



Foreign Policy

The foreign policy of India regulates India's relations with other states of the world in promoting its national interests. It is determined by a number of factors, viz., geography, history and tradition, social structure, political organisation, international milieu¹, economic position, military strength, public opinion and leadership.

PRINCIPLES OF INDIAN FOREIGN POLICY

1. Promotion of World Peace

India's foreign policy aims at the promotion of international peace and security. Article 51 of the Constitution (Directive Principles of State Policy) directs the Indian State to promote international peace and security, maintain just and honourable relations between nations, foster respect for international law and treaty obligations, and encourage settlement of international disputes by arbitration. Besides peace is necessary to promote the economic development of nations. Jawaharlal Nehru said: "Peace to us is not just a fervent hope; it is emergent necessity".

2. Anti-Colonialism

The foreign policy of India opposes colonialism and imperialism. India views

that the colonialism and imperialism leads to exploitation of the weaker nations by the imperialist powers and affects the promotion of international peace. India advocated the liquidation of colonialism in all forms and supported the liberation movement in Afro-Asian countries like Indonesia, Malaya, Tunisia, Algeria, Ghana, Namibia and so on. Thus, India expressed her solidarity with the people of Afro-Asian nations in their struggle against colonial and imperialist forces like Britain, France, Holland, Portugal and so on. The present neo-colonialism and neo-imperialism is also opposed by India.

3. Anti-Racialism

Opposition to racialism in all its forms is an important aspect of Indian foreign policy. According to India, racialism (i.e., discrimination between people on the basis of race), like colonialism and imperialism, leads to exploitation of the blacks by the whites, social inequity and hinders the promotion of world peace. India strongly criticised the policy of apartheid (racial discrimination) being followed by the white minority racist regime of South Africa. It even snapped diplomatic relations with South Africa in 1954 as a protest against the policy of apartheid². Similarly, India played an important role in the liberation of Zimbabwe (earlier Rhodesia) and Namibia from the white domination.

4. Non-Alignment

When India became independent in 1947, the world was divided into two blocs on ideological basis, namely, the capitalist bloc headed by USA and the communist bloc headed by the former USSR. In such a situation of ‘cold war’, India refused to join any of these two blocs and adopted a policy of non-alignment. In this context, Jawaharlal Nehru observed: “We propose to keep away from the power politics of groups, aligned against one another, which have led in the past to world wars and which may again lead to disasters on an even vaster scale. I feel that India can play a big part, and perhaps an effective part, in helping to avoid war. Therefore, it becomes all the more necessary that India should not be lined up with any group of power which for various reasons are full of fear of war and prepare for war”.

“When we say that India follows a policy of non-alignment, it means (i) that India has no military alliances with countries of either bloc or indeed with any nation; (ii) India has an independent approach to foreign policy; and (iii) India attempts to maintain friendly relations with all countries”³.

5. Panchsheel

Panchsheel implies the five principles of conduct in international relations. It was embodied in the Preamble of the Indo-China Treaty on Tibet, signed in 1954 by Jawaharlal Nehru and Chou-En-Lai, the Chinese Premier. The five principles were:

- (i) mutual respect for each other’s territorial integrity and sovereignty;
- (ii) non-aggression;
- (iii) non-interference in each other’s internal affairs;
- (iv) equality and mutual benefit; and
- (v) peaceful co-existence.

“India perceived the ‘Panchsheel’ as productive of peaceful cooperation of sovereign nations instead of the balance of terror and the degrading cold war tensions, being brought about by the rival great power pacts and alliances. India explained it as based on the concept of universalism as against the concept of the balance of power”⁴.

Panchsheel became very popular and many countries of the world like Burma, Yugoslavia, Indonesia and so on adopted it. Panchsheel and non-alignment are the greatest contributions of India to the theory and practice of international relations.

6. Afro-Asian Bias

Even though the foreign policy of India stands for maintaining friendly relations with all the countries of the world, it has always exhibited a special bias towards the Afro-Asian nations. It aims at promoting unity among them and tries to secure for them a voice and an influence in the international bodies. India has been seeking international assistance for the economic development of these countries. In 1947, India called the first Asian Relations Conference in New Delhi. In 1949, India brought together the Asian

countries on the burning issue of Indonesian freedom. India played an active role in the Afro-Asian Conference at Bandung (Indonesia) in 1955. India also played an important role in the formation of Group of 77 (1964), Group of 15 (1990), Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (1995), BIST Economic Cooperation (1997), and SAARC (1985). India earned the name of 'Big Brother' from many of the neighbouring countries.

