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Chapter III

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The foreign policy of India like that of any other country is an extension of its internal policy and reflects the dominant domestic concerns. 'Our foreign policy', Nehru wrote, 'will ultimately be governed by our internal policy'. The foreign policy of a country is primarily based on its own individual interests and what it considers good for the world in general. Further a country's foreign policy is essentially conditioned by its internal circumstances. Foreign policy is a product of 'interests', which are governed by a country's political, economic and social structure perceived through its history, culture, and tradition. Every country conducts its foreign relations with a view to protecting its national interests.

The basic constituents of national interest however, remain more or less constant and these would include security against aggression, the desirability of increasing the level of living standard of masses and the maintenance of stable conditions in the periphery of its boarder.

It is always a difficult task to define a country's interests. It is inevitable, however, that in a system of international politics with the nation-state as the unit, the common man should judge the success of the foreign policy in terms of the benefit accruing to the

people.\(^3\) It has been rightly pointed out by Pandit Nehru during the foreign affairs debate in the Dominion Parliament that:

> The principle followed by all nations, no matter whether their politics have got a red, pink or true blue tint, is one of self-interest. In case of any war, India also will not hesitate to take sides as her self-interest dictates. And in the immediate future, India would do well to keep an independent ‘neutral’ policy\(^4\)

Indian foreign policy and domestic policies are fused in the concern for national security and economic independence. Eradication of poverty was an important ideal, said Mrs. Indira Gandhi, but even more important was the preservation of India’s freedom—the development of a defence capability against external threats, the building up of infrastructure to strengthen the economy and achieve self-reliance and protect the nation’s honour and self-respect.\(^5\) Elaborating on the importance of national interest as an inescapable factor in the formulation of our foreign policy Nehru said

> Whatever policy we may lay down, the art of conducting the foreign affairs of a country lies in finding out what is most advantageous to the country . . . whether a country is imperialistic or socialist or communist, its foreign minister thinks primarily of the interests of that country.\(^6\)

> Self-interest is integral to a state’s foreign policy and nationalism whatever

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disguise it may often time assume, is the central factor of foreign policy. National self-interest cannot, however, disregard the interests of others. The national interest of India was not incompatible with the legitimate interests of other nations. In Jawaharlal’s view “indeed, national interest may itself demand a policy of co-operation with other nations.”7 Therefore, he told the Constituent Assembly of India, “we propose to look after India’s interests in the context of world co-operation and world peace, in so far as world peace can be preserved.”8

It is through the instrument of foreign policy that a state transacts its business with the rest of the world. Its aim is to protect and promote the interests of the nation. Therefore, it requires a clear understanding of what these interests are and how far one can hope to go with the means at its disposal.9 Further, the formulation of the foreign policy of a country is based on knowledge and experience and the policy so formulated ought to be in accordance with the domestic perception.

In the formulation of foreign policy, the newly liberated countries of the third world had to address themselves to certain pertinent questions. 1. What are the political and economic goals of the countries of the third world, 2. What kind of world co-operation is needed to achieve social transformation in the newly liberated countries? 3. What kind of structural constraints has the third world inherited during

7. A. Appadorai, op. cit., p.14
8. idem.
9. P.N. Haskar, India’s Foreign Policy and Its Problems (New Delhi, 1989), p.73.
the colonial period? 4. What mechanism can the third world use to liberate itself from the shackles of the past and then make full use of the opportunities available in the present era for the development of their societies?\textsuperscript{10}

