriculture, irrigation etc. In the foreign policy arena, the effort was to establish links with the foreign aid agencies and other countries, which can help India financially in the execution of such policies.

Thus, India’s foreign policy on environmental issues did not evolve at least during the first three decades since independence. Two reasons can be pointed out for the ignorance of environmental issues in the discourse of India’s foreign policy. One, there was no debate on environmental issues both at the national and international levels during that period. And two, the dominant concerns in the whole world during this period were on ensuring rapid development. In fact, in the official Indian discourse, expressions such as ‘India’s Foreign Policy on Environment’ did not exist at all until the post-1970 period. It was only with the emergence of Ministry of Environment and Forests in 1985 and its close association with the Ministry of External Affairs on formulation of policy response to global environmental issues that helped shaped India’s foreign policy on environment.
The conclave of United Nations Conference on Human Environment in Stockholm in 1972 worked as a watershed in the history of environmental policy making and legislation in India. This event for the first time brought the Indian government into direct contact with environmental issues, making it sit up and take cognizance of the urgency of such issues. The then Prime Minister of India, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, had actively participated in the conference by articulating the official Indian position on global environmental issues. The conclusion of the conference left a deep impact on Mrs. Gandhi, who started taking personal interest in the area of environmental protection. Mrs. Gandhi’s personal interest in environmental protection encouraged her to include some provision pertaining to environmental protection in the constitution of India. Beside these provisions, the subjects like protection of wildlife, forests, population control and family planning were transferred from the state list to the concurrent list on which center has an upper hand in case of conflict arising out of contradicting legislations by the center and the state on the same subject. What came out from these constitutional provisions was that all the major components of environment – land, water, air etc. – came under the authority of central government in one way or the other. This gave the Indian federal government exclusive legislative control over matters of environment.

The post-Stockholm environmental legislation in India included acts covering a array of issues ranging from air, water to general protection of environment. The Bhopal Gas Tragedy in 1984 further gave an impetus to the drive to enact environmental legislations in India. However, the water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act 1974 was the first off shoot of this new awareness in the wake of the Stockholm Declaration. This act created the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB),

19 By the 42nd constitutional amendment 1976, article 48A was added to part IV and 51A(g) was introduced to the newly added part IVA to the constitution of India. The Article 48A reads, “The State shall endeavour to protect and improve the environment and to safeguard the forest and wildlife of the country.”. The article 51A was added to elaborate the fundamental duties of the citizens. One such duty reads, “[It shall be the duty of every citizen of India] (g) . . . to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers and wildlife. and to have compassion for living creatures.” See, Constitution of India, (Publication Division, Government of India).
20 See article 2 of the Constitution of India.
and the State Pollution Control Boards (SPCB), for each state to implement the provision of the act. Next in line came the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act 1981; the Environment (Protection) Act 1986, which was a direct response to the Bhopal disaster. It was an umbrella legislation, which intends to provide a particular focus to the control of all environmental pollutions. The Environment (Protection) Act also covers the handling of hazardous chemicals. Following this, there were the policy statements on abatement of pollution in 1992 and the Environment Action Programme in 1993. The National Environment Tribunal Act, 1995 and the National Environment Appellate Authority Act, 1997, are other important environmental legislations.21

Towards the end of 1980s almost all the political parties in India started advocating protection of environment. In the 1989 election manifestos almost all the political parties like the Bharatiya Janata Party, Communist Party of India, Indian National Congress, United Front/Janta Dal/National Front etc. had included the environmental issues for the first time. This practice has now become a precedent and customarily finds a mention in the manifestos of all the political parties.22

In pursuance of the Stockholm Declaration 1972, the government of India created the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) in 1985 for greater coordination, policy formulation and implementation. By now, “the MoEF has become a nodal agency in the administrative structure of the Central Government for the purposes of planning, promotion, co-ordination and overseeing the implementation of environmental and forestry programmes.”23 MoEF oversees all environmental matters in the country and is a permanent member of the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council. The Ministry also plays a pivotal role in the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

The creation of MoEF is often accredited to the efforts of Indira Gandhi, who took special interest in matters of environmental protection. The Ministry has a large administrative setup. At the top of the hierarchy is a minister of cabinet rank.

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However, in the initial period, Prime Ministers Mrs. Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi were holding direct charge of the environmental issues, supported by a deputy minister of state. This clearly shows the personal interests of these top political leaders of India in matters relating to environmental protection. Nevertheless, the MoEF is the sole agency entrusted with the multiple tasks of planning, promoting, coordinating and implementing domestic environmental activities and works in close coordination with the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) to address the issue of foreign environmental policy. The policy planning division of MEA, however, is not institutionally concerned with foreign environmental policy. Much of the planning on such issues depends on the personal individual interests of the concerned bureaucrats. In fact, the foreign secretary could assign any MEA official to coordinate foreign environmental policy with the MoEF. In more recent times, with the increased involvement of the United Nations in global environmental issues, the United Nations Division of the MEA has been playing a leading role in formulating Indian foreign environmental policy. With a view to coordinating the interactions between different ministries concerned with environmental issues in varying degrees, the MoEF established an Inter-Ministerial Group (IMG) in 1991. The IMG’s primary task at the time of its formation was visualized in the specific context of the forthcoming Rio summit to work as a key coordinator on environmental issues between different ministries.

