Foreign Policy is the policy laid down by a state for managing its relations with other Sovereign states in order to promote its national objectives and to safeguard its vital interests. Foreign policy is chalked out by the people at the helms of affairs in a country, after thorough deliberation of all the relevant factors. It is the process, art a strategy of making decisions on issues of international importance.

The foreign policy of India after independence is based on the philosophy of its government and leaders. The present foreign policy of India has its roots in the freedom movement. At its very first session under the presidency of W.C. Bannerji in 1885, the Indian National Congress denounced the annexation of Burma by the British and objected to military activity going on beyond the natural lines of defence of India.

No state in the modern world can do without a foreign policy or involvement in international affairs. This involvement must be systematic and based on certain well-defined principles. Every state has to work within the limits of its strength and the realities of the external environment. A state without a foreign policy can be compared to a ship without a radar which drifts aimlessly, buffeted by every surge it encounters.
The first aim of the foreign policy of the country is to articulate its external or internal interests. The aim is to preserve its independence so that it can take decisions on both the internal as well as external affairs, without any external interference. Its third objective is to preserve the existing international system. The last aim of the foreign policy of the country is to improve the living standards of its people.

The most important factor determines the foreign policy of a country is the geographical situation. The coastline of India is as important from the point of view of its defence as its land boundaries. With the relations between India on the one hand, and China and Pakistan on the other having been vitiated, the foreign policy of this country has to be guided by consideration of the defence of its northern borders.

India is much more close to the Communist world, or to put it more precisely, to the principal partners in the Communist Block - China and Russia - than she is to the corresponding principals in the Western Block. The necessity of India, therefore, to find a modus vivendi with her neighbours is greater than with those who are at a distance, unless of course, she is convinced that her neighbours have aggressive intentions towards her.

Traditions of the National Movement of the country have also influenced its foreign policy. India's foremost leader
Gandhiji and Nehru saw the evil effect of colonialism and imperialism in different countries of Asia and Africa.

The chief feature of the foreign policy of India is non-alignment. A policy of peace and international cooperation, and friendship with different nations of the world are the most necessary components of foreign policy of the country. The policy of non-alignment was conceived by Nehru. His main object was to steer clear of the two power blocs—one led by the USA and the other by USSR. Such a policy was suited to the national interest of the country. India could not join hands with either power bloc because she needed speedy economic development. This could be achieved with the help of big powers only when India pursued a policy of friendship with all the countries of the world. In the early years i.e. between 1947-50, this policy was not very clearly enunciated. It was despised with suspicion by the communist bloc as well as the American bloc. It was after 1950, and especially after the death of Stalin in 1953, this policy became more clear. In fact, by this time many of the countries including Yugoslavia and UAR had accepted this policy and it had become a commonly accepted nation in the world politics. This was so done because many countries achieved their independence after a long struggle for freedom and wanted to maintain their freedom and did not wish to be subserviant to any foreign power. Nehru also wanted to make it more emphatic and clear. Several conferences of non-aligne...
nations were held and they gave a clear-cut idea of non-alignment. Nehru remarked as early as in 1949: "Where freedom is menaced or justice threatened or where aggression takes place, we cannot be and shall not be neutral".

Non-alignment involves rejection of military pacts and alliances to save the world from a horror of a possible third World War.

In adopting a policy of peace and international cooperation and friendship with different nations of the world, India is mainly concerned with the establishment of lasting world peace. She has, therefore, to establish friendly relations with all the countries of the world and she is opposed to those countries that indulge in colonialism or racialism. This is an important aspect of the foreign policy of India. It was this desire that made India join the Bandung Conference and to help the evolve the principle of Panchsheel and to participate actively in the conferences of the non-aligned powers.

India opposed the policy of racial segregation and exploitation of one class by another. She believes in providing equal opportunities to all the people of the world, irrespective of whether they belong to one race or another. She has opposed to discrimination on the bases of colour, class or sex. Opposition to racial discrimination is linked with the history of India's freedom struggle. Mahatma Gandhi
was the prime mover of such a struggle in South Africa. Even today she is opposed to the policy of Apartheid in South Africa. Similarly, she does not think that discrimination in the USA on the basis of colour between the whites and the coloured people, is at all justified. India is one of the staunch supporters of UNO and its activities. UNO has not been helpful to India in her affairs. Kashmir problem is alive only because of UNO and its block Politics. Similarly when Pakistan invaded India in 1965, UNO did not treat Pakistan as aggressor, which disappointed India very much.

In spite of all this, India has all along believed that UNO should be an effective instrument for bringing about stable world peace and for ending exploitation and human sufferings throughout the world.

With her faith in co-existence - the basic tenets of Panchsheel - India believes that the countries with different social and political systems can co-exist on the basis of certain agreed principles. Today the principle of co-existence is accepted even by Russia and other great powers. It was Nehru who laid down these principles. The principles of Panchsheel were based on the nation of co-existence. These principles of Panchsheel were inspired by the philosophy of Buddhism and comprised the following five tenets: (a) Mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty; (b) Non-aggression; (c) Non-interference in each other's
internal affairs (d) Equality and mutual advantage and (e) peaceful co-existence and economic cooperation.

After independence, The Indian government, took a lot of interest in raising the standard of living of the Indian people. This could be possible only through industrialization and this could only be achieved with foreign collaboration. This was an important factor in shaping the foreign policy of India.

India's policy towards her neighbours has always been of friendship and cooperation but response from some of these countries has not been equally cordial, Nehru said, "We have more economic and trade relations with some countries; we have also some special ties with some of our close neighbour and with commonwealth countries. What we try to avoid, however, is being unfriendly to any country unless that country chooses actively to pursue a hostile policy towards us".