



Principles of Indian foreign policy

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Abstract

India through its foreign policy wants to secure, first of all, its national interests and economic development. It has many other objectives including preserving international peace and security, denouncing imperialism, supporting peaceful resolution of international disputes, opposing foreign military intervention for settlement of international problems, opposing all forms of discrimination on the basis of religion, race, or language, promoting unity and solidarity among the Third world countries etc. These objectives are sought to be achieved through certain guiding principles such as Panchsheel, NAM, and others.

Keywords: Foreign policy, panchsheel, NAM, anti-colonialism and anti-racism, international disputes

Introduction

India, through its foreign policy wants to secure, first of all, its national interests and economic development. It has many other objectives including preserving international peace and security, denouncing imperialism, supporting peaceful resolution of international disputes, opposing foreign military intervention for settlement of international problems, opposing all forms of discrimination on the basis of religion, race, or language, promoting unity and solidarity among the Third world countries etc. These objectives are sought to be achieved through certain guiding principles such as Panchsheel, NAM, and others.

There certain principles in article 51 under the Directive Principles of State Policy in the Constitution of India, which emphasizes on the promotion of world peace and security among others.

Therefore, as per the provisions of article 51 of Indian Constitution, the State shall endeavor:

- To promote international peace and security.
- Maintain just and respectful relations between nations.
- To promote respect for international law and treaty obligations in the dealings of organized peoples with each other.
- To encourage settlement of international disputes through arbitration.”

Basic principles governing India's foreign policy

Every nation in the world generally follows certain principles that guide its foreign policy. Often these principles, due to some specific compulsions, appear to be ignored by the nation. However, the basic principles generally do not change. India, like any other nation, also follows certain principles that guide its foreign policy. These principles have roots in Indian philosophy, culture and traditions and evolved over the years and centuries; the origin of many can be traced back to ancient India. Many of the principles are embedded in international law. Some of the principles of Indian foreign policy that determine Indian foreign policy are as follows-

1. Panchsheel
2. Anti-Racism and Anti-Colonialism
3. Policy of Non-Alignment
4. Peaceful Settlement of International Disputes

5. Support for the United Nations, International Law, and a Just and Equitable World Order

A brief description of the above-mentioned principles is being provided below.

Panchsheel

The farsightedness of Indian policy makers led them towards understanding the fact that socio-economic development and security of human beings, cannot be ensured without global peace. A sovereign nation domestically maintains law and order within its territory and provides security to its citizens. The inability of a nation in fulfilling the above-mentioned objectives, among others, results in civil war within its territory. Civil wars not only pose threat to the lives and properties of the people, but also to the very existence of the nation. Lack of socio-economic development within a nation often attributed to the lack of security and law and order problems within its territory. Similarly, globally, peace is necessary for wellbeing of human beings. In order to ensure global peace nations in the world, should follow the principle of peaceful coexistence; the belligerent behavior of nations may jeopardize the world peace, thereby giving a setback to socio-economic development of the world. The devastation caused by the two world wars, led India towards realizing the fact that the progress of any nation, requires durable peace and security. Thus, Nehru, the architect of India's foreign policy, gave utmost importance to world peace in his policy planning. India, like many peaceful nations of the world, wants to maintain peaceful relations with the world nations in general and with the neighboring nations and the great powers of world in particular. It emphasizes on peaceful coexistence of the nations which is visible in its concept of Panchsheel. The notion of Panchsheel or Five Principles of Coexistence, officially for the first time mentioned in an agreement between China and India regarding trade and intercourse between Tibet region of China and India. The agreement was signed on April 29, 1954 and thereafter, the Panchsheel became a guiding principle of relations with other countries. Panchsheel comprises the following five principles:

1. “Mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty,

2. Mutual non-aggression
3. Not to interfere in each other's internal affairs.
4. Equality and mutual benefit, and
5. Peaceful co-existence.’’

These principles of Panaceel were later incorporated into the Bandung Declaration signed at the Afro-Asian Conference held in Indonesia in 1955. They are the core principles of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and still guide the conduct of India's foreign policy.

Policy of Non-alignment

The policy of Non-alignment, one of the most important features of India's foreign policy, was adopted by the Indian policy makers after independence in the context of cold war after the Second World War. The essence of NAM is to maintain independence in foreign policy, without being aligned to any power bloc. We know that after the Second World War, two blocs of countries emerged; the capitalist bloc, led by the US and the communist bloc, led by the erstwhile Soviet Union. Aligning with a super led block meant compromising independence in one's foreign policy. The countries of the capitalist bloc were characterized as being the countries of the first world, whereas the countries pertaining to the communist bloc were considered to be the countries of the second world.

Non-alignment, however, doesn't mean that a country following the policy of non-alignment should be neutral, non-participant or adopt isolationism in international affairs. Rather, it was a very dynamic and positive concept; it required that the non-aligned countries should be active participant in the international politics and take independent stance on the international issues as per the merit of each issue, without being influenced by any military power bloc.

India has played a very significant role in popularizing and strengthening the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). It was under the leadership of Indian Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, that the Asian Relations Conference was held in New Delhi in 1947, to promote the idea of Asian Unity. Thereafter, supporting the independence of Indonesia, another Asian Relations Conference was called by India in 1949, emphasizing the need for freedom of the colonized countries around the world. The Bandung Conference of 29 countries of Asia and Africa held in Bandung (Indonesia) in 1955 aimed at creating an Afro-Asian entity. The Bandung Conference actually precedes the NAM, which held its first summit in 1961 in Belgrade. Thereafter, various summits of NAM, were held around the world in the third world countries. The seventh NAM summit was held in New Delhi, in which India emphasized on the need for development, disarmament and resolution of Palestinian issue.