Over the years, the officials of the MoEF in conjunction with the officials of MEA have emerged as the spokespersons of the Indian state in various international environmental conferences and conventions. In addition, India has also assumed for itself the role of being the official representative of the collective voice of the Third World in global meets on environment. The principle of “common goal but different responsibility” has, therefore, generally been the principal guideline of the Indian negotiators at various environmental negotiations with the developed states. In the inauguration address to the First Assemby Meeting of Global Environment Facility on 31 March 1998 the then Indian Prime Minister had observed:

When we analyse the nature of pollutants, we find that both affluence and poverty contribute to their high levels. The problems of the industrialised and the developed world stem from their high levels of economic activity and consumption. The degeneration of forests and natural resources in the developing countries, on the other hand, can be attributed largely to the lack of resources and alternative source of energy and income generation. The strategies to tackle these two distinct causes therefore, need to be
While the post-Stockholm developments in the 1970s did witness a spurt in the number of domestic legislations in India, the central plank of India’s foreign policy on environment remained unchanged – the assertion of national sovereignty and Third World solidarity. This is illustrated from the Indian stance in various environmental negotiations on major global environmental issues of Ozone depletion, Climate Change and Biodiversity Loss. An analysis of India’s role in these negotiations would help us understand its foreign environmental policy in a much better way. Given the dearth of literature on Indian environmental foreign policy analysis with the exception of studies done by Mukun Govind Rajan and Anil Agarwal, Sunita Narian et al of the Centre for Science and Environment, the following section draws heavily from such writings in order to make sense of the official Indian position on environmental issues.

India’s Role in Ozone Negotiations

India’s role in the Ozone negotiations has been marked by remarkable inconsistency. Hesitant and reluctant to participate in such negotiations in the initial rounds, Indian state went on to justify its non-participation on the ground that it could hardly be held responsible for the depleting ozone layer with its meager 0.5 per cent share of the world’s total CFCs production. In its opinion, it was the responsibility of the developed countries to help prevent further depletion of the ozone layer, as it were they who produced a disproportionately huge amount of CFCs in the world.

Moreover, the fast depleting reserve of India’s foreign exchange was cited as yet another official reason for its inability to participate in the 1985 Vienna Convention.\(^{27}\)

Such indifferent policy of India on ozone issue continued even in the post-Vienna period. India sent only an observer to the 1987 Montreal Conference without any negotiating power. The comprehensive decisions taken in the Montreal Conference including restriction on trade with non-parties resulted in concerted criticism of Indian government’s dithering stance on the issue. The Indian government adopted a defensive position by claiming that it was ‘studying the issue’. However, Dr. K. Chaterjee, former senior consultant to the MoEF argued, “the lack of data [on ozone depletion] was a mere convenient excuse for senior scientists”.\(^{28}\) He pointed out that much research had already been conducted to conclusively establish the possible adverse impact of ozone depletion on India. Secondly, India was also not interested in becoming a party of any international covenant that would impose restrictions on CFCs production in India. It was perceived by the Indian elites that any proposed cut in the production of CFCs might result in making compromise with India’s surging economic interests. India is one of the rare developing countries that has a surplus production of CFCs for export purposes. The Indian refrigeration industry has huge potential for export opportunities in Soviet Union and Middle East. The Indian state has thus been wary of the negative and adverse implications emanating from ratification of the Montreal Protocol on its industrialisation process.\(^{29}\)

India did not react positively to the joint declaration by the European Community (EC) and USA to phase out the use of CFCs by the year 2000. In the March 1989 international conference in ozone depletion in London, the Indian Environment Minister Z.A. Ansari rejected the Montreal Protocol in its present form by arguing that it did not address the concerns of developing countries. He advocated certain amendments in the Montreal Protocol to accommodate the concerns of developing countries. Such a demand by the Indian government got considerable support from the Third World countries. However, Indian indecisiveness on the ozone issue once again cropped up with no properly briefed team of negotiators representing

\(^{27}\) Rajan, no. 25, p. 59.
\(^{28}\) Ibid., p. 61.
\(^{29}\) Ibid., pp. 61-62.
India in the first meeting of the parties to the Montreal Protocol at Helsinki. The Indian ambassador to Finland attended the meeting as a mere observer. The dissatisfaction with the official Indian stance was articulated by K.P. Fabian, the ambassador to Finland, to the MoEF who urged the concerned ministry to evolve a clear and transparent position on the ozone issue, the absence of which could severly harm India’s interests. He made strong recommendation to the Indian government urging it to rope in the support of the G-77 and China in order to strengthen its position. This did convince the Indian government to get into the proactive mode, as it later did clarify its position on the issue and started sending properly trained delegations to the subsequent meetings. This was followed by the Indian government taking keen interests in organising the first Conference of Select Developing Countries with a view to generating a collective consensus on various issues relating to environment.  

In the second meeting of the state parties to the Montreal Protocol held at London, the developing countries were successful to get most of their demands accepted. The proposed amendment to articles 2(9)(c), 4.2 and 19 of Montreal Protocol were made to accommodate the concerns of the developing countries. The demand for establishing a multilateral fund to support the developing countries in their incremental transitional costs with equal share of control over it with the developed countries and the concession of ten years for the developing countries from the targets to reduce CFCs emissions set for the North in the Protocol were fully accepted. Although, on the issue of technology transfer the developing countries could not get full assurance from the North, “they managed to link the fulfillment of obligations under the Protocol to the satisfactory provision of financial and technical assistance by the North”.  

Convinced of the fact that the amended protocol was sensitive to the concerns of developing countries, Maneka Gandhi, the then Indian Environment Minister, recommend the government of India to ratify the Protocol. This was done on 19 June 1992 and India became a party to it on 17 September 1992.

