



A Study on Indian Foreign Policy after Independence

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ABSTARCT

India's foreign policy is fundamentally based on the principles of peaceful co-existence, friendship and co-operation among all the countries of the world irrespective of their political systems. The foreign policy is aimed at promoting international peace and security and maintaining good and friendly relations with all the countries of the world. India, which was a colonial country under the mighty British rule, experienced the power politics of Super Powers during Cold War period, and chose for herself the path of non-alignment and peaceful co-existence. The current article highlights the foreign policy of India after independence.

KEYWORDS:

Foreign, Policy, Nehru



INTRODUCTION

India, while conducting its external relations with Super Powers distanced itself aligning with either of the blocs, thereby pursuing independent foreign policy, and maintaining its sovereignty. India's policy also maintained aloofness in the politics of Super Powers without taking the side. Thus, India always took just and independent judgments depending upon the issues involved in the international arena. Therefore, India's independence in foreign affairs paved the way for the concept of non-alignment that became not only the guiding principle but also the corner stone of India's foreign policy.

It was this foreign policy that started off the Non-Aligned Movement; which later on became one of the largest movements the world has ever seen, comprising more than one-thirds of the world's total population, covering a broad geographical and ideological spectrum.

It was only after it became independent in 1947 that India began to evolve its own foreign policy in the light of its requirements and the prevailing international situation. Besides, it began to conduct its external relations with the rest of the world directly as sovereign state.



The post independent foreign policy was formulated taking into consideration the various factors such as the Congress party resolutions, ideology of national leaders, power politics of the Super Powers, Cold War, colonial experience, imperialism, racial discrimination etc. India's foreign policy, ever since her independence advocated the principles of friendship and co-operation with all the countries of the world irrespective of their political systems. Especially the establishment of friendly relations with the neighbouring countries was the principal plank of India's foreign policy.

In order to achieve its national interests/objectives and to promote international peace, India had maintained good and friendly relations with almost all countries of the world. While securing the interests, the conduct of the Indian foreign policy was governed by the principles such as preservation of sovereign independence, pursuance of independent foreign policy by avoiding alignment with power blocs, mutual understanding and cooperation, promoting international peace and prosperity etc. The post-independence foreign policy of India followed the path of nonalignment and peaceful co-existence in order to achieve these objectives. The policy of non-alignment advocated by both Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru on the idea of non-involvement and non-



entanglement became the corner stone of independent India's foreign policy.

The post-Independence foreign policy was formulated on the principle of non-alignment because India achieved its independence during the time when the Cold War clouds were already looming large on the globe as a result of which it not only underwent but also experienced the power politics of the Super Powers. This naturally made India formulate her foreign policy on the lines of non-involvement and non-alignment that became the basic principle of India's foreign policy.

It was Jawaharlal Nehru, the architect of India's foreign policy, who continuously held the External Affairs Ministry as well from 1947 to 1964, played a decisive role in shaping the India's postindependence foreign policy. His contribution towards India's foreign policy formulation and implementation was memorable and highly appreciable. Nehru's authority on foreign policy matters was all in all and his word in cabinet discussions was final, to which several members of the Congress and his colleagues in the government supported actively. In short, Nehru's role in India's foreign policy matters was a one-man show.

Apart from Mahatma Gandhi, the role played by Jawaharlal Nehru in formulating India's foreign policy was unique and significant. It was Nehru the hero of freedom struggle and the towering personality in



India's foreign policy to whom the credit for formulating India's foreign policy before and after the independence accrues. Nehru, who was instrumental in formulating and fashioning the country's foreign policy, was regarded as the sole architect of the foreign policy of independent India. Besides Mahatma Gandhi's principles, the ideological commitment of Nehru greatly influenced the shaping of India's foreign policy.

INDIAN FOREIGN POLICY AFTER INDEPENDENCE

Nehru, who was Western educated was deeply impressed by the Western Liberal Democratic ideology of the western countries and also the Soviet Union economic policies. But Nehru wanted to keep away from both the ideologies while formulating India's foreign policy. However, Nehru had followed the H.J.Laski's ideology, which was a synthesis of Liberalism and Marxism. In fact, the policy of non-alignment was indirectly the result of the synthesis of Liberalism and Marxism.

Nehru, who took keen interest in formulating and implementing India's foreign policy, influenced the west through his charismatic image that greatly helped to change the discriminatory attitudes of the foreign countries towards India. Taking into consideration the role-played by Jawaharlal Nehru in the international field, Mahatma Gandhi wrote "Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru is Indian to the core but, he being also an



internationalist, has made us accustomed to look at everything in the international light instead of the parochial”.

Due to the sincere efforts of Jawaharlal Nehru in 1936 a separate Foreign Affairs Department was opened in the Indian National Congress under his leadership. This was used in developing outside contacts and organizing the anti-imperialistic movement of the dependent people across the world. The Foreign Affairs Department greatly helped Nehru in passing the resolutions on foreign affairs and formulation of India’s complete and clear foreign policy. Nehru as an internationalist acted as a bridge of balancing factor between the Indian National Congress and the anticolonialist forces of the world during the time of struggle for independence. It is because of Nehru’s endeavour and articulated interest that the foreign policy of India has occupied a unique position in the international arena. Commenting on the role of Nehru in formulating India’s foreign policy, V.B.Kamik opines that “ The framework was provided from time to time by Nehru: his ideas and ideology, his aims and aspirations, his judgments and impressions, his desires and ambitions, his likes and dislikes, his passions and prejudices... constituted the timber of which went into the building of that framework.”



