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## UNIT 4 DECISION MAKING INSTITUTIONS

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### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

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India has chosen to follow parliamentary democracy wherein elected representatives form the government. In this system, government is continuously responsible and answerable to the elected representatives of the people. The government, while making foreign policy, has to be considerate of people's will. Let us see and try to understand how Indian parliamentary government faces the task of making foreign policy.

Traditionally, foreign policy-making in European countries was the concern of concerned foreign office and the minister-in-charge. Secrecy was the motto of foreign policy-making. Neither the public opinion was allowed to be formulated nor even national parliaments normally debated foreign policies. But, in a parliamentary democracy as in India decision-making in foreign policy is highly diffused. It is difficult to decide as to who makes a policy decision, and at what level was it decided. Thus, it is necessary for us to know foreign policy decision-making process. When we use the term 'process' it can suggest that decision-making is a smooth flow amongst the predetermined participants. But often, foreign policy-making is a zigzag process. All participants do not necessarily participate in all decision-making. Yet it is accurate to say that foreign policy in India, broadly speaking, is finalised by the Council of Ministers headed by the Prime Minister.

Cabinet is the inner circle of the Council of Ministers. But even Cabinet is too large a body to take all policy decisions. The Cabinet has a sub-committee called Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS), which decides most of the issues affecting vital foreign policy and national security issues. Thus within the government it is this CCS that gives final shape to foreign policy and security related issues. Prime Minister Vajpayee said in the context of India offering to cooperate with the United States (US) in its fight against international terrorism after 11 September 2001 that in policy-making "debates and discussions do take place as they meet. But once we take a position every one falls in line."

It is now agreed that foreign policy is a synthesis of the ends and means of nation-states. Here ends are national interest and means is power. Thus, the interaction between national goals and its resources to be able to synthesise the ends and means is the task of foreign policy-makers, while the simplest way to define foreign policy is: "The way a country handles the outside world". A more scientific definition is given by Modelski. He says, "... activities evolved by communities

for changing the behaviour of other states and for adjusting their own activities to the international environment.” Here, one may rather use the term ‘regulating’ the behaviour of other states (rather than ‘changing’) so as to serve one’s national interest. But, the essence is always protection and promotion of one’s own national policy. Power is the means, without which effective foreign policy cannot be formulated.

In India the political leadership gives final shape to its foreign policy, but it is largely the outcome of inputs from various institutions in the government, the most important instrument being the Ministry of External Affairs. In this Unit you will learn about various organs and agencies of the government, with the Prime Minister at the top, who plays different roles in foreign policy decision-making in India.

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## **4.2 FOREIGN POLICY-MAKING AND THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (MEA)**

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Foreign policy making is a highly complex and complicated process. In a domestic policy issue, for instance, like checking the increase in the price of a commodity say onion or potato, one can easily decide the options like buying it from abroad or control its price. But foreign policy requires expert knowledge and its application. The simple reason is that since foreign policy is in relation to another state or states, their behaviour is not under the control of India. The Indian policy makers can only make an intelligent guess about the likely behaviour of another state in a particular case.

Thus, should India initiate a dialogue with Pakistan now having steadfastly stated that for negotiations to be fruitful, Pakistan needs to demonstrate its seriousness in checking cross border terrorism? Is the gamble going to pay off dividends? Is the PM right in saying that this will be his final effort or he will retire if he did not succeed? Will that kind of statement influence decision-making in Islamabad? What if the Pakistani decision makers calculate to wait for one more year till the next elections in India, hoping that a Congress government might come to power and offer better terms to Pakistan? One can never get a firm answer to these questions.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) is the ministry in the government that is expected to provide intelligent, accurate answers to the questions above as it is supposed to be the storehouse of expert knowledge on foreign affairs. The Minister of External Affairs (sometimes called Foreign Minister) is the head of the MEA. He is the political appointee, member of the Cabinet, not necessarily an expert in foreign affairs decision-making. But, all policy and decisions recommended by the experts in the Ministry are cleared, or modified, by the Minister before their implementation. Several policy decisions cleared by the Minister require final approval of the Cabinet.