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30 Ibid., pp. 65-85.
31 Ibid., p. 86.
India’s Role in Climate Change Negotiations

There is not much of a qualitative difference in the official Indian policy on climate change from that of its policy on the issue of ozone depletion. Such a state of affairs is largely attributed to the lack of proper advice by the Indian scientific community. However, with the growing international concerns over global environmental issues, the MoEF responded positively by constituting an Expert Advisory Committee under the chairmanship of Dr. A.P. Mitra, the then Director-General of Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) in the late 1980s. This committee was entrusted with the responsibility of studying all aspects related to global warming and to advise the government on the same. In its second meeting in 1990 the committee, however, reported that no database existed on Indian contribution to global inventory of Green House Gases (GHGs) to make sufficient advice to the Indian government on policy matters.32

The absence of any concrete advice by the Indian scientists to the government on climate change issue left the the government with no option, but to toe the the traditional line hinging on the conventional North-South divide.33 Not surprisingly thus, in most of the environmental negotiations on climate change, the Indian government followed the same policy that it did during the much of the negotiations on the issue of ozone. The shifting of responsibilities on to the North on the issue of climate change is evident from the consensus arrived at the April 1990 New Delhi Conference of Select Developing Countries on Global Environmental Issue. The conference agreed on the fact that:

Even assuming high economic growth by developing countries and stabilization of energy consumption by the developed countries over the next 20 years, the developed countries would continue to be responsible for a major portion of the greenhouse gas emissions. The developing countries would require to increase their energy consumption for their development and for alleviation of poverty. The responsibility for reduction of greenhouse gas emissions to prevent a climate change would, therefore, rest with developed countries. The developing countries will be prepared to cooperate in energy efficiency measures but no targets can be fixed for the reduction of greenhouse emissions by them.34

32 Ibid., p. 101.
33 For detailed analysis of North-South politics on environment see Marc Williams, “Re-articulating the Third World Coalition: the Role of the Environmental Agenda”, Third World Quarterly, Vol. 14, No. 1, pp. 7-29.
34 MoEF, Chairman’s Summery as cited in Rajan, no. 25, pp. 104-5.
The conference also exhibited unanimity on the need for “any convention on climate change [to] provide for technology transfer to the developing countries and funds to meet their resource needs”.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) which was created by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Meterological Organization (WMO) in 1988 to assess the scientific knowledge on global warming played an important role in the process of climate change negotitions. Its first major report in 1990 showed that there was broad international consensus that climate change was human-induced. The First IPCC Assessment Report was completed in 1990. The Report played an important role in establishing the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) for a UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) by the UN General Assembly. In the various sessions of INC held from February 1991 to May 1992, the Indian delegations treaded very cautiously. They insisted on the adoption of ‘per capita equity’ as a rightful way to determine the responsibilities to reduce the GHGs emission. On the whole, India’s negotiation stance during the INC sessions had been the inclusion of the concept of per capita equity, opposition to any international review of the national policies of the developing countries, willingness to consider contractual commitments and demand of separate fund under the climate convention.

The text of the Convention on climate change was finally adopted at the United Nations Headquarters, New York on the 9 May 1992. It was put to signature at the Rio Earth Summit where 154 countries including India signed the convention. It provided the overall policy framework for addressing the climate change issue and did not include any binding obligations. As a general principle, it was recognized that

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35 ibid.
36 The IPCC provides scientific, technical and socio-economic advice to the world community, and in particular to the Parties to the UNFCCC through its periodic assessment reports and special reports. Its Second Assessment Report, Climate Change 1995, provided key input to the negotiations, which led to the adoption of the Kyoto Protocol to the UNFCCC in 1997. The Third Assessment Report (TAR), Climate Change 2001, was completed in 2001. It was submitted to the 7th Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC and Parties agreed that it should be used routinely as a useful reference for providing information for deliberations on agenda items of the Conference of the Parties. The IPCC has decided to continue to prepare comprehensive assessment reports and agreed to complete its Fourth Assessment Report in 2007.
Northeastern states were principally responsible for contributing to climate change since their developmental activities spanned over a long period of time. India could achieve this feat on the basis of a report by the Delhi-based NGO Center for Science and Environment (CSE) which highlighted that carbon emissions remain in the atmosphere for a long time. In addition, the UNFCCC also admitted that the North had been developing for a much longer period than the Third World, so action to address this must proportionately be with those industrialized nations. The convention endowed the responsibility on the members to the UNFCCC to work out the full details to control the emission of greenhouse gases in the coming years.

The most important Conference of Parties (COP3) to UNFCCC was held in Kyoto, Japan in 1997. The developed countries agreed to specific targets for cutting their emissions of greenhouse gases. A general framework was defined for this, with specificities to be detailed over the next few years. In this conference of parties the US did not want any agreement that put limit on the emission of greenhouse gases. Therefore, US proposed only to stabilize the emission. Whereas on the other hand, European Union wanted a 15 per cent cut on the emission of greenhouse gases. However, in the end it was agreed to reduce the greenhouse gases by 5.2 per cent below the 1990 level for the period 2008-2012.

Indian High Commissioner to Australia G. Parthasarathy in 1998 in his paper “Climate Change and the Environment – An Indian Perspective” presented in the conference on “Kyoto – The Impact on Australia” clearly articulated the Indian policy on global climate change. He thus argued:

There has naturally been increasing global concern about the growing atmospheric concentration of greenhouse gases. We do, however, believe that the entire issue needs to be viewed from a proper historical perspective, which takes into account the extent to which countries of the world have each contributed to this problem and how we can deal with this problem in an equitable manner. Countries like India which are only now set on the road to sustainable development cannot obviously be asked to take measures which would adversely affect their efforts to provide food, clothing and shelter to their people within the shortest possible time. It is, after all, the countries of the developed world which have created a problem for the world’s environment by what many would regard as being

38 For details of COP-3 log on to <http://www.globalissues.org/EnvIssues/GlobalWarming/Kyoto.asp>
conspicuous consumption and luxurious living. The needs of a man yearning for a second meal in a developing country, in our view, require to be more urgently addressed than the passion of a youth for a second sports car in an affluent country.

