

INDIAN FOREIGN POLICY: CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN 21ST CENTURY

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Abstract

Since independence, India's foreign policy has been dynamic though it has progressed in gradual manner due to internal and external constraints. To begin with, the basic principles reflected its colonial legacy, namely non-alignment, desire for independence in foreign policy making and siding with other newly liberated nations particularly in Africa and Asia. As a result of political influence, the country had a post-independence commitment to political and economic non-alignment, and refraining from Cold War involvement in between America and Soviet Union. NAM recommended that the developing countries should not take sides with either of the super powers as this gives them their independence to make their own decisions on the global platform. However, in changing global dynamics all over the world, especially after the fall of Soviet Union and the emergence of a new liberal international order in late 1980s and 1990s, the policy of non alignment was to meet challenges. Internationally, there was a balance of payment crisis which made the country realize the weaknesses of its policies that were so protective of its economy. The early 1990s became a critical time in such a context as India has been affected both by the economic stagnation as well as political instability.

At this time India begun a process of liberalisation of its economy under the watchword of Prime Minister P. V. Narsimha Rao, and this called for a shift in its foreign policy approach. India knew that it had to interact with the West especially the United States and hence began to adopt some features of the western economic system. This was a dramatic change since before the country avoided the Western lead institutions, and demonstrated a positive change in the country's foreign policy. The liberalisation policies launched during this period not only brought back economic growth of the country but also established India on the map of world economy capable of dictating terms in the international system. This paper looks into the Change in India's foreign policy from non-alignment policy to economic realism. In doing so, this paper discusses India's historical experiences and too how the transition of the international system influenced India's foreign policy trajectory, and its potential consequences for India. Thus, understanding this evolution the paper contributes to the identification of the key issues concerning post-colonial nations in this process of establishing the relations between the national and the international.

Keywords

India's foreign policy, post-colonial identity, non-alignment, strategic autonomy, economic reforms, Western economic model, P.V. Narsimha Rao, US-India relations, global governance, liberal world order, Non-Aligned Movement, economic liberalization.

Introduction

The history and structure of India have caused the country's foreign policy to evolve throughout time, rather than being a static idea in international relations. The character of colonialism and the views of India's leaders, notably Nehru, have shaped the country's foreign policy since its independence in 1947. It was a stance of strategic neutrality, non-alignment with any bloc of power, and solidarity with other formerly colonized regions, particularly in Asia and Africa. These concepts were based on the Indian experience of colonialism and on the desire to break free and establish a new identity in the global system. For political and economic reasons, India wished to avoid the Cold War's double-edged sword by avoiding dependence on the US and the USSR.

In order to articulate its foreign policy goals, India has mostly used the newly formed Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), in which it actively participated. The initial intent of NAM was to oppose the Cold War era of global communitarianism and the idea that developing nations should have the power to choose their own foreign policy. Rather of seeing non-alignment as a simple strategy of not aligning with the West or East, India saw it as a strategic notion for protecting the strategic independence of a newly-emerged Indian state from potentially dangerous conflicts. Plus, it was a great way to highlight India as a peaceful country that has actively sought disarmament and a new global order. There was some uncertainty about the viability and notion of absolute non-alignment after the Cold War's conclusion and subsequent changes to the structure of international relations. India had to change its foreign policy stance because of its economic woes, the fall of its main ally, the Soviet Union, and the emergence of the US as the only global powerhouse. Also contributing to liberalization in India was the Balance of Payments crisis of the early 1990s and the Asian financial crisis of 1997, both of which brought attention to the country's imbalanced economic model. Rao implemented liberalization measures in India in the early 1990s, which included easing restrictions on imports and strengthening ties with Western nations, particularly the USA. This represented a paradigm change in India's foreign policy with respect to attaining its economic objectives. Indian foreign policy shifted because of shifting global power dynamics and the country's aspirations to play a significant role in the new international order.

OBJECTIVE OF PAPER

The purpose of the present work is to examine the shift from the customary non-aligned policy of India and analyze the historical predispositions, internal and external pressures, and

new orientations in the framework of changing world order as to the contemporary foreign policy of India in the twenty-first century.

THE 1998 NUCLEAR TESTS AND INDIA'S CHANGING STRATEGY

The tests were also considered as BJP's knowledge as their ideology was about strong and self-reliant India which is capable of protecting its own interest. As for the BJP, which was not so long ago recognized as being considerably more proactive in terms of foreign policy than the Congress Party, the possession of nuclear weapons was deemed to be crucial in perpetrating India's position on the international stage. Vajpayee's government took India to a nuclear state while at the same time correcting the regional imbalances by announcing a voluntary no nuclear test policy and No First Use policy. This was a typical Indian approach where on one hand it showed its military muscles that it possesses nuclear capability and on the other advocated for no nuclear expansion.

