



India-Saudi Arabia Relations: Continuity and Change in 21st century

Naveena H A¹ Dr. Bharati Hiremath²

¹PG Scholar, Dept. of International Relations, Maharaja's College, University of Mysore

²Associate Professor, Head and Coordinator, Department of International Relations
Maharaja's College, University of Mysore, Mysuru, India

Abstract:

India's priority in its foreign policy is world peace, stability, security, mutual economic development. India's interest is also to promote international peace and security to maintain just and honourable relations among nations and to forget respect for international law and treaty obligations. The paper aims to focus on the bilateral relations between India and Saudi Arabia, balancing relations of India with West Asia and Saudi Arabia's stands on Kashmir issue.

Key words: Indian foreign policy, Gulf Cooperation Council, International Peace and Security

Introduction:

Foreign policy of any country is subject to the national interest of the country. The demand of a country is complementary to the requirements as well as the Indian foreign Policy of its own independent foreign policy after its freedom in 1947. India pursued non alignment policy in its foreign policy since the independence of 1947. Non alignment means that India follows its own independent foreign policy without joining any group like the USA and USSR after World War II. India adopted its own non- alignment policy along with the third world countries which secured independence by colonialists. However, we find that, India as a great connection with Russia during the cold war period.

In the changing international system India has made several changes in its foreign policy. As the events of the 21st century, the destruction of the USSR and the result of globalization India focused its attention from Russia to West Asia and Southeast Asia. India which was economically prosperous had the need for a petroleum product so India increased relations with West Asian countries to fulfil its interests.

India and Saudi Arabia Relations:

India has historically been involved in West Asian politics through centuries old commercial ties and cultural religious connects with gulf states and through a more recently shared colonial history. Trade and cultural links between ancient India and Arabia date back to third millennia B.C. by 1000 A.D. the trade relations between southern India and Arabian economy. Arab traders held a monopoly over the spice trade between India and Europe until the rise of European imperialist empires.

Since India's independence in 1947 India has maintaining strong ties with Saudi Arabia an important regional power and training have in West Asia on a major visit by King Saud of Saudi Arabia to India in November 1955. Both countries agreed to shape their relationship based on the principles of peaceful coexistence and mutual cooperation.

Saudi-Indian ties is a recent phenomenon for long-time bilateral relations had been built mainly by cold war consideration and Saudi Arabia's intimate ties with Pakistan. Although king Saud visited India in 1955 bilateral ties could not flourish as Saudis sided with the US and India drifted closer to USSR. Since the early 1970's when Pakistan sought to reorient its foreign policy towards the oil rich gulf states after suffering from the trauma of East Pakistan secession, it succeeded in foreign extremely cordial relation with Saudi Arabia and during the Persian Gulf War (1990-91) India officially maintain neutrality. This too would serve to hinder of growth of Saudi-Indian bilateral relations.

After independence and during the cold war period India had greater connection with Russia but after 1990's India and Saudi Arabia has increase their relations. Shift in the foreign policy of India was occurred due to the change in the international system after the collapse of the Union of Soviet socialist Republic. In January 2006 Saudi Arabia's king Abdullah made a special visit to India, becoming the first Saudi monarch in 51 years to do so. The Saudi Arabia King and the Indian Prime minister Manmohan Sign signed an agreement of strategic energy partnership that was called the "Delhi declaration". The pact provided for a increased volume of crude oil supplies to India through long terms contracts. Both countries agreed on joint development of nature gas and oil in the public and private sectors. An India and Saudi Arabia joint declaration in New Delhi described the Saudi king visit.

Since the 1990's India's economic liberalisation has helped increase trade with Saudi. Saudi - Indian bilateral trade in 2002-03 was estimated at \$ 5 billion with Saudi exports being \$ 3.65 billion and India's exports were at one billion US \$. Its products were a major component of Indian exports. Saudi Indian trade during 2001-02 stood at \$ 1290.42million (US) and in 2002-03 at \$ 1445.47million (US) excluding crude oil and petroleum products. Saudi at the moment is the 13th largest market for India exports and a source for 5.5 percent of India's total imports. India is the 4th largest market for Saudi goods. Saudi Arabia imports from India amounted to \$ 7 billion or 2.7% of India's overall exports in 2015. Saudi exports to India amounted to \$ 21.4 billion or 5.5 % of India's overall imports in 2015.