The Indian Foreign Service (IFS) officials, selected through the competitive examinations conducted by the Union Public Service Commission, primarily man the MEA. The Foreign Secretary is a very senior and experienced IFS officer, and the permanent head of the Ministry. He is an important adviser to the Foreign Minister. There are two other senior officials to assist the Foreign Secretary known as Foreign Secretary (West), and Foreign Secretary (East).

These officials normally are very senior persons chosen to head the work in MEA. There are three additional secretaries to assist Foreign Secretary. The work of MEA is divided into 24

divisions. A joint secretary heads each division. There are 12 territorial divisions, dealing with a group of countries belonging to a limited region like Canada and America, Latin American and Caribbean countries, Gulf, East Asia etc. There are eleven functional divisions like Protocol, External Publicity, Historical, Policy Planning, and the UN etc. There is one administrative division, which does a kind of house keeping work of the MEA itself.

It is necessary for you to be familiar with the work of some of the significant divisions from the viewpoint of decision-making. In the beginning there was no policy planning or any division to think ahead of times and plan to meet any contingencies or conduct research. There was only the Historical Division. It was providing information necessary to the territorial divisions as and when they needed it. But the need to establish a planning and research division was felt after the experience of the Chinese attack in October 1962. When the Chinese attack took place, the MEA did not have much information to support India's claim for territory over which China had raised the dispute.

Then in 1963 East Asia Research and Coordination Division was established. From its very name it is obvious that its jurisdiction was limited to China. However, in 1965 a broad based planning and research division known as Current Research Division was created. In 1966 it was renamed as Policy Planning and Review Division with a Policy Planning and Review Committee. But it was actually used by Mrs. Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi to dump those who could not be accommodated elsewhere. At present there is a Policy Planning and Research Division in the MEA. While the purpose is to have some talented officials to do planning and forecasting, the division is used to place an official till he can get a regular posting.

The IFS officials are sent abroad to man the Embassies in different foreign capitals. Besides other functions, the embassies actually act as the official centres for collecting information on developments in the foreign countries. They gather information that may not be openly available in the country. The information collection has also become a specialised job. A person trained as a professional diplomat is not necessarily suitable for collecting information say on military developments or agriculture. Thus within the embassies you will find officials like Agriculture Attaché or Military Attaché who perform specialised job of collecting information in their respective areas like agricultural progress or military development in the country where the embassy is located. In powerful countries like the US or UK one will also find such attache's in other fields like industry, education, science and technology etc., depending upon the needs of India and the known importance of a country where such an embassy is located.

In addition to the information collected by the embassies openly by the diplomatic personnel, states also depend on vital information collected secretly by the representatives of the state. Such information is called 'Intelligence.' Intelligence is very crucial for policy-making. Often we read in the newspapers that informed public or even policy-makers attribute a failure in policy making to intelligence failure. For instance, the Pakistani soldiers were said to have occupied Kargil peaks long before it came to light only on 6 May 1999. It was then attributed as a failure of intelligence.

To gather foreign intelligence there is a special agency called Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) of the Cabinet Secretariat. It is India's equivalent of Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in the US. The Intelligence Bureau (IB) gathers internal intelligence. Whenever, the policy makers blame intelligence, the intelligence officials tend to feel that they are blamed for the failure of the policy

makers and they are unable to defend themselves. Intelligence officials, as a result, tend to present *all* intelligence gathered rather than providing intelligence after proper analysis. This trend defeats the very purpose of having separate intelligence agencies.

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### 4.3 NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

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The Indian foreign/national security policy-making generally suffers from two main drawbacks. One, it is highly *ad hoc* and second, it lacks effective policy coordination. Dinesh Singh, who was the Minister of External Affairs under Mrs. Gandhi, said that during his tenure much of the foreign policy involved responding to others rather than determining proactively the Indian policy. For this, the reasons are not far to seek. PMs particularly Nehru, Mrs. Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi thought they had answers to every crisis. However, a Minister can never be an expert like the trained foreign service officers. He must give enough weightage to the views expressed by the Ministry officials.

