

# Title - History of India's Foreign Policy: an overview and Assessment

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**Abstract:** *Indian foreign policy has undergone many changes in last 70 years of our independence. The cold war and after the USSR disintegration new market economies came closer with each other. The domestic change of government in 20th and 21st century took major changes in India political and foreign grounds. Non alignment becomes the Indian soul of their peaceful and sustainability of prejudice, India's foreign policy woven around this non alignment. The relevance of non alignment was still relevant before and after any major circumstances, India's act as independent player in the world makes it fully right to judge every policy independently and formulation of new policy as per their choice. India always reshapes its foreign policy for the betterment of the human kind.*

**Key words:** *Detachment, Communism, Martial law, Disintegration, Genocide*

## Introduction

India's foreign policy have a range of approaches which were belongs from theory of realism and non realism, interdependence and domestic and socio cultural and political experiences which were based on India's freedom movement. The leaders like Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru have their role in shaping and rethinking of India's foreign policy.

As of its size of area, economy, population, leadership and other sets of paradigm, India constantly influence the international relations with its energetic manners, responsibilities and capacities that it have in international system. India's foreign policy consists of various factors, goals, influences and mechanism. The single evaluation of approaches towards India's foreign policy do not seems to be best.

The policy which took shape in the core concern of foreign policy makes decision making approaches at institutional level of government as well as social and political level. The agglomeration of government, institutions and socio political exchanges makes ultimate actors which are the basics of foreign policy. The policy process is the outcome of the national interest which should be on concrete level directed towards external affairs or foreign national diplomacy. The characterization of India's national movement and the makeup of cold war between the US and USSR after second world war marked India's foreign policy as non alignment by nature to away from military and power politics and to reshape the country with independent vision. The initiative of India's foreign policy as non alignment makes other countries that have newly independent after colonial rules a ray of hope. India's from that point up to now register a deep analysis of ups and downs in foreign policy with world powers as well as its neighbour's point of concern.

## India's foreign policy under the reign of Nehru

India secured to their control over foreign policy after the British left India in 1947. The external environment was confined with cold war between two winning nations of Second World War. Nehru was in highly dilemma to join any of the blocks as per the concerns regarding India's newly independence was in danger if it would happen. Thus, he adopted India would away from both the blocs as regarded it as policy of non alignment. Nehru formulated basic policies which include goals to end of racism and colonialism, independence from power blocs and close ties with its neighbours. In his own words ", India were free to participate any conference, summits and etc. events as per a free nation, not as a satellite nation from any power bloc and ideology". India at that time left no time and place to disharm colonial actions and practice of inequality which she faces 200 years of its colonial shadow. First American President George Washington too were in favors of non alignment as he in 1776 advocated just and true feelings towards all nations. Primarily India was against the military blocs established by US led NATO and USSR led Warsaw pact. After that India was not going to make neutrality. Neutrality was in good sense an instrument used in war time. But as a positive thought, India's non alignment makes independence of decision making that affect her interest. US promoted military treaty in India's neighbourhood as South east Asia treaty organization (SEATO) and Central treaty organization (CENTO) in 1950. These were to fight against USSR led communism. But Pakistan entry in these military organizations for military aid and support from USA makes a challenging nature for India. The support of arms and ammunition to Pakistan makes complications in the relationship of India USA too.

Nehru had great faith in International organizations and due to that he led Kashmir issue in United Nation (UN) as well as in Security Council (SC). He never imagined that Kashmir issue seen through the prism of cold war. Being friendly parts against a communism Pakistan begin to raise the Kashmir issue now and then. USA kept this issue as an instrument to pressurize India politically. After all is being a commonwealth member, Britain does not get any interest in finding a solution. Thus, the Soviet Union came to rescue India and when US and UK began to vote on the side of Pakistan, USSR exercised his VETO power to save Indians interest and cold war politics.

## India China war

The major crisis happens in India's foreign policy was the Chinese aggression of October 1962. The peace and friendship policy formulated by Nehru and his friend defence minister V K Krishna Menon never envisaged a threat from communist China.