Trade and commerce are one of the strongest pillars of the bilateral relationship. Saudi Arabia is India's fourth largest trade partner after China, US and UAE. It is a major source of India's energy security requirement as it accounts for almost one fifth of India's crude oil requirements. The volume of bilateral trade between both countries during 2016-17 was recorded at \$ 25.079 billion. Private sector Indian investment in Saudi is increasing. Saudi investment in India is also growing between 2000 and 2016 the kingdom invested around \$ 72.02 million.

In 2016 April Prime Minister Narendra Modi visit oil rich Saudi Arabia. As both nations are set their strategic partnership besides exploring ways to enhance security and counter- terror cooperation. Combating threat of terrorism and radicalisation are expected of figure high on the agenda of the talk between India's prime minister and leadership of Saudi Arabia.

The Saudi crown prince Muhammad bin Salman made a visit to India. In February 2019 the main aim of the visit is to improve the historical ties between the two countries. The two sides agreed on increasing trade relations between them also trade and investment, defence and security including counter terrorism and renewable energy will be discussed during the crown prince's meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Saudi Arabia's stands on Kashmir issue:

In the past Saudi Arabia's kingdom supported Pakistan's stance on the Kashmir conflict but Saudi Arabia's position on Kashmir now emphasizes the bilateral process with dialogue with Pakistan on the basis of existing agreements like Shimla and Lahore. It condemned all forms of extremism and made a fervent appeal for peace between India and Pakistan. Recently Indo Asian news agency, New Delhi reported that the joint statement issued during the visit of Saudi Arabia's crown prince Mohammad bin Salman was a very clear recognition of India's position on Jammu and Kashmir and shows a great deal of sensitivity to India's concerns in terrorism. However, this report Saudi Arabia maintaining good relationship with Pakistan. Like how India playing balance game in west Asia as well as Saudi also maintaining balancing policy between India and Pakistan.

India's Balancing Policy with West Asia:

The dynamics of the west Asia have been changing in an unprecedented manner over the past few years those changes pose multiple challenges for India with respect New Delhi's agenda for a stronger co-operation with the west Asia. India is following balance policy in relationship with West Asian countries. Whole Arab world have enemy feeling with Israel but India continuing good relations with the Jewish Israel and other Islamic states. Maintaining a close relationship with the Sunni monarchs of the Arab world without disrupting the relationship with Iran and refraining from getting politically involved in any conflict in the region could be seen as continuity in terms of India's engagement with the Arab nations.

Another major turnover of events in the region was the Qatar crisis which erupted when nine countries including Saudi Arabia, The UAE, Bahrain, Egypt, Libya and Yemen cut off all kind of diplomatic relations with Qatar.

India responding to the Qatar situation Minister of external affairs Sushma Swaraj said that, India does not see its relations in the gulf facing any issues as it was an "internal matter of the Gulf Cooperation Council. Thus, major Arab nations cut their diplomatic ties with Qatar but India maintaining good diplomatic ties with Qatar. India imports ammonia, Urea, Polyethylene, Natural gas from Qatar.

The balancing policy of New Delhi in the region has so far made sure that India sets its priorities to ensure energy security and accelerate economic ties in the region.

Conclusion

India and Saudi Arabia had historical relationship but after 1990s these relations transformed traditional oil trade into investments, health, IT etc. Both the countries building their relationship for the sake of welfare. India needs Hydro Carbon and oil resources from Saudi Arabia for its emerging economy. Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince launched his "vision 2030" which is aimed for economic diversification has laid the basis for wide-ranging reforms in non-oil sectors. That's why Saudi need lot of investments. After 1990s India emerge as a global power, Saudi Arabia was conscious of India's growth and they realized the importance of Indian market. When the both the countries aware of their needs and demand so they built their relationship in twenty first century.

Over the past decade, the India-Saudi relationship has been transformed from a transactional relationship to a strategic partnership. India Saudi Arabia's relation not only widened within traditional areas such as energy, trade and migration but also expanding to other sectors including Investment, Health, Space, IT and ICT. India invested a lot in Saudi's private sector. Saudi's investment in India is also growing in a decade. India and Saudi have also reached a greater understanding in security and defence matters.

India and Saudi Arabia has grown stronger attaining the level of a strategic partnership and incorporating more political and security content. Trade and commerce have long been one of the strongest components of the bilateral relationship. Today Saudi Arabia is India's fourth largest trading partner. Energy has been one of the main pillars of India Saudi relations. The visit of king Abdullah to India in 2006 underlined the importance of Saudi Arabia energy resources to India's fast growing economy. Cooperation in defence and security fields between the two countries is relatively new. Both the countries have recently forged close ties in this area.

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