Prime Minister Nehru was a towering personality and during his lifetime he decided national security himself alone; at the most, some times he consulted one or the other confidants on a specific issue. He did not appoint a full time Foreign Minister. Thus for instance in the 1950s he relied on Krishna Menon who was for some time Minister for Defence in his cabinet. Mrs. Gandhi consulted, when she thought it necessary, a few of her trusted men in the government.

There has been always, from the beginning, some suggestions for an organised system of foreign/national security policy making. K. P. Mishra and K. Subrahmanyam were among the earliest to suggest the settingup of a National Security Council. K. P. Mishra mentioned about the need for Expert Advisory Committee and also a need for Policy Planning. But Subrahmanyam had stressed on creating a policy formulating secretariat rather than policy discussing council. This was mainly because the Cabinet system provides for collective policy-making. Then existing Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs (CCPA) was considered as a counterpart of the National Security Council (NSC) in the US—as a deliberative body.

But J. Bandopadhyaya in his *Making of India's foreign Policy* pleaded for the creation of a Foreign Policy Council on the American model. But whenever we speak in favour of a NSC for India, we are aware of the fact that ours is a plural executive and already there exists a collective decision-making mechanism. However, the experience shows that, the Prime Ministers, if they so choose, may not hold the meetings of the CCPA.

After 1991, then PM Narasimha Rao faced internal challenge to his leadership from Arjun Singh who was then the Human Resources Minister. After 1993, Narasimha Rao did not call any meetings of the CCPA, as he did not wish to have Arjun Singh in it. Thus there was no institutional and organised discussion during the term of Narasimha Rao. Therefore NSC had to be legislated by an act of the Parliament instead of being created by an executive order.

As a result of public demand, practically all the political parties were in favour of India establishing a National Security Council for policy-making. Finally the Vajpayee government, in 1998, established it. The National Security Council (NSC) consists of the PM as the chairman and ministers for External Affairs, Defence, Home, Finance and Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission as its members. It includes several experts like the Scientific Adviser to the Defence

Minister, nominated experts in the field of defence and security strategists, several retired foreign service officers, academics, senior bureaucrats and service chiefs.

However, ministers are busy politicians who will not have sufficient time to think in advance regarding problems, which could arise in the security decision-making. Thus there is a Strategic Core Group. This group consists of three service chiefs, Secretaries of principal departments represented in the NSC, and the Chiefs of Intelligence Bureau and RAW.

The NSC needs secretariat to be effective but the government has provided the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) to double up as the secretariat of the NSC. Finally, for a NSC to be successful, it needs an official who, in consultation with the PM, would coordinate all inputs in the policy making. The present scheme provides for the Principal Secretary of the PM to act as the National Security Adviser. The scheme also provides for a National Security Advisory Board (NSAB). This Board when set up in 1998 included 27 members. Its members include academics, journalists, defence analysts and key public figures. Among those who constituted the Board were eminent people like K. Subrahmanyam, J.N. Dixit, and many other prominent figures. While National Security Council is headed by Brajesh Mishra, Prime Minister's Principal Secretary and National Security Advisor, the National Security Advisory Board was headed by K. Subrahmanyam. The first task assigned to the NSAB was to prepare a draft nuclear doctrine. This task was completed when the details of nuclear doctrine were announced in August 1999.

The NSC thus created appears to be reluctantly created and sparingly used by the government. Some of its limitations can be mentioned here. First, it is not regularly used in decision-making. After it was created, for the first time it met to consider the Kargil crisis on 8 June 1999 almost one month after the crisis broke out. After Kargil many foreign policy crises have occurred, like, the crisis in Fiji Islands where a Prime minister of the Indian origin was dethroned by a military coup or the continued ethnic crisis in Sri Lanka where the Sri Lankan government tried to seek a military solution to the problem. But it was the CCS, which considered the crisis. Another occasion when the NSC was convened is to consider post-Kashmir election scenario in J & K after the election in October 2002.