The foreign policy of any country is shaped and guided by a variety of factors. Generally basic determinants of foreign policy are geographical location, historical experiences, political tradition, political ideologies, national character, domestic socio-economic needs. International environment and national leadership, geo-strategic location and strategic considerations also play a crucial role. India is placed in a strategic part of Asia set in the centre of Indian ocean with close connections to West-Asia, South-east Asia and Eastern Asia. India’s central location on the main trade route between Europe and Far East via the Mediterranean, the Red Sea, the Indian Ocean, and the Straits of Malacca provides sea routes for trade and commerce. Again bordered on the north by the world’s highest mountains, the country is protected from winter cold of the north and that has denied it easy communication with inner Asia. India’s command over the Indian Ocean is vital to her existence.\textsuperscript{11} Also India’s foreign policy has been influenced by post-war international developments such as bi-polar divisions of the world, being replaced later by polycentric trends, rapid proliferation of nuclear weapons, polycentrism within the communist world and emergence of third

\textsuperscript{10} Amiya Kumar Bagachi, \textit{Private Investment in India} (New Delhi, 1975), p. 76.
\textsuperscript{11} Shakti Mukherjee and Indirani Mukherjee, \textit{International Relations} (Calcutta, 1986), p. 226.
world as a potent factor in world politics. Krishna Menon observes in this regard:

It is also true that the foreign policy of a country is affected by that of other countries, both consciously and deliberately and otherwise. This is in a small measure true of domestic policies and of all spheres of national administration. This occurs at least in three ways. Pressure may come from another country—political, military or even sentimental. These are the more obvious. Secondly, the concerned country may be obliged to modify her line of conduct or orientation because of the gravitational pulls or because the events and circumstances in another country project economic, military or other consequences beyond its borders with the concerned country and to its affairs. Thirdly, independent countries invariably follow the rule of reciprocity, unless they deliberately decide not to follow it, in their own national interest. Reciprocity is dignified and legitimate exercise of national judgement and function. Reciprocity reflects independence. No nation-state, old or new, can write on a clean slate. It is conditioned by its own historical antecedents and inheritance as well as by world developments. Thus, a state stands conditioned by international customs, tactics and the law and practice that have developed in respect of them.

The newly liberated countries of the third world were confronted with the problems of challenges of adjustments in their domestic and the world environment. It required well thought out formulations of domestic and foreign policy. By the time the third world emerged, the nations of the world had already become divided into two blocs under the leadership of the United States of America and the Union of Soviet

Socialist Republic 'Certain forces inherent in the traditions and experiences of the social and political movements made it difficult for the third world countries to identify with either of the bloc.\textsuperscript{14} Their greater contacts with the west in the past had led to a natural inclination in their thinking on the lines of western political and economic systems. Thus, in India, Indonesia and Burma parliamentary democracy was sought to be realised.\textsuperscript{15} In spite of their preference for the political and economic model of the West, they decided to keep away from the influence of the West, because they refused to be the client states of their former masters.

Along with this, however, there was a basic distrust of the western powers. This was mainly due to the imperialist characteristics of most western powers. There was an obvious snag in the argument that the western nations were trying to preserve democracy against totalitarian communism, as long as they sought to maintain colonies. “The evils of western imperialism were much more real and obvious to these nations than those of some distant danger of communist totalitarianism”\textsuperscript{16}

Further, it became the moral duty of the newly liberated countries to extend full support to those nations, which were still struggling for freedom. Therefore, anti-imperialism became the accepted policy of the third world. These nations were also conscious of the fact that the imperialist threats will not end unless it is fully


\textsuperscript{15} \textit{idem}.

\textsuperscript{16} \textit{ibid}., p.27.
exterminated from the third world and imperialism would not withdraw without struggle.\(^{17}\) Therefore, the policy acceptable to the third world was a policy of struggle against imperialism and racial discrimination.

Nor was a total alignment with the Soviet bloc easy in the circumstances. The nationalist movements of these countries were mostly led by middle class intellectuals who were in no sense communists or socialists, except possibly in a romantic way. The socialist or communist elements present in the nationalist ranks were comparatively too weak and small to effect any change in the general character of these nationalist movements.\(^{18}\) The extreme rigidity of the social and political system of the Soviet Union had cast strong doubts in the minds of the nationalist leaders, despite its impressive economic achievements and absence of any obvious racial discrimination. Krishna Menon observes that:

In 1945, immediately before India got her independence, it was all ‘one world’ but by 1947 it was ‘two worlds’. And we, for the first time, had to make up our minds on the issue, how we would function and what we would do. We would not go back to the west with its colonialism, and there was no question of our going the Soviet way; we did not even know them much.\(^{19}\)

Under the then prevailing world situation it became necessary for India to take the step...