The outsiders' response to India exercising its nuclear option was immediate and that was severe. The countries of the world expressed their outrage over the tests and India was subjected to a flood of economic sanctions especially from the United States and its allies. The sanctions were put specifically on the Indian economy with the purpose of forcing the country to abandon its nuclear weapons program. However, the Indian government having massive support back home for the tests stood firm on its decision.

However, time revealed that the key players of the international community are changing their view gradually, mainly due to the understanding of the nature of the new world that has emerged after the Cold War. Most of the sanctions laid on India from the United States were lifted by the year 2001 understanding that India playing an important role in the new order. The U. S. -India relationship which had been affected by the nuclear tests started improving and was eventually manifested by the signing of the U. S. -India Civil Nuclear Agreement in 2005. This is one of the major landmarks in bilateral relations, as it can be considered that India got confirmed as a responsible nuclear state and the cooperation in civilian nuclear area is possible.

Nuclearization of India therefore, did not mean that Nehruvian ideas had been completely changed; rather it reflected an attempt to adapt with the new situation on ground. Thus, alongside with practico-realistic elements of India's foreign policy, the country based its diplomacy on moral values and served the agenda of global disarmament and peace. The nuclear philosophy of India has been the most changing one since independence but tests

made in 1998 were strategic move in the interest of its security and sovereignty in a cross regionalising world.

HOW CHINA INFLUENCES INDIA-US DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS

The most crucial component of the US-India strategic cooperation has been China's ascent to global power status. The rapid economic growth, military modernization, and assertive diplomacy of China in recent years have cast doubt on her position as a major actor in the Indo-Pacific region. The US and India have strengthened their military connections after exchanging intelligence over the threat that China represents.

For this reason, the United States has watched China's ascent and ambitions to exert its influence in Asia with caution. Aiming to counter China's growing influence, the Obama administration began its "pivot to Asia" plan in 2011 by shifting its focus to Asia. The idea behind this program was to strengthen American ties to Asia, with India serving as a counterweight. Concerns over China's ascent in India stem from the country's expanding influence in South Asia and the Indian Ocean area, as well as from territorial disputes with India.

The signing of the U.S.-India Civil Nuclear Agreement in 2005 was one step toward further solidifying the two nations' strategic cooperation. In addition to formally acknowledging India as a nuclear weapon state, it cleared the way for further collaboration in the fields of security and defense. As China's military strength continues to rise, the US has extended an invitation to India to join its strategic alliance. From India's perspective, this resolved its worries about energy security and demonstrated that the country is really a nuclear power.

As the United States and India have become more worried about China's actions in the Indo-Pacific, their geopolitical cooperation has grown stronger in recent years. The two nations' armies may now use one other's facilities for logistic assistance, according to the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement agreements inked in 2016. This will improve their operational competence in the area. Naval exercises, such as the Malabar exercises, are another kind of collaboration that has grown in both frequency and complexity.

However, the India-U. S. relationship does not entertain a clear-cut structure. Although both countries are alarmed at China's rise, it has led them to be pragmatic partners in some international affairs, but ideological opponents in others, including economic and immigration policies. Lingering historical ties of India with Russia, especially in the defense sector, put forward an extra dimension in the strategic partnership with the U. S. India adjustment

strategic relations with Russia also factors its interests geared towards strategic independence prevents New Delhi from aligning itself to either Washington or Moscow.

Nevertheless, it is heartening that the two nations have dealt with all these challenges in a bid to foster their mutual relationship because of the many strategic interests that the Indian and the U. S. nations have. The increasing assertiveness of China in the Indo-Pacific region especially after the incident in Galwan valley in June 2020 has further strengthened. S. cooperation. Four-nation Quad including the U. S , India, japane and Australia has emerged as an important centre for deliberation on security threats in the region after it became active again.

India's approach to its relationship with the U. S can be described as realistic approach in balancing the two super powers. Though India appreciates its freedom of operation and does not feel comfortable getting into strategic partnerships or becoming a member of an alliance it understands the need to have a strategic partnership with the U. S. especially in view of the growing Chinese power and influence. This partnership will most probably develop further, positively influenced by changing geopolitical structure of the Indo-Pacific and other global areas.