Some times the explanation offered for not using the NSC is very strange. Often the justification given for not convening the NSC is that it is only an advisory body. The crucial decision on the national security is taken in the CCS, which is a cabinet subcommittee.

If the contention that NSC itself is an advisory body, then the question is: Why create a National Security Advisory Board? Incidentally, NSAB has government appointed, mostly retired officials, who were in the Union Government and are residents in New Delhi. The Kargil Committee appointed to study as to what went wrong in the Kargil crisis and suggest ways to improve the decision-making suggested that the work of the NSC must be streamlined.

Second, the NSC has to be created by the law of Parliament and not by the executive order on the ground that the NSC must have a reasonable guarantee of survivability. Because the Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs which met to decide on foreign and national security policy as stated earlier never met since 1993 during the tenure of Narasimha Rao for three years as Rao did not wish to have Arjun Singh, then Human Resources Minister attend it. Of course, even if NSC is legally established, it may still be not summoned to meet if a PM is determined not to hold



its meeting. But in such situations at least those who are affected by the PM's approach could create public opinion against it.

Third, for the NSC to be a successful mechanism in policy making, it has to have an independent secretariat. The Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) cannot perform that function. One thing is that the national security policy is not merely a co-ordinated intelligence. It is much more than that. As it is, past chairmen say that in the JIC meetings, directors of various intelligence agencies do not wish to share raw intelligence data possessed by them. They desire to share it with only the highest policy-makers. In such a situation, it will not be able to coordinate national security policy where inputs from other ministries like Defence, External Affairs, Home etc., needed to be coordinated.

Fourth, the NSC needs a full-time National Security Adviser or call him director or by whatever name. The Principal Secretary to PM is itself a full time job. As the former PM, Inder Kumar Gujral said "the Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister is always overloaded" with work that he will have no time left to devote to think in terms of coordinated, holistic manner on the issue of national security. The Kargil Committee had also recommended the appointment of an independent National Security Adviser.

Fifth, the NSAB is filled with mostly retired Foreign Service and military officials that too based in New Delhi. National security has however, a regional angle as well. Members based in New Delhi will not be able to understand the regional sensitivities in a policy, affecting the people of a region. For instance, if the NSAB is discussing about India's policy on ethnic crisis in Sri Lanka, it is better that someone represent the regional sensibilities in the discussion. Even if a person belonged to the region if he has been a resident of Delhi, he would be a poor second choice to air his views on the crisis.

The problem with any innovative suggestion in the revitalising of the NSC is that the existing bureaucracy is unable to accept any dilution of their individual powers.

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## **4.4 PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE**

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It is well known that parliamentary government became cabinet government and gradually after the Second World War, it has increasingly become Prime Ministerial government. Since then PM has become very important in all the decision- making processes. Thus, Prime Minister's Office (PMO) plays a major role in policy formulation including foreign policy decision-making. However powerful a PM is, he cannot decide every issue relating to the foreign policy. Naturally only such issues which a PM thinks is important for India's security, foreign policy goals or economic development or that is vital to party's standing in the country and his own power and prestige would be decided in the PM' office.

Lal Bahadur Shastri had set up the Prime Minister's Secretariat which later became the PMO in 1964 when he became the PM. He was not very well acquainted with foreign affairs. He also appointed a full time External Affairs Minister for the first time. Nehru had retained MEA with himself and therefore it was natural for him to handle foreign policy through his own office. Shastri used the talents of a senior civil servant L. K. Jha to handle the foreign policy.

This trend of PMO playing a major role became evident only during the tenure of Indira Gandhi. She held MEA with her for a while (1967-1970) but later she appointed separate ministers for external affairs. Her power was at pinnacle during the Bangladesh war in 1971 with Pakistan. She had in her office trusted aides like P. N. Haksar and D. P. Dhar. It was she who conducted talks on the Bangladesh crisis with foreign powers, decided the details of War, and also held delicate negotiations in Shimla after the war ended in the defeat of Pakistan and signed the Shimla Agreement in 1972.

