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INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY

Every sovereign country has its foreign policy. India too has one. Foreign policy refers to the sum total of principles, interests and objectives which a country promotes while interacting with other countries. Even though there are certain basic features of a foreign policy it is not a fixed concept. The thrust of foreign policy keeps on changing according to changing international conditions. India's foreign policy is shaped by several factors including its history, culture, geography and economy. Our Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, gave a definite shape to the country's foreign policy.



Objectives

After studying this lesson, you will be able to

- identify the basic principles of India's foreign policy ;
- explain the meaning and significance of non-alignment ;
- analyse the relevance of non-alignment in the post cold war period ;
- explain the major concerns in India's foreign policy in the post cold war period ;
- recognise India's contribution to UN efforts for peace and disarmament ;
- explain India's participation in UN peace keeping and its claim for a permanent seat in the Security Council.

26.1 Basic Objectives and Principles of Foreign Policy

Preservation of national interest, achievement of world peace, disarmament, independence for Afro-Asian nations have been important objectives of India's foreign policy. These objectives are sought to be achieved through some principles viz. Panchsheel; non-alignment; anti-colonialism, anti-imperialism, anti-racism, and strengthening the UN. It would be befitting to expand these principles.

26.1.1 Panchsheel

Nehru was a believer in world peace. He understood the linkage between peace for

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development and survival of mankind. He had seen the destruction caused by the two world wars and therefore realized that for the progress of a nation a long spell of peace was needed. In its absence social and economic priorities relating to development tend to get pushed to the background. The production of nuclear weapons strengthened Nehru's faith in the peaceful philosophy even more. Hence he gave utmost importance to world peace in his policy planning. India's desired peaceful and friendly relations with all countries, particularly the big powers and the neighbouring nations, while signing an agreement with China, on April 28, 1954, India advocated adherence to five guiding principles known as Panchsheel for the conduct of bilateral relations. It includes the following:

- Mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty.
- Mutual non-aggression
- Mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs
- Equality and mutual benefit
- Peaceful co-existence.

The Panchsheel agreement enumerates best the principles of peaceful co-existence with neighbours. It is an important component of India's foreign policy.

26.1.2 Non-alignment

Non-alignment has been regarded as the most important feature of India's foreign policy. Non alignment aimed to maintain national independence in foreign affairs by not joining any military alliance formed by the USA and Soviet Union in the aftermath of the Second World War. Non-alignment was neither neutrality nor non-involvement nor isolationism. It was a dynamic concept which meant not committing to any military bloc but taking an independent stand on international issues according to the merits of each case. The policy of non-alignment won many supporters in the developing countries as it provided an opportunity to them for protecting their sovereignty as also retaining their freedom of action during the tension ridden cold war period.

India played an important role in forging the non-aligned movement (NAM). The concept of NAM emerged through a gradual process. Nehru took the initiative to convene the Asian Relations Conference in New Delhi in 1947. Later on a Conference, of 29 countries of Asia and Africa was held in Bandung (Indonesia) in 1955. This was the first gathering of its kind which pledged to work together for colonial liberation, peace, cultural, economic and political cooperation. Bandung to Belgrade in 1961 where the first NAM conference was held was a logical process to project an alternative to cold war bloc politics and assertion of newly independent countries of their independent and sovereign rights.

Cold War was intense rivalry between USA and Soviet Union without fighting a direct war to attract allies in Africa, Asia and Latin America. It started soon after the Second World War and continued for forty five years. These two big countries became two opposite poles known as East and West. The world politics revolved around these two poles. Thus the world became *bipolar*.

Among the non-aligned, Nehru had evolved special relationship with President Tito of Yugoslavia and Nasser of Egypt. These three are regarded as the founding fathers of the Non-Aligned Movement. The non-aligned movement was a group of the newly independent states who refused to accept the dictates of the former colonial masters and decided to

act according to their own judgement on issues of international concern. Non-aligned movement is anti-imperialist in approach. India as the prime architect of non-alignment and as one of the leading members of the non-aligned movement has taken an active part in its growth.

The Non-Aligned Movement is providing all member states, regardless of size and importance, an opportunity to participate in global decision making and world politics. India hosted the Seventh NAM Summit at New Delhi in 1983. India hoped NAM take up the cause of development, disarmament and the Palestine question.

