

Sardar Patel's Vision of the Contemporary World: Ideas on Geopolitical Environment

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Abstract: Sardar Patel was a person of strong character and diligence in varied areas of national interest. His vision and ideas on India's long-term security and the emerging geopolitical environment were both pragmatic and prognostic. His thoughts and approach to India's international challenges were shaped, to a great extent, by the historical setting at that time and also by his role of a nation-builder. He was aware of the 'cold-war' phenomenon and the effect it was having on the geopolitical rivalries between great powers. Patel was a champion of democracy, and was against Communism. This paper seeks to analyse the world-view of Sardar Patel in his time when the geopolitical environment, in the neighbourhood and far, was very influential and instrumental in shaping India's overall foreign policy. In fact, his role in the creation of India's foreign policy was decisive for the consolidation and the very survival of India as a nation. One who follows his writings and his views on international relations would definitely conclude that whenever Nehru, who had a global vision and who cared for the international image, ignored the advice of Patel on global affairs, the entire country had to suffer. In his own words, 'India today is surrounded by all sorts of dangers and it is for the people today to face fearlessly all dangers'.

Keywords: Sardar Patel, Jawaharlal Nehru, Foreign Policy, China, Tibet.

Introduction

History is replete with influential personalities who have contributed in myriad ways in the making of their nation-states. India, while gaining its independence in the 20th century, was also teeming with such dominant personalities. Vallabhbhai Jhaverbhai Patel, better known as Sardar Patel, was one such towering figure in 20th century India. He was one of the most revered personalities who fought for independence and contributed to Indian politics in significant ways post-independence as well. With his sharp political acumen, he played the most crucial role in the integration of around 562 princely states into the Indian Union, barring Jammu and Kashmir, Junagadh and Hyderabad. He was the first Home Minister and Deputy Prime Minister of independent India, and his uncompromising efforts towards consolidation of the country earned him the sobriquet 'Iron Man of India'. He was the key

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force in establishing the Indian Administrative Service and the Indian Police Service as well. On his demise, Girja Shankar Bajpai, Secretary-General, Ministry of External Affairs observed, "We meet today to mourn the loss, and to pay tribute to the memory of a great patriot, a great administrator and a great man. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel was all three, a rare combination in any historic epoch and in any country" (Press Information Bureau, 1950).

Patel, to most readers of history, has been one of the greatest freedom fighters in the Indian national movement whose contribution to the unity of India was indisputable. However, one who follows his writings and his views on international relations, would definitely agree to the fact that he had a pragmatic vision of the global affairs. His ideas on the then geopolitical environment were not only timely, but also realistic as opposed to the quixotic views of Prime Minister Nehru. Nehru was always in the limelight, but at times Sardar Patel gathered more prominence and garnered more support than Nehru did. Even during the freedom struggle, Patel commanded more support in the Congress Party compared to Nehru (Godbole, 2014, p. 1). In his book, D.V. Tahmankar has stated that "in 1929, the provincial Congress committees had voted Gandhi, Patel and Nehru, in that order, for the presidency of the Lahore Congress. Again, in 1946, twelve provincial Congress committees had nominated Patel for the presidency; and only three [had nominated] Nehru. But on both the occasions, Gandhi intervened and made his loyal follower Patel retire" (Tahmankar, as cited in Godbole, 2014, p. 2).

Sardar Patel was not interested in mere visions and ideals. To him, the first pre-requisite was a strong, united and prosperous India. It was only after this was achieved that India could afford to have visions or ideals. This thinking was clearly visible in his ideas and views on the contemporary times, on India's foreign policy and the emerging geopolitical situation in the region. V.P. Menon has quoted Vallabhbhai Patel saying, "It will be folly to ignore realities; facts take their revenge if they are not faced squarely and well" (Patel, as cited in Menon, 1956, p. 494). Very soon Patel was proved right.