The PMO includes large number of joint-Secretaries, deputy-secretaries, OSDs and other officials, each dealing with different aspects of Prime Ministerial functioning.

In the present NDA government, PMO is gradually becoming powerful in the policy-making. Normally PM's National Security Adviser does not get involved in the public presentation of India's foreign policy. That is the task of the PM or the Minister of External Affairs or the Foreign Secretary. But for the first time, Prime Minister's Principal Secretary Brajesh Mishra, not only discussed a wide range of foreign policy issues but also made public policy pronouncements on several occasions. He had hinted at important foreign policy decisions on visits to other countries. Thus, while addressing a gathering of American Jews in Washington, DC in May 2003, he said that India, US, and Israel should make a joint effort to fight the menace of terrorism. This also provoked media reaction that National Security Adviser is overshadowing the Minister of External Affairs.

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## 4.5 PARLIAMENT

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If the above is the brief description of foreign policy decision-making within the executive branch, what is the role of Parliament? Does the Parliament play a role in the decision making on foreign policy? Parliament is a representative body of the people. Thus, the ultimate control over the government policy-making including foreign policy rests with the Parliament. On several foreign policy-related issues as listed in the Union List, the Parliament has exclusive power to enact legislation. For instance these include, diplomatic, consular and trade representation, war and peace, the United Nations, citizenship, naturalisation etc.

The Parliament has the power to approve treaties. But it is the Union Government, which determines the basic contents of treaties and seeks final approval of the Parliament. Thus in the case of the Indo-Soviet Peace and Friendship treaty, Indira Gandhi, then Prime minister, informed the Parliament one hour before it was to be signed on August 9, 1971. Politically it depends upon the majority support commanded by a PM. By and large during her term no one dared to question her decisions.

During Nehru's time, A. Appadorai in *Domestic Roots of India's Foreign Policy* discusses in detail how parliament was able to exercise its influence over India's China policy. It was under the pressure of the Parliament and the President that Nehru was forced to relieve Krishna Menon of his Defence portfolio. Second instance that reflected Parliament's influence is the issue of government taking high-powered transmitter from Voice of America (VOA) for All India Radio in March 1963 to meet the Chinese propaganda after the October 1962 border war. The agreement had a clause to share time with the VOA. The communist MPs were vehemently against this as they were concerned more with their anti-Americanism than protecting Indian national interest.

The government ultimately dropped the whole project. In these examples, it is possible to argue that Parliament was able to assert only after a policy decision is taken. Second, it succeeded in getting rid of Menon only because of the failure of India in the 1962 Sino-Indian War. In normal times, it is difficult for a Parliament to assert such powers.

In a coalition government that we are familiar with since 1996, it is prudent for the PM to take people's representatives into confidence. During the Gulf War II by the US—led alliance against Iraq in March 2003, the NDA government was keen to pursue what Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee called 'middle path' of not offending the US by not taking any hard line against the war but at the same time asking Iraq to fully cooperate with the UN in destroying the weapons of mass destruction. However, the Parliament insisted on a resolution condemning/deploring American military intervention in Iraq. Ultimately it took recourse to Hindi language by using '*ninda*' as a substitute for stronger English word 'condemn.'

But this is not the first instance of a coalition government facing such an embarrassment in policy formulation. In 1991 during the first Gulf War, Chandra Shekhar was the Prime Minister. As PM, he had given permission to the US Air Force (USAF) planes to refuel in Mumbai airport. However, when this fact became public, members of the Parliament were against it. As the elections were likely anytime then, the Congress Party, which was supporting him from outside, was concerned with the effect on the Muslim voters. Then after discussion in the Parliament, the policy of permitting refuelling the USAF planes was changed.