He further said:

…the primary cause for the depletion of the ozone layer, for global warming and for other developments like the dumping of hazardous wastes has been the policies which were designed to facilitate the increasingly high levels of consumption that their peoples aspired for, with scant regard for environmental considerations. The main responsibility for combating pollution, therefore, rests with the developed countries on the Polluter Pays Principle.

The Kyoto Protocol came into force after the Russian Parliament on October ratified it and President Vladimir Putin signed the resolution pertaining to ratification of the Kyoto protocol on Nov 4, 2004. India being a member of countries had ratified the Kyoto Protocol in August 2002. “Subodh S. adviser to the Ministry of Environment and Forests, on the eve of ratification of India did not have to commit anything right now, adding that the ratification of India has confirmed its willingness to be bound by it in future.”

As a developing country, India is not required to reduce the emissions under the Kyoto Protocol. Rather, it is expected to benefit from transfer of technology and additional foreign investments into sectors like renewable energy generation and afforestation project when the Kyoto Protocol comes into force. Accession to the Kyoto Protocol will also enable the country to take technology projects with external assistance in accordance with national development priorities. After the approval by the Cabinet to Kyoto Protocol, Union Information and Broadcasting Minister, Sushma Swaraj said that this would enable India to access adaptation fund under the protocol which cou

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40 Ibid.

India hosted the Eighth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP-8) in New Delhi from October 23 to November 1st, 2002. During the conference, India rejected pressure on poor nations to step up efforts to tackle global warming by cutting greenhouse gas emissions. Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee argued that countries like India produced only a fraction of the total greenhouse gas emissions, and could not afford the extra costs of cutting them. Opening the ministerial talks at the conference, the Indian prime minister said poor countries should not be forced to set targets for cutting greenhouse gas emissions. “Climate change mitigation will bring additional strain to the already fragile economies of the developing countries and will affect our efforts to achieve higher GDP growth rates to eradicate poverty speedily.”

In the 13th COP in 2007 at Bali, India again reiterated its position on the issue of greenhouse gases reduction. A senior member of the Indian delegation to the COP made the Indian position clear by saying, “… industrialised countries should fulfil the commitments they had made under the Kyoto Protocol and there should be quick progress on concluding negotiations for greenhouse gas emissions reductions by these countries in a post-Kyoto world…” Chandarshekhar Dasgupta former ambassador and currently fellow at The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) said, “Developing countries are most vulnerable to climate change because they lack the resources and technology to build infrastructure in order to deal with climate change…. The only solution is accelerated development that will generate the resources necessary.”

Thus, Indian policy on climate change issue has by and large been influenced by its traditional foreign policy wisdom. During the whole negotiation process, the Indian foreign policy on climate change has been less concerned with the issue of rising global mean temperature. It has particularly been guided by the idea of

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43 http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/default.stm
45 Ibid.
procuring concessions and benefits from the North by enhancing their collective bargaining power through Third World solidarity.

**India’s Role in Biological Diversity Negotiations**

India’s interest in the conservation of biological diversity coincides with the period which witnessed an international surge on the issue in the 1980s. The Indian government undertook many legislative measures in the 1970s to conserve biodiversity. This was largely facilitated by certain new developments in the area of biotechnology in the late 1970s and early 1980s which allowed Indian government to take special interest in the conservation of biodiversity. In the sixth five-year plan (1980-1985), the Indian government declared that genetics would be a new priority area. India saw the new international developments for conservation of biodiversity as an opportunity to seek transfer of biotechnology from the North to the South on easy terms.

Much like the Indian official position on environmental issues pertaining to ozone depletion and climate change, its negotiating strategy on preserving biological diversity as witnessed during the process of preparing the text for the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) has remained the same. The New Delhi Conference of Select Developing Countries on Global Environmental Issues clearly articulated in its declaration the Southern states’ interests, perceptions, intentions, and fears with respect to the Convention on Biological Diversity. The conference called for the following:

- Recognise, reward and sustain informal innovation by the local people and recognise that the protection of bio-diversity by any country is a part of the socio-economic framework of that country. The biodiversity of a country is its national resource.
- The burdens on a country due to protection of bio-diversity should be recognised and compensated.
- The obligations assumed by a country to protect its bio-diversity should not result in conditionalities by the international funding agencies for developmental loans.
- The fruits of bio-technology should be equitably made available to the developing countries which are the source of the gene pools.

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46 Rajan, no. 25, p. 196.
• There must be clear provisions for the transfer of the requisite technologies and resources to the developing countries.
• There must be as much clarity in the rights of the developing countries as in their obligations.\textsuperscript{47}

Indian delegations to the various meetings of Ad Hoc Working Group of Legal and Technical Experts on Biological Diversity, which comprised of officials from the MoEF and MEA, particularly emphasized India’s sovereign right over natural resources as the basis of CBD negotiations. India also objected to the global list of conservation sites and endangered species of international importance, as it would lead to external intervention into the national policies in the name of conservation of those sites. India also called upon the developed countries, as it was declared in the Conference of Select Developing Countries, to transfer technology, particularly biotechnology on a ‘preferential and non-commercial basis’.\textsuperscript{48}

India was also in favour of explicit recognition of the linkage of access to genetic resources with access to biotechnology, research and development and associated products. India was particularly against the efforts of the developed countries to sabotage the CBD by making it subordinate to the decisions in other international forums such as World Intellectual Property Rights Organization (WIPO) and GATT.\textsuperscript{49}

