

## Development of Indian Foreign Policy



## Political Science

KEYWORDS :

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### ABSTRACT

*Indian foreign policy is changing from time to time. The basic principles laid by Jawaharlal Nehru laid foundation to Indian foreign policy. Panch sheela, Non-Alignment, fight against colonialism and imperialism, opposition to racial discrimination, peaceful settlements of international disputes, regionalism and Gujral doctrine are few of the principles of Indian foreign policy. As per this principles, the Prime Ministers of India have maintained cordial relations with neighbouring and other countries and also international agencies like UN. The paper discussed the development of different principles of Indian foreign policy.*

### Introduction:

In real terms, Indian foreign policy came into being with the advent of independence in 1947. Until then the nation, as a satellite of the British Empire, had no diplomatic identity and eschewed the postulates of foreign policy dictated by the erstwhile rulers. India's role in the First World War and the subsequent course of its rudimentary diplomatic overtures were constrained by prevailing British influences<sup>1</sup>.

First Prime Minister and First External Affairs Minister of India, the beliefs of Jawaharlal Nehru dominated the making of Indian foreign policy from 1947 until his death in 1964. Central to these beliefs was that India had 'special rights and duties in the management of international society based on its status as one of the world's major civilisations'<sup>2</sup>. In turn, India's international interaction was to be a form of positive neutralism based upon Purna Swaraj (complete independence), consisting of an independent foreign policy and separation from big power games, also often termed as enlightened national self-interest. Such a policy was central to establishing India as an inherently self-determining, powerful and stable nation on the international stage.

### Developments in Indian Foreign Policy:

The early idea for an ideal foreign policy for the independent India was begun at the early 1927s, in Indian National Congress conference. In the conference a resolution was made that India could be no party to an imperialist war and in no event should India made to join any war without the consent of the people being obtained. Later, at the AICC Conference organized at Bombay on August 7-8, 1942 made more clear views of Indian relations with other nations in the world and during the conference a popular resolution 'Quit India Resolution' was also passed. It states "While the A.I.C.C. must primarily be concerned with the independence and defence of India in this hour of danger, the Committee is of opinion that the future peace, security and ordered progress of the world demand a World Federation of free nations and on no other basis can the problems of the modern world be solved. Such a World Federation would ensure the freedom of its constituent nations, the prevention of aggression and exploitation by one nation over another, the protection of national minorities, the advancement of all backward areas and peoples, and the pooling of the world's resources for the common good of all. On the establishment of such a World Federation, disarmament would be practicable in all countries, national armies, navies and air forces would no longer be necessary, and a World Federal Defence Force would keep the world peace and prevent aggression...The future relations between India and the Allied Nations will be adjusted by representatives of all these free countries conferring together for their mutual advantage and for their co-operation in the common task of resisting aggression"<sup>3</sup>. It emphasized for India's peace and harmonious relations with other countries. By September 1946, when the Interim Government had been installed, Jawaharlal Nehru had a clear vision of independent India's foreign policy.

Jawaharlal Nehru was a believer in world peace. He understood the linkage between peace for development and survival of mankind. He had seen the destruction caused by the two world wars and therefore realized that for the progress of a nation a long spell of peace was needed. In its absence social and economic priorities relating to development tend to get pushed to the background.

Another contribution of Jawaharlal Nehru in the field of foreign policy and international affairs for which he will be remembered was the policy of peaceful coexistence between different social, political and economic systems in the post-World War II period. He had given expression to this long before India became independent and tried to the best of his ability to project this policy in India's relations with all countries of the world and, in particular, with India's neighbours.

The production of nuclear weapons strengthened Nehru's faith in the peaceful philosophy even more. Hence he gave utmost importance to world peace in his policy planning. India's desired peaceful and friendly relations with all countries, particularly the big powers and the neighbouring nations, while signing an agreement with China, on April 28, 1954, India advocated adherence to five guiding principles known as Panchsheel for the conduct of bilateral relations. It includes the following:

- ❖ Mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty.
- ❖ Mutual non-aggression
- ❖ Mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs
- ❖ Equality and mutual benefit
- ❖ Peaceful co-existence.

India's leadership of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM)—which it co-founded in Belgrade in 1961—endeavoured to counteract the rigid dichotomies of a Cold War world dominated by the USA and USSR. Non-alignment also generated moral influence for India and reinforced arguments that to ally with either of the two superpower blocs would effectively mortgage India's future rise and emergence as a Great Power. In the first decades of her independence, this belief existed 'regardless of the realities of what India is'<sup>4</sup>, as India's leaders saw Great Power status as based upon moral idealism rather than territorial, economic or military indicators.