Relevance of Non-Alignment

Since the NAM was a product of Cold War politics and the bipolar world, many scholars have questioned the relevance of the NAM after the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union. It is also said that India, which was one of the founding members of NAM, has to a great extent adopted neo-liberal policy propounded by the West, after the end of the cold war. India's close relationship with the US, along with its liberalization policy, has given rise to a perception as if NAM has been sidelined. However, NAM is still relevant, even after the

disintegration of Soviet Union and triumph of the liberal world. A deep and careful study of its objectives will lead us towards understanding the fact that in some aspects, it has become more important in the changing world politics. Here, a brief description of some of the factors is being provided for understanding the relevance of NAM in the current world politics.

- In the Post-Cold War era, after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, NAM can act as a check against undue dominance and hegemony of any country or block.
- There are many global issues and problems, whether economic or political, on which the developed countries of the North and the developing countries of the South, have different views. NAM can provide a platform for the developing countries of the South for engaging the developed countries of the North in a constructive and productive dialogue.
- Developing countries can discuss and deliberate on various global issues, reforms, and problems, including reforms of the United Nations and other international financial institutions like the World Bank and IMF, etc., on a platform that can be provided by NAM.
- In the current market-driven global order, NAM can prove to be a powerful mechanism for building cooperation among the developing countries.

Anti-colonialism and Anti-racism

India, for a very long time, remained under the British colonial power. Like other colonies, India also suffered atrocities at the hands of the imperial power. India was not free to determine its domestic affairs, nor was it allowed to have a say in its relations with other nations of the world. The practice of racism was rampant in the policy of British colonial power. It was during the freedom struggle in India that the foundation of Indian foreign policy was laid. India realized that colonialism propelled by racism cannot pave the way towards progress and development of the colonies as colonies were being established to serve the selfish interests of the colonial powers and not to serve the interests of subjugated colonized people. As a result, India considers colonialism and racism to be threat to the world peace and human civilization. It strongly believes in the equality of all human beings without any discrimination on the basis races. Even our Constitution says, that 'there shall be no discrimination on the basis of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth.' India aims at opposing at all forms of racial discrimination.

India supported the anti-apartheid movement and contributed to the struggle of African National Congress against the white minority apartheid regime and severed diplomatic and trade relations with South Africa for its policy of apartheid. It brought the issue of apartheid to the notice of United Nations and other international forums such as NAM. India gave its support to the freedom struggle in Indonesia. India played significant role in ending colonialism in numerous countries in Asia and Africa. It doesn't mean that India intervened militarily in a colonized country to help it in achieving independence from the colonial powers; rather it used its influences in international forums such as UN, NAM, etc., giving vehement support for independence of the Afro-Asian colonies. As a result, 14 African countries achieved independence from the colonial power by 1964. India's effort for ending colonialism and racism in Africa is also visible in the fact that due its

initiative, in 1986, Africa Fund (Action to Resist Imperialism, Colonialism and Apartheid), for helping the states which were victim of South Africa's aggression and apartheid.

Peaceful resolution of international disputes

India believes in peaceful settlement of international disputes. India's belief in peaceful settlement of international disputes constitutes one of the core elements of Indian foreign policy. The principle of peaceful settlement of international disputes has incorporated in Indian Constitution's Directive Principles of State Policy and also enshrined in the charter of the UN. India has played a significant role in this arena; India supports peaceful resolution of Palestinian issue, played major role in resolution of Korean conflict, and although India often suffers from aggression of the neighboring countries, still it supports peaceful and negotiated settlement of border disputes with its neighboring countries. India has never been in support of foreign military intervention for solving international disputes as violence begets more violence.

Support for the United Nations, International Law, and a Just and Equitable World Order

India firmly believes in a fair and just global order, as well as the UN and international law. India firmly adheres to the UN and/or international legal doctrines that support the equality of sovereign states and the non-intervention in the domestic affairs of other nations. By aiding in the decolonization process and actively taking part in UN peacekeeping operations, India has contributed significantly to maintaining international peace. India is in favour of the disarmament resolution that the UN has adopted. India presented a highly comprehensive nuclear disarmament agenda to the UN in 1988. Despite the fact that other UN members did not agree with this idea, India remains dedicated to achieving universal disarmament. India is in favor of and has suggested reforming the Security Council and other UN institutions to make them more functional and democratic. One of the candidates for Security Council permanent membership is India.

A nation's fundamental interests are the preservation of its boundaries and the integrity of its territory against outside invasion. It took a long time and much effort for India to gain independence from foreign dominion. It made sense that it would place the appropriate focus on foreign policy independence. In this context, one should view India's efforts to solidify support for and eventually embrace the principles of non-cooperation in the internal affairs of other nations.

India must engage with international partners to keep up the country's growth pace in order to promoting financial aid, foreign direct investment, and initiatives like Made in India, Skill India, Smart Cities, infrastructure development, Digital India, Swachh Bharat, and others. Other programs can use the technology. As a result, it is significant that India has incorporated economic diplomacy with political diplomacy into its foreign policy in recent years.

Indian diaspora is the largest in the world, comprising approximately 20 million non-resident Indians and persons of Indian origin, spread across the globe. Therefore, one of the key objectives is to engage them and derive maximum benefits from their presence abroad, while at the same time protecting their interests as much as possible.

In a nutshell, India's foreign policy aims to achieve four key objectives: safeguarding the nation from both conventional and unconventional threats; fostering an external environment that supports inclusive development in India so that the benefits of progress are shared by the nation's poorest citizens; making sure India's voice is heard in international fora and that it can sway opinion on global issues like terrorism, climate change, disarmament, reforming global governance institutions; and fostering connections with and protecting the Indian diaspora.

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