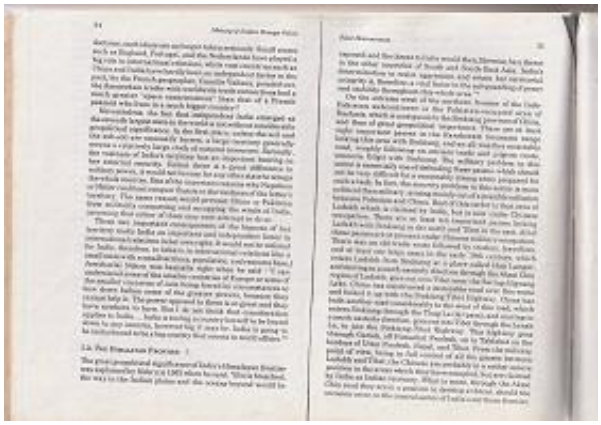
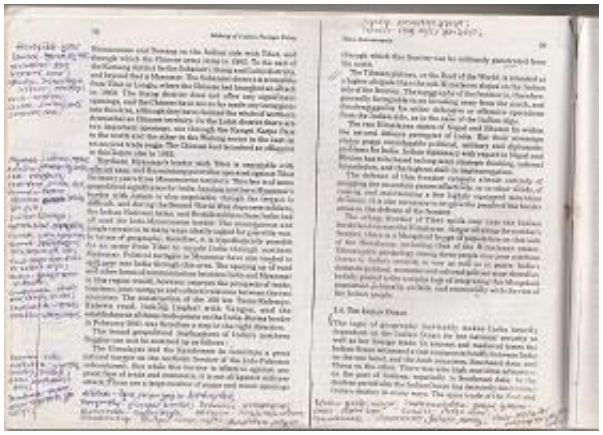
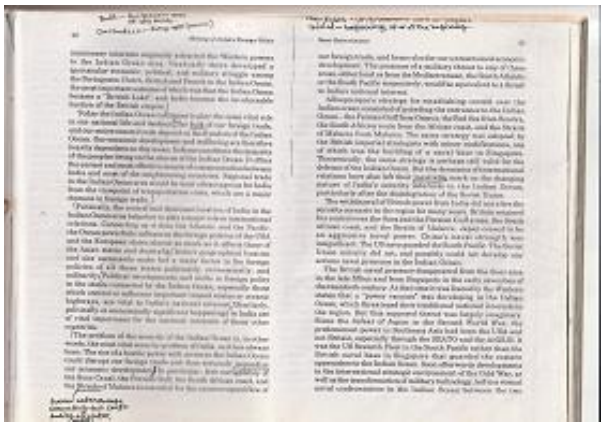
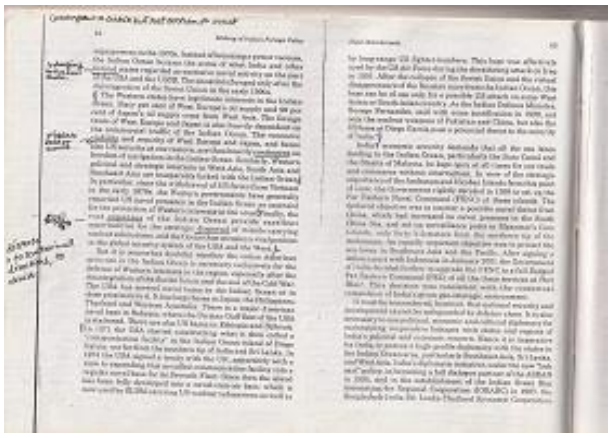
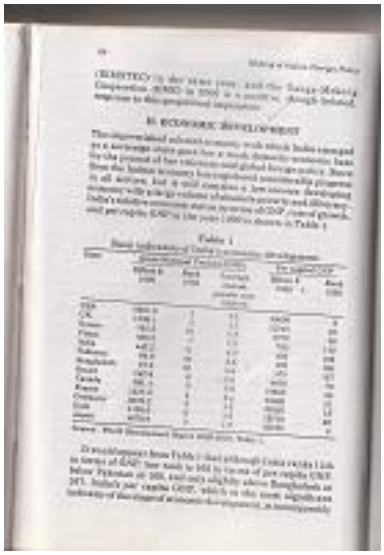
CHAPTER TWO

Basic Determinants

Foreign policy is never uniquely determined by any one factor or set of factors, but is the result of the interplay of a large number of factors that affect the formulation of policy in different ways in different circumstances. Some of these factors are relatively stable and have to be taken as given by the makers of foreign policy, and can, therefore, be regarded as more basic or underpinning determinants of policy than others. But the more variable institutional factors, and even the personal role of the decision makers, are in no importance to the process of decision making than the basic determinants. In this chapter we propose to analyse only the basic determinants of our foreign policy, such as geography, economic development, political tradition, domestic politics, international values, and military strength, leaving the institutional and personal factors for the ensuing two chapters.

Now the basic determinants of foreign policy, however, vary in importance according to circumstances, and it is impossible to lay down any general rule regarding the relative importance of each of these factors, or a scale of priorities which the decision makers must permanently adhere to in making their policy decisions. It is, nevertheless, a general rule that these factors do individually and collectively affect major policies of foreign policy, and that decision making in foreign policy can have a claim to rationality only when these have been seriously taken into account.

1. GEOGRAPHY

Geopolitical speculation has a remote and long ancestry dating back to Kautilya and Aristotle. But systematic geopolitical thinking probably did not develop until the early 19th century.