\(^{17}\) K.S. Pavithran, Jawaharlal Nehru–The Architect of Indian Foreign Policy, in C.N. Somarajan (Ed) Formulation and Practice of India’s Foreign Policy (New Delhi), p. 34.

\(^{18}\) N.P. Nayar, \textit{op.cit.}, pp. 29-30.

in its international relations, best suited to her own interests.

In spite of India's long association and experience with the West, she did not copy any foreign models in the formulation of her foreign policy. India believed that by virtue of her long history and tradition, she had an individuality of her own and India should retain this without adhering to outworn ideas or traditions. Nehru observed:

In foreign affairs in a period when cataclysmic conflict seems never too far below the horizon, she has invariably taken her stand with those who are striving for the maintenance of peace, reconciliation and co-operation.²⁰

In foreign relations India thought it imperative to cultivate friendly co-operation with all the countries and help the process of maintaining international peace and harmony. India's national interest was the governing principle of her foreign policy. Jawaharlal Nehru told the Constituent Assembly of India on December 4, 1947:

We may talk about peace and freedom and earnestly mean what we say. But in the ultimate analysis a government functions for the good of the country it governs and no government dare do anything, which in the short or long run is manifestly to the disadvantage of the country.²¹

However, the content and definition of national interest varies from time to time. But maintenance of the territorial integrity of the state is the prime concern of every state while formulating its foreign policy. Apart from the maintenance of territorial integrity,

four other objectives of Indian foreign policy were revealed in Nehru's first broadcast to the nation as the Head of the interim government on September 7, 1946:

We shall take full part in international conferences as a free nation with our own policy and not merely as a satellite of another nation. We hope to develop close and direct contacts with other nations and to co-operate with them in the furtherance of world peace and freedom. We believe that peace and freedom are indivisible and the 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 and in the recognition in theory and practice of equal opportunities for all races.²²

However, India's adherence to world peace had strong overtones of national interest, without in any way diminishing the humanitarian motives and concerns for other nations. Indian foreign policy is rooted in history, traditions and present geopolitical factors and circumstances. Its roots can be traced to India's belief in the co-existence of good and evil in the world and the golden middle path, it believes, is the best answer. 'At best, the heritage of the Indian National Congress Party as accumulated in the yearly resolutions during sixty years and more of struggle is the tradition that lies behind the present foreign policy of India.'²³ Nehru was of the opinion that Indian foreign policy, was in the process of being formulated and there could be no finality about it. While it had to be based on certain fundamental

²². V.N. Khanna, *Foreign Policy of India* (Delhi, 1997), p. 15.
principles, it was also to be evolved in the light of experience, and adjusted to changing circumstances. Foreign policy had thus, a long distance objectives as well as short distance objectives, but the latter had to be in keeping with the former.\textsuperscript{24} Indian foreign policy was also a formulae to keep away from the grave threat to peace in the world emanating from the antagonistic ideological-cum-military blocs in the post-war period.\textsuperscript{25}

Though a clear beginning of the foundation of an independent foreign policy was writ large in the minds of the nationalist leaders, it could not take a concrete shape till freedom was achieved. It was in 1920s that Nehru spelt out the principle of the foreign policy of a future independent India. “In her policy,” he said, ‘India sought to combine idealism with national interest’. In Nehru’s views foreign policy ought to achieve peace and secure emancipation of the oppressed nations, elimination of racial discrimination and non-intervention in the internal affairs of other countries.\textsuperscript{26} He also spoke about defence of freedom both national and personal, about combating such maladies affecting a large part of humanity as disease, poverty and ignorance.\textsuperscript{27} But he invariably emphasised that peace was the goal of India’s foreign policy.

