
POLICY OF NON-ALIGNMENT

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Introduction :

India's emergence as an independent nation in 1947 coincided with the rise of United States and the Soviet Union as the two super powers which were fanatically opposed to each other ideologically. It was apprehended even at that early date that day. The setting up of NATO, CENTO, SEATO, ANZUS and they would collide one WARSAW pact as military blocs made it all the more difficult for a new nation like India to formulate an independent foreign policy.

It is often said that the foreign policy of India was the handi-work of one man, Jawaharlal Nehru. He sincerely believed that India had "no enemies" and based India's foreign policy on this assumption. If that was the belief, India could be a friend to all the nations irrespective of their political, political, economic and ideological differences. But the emerging pattern of tense relations between the two super powers made Nehru unhappy and left India with little scope for the formulation of an independent foreign policy. In the circumstances, it adopted a policy of judging each international issue in its merit. Thus, instead of joining one bloc or the other, or staying neutral, India chose the policy of non-alignment. This provided it not only the flexibility of action but also an opportunity to play a positive role in the cause of peace.

Meaning of Non-alignment :

Non-alignment, as a concept, is often confused with isolationism. Non-commitment, neutrality, neutralization, non-involvement and withdrawal. Non-alignment is not isolationism, for isolationism means "a political sanyas" i.e. withdrawal from international politics. To a certain extent, isolationism means escapism or the non-participation in international affairs. Non-alignment is neither escapism nor political sanyas; rather, it implies full participation in the world's affairs. Similarly, non-alignment is not a commitment, for the latter means having relations with all the nations but commitment to none. By its very nature, non-commitment denotes a love for one's own interests, without having any respect for international values. Non-alignment is by no means such a commitment. It does not mean respect only for one's own interests it also means an equal regard for the world's public opinion, internationalism, peace and security, and co-existence.

Nor is non-alignment neutrality. Neutrality is a legal and a formal status with certain obligations to be fulfilled and certain rights to be enjoyed. Neutrality is a status accorded by various nations to a neutral state only in times of war. Non-alignment does not imply such a status accorded by other nations; it is a self-declared position of a nation wanting to pursue the policy of non-alignment. Unlike neutrality, non-alignment is a status both in times of war and in peace. A non-aligned nation need not be any legal or formal recognition from others. Like neutral states, non-aligned nations do not have any obligations, nor special rights. Non-alignment does not mean neutralisation, which means a permanent positioning of a neutral state, whether it be war or peace, and which is enjoyed by Saarland today. Non-alignment is not a permanent status of a non-aligned nation; it is a policy of a state.

Non-alignment is not non-involvement either, for the latter means not involving oneself in major or minor international conflicts. On the contrary, non-alignment stands for the removal of all types of castes, minor or major. In turn, unilateralism is a position taken by a nation with regard to disarmament. Non-alignment, therefore, does not confine itself to disarmament only; it is concerned with the world. Thus, the non-aligned movement is a policy of a nation which, though weak in power or bloc, is emotionally committed to the course of international peace and security.

Policy of Non-alignment :

Jawaharlal Nehru considered non-alignment a vital policy that grew from India's struggle for freedom and the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi. In an address to the University of Cambridge, he said: "When man's liberty or peace is at stake, we shall not be neutral; neutrality then would be a half what we have fought and stood for." Explaining the policy to the Americans, Nehru remarked that India would oppose it to the hilt, if the territorial integrity of any country was violated to its people subjugated. On such occasions, he said, India would not sit on the fence, but would put pressure on the international community to take effective steps to redress the injustices. Almost similar meaning was given to non-alignment by VK Krishna Menon, leader of the Indian delegation to the United Nations. He said: "We are not a neutral country. We are not neutral in regard to war or peace. We are not neutral in regard to domination by the imperialists. We are not neutral in regard to ethical values. We are not neutral with regard to the greatest economic and social problems... Our position is that we are an unaligned and uncommitted nation in relation to the cold war."

Characteristic Features of India's Foreign Policy :

From what has been discussed so far, we may enumerate the characteristic features of India's policy of non-alignment as follows:

- (a) Maximum participation in international affairs;
- (b) Promotion of international understanding, mutual cooperation, peaceful co-existence and respect for national sovereignty;
- (c) Avoidance of local, regional and global wars;
- (d) Strengthening the cause of international peace and security;
- (e) Consideration of each international issue on its own merit; and
- (f) Pursuance of an independent foreign policy without siding with any power or bloc.

India's Policy of Non-alignment; Goals and Objectives

The goals of India's policy of non-alignment, since its independence, may be summed up as under: Independence, meaning thereby the firm and independent base in the international field free of the evils of colonialism and imperialism; development and national sovereignty of the newly independent states, by pursuing a policy that helps conditions for rapid economic development and secures the national interests of such countries; Maintenance and extension of the "third world," which would act as a "buffer zone" between the two opposing blocs; and

i) Strengthening the efforts of United Nations for world peace, security and co-operation. India has undertaken all efforts to achieve the following objectives

(a) A peaceful atmosphere amidst the bi-polar and cold war

b) A new international order committed to world peace and security: A new atmosphere which strengthens peace and negates the conditions of war

(4) A new international economic order which brings North-South equity; (e) Promotion of international co-operation: (A) respect for the sovereignty, Independence and territorial integrity of all the states, and (A) aware of the newly independent states of their rightful place in the community of nations.