Patel's World-view and the then Geopolitical Realm

Ill-informed observers and narrators assume that Patel was an excellent organiser, but not an expert of foreign affairs and, thus, focus on Patel's record in India's domestic sphere only. But a perusal of some of Patel's correspondence shows that he had a very pragmatic approach towards the country's security, and a very cautious approach to foreign policy. Sinha and Roy (2019) state that, in his letters, and in the Cabinet meetings, Patel pointed out, time and again, that in relations with different countries, India should adopt policies that suited its national interests. As a member of the Government, and later as the Deputy PM, he was exposed to discussions on foreign affairs at Cabinet meeting. He presented his well-considered views while dealing with the questions of the Commonwealth, Tibet, China, Korea, Pakistan, Indonesia etc. and they bear the imprint of his far-sightedness and serious understanding of these questions from an unpretentious national perspective.

Patel had a strong world-view. His ideas on India's long-term security and the emerging geopolitical environment were not only sound, but also prophetic in sharp contrast to those of Nehru's idealism. Patel was well aware of the fact that apart from the Hindu-Muslim factor, the geopolitical rivalry between the Western countries, led by the United States and

Britain on one hand and the then Soviet Union and China on the other, was an equally contributory factor towards the partition of India. Nanda (2014) has, in fact, beautifully summed up the views of Patel:

As it was, London always suspected Moscow to be nurturing an ambition for having an access to a warm-water port in the Indian Ocean. Besides, the discovery of oil in the Arab countries and the global economy's increasing dependence on oil made it imperative that Britain, or for that matter the US, must have a strong military presence, whether direct or indirect, in a part of India so as to control and secure the oil production in and oil supply from the Middle East. After all, it was from India that the imperial Britain was mastering the waves east of Suez Canal. An undivided, independent and democratic India would not have played such a role. So Pakistan had to be created out of India at any cost. In fact, in one of his letters to industrialist G D Birla, he had clearly linked the creation of Pakistan to the unhindered access of the Western powers to oil in the Gulf region.

For this reason, Patel wanted the Indian relations be developed beyond UK and USA and he strongly recommended the free India to be part of the Commonwealth maintaining self-respect.

Patel's Ideas on Foreign Policy: Realistic and Tactical

The official correspondence and epistles released by Patel's daughter Manibehn serve as the best source of understanding Patel. The Patel commemorative volumes include some of his public speeches which provide further insight into his personality, and his views on India's foreign policy. Patel's foreign policies were often fundamentally opposed to Nehru's policies. Patel was, in fact, often critical of Nehru's foreign policies.

The Question of Israel: Demystifying the 'Communal'

India's policy towards the West Asia in the late 1940s and early 50s, particularly Israel, can be seen in the light of domestic politics influencing the foreign policy. Patel rightly questioned the legitimacy of India's policy in delaying recognition to the state of Israel only to placate the sentiments of its Muslim citizens (Patel to Nehru, 1950). It subsequently turned out to be a genuine fallacy and Patel advised Nehru to keep religion away from the making of the national policy.

Patel wanted to recognise Israel as a nation. He felt that India has been making delay in recognising Israel because of the fear that that it would cause anger among the Muslims of India. He made no secret of it, and in a letter to Nehru on 28th March 1950, he wrote candidly, "... the delay in the recognition of Israel because of the feelings of our Muslim citizens on this question probably cost us of the goodwill of Israel and countries interested in it. I also pointed out that even some of the Muslim countries had recognised Israel, but we had not out of difference for the views of our Muslim brethren" (Kumar, 1991, p. 19).

The 'delay' and the 'appeasement' continued to be the policy even after the demise of Patel. Brecher had remarked:

The "sudden change of mind" in the spring of 1952 was due to the forceful intervention of Maulana Azad, intimate friend of Nehru.... Until his death in 1958, the Maulana exerted great influence on India's Middle East policy.... *As a Muslim, Azad was naturally pro-Arab.* He was also fearful of the consequences of diplomatic relations with Israel on India's position in the Arab world. An unstated but bitter rivalry

with Pakistan for Arab support on the Kashmir dispute was then at its height..... Azad [and Nehru] was also concerned about the possible impact of a welcoming gesture to Israel on India's large and insecure Muslim minority. Pakistan would probably have fanned the flames of communal hatred in India by reference to Israel....At any rate, Nehru yielded to Azad's advice (as cited in Kumaraswamy, 2010, p. 149).