Certain fundamental principles guided the Congress in its attitude towards

\begin{itemize}
\item[25.] \textit{idem.}
\item[26.] Orest Martishin, \textit{Jawaharlal Nehru and His Political Views} (Moscow, 1989), p. 303.
\item[27.] \textit{idem.}
\end{itemize}
international problems. Firstly, the right of self-determination for all oppressed peoples of the world. The right of slave-nations to independent existence is essential to a democratic set-up of the world.28 Second, stern opposition to imperialism and its twin brother fascism.29 Thirdly, non-alignment with power blocs. Speaking in the Indian Parliament Nehru proclaimed “we will not attach ourselves to any particular group.”30 For India, the policy of non-attachment implied its refusal to accept definite commitment or join a system of pacts or committing India in one side or the other. Independence of the two power blocs in making up her own mind as to the rights and wrongs of a given problem, the use of method that relax inflexibility and counter inflexibility forms the backbone of India’s foreign policy.31

By formulating and promoting the cause of non-alignment, India offered to the world an alternative to military alliances of rival power blocs and the arms race of the cold war. On account of her policy of non-alignment, India was able to serve the cause of peace in the world. She was in a position to examine every problem dispassionately and point out a solution for the same. As the modern component of an ancient policy, the policy of non-alignment essentially sought to secure the basic liberties of nations, to safeguard the freedom of people to pursue their integrity and sovereignty and pursue

29. idem.
30. idem.
the political systems of their choice to work for the benefit of their people. For India, non-alignment is a means by which it seeks to achieve its policy objectives. Therefore, it is important, not to conceive the ‘means of the policy’ as the ‘goal of the policy.’

The policy of non-alignment was to sustain a dynamism in international relations, allowing nations to exist truthfully and to work for their own prosperity exercising their own faculties freely to select the avenues of co-operation of their choices in the international field. Thus, India’s foreign policy of non-alignment implies that India is not prepared to join any system of pacts or alliances to commit herself to any camp, while trying to maintain friendly relations with all kinds of nations. It is a ‘means’ to preserve world peace. The policy of non-alignment is not an accidental product of the whim and fancy of a few nationalist leaders. “Historically, the foreign policy of India, to a certain extent, emanated from the past legacy of India, her national urges and objectives, her way of life and her cultural heritage.” Thus, Nehru said, “it is a policy which flows from our past, from recent history and from our national movement and its development and from various ideals we have proclaimed.”

Speaking at the Amritsar Congress Session Nehru said, “the foreign policy of

33. idem.
34. K.S. Pavithran, op.cit., p. 35.
35. idem.
India is based on certain fundamental concepts which arose from the mind and heart of India. One of the greatest contributions of India in the world affairs is the enunciation of the policy of non-alignment.

Indeed, it is difficult to find a parallel case in which a democratic country, so vast in area and with a very large, diverse and heterogeneous population, has fully supported in peace time the foreign policy of its government. It is far more correct to speak of an Indian foreign policy in the case of India than is the case in respect of many other democratic countries: in the latter case, their foreign policy is more the foreign policy of the party in power for the time being rather than a consensus of opinion among major parties or political groups.

Therefore, it endures and certainly brings rich dividends to the country. That is how each successive government has taken pains to emphasis the element of continuity rather than change in India’s foreign policy. Even the most severe critics of India’s foreign policy of non-alignment are agreed on one point:

From India’s own national point of view, it has brought dividends to the country. By becoming a folding-bridge or an intermittent ‘middleman’ between the two power blocs, India acquired a prominence and eminence in the comity of nations far in excess of her military strength or industrial importance.