Contest of the Non-Aligned Movement

India's non-alignment policy was the result of various factors from both national and international, which came to the fore during the Indian struggle against the Britishers. In its resolutions in the 1920s, and 1930s, the Indian National Congress had been in opposition to Western imperialism. At the time of the Bandung Conference, Nehru declared "We propose, as far as possible, a new way from power politics of groups, against again machete, since love and peace on the past world war and which has led to an even worse world. The Bandung Conference, held at New Delhi in 1955, the then Prime Minister, Jawahar Lal Nehru, remarked for the first time that India would not follow the Western bloc and that India would stand on its own feet and not be the plaything of others." It was of this period of confidence that there arose the foreign policy. And in a world divided into blocs alone could ensure freedom of national initiative in world affairs

Non-alignment was more than a policy for India. It is a movement. It was largely because of the efforts of India that there could start a non-aligned movement. Nehru himself was the architect of this movement. The popularity of non-alignment grew by its ever-increasing strength since its first summit was held at Belgrade in 1961 in which 25 non-aligned nations took part. The number of non-aligned nations rose to 60 at the Lusaka Summit. The second summit was held at Cairo in 1964, the fourth at Algiers in 1973, and the fifth non-aligned summit held at Colombo in 1975 had 86 members. The number rose to 92 at the sixth held at Havana in 1979. The seventh non-aligned summit held at New Delhi in 1983, had a strength of 101 members. The eighth summit was held at Harare in 1986. The non-aligned movement now has almost two-thirds of the world's nations as its members. The movement has progressed well in the past and has a great future. India has its stakes in the movement, for it helped the latter into being, nurtured it through the years, and wants it to be a success. The movement stands for the democratization of international relations, so that all the states, big and small, can have a say in them.

Non-alignment and India's Role

In order to understand the nature of India's policy of non-alignment, necessary to state that the policy of non-alignment is a state of neutrality. In the words of Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru "What Prime Minister Nehru wanted to describe India's foreign policy except in terms of war." What Prime Minister Nehru

The Non-alignment Journey

The main lines of India's foreign policy," Richard Park says, were established by Jawaharlal Nehru and they have been continued, with some alterations in emphasis." This assessment of India's policy of non-alignment, over the years seems a fair one. The policy of non-alignment, in its early years of formulation, did not attract many partly because India had little time to advocate it and partly because the notion of non-alignment had little meaning in a bi-polar world that came to exist after the Second World War. This was why the policy of non-alignment did not at first find favour with the big powers,

The reaction of the big powers, particularly the United States and the Soviet Union, to India's non-alignment, broadly speaking, can be classified into three phases: (a) doubting the policy of non alignment, (b) respect for it, and (c) support to it. India's resolve to create a "NO WAR ZONE" in India, South-East Asia and Pakistan during 1948-49 was doubted by the big powers. Later, India's firm stand on Korea, and on Indo-China in the year 1950, brought her tremendous respect from the big powers. And, in 1951, when both the United States and the Soviet Union helped India by donating grains and other assistance, it was clear that the big powers had started supporting India's non-alignment policy.

The journey of India's non-alignment begins with the country's independence. Between 1947 and 1950, India's non-alignment used towards the West. India's close relations with Great Britain, Cated States in 1949 are examples of our pro-West attitude. But A membership of the Commonwealth, and Nehru's visit to the on 1951 and 1956, India played a fairly active role as a mediator

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400 in international conflicts and, in the process, moved from a West oriented non-alignment to a middle-of-the road position. This is evident from India's stand on issues like Korea, Indo-China, Suz and Hungary. It was a period during which our relations with the Soviet Union and People's China improved. It was also the period during which our relations with the United States deteriorated and those with Great Britain underwent considerable fluctuations. During this period, India started playing an active anti-colonial and a imperialist role and supported the liberation struggle of the Afro Asian countries. This support brought it the fame of a custodian of the Afro-Asian unity, atleast in the United Nations. Non-alignment, by this time, had taken the shape of a movement.

Between 1957 and 1962, India followed a rather quieter role in the international field because of its preoccupations with its domestic problems relating to economic development, defence, national unity, etc. In world affairs, it was less radical than earlier. Between 1963 and 1963, India's policy came under heavy stress and showed weakening tendencies. The Chinese attack, the tension with Pakistan, close relations between Pakistan and China, and the lukewarm support of the non-aligned nations during the Chinese invasion, forced India to assess its foreign policy more realistically. Happily, India withstood these challenges, thanks to the timely support received from the United States, Canada, Great Britain, France and the Soviet Union. During the years 1964-66, India's non-alignment came to be applied to a limited geographical area. India

realised that the improving of bilateral relations with the nations close to its doors was more important than improving relations with far off countries. Mrs. Indira Gandhi, in the years of her leadership between 1966 and 1977 and from 1980 until her death, concentrated on a limited geographical area. As a consequence, India's relations with its neighbours-Pakistan, China, Ceylon, etc.-improved. Thereafter, Indira Gandhi ventured out into a larger area and gradually India showed signs of wider involvement. The Non-aligned Conference and the Commonwealth Summit in New Delhi in 1983 furthered India's full participation in international affairs and led to the application of non-alignment to the international situation as realistically as possible. The Rajiv Gandhi era promises to take non-alignment to the farthest lands of the world.

Conclusion :

To sum up, India's policy of non-alignment is very much in international conformity with its national interests and its geographical location. This policy has added to the moral strength of India's relations. This policy is so deeply entrenched in India's political system that the persons who had raised the issue of "genuine non-alignment" could not muster the courage to deviate from the established principles of this policy as laid down by Jawaharlal Nehru.

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