More than a decade later, Nehru's other biographer, S. Gopal, gave credence to Brecher's assessment. Gopal admitted that Nehru had informed Israel that there were no major objections to normalisation and that Israel would have to wait for the formation of a new Indian government after the elections. But then Gopal adds, "Even then nothing was done. This inaction has been attributed to the influence of Azad" (Brecher, as cited in Gopal, 2014, p. 129). The deafening silence ironically calls for serious introspection into the subject-matter.

Patel's views on the delay in recognising Israel was deemed communal. However, his secular credentials can be gauged from several instances. At least two studies – one by writer-journalist Urvish Kothari highlighting Patel's views on the communal question, and the other by sociologist Prof Ghanshyam Shah on caste and social order – do suggest where he actually stood. It suggests that even though the Sardar may have developed a little attraction towards Hindutva, he was a 'practical' Gandhian, whose governance didn't suggest an iota of antipathy towards any particular community (Counterview, 2013). Kothari gives several instances to prove his point. He writes, "One of the biggest misconceptions about the Sardar is that he was anti-Muslim. During the Bardoli Satyagraha, the British rulers, in an effort to break Hindu-Muslim unity, hired a few Pathans to ensure that at least Muslims pay up a higher land revenue tax, against which the farmers had protested. The Sardar did not let the Hindu-Muslim unity break. He ensured that Muslims became the chief complainants against the Pathans' divisive tactics" (Counterview, 2013). In another instance, Kothari recalls how, during the communal holocaust in the wake of Partition, the Sardar personally reached Amritsar to convince the Sikhs to allow vulnerable Muslim groups to pass by (Counterview, 2013).

Patel's message to Hindus in the Constituent Assembly was:

It is for us who happen to be in a majority to think about what the minorities feel and imagine how we would feel if we were treated in the manner in which they are treated.' And in one of his more important speeches, made on 6 January 1948 at Lucknow, Patel himself said: 'I am a true friend of the Muslims although I have been described as their greatest enemy. I believe in plain speaking. I do not know how to mince words. I want to tell them frankly that mere declarations of loyalty to the Indian Union will not help them at this crucial juncture. They must give practical proof of their declarations (Patel, as cited in Akbar, 1988, p. 494).

H.M. Patel, former finance secretary and union finance minister, has also stated: "He was not a hypocrite to say that secular meant being pro-Muslim.... It is because he refused to be unfair to Hindus in order to win Muslim applause that he has been attacked by some as being communal" (Nandurkar, 1974, pp. 293-98). His stance towards Israel, must, therefore, be gauged from this broader perspective.

The Kashmir Question and Pakistan

With regards to Pakistan, Nehru and Patel's disagreements were further accentuated. Gandhi, himself, was a key player against Patel in this show. He went on an indefinite fast in protest against Patel withholding the payment of Rs 55 crore to Pakistan (Basu, 2014). Patel

had judiciously deferred payment until the issue of Kashmir, and the plight of its Hindu minorities was resolved to the satisfaction of all stakeholders. India was under no obligation to pay the entire sum all at once. However, Gandhi's fastidiousness and his failing health compelled Patel to yield to his demands.

The disagreements with Nehru on the Kashmir issue have not found sufficient attention since Patel had deferred to Nehru's wishes in not interfering in Kashmir (Basu, 2014). Nehru's 'genius' in handling the Kashmir issue allowed the state to maintain an Islamic identity. Nehruvian apologists were quick to tarnish the name of the liberal but Hindu Maharaja Hari Singh, the ruler of Kashmir valley for his alleged procrastination in signing the instrument of accession to India (Basu, 2014). However, nothing could be further from the truth. For it was Nehru's precondition that the Maharaja could accede to India only by first transferring power to Sheikh Abdullah, a man, who by no stretch of imagination represented Hindu or Sikh populations, and even among Muslims of the entire valley it was doubtful if his popularity exceeded that of the Maharaja, even in the highly vitiated and communalized atmosphere to which Abdullah's demagoguery had contributed in no small measure (Singh, 2011, p. 242). However, for Nehru, as Harbans Singh states, "*Sheikh Abdullah was the key to first exposing the fallacy of the two nation theory and then establishing the secular credentials of new India*" (Singh, 2011, p. 242).