As is mentioned elsewhere, India’s foreign policy has over the years been directed

36. The Hindu, Feb 17, 1956.
towards the promotion of the country’s basic national interests in the light of the requirements of the changing internal and external environment. The three major areas of our interests are: 1) to create a pattern of foreign relations which helps and does not in any way hinder the solution of India’s domestic problems of achieving a higher rate of economic development, of initiating radical social changes without affecting the stability of the political institutions and values chosen after independence, and of building a well integrated nation out of the diverse people who inhabit the country 2) to ensure security and integrity of India and eventually to erect a structure of stable peace in the region and 3) to strive to promote world peace. At any particular point of time, India’s foreign policy problems were the problems of choosing between alternative methods of advancing the country’s national interests in the areas of internal progress, regional stability and world peace and world reform and deciding how the emphasis of these three sets of objectives should be distributed when they exerted contradictory pulls over the country’s foreign policy.39 Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit observes:

In our assessment of the world situation, we, like other nations, find ourselves confronted by two alternatives. One is the belief that peace can be maintained by building military might and held in balance by an armament race. The other is the view that it can be preserved only by peaceful means, that the armament race endangers its preservation and that no stone must be left unturned to lessen

the tensions that exist in the world. To us, it seems logical that the latter is the surer way to safeguard the peace. Our approach to peace might then be called "neutrality." 40

India's foreign policy of non-alignment did not mean 'neutralism of the Swedish or the Swiss kind, nor did it mean 'value neutrality' as is often erroneously suggested by some western observers. It did not stem from a desire on India's part to avoid the opportunities or obligations of power politics, but simply from a wish to avoid the obligations of military alliances because such ties provided opportunities for economic and military gain but at a heavy political price. In the Indian context non-alignment reflected the belief that close ties with the great powers would inhibit India's freedom of action in world politics and that freedom of political manoeuvre was necessary to promote her material interests and political influence. 41

India's policy of non-alignment is against status quo in international relations. That means opposition to colonialism, imperialism, racial discrimination and now of neo-colonialism. 42 India's non-alignment rejects the concept of superiority of super powers. It advocates sovereign equality of all states and it encourages friendly relations among countries. It advocates peaceful settlement of international disputes and rejects the use of force. "It favours complete destruction of nuclear weapons and pleads for

41. *idem*.
42. V.K. Khanna, *Foreign Policy of India*, *op. cit.*, p. 48.
Comprehensive disarmament and supports all efforts to strengthen the United Nations.  

Nehru made it clear that India’s approach to peace is a positive and constructive, not a passive neutral approach. In the existing international environment, Nehru felt strict neutrality was impossible. In one of his most blunt utterances Nehru said: “If there is a big war, there is no particular reason why we should jump into it, nevertheless, it is a little difficult now-a-days in world wars to be neutral.” India, he went on to say, “would not join a war if she could help it; but if the choice came, she was going to join the side, which was to her interest.”

The basic objective of India’s foreign policy are: 1. Maintenance of international peace and security, 2. Anti-imperialism, 3. Peaceful and political settlement of international disputes, 4. anti-racialism, 5. peaceful co-existence and 6. Non-alignment. Non-alignment is the soul and substance of India’s foreign policy. It is essentially an approach or posture. It is not a negative, but positive, dynamic and evolutionary concept. It does not indicate passivity and differs from neutrality. As is mentioned elsewhere, Nehru claimed that non-alignment implied no political or military commitment to any bloc. It signifies a deliberate detachment from either bloc or determination to judge every issue of international concern on its own merit. It is not a policy of expediency, but a policy based on enlightened self-interest. In essence

43. Idem.
non-alignment is the ability to exercise a reasonable degree of independence of policy and action in world affairs. Nehru observed: “non-alignment is freedom of action which is part of independence.”

India's policy of non-alignment has contributed much to conceptualisation, integrity and strength of the third world. Subsequently, Nehru along with Nasser and Tito, set-up international non-aligned movement through the Belgrade Conference of 1961. Gradually majority of the third world countries accepted non-alignment as a foreign policy strategy. India has been playing a crucial role in consolidation of international non-aligned movement and has been striving strenuously to adjust it to the requirements of the ever-changing inter-state relations.