India’s position on CBD became explicitly clear from the directions issued to the Indian delegation by the Indian Cabinet during the fifth round of negotiations on CBD in Dec. 1991. The Cabinet stressed, “in the negotiations we would not accept any limitation of sovereignty over natural resources or international review of national policies; and, commitments would essentially be of a contractual, rather than obligatory, nature”.\textsuperscript{50} India has been successful in getting much of her points endorsed in the final text of CBD. On the final outcome of the negotiations on CBD the MoEF asserted:

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., pp. 201-2.
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{50} Rajan, no. 25, p. 216.
This Convention can...be viewed as a gain for us since it not only supports the actions we are already taking for the conservation of our biodiversity, but also creates a firm link between the transfer of genetic resources and the return transfer of biotechnology which uses those resources. In addition, the Convention calls for a sharing of the profits derived from biotechnology which uses the genetic resources of developing countries... obligations on us... are essentially of a contractual nature and dependant on provision of finance and technology.\(^{21}\)

However, one area where India conceded a big defeat was nowhere mentioned by the MoEF. The developed countries successfully protected the intellectual property rights regime under the new GATT agreement wherein it was provided that “the holder of a property right could be a private party, who would be under no obligation to provide access to these resources, or to share the benefits arising from the utilization of these resources, or to give access to the technologies that used these resources.”\(^{52}\)

Till date, many Conferences of Parties (COP) to CBD have taken place but the dispute on intellectual property protection between north and south is continually disrupting the process of implementation of CBD. One of the major successes that India could clinch in such negotiations, however, relates to the retention of its sovereign right over its natural resources.

**Appraisal**

The prioritization of development over environmental issues explains two different views of Indian political system. One view mostly held by the Indian environmental NGOs, “invokes the class-based analyses of India’s ruling elite.”\(^{53}\) Guha, who has been the prominent supporter of this view point, argues that the prioritization of development over environment owes to “the coalescence of class interests with powerful ideology of modernisation that has been internalized by our elites”\(^{54}\) The second view is projected by the mainstream political parties and development planners. This view “justifies a high degree of prioritization of development over the

\(^{21}\) Ibid., p. 240.
\(^{32}\) Ibid., p. 241.
\(^{33}\) Rajan, no. 25, p 34.
environment in the short term in order to generate the momentum for the reduction of poverty as well as the creation of surplus resources that can be ploughed back into the environment in the long run.55 Mrs. Gandhi’s assertion at the Stockholm conference that “poverty is the greatest polluter” is very much in consonance with this view.56

The ‘government rhetoric’, although, ‘accommodates environmen
tal concerns’ has ‘the scale still tips substantially towards a very much higher priority for economic over environment’.57 This tendency of the government aptly became evident in the statement of the then Indian Finance Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh (the Prime Minister of India), in the early 1990s:

Future strategies of development should pay systematic attention to the environmental impact. Environmental impact analysis, environmental accounting and use of environmentally sound technologies should be built into all major development processes and projects. It has, however, to be recognized that this will lead to a rise in the capital cost per unit of output at least in the short run. The economy’s resource base has to be expanded so that these additional costs can be absorbed without hurting the development process.58

India became more defensive in the international environment negotiations because of the contemplated attempt of the developed countries to segregate the environment and trade issues. Although environmental issues remained on the agenda of the UN, Dubey points out that:

Hard-core economic issues like the removal of poverty, development strategies, trade, money, finance, and debt have been taken off the agenda of the United Nations and transferred to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and the General Agreement on Tariff and Trade (GATT) over which they [developed countries] have a greater control and which permit them to use cross-conditionalities and cross-retaliation.59

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55 Rajan, no. 25, p. 35.
57 Ibid., p. 36.
58 Dr. Manmohan Singh, as cited in Ibid.
The dependence of India on international institutions like World Bank and IMF in the 1990s to improve balance of payment crisis relatively reduced her bargaining power in the climate change and biodiversity negotiations in comparison to the power exercised earlier during the ozone negotiations.

India, therefore, remained skeptical of the north during the World Summit on Sustainable Development 2002, and stuck to the traditional wisdom of foreign policy. She blamed the north for all the environmental devastation. The then Minister of External Affairs of India Mr. Yashwant Sinha in his statement on the eve of this summit argued:

Because we focus on sustainable development, we underplay the fact that the real problem is unsustainable consumption and the pressure it generates on the earth’s finite resources. It is this attachment to unsustainable consumption patterns, and a determination to preserve and raise levels of prosperity at any cost, that breeds resistance to any meaningful reform in the financial and economic structures that underpin global society today, and results in the neglect of the development agenda. The poor are not the biggest consumer of the world’s resources; the rich are.\(^{60}\)

He further argued:

Mr. President, while this process has thrown up pertinent issues on which we must act together, it has also sadly underscored a fundamental gap in the understanding of the legitimate needs of developing countries. It is difficult to pursue enlightened approaches to development in a world where ODA levels are falling, protectionism is on the rise, terms of trade are stacked in favour of the rich, debt burdens have spiraled, corporate governance need urgent re-definition, and the volatility of international capital transfers has affected productive investment flows to the South.\(^{61}\)

The above statement clearly articulates the official Indian position on environmental issues which privileges ‘development’ over environmental concerns. The National Environment Policy 2006 also endorses the same view right in its preamble:

The present day consensus reflects three foundational aspirations: First, that human beings should be able to enjoy a decent quality of life; second, that humanity should become capable of respecting the finiteness of the

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\(^{61}\) Ibid.
To achieve the above objectives, the National Environment Policy 2006 acknowledged and reiterated the urgent need to establish harmony between economic, social and environmental needs of the country. What becomes abundantly clear from the foregoing discussion on Indian foreign policy on environment thus is the fact that environment is merely considered as a means to an end, and not an end in itself. What remains unclear and inexplicable, however, is the rigid Indian stance on environmental issues and its insistence on toeing the traditional wisdom of foreign policy. What could be the possible factors which preclude the official Indian environmental agenda from becoming global in nature and scope?