Nehru was also guilty of taking the Kashmir issue to the UN and internationalizing it only for the sake of enhancing his personal esteem in Western eyes. Moreover, the promise of a plebiscite was also entirely unwarranted. Again, it was left to Patel to save the day. General Sam Manekshaw, who was a colonel during the first Indo-Pak war of 1948, was privy to how Nehru was seized with indecision until an infuriated Patel himself passed the order to carry Indian troops through air which prevented the fall of Srinagar and redeemed the situation (Jha, 1996). Later, Patel confessed to Baxi Ghulam Mohammad that he was unable to resolve the Kashmir problem since he did not enjoy Nehru's confidence (Chopra, 2002, p. 274).

China Proved Patel Right: The Question of Tibet

Sardar Patel and Jawaharlal Nehru differed on their perspectives on China and Tibet affairs as well. Jawaharlal Nehru, in order to realise his dream of Asian unity, was always in favour of appeasing China. And that is why immediately after Indian independence, he legitimized Chinese 'sovereignty' over Tibet in 1954 (Nanda, 2014). Little did he know that as Tibet's boundary with India was never a settled issue, China was bound to exploit the flaw. But this was very well realised by Patel. He envisaged that China's possession of Tibet in future could put India into a perilous position. Unlike the British policy of imperialism, Sardar was not interested in colonising Tibet because imperialism was never a characteristic feature of the Indian civilisation. Nonetheless, it was important to take precautions against China's future plans. Sardar had sent messages to Jawaharlal about China's possible intrusions but Jawaharlal had different views over the matter. He believed that China would never adopt the policy of expansion and that China would always remain a friendly neighbour to India because together they could give a strong fight to the western countries. The government of China had already sent official messages to the newly formed government of India that it would take peaceful measures to release Tibet. Nehru thought just as India had become free from the British rule

in the same way; China would release Tibet because it had suffered enough under British administration. While Patel took this as a warning, Nehru took it as a friendly move.

Keeping this in mind, on November 7, 1950, Patel wrote a letter to Nehru pointing out how the Chinese troops' entry into Tibet earlier that year resulted in a situation that "for the first time, after centuries, India's defence has to concentrate itself on two fronts simultaneously" (Patel's letter to Nehru, 1950)¹. Patel had suggested, "we have to consider what new situation now faces us as a result of the disappearance of Tibet as we know it, and the expansion of China up to our gates" (Ibid). Continuing in this prophetic vein, he had noted:

Chinese irredentism and communist imperialism are different from the imperialism of the Western powers. The former has a cloak of ideology which makes it 10 times more dangerous. In the guise of ideological expansion lie concealed racial, national and historical claims... While our western and north-western threats to security are still as prominent as before, a new threat has developed from the north and north-east. Thus, for the first time, after centuries, India's defence has to concentrate itself on two fronts simultaneously. Our defence measures have so far been based on the calculations of superiority over Pakistan (Ibid).

Sardar Patel could not have been more clinically precise and more right as quite by coincidence, the same day as Sardar Patel wrote to Prime Minister Nehru on Tibet, the Tibetan Government appealed to the United Nations for its intervention through a letter to the Secretary General on November 7, 1950 as follows:

Though there is a little hope that a nation dedicated to peace will be able to resist the brutal effort of men trained to war, we understand that the United Nations has decided to stop aggression wherever it happens (Mehrotra, 2000, p. 23).

India sanctified the Chinese military occupation of Tibet by accepting it as a region of China in the 1954 Sino-Indian Agreement on trade with Tibet. As that Agreement enunciated the principles of Peaceful Co-existence, the Panchsheel, Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar, said in the Rajya Sabha:

Our Prime Minister is depending on the Panchsheel which has been adopted by Comrade Mao and the Panchsheel which is one of the clauses in the No-Aggression treaty on Tibet. I am indeed surprised that our Hon'ble Prime Minister is taking this Panchsheel seriously. Hon'ble Members of the House, you must be knowing that Panchsheel is one of the significant parts of the Buddha Dharma. If Shri Mao had even an iota of faith in Panchsheel, he would have treated the Buddhists in his country in a different manner (Ambedkar, as cited in Mehrotra, 2000, p. 25).

