

Review

India's Foreign Policy-Retrospect and prospect

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A country relation with other countries of the world is known as her external relations. The external relations of a country are based on certain principles and policies. They are collectively called foreign policy. Thus foreign policy is the totality of actions of a state in dealing with external environment consisting of national, international and regional actors. In other words, foreign policy is the sum total of a country's relationship with these actors; while pursuing its received goals and objectives through the process of foreign policy a state translates its goals and interests into specific courses of action. India's foreign policy is shaped by several factors including its history, culture, geography and economy. Our PM, Jawaharlal Nehru gave a definite shape to the country's foreign policy. Indian ideology in the international affairs is based on the five principles of India's foreign Policy under leaders like Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi. These are a belief in friendly relations with all countries of the world. The resolution of conflicts by peaceful means, the sovereign equality of all states, independent of through and action as manifested in the principles of non – alignment and equity in the conduct of international relations. Promotion of democratic values is high on India's international relations. Another bench mark of India's official ideology is secular nationalism. India is the home for peoples from various religions and cultures. India promotes secular values and freedom to follow any religion or culture. India's Foreign Policy after se became independent in 1947. It was in September 1946 that Jawaharlal Nehru formulated the independent policy which has been followed ever since. Successive Prime Ministers have endorsed that policy and parliament has approved it. The essence of the independent foreign policy is non-alignment i.e., India refused to join either the communist bloc or the Western bloc into which most of the nations were grouped during the days of the cold war. She preferred to remain outside the contest. Two other features of this policy have been (1) an emphasis on peaceful negotiation as a means to resolving conflicts, the temper of peace as Nehru put it and (2) a deliberate effort to seek the friendship of all nations including the nations of the communist bloc as well as the western bloc. In formulation of a foreign policy, both domestic and external factors are taken into account. If we look at the way the formulation of foreign policy in democratic and non-democratic countries, they mobilize national power, define their national interests, and peruse effective policies play military strategy in the light of balance of power – which is one of the basic principles of power politics game that acts to control interstate relations. However, the formulation of foreign policy is the result of its leaders' capacity which gains people's support in implementing that foreign policy.

Key words: External relations, foreign policy, military strategy, pre-independence phase, panchsheel, peaceful co-existence, pious means, mutual respect, territorial integrity, sovereignty, mutual non – aggression

INTRODUCTION

Pre-Independence phase of India's Foreign Policy
Indian foreign policy is not a product of some specific

circumstances or conduct rather it has long historical past dated back to ancient time. Throughout ancient and

medieval times, we had cordial relationship with the people of the globe. With the establishment of British colonialism in India, its external relation particularly with neighbouring countries was mainly shaped by colonial motives. They started expansionist policy with regard to Burma Nepal, Afghanistan and Tibet, Nationalist leaders` of that time condemned such "Policy" and demanded independent foreign policy based upon respect for national sovereignty, territorial integrity and peaceful co-existence. In the first session in 1855 the Indian National congress denounced the annexation of Burma and objected to the military activity going on beyond the natural lines of defences of this country.

In a letter addressed to the president of the peace conference of 1919 Bal Gangadhar Tilak Wrote "India is self – contained harbours, no design upon the integrity of other states and has no ambition outside. In 1921 at meeting of the All India Congress Committee in Delhi the Indian National congress passed its first general resolution of foreign policy, and openly declared that the present (British) government of India in no way represents Indian opinion. In 1938 another significant pronouncement about the foreign policy of India was made at the Haripura session in 1938. This resolution said " India's foreign policy based on various factors including socio-political, economic and cultural during the British rule underwent drastic changes. It saw cross cultural and cross linguistic connections between colonial powers in India. It generated a penchant among the Indian elite to learn English and to emulate British political institutions. In fact, before, 1857 it was an era of Visualisation of India similar to the nation states of Europe. The mutiny of 1857 created profound impact on administrative, cultural, intellectual and psychological attitudes leading to a renaissance like situation a newly emerged middle class was seen in the form of linear continuity of attitudes which was expressed in ideologies and various movements". On the other hand, there was an assertive reaction to the arrogance of the Western rulers.

However educationally India and West came closer and increasing number of Indians going to England for higher studies brought better technical know-how back into the country this phase was therefore, marked by increasing awareness. In the post-first World War era India's foreign policy got real fillip when British – Indian delegation was given separate representation in international conference and deliberation; this not only intensified India's global consciousness but also laid the foundation of Indian foreign policy orientation in the post independence era (Shrivastava, 2003).

Indians desire to live in peace and friendship with their

neighbours and with all other countries, and for this purpose wish to remove all causes of conflict between them in order, therefore, to establish world peace on an enduring basis; imperialism and exploitation of one people by another must end.

