

ISSN 2277 - 5730  
AN INTERNATIONAL MULTIDISCIPLINARY  
QUARTERLY RESEARCH JOURNAL

# AJANTA

Volume - VIII

Issue - III

July - September - 2019

English Part - II

Peer Reviewed Refereed  
and UGC Listed Journal

Journal No. 40776



ज्ञान-विज्ञान विमुक्तये

IMPACT FACTOR / INDEXING

2019 - 6.399

[www.sjifactor.com](http://www.sjifactor.com)

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❖ PUBLISHED BY ❖

**Ajanta Prakashan**  
Aurangabad. (M.S.)



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## 29. Principals of Indian Foreign Policy & It's Relevance in Present Era

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### Introduction

Every Sovereign Country like India has its foreign policy. While keeping in view the fundamental objectives of India's foreign policy, India has adopted and pursued certain principles to realize these objectives. The principles of India's foreign policy and its objectives are closely interlinked with each other. In this article, you can read about the main principles of the foreign policy of India, which is a very relevant topic for the UPSC international relations segment.

### What are Foreign Policies?

Foreign Policies are a set of the plan of action for diplomatic dealings with International nations and bodies and regional grouping.

### The Constitutional Principles

The constitution of India lays down certain principles in Article 51 under the Directive Principles of State Policy. These principles focus on the promotion of International peace and security-

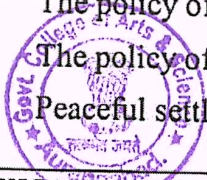
As per the principles laid down in Article 51, the state shall endeavor to-

1. Promote international peace and security.
2. Maintain just and honorable relations between nations.
3. Foster respect for international law and treaty obligations in the dealings of organized people with one another
4. Encourage settlement of international disputes by arbitration

### Basic Principles Governing India's Foreign Policy

The principles have stood the test of time and are ingrained in international law and India's foreign policy practice. The principles of Indian foreign policy are as follows –

1. Panchsheel
2. The policy of Non-Alignment
3. The policy of Anti- Colonialism and Anti Racism
4. Peaceful settlement of International Disputes



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5. Foreign Economic Aid – Support to UN, International Law and a Just and Equal World Order

The principles of India's Foreign Policy are discussed in detail below-

**A. Panchsheel**

Indian Policymakers understood the linkage between peace and development and the survival of mankind. Without global peace, social and economic development is likely to be pushed to the background. In view of the destruction caused by two world wars, they realized that for the progress of a nation a durable world peace was needed. Thus, the founder of India's foreign policy, Nehru gave utmost importance to world peace in his policy planning.

India desired peaceful and friendly relations with all countries, particularly the big powers and the neighbouring nations. While signing a peace agreement with China; he advocated adherence to five guiding principles known as Panchsheel.

Panchsheel also called the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence was signed on 29p April 1954 and since then it has become a guiding principle of India's bilateral relations with other countries.

Panchsheel includes the following five principles of foreign policy:

1. Mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty.
2. Non-aggression against each other.
3. Non-interference in each other's internal affairs.
4. Equality and mutual benefit.
5. Peaceful co-existence.

These principles of Panchsheel were later incorporated in the Bandung Declaration, signed in the Afro-Asian Conference held in 1955 in Indonesia. They are the core principles of the Non-Alignment Movement (NAM) and still guide the conduct of India's foreign policy.

**B. Policy of Non-alignment**

1. Non-alignment is the most important feature of India's foreign policy. Its core element is to maintain independence in foreign affairs by not joining any military alliance formed by the USA and the Soviet Union, which emerged as an important aspect of Cold War politics after the Second World War.
2. Non-alignment was neither neutrality nor non-involvement nor isolationism. It was a positive and dynamic concept. Non-Alignment gained popularity in developing countries.



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3. India played a lead role in popularizing and consolidating the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). India, under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru, convened the Asian Relations Conference in New Delhi in 1947 to forge the idea of Asian solidarity.
4. Another Asian Relations Conference was convened by India in 1949 on the question of the independence of Indonesia as India stood firm-against the colonial rule in other countries.
  - A larger Conference, known as the Bandung Conference of 29 countries of Asia and Africa was convened in Bandung (Indonesia) in 1955 to forge the Afro-Asian unit.
  - The Seventh NAM Summit was hosted by India in New Delhi in 1983. In this Summit, India took up the cause of development, disarmament, and the Palestine issue.
  - The conference laid down ten fundamental principles of international relations. The leaders pledged to work together for colonial liberation, peace, cultural, economic, and political cooperation among developing countries.
  - It provides all its members, regardless of their size and development, an opportunity to participate in the global decision-making process.

#### Continued Relevance of Non-alignment

As NAM was a product of Cold War politics and the bipolar world, many scholars have questioned the relevance of NAM after the end of the Cold War and the disintegration of the Soviet Union. It appears to be equally significant also in the changing context due to the following factors:

1. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the NAM can act as a check against undue dominance and hegemony of any country or block.
2. The developed (North) and developing (South) worlds have divergent views over several global and economic issues. The NAM may provide a forum for third-world countries to engage the developed nations in a productive dialogue.
3. The NAM can prove to be a powerful mechanism to forge cooperation, which is essential for their collective self-reliance in the present market-driven global order.
4. NAM can provide an important forum for developing countries to discuss and deliberate upon various global problems, issues, and reforms including the reform of the UN and other international financial institutions like the World Bank and IMF in order to make them more democratic and effective.