Dr. Ambedkar then warned the Prime Minister in no uncertain terms:

.....Prime Minister will realise the truth in my words when the situation matures further. I don't really know what is going to happen. By letting China take control over Lhasa (Tibet's capital) the Prime Minister has in a way helped the Chinese to bring their armies on the Indian borders. Any victor who annexes Kashmir can directly reach Pathankot, and I know it for sure that he can reach the Prime Minister's house also (Ibid).

Thus, Patel's assessment was acknowledged by others as well. It is understood that Patel had made up his mind to oppose Nehru's foreign policy in a Cabinet-meeting scheduled to be held on November 21, 1950. According to Manibehn, he had the support of Rajagopalachari

and K M Munshi (cabinet colleagues) and that he 'expected support' from other colleagues such as Baldev Singh, Jagjivan Ram and Sri Prakasa, 'in the event of a showdown in cabinet with Nehru's China policy'. Unfortunately, Patel could not attend the scheduled meeting. Had he attended the meeting, India's military humiliation in the hands of China in 1962 may have been averted.

He was also perturbed by the approach of Nehru towards the Chinese and was deeply anguished in India being unable to defend the right of the Tibetan people who had reposed 'faith in us, who chose to be guided by us' but who became victims to Chinese 'perfidy'. He said:

The Chinese Government has tried to delude us by professions of peaceful intention. My own feeling is that at a crucial period they managed to instill into our Ambassador a false sense of confidence in their so-called desire to settle the Tibetan problem by peaceful means. There can be no doubt that during the period covered by this correspondence the Chinese must have been concentrating for an onslaught on Tibet. The final action of the Chinese, in my judgement, is little short of perfidy (Patel's Letter to Nehru, 1950).

Patel presciently warned Nehru that 'while we regard the Chinese as friends, they do not regard us as their friends' (Patel's Letter to Nehru, 1950). Nehru, taking a different approach, confidently predicted that such a situation was 'unlikely' in the 'foreseeable future'. Nehru ruled out any such intention on Chinese part. Moreover, he rejected Patel's advice of modernizing the army and making adequate security provisions since it would "cast an intolerable burden on us, economic or otherwise and it would weaken our general defence position" (PM Nehru's note, as cited in Krishna, 2015, pp. 230-34).

V.N. Gadgil concurred with Patel's view on China when the Cabinet met to discuss the issues related to China and argued that there is always a lurking danger of China taking away Tibet and moving ahead to acquire the north east regions of India. Sardar Patel knew that the weak spots, from the point of view of communication, i.e. Nepal, Bhutan, and Sikkim presented an unlimited scope for infiltration. He was sure that the Chinese would not miss any opportunity of exploiting these weak spots, partly in support of their ideology and partly in support of their ambitions. He sounded an alarm by saying, "Any faltering or lack of decisiveness in formulating the objectives or in pursuing the policies to attain those objectives is bound to, as he felt, weaken us and increase the threats which are so evident" (Patel's Letter to Nehru, 1950). The looming threat to internal security was also brought out when he suggested that the Communist Party of India would now have a comparatively easy means of access to Chinese communists and through them to other foreign communists.

Had Patel been the decision-maker, he would have adopted the policies which would have safeguarded India's security interests. He would also not have pursued the advocacy of China's entry into the UN as doggedly as Nehru did. In fact, on the question of Chinese entry into U.N.O., Patel said: "In view of the rebuff which China has given us and the method which it has followed in the dealing with Tibet, I am doubtful whether we can advocate its claims any longer. There would probably be a threat in the U.N.O. virtually to outlaw China, in view of its active participation in the Korean War. We must determine our attitude on this question also" (Patel, as cited in Godbole, 2014, p. 50). The 1962 conflict made it amply clear that Nehru was living in his own make-believe world so far as China was concerned and that

his method of cultivating friendship with China as the best way of moderating the Chinese thinking proved of little or, in fact, no avail. Patel's prophecy proved to be true and had Nehru seriously considered the suggestion of Patel to explore the possibility of declaring Tibet an independent state to checkmate Chinese designs, the geography and geopolitics of Asia would have been different today.