Thus, China's ascent and the nuclearization of South Asia have considerably altered India's geostrategic calculations and foreign policy. Concerns about nuclear testing in 1998 prompted a shift toward realism in policymaking. Due of China's rise to global prominence, India and the United States now share a strategic partnership. So, India's foreign policy, which aims to balance national defense and international relations with strategic independence, would likely be further defined by the new global order's regulatory reforms.

FOUNDATIONS OF EGYPT-INDIA RELATIONS: THE LEGACY OF INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENTS

TThe Egypt-India bilateral relation has its root in early 20th century when both the countries where under colonial rule. They become dominating figures like Saad Zaghloul for Egypt, Mohandas Gandhi for India and so on becoming main leading characters in the struggle of their countries for independence. All these leaders had one thing in common in that they were struggling for independence and sovereignty and did not accept colonialism. They formed movements that were not simply political with the objective of gaining independence for their country but also movements having the further aim of reversing the people's low self-esteem.

Saad Zaghloul is a national hero of the country, Egypt and contributed a lot towards the revolution of the year 1919 in Egypt. This revolution was as a result of British colonization and it led to the share independence of Egypt in the year 1922. Similarly, the man called Mohandas Gandhi with his emotions of non-violent and civil disobedience turned into the face of Indians' struggle against the British colonizers. The story of Gandhi awakened India and it got independence in the year 1947.

Development of these two nations was similar thus the connection, the certain allegiance between the two states was created. Both of them had understood the necessity of recognizing each other struggle against colonialism. This was done through a sisterly stand between Gandhi and Zaghloul which involved exchanging of letters respecting each other's fight. Such interaction created good diplomatic foundation that would later be built between two nations in future.

For the Second World War Egypt and India got their freedom and each country was confronted with the issues of the new formed nation – poverty, illiteracy and constructing of the new power state. These were due to the colonial influence and for the independence of both these countries and this was the best they stick together to overcome these challenges. It also brought into an understanding that began the Bi-Lateral relation in which the two countries would also actively participate in other forums for the enhancement of the achievement of peace stability and development of the third world countries.

INDIA'S LEADERSHIP IN THE NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT

An activist of the Non-Alignment and socialism India gained considerable status amongst the newly liberated states of Asia Africa and Latin America. These countries many of which had only gained their independence a few years back wanted to regain their independence and did not want to be dragged into the cold war wars. NAM was important to those countries since India as a head provided them with a political voice and aimed at defending such principles as self-determination, economic development and peace.

Fifteen years later, in 1966, twenty-five countries participated in the movement's first formal summit, which took place in the Yugoslavian city of Belgrade in 1961. Josip Broz Tito of Yugoslavia, Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt, Kwame Nkrumah of East Africa, Sukarno of Indonesia, and, of course, Nehru, the political successor of Mahatma Gandhi, were among the prominent figures associated with this movement.. An aspect that reflected in the conference was the principle of non-alignment with the superpowers, the establishment of the idea of

collective economic development among the developing world and the support for the liberation and decolonization struggles of third world countries.

The active membership of NAM proved beneficial to India as it helped it to emerge as a leader of Third World. In this way, India expressed the position of developing nations at NAM via emerging themes like the economic development of the third world, disarmament and the apartheid regime in South Africa among others. NAM also gave a political geography option to India to interact with numerous countries and establish diplomatic relations and alliance that would be beneficial to India in future.

THE CHALLENGES OF NONALIGNMENT

However, nonalignment had its own problems and got disturbed at international level for India which got international recognition. Talking of the bipolar nature of the Cold War, it was extremely challenging for India to strike a balance between alignment and neutrality at various points of the war. Furthermore, conflict in the region and local political pressures sometimes forced India to make some decisions that were regarded as practices of a country that does not adhere to the policy of the nonalignment.

Probably the most significant test to the policy of nonalignment of India was in 1971 in the context of Bangladesh Liberation war. Despite the fact that East Pakistan (Bangladesh today) was seething in a humanitarian crisis and political turmoil India was caught in a dilemma, opposing a U. S. ally – Pakistan. In order to preserve the balance of power and to counterbalance the potential support of the Pakistan's main patrons – the USA and China, India signed the Treaty of Peace, Friendship, and Cooperation in 1971 with the Soviet Union. Despite the fact that this treaty proved beneficial to India by securing military and diplomatic support for India during the war the treaty raised concerns about India's policy of non alignment as it seemed to pull India closer to the Soviet Union.