Second, Parliament has control over the money that is spent to run the foreign policy and national security establishments in the country. But parliamentary control over the funds appropriated is perfunctory. The budget and appropriations for individual ministries like External Affairs and Defence are often rushed through in the Parliament. Veteran Parliamentarian Madhu Dandavate once wrote that 85 to 87 per cent of budget proposals are approved without any debate. This is really an appalling situation cutting across the very democratic theory that control over money lends the parliament to control the executive branch.

The MPs are not greatly concerned about the financial needs of the nation's armed forces. During 1959-1960, there was an obvious national security threat from Communist China. But then Defence Minister, Krishna Menon proposed a reduction of Rs. 25 crores from the defence budget. The MPs never protested. On the other hand, the defence budget in 1987-1988 was Rs. 12,512 crores—till then highest ever. But the MPs, while discussing it, were very feeble in questioning the sudden rise in the defence budget. When an MP did question, Rajiv Gandhi, then PM, silenced the member by stating that any one questioning defence budget is anti-national.

The third area of parliamentary influence is through debate over the policy issues. All the parliamentary devices of generating a discussion in the Parliament, like calling attention notice, adjournment, questions etc., are also available in foreign affairs to the Members of Parliament. However, the discussion and debates in the Parliament over the foreign policy issues is always perfunctory. There are two main reasons for the lack of interest amongst the MPs beyond their general rural background and lower level of general education in international affairs. One reason is that in reality Parliament is a large body—Lok Sabha consisting of over 500 and Rajya Sabha consisting of 250 people—such a body cannot effectively make policy, let alone decide.

If the large number is one reason for the Parliament's inability to formulate nation's policy, the



second reason is that they do not have basic political interest to pursue foreign affairs and defence matters in the Parliament. The question is by performing good role as an effective MP in foreign affairs, he is not going to get a few additional votes in the next election. On the other hand, if he is effective in getting an arms depot in his constituency or an ammunition-manufacturing factory, he can generate employment for the people and get additional votes from his grateful voters. By and large, the MPs lack knowledge and information necessary to effectively discuss and suggest even alternate policy options to government. This is not an insurmountable problem; if given an expert advice, they can discuss foreign policy effectively. But the political will always seems to be lacking.

Yet, Parliament exercises broad influence by determining the general parameters of policy beyond which a government cannot proceed. Occasionally, their influence on the foreign policy directions of the country is much more than that. But for long there was no strong link between the MEA or foreign policy formulation and Parliament despite the fact that the foreign minister is a member of the Parliament. The only link has been through the Parliamentary Consultative Committee on External Affairs. Such a committee also exists relating to Defence.

#### **4.5.1 Parliamentary Committees**

The Parliament has been making use of consultative committees to assist each Minister. The Consultative committee meetings were called whenever the minister thought it fit. They did not have their independent operations. Thus Foreign Minister called the meeting to discuss or clarify an already announced policy. No new issues were taken up in the consultative committee. During Nehru's time since he himself was the Minister of External Affairs, he used the Consultative Committee as a sounding body or a debating society.

But under Indira Gandhi initially the Consultative Committee on external affairs was called to meet more often. But once she consolidated her power after 1971 general elections, she did not pay much importance to the Consultative Committee on External Affairs. One proof of that is the complete lack of discussion on the Indo Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation of 1971. There was no Consultative Committee meeting either before signing it or after signing though the treaty proposal was with Mrs. Gandhi for some years. Similarly the Shimla Agreement was reached on 2 July 1972 and was ratified by India on 28 July the same year. But Bandopadhyaya points that consultative committee met once on 3 July after the agreement has been reached, and again on 28 August—one month after the agreement had been ratified; and on neither of these two occasions was the Shimla agreement “even specifically mentioned on the agenda.”