Mohan Das Karam Chand Gandhi was the pre-eminent political and ideological leader of India during the Indian independence movement. It encompasses a wide area of political organisation, philosophies and movements which had the common aim of ending first British East India company rule, and then British imperial authority, in parts of South Asia; the independence movement saw various national and regional campaigns agitations and efforts, same non-violent and others not so.

The first organised militant movement was in Bengal, but they later took to the political stage in the form of a mainstream movement in the then newly formed Indian National congress (INC) with prominent moderate leaders seeking only their basic right to appear for Indian civil rights, economic in nature, for the people of the soil. The early part of the 20th century saw a more radical approach towards political independence proposed by Bal, Pal and Aurobindo Ghosh. The last stage of the freedom struggle from the 1920's onwards saw congress adopt Mahandas Karamchand Gandhi's policy of non-violence and civil resistance (Chandra, 1989).

Foreign policy of Independent India: Immediately after independence India was in need of consolidating herself politically and territorially. In order to fight back the polarisation of the world between two super powers, the US and the USSR, India adopted a non-aligned stand. Further with a view to maintaining its politico – strategic entity India tried to develop cordial relations with Pakistan and China. It also tried to unite newly independent nations on matters of common concern in order to concern freedom of opinion (Shrivastava, 2003).

Therefore, after independence India evolved its foreign policy on the background of her colonial sufferings. Basically it was based on its inherited principal of peaceful- co- existence mutual adjustment and amicable solution of disputes. Jawaharlal Nehru, the first prime minister of India was the chief architect of Indians foreign policy. From independence to the present time India's foreign policy has run more or less on the same line. Each and every government that came in succeeding years has adhered to these basic principles and objectives laid down during Nehruvian era; this shows continuity in our foreign policy (Chronicle, 2009).

Jawaharlal Nehru: "Foreign policies depend ultimately

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on internal conditions and developments. Internal progress for us, therefore, becomes essential if we are to play an effective part in world affairs. "Jawaharlal Nehru". India's international prestige had rapidly risen till nearly 1956. India had opted to stay off the cold war and follow the policy of non – alignment. This policy is even 50 years later still the foundation stone of India's foreign policy. Initially non – alignment was viewed with suspicion by both the power blocs; but gradually they came to realise its utility. India's role during Korean war was generally appreciated; and India played a vital role in enabling the disputants to reach an amicable settlement in respect of Indo – China in 1954. The Declaration of Panchsheel jointly made by India and China in 1954 was also warmly welcomed by several countries. India under Nehru was considered to be the pioneer of the policy of peaceful co – existence. Non – alignment and peaceful co – existence is two major contributions of India and its first Prime Minister.

In the initial years after independence Indo China relations were very cordial "Hindhi – Chini bhai, bhai" was the popular slogan of that time. India and China also signed 'Panchsheel' agreement in 1954. But from 1955 on – words Sino-Indian relationship deteriorated because of mutual differences over Tibet and other border issues. These tensions culminated with Sino-Indian war of 1962. India had very low level relationship with major powers of the world. USSR saw Nehru as an agent of capitalism led by America. On the other hand USA had suspicion regarding India's non – alignment policy.

During the period, three major conferences greatly influenced the Indian World View. These conferences were the Asian Relations Conference 1947, the Bandung conference, 1955 and the Belgrade Summit, 1961. All the three conferences had the same agenda i.e., commitment to the United Nations and the proposed steps to strengthen the commitment. Further, India intended to become a role model for Afro – Asian nations emerging from the colonial rule. Moreover, India also articulated her views on colonialism, apartheid racial discrimination, nuclear and general discrimination (Shrivastava, 1989).

Shastri period: Lal Bahadur Shastri in his first broadcast as prime Minister, on 11 June 1964, stated "these come a time in the life of every nation when it stands at the cross-roads of history and must choose which way to go. But for us there need be no difficulty or hesitation, no looking to right or left our way is straight and clear-the building up of a socialist democracy at home with freedom and prosperity for all, and the maintenance of world peace and friendship with all nations" (Wikipedia.com).

India's foreign policy, during Shastri's brief tenure of 18 months proved to be more realistic than before. In the post – Nehru period, India not only had to manage a hostile China, but had also to deal with the growing US

support to Pakistan and also the emergence of Peking, Jakarta Axis. This was a new anti – India combination of Pakistan, China and Indonesia. Shastri regime had to devise India's foreign and security policies in the background of US – Pak friendship, and the Axis. Shastri laid greater emphasis on India's neighbours, and friendly relations in South Asia (Jaipur, 1971).