Nehru never wants any military strength to negotiate political settlement amongst nations. Chinese claim over the Tibet easily accepted by India without making any reciprocal concessions from China. Sino Tibet agreement on May 31, 1951 which was signed by India makes Chinese troops stationed on the borders of India. Nehru concluded Panchsheel Agreement in 1954 to pacify Chinese. It was an act to hide India's inability to oppose China's expansionist design. The military detachment in the Aksai Chin region and along Sinkiang borders makes concerns for India. To show North East Frontier Agency (NEFA) as Chinese territory makes a tension start between these two. If India had solicited a help from US in 1954 during Tibetan crisis, then the help of 1962 must be substantially bigger and more effective for India. The showing of correct image to take assistance from any country rather to make tilt towards the super power is the larger context of non alignment. Thus, the doctrine of defence by friendship with China was a failure. Nehru's idealistic interpretation was making responsible of lack of strategic planning by India.

### **Foreign policy after 1964**

Nehru died in 1964 and Lal Bahadur Shastri sworn as a Prime Minister of India but his tenure was short and he died in Tashkent in January 1966. Nehru's major role was to take India on international affairs. Shastri too making advanced relations with India's neighbouring and countries of South Asia. The issue of Rann of Kutch, a marshy land between India and Pakistan were referred to arbitration by mutual consent. Pakistan occupy just 1/10 part of its claim over this. On the other hand China tests the atom bomb in 1964. Shastri's perception too makes short vision of classification as Pakistan waged war on India in 1965. When Pakistan trying to capture some territory of Jammu and Kashmir in this war, Indians opened a second front towards Lahore. US was at that time engage in Vietnam War, on the other hand Soviet Union tried good offices in resolving conflicts between these two. Soviet leaders also invited both parties of conflict in Tashkent to find a solution.

### **Indira Gandhi tenure**

Indira Gandhi has the longest tenure after Jawaharlal Nehru and succeeded Lal Bahadur Shastri. The war of 1971 was the major event of foreign policy in his regime. Democratic elections of Pakistan held in 1970, in which Awami league was in absolute majority in East Pakistan. Yahya Khan military dictator of Pakistan was unwilling to transfer power to a Bangladeshi. Instead of it, he imposed martial law in Bangladesh and sent Lieutenant General Tikka Khan as governor and army to quell the movement. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, leader of Awami league arrested and East Pakistan was in military dictatorship of West Pakistan.

The military entry to East Pakistan from West Pakistan indulged in one of the worst human rights violation in human history. The massacre, brutal punishment, rape and genocide of Hindus took place. It was resulted with the migration of 12 million Bangladeshi, Muslims and Hindus to come to west Bengal as refugees. The feeding of such a large number of makes economic strain over India and created a problem of law and order within the country.

Indira Gandhi took diplomatic step and informs western countries in her tour about human tragedies going in East Pakistan. US at that time come closer to China with help of Pakistan. Indira Gandhi also started military intervention for this purpose. Indian army wanted this intervention in a winter after snowbound Himalayas stop China to take part into the military intervention done by India. Pakistan pre-emptive strikes on 3 December 1971 done to move Indian forces towards the west. The successive war ends with the result of Bangladesh as an independent country. Pakistani soldiers of around 90,000 in numbers surrender before the Indian army. US were in tension as he considered this victory was of Soviet Union. Nixon was very much keen to save West Pakistan destruction by India. The USSR veto against withdraw of Indian forces from east Pakistan and nuclear powered ship support to India against Americans support to Pakistan help Indian victory through diplomatic efforts played by Indira Gandhi.

### **Indo Soviet treaty of Peace and Friendship 1971**

From the Nehru period a tilt of Soviet towards India was always there. 1970's were the period when the Soviet Union had sympathetic towards non alignment. Even Soviet Union called as a natural ally of the non alignment nations. Before the Bangladeshi liberation war of 1971 India signed a treaty of friendship with Soviet Union. Both the countries agreed on mutual consultations in the period of military threat and adopt effective measures according to the situations.

This treaty has clearly seen as an acceptance of India as a non aligned country in the eyes of Soviet union. US criticized it and said India ends its policy of non alignment. But it was not the treaty of military aid and other cold war benefits but changing global concerns and threats from super powers and neighbouring countries. As China and Pakistan, two of the India's enemy and belligerent nations of war against India and their closeness with USA have serious implications for India, having no option to avoid friendship treaty with USSR.

### **Simla Agreement**

It was an agreement after 1971 war between Indira Gandhi and Bhutto. Both nations agreed to solve their differences through peaceful means and bilateral negotiations. Apart from this Pakistan regained all its territories lost in this war and also secured Prisoners of war (PoW) from Bangladesh.