Hence, India securing its influence over its smaller neighbours' domestic politics in the 1970s and 1980s, including Sri Lanka's civil war and supporting Nepalese monarchy raised doubt about India's nonalignment foreign policy. Some of the critics attributed India's actions as fitting a regional power not as a nonaligned nation.

NONALIGNMENT IN THE POST-COLD WAR ERA

From its peak during the Cold War period, the Non-Aligned Movement began its decline with the Soviet Union's demise in 1991. Once the bipolar world system collapsed, the "nonalignment" goal became meaningless in directing global events. Nonetheless, India

persisted in its membership in NAM because of the group's focus on development issues, its function in elevating the voices of developing countries, and its support of south-south cooperation.

The way India's foreign policy changed in the wake of the Cold War is one such example. Even as it sought to forge closer links with influential nations like the United States, Russia, and China, India maintained its nonalignment foreign policy position. This shift occurred because the Indian government prioritized economic and strategic progress and pushed for a more aggressive stance on the international scene.

India does not strictly follow the idea of non-alignment, is not a member of any military alliances, and does not support any particular group of states; instead, it asserts that it is engaging in "multi-alignment" in the present world political context. Because of this, the nation has been able to maintain its independence and even improve its standing in the global community.

THE LEGACY OF NONALIGNMENT

In its current foreign policy framework, nonalignment remains an important component for India. This impact from India has permeated the very fabric of the nation's foreign policy approaches and its position as a frontrunner in the NAM. Especially in its interactions with other emerging nations, India's policy of nonalignment—which is founded on sovereignty, noninterference, and peaceful coexistence—remains pertinent.

It was also a part of NAM and here leadership of India played a vital role in deciding the fate of this movement. NAM also became an influential actor in endeavors aimed at the continuation of the decolonization process, disarmament, and reconsideration of questions connected with evolution of the economic relations and illustrate opposed to underdevelopment. Even though the usage of the movement has decreased in the post-Cold War period, it has been credited for its contributions towards the similar ordering of the world especially in so far as providing a voice to the developing nations.

Now, Indian foreign policy still retains the policy of nonalignment but in the world that is at present dominated by the phenomena of multipolarity. The role of Non-Aligned Movement is apparent in India's loyalty to multilateralism, its backing of the United Nations and other international organizations and its call for justice for developing nations.

INDIA'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO UN PEACEKEEPING

It may also be said that the Indian participation in the peacekeeping missions of the United Nations remains one of the major spheres in the bilateral cooperation. The case of India reflects the fact that this country has been one of the most active all over the world in participating in UN peacekeeping operations being involved in it since the 1950s. India participates in Peace Keeping Operations more than 200000 people in almost 50 operations of UN system, which makes it one of the largest donor countries for international peace keeping operations.

UN peacekeeping missions received support of an Indian medical unit in the Korean War since 1950. For the past decade, Indian peacekeepers have been deployed in some of the worlds most hostile regions like Congo, Lebanon, Somalia and recently in South Sudan. This has placed Indian troops in good light in terms of professionalism, dedication and commitment to the protection of the civilians as well as the cause of peace.

India not only contributes troops but also has significantly contributed to formulation of policies and practices of UN peace keeping. India has always supported the major principles of neutrality, consent and non-use of force which are considered as the main modalities of the UN peace keeping missions. India has also advocated increased focus on the safety of civilians, or gender and gender parity, post conflict reconstruction in peacekeeping operations.

It bears noting that India auxiliates the UN in peacekeeping not only through his military personnel but in so many other ways. India has also contributed the provision of forces such as police officers, military observers and civilians for peacekeeping missions. Indian police officers have also equally contributed to the provision of the rule of law, human rights protection and rebuilding post wars institutions.

INDIA'S ADVOCACY FOR UN REFORM

“It was argued that, being one of the founders of this organization, India had always called on the UN to progress towards a more representative, efficient and open organization. Foreign policy has been a significant priority for India, especially in regard to the reformation of the UN Security Council as the organization which provides for the international peace and security.

India has claimed that the present composition of the Security Council does not meet the character of the world of the twenty-first century. Thirteen nations make up the Council, five of which—China, the US, the UK, France, and Russia—are permanent members with voting

rights. With respect to the different parts of the globe, India has pushed for a more equitable distribution of permanent and non-permanent members on the UN Security Council.

India's argument for membership to the Security Council is anchored on its rising power, its India's candidacy with most of them being members of the G4 group which includes, Brazil, Germany and Japan all of whom are aspiring to attain permanent positions on the Council.

