

Evolution Of Indian Foreign Policy

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I. Introduction

India has gone from merely being a protest voice on the world stage to being involved in active participation in the international structure. When India got independence, it was greatly influenced by Jawaharlal Nehru, who was against the West and glorified the ideals of socialists. That was why India's foreign policy is based on the following three pillars:

- Non-alignment in the international arena.
- Maintaining independence in the domestication.
- Uniting people of developing countries.

This philosophy continued during the Cold War and with India dealing with the Soviet Union and still being careful to maintain its independence and set its own direction in a two-sided international order.

The analysis of the progress and operation of India's foreign policy of different periods could identify two related tendencies that could be taken as the symbols of this policy. The first one was the fact that an idealistic view of international politics prevailed in India's foreign policy at its very beginning. They attempted to provide guidance and assistance to recently independent countries in Asia and Africa rather than insisting on national interests. Both causes India was losing and the national interests were compromised. The second is that in the post-Nehru period, the conduct of India's foreign policy has been the result of harsh realities. Consequently, non-alignment policy has been violated to a large extent by the signing of the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Peace and Friendship in 1971. This demonstrates that India's foreign policy is variable.

II. Genesis

During the long years of British rule, the colonial government pushed India into global politics, despite its limited stakes in international relations during the first half of the 20th century. Sumit Ganguly states in his book *Indian Foreign Policy* "India gained independence when the Cold War was dividing the world into two blocs, each trying to pull India into its orbit. In 1947, India was diminished by partition and its consequences. Pakistan sent raiders and troops to seize Kashmir illegally, and India faced immediate conflict post-independence". India also had border disputes with China.

India's policy response to this difficult situation was a strategic choice of non-alignment rather than joining either bloc. This involved active diplomacy, with India contributing to the Korean War and working successfully with freedom movements in neighboring countries like Burma and Indonesia. India's peace diplomacy took a hit with the Sino-Soviet split, prompting a closer alliance with the Soviet Union. When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, it created a new international landscape for Indian diplomacy. The unipolar moment of US supremacy pushed the West toward the neoliberal Washington Consensus, which also influenced India to change its economic course in the late '80s and early '90s.

Three Prime Ministers, each with unique backgrounds, ideologies, and ideas—P.V. Narasimha Rao, Manmohan Singh, and Atal Bihari Vajpayee—adapted their policies to navigate this post-Cold War world dominated by the US. They pursued a multi-dimensional approach, opening relations with Israel, Taiwan, China, and the USA. They integrated India into the global economy on its own terms, making foreign and security policy more economically driven than ever before.

III. Principles Of Indian Foreign Policy

The core principles guiding India's foreign policy have proven resilient over time. They are deeply rooted in international law and the practical realities of India's diplomatic efforts.

1. Panchsheel
2. Non-Alignment Movement (NAM)
3. Anti-colonialism, Anti-racism

4. Peaceful settlement of International Disputes
5. Foreign Economic Aid
6. Gujral Doctrine

IV. India's Foreign Policy Evolution: Six Distinct Phases

The international scene is becoming more and more dynamic with all the major geopolitical events, caused by the "America First" policy in the USA, flapping in the wind of global economy, the fast ascending of China and India, and the never-ending crises in the Middle East, like the conflicts in Syria and Afghanistan. The first thing to do for India in these strained seasons is to mine the strategies which have been used in the past by it, much more so considering the independence time. The delineation of India's foreign policy journey primarily consists of the following six large stages.

The First Phase (1947-1962): "Optimistic Non-alignment"

During the initial post-independence era, the major powers; the USA and USSR, had established a bipolar world. This implies that the Indian foreign policy was the first step towards the emergence of a two-polar world; the two superpowers. India's non aligned policy was one that could best be described as optimistic. They intended to avoid the disempowerment of their ecosystem, recover their economy, and enlarge their territorial counting. It was in the year 1961 that New Delhi had an opportunity to come forward in the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), which was a united opposition movement for ex-superpowers. In other words, NAM was a movement that was not subject to the influence of the dominant superpowers. This Non-Alignment Movement was, however, a ruined phase that could not respond to the immediate crises. The military conflict between China and India in 1962 turned very sour for India. It has been not only the first one but also the end of the sunny period demonstrating the concerning deficiencies of such foreign policy when being addressed with the closer threats.