Non-alignment has been regarded as the most important feature of India's foreign policy. Non-alignment aimed to maintain national independence in foreign affairs by not joining any military alliance formed by the USA and Soviet Union in the aftermath of the Second World War. Non-alignment was neither neutrality nor non-involvement nor isolationism. It was a dynamic concept which meant not committing to any military bloc but taking an independent stand on international issues according to the merits of each case. The policy of non-alignment won many supporters in the developing countries as it provided an opportunity to them for protecting their sovereignty as also retaining their freedom of action during the tension ridden cold

war period.

India played an important role in forging the non-aligned movement (NAM). The concept of NAM emerged through a gradual process. Nehru took the initiative to convene the Asian Relations Conference in New Delhi in 1947. Later in 1955 at Bandung (Indonesia) a Conference of 29 countries of Asia and Africa was held. This was the first gathering of its kind which pledged to work together for colonial liberation, peace, cultural, economic and political cooperation. The first NAM conference was held at Belgrade, Yugoslavia in 1961 was a logical process to project an alternative to cold war bloc politics and assertion of newly independent countries of their independent and sovereign rights.

The NAM created a powerful forum for Indian interests and goals in international politics, where it became the second largest multilateral diplomatic organization after the UN. Overall, non-alignment became an article of faith for India's leaders and strategic community that allowed the nation to become established as an independent voice in international politics. Non-alignment was neither isolationist nor neutral as India criticized various states over their policies in Korea, Congo, Suez and Viet Nam. Reflecting India's own experiences, such criticism targeted expansionist powers rather than specific ideologies. The policy of economic self-reliance (swadeshi)—often based upon socialist five-year plans and limited internal investment from outside powers—also backed-up non-alignment aims of stability and self-sufficiency. So critical was swadeshi that Nehru stated that 'we would rather delay our development [...] than submit to any kind of economic domination to any country'<sup>5</sup>. These notions were underpinned and exemplified by the implementation of an economic and science-and-technology policy, which included nuclear power through the establishment of the Atomic Energy Commission in 1948 and the Department of Atomic Energy in 1954. Furthermore, eschewing arms races allowed what would have been military spending to be concentrated on economic development. By leading the NAM, Indian leaders also wanted to overcome the view commonly held by external powers (such as the USA, the United Kingdom and China) of supposed India-Pakistan equality, in an attempt to free India from being purely associated with South Asia.

Despite the 1962 set back due to defeat in war with China, the belief in pursuing Great Power status remained and India's 1965 victory versus Pakistan strengthened her self-sufficiency. India's growing awareness of Great Power politics was again shown before the 1971 war with Pakistan, when India signed a 20-year Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Co-operation with the USSR. The handling of the 1965 war and negotiations by the new Prime Minister, Lal Bahadur Shastri with Pakistan in Tashkent were indicative of an era of decisive diplomacy as opposed to the earlier vacillations. India required a firm regional base in South Asia, as local hegemony is a pre-requisite for broader ambitions. Henceforth, India moved away from diffuse goals such as world peace towards concrete national interests such as defence and economic growth and an increased realism about diplomacy emerged. Since India lacked the internal economic base to build military technological capabilities, it resorted to borrowing them from the US and the USSR<sup>6</sup>.

With the Cold War at its peak, India was pushed on to the centre stage of action in the early 1970s. In this period, the country gave concrete proof of its capability to become a regional superpower in the twenty-first century. During the Bangladesh Crisis, India was staggered by the American warning that it should expect no assistance in the event of Chinese intervention<sup>7</sup>. To counter the US-China alliance against India, in a masterly balance of power move, Indira Gandhi entered into a *Treaty of Friendship* with the USSR. When war erupted and with the US and China diplomatically and militarily neutralised by the USSR, India was able to inflict a severe military defeat on America's proxy—Pakistan in 1971. Thus, India created a new strategic environment and emerged as the pre-eminent power in South Asia.

The 1971 conflict with Pakistan and India's consequent 'libera-

tion' of East Pakistan into Bangladesh showed India capable of successfully fighting a limited conflict and of redefining her strategic environment. Subsequently, post-1971, India emerged as the foremost power on the subcontinent; 1971 further more confirmed the ongoing morality present within India's aspiration to Great Power status and remains as a rare case of successful state-to-state humanitarian intervention. These events also emboldened India's acquisition of nuclear weapons, achieved through the Peaceful Nuclear Explosion (PNE) of May 1974. The tests were emblematic of its criticism of the permanent vetoes of the P-5 (China, France, the USA, the then-USSR and the United Kingdom) Permanent Members of the UN Security Council and the Non-Nuclear Proliferation Treaty (NPT) of 1970 that protected their exclusive nuclear status<sup>8</sup>.