### **Operation Smiling Buddha (1974)**

Nehru was very much idealistic about power but Indira had firm determination regarding that. She was very much realistic. Such view was in real manner performed when she conducting nuclear test in Pokhran, Rajasthan on May, 1974. As per consequences of nuclear threat poses by China after its nuclear test of 1964 and its closeness with Pakistan. Also USA blackmail India with its nuclear capability in the 1971 war.

### **Indian Peace Keeping Force in Sri Lanka**

An ethnic crisis in Sri Lanka was at its peak in Rajeev Gandhi tenure, which began in 1983 a year before Indira Gandhi assassination. India at the wake up of this crisis handled it in a very disinterested manner. Rajeev Gandhi tenure took this crisis as asserted for Indian interest and wanted aid to Tamils in Jaffna on humanitarian ground. He sent 20 boats of food grains but Sri Lankan government did not permit it to reach to the Tamils. 1987 was the period when Indian Air Force drops the supply and this incident raises concerns for Sri Lankan president Jayawardhane that India took this issue seriously. India and Sri Lanka for maintaining peace signed an accord in July 1987 after help was requested by Sri

Lankan president. Under this accord, Indian Peace Keeping forces took their role in north and east side of Sri Lanka and managed Tamils to drop down the arms. Sri Lankan government also favors merger of Tamil dominant areas and holding provincial elections. But both sides have distrust and no implementation occurs. Tamilians on the other hand misjudged Indian Peace Keeping actions and assumed it as 'Innocent people killing force'. Demands from both the belligerents were to withdraw IPKF. V P Singh the then Prime Minister of India withdrew forces from Sri Lanka. The peace keeping forces turn towards bloody battles and this led to plot against a human bomb for the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi.

### 1991-1995

The first congress PM Narsimha Rao was outside of Nehru Gandhi clan and faces major problems of foreign policy. The readjustment of mixed economic policy to global is one of them. The liberalization, privatization and globalization (LPG) were decisions to drive economic resources of the country. This period marked the Soviet disintegration which makes USA a global power and world of bipolar scenario changed to unipolar world. India at that situation was economic weak state who has no way but to choose LPG policy. USA at that time taking maximum advantage to making pressure over India. America pressurize India to open its market for computers, IT, Telecommunications etc. India also abandoned their nuclear tests which were in plan of 1995 after it was detected by the USA.

### Developments and changes in governments

Atal Bihari Vajpayee led coalition government main foreign policy is to push India's nuclear capability and improving relations with Pakistan. Nuclear weapon test on 11 May 1998 surprised the world when India declared herself nuclear weapon state and declared no more test would conduct any more as necessary data has been collected. India trying to maintain minimum nuclear deterrence. The 1999 was the year when a relation with Pakistan seems to be improving. The Lahore bus trip by Atal Bihari Vajpayee was a step of relaxation of tensions between both the countries. The month of May in the same year saw Kargil war, when the two leaders discussing for bilateral relations, Pakistan was on the other side preparing for war. It was much significant before any war as both the nuclear capable countries are facing each other. The Agra summit of 2001 between Atal Bihari Vajpayee and General Pervez Musharaff was very near to any judgment and conclusion over Kashmir but talks collapsed due to rigid behavior over Kashmir by Musharaff. The 13 December 2001 attack over Indian parliament again performs serious tension between these two countries. The 26/11 attack over Mumbai in 2008 marked the serious implications and domestic pressure raises to teach a lesson to Pakistan. The soft power of India time to time challenged and questioned. The regular attacks on army base and police in Jammu and Kashmir took a harsh action by Modi government when surgical strikes would take place by Indian army in Pakistan area of Pak occupied Kashmir (PoK).

### Conclusion and Recommendation

We have seen that the value of non alignment in the newly independent countries was very high but it diminishes with time. It was a child of a bi polar world where two super powers contesting for ideological, economic and political supremacy. But after the disintegration of Soviet Union in 1991 such rival military alliances have no more in any competition and paved the way for countries to join one side or other as per their choices. The non aligned countries have no concern of their power as their values are not under anyone's control and they must be independent in their decision making approaches. India as per to safeguard their national interest and sovereignty tilted towards power blocs. The tilt of India towards Russia was done after the Pakistan, USA and China was very much aggressive towards India. But after and USSR disintegration and USA and Russia no more a rival then India tilt towards USA not seen as a negative factors. Today in multi polar world the market economy sustains their values. The military blocs sustainably changes towards market blocs. Non alignment is not a pseudo nature but a range of hope for the survival of weak and depressed class. Non alignment is the self reliance mechanism in which India has created her own identity in the world.

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