Since NAM was a product of the cold war scenario and the bipolar world, many scholars have questioned the relevance of NAM after the end of cold war and demise of the Soviet Union. However, even in the present scenario NAM has a significant role to play, First, with the disintegration of Soviet Union, the world faces threat from unipolar world. The NAM can act as a check against US dominance. Secondly the developed (North) and developing (South) world are divided over several economic issues. The NAM remains a very relevant forum for third world countries to engage the developed nations in a productive dialogue. Moreover, the NAM can prove to be powerful instrument for South-South cooperation. Such a thing is essential if the third world countries are to increase their bargaining power vis-a-vis the developed world. India continues to take active part in the non-aligned movement even after the end of cold war. Finally, the developing countries united under the forum of NAM have to fight for the reform of UN and change it according to the requirements of 21st century.

26.1.3 Anti Imperialism, Anti Racism, Anti Colonialism

India has always opposed colonialism and racism. Whenever any injustice happened, India raised her voice, for instance in favour of Indonesia's nationality fighting the Dutch colonialism in 1947, against South Africa's illegal occupation of Namibia and the infamous apartheid policy in South Africa India fully supported inclusion of communist China in the United Nations.

26.1.4 Strengthening of UN

India has always viewed UN as a vehicle for peace and for peaceful change in world politics. Apart from this, India has always expected UN to actively involve countries to moderate their differences through talks or negotiations. Further, India has advocated active role for UN in development effort of Third World countries. India has pleaded for a common united front of the third world countries in the UN. It believes that the non-aligned world by virtue of its massive number could play a constructive and meaningful role in the UN by stopping the superpowers from using this world body for their own designs. As early as 1950 India linked the reduction of armaments with the larger goal of development.

The UN has in fact played a key role in preserving world peace by helping in the decolonization process, by providing humanitarian and developmental assistance and through peacekeeping.

Decolonization – refers to achievement of independence from colonial rule. After the Second World War many colonies of achieved freedom in Asia and Africa.

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Intext Questions 26.1

1. Fill in the blanks :

- (a) _____ was the main architect of India's foreign policy.
- (b) The Afro-Asian Conference, 1955 was held at _____.
- (c) The first NAM Conference was held at _____ in the year _____.
- (d) The Panchsheel agreement was signed between _____ and _____.
- (e) India hosted NAM Summit in _____.

2. Tick (✓) the correct answer :

- (a) Non-alignment and neutrality can be treated as same. (True/False)
- (b) India opposed the policy of apartheid as practised by the government of South Africa. (True/False)
- (c) Nehru along with Tito and Nasser played a major role in the founding of NAM. (True/False)

26.2 Major Concerns in India's Foreign Policy in the Post Cold War Period

The end of cold war in 1989 has brought about significant changes in the international scene and hence new policy problems for the various states in the developing world including India. The new situation is made by greater uncertainty and complexity.

For India, disintegration of the Soviet Union has meant uncertainty on several aspects viz. supply of weapons system, supply of spare parts, diplomatic support on Kashmir and other politico-strategic issues in and outside the United Nations and as a counter weight to US in South Asia. During the last one decade and a half international politics has undergone major changes. The cold war has ended, the world has become unipolar, a number of states have disintegrated, cold war military blocs have lost their significance, some such blocs have dissolved and new regional economic blocs are shaping up. Globalisation has given rise to new set of problems such as terrorism, money laundering, proliferation of weapons, global warming etc. These problems are not endemic to any region but affect all the countries to some extent or the other. This has forced many nation states which were hitherto enemies to cooperate with each other to solve problems which are universal in nature. In this changed international scenario it has become imperative for UN to restructure and reform itself if it is to effectively respond to emerging challenges.

Militancy in Kashmir has emerged as the foremost challenge to our foreign policy. Pakistan and the Western countries blamed India for violating human rights and denial of rights to self determination. Gradually, India brought the situation under control.

Because of the Kashmir dispute, India's relations with Pakistan sharply deteriorated. India accused Pakistan of fanning trouble through cross border terrorism in Kashmir and other parts of our country. India conducted nuclear weapon tests in 1998, followed by Pakistan's

tests. Pakistan resorted to further mischief by secretly sending its soldiers into Kargil in order to cut off the Kashmir valley from the rest of India. India handled the challenge firmly and effectively. Now engaging Pakistan in a constructive and composite dialogue process remains a challenge to India's foreign policy, because there is a great deal of push from the United States

Spread of terrorism to corners beyond Kashmir is a challenge as well as opportunity for our foreign policy now a days. India is interested in forging anti-terrorism coalition with as many countries as possible.