### C. The policy of Anti – Colonialism, Racism and Imperialism

The foundations of India's foreign policy were laid during independence struggle when our leaders fought the evils of colonialism and racism. India has been a victim of colonialism and imperialism and considers these as a threat to international peace and security

India was the first to bring the issue of Apartheid in the UN in 1946. India raised her voice for the independence of Indonesia and organized the Asian Relations Conference for this purpose.

1. Due to India's consistent efforts through NAM and other international forums, 14 African countries were liberated from the yoke of colonialism in 1964.
2. India firmly opposed the infamous apartheid policy in South Africa. India had cut off diplomatic relations with South Africa in 1949 .
3. At India's initiative, NAM set up the Africa Fund (Action for Resisting Imperialism, Colonialism, and Apartheid) in 1986 to help the frontline states, which were victims of aggression of South Africa and for facing the brunt of Apartheid.

#### India's foreign policy & Its achievements

1. Under the leadership of Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, India was the founder member of the Non-aligned Movement. India has played an active role in strengthening the Movement and making it an effective voice in representing the collective aspirations and interests of developing countries on such vital issues as development, peace and stability.
2. India has also been in the forefront of the world community in the struggle against colonialism. Indeed, the Independence of India itself played the role of a catalyst in removing the vestiges of colonialism in other parts of the developing world, particularly in Africa. India was also the first country to raise the question of racial discrimination in South Africa in the UN in 1946.
3. A notable feature of Indian foreign policy has been its strong advocacy of general and complete disarmament, with nuclear disarmament being accorded the highest priority.
4. As a founder member of the United Nations, India has been firmly committed to the purposes' and principles of the United Nations and has made significant contributions to its various activities, including peace-keeping operations.
5. India has succeeded in establishing a network of mutually beneficial relations with all countries of the world to promote her vital national interests India launched a new Neighbourhood Policy in 2005, which laid emphasis on developing connectivity and people to people contact with these countries.



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6. One of the significant aspects of success of India' Policy in post-1990 period has been the development of strategic relations with the US. The Peaceful Nuclear Cooperation agreement signed in 2008, between the two countries is land-mark in bilateral relations
7. In addition, India has renewed its engagement with African countries under the framework of India-Africa Forum Summit, convened first time in 2008 and again in 2011
8. An important achievement of India's foreign policy has been the promotion of regional co-operation in south Asia. India is an active member of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC),
9. India has emerged as a leading player in global affairs. India is a founder member of G-20, which was established on the eve of global financial crisis, 1997 for the management of global financial order. India has been invited to become as a part of Outreach group of G-8 , which is considered as the rich countries club.
10. Economic diplomacy has been a core element of India's foreign policy in last 20 years or so. India responded to globalization by domestic economic and institutional reforms. India set up Investment Publicity Unit (IPU) in 1990. India has signed Free Trade Agreement with ASEAN in 2010.

In order to boost trade, India has also signed free trade agreements with Singapore, Malaysia and Sri Lanka. India's trade has registered big boost in last 20 years and stood at \$ 70 trillion in 2011. India has also attracted Foreign Direct Investment in big quantity in recent years.

Another notable development has been the involvement of private sector by the government for the promotion of trade and investment in other countries. India's investment in other countries is a new feature of foreign policy.

#### **Contemporary Context: Change And Continuity In India's Foreign Policy**

The modern international relations may be broadly classified under two phases on the basis of underlying fundamental characteristics. First is the Post-World War II period, which was dominated by the cold war logic and super power rivalry between the two super powers US and Soviet Union.

Second is the post-cold war period since early 1990s, which marks the fundamental break from the first period. The disintegration of Soviet Union in 1991 and the demise of WARSA pact, the military alliance of Communist bloc in 1992, the end of cold war, the unification of Germany, the expansion of Western Military Alliance, NATO, the emergence of signs of unipolar world led by the US and her allies etc altered the hitherto existing paradigm of cold war politics.



In economic terms also, the global order experienced a major shift. The process of globalization riding on the back of new communication technology and neo-liberal market economy logic gradually became the new economic reality of international relations.

The combined impact of these two set of factors' was visible across the entire spectrum of emerging international order. This new situation had deep impact on the foreign policies of all nations. But most were the nations affected, which followed a policies highly divergent from this new reality India falls in this category.

India had to introduce fundamental changes in her domestic economy as well as foreign policies in early 1990s. The new economic policy, 1991 based on liberalization and privatization was in response to cope with the emerging global economic order brought out by the process of globalization.

China started similar reforms in early 1980s. If we go by the nature of the changes introduced in the foreign policy of India in response to emerging post-cold war political and economic global order .

India adopted a pragmatic approach in foreign affairs in view of her strategic and economic interests. The pragmatic assessment of foreign policy in 1990s led to two fundamental shifts in India's foreign policy orientations:

- First, India reconsidered her relations with the only super power, the US and moved on to develop strategic partnership with her, which appeared unthinkable in cold war ideological conditions.
- The second change was the initiation of new engagement with the countries of East Asia. This was encompassed under the Look East Policy announced by India in 1991.

Though India has not renounced the principles it upheld under the policy of non-alignment, the priorities of foreign policy have changed in view of changing global environment. India has also emerged as the leading player in global affairs.

It has joined new global groups like G-20, IBSA, and BRICS which gives more scope to India to play a larger role in Global affairs. India still stands by the commitment to the cause of developing and the Least Developed Countries and serves it through the new international forums, mentioned above.

Consequently, the visibility of NAM as seen in yester years has declined. However, the cause it stands for is still relevant in the globalized world. The transition from NAM to IBSA and G-20 captures the change and continuity of India's foreign policy.





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