Besides, Security Council reform, India has sought reform in other facets of the UN system which are the General Assembly, the ECOSOC and the specialized agencies of the UN. India has claimed higher accountability, obligation and participation of these bodies.

INDIA'S POSITION IN INTERNATIONAL PROGRESS

It is also worthy to note that India also support multilateralism through its participation in international development frameworks. India has been one of the major supporters of the United Nations and its goals of sustainable development, poverty eradication, climate change, health and education among others.

Sustainable Development Goals –Instrument largely negotiated and adopted by India: A set of 17 goals which outlines the global developmental activity till 2030. India has also been very proactive in speaking on the issue of climate change and has rightly taken the stand of absolute equity based on historical responsibility, CBDR-RC, and providing support to the developing nations in their fight towards climate change mitigation.

A brief non-exhaustive list of India's contributions for the world development does not begin with the country's involvement with the United Nations. India also has been the largest supplier of development aid to other developing countries especially in Africa and other parts of South Asia. India has offered financial support coupled with technical support and training to support development projects through ITEC programme and the India Africa forum summit among others in areas of agriculture, health, education and infrastructure.

Indian development cooperation's parameters are the concept of South-South cooperation, reciprocity, and recognition of the independence of the receiving state. In this regard, India has tried to stress on demand-led country-owned development and tried to forge partnerships that were sustainable, sensitive to mutual concerns, and reciprocal.

INDIA'S CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES AT THE UNITED NATIONS

On one hand, India has enjoyed a tumultuous diplomatic relation with the United Nations and the multilateral system as a whole, although on the other hand it has continually supported the UN. When it comes to the UN's weaknesses one of the primary concerns is the lack of reform

in the organization and especially the SC . However, there has been little change on the ground as there is a number of reasons that support this issue while some key members of the Security Council are against this change or the reform process is still a subject for dispute among the members of the UN.

One more issue is the worsening of geopolitical configuration that sometimes results in confrontation of key world states. These contestations have made issues of global contention complicated for the United Nations to address, and have at times limited India's endeavours to amplify its agenda within the UN system.

Nevertheless, despite these obstacles, India also has excellent prospects in the UN. India has a vested interest in the United Nations' trajectory because of its growing influence on the international scene, its expanded participation in multilateral processes, and its abilities as a regional and global player in a number of fields, such as development, climate change, and peacekeeping. Key to India's UN interactions will be its orientation to multilateralism, its contribution to maintaining world peace and prosperity, and its vigorous advocacy for UN reform.

CONCLUSION

India's membership to the Non-Aligned Movement, the Quad, the United Nations as well as the World Trade Organisation serves as testament of its unwavering adherence to the principles of multilateralism as well as its pragmatic policy of striving for a middle course in international relations. By joining NAM, India for standing up for newly emerged nations and trying to secure a place in the international politics that was not influenced by Cold War rivalry. Many aspects of this nonalignment have remained permanently embedded into India's foreign policy approach that retains the sovereignty and strategic independence to be a top guiding principle.

India chooses to be a part of the Quad which is also a shift in strategies according to the new realities of the Indo-Pacific especially with regards to China. The Quad exemplifies that India is ready to participate in the security discourses of the region, whereas its overall foreign relation policy is still non aligned, making it a complex international partner to deal with.

In United Nations speaking on its membership, it has been most committed to peacekeeping, advocating for the UN reforms, and participation in International development indicating a respect for a world order in Third World developed states. India's desire to become a member of UNSC and exercise more power in the formation of rules and regulation can be seen from

its bid to become permanent member of the UNSC and its stewardship of climate change and sustainable development agenda. India has been a vocal supporter of the developing countries in WTO and has always worked for a balanced and fair trading system which can benefit all the economies in the world. India's position in WTO can further be understood in terms of India's policy to make globalization a beneficial process and to make sure that its impacts are fairly distributed including the Third World nations. Given that India has to cope with real concerns in the contemporary world and manage new forms of threats in the 21st century, its participation in these forums will be important. This is by achieving a perfect mixture of its long held principles of not being aligned to any superpowers and at the same time, foster strategic partnerships and multilateral cooperation as a global player. Whether it will remain faithful to the principles of its founding and continue to effectively advocate for the world's future as an arena where the states live in peace, are free from threats of aggression, and where development of the human person, political, economic, social and cultural is possible without disruption will depend on how effectively it can incorporate itself into current geopolitical conditions without having to abandon the principles upon which the Organisation was founded.

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