Keeping old friendship and looking for new friendships is another challenge for our foreign policy after the cold war has ended. For example, India is interested in strengthening its relations without damaging its relations with Arab countries. Similarly, India's foreign policy is tackling new tasks like deepening economic and security cooperation with the United States, while at the same time opposing unilateral actions against Iraq and Yugoslavia. Finally, India is realizing the growing importance of economic aspects of foreign policy. Hence, it is trying to establish a new basis for its relations with neighbouring countries in South Asia, China and the South East Asian countries.



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Intext Questions 26.2

Q. 1. Tick (✓) the correct answer :

- (a) International relations in the post cold war period is based upon the bipolar model. (True/False)
- (b) Kashmir issue became the biggest foreign policy problem for India in 1990s. (True/False)
- (c) India's foreign policy after cold war wants to neglect Arab countries and embrace Israel. (True/False)
- (d) India is trying to forge a coalition of countries to counter terrorism. (True/False)

26.3 India and the United Nations

26.3.1 India's Contribution to UN Efforts for Peace and Disarmament

The United Nations which came into being on Oct. 24, 1945 has been the most important international organisation since the Second World War. The formal basis for UN activities is the UN charter. The UN has a vital role in world affairs. For more than fifty years UN has helped to manage relations between states and regulate a broad range of international activities. It has worked to protect the security of people and promote peace and development. One way in which UN has contributed to world peace is by taking up the cause of disarmament India has also contributed immensely to UN's disarmament efforts.

Disarmament is limitation, reduction and possible elimination of dangerous (like nuclear) weapons.

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Since independence, India has consistently pursued the objective of global disarmament based on the principles of non-discrimination. Given the destructive capacity of nuclear weapons, India has always believed that a world free of nuclear weapons would enhance global security. Thus India has always advocated that highest priority be given to nuclear disarmament as a first step towards general and complete disarmament.

India has contributed to UN significantly on disarmament in terms of ideas, resolutions, initiatives and bridging differences through action plans. In 1948, India had proposed limiting the use of atomic energy to peaceful purposes and elimination of nuclear weapons from national arsenals. In 1950, India suggested formation of a UN Peace Fund created through peaceful reduction of arms and directing the amount thus released towards development purposes. In 1954, India advocated the cause for a comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty. India was the first to become party to partial Test Ban Treaty in 1963. Hence India strongly and consistently refused to join the Treaty. In 1964, India took the initiative to place the item 'non-proliferation of weapons' on UN agenda. However, the purpose was defeated by the (1968) carried that a large numbering of counties from going nuclear, without firm restrictions on the few nuclear weapon countries activities Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty Although our country allged to the oppose to problem.

In 1984, India launched a Six-Nation Five Continent Peace Initiative along with Argentina, Greece, Mexico, Sweden and Tanzania. Four years later (in a joint declaration issued on the occasion of visit of President Gorbachev of Soviet Union the then Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi made a forceful plea for the elimination of nuclear weapons. The Delhi declaration enumerated ten principles for building a nuclear weapon free world). In 1988, Rajiv Gandhi proposed an Action Plan for ushering in a nuclear weapon free and non-violent world order. The Action Plan envisaged a binding commitment by all nations to the elimination of nuclear weapons in stages by 2010. India is also an original signatory to the Chemical Weapons Convention, having signed it on Jan. 14, 1993 and was among the first 65 countries to have ratified the treaty. In 1993 India sponsored a resolution on comprehensive test ban along with the US within the overall framework of advancing towards nuclear disarmament. India was distressed when final version of the CTBT was rushed through without consenses. And it failed to address the security reasons of India. Hence it bravely stood against the steadlity fashion in which some tests use canned while sophisticated nuclear tests were not in a way, India's conduct of nuclear tests in 1998 could we linked to the unfair framework of CTBT, though many initially misunderstood India's tests as a negative development for disarmament; India pledged to continue to work for inaugural and non-discriminaly nuclear disarmament.



Intext Questions 26.3

1. India has always stood for
 - (a) a nuclear weapons free world
 - (b) a world where every country has nuclear weapons
 - (c) a world where nuclear weapons are selectively held by few countries
2. What do the following abbreviations stand for?
 - (a) CTBT
 - (b) NPT



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26.3.2 India's participation in UN peacekeeping

India's history of participation in UN peacekeeping operations is a long one. India's contribution has been described as excellent by many political observers. In UN. India's contribution has been acknowledged by members of the international communities.