Mrs. Indira Gandhi: Foreign Policy of India under Mrs. Indira Gandhi became more pragmatic than before, though the basic elements remained the same. India maintained cordial relations with countries like Nepal, Maldives, Afghanistan, Myanmar and Sri-Lanka in order to ensure a secure, safe and stable South Asia avoiding any threat of war from Pakistan. The change of guard at the helm of political affairs in India in 1977, much expectation was raised about a possible change in India's foreign Policy. In this India tried to revitalise Indo-US relations. In fact, for the first time equal partnership between India and the US was sought. This led to the foundation of bilateral relations with the United States instead of making it a donor-recipient relationship as was pursued earlier.

The creation of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 1967, to assist the development of its member states (Brunei, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam). It aimed to eliminate trade barriers, promote cultural exchanges, facilitate communications, and improve technology, commerce and industry and wanted India to be a full time member of this regional group (Shrivastav, 2003).

Mr. Rajiv Gandhi: Under Rajiv Gandhi, there were no changes in countries foreign Policy. He reiterated his faith in the principles enunciated by Nehru and Indira Gandhi. He professed faith in United Nations, non-aligned movement, opposition of colonialism, narrowing down of international disparities closer relations with immediate neighbours etc. He adhered to these basic principles of foreign policy during his tenure.

He wanted to maintain cordial relations with both USSR and the US; India also began pursuing the policy of non intervention and tried to maintain better relations with Pakistan and Sri Lanka through the South Asian Association for regional cooperation (SAARC) (Shrivastav, 2003).

Objectives

India's objective has been to maintain friendly relations with all, avoid military alliances. follow non-alignment as a moral principle, seek peaceful settlement of international disputes and promote universal brotherhood and humanism by following and advocating the five principles in panchsheel. India tried to faithfully observe the ideals

of non-interference and peaceful co-existence (Jawaharlal Nehru, n.d).

PRINCIPLES OF INDIAN FOREIGN POLICY

India wanted to act as a missionary of peace. These factors prompted India to adopt a policy of non-alignment. It was a positive decision to keep aloof from military pacts. By non-alignment to any power bloc, India reserved the right to judge every international issue on its merit and to express her view freely and frankly without any fear and favour. She condemned the naked Anglo – French aggression on Egypt, the Russian repression in Hungary, the apartheid in South Africa, the colonialism in Angola, the U.N. involvement in Vietnam and the Israeli aggression against U.A.R. While explaining India's interpretation of non – alignment Shri Nehru himself said, When freedom is menaced or justice threatened or aggression takes place, we cannot be or shall not be neutral (Palmer and Perkins, 2007).

Panchshed and Peaceful co-existence: Peaceful co-existence of nations of diverse ideologies and interests is an important principle of our foreign policy. In practice it means that nations inhabited by people belonging to different religious and having different social systems can co-exist, live together in peace, while each follows its own system. The basic Indian philosophy was formally recognised when in 1954 China signed the famous declaration of the five principles, or panchsheel as the bases of their mutual relationship; the five principles are:

- (a) mutual respect for each others' territorial integrity and sovereignty.
- (b) mutual non – aggression
- (c) mutual non – interference in each others' internal affairs.
- (d) equality and mutual benefit and
- (e) peaceful co-existence

Anti Colonialism and Anti-Imperialism: India knew the evils of economic exploitation under colonialism. Therefore she did not want the contribution of colonialism in any part of the world any from. Therefore, after independence India showed zero tolerance towards colonialism and imperialism. She was interested particularly in the de-colonisation of the Asian, African and Latin American countries. It supported liberation movements in Indonesia, Libya against neo- colonialism and demanded a new international economic order based on equity and fairness. It also initiated the idea of South-South cooperation to promote self-reliability among developing countries.

Anti-Racialism: India has consistently supported the establishment of an equalitarian human society in which

discrimination based on colour, race, class, etc, does not exist. India firmly believes that racialism is one of the sources of conflict in the world, and therefore a threat to international peace and security. India has supported the UN efforts leading adoption of covenants of human Rights and the observance of fundamental freedoms all over the world (Palmer and Perkins, 2007).

Promotion of World Peace: We believe that international disputes should be settled through negotiations and peaceful means and not by force India believes in the United Nations organisation's principle of peace and development; without peace there is no progress of mankind. As a member of the U.N.O India played an active role in reducing tension on several occasion e.g. Korean War (1950) Indo-China crisis (1954) Suez crisis (1956) and Congo Problem (1960). India sent her military forces to several UN peacekeeping missions in Congo, Angola, Gaza and Cyprus (Palmer and Perkins, 2007).

Faith in United Nations: India has great faith in United Nations. She stands for settlement of all disputes under the aegis of the UN through peaceful means.

Faith in Pious Means: India lays great emphasis on the good means. She has always insisted that the means for the attainment of the foreign policy objectives should be above – board and conform to the well known tradition of India (Chaudhary, 2007).

Conflict of Interests

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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