Patel's Ideas on the Commonwealth, USA and Korea

Patel's views on other matters relating to the Commonwealth, the USA, Korea and even Nepal were also significant. While on the one hand, Nehru wanted to cleave all the ties with the Commonwealth, Patel was keen on having a strong association with Commonwealth with the caution that India's status as Sovereign Republic must not be affected (Desai, 2018). It was to his credit, ultimately, that he persuaded Nehru, who was opposed to the idea, to agree to be a member of the Commonwealth (Chopra, 1995, vii). Though Patel's stint as the Deputy PM and Home Minister was short-lived, one can suggest that the growing differences between Nehru and Patel in foreign affairs would have brought Patel in clear alignment with the West against Nehru's non-alignment. He, as part of his general attitude to Communism, dismissed the USSR and leaned more towards the USA. Showing the necessity of a marked shift in policy towards the USA, he wrote on 6th May, 1948:

The USA holds the key to the international situation today. We ourselves have to depend upon the USA probably more than on the UK. Without the USA's support in men, money and machinery, I am very doubtful, notwithstanding Asaf Ali's (India's Ambassador at Washington) views to the contrary, whether we shall ever succeed in our industrial policy and it is on that policy that so much of the future of this country depends. For some years, therefore, whether we like it or not, we have to depend on the USA for our progress (Patel, as cited in Kumar, 1991, p. 19).

His faith in the USA again came through the speech he made at Ahmedabad in November, 1950: "Many people say that we should not take the help of America because we will lose our prestige and we will be blamed for joining one bloc. We are not so ignorant as not to realise our own position and interest" (Ibid).

Patel's views regarding the developments in Korea were in total sync with the views of Nehru. In a letter to Nehru on 3rd July, 1950 he wrote:

I feel that we need not have reiterated our foreign policy. Such reiteration implies that this step could be construed as a departure from that policy and we were being apologetic or on the defensive about it. After all, the step which we have taken fits in with our policy of supporting the UNO and invoking the various remedies mentioned in the charter against aggression (Ibid).

Patel was, at the same time, eager to see India's relations with the neighbouring countries being strengthened. After a meeting with the Ambassador of Nepal on 1st December 1950, he wrote:

... I told them that they had to come to important decisions in the light of the delicate international situation prevailing in the world today. The situation was such that neither they nor we could afford to have instability and insecurity in Nepal. There was no doubt that in Nepal's difficulties it was India and no other power which could assist it. Britain's role in Asia or South Asia is no longer decisive...None of us desired to encroach on Nepal's independence; indeed, it was everybody's concern here to preserve it.

It was therefore in our mutual interests to see that the present difficulties were settled to our mutual satisfaction and advantage (Vijay, 2015).

He further said:

....There was no point in suggesting or achieving a solution which would leave a trail of bitterness behind. That would be no lasting situation...in Nepal -there was every advantage in being liberal rather than niggardly and in doing things with a good grace... (Ibid).

Patel was, thus, realistic in his approach towards foreign affairs. He wanted to make newer friends in consonance with the exigencies. He was well aware of the cold-war situation but even then, he did not shy away from siding with the USA as was the need of the hour. Sardar Patel was also a great supporter of the African unity and wanted India to forge strong ties with African nations. After examining his views on different international issues, it can be said that Patel had a pragmatic world view encapsulating the geopolitical changes that were taking place in those days. He concerned himself almost exclusively with those aspects of foreign relations, and those countries of the world, which concerned the security of India, or threatened it or could threaten it. Patel's interest and his association in India's foreign politics were born and conditioned entirely by the geopolitical considerations of India's security. He fully weighed the national interest in his stands on foreign policy matters such as, when he favoured the Commonwealth membership, opposed China's intervention in Tibet and supported UNO's recommendation regarding Korea. His recommendation to maintain friendly relations with the neighbouring countries and also with Indonesia and Israel etc. were also inspired by the most practical consideration of national interest. He never concealed his conviction that India's position as a world power would be recognised by all when she was able to defend her external security.