But there have been standing Committees of Parliament with statutory powers, like Estimates Committee, Public Accounts Committee and Public Assurances Committee. These committees can and do examine the issues relating to the working of foreign policy and defence. Thus for instance, the Estimates Committee in 1976-77 under the chairmanship of Atal Behari Vajpayee examined the working of embassies abroad. Similarly other committees like Public Accounts Committee and Public Assurances Committee can examine accounts of the agencies implementing foreign affairs or the assurances given on the floors of both the Houses of Parliament.

However, for many years in the 1970s and the 1980s some foreign policy scholars suggested the need to establish standing committees to discuss foreign affairs and defence. But amongst the political class the opinion was that the Parliamentary Committee system is not attuned to

parliamentary government but to the Presidential system as in the US. But because of the sustained lobbying by some of the foreign policy experts, the government finally decided to constitute parliamentary committees on foreign affairs and defence. These were finally established in 1991.

The role of the Parliament in the making of foreign policy is changing somewhat gradually ever since the establishment of Parliamentary Committees in the area of Foreign Affairs and Defence in 1991. These are known as Select Committees. They are not advisory committees or consultative committees as referred earlier. These committees respectively, have the task of scrutinising the budget of the concerned departments like the MEA and Defence. After the budget is presented in the House, normally *Lok Sabha* is adjourned. After a month, the Parliament meets again to consider the budget.

Equally important is the fact that the Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs and also Defence study issues which the Parliament considers important, submits its report to the Parliament and Executive. The Executive branch is supposed to submit an action taken report to the parliament. Thus, for instance, the standing committee on the Defence Department has been active in raising important security issues and seek clarifications from the government. Thus for instance, Parliamentary Committee on Defence in 1995 said: “Despite warming relations with China, China is and is likely to remain, the primary security challenge to India in the medium and long terms.”

On the basis of the working of the Parliamentary committees it can be concluded that there is a need to strengthen the working of these committees. One reform that could be introduced is to provide the permanent staff to these committees drawn from the regular IFS officials in the middle level. These staff members can study the issues coming under discussion in the Committees and the Parliament. Another possibility is that political parties, in a conscious way, should encourage more and more retired military and Foreign Service officials to join politics and enter parliament. Their in-service knowledge could be of great help to the parliament as an institution to critically assess every issue involved in the foreign affairs of the country.

These committees are definitely improving the role of Parliament in foreign/security policy making. But their role needs to be strengthened in foreign policy-making. Two brief suggestions can be made in this regard. One, to increase the functions they perform, and second, give these committees a skeleton of permanent expert staff so that the MPs can effectively perform their roles in these committees.

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## 4.6 SUMMARY

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It is the domestic needs, which decide the broad contours of the foreign policy decisions. In the foreign policy-making, political representatives of the people have ultimate control over the foreign policy decisions. But in the Indian democracy, the politically chosen ministers with the aid and advice of the Foreign Service Officers do much of the policy-making. In this unit we have analysed the position of such important institutions as the Ministry of External Affairs comprising several senior and junior officers handling various Sections and Divisions dealing with different countries, regions and organisations. At the bureaucratic level, the MEA is headed by the Foreign Secretaries, whose recommendations are normally accepted by the Minister of External Affairs, who is the political chief of the MEA. The Cabinet Committee on Security, comprising select senior ministers and headed by the Prime Minister, clears policy decisions before they are approved by the Union Cabinet. The National Security Council, and its Advisory Board as well as the Prime

Minister's Office (PMO) are other important institutions that give their inputs in policy-making process. Parliament represents the people, and has final word in the days when foreign policy has been democratised, and is no more secretly formulated by the Foreign Office. As India grows in power, there is a need to improve policy-making mechanisms. Equally true is to streamline control of the Parliament through the Parliamentary Committees on foreign affairs and defence.

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## **4.7 EXERCISES**

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- 1) Examine the structure and functions of the Ministry of External Affairs.
- 2) What were the compulsions in establishing the National Security Council? Critically assess its working.
- 3) How do you explain the growing influence of the PMO in foreign policy-making?
- 4) Discuss the role of Parliament in foreign policy-making. How do the parliamentary committees help in enhancing the role of Parliament in foreign policy-making?