

Principles Of India's Foreign Policy

Indian foreign policy objectives and principles

While keeping in view the fundamental objectives of India's foreign policy listed above, India has adopted and pursued certain principles to realize these objectives. Some of these principles are given in Article 51 under the Directive Principles of Policy in the Constitution Of India. These principles are: promotion of international peace and security; friendly relations with other countries; respect for international law and international organizations like the UN; and finally the peaceful settlement of international disputes. The principles of India's foreign policy and its objectives are closely interlinked with each other. These principles have stood the test of time and are ingrained in the international law and India's foreign policy practice. Some of these principles are discussed below.

A. Panchsheel

Indian Policy makers understood the linkage between peace and development and survival of mankind. In view of the destruction caused by two world wars, they realized that for the progress of a nation a durable world peace was needed. Without global peace, social and economic development is likely to be pushed to the background. Thus, the founder of India's foreign policy, Nehru gave utmost importance to world peace in his policy planning. For him, India desired peaceful and friendly relations with all countries, particularly the big powers and the neighboring nations. While signing a peace agreement with China; he advocated adherence to five guiding principles known as Panchsheel. Panchsheel was signed on 28 April, 1954 and since then it has become a guiding principle of India's bilateral relations with countries also. Panchsheel includes the following five principles of foreign policy:

1. Mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty.
2. Non-aggression against each other.
3. Non-interference in each other's internal affairs.
4. Equality and mutual benefit.
5. Peaceful co-existence.

These principles of Panchsheel were later incorporated in the Bandung Declaration, signed in the Afro-Asian Conference held in 1955 in Indonesia. They are the core principles of Non-alignment and still guide the conduct of India's foreign policy.

B. Policy of Non-alignment

Non-alignment is the most important feature of India's foreign policy. Its core element is to maintain independence in foreign affairs by not joining any military alliance formed by the USA and Soviet Union, which emerged as an important aspect of cold war politics after the Second World War. Non-alignment should not be confused with neutrality or non-

involvement in international affairs or isolationism. It was a positive and dynamic concept. It postulates taking an independent stand on international issues according to the merits of each case but at the same time not committing to coming under the influence of any military bloc. Thus, keeping away from the military alliances and super power blocs was a necessary condition for the independence of foreign policy. India's policy of non-alignment got many supporters in the developing countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America as it provided them opportunity for protecting their foreign policy independence amidst the cold war pressures and tensions. India played a lead role in popularizing and consolidating the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). India, under the leadership of Nehru, convened the Asian Relations Conference in New Delhi in 1947 to forge the idea of Asian solidarity. Another Asian Relations Conference was convened by India in 1949 on the question of independence of Indonesia as India stood firm -against the colonial rule in other countries. A larger Conference, known as Bandung Conference of 29 countries of Asia and Africa was convened in Bandung (Indonesia) in 1955 to forge the Afro-Asian unit. The conference laid down ten fundamental principles of international relations, which included five principles of Panchsheel. The leaders pledged to work together for colonial liberation, peace, and cultural, economic and political cooperation among developing countries. The Bandung Conference was precursor to the NAM, which held its first Summit in 1961 at Belgrade. Since then, the Non-Aligned Movement has not looked back. So far its 15 Summits have been held, the last one held at Sharm El Sheikh in 2009. It provides all its members, regardless of their size and development, an opportunity to participate in global decision-making process. The Seventh NAM Summit was hosted by India at New Delhi in 1983. In this Summit, India took up the cause of development, disarmament and the Palestine issue.

Continued Relevance of Non-alignment: As NAM was a product of cold war politics and the bipolar world, many scholars have questioned the relevance of NAM after the end of cold war and disintegration of the Soviet Union. Again, the globalization led to the change in the priorities of even its chief votaries like India, which tried to adopt neo-liberal market economy principles in order to integrate with the emerging global order. This new situation generated the impression as if NAM is sidelined and its relevance is declining. However, if we go deep in the basic features of NAM, it appears to be equally significant also in the changing context due to the following factors:

1. As the world faces greater threat from a unipolar world led by US after the disintegration of Soviet Union, the NAM can act as a check against undue dominance and hegemony of any country or block.
2. The developed (North) and developing (South) world have divergent views over several global and economic issues. The NAM may provide a forum for third world countries to engage the developed nations in a productive dialogue.

3. The NAM can prove to be a powerful mechanism to forge South-South cooperation, which is essential for their collective self reliance in the present market driven global order.
4. NAM can provide an important forum for developing countries to discuss and deliberate upon various global problems, issues and reforms including the reform of UN and other international financial institutions like World Bank and IMF in order to make them more democratic and effective.

C. Policy of Resisting Colonialism, Imperialism, Racism

India has been victim of colonialism and racism and was as such opposed to these evils in any form. India considers colonialism and imperialism as the threat to international peace and security India was the first to bring the issue of Apartheid in the UN in 1946. India raised her voice for the independence of Indonesia and organized Asian Relations Conference for this purpose. Due to India's consistent efforts through NAM and other international forums, 14 African countries were liberated from the yoke of colonialism in 1964. India made sincere efforts to end the scourge of apartheid in South Africa. At India's initiative, NAM set up the Africa Fund (Action for Resisting Imperialism, Colonialism and Apartheid) in 1986 to help the frontline states, which were victims of aggression of South Africa for supporting the cause of fight against Apartheid. India made generous contribution to this fund. The end of racialism in South Africa in 1990 was a great success for Indian policy.

D. Peaceful Settlement of International Disputes

One of the core elements of India's foreign policy is its unflinching faith in the political solution and peaceful settlement of international disputes. This principle has been included in the Constitution of India, under the Directive Principles of State Policy as well as in the Charter of the UN. India has played leading role in the resolution of Korean conflict and supported negotiated settlement of Palestine issue, Kashmir problem, border problems with neighboring countries and other such disputes and problems. At present, India is in favour of resolution of peaceful settlement of Iranian nuclear issue, problem of democratic upsurge in Middle East and so on. India is always against foreign military intervention for resolving international problems. This principle continues to be the cornerstone of India's policy.

E. Support to UN, International Law and a Just and Equal World Order

India has deep respect for the international law and/or the principles of sovereign equality of nations and non-interference in the internal affairs of other nations as espoused by the UN. India has supported the cause of disarmament pursued by the UN. In 1988, India proposed a very ambitious programme of nuclear disarmament before the UN. Though, this proposal was

not accepted by the other members of the UN, India stands committed to the cause of universal disarmament even today. India has played a key role in preserving world peace by helping in the decolonization process, and through active participation in UN peacekeeping activities. In order to make the composition of the Security Council more realistic and democratic, India has proposed and supported the reform of Security Council and other UN agencies. India is one of the claimants of permanent membership of the Security Council.