

# Non-Aligned Movement of India in Nehru Years

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**Abstract:** This article describes Nehru's role in Foreign Policy towards Africa. Nehru was the main architect behind the basic principles of India's Foreign Policy in the post 1947 era till his death. The international developments after the Second World War have shaped India's Foreign Policy to a great extent. After the World War II all over world the imperialism was weakening and democracy type of governance was becoming famous and spreading. Many countries in Asia, Europe, and Africa started condemning capitalist system and advocating socialist system. Colonialism collapsed in many countries because of the boom in freedom movement and increase in resentment against imperial powers. After independence Nehru became the virtual director of India's Foreign Policy. Under his guidance India emerged as the first country to chase and successfully implement the new 'Non-Alignment Policy' in the world history. This article draws attention to how Indian National Congress and Nehru guided African states after 1947 to bring the rule of the natives.

**Keywords:** Foreign Policy towards Africa, India's Foreign Policy, how Indian National Congress.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The study of expansion and development of an Indian policy towards Africa often brings amazement. The lack of studies on the subject have led to the misconception that India had never tried to develop the policy towards Africa. But if we examine newspaper articles, legislative debates, Speeches and writings of prominent leaders M.K. Gandhi, G.K. Gokhale, Jawaharlal Nehru, V.S. Shrinivasa Shastri and review resolutions of the Indian National Congress it becomes apparent that according to the changing scenario there had been an important adaptations by India's Africa policy (Gregory, Robert 1992, p. 33). Prof. Robert Gregory (Syracuse University, New York) who has worked on subject 'India Africa relations' for more than thirty years also recognizes change and progression in India's Africa policy (Ramchandani, 1989, p.1).

Gregory Wrote in 1963, "In common with other salient features of India's foreign policy it (her policy towards Africa) has its roots in the soil" (Ramchandani, 1989, p.1).

According to Gregory the origins of India's Africa policy can be traced back in 1860. At the beginning India's Africa policy was based on narrow ideologies but later it evolved after which it into broad humanitarianism. Gregory acknowledges the transformation in India's foreign policy on the grounds of various documents (Ramchandani, 1989, p.1).

Gregory says these documents, "Shows quite clearly a remarkable transformation in outlook toward Africans and evolution of clear-cut policy" (Gregory, Robert 1992, p. 33).

Large scale Indian settlement in Africa started in 1860 when first group of indentured labourers arrived in Natal. The actual immigration that began as a result of various agreements took place between British Government of India and colonial Government of South and Eastern African regions, later gave rise to accelerated Indian interest in social and political development in Africa (Gregory, Robert 1992, p. 33). According to Ramchandani the emergence of India's Africa policy therefore can be attributed to the 1860s first Indian servant's migration in Africa (Ramchandani, 1989, p. 1). Early stages in the development of Foreign Policy are important in order to comprehend the work of Nehru towards the policy.

## 2. THE FIRST PHASE (1860-1914)

British Government in India had an inconsistent and uncoordinated attitude before 1914 towards India's problems in Africa. The European settlers were more pleased by Governors and High Commissioners, while the interests of others were overlooked. Colonial Office has always tried to reconcile European settlers and non-European officials in Africa and at the same Indians in South Africa, the Government of India and India office. Some secretaries of State like Joseph Chamberlain were supportive of European's matters while there were also few people like Lord Granville who were concerned about Indian's claims (Gregory, Robert 1992, p. 35).

The indenture system started in 1860. The indenture labour was very important to the British from the point of view of strengthening their empire, earning revenues, to fix their position in the colony, to become the most powerful nation in Europe, etc. The British understood that it was necessary to look after the indentured workers as they were playing an important role in the British colonies. In one way, the indentured workers were helping the British to attain their aims. But drafting a policy was strategically important to them. India was the most important colony for the British. Therefore, they saw Indian workers as a way to bring stability to the British dominion (Patterson, George N. 1963, p. 76).

The colonial government tried to protect the coolies through many legislative policies. Many commissions were formed to inquire and analyse exploitations of Indian coolies by their masters. The reports revealed some terrifying examples of abuses. These reports were kept secret so that Indians were not provoked. In 1887, the Wragg Commission said that Indian labourers went to the remote parts of Africa and developed colonies for the British Empire. But they were not given the right to roam anywhere in the colony. So, their needs were being ignored, though they had been a big help to the British (Gangopadhyay, Aparajita 2005, pp. 95-96). Thus, British Policy for indenture labour remained limited only to criticism, forming commissions, sending agents etc. But no definite policies were formed to protect indentured labours from abuses.

## 3. THE SECOND PHASE (1914-1947)

Between 1914-47, the awareness about the abuse of labourers was increasing. After 1914, the Congress leaders started agitating to protect the Indian rights living outside India. Their concern was the Indian contract labourers. For example, in September 1934, K.P.S. Menon went to East Africa to examine the facts about maltreatment of the indentured workers. In 1942, the East African Indian Congress called Sarojini Naidu to Mombasa to chair its session (India-Kenya Relations 2013).