During the 1980s, India came into its own in terms of foreign policy. The success of the 1971 War, a stronger military and a more mature nation were part of the reason. During this phase, India began to play a greater role in Asian region, engaged several countries bilaterally and increased its UN peacekeeping engagements. The Soviet armed intervention in Afghanistan was used as an excuse by Pakistan to arm itself on an unprecedented scale, triggering off a virtual arms race in the subcontinent. In the neighbourhood, Sri Lanka became a growing security concern due to the involvement of outside powers like China, Israel and Pakistan. India reasserted its dominance by initiating the Indo-Sri Lanka dialogue and eventually signing a treaty with Sri Lanka popularly called as Indo-Sri Lanka Peace Treaty of 1987. India realized that regionalism is essentially needed to extend co-operation and harmony with neighbor countries, so that there is necessary of peace and development among the Asian countries.

The Non-Aligned Movement is providing all member states, regardless of size and importance, an opportunity to participate in global decision making and world politics. India hosted the Seventh NAM Summit at New Delhi in 1983. In the present scenario NAM has a significant role to play, first, with the disintegration of Soviet Union, the world faces threat from uni-polar world. The NAM can act as a check against US dominance. Secondly the developed (North) and developing (South) world are divided over several economic issues. The NAM remains a very relevant forum the developing world to engage the developed nations in a productive dialogue. Moreover, the NAM can prove to be powerful instrument for South-South cooperation. Such a thing is essential if the developing countries are to increase their bargaining power vis-a-vis the developed world. India continues to take active part in the non-aligned movement even after the end of cold war.

In 1984, India launched a Six-Nation Five Continent Peace Initiative along with Argentina, Greece, Mexico, Sweden and Tanzania. In 1988, Rajiv Gandhi proposed an Action Plan for ushering in a nuclear weapon free and nonviolent world order. The Action Plan envisaged a binding commitment by all nations to the elimination of nuclear weapons in stages.

The end of cold war in 1989 has brought about significant changes in the international scene and hence new policy problems for the various states in the developing world including India. As the cold war has ended, the world has become unipolar; a number of states have disintegrated, cold war military blocs have lost their significance, some such blocs have dissolved and new regional economic blocs are shaping up.

The significant change in India's foreign policy, attendant with reforms in its economic policy took place under the stewardship of Prime Minister Narasimha Rao, the initiator of India's "New Look" foreign policy. These policy changes resulted from the prevailing international environment at the end of the Cold War, the disintegration of the former Soviet Union and its global countervailing power, the need for India to detach its foreign policy from domestic minority vote bank considerations and from the necessity to focus on neglected regions. These imperatives manifested in the thrust for a strategic partnership with Israel in West Asia, the quest for a substantive relationship with

the US and the “Look East” initiative.

The years from the latter half of the 1990s until 2004, witnessed a Bharatiya Janata Party government in power, which maintained the overall general direction of Rao’s foreign policy. Its tenure coincided with the post-Cold War era, the rise of American unilateralism and new policies of pre-emption and unrestrained military intervention in global affairs. India becoming a nuclear power with the “Buddha Smiling” tests, the 9/11 attacks in the US and the resultant “Global war on terrorism” were highlights of this period which demanded Indian responses. However, greater attention was accorded to building-up Indo-US strategic cooperation, normalising relations and enlarging cooperation with China, besides Vajpayee’s personal commitment to bringing Pakistan to the dialogue table.

The nuclear tests of 1998 put India technically in the league of atomic powers. But, India’s membership of the club of five—the USA, China, France, the UK and Russia—whose full nuclear status and access to fissile material are guaranteed by treaties and sanctions, still remains strongly contested. The signing of the ‘Henry Hyde United States–India Peaceful Atomic Energy Cooperation Act’, on 18<sup>th</sup> December 2006 permitted US civilian nuclear cooperation with India, and represents the culmination of a year and a half of work<sup>9</sup>. Counterterrorism initiatives, energy security, globalization and the opening of new markets all directly benefit influential countries. The major debates today concern the degree of India’s engagement with the US, its handling of China and the Islamic world and its lofty international goals in contrast with its image as a poor, underdeveloped nation.