Section III

Several factors can be recounted here to help explain why Indian delegates have often adopted reactionary response or shied away from getting into a proactive mode on global environmental issues during a string of environmental negotiations that have taken place thus far. Some of these can be enumerated as follows:

First, during the first three decades of India’s independence, the Indian state did exhibit remarkable autonomy in pursuing its foreign policy goals unhindered by externalities of any kind. This was the phase in which Nehru had most emphatically reiterated the need to pursue an independent foreign policy by keeping away from the cold-war calculations of the two super powers. Moreover, the absence of any internal critical voice during much of this phase also made the job for Nehru easier in terms of shaping India’s foreign policy in accordance with his own worldview. It was only in the post-1970 period that different critical voices in the form of opposition political parties, media, NGOs, business and other interests groups started questioning the

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wisdom of the power that be on issues of foreign policy. However, even such late interventions by such groups in the realm of foreign policy making have at best been marginal given the charismatic persona of Nehru and the dominance of single party system during much of this phase. Lack of popular consciousness on issues of foreign policy was yet another factor which allowed leeway to the foreign policy makers in pursuing their goals. In the context of India’s foreign policy on environment particularly, the extent of public indifference and general amnesia could be gauged from the fact that the expression “India’s foreign policy on environment” had not even found a place in the official lexicon of foreign policy making till the late 1970s.

Second, the overwhelming emphasis in the whole discourse of Indian foreign policy has been on attaching top priority to development. This has largely been so owing to the pragmatic stance of the former Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, who had consistently maintained that development comes before any other issue, including environment-related issues. Such pragmatism has, however, wittingly or unwittingly resulted in reaffirming and entrenching the state monopoly over the use or abuse of nature. Under such a framework, the state has been viewed as a custodian of natural resources, which could be used by its government to accomplish the developmental goals. This firmly established the sovereign right of the government over natural resources which could not be impaired by any internal or external agency under any circumstances. The adoption of such a stance by the Indian government has, however, further alienated the eco-system people from their legitimate claims and natural rights over resources like land and forest use. This was purely a mechanical approach. Sumi Krishna calls this approach a “Managerial approach”. According to this approach the state can determine priorities given to the environment over other issues. However, the priority given to one issue over the other will depend upon the nature of urgency attached to it. Thus, environment for this approach is one of the issues, which can be managed by state by defining the priorities given to various social issues. As Sumi Krishna puts it:

"The managerial approach ... emphasizes appropriate government policies and interventions to mitigate the adverse consequences of development. It seeks to bring about change in a gradual and incremental manner, through"

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Indira Gandhi was the most vocal exponent of this approach. It was in her address to the 1972 UN Conference on Human Environment (UNCHE) in Stockholm that she had emphatically articulated India's priorities for development over environmental issues. She had thus observed:

... we do not wish to impoverish the environment any further and yet we cannot for a moment forget the grim poverty of large numbers of people. Are not poverty and need the greatest polluters? For instance, unless we are in a position to provide employment and purchasing power for the daily necessities of the tribal people and those who live in or around our jungles, we cannot prevent them from combing the forest for food and livelihood; from poaching and from despoiling the vegetation. When they themselves feel deprived, how can we urge the preservation of animals? How can we speak to those who live in villages and in slums about keeping the oceans, the rivers and the air clean when their own lives are contaminated…? The environment cannot be improved in conditions of poverty. Nor can poverty be eradicated without the use of science and technology.

She further held that “development is not the cause of most of these problems but the cure, and that planned development was an instrument to improve the quality of life.” According to her environmental problems could easily be solved with the right use of science and technology. For her, the industrialization of the developing countries was not the cause of concern because it did not lead to the environmental destruction. In other words, environmental problems of the developing countries have basically been the result of ‘inadequacy of development’.

Such environmental pragmatism on the part of India was in sync with the general position adopted by the South. In sharp contrast to the Northern perspective on environment, the roots of environmental problems in the South were identified in the existence of poverty, underdevelopment and unequal global economic relations. Moreover, the environmental agenda of the North is widely held responsible for

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64 Ibid., p. 37.
66 Krishna, no. 63, p.38.
perpetuating the plight of the South. According to Wu and Clemente environmental problems:

...are not the by-products of affluence but of poverty: not the symptoms of over-consumption, but the sufferings of underconsumption. They cannot cry over the dying lake, but weep for the dying *homo sapiens*; they cannot be concerned with the doses of DDT, but with eradication of diseases. Their worry is not the smoking chimney, but concern with the vast numbers of jobless people; not a question of clear water, but of obtaining higher productivity from the water. Their advocacy is not of consumerism, but of the struggle against imperialism. The problem is more of survival than of aesthetics.\(^6^7\)

The same theme echoed in Mrs. Gandhi’s address to the UNCHE. Expressing solidarity with the developing countries, she put forward the shared worldview of the developing countries on developmental priorities, with specific focus on environmental equity. She observed “Many of the advanced countries of today have reached their present affluence by their domination over other races and countries…”\(^6^8\) She further remarked:

>The ecological crisis should not add to the burdens of the weaker nations by introducing new considerations in the political and trade policies of rich nations. It would be ironic if the fight against pollution were to be converted into another business, out of which a few companies, corporations, or nations would make profit at the cost of the many.\(^6^9\)

The rationale behind the firm stand of Mrs. Gandhi on environmental issues lies in her domestic as well as international compulsions. She won the 1971 General Elections on the slogan of ‘Garibi Hatao’ (eradicate poverty). She took a number of measures\(^7^0\) to implement her programme of poverty alleviation in India. This set the priorities of the government for development over other issues.