In this period, the Indians in both India and Africa were solely worried about the Indian subjects in Africa and other countries. They wanted to make sure that the Indians living outside get equal treatment from the colonial governments, but they weren't even thinking about similar treatment to the Africans. The local Africans saw this behaviour as cruel. According to them, it was the African population and not Indian who had to go through the most exploitation and abuse (Gregory, Robert 1992, p. 36). In the second phase, the Indians did not support the Africans materially. Yet some Indian leaders were little sympathetic about the Africans like V. S. Srinivasa Sastri. Sastri who had also gone to East Africa was liberal in his approach (Gupta, Anirudha 1970, p. 170).

The Indian Congress used many methods like pressurising the British government in India, agitating, and boycotting the British goods. The British were threatened that the Indians wouldn't support their government in India if they neglected their Indian brothers in the British colonies. There were these and many other tactics utilized to improve the conditions of the Indian Diaspora. In 1936, the Foreign Department was formed so as to develop the strong links between India and the Indian inhabitants in Africa (Tyagi, Jyoti 2010, p.153).

From 1920s, Nehru's role became significant, especially after his return to India in 1927 from Europe and Soviet Union (Moraes, Frank R.) and the draft of a foreign policy statement from INC. It stated that India would stay away from the colonial fights and wars (Aggarwal, Mamta). Initially, the political leaders in India shaped India's Foreign Policy. Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Mahatma Gandhi and Srinivasa Sastri were assigned the task of implementation of the newly drafted foreign policy. Consequently, they became more connected to the Indians in Africa. After independence till 1964, it was solely framed by Jawaharlal Nehru.

### 3. NON- ALIGNED MOVEMENT (NAM)

On the initiative of Jawaharlal Nehru India's new foreign policy was introduced at the Asian Relations Conference in Delhi in 1947. The representatives from twenty-nine countries had attended the conference which included aspects that would be of common interest to the Asian countries in its agenda. Here, Nehru announced India's new foreign policy of non-alignment. This principle was unknown to everybody because such a policy had never been adopted by any country as part of its foreign policy. When Nehru spoke about the basic foundations on which non-alignment was built, the responses were noteworthy. Sukarno of Indonesia, Nasser of Egypt, and Joseph Broz Tito of Yugoslavia supported non-alignment (Bharati, Agehananda 2013, pp. 105-106). Non-alignment means staying neutral.

Looking at Nehru's efforts, Churchill made a right guess that Nehru would play a good role in global affairs. Calling him the 'light of Asia', he wrote a letter to Nehru letting him know that India would lead now and this was possible only because of him. In another letter, Churchill wished Nehru the best (Sarvepalli, Gopal 1993, pp. 469-470). The non-aligned movement or policy includes five guiding ethics.

#### **Panchsheel and Non-alignment:**

The five ethics are named as 'Panchsheel'. The term is found in Buddha literature. When Gautam Buddha preached it for the first time, he talked about the five ethics (Khilnani, Sunil 2003, p. 49).

The main idea behind Panchsheel was to 'live and let live' (Jansen, G.H. 1966, pp. 173-174). The five aspects of the Panchsheel policy were:

- i. Mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty
- ii. Mutual non-aggression
- iii. Mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs
- iv. Equality and mutual benefit
- v. Peaceful co-existence (Aggarwal, Mamta).

In April 1955 Nehru promoted Panchsheel movement for the first time at the international level at the Afro-Asian conference at Bandung (Indonesia). The Bandung conference had some prior objectives like:

- a) Co-operation and goodwill between different countries in Africa and Asia;
- b) Trying to solve the social, cultural, and economic problems that Asian and African countries face;
- c) Concentrate on special problems like racialism and colonialism in these countries;
- d) Check the capacity of Africa and Asia to see if they could together play a significant role in bringing world peace and co-operation. China, Nepal, Burma, Laos, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, Cambodia, and Yugoslavia welcomed the five principles of Panchsheel. The countries in Asia and Africa were supportive of it and keen on using it as their foreign policy (Jansen, G.H. 1966, pp. 173-174).

The Non-alignment Policy was based on some ethics such as:

- i) Non-alignment meant not getting involved in the war, though it believed that sometimes wars were inevitable;
- ii) NAM advised that the governments of different countries should not make agreements and commitments which could create clashes and war-like situations in the future;
- iii) Non-alignment gave importance to the fact that analysing had to be without any biases and prejudices;
- iv) It gave importance to analysing in a way that satisfactory solutions could be found;
- v) Non-alignment believed in cultivating diplomatic relations with all the nations so that there wouldn't be complete isolation;

- vi) The NAM suggested that national aims of any country did not create problems for other countries;
- vii) The decisions had to be made after considering all the benefits and faults, though everybody had freedom of expression (Bharati, Agehananda 2013, pp. 105-106).