The Second Phase (1962-1971): "Decade of Realism and Recovery"

India underwent a shift to a different approach after the 1962 China war, this time towards a more realistic one to confront new challenges of security and politics. A defense agreement was finalized by Indian defense forces with the US in 1964, as a step in the direction of increasing security capabilities and not considering the issue of Kashmir that was persistent on the operative level. As the strained US-India relations due to the Kashmir issue vamoosed India to the USSR; this was the move that the Indian foreign policy was most notably shaped by. The phase of realism and recovery was henceforth concerned with the establishment of a solid defense and the revisit of the foreign land balances.

The Third Phase (1971-1991): "Greater Indian Regional Assertion"

The stage became where the use of hard power in India was the most decided, especially in the liberation of Bangladesh during the Indo-Pak war of 1971. The Great Depth in the South Sea between the United States, China, and Pakistan not only posed military challenges to the region (South Asia and the Indian Ocean) but also tightened (the encirclement of) India. Iran developed into a thorn in India's flesh brought about by an entire series of events that started with the Balkan War (1980-1988), to the collapse of the Soviet Union, and to financial paralysis. The internal unrest peaked when the balance of payments crisis struck in 1991 that led to the reconsideration of India's economic and foreign policy principles. This age was a turning point for India to show its regional power and indicated that in the future, it would be involved in direct intervention to guarantee peace.

The Fourth Phase (1991-1998): "Emergence of a Unipolar World"

The world establishment of the unipolar order (in the 21st century) dominated by the USA, resulted in the adaptation of our foreign policy towards the world. During this period, India was involved in prioritizing self-assurance through nuclear weapon manufacture. As a part of the US-dominated world, the Indian subcontinent got more actively involved in multifaceted moves around the globe including closer ties with the United States, Israel, and ASEAN as these alliances sought to counteract Chinese strength and hedging their interests. This phase signified a compelling transformation in the non-alignment area towards the policy-oriented regimes taking into account the influence of others in future strategic alliances.

The Fifth Phase (1998-2013): "India as a Balancing Power"

In this period, India's appearance as a balancing power on the scene of international politics started to become clear. The announcement of the nuclear deal (123 Agreement) with the USA unveiled India's increasing global strategic importance. In the context of its collaboration with both China on the eco-friendly development of green energy production and Russia on the joint activities in the formation of the BRICS and other issues,

India also found common ground. The above steps indicate that India successfully worked her way through the fluctuating international arena, consolidating her collaboration with the big powers while also exercising her influence in the multilateral forums.

The Sixth Phase (2013-Present): “Energetic Engagement”

India's latest foreign policy phase has been researched as a remarkably drastic leap from non-alignment to multi-alignment. India can see its abilities in a better light and has a better understanding of what the world wants from the country. This year will be known for India's proactive moves to shape important global talks and to stretch its influence out of South Asia as well. The national foreign policy is now mostly a strategic independent aspiration with an energetic engagement method and which represents the country becoming an important player in the world.

V. Conclusion

Today's world, shaped by globalization and the political choices of powerful nations, is full of contradictions. While more people are living better lives than ever before, issues like inequality, conflict, and uncertainty continue to affect many. Globalization has shifted the balance of power, making the world economically multipolar but still politically unipolar and somewhat confused. Amidst these changes, Asia's rise presents a significant opportunity for India. By focusing on internal development while maintaining strong global connections, India can create an effective and dynamic foreign policy. The current geopolitical landscape offers middle powers like India a chance to play a significant role.

Today's India is not just an observer but an active player on the world stage. In this multipolar world, India has established itself as a significant pole, poised to develop further while also representing the global South. India aims to be a bridge between the global North and South, fostering connections and promoting collaboration.

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