\(^6^8\) Rajan, no. 25, p. 26.

\(^6^9\) Indira Gandhi’s address to the UNCHE as quoted in Divan and Rosencranz, no. 65, p. 32.

\(^7^0\) For instance, she nationalized banks and insurance companies, abolished the privy purses of the ex-princes of India, and instituted special employment-generation and poverty-alleviation schemes. Industrialization, and the modernization of the agricultural sector through the ‘Green Revolution’, continued to be governmental priorities.
At the international level too, it was during this period that the demand for New International Economic Order (NIEO) was in its advanced stage. Although, the demand for NIEO was developing slowly under the banner of Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and G-77, the ‘UNCHE was probably the first major international forum where the South consolidated itself and negotiated as a bloc’ to put forward such demands which later on become the hallmark of NIEO. Mrs. Gandhi, therefore, found the UNCHE as an opportunity to present the Indian stand in particular and that of the South in general on the issues of environment and development. In fact, this platform was used by India to articulate:

...mainstream Third World opinion on a number of issues in this regard, including demand for the removal of Northern non-tariff barriers to Third World exports, Northern acceptance of the principle of non-reciprocal treatment of developing countries in trade, increased aid flows, particularly from multilateral sources, to the South, and debt relief.

In short, India’s foreign policy on environment during Mrs. Gandhi’s reign subscribed to the four fundamental principles, rooted in the fairly long tradition of Indian foreign policy discourse. However, Mrs. Gandhi very eloquently used these principles to justify the apprehensions of developing countries on environmental issues. These principles were: concern for sovereignty, concern for equity, solidarity with the Third World, and a high degree of self-esteem and concern for India’s international image.

Third, unlike the practice in some countries, India does not designate the business of formulating its foreign environmental policy to any independent agency. The two principal ministries in the MoEF in collaboration with the MEA formulates policies and strategies with reference to particular environmental issue. The MEA officials also lead the Indian delegation in all environmental negotiations at various international forums other than UNEP where MoEF is authorized to deal with. The MEA, thus, invariably exert considerable influence on determining the course of action in various environmental negotiations. The MEA, however, generally sticks to the traditional wisdom of foreign policy. Since the MEA bureaucrats determine much

72 Sumitra Chishti as quoted in Rajan, no. 25, pp.39-40.
73 Ibid., p. 37.
of the course of action, they generally advise the government to be cautious as they lack specialized knowledge or they lack necessary data and needy support of the scientific community. As Rajan argues:

> The different global environmental negotiations revealed impressive consistency in the character of Indian interests and preferences, attributable to the construction of Indian policy around traditional foreign environmental policy concepts such as sovereignty, equity, the ‘poverty is the greatest polluter’, orthodoxy and Third World Solidarity.74

Fourth, the process of Indian foreign environmental policy formulation limits the impact of pluralist inputs. There is little impact of non-state actors such as media, NGOs and business groups on the foreign environmental policy process of India. The government exercises a considerable autonomy on foreign environmental policy making. Bureaucrats play a considerably high role in the formulations of environmental policy. They simply carry on with the traditional wisdom to avoid controversies. Moreover, they are generalists and do not possess any special knowledge on such issues which require high technical knowledge. On the other hand such knowledge can be provided by the research groups, NGOs, etc. But such groups most of the time are not involved in the policy making process on environment.

Fifth, lack of access to information due to rigid secrecy rules significantly reduces the prospects for the NGOs to play an active role in the resolution of international environmental issues. Ironically, this is so even though the domestic NGOs provide critical inputs to the government vis-à-vis the North-South dimension of the issue. On the other hand, the Indian government invariably relates such issues to nationalistic concerns with a view to mobilizing domestic support. As Rajan argues:

> The limited resources of most NGOs and their consequent inability to keep abreast of international developments and their sense of nationalism and general skepticism of western concepts of environmental protection, also help explain the weakness of transnational linkages with Northern pressure groups, and the absence of any evidence that such links influenced Indian policy on global environment issue.75

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74 Rajan, no. 25, p. 255.
75 Ibid., p. 246.
Sixth, the Indian government during the various environmental negotiations has been primarily concerned with the achievement of two types of goals. First, defensive which includes sovereignty and protection of her vulnerability in environmental negotiations and second assertive that encompasses economic gains and the enhancement of power in the international system. The defensive as well as assertive goals clearly show the overwhelming priority given to economic issues over environmental issues by the Indian government. These defensive and assertive inclinations of the Indian government become clear from the speech of the deputy chairman of the planning commission Montek Singh Ahluwalia on the eve of releasing ‘civil society report on climate change’ on April 3, 2008. He observed that that the national action plan on climate change would focus more on adaptation to climate change than on mitigation. He further argued in favour of adopting different strategies for different countries whereby the developing nations should try to adapt to climate change while the developed nations must mitigate the same. The report further reiterates that cutting of greenhouse gases was not a cost effective way of addressing the issue of climate change. It favours instead the promotion of economic growth to help empower the poor to face new challenges thrown by such environmental hazards.