Conclusion

Talking of Indian perception of the world beyond its borders, K.M. Panikkar contended that India has, throughout history, had trouble arousing much interest in the world beyond its borders. Contrasting Indian heedlessness beyond its borders with British attentiveness to developments all around India during the Raj, he once remarked: "They carefully studied the conditions across the borders, developed a large body of experts who studied the geography, language, political conditions, and economic structure of the areas which bordered on India or which were considered to be of vital importance to the defense of India" (Malone, 2011, p. 1). Even after independence, Nehru echoed the same feelings but remained blind to the developments around Indian borders. In the Nehru era of 'misguided trust' over China, Sardar Patel was a bold exception. He was very articulate in summing up the geopolitical environment of the day.

Sardar Patel, a pioneer in Indian history, played a very significant role during British colonial rule and especially between the critical periods of transition from 1947 to 1950. R.K. Murthi rightly states that Nehru could have not been able to redefine India's future without the support of Sardar Patel (Murthi, 1976, p. 136). Patel's speeches and his work during the

freedom movement and after the Independence as the Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister reflect the coordination between speech and action.

The Nehru coterie has largely been engaged in creating Patel's image as if he was against Nehru and knew little about the international affairs, whereas the fact was otherwise. He did give his judgement on the future actions of China. Patel was proven right after 12 years when China attacked India after grabbing Tibet. He preferred to "create history rather than wasting time writing it" (Patel, as cited in Desai, 2016).

India's foreign policies were never synced under Nehru. Nehru was of the opinion that Pakistan was the only imminent threat to India's security and that China's aggressions could be curtailed by friendship. Nehru's policies, unlike Patel's, based more on idealism than reality was, however, immune to China's foreign policy completely based on deception and guile to hide its ambitions of expansionism behind the charm of pacifism.

Patel provided critical suggestions to Nehru in the making of the foreign policy. Sardar Patel, a better judge of geopolitics; was strongly against communist China. He knew that in the long run it would be the Chinese who would present the major threat to India and not Pakistan. Hence, he never approved of Nehru's legitimization of China's sovereignty over Tibet. Patel also did not favour Nehru's endorsement of the 'One China policy' and over a Permanent Seat at the UNSC to China. Influenced by the Chanakya school of thought, he was against internationalising Kashmir by taking it to the UN.

PM Nehru's belief in Pan Asian Unity and Anti-imperialism and his ignorance of Sardar Patel's warnings came back to haunt him in the years leading up to 1962. The 1962 War shaped the world order in many ways. It shaped China's destiny as the dominant power in South and Southeast Asia. The Indo-China conflict was a geopolitical cornerstone in South Asia as well as the larger Asia-Pacific. PM Nehru's delusion about China's pacifism has, thus, resulted in a complete encirclement of India.

Finally, in the era of internet transmission, arguments and counter-arguments over matters with no common opinion presents some sort of intellectual churning which ultimately culminates into 're-imagining' of the whole idea. Current debates among the analysts of India's foreign policy and particularly on Sardar Patel's world-view are constant and exciting and present 're-imagining' of the same kind. In the current scenario, when India and China face each other over Doklam and other issues, Patel's ideas and his views on foreign policy becomes all the more relevant. The centrality of national interest in making relations with other countries, i.e. the making of foreign policy is, thus, one of the parts of his legacy. India faces numerous contemporary security challenges today of which few can certainly be attributed to the historical mistakes committed soon after the independence. Patel's writings and correspondence are living proof to those mistakes which could have been averted had his suggestions been given serious consideration.

Note

1. *Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's letter to Jawaharlal Nehru on 7 November 1950 not only deploring Indian Ambassador KM Panikkar's action but also warning about dangers from China.* Retrieved from <http://www.friendsoftibet.org/main/sardar.html>

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