No doubt, there was an element of truth in the abovementioned views. It is clear that it was the Nehru who formulated the Indian foreign policy. However, India had to formulate its foreign policy taking into consideration such ideas as imperialism, colonialism, and power politics that emerged during the time of India's struggle for independence. Further the historic declarations of the Congress and the principles advocated by Mahatma Gandhi were instrumental in providing roots to the anti-cold war, antiimperialism, anti-racialism, anti-power politics and pro-neutralism, peaceful co-existence and friendliness with neighbours.

While commenting on foreign policy, D.C.Sharma in Lok Sabha observed, "Our foreign policy has the framework of our Indian culture and tradition which has lasted for thousands of years. It is rooted in the philosophy which Mahatma Gandhi gave us and it is also grounded in the theory and practice of the foreign policy which Pandit Nehru expounded to us and to the whole world". In short the foreign of policy of India is not formulated by some personalities or individual leaders but by the interaction of many forces within the country and also outside the country.

Jawaharlal Nehru had a long tenure as Prime Minister of India and had made substantial contributions to the field of international relations, which put India on the diplomatic map of the world. It was during his



tenure as Prime Minister that India's foreign policy came under heavy influence due to certain developments of far reaching consequences such as the beginning of Cold War and Sino-Indian war of 1962. These developments, no doubt greatly influenced the formulation of post-independence foreign policy on the lines of non-alignment, test ban, non-proliferation etc. Now it is significant to understand these events, which had a great bearing on India's foreign policy during Nehru's regime.

There was a drastic change in the international scenario due to the developments of far reaching political consequences that had taken place soon after the Second World War. Firstly, the end of Second World War with direct-armed confrontation and the beginning of Cold War without armed struggle but with a diplomatic and an ideological clash are said to be the important developments that had taken place during the said period. In short, it can be defined as a state of intense diplomatic, political, economic and ideological, struggle short of armed belligerency and clash. Secondly, it was marked with the emergence of newly achieved independent countries as a result of rapid decolonisation.

Thirdly, it was after the defeat of the Axis powers i.e., Japan and Germany in 1945 that the international scene was mainly dominated by the rivalry between the two warring groups, United States and USSR,



each endeavoring to contain the other and, in the process, attempting to muster friendly and subordinate nations on its side. “

This state of affairs was known as the “Cold War”- the phrase was coined by Walter Lippmann - and was characterised by extreme hostility between the two factions, especially in public international organizations such as the united Nations, but with little actual fighting, and this, where it occurred, was mainly between one Super Power, normally the United States, and an ally or client state of the other.”

DISCUSSION

There are divergent versions with regard to the exact origin of Cold War. Some say it is the Bolsheviks revolution of 1917 in the Soviet Russia, which sowed the seeds of Cold War. On the contrary some opined that the Cold War had started soon after the Second World War, which was widely prevalent and accepted version. Therefore, we may not go into the details of the origin of the Cold War as it is beyond the scope of this study. Here we are concerned more about the impact of Cold War on the newly emerged independent countries like India, as part of rapid decolonization process.

By the time India achieved its independence in the year 1947, the Cold War had already started and the world was being bifurcated into two



hostile groups, namely, American block and U.S.S.R. Block each jockeying for the supremacy in the globe with conflicting ideologies. The world was virtually divided into two blocs, and a line was drawn in Europe “the crossing of which was recognized as casus belt.

Thus, it is clear that right from independence India had to confront with the problem of evolving foreign policy consistent with its national interests during the time when the whole world was divided virtually into two blocs. As a result, India, which was just liberated from the clutches of British colonialism, had to under go the impact of politics of power blocs.

In such an atmosphere India wanted to achieve its rightful and honored position in the international horizon thereby drawing the attention of the Super Powers with an idea of establishing peace and harmony in the globe. To avoid the foreign entanglements by joining either of the blocs, India decided to keep away from the power blocs aligned against one another. Explaining India’s stand in the world Jawaharlal Nehru declared that “

We propose as far as possible, to keep away from the power politics of groups aligned against one another, which had led in the past to world wars and which may again lead to disasters on even vaster scale. We believe that peace and freedom are indivisible and denial of freedom



anywhere must endanger freedom elsewhere and lead to conflict and war. We are particularly interested in the emancipation of colonial and dependent countries and peoples”.

India as a colony considered herself isolated from active participation in world affairs because she was bound by the decisions of the British Government. It also resented twice for its involuntary involvement in two world wars at the behest of Great Britain. Therefore, this involuntary involvement with Great Britain and its allies in times of war undoubtedly contributed to the development of India’s foreign policy on the lines of non-alignment with power blocs, especially with Western alignment with which she had been familiar all along.

CONCLUSION

In short, India decided not to join either of the two blocs in the interest of economic development, to maintain independent judgment in evaluating and deciding foreign affairs and to follow independent foreign policy, to safeguard interests and to promote the international peace.

Therefore, India had to evolve its foreign policy taking into consideration all the major factors discussed above, such as Cold War conflicts, Super



Powers alliances, imperialism, and colonialism etc., which greatly influenced the formulation of India's foreign policy on the lines of non-alignment.

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