7. Links with Commonwealth

In 1949 itself, India declared the continuation of her full membership of the Commonwealth of the Nations and the acceptance of the British Crown as the head of the Commonwealth. But, this extra-constitutional declaration does not affect India's sovereignty in any manner as the Commonwealth is a voluntary association of independent nations. It also does not affect India's republican character as India neither pays final allegiance to the British Crown nor the latter has any functions to discharge in relation to India.

India remained a member of the Commonwealth because of pragmatic reasons. It thought that the membership in the Commonwealth would be beneficial to her in the economic, political, cultural and other spheres. It has been playing an important role at the CHOGM (Commonwealth Heads of Governments Meet). India hosted the 24th Commonwealth Summit at New Delhi in 1983.

8. Support to the UNO

India became a member of the UNO in 1945 itself. Since then, it has been supporting the activities and programmes of UNO. It has expressed full faith in the objectives and principles of UNO. Some of the facets of India's role in UNO are:

- (i) It is through the UNO that India embarked on the policy of fighting against the colonialism, imperialism and racialism, and now neo-colonialism and neo-imperialism.
- (ii) In 1953, Vijay Lakshmi Pandit of India was elected as the President of the UN General Assembly.
- (iii) India actively participated in the UN Peace-keeping missions in Korea,

Congo, El Salvador, Cambodia, Angola, Somalia, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, Yugoslavia and so on.

- (iv) India continued to participate actively in the open ended working groups of the UNO. India was the Co-chairman of the working group on the strengthening of the UN which submitted its report in 1997.
- (v) Several times, India has been a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council. Now, India is demanding a permanent seat in the Security Council.

9. Disarmament

The foreign policy of India is opposed to arms race and advocates disarmament, both conventional and nuclear. This is aimed at promoting world peace and security by reducing or ending tensions between power blocs and to accelerate economic development of the country by preventing the unproductive expenditure on the manufacture of arms. India has been using the UNO platform to check the arms race and to achieve disarmament. India took the initiative of holding a six-nation summit at New Delhi in 1985 and made concrete proposals for nuclear disarmament.

By not signing the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) of 1968 and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) of 1996, India has kept its nuclear options open. India opposes NPT and CTBT due to their discriminatory and hegemonistic nature. They perpetuate an international system in which only five nations (USA, Russia, China, UK and France) can legitimately possess nuclear weapons.

OBJECTIVES OF INDIAN FOREIGN POLICY

India's foreign policy is directed towards the realisation of the following objectives⁵:

1. To protect India's core national interests and concerns in a rapidly changing international environment by fostering support and understanding in the international community.
2. To preserve the autonomy of the decision making process and to play a pioneering role in the establishment of a stable, prosperous and secure

global order.

3. To strengthen the international campaign against terrorism which is a global threat.
4. To build an international environment which is supportive of India's rapid economic growth including higher investments, trade, access to technology and strengthening India's energy security.
5. To work closely with P-5 countries and to build strategic ties with the major powers such as the USA, the EU, Japan, Russia, and China.
6. To intensify and strengthen ties with neighbours through mutually beneficial cooperation and by acknowledgement of each other's legitimate concerns.
7. To work for the realisation of SAARC as an economically integrated region at peace with itself and engaged with the world.
8. To ensure that cross-border terrorism is brought to an end and the entire infrastructure of terrorism operating from Pakistan is dismantled.
9. To further the gains from India's 'Act East' Policy (erstwhile 'Look East' Policy) and aspire for substantive progress in several areas of common interest to India and ASEAN.
10. To strengthen our ties with the countries of the Gulf region that has become home to over 4 million Indians and is a major source of supply of oil and gas.
11. To leverage economic growth through support to the activities of regional organisations like the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), Mekong-Ganga Cooperation and trans-regional groupings like the India, Brazil and South Africa (IBSA) Initiative and Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC).
12. To continue to work closely with regional groupings like the EU and G-20 for furthering India's interests in the international arena.
13. To reform and restructure the UN Security Council and espouse multipolarity in a world order that respects the principles of sovereignty and non-intervention.
14. To promote a more equitable equation between the developed and the developing world in the political, economic and technological domains.
15. To work towards the goal of global nuclear disarmament within a time-bound framework.

16. To closely interact with the Indian diaspora on a continuing basis in order to strengthen their bonds with India and to recognise their pivotal role in India's international relations.

GUJRAL DOCTRINE OF INDIA

The Gujral Doctrine is a milestone in India's foreign policy. It was propounded and initiated in 1996 by I.K. Gujral, the then Foreign Minister in the Deve Gowda Government.

The doctrine advocates that India, being the biggest country in South Asia, should extend unilateral concessions to the smaller neighbours. In other words, the doctrine is formulated on India's accommodating approach towards its smaller neighbours on the basis of the principle of non-reciprocity. It recognises the supreme importance of friendly and cordial relations with India's neighbours.