Seventh, lack of free and open debate on environmental agreements both inside and outside the parliament. This is so because of low priority attached to the issue of environment. A careful look at the debate in Indian Parliament from 1992 to 1999 clearly reveals this. There were only four questions pertaining to climate change/global warming, nine questions on ozone layer and nine questions on biodiversity raised on the floor of Indian Parliament. In sharp contrast, economic agreements or negotiations have traditionally evoked intense debate in the highest law making body of the country. It becomes further evident from the near total lack of domestic debate over the issue of access to and ownership of genetic resources during the biodiversity negotiations, while the same issue generated a nationwide heated debate when it came up for discussion in the Uruguay Round of trade negotiations.

76 Ibid., p. 260.
78 <http://www.indianparliament.nic.in>
Eighth, the emergence of certain significant political developments in the last quarter of the twentieth century has greatly shaped India’s response to environmental issues. It was during this phase that the congress party had lost its mass support base with no other party staking a claim to replace it. The declaration of emergency in 1975 was one of the most significant developments which shook the foundation of Indian democracy, with long-term implications for the Indian polity. Between the late 1980s and the early 1990s as many as four governments were formed in a very short span of four years. The international situation was also tense due to economic crisis/oil crisis during the same period. India was almost on the verge of economic bankruptcy due to her depleted foreign exchange and balance of payment crisis. All these issues forced the then government to divert its attention from environmental issues to other domestic issues arising out of political uncertainty. The economic failure and the balance of payment crisis forced India to adopt New Economic Policies (NEP) which were driven by the market forces and were least concerned with the environmental issues. The government of India had to adopt Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) to improve its fiscal health as advocated by the Bretton Woods institutions. Explaining this state of affair, R. Sudarshan observes, “The environment is now caught in a pincer grip of newly unleashed forces of prosperity, on the one hand and persisting problems of poverty, on the other”.79

The new economic policies adopted by India in the 1990s have adversely impacted the natural environment. Analyzing each of the components of the NEP, Ashish Kothari observes:

1. The drive towards an export-led model of growth was rapidly sacrificing natural resources to earn foreign exchange, as was especially seen in the fisheries and mining sectors;
2. The move towards liberalization had resulted in an atmosphere of a free-for-all, with industries increasingly ignoring environmental standards, and state government sacrificing natural habitats, including their own wildlife protected areas, to make way for commercial enterprises;
3. The directive to reduce government expenditure was resulting in cuts in social and environmental sectors. This was leading to a reduction in programmes for the conservation and regeneration of natural resources;
4. Opening up of the economy was bringing in companies with a notorious track record on environment (including pesticide manufacturers who had almost wound up in their parent

The basic thrust of the NEP was to earn foreign exchange by enhancing the export opportunities particularly in the areas of fisheries and aquaculture, floriculture, cash cropping and mining with little concern for environmental conservation or protection. New legislations had been made and amendments were introduced to the existing one to implement the NEP. For example in 1994, major changes were made in the National Mining Policy and amendments were made in the Mines and Minerals Development Act to facilitate private sector investment including foreign concerns in this area. Critiquing the official Indian policy, Kothari retorts, “forex speaks much more powerfully in its current mindset then does environmental sustainability and human rights.”

In the context of market economy and globalization, Kothari further observes, “The commercial stakes are very high, and competitiveness can be greatly increased by ignoring the costs of environmental conservation and social security measures needed to achieve sustainability in production in these sectors.”

In 1993-94 Budget the government exempted all the new industries being set up in the backward areas from tax for five years. It is, however, ironical that the government applied the narrow definition in terms of economic parameters to designate those areas as backward. These areas, on the other hand, have rich biodiversity and traditional culture. Kothari argues:

> The government is still viewing the relatively non-monetised, non-commercial livelihoods (such as traditional organic farming, small-scale fishing, pastoralism and village industries) as ‘backwards’, and not realising (or not wanting to accept the fact) that these are in fact the most sustainable ways of living on earth, and not thinking of ways to encourage and enhance these livelihoods to meet the challenges of modernity.

In a similar vein, Milion Kothari and Ashish Kothari critique the NEP and SAP which India adopted in the 1990s as per the direction of IMF. They argue that these policies

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81 Ibid., p. 952.
82 Ibid., p. 925.
83 Ibid.
are basically oriented toward opening the doors of domestic market of India to the
global market where economic forces determine the rules of the games with almost no
concerns for the environmental issues. Analysing the impact of these policies on the
natural environment of India, they argue that ‘forex’, ‘liberalization’, ‘privatization’,
‘disinvestments’, etc. have become the new buzzwords of Indian economic and
foreign policies in which environmental issues get totally sidelined. The New
Economic Policies received a further boost with new expansion plans of integrating
the Indian economy with the global market. In a special report on the Tenth Five Year
Plan 2002-2007, the then Indian Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Bihari Vajpayee, declared:

...we have inherited from the past a wide range of controls and restrictions
on entrepreneurial initiatives, which have retarded the emergence of an
investor-friendly climate in the country. We must shed the mind-set of
shortages that had given birth to this regime of pervasive controls, and
create an environment which welcomes entrepreneurship with open
arms.

Fundamentally what transpired out of the above discussion are certain questions
which can broadly be identified as follow:

Why the behavior of Indian state did not change as perceived by the neoliberal
institutionalists? Why international environmental non state actors could not dovetail
with that of the Indian one to build pressure on the Indian government to take
environmental issues seriously? In other words, why the pressure from the above
could not be combined with the pressure from below to change the behavior of Indian
state? Is the answer to be found in the nature of the Indian state only or also in the
nature of the Indian environmentalism too? These questions are taken up in the next
chapter.

84 Milion Kothari and Ashish Kothari, “Structural Adjustment Vs Environment”, Economic and
85 India Economic Road Map: The Next Five Years 2002-2007 the Essence (Planning Commission,
Government of India, New Delhi, 2002).