

PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTIVES OF INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY

INTRODUCTION

Theoretically, foreign policy of no country can be bereft of certain foundational principles and profound objectives. The principles and objectives, in fact, provide the structural and functional frameworks within which the foreign policy is to be framed and in accordance with whom it has to be conducted. Obviously, principles and objectives are not the same things. While principles are the guiding philosophical norms and values that lay at the root of long term formulation of a foreign policy, objectives are the concrete goals enmeshed in the overall national interests of a country which the foreign policy seeks to achieve in short or long run. Clearly, India's foreign policy has been underpinned by a number of cardinal principles and lofty objectives that impart it a distinguished character.

PRINCIPLES OF INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY-

India is one of the unique countries in the world that exhibits remarkable degree of traditional wisdom inherited from the hoary past along with its utmost consciousness of the contemporary norms of international relations. This is the precise reason that the principles of India's foreign policy are a marvelous bunch of philosophical stipulations that lay at the root of a peaceful, mutually beneficial, collaborative and cooperative international order. Though the design of many of these principles has been shaped by the certain domestic and international factors, in the main, these principles exhibit the conventional ethos of life lived by Indians over ages. At the same time, in the Realist framework of international politics, while some of these principles might seem utopian or quite far from the contemporary international scenario, what they definitely seek to convey is a blueprint of collective life in which all are healthy, happy and prosperous. As the ancient Indian dictum, called kalyan mantra, articulates the vision of India's foreign policy: Sarvey bhavantu sukhinah, sarvey sant niramayah Sarvey bhadrani pashyantu, ma kashchid dukh bhagbhavet It means, 'May all be happy; May all be free from illness; May all see what is auspicious; May no one suffer'. What follows next is an illustrative discussion on the important principles of India's foreign policy.

3.2.1 Policy of Non-Alignment

Though slightly out of date in contemporary times, Non-alignment has remained the defining principle of India's foreign policy since its inception in the post-Independence period. This policy needs to be viewed as a creative response of some of the newly independent countries particularly, India, Egypt and Indonesia to the gripping scenario of intense Cold War besieging the international relations at that particular point of time. Leaders of these countries evolved the policy of Non alignment not only as a safety valve to escape the seemingly inescapable persuasions for joining either of the military blocs but also as a means of ensuring autonomy of their independent foreign policy making after securing their hard earned freedom from colonial masters. Thus, Jawaharlal Nehru, a key architect of the policy of Non-alignment and prime mover of India's foreign policy, explains the subtle implications of the policy in these memorable words: —Non-alignment means attempt by a nation to keep itself aloof from military blocs. It means trying to view the things, as far as possible, not from military point of view though that has to come in sometimes, but we must

have independent view point and must have friendly relations with all countries.|| Since its inception,

Non alignment continues to be the guiding principle of India's foreign policy. It arguably served the national interests of the country well during some of the toughest times in the international politics. After the end of Cold War and disappearance of bipolar nature of international scenario, though aspersions have been cast on the continued relevance of the policy as the guiding principle of India's foreign policy, it may be argued that Non-alignment remains relevant albeit with altered locus and focus. As a result, significance of Non-alignment as a principle of India's foreign policy remains intact.

Panchsheel---

While policy of Non-alignment was invented to act as the philosophical signpost of India's foreign policy vis-à-vis the wider international relations, doctrine of panchsheel was formulated to act as the bedrock of India's interface with its neighbours. Literally, panchsheel means a set of five principles of peaceful coexistence. These principles were enunciated in the treaty that India signed with China to set the trajectory of relations between the two countries. The five elements of the doctrine of panchsheel are: respect for each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity; non-aggression towards each other; non-interference in the internal affairs of each other; mutually beneficial relations bases on equality; and peaceful co-existence. These principles were in fact nothing short of articles of faith for Nehru who appeared to turn oblivious to Chinese expansionist overtures to India. Thus, though scrupulous observance of the principles of panchsheel cost India dearly in terms of substantive loss of territory and notional loss of face in international community, she continues to be guided by these principles in setting the trajectory of its relations with its neighbours. At the larger scale, India professes these principles to be the guiding foundations of the foreign policies of different countries in all parts of the world. Only the observance of these principles could bring about and maintain long lasting peace in the neighborhood of different countries. In reality, since many of the countries defy 45 the principles of panchsheel, the obvious result is out in the form of continued conflict and armed struggles in different parts of the world.
