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WRITTEN BY ADMINISTRATOR | 05 SEPTEMBER 2011

Atlas Corps Fellow and Founder
We Care

Describe the impact on foreign policy you have made in your current/past jobs.

While I was working with United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Regional Office for South Asia, New Delhi, I assisted the Office in pursuing its mandate of assisting the governments of the South Asian countries – Nepal, India, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Maldives – on issues of drugs (prevention, intervention and trafficking), HIV and AIDS; anti-human trafficking and anti-corruption. In the capacity of the Communications and Advocacy Officer, I assisted the team in establishing dialogues with the concerned government. I also helped mobilize support from the civil society, media, and the public at large so that these issues are brought into the conversation on India's Foreign Policy.

What is your vision of foreign policy in the 21st Century?

On a global level, my vision is that all countries should give utmost prominence to health as a foreign policy. In the Indian context, influence good governance in countries that India has historical strategic relations like Afghanistan, Central Asia, Myanmar, Sri Lanka. Increase strategic and international assistance to weaker countries for better governance. Also, deepen democracy within its borders and espouse the same cause in other countries.

What is the greatest foreign policy issue facing our generation?

At the global level, mistrust among countries; failure of Islamic countries; loss of faith between Islamic countries and the West and the increasing conflict between them. In the Indian context, the greatest foreign policy issue is the increasingly hostile attitude and destabilized governance of neighbours such as Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, barring Bhutan. The other foreign policy facing us is co-existence with China's supremacy while avoiding the political conflict.

What challenges need to be overcome to create better foreign policy?

The lack of leadership and statesmanship.

What personal, managerial, and leadership skills and traits must the next generation of foreign policy leaders possess?

A high level of integrity, transparency and conviction; an ability to follow the principle of simple living and high thinking – which is deeply engrained in Indian philosophy – to see the world as one family (vasudhev kutumbakam) so as to work towards important issues of conflict resolution and peace building on the spirit of cooperation for the greater good of humanity.

How can foreign affairs be made more accessible to Americans, particularly younger generations?

In my experience, foreign policy needs to be made more relevant to younger Americans for it to be accessible. As an Atlas Corps Fellow in the United States, I witnessed first-hand how younger Americans may not have immediately translated perceived "international" issues as valuable to domestic policy. This concept was most evident when I presented at a human trafficking conference in Nebraska. There I was, in America's heartland providing an Indian perspective on human trafficking, a perspective that is relative in all parts of the world. It was amazing how such dialogue facilitated immediate accessibility.

Which living or dead foreign policy practitioner do you look up to the most?

The foreign policy practitioner I admire most is India's first Prime Minister, Jawahar Lal Nehru. Considered to be the architect of modern India and the longest serving Prime Minister, Nehru was instrumental in shaping India's international profile after independence was won from British colonialism. He framed and guided India's foreign policies on the principles of non-violence and -war, peaceful alliances, goodwill, and honesty. Also, his policy of having an independent identity for India, bereft of any commitment to either US or Soviet – both the forces were competing to make India an ally throughout the Cold War – led to the formation of the Non-Alignment Movement (NAM) along with Tito, Nasser Soekarno, U Nu and Nkrumah. He is considered to be the greatest statesman of the post World War II years.

Which living or dead foreign policy practitioner do you think has missed the mark and why?

Unfortunately despite all the promises and upsurge of leadership, US President Barrack Obama has missed the mark on a number

of global issues and caused foreign policy blunders, especially in the context of countries such as China, North Korea, Libya, Iran, and Pakistan, among others. The US's relationship with China and the attempt to open up Chinese markets to ease the billion dollars trade deficit has reached a dead end. On the other hand, North Korea refuses to come to negotiation talks and is unapologetic about its missile shoots on South Korea.

Regarding Libyan crises, President Obama should have continued pressure tactics rather than sending troops immediately, and averted the hundreds of civilian casualties. Also, in the absence of a clear policy on Iran, it continues to build its nuclear arsenal, while the US fails to break ice with the Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Iran continues to increase its nuclear programmes and poses a serious threat to dialogues of peace in the region.

Further, the decision to move out of troops from Iraq and Afghanistan while the situation is fragile and remains a challenge, and may invalidate the progress on terror that has been made so far.

If you could change a critical decision in history to affect foreign policy, what would it be?

I would definitely like to change the US's decision to make war in Iraq, especially Operation Iraqi Freedom. Besides thousands of casualties and exploitation of human rights, the war on Iraq laid down the foundation for the present difficulties and conflicts that grips the Middle East. To quote Al Gore, "Iraq was the single worst strategic mistake in American history."

Another one, India's post-independent foreign policy on China and Kashmir and its involvement in the creation of Bangladesh.