

Synopsis

Modi's Foreign Policy: Kashmir, Pakistan and Beyond

The basic characteristics of the Modi government's foreign policy since 2014 are largely inherited from previous governments and also distinctive. Certainly, what has been done to Kashmir marks a major turn decisively ending prospects of future improvement in Indo-Pakistan relations and raising tensions to a new high between the two nuclearly armed nations making this region among the most dangerous, in the world. That Kashmir's treatment has not caused as much of an international outcry as it should have is because India along with Japan is part of the US-led (and Western approved) alliance aimed at containing China. Japan--India relations are deepening on the political-military level.

The three dimensions of Indian foreign policy are economic, cultural and geopolitical-military. On the economic front India is accelerating the neoliberal thrust and using its huge home market as a point of leverage with other major powers for political benefits also. Culturally, the government wants a) to ride on the Islamophobia bandwagon; b) use the Indian diasporas in the UK and the US particularly, to help whitewash its domestic sins and encourage policies favourable to it in the West. Geopolitically, apart from containing China and seeking to as much as possible isolate Pakistan, India is deepening its relationship with Israel for military and ideological reasons.

Can India, with possibly other countries in Asia, pursue alternative, more progressive foreign policy perspectives? Some possibilities are discussed. But the key for bringing about progressive change in the foreign policy domain will crucially depend on whether progressive change can take place within India against the Modi regime and what it stands for. That, however, is another story.