The doctrine is a five-point roadmap to guide the conduct of India's foreign relations with its immediate neighbours. These five principles are as follows:

1. With the neighbours like Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka, India should not ask for reciprocity, but give to them what it can in good faith.
2. No South Asian country should allow its territory to be used against the interest of another country of the region.
3. No country should interfere in the internal affairs of another country.
4. All South Asian countries should respect each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty.
5. All South Asian countries should settle all their disputes through peaceful bilateral negotiations.

Gujral himself explained: "The logic behind the Gujral Doctrine was that since we had to face two hostile neighbours in the north and the west, we had to be at 'total peace' with all other immediate neighbours in order to contain Pakistan's and China's influence in the region."

NUCLEAR DOCTRINE OF INDIA

India adopted its nuclear doctrine in 2003. The salient features of this doctrine are as follows:

1. Building and maintaining a credible minimum deterrent.
2. A posture of “No First Use” – nuclear weapons will only be used in retaliation against a nuclear attack on Indian territory or on Indian forces anywhere.
3. Nuclear retaliation to a first strike will be massive and designed to inflict unacceptable damage.
4. Nuclear retaliatory attacks can only be authorised by the civilian political leadership through the Nuclear Command Authority.
5. Non-use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon states.
6. However, in the event of a major attack against India, or Indian forces anywhere, by biological or chemical weapons, India will retain the option of retaliating with nuclear weapons.
7. A continuance of strict controls on export of nuclear and missile related materials and technologies, participation in the Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty negotiations, and continued observance of the moratorium on nuclear tests.
8. Continued commitment to the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world, through global, verifiable and non-discriminatory nuclear disarmament.

The Nuclear Command Authority comprises a Political Council and an Executive Council. The Political Council is chaired by the Prime Minister. It is the sole body which can authorise the use of nuclear weapons.

The Executive Council is chaired by the National Security Advisor. It provides inputs for decision making by the Nuclear Command Authority and executes the directives given to it by the Political Council.

The Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) reviewed the progress in the operationalising of India’s nuclear doctrine. The CCS reviewed the existing command and control structures, the state of readiness, the targeting strategy for a retaliatory attack, and operating procedures for various stages of alert and launch. The CCS expressed satisfaction with the overall preparedness.

The CCS approved the appointment of a Commander-in-Chief, Strategic Forces Command, to manage and administer all Strategic Forces. The CCS also reviewed and approved the arrangements for alternate chains of command for retaliatory nuclear strikes in all eventualities.

CONNECT CENTRAL ASIA POLICY OF INDIA

India launched the “Connect Central Asia” Policy in 2012. This policy is aimed at strengthening and expanding of India’s relations with the Central Asian countries. These countries include Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

India’s “Connect Central Asia” policy is a broad-based approach including political, security, economic and cultural connections. Its features (or elements) are as follows⁶:

1. India will continue to build on its strong political relations through the exchange of high level visits. India’s leaders will continue to interact closely both in bilateral and multilateral fora.
2. India will strengthen its strategic and security cooperation. India already has strategic partnerships with some Central Asian countries. The focus will be on military training, joint research, counter-terrorism coordination and close consultations on Afghanistan.
3. India will step up multilateral engagement with Central Asian partners using the synergy of joint efforts through existing fora like the SCO, Eurasian Economic Community (EEC) and the Custom Union. India has already proposed a Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement to integrate its markets with the unifying Eurasian space.
4. India looks to Central Asia as a long-term partner in energy, and natural resources. Central Asia possesses large cultivable tracts of land and there is potential for India to cooperate in production of profitable crops with value addition.
5. The medical field is another area that offers huge potential for cooperation. India is ready to extend cooperation by setting up civil hospitals/clinics in Central Asia.
6. India’s higher education system delivers at a fraction of the fees charged by Western universities. Keeping this in mind, India would like to assist in the setting up of a Central Asian University in Bishkek that could come up as a centre of excellence to impart world class education in areas like IT, management, philosophy and languages.
7. India is working on setting up a Central Asian e-network with its hub in India, to deliver, tele-education and tele-medicine connectivity, linking all

the five Central Asian States.