The main aims of the Non-Alignment Policy were as follows:

- i) The primary aim of NAM was to end imperial domination in Asia, Africa, Latin America, Caribbean, and the rest of the world. Thus it aimed at ending imperialism from all parts of the world.
- ii) Nehru believed that democracy was the best way to stop outside forces away from creating any obstacle in the countries' progress. So, in India, he wanted to bring a democratic government.
- iii) Nehru aimed at preserving close and friendly relations with other countries for economic and social progress.
- iv) Attaining the native's welfare in any country was more important in NAM than the migrated communities (Bharati, Agehananda 2013, pp. 106-107).

The Non-Alignment Policy had the following features:

- i) The NAM policy was drafted taking into account the needs and problems India was facing at that time.
- ii) The difference about NAM was that it was an autonomous policy i.e. it was developed out of Nehru's own understanding of worldly matters.
- iii) India's weaknesses and strengths were considered while directing the NAM policy (Bharati, Agehananda 2013, pp. 107-108).

Because of NAM, many countries which were under imperial domination developed the confidence because they began to believe that NAM had suggested the right way to attain freedom. For the poor countries, it was a hope for economic betterment. Nehru was never on the side of the western or eastern countries. He criticized both whenever he felt necessary or whenever he thought they were creating disharmony in the world. Nehru did not like the attacks of communist North Korea and denounced it. He got to know more about the African problems which needed to be resolved urgently and emphasised with them. Nehru immediately spoke about the essential goals for Indo-African progress in 1955 in the function of School of African Studies and African Society of India, at the convocation hall of the University of Delhi (Ramchandani, R.R. 1989, p.10).

One secret of NAM was that it helped India play the role of a middleman. When India was following NAM, it neither completely took the side of the western countries or of the eastern countries. In its eyes, all the countries were equal. Because of this approach, it became easier to take care of the domestic needs of the communist countries and even of the democratic countries. With the adoption of NAM, Nehru ensured that he maintained peaceful relations with all the developed and underdeveloped, rich and poor, independent and dependent countries. Thus, India had peaceful relationships with almost all the nations. NAM also made it possible for foreign aid to come through (Aggarwal, Mamta). When India was freed, it was a poor country. Nehru then welcomed financial aid from all those who offered it. Many countries helped India financially, such as USSR, UK, USA, Germany, and Japan (Aggarwal, Mamta).

Thus, the conference at Bandung proved beneficial to the world in the following respects:

- i) The countries that attended the Bandung conference denounced the imperial type of domination as an 'evil system' (Nasenko, Yuri 1977, p. 188). In an interview, Nehru said to Tibor that "the common factor was against Western domination. The other common factor was a desire for social progress". And everybody agreed with that (Mende, Tibor 1956, p. 62).
- ii) The non-aligned movement started becoming more popular and earned a good name after the Bandung conference. More and more countries favoured NAM and wanted to apply NAM as their policy.
- iii) Because of Bandung, many countries began to look at the socialist countries from a different perspective (Nasenko, Yuri 1977, p. 189).

India was the father of Non-Alignment Policy, and it was following it very well. Because of India's adherence to NAM, India became the mediator in worldly matters. Under Nehru's leadership, the Indian Government could critically examine and give unbiased assessment. Nehru avoided partnerships and agreements with other countries so that peace could be maintained (Bharati, Agehananda 2013, p. 106). He was always interested and active in Asian and African politics and freedom movements and had created a voting bloc in the US. He repeatedly asked the African and Asian countries to not get involved in cold war politics (Gregory, Robert 1992, pp. 42-43).

In Nehru: A Political Biography, Michael Brecher writes:

"Nowhere does one man dominate foreign policy as does Nehru in India. Indeed so overwhelming is his influence that India's policy has come to mean in the minds of people everywhere the personal policy of Pandit Nehru... he has impressed his personality and his views with such overpowering effect that foreign policy may properly be termed a private monopoly... no one in the Congress or the government, not even Sardar Patel, ever challenged his control in this sphere" (Brecher, Michael 1959, p. 216).

Nehru had done a deep study of India and its position in the world, linking it to the worldly situations. He never looked at India as only his country but in relation to the rest of the world. Nehru believed that domination created obstacles in maintaining peace. It was freedom for all countries that was most wanted. He strongly believed that India had a very motivational story of freedom struggle which could properly guide the poor and other countries that were still under colonial rule (Laxman, Deelip 2015, pp. 207-210).

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Thus, India's foreign policy for Africa and non-aligned movement were interlinked. The NAM was developed with the objective that any country could be benefitted by adopting such foreign policy. Till his death Nehru had guided and controlled foreign policy of India almost singly and he made NAM the fundamental aspect in international relations.

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