The initial years of the twenty-first century, in terms of international and political developments influencing India’s foreign policy, presented by Atul Kumar as follows<sup>10</sup>.

- ❖ The US in its tactical obsession with Pakistan placed the emerging Indo–US strategic partnership on the backburner and India was no longer a priority. The war on terrorism and the urgent need to control the oil reserves of the Middle East dictated terms. Some mitigation to the American stand was provided by the civilian Nuclear 123 Agreement.
- ❖ Russia realized that it was no longer a “natural ally of the West” and the post-Cold War knee-jerk reaction of forging a strategic alliance with China did not bring all the desired fruits.
- ❖ China, despite a phenomenal rise in trade with India and a flurry of visits by senior leaders has yet to give up its strategic nexus with Pakistan. The PRC continued with the military build-up and establishment of the infrastructure of its presence in Pakistan.
- ❖ The Indian subcontinent presented a dismal security environment. Pakistan strategically buoyed by American economic, military and political aid persisted in its illusions of achieving strategic parity with India and did not display any signs of political maturity or willingness to pursue conflict resolution. Turmoil and conflict also continued in Nepal and Sri Lanka, while Bangladesh under its previous political dispensation was hostile to its huge neighbour and emerged as an alternative base for Pakistan’s long-standing proxy war against India. However, the trend in Dhaka has now been reversed.
- ❖ The international community remained divided on important issues of trade, climate change and global recession.

After 1990s, the shifts in India’s foreign policy manifested themselves in various ways, including better relations with China; the

‘Look East’ Policy (launched in 1992) aimed at improved relations with Asia to the east of India; the further nuclear tests at Pokhran (1998); a significant defence procurement relationship with Israel (after diplomatic relations were established in 1992) and simultaneously enhanced energy diplomacy with Arab countries and Iran; acquiescence in the US nuclear missile defence programme (2001); support for the US invasion of Afghanistan (2002); the Indo-US nuclear cooperation agreements of 2005 and 2008; and India’s votes against Iran at the International Atomic Energy Agency. The relationship with Pakistan remained vexed, marked by the potentially dangerous Kargil war of 1999 and Indian concerns about terrorism from across the border and the attack on Indian Parliament<sup>11</sup>.

As India’s international profile increased, heightened trade levels and greater military-to-military links (including the signing of ‘strategic partnerships’ with many major and great level powers) personified her international interaction. Such ties have helped expand and strengthen India’s links to the international community and international economy, confirming her status as a rising international force. Typical of this expansion, Indian policy-makers broadened the scope of India’s security horizons, with officials talking of India’s ‘extended neighbourhood’ (Central Asia, South-East Asia and Africa), ‘Look East Phase 2’ (towards East Asia and Australasia), a more even-handed approach to West Asia (between Israel and the Arab states), as well as better links with the European Union<sup>12</sup>.

The principles of Indian foreign policy laid emphasis on the Asian countries. As such, East Asia has been a natural component of India’s foreign policy priorities. These countries formed ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) group and consists of India, China, Burma, Philippines, Singapore, Vietnam, Cambodia, Japan, Thailand and South Korea. The Indian policy with these countries is popularly termed as “Look East” Policy. In this respect, Kanwal Sibal, former Foreign Secretary of India expressed that “India is an Asian country, the second largest both demographically and geographically. Developments in Asia impinge directly on our security and strategic interests. China is a direct neighbour as are ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) countries such as Myanmar and Indonesia. The Indian Ocean straddles the most important sea routes that connect the oil producing region of the Gulf with the consumer countries of East Asia. Increase in maritime trade is another reality today. Cooperation between India and these countries is a necessary prerequisite for the 21st century to become the century of Asia.

### Conclusion:

The contribution of Jawaharlal Nehru is much appreciated to give sound foundation to Indian foreign policy as his emphasis on the peace and cordial relations with other countries. His popular Pancha Sheel principle emphasize the mutual respect, non-aggression, non-interference, equality, mutual benefit and peaceful co-existence. As India is faced imperialism and colonialism during British period, after independence, anti-colonialism and imperialism were became the principles of Indian foreign policy. On the gender and racial discrimination as in South Africa, opposition to racial discrimination become one of the principle of foreign policy. Peaceful settlements of international disputes are also one of the principles of India’s foreign policy. India believes in peace and maintaining cordial relations with other countries. As such, India has become member to SAARC and ASEAN countries. United Nations aims to keep peace and helps to develop the member countries all over the world. As such, India is supporting different activities of the UN all the time.

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