8. Indian companies can showcase India's capability in the construction sector and build world class structures at competitive rates. Central Asian countries, especially Kazakhstan, have almost limitless reserves of iron ore and coal, as well as abundant cheap electricity. India can help set up several medium size steel rolling mills, producing its requirement of specific products.
9. As for land connectivity, India has reactivated the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC). There is a need to discuss ways to bridge the missing links in the Corridor at the earliest and also work on other connecting spurs along the route.
10. Absence of a viable banking infrastructure in the region is a major barrier to trade and investment. Indian banks can expand their presence if they see a favourable policy environment.
11. India and Central Asian nations will jointly work to improve air connectivity between them. India is one of the biggest markets for outbound travelers estimated at USD 21 billion in 2011. Many countries have opened tourist offices in India to woo Indian tourists. Central Asian countries could emerge as attractive holiday destinations for tourists and even for the Indian film industry which likes to depict exotic foreign locales in its films.
12. Connections between the people are the most vital linkages to sustain the deep engagement. There is particularly need to emphasise exchanges between youth and the future leaders of India and Central Asia. There is already a robust exchange of students. India and Central Asian nations will encourage regular exchanges of scholars, academics, civil society and youth delegations to gain deeper insights into each other's cultures.

India's "Connect Central Asia" policy is consonant with its overall policy of deepening engagement in Eurasia, its policy of strengthening relations with China, with Pakistan, and building on its traditional relationship with Russia. India hopes that its membership in numerous regional forums including at the SCO, would bolster India's renewed linkages with the region.

ACT EAST POLICY OF INDIA

In 2014, the Modi Government upgraded India's "Look East Policy" and re-

named it as the “Act East Policy”. The “Look East Policy” was first initiated in 1992 by the then Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao.

While addressing the India-ASEAN Summit (2014), the Prime Minister Narendra Modi said : “A new era of economic development, industrialization and trade has begun in India. Externally, India’s ‘Look East Policy’ has become ‘Act East Policy’”. Similarly, the External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj, during her visit to Vietnam in 2014, told Indian envoys to ‘Act East’ and not just ‘Look East’.

The features (or elements) of India’s “Act East Policy” are as follows⁷:

1. India’s Act East Policy focusses on the extended neighbourhood in the Asia-Pacific region. The policy which was originally conceived as an economic initiative, has gained political, strategic and cultural dimensions including establishment of institutional mechanisms for dialogue and cooperation.
2. India has upgraded its relations to strategic partnership with Indonesia, Vietnam, Malaysia, Japan, Republic of Korea, Australia, Singapore and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and forged close ties with all countries in the Asia-Pacific region.
3. Further, apart from ASEAN, ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and East Asia Summit (EAS), India has also been actively engaged in regional fora such as Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD), Mekong Ganga Cooperation (MGC) and Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA).
4. Act East Policy has placed emphasis on India-ASEAN cooperation in our domestic agenda on infrastructure, manufacturing, trade, skills, urban renewal, smart cities, Make in India and other initiatives. Connectivity projects, cooperation in space, S&T and people-to-people exchanges could become a springboard for regional integration and prosperity.
5. The objective of “Act East Policy” is to promote economic cooperation, cultural ties and develop strategic relationship with countries in the Asia-Pacific region through continuous engagement at bilateral, regional and multilateral levels thereby providing enhanced connectivity to the States of North Eastern Region including Arunachal Pradesh with other countries in our neighbourhood.

6. The North East of India has been a priority in our Act East Policy. The policy provides an interface between North East India including the state of Arunachal Pradesh and the ASEAN region.
7. Various plans at bilateral and regional levels include steady efforts to develop and strengthen connectivity of Northeast with the ASEAN region through trade, culture, people-to-people contacts and physical infrastructure (road, airport, telecommunication, power, etc.).
8. On the Civilizational front, Buddhist and Hindu links are being energized to develop new contacts and connectivity between people.
9. On Connectivity, special efforts are being made to develop a coherent strategy, particularly for linking ASEAN with North East India. Measures, including building transport infrastructure, encouraging airlines to enhance connectivity in the region, contacts between academic and cultural institutions are underway.
10. India's economic engagement with ASEAN has been stepped up – regional integration and implementation of projects are priorities. The ASEAN-India Agreement on Trade in Service and Investments has entered into force for India and seven ASEAN countries from 1 July 2015.
11. On strategic issues, India has increased convergence on security interests with key partners both in bilateral and multilateral format. Closer cooperation in combating terrorism, collaborating for peace and stability in the region and promotion of maritime security based on international norms and laws are being pursued.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. It includes world political climate, world public opinion and world organisations.
2. India again re-established full diplomatic relations with South Africa in 1994 when the policy of racial discrimination was finally given up and democratic government under Nelson Mandela came into existence.
3. A S Narang: *Indian Government and Politics*, Gitanjali, 2000 Edition, p. 602.
4. D N Mallik: *The Development of Non-Alignment in India's Foreign Policy*, p. 165.
5. *India 2009: A Reference Manual*, Publications Division, Government of India, p. 530.

6. Based on Keynote address delivered by Minister of State for External Affairs, E. Ahamed, at the first India–Central Asia Dialogue, June 12, 2012 at Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.
7. Press Information Bureau, Government of India, December 23, 2015.