Peace keeping stands for prevention, containment and termination of hostilities between or within states through the non offensive activities of multinational forces of soldiers, police and civilian people sent unto the authority of the United Nations with the consent of the countries concerned. Peacekeeping nations changed in its scope and nature according to needs of a conflict situation.

India has taken part in 35 of UN peacekeeping operations in four continents. Its most significant contribution has been to peace and stability in Africa and Asia. Presently India is ranked as the largest troop contributor to UN.

The saga of India's role in UN peace keeping began with the establishment of the United Nation's Emergency Force (UNEF) in the Gaza strip and the Sinai in 1956 after Israeli war against Egypt ended. The Congo in Africa benefitted significantly from troop presence. India's contributed to keep unity and integrity of that history in 1960s.

After the end of cold war, India's contribution to UN peacekeeping remains significant equally, if not more, military personal at the request of the United Nations Secretery General to Angola, Cambodia, Somalia, El Salvador and Sierra Leone etc. Many of these countries were victims of chaos caused by civil wars. No government machinery collapsed or was discredited. India sent not just troops, but police, doctors, engineers and administrators.



Intext Questions 26.4

Q.1. The first peacekeeping nation with Indian troops was sent to

- (a) Korea
- (b) Sinai
- (c) Congo

Q.2. Which of the following statements is false ?

- (a) India is one of the second largest troop contributors to UN peacekeeping.
- (b) Peacekeeping was confined to cold war years.
- (c) India's role was significant in protecting the Congo from separation.

Q.3. India's contribution to peacekeeping included

- (a) only troops.
- (b) only non-military staff.
- (c) both military and civilian staff.

26.4 India's Case for a Permanent Seat in the Security Council

As you already know, the efficiency of peace maintenance in the world depends on the effectiveness of the Security Council but the Council has suffered in this regard due to its outdated, unchanged membership. Presently the permanent membership of the Security Council is confined to US, Russia, Great Britain, France and China. However, such composition of the Security Council does not take into account the current global power configuration which has changed since the days when these countries were inducted as permanent members. Since India has emerged as the fourth fastest growing economy and also because of the leadership it has provided in all international fora, its contribution to UN peacekeeping, its track record in espousing the cause of the third world, India has a strong case for a permanent seat in the Security Council. We are getting support from many friendly countries. A final decision on the matter is likely to take some time, because of its complexity.



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**Intext Questions 26.5**

- Q. 1. Which of the following is not a permanent member of the Security Council?
- Russia
 - Great Britain
 - India
 - China
- Q. 2. Which of the following statements is false?
- Cold war is over
 - Soviet Union has disintegrated
 - Globalisation is a reality
 - United Nations has been dissolved.

**What Have You Learnt**

India has followed certain basic principles in the conduct of its foreign policy from which it has not deviated much. In fact some of its basic features such as non-alignment still remain significant and relevant. The proof of the durability of some decades old principles lie in the efforts of India and China to revive the fifty year old Panchsheel as the basis of bilateral relations. India has contributed significantly to UN efforts for peace and disarmament and to UN peacekeeping operations. Even as India is poised to become an economic superpower in the coming times, it always has and in future too will take necessary steps to further its national interest in every respect i.e. political, strategic and economic terms.



Terminal Exercises

- (1) Discuss the basic tenets of India's foreign policy.
- (2) Discuss the relevance of the policy of non-alignment.
- (3) How far are India's claim for a permanent seat in the Security Council justified ?
- (4) What are the challenges that confront India after the end of cold war and disintegration of Soviet Union ?
- (5) Write short notes on
 - (a) Panchsheel agreement
 - (b) India's contribution to UN efforts for disarmament
 - (c) India's participation in UN peacekeeping.



Answers to Intext Questions

26.1

1.
 - (a) Nehru
 - (b) Bandung
 - (c) Belgrade, 1961
 - (d) India, China
 - (e) New Delhi
2.
 - (a) False
 - (b) True
 - (c) True

26.2

1.
 - (a) False
 - (b) True
 - (c) False
 - (d) True

26.3

1.
 - (a) a nuclear weapons free world
2.
 - (a) Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty
 - (b) Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty



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1. (b)
2. (c)
3. (c)

26.5

1. (c)
2. (d)

Hints for Terminal Exercises

1. Refer to Section 26.1
2. Refer to Section 26.1.2
3. Refer to Section 26.4
4. Refer to Section 26.2
- 5 (a) Refer to Section 26.1.1
(b) Refer to Section 26.3.1
(c) Refer to Section 26.3.2

**Notes**