



## DIPLOMATIC KALEIDOSCOPE: MAPPING THE CULTURAL HORIZON OF INDIAN FOREIGN POLICY

**AUTHOR – BHAGYAMMA GOPALA**, PRINCIPAL AT M.H. COLLEGE OF LAW, KARNATAKA, INDIA & PH.D. SCHOLAR (LAW) DEPARTMENT OF STUDIES IN LAW, UNIVERSITY OF MYSORE & **KANCHANA M**, STUDENT OF LLM (INTERNATIONAL LAW), DEPARTMENT OF STUDIES IN LAW, UNIVERSITY OF MYSORE

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### ABSTRACT

*The core principles of Indian foreign policy form a crucial section of the narrative, elucidating the intricate balance between promoting international peace, cultivating friendly relations, respecting international law, and advocating for peaceful dispute resolution. The article unfolds the historical odyssey of India's non-alignment policy, its resistance against colonialism and imperialism, and its stalwart support for international law and peacebuilding diplomacy. This article encapsulates the unfolding narrative within the symphony of India's soft power dynamics, leveraging its rich cultural heritage as a transformative force in global engagement. The exploration commences with an in-depth examination of India's diverse cultural tapestry, emphasizing its diplomatic implications. By scrutinizing the global reverberations of the Indian diaspora, the article sheds light on the profound cultural impacts resonating beyond international borders. A nuanced examination of India's global economic development strategies underscores its unwavering commitment to fostering sustainable growth on the world stage. This article provides a succinct overview of the article's exploration into the intricate interplay between India's cultural diplomacy and strategic imperatives, offering valuable insights into the nation's evolving role in the international arena.*

**Keywords:** Indian Foreign Policy, Soft Power Dynamics, Cultural Diplomacy, Non-Alignment Policy and Global Economic Development

### SOFT POWER SYMPHONY IN REINVENTING INDIA'S GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT

The concept of "soft power," initially introduced by Joseph Nye in 1990 within his book "Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power," has become increasingly significant in the realm of international politics.<sup>109</sup> Over the years, scholars in this field have shown a growing interest in understanding and harnessing the dynamics of soft power. According to Nye's perspective, a nation can effectively achieve its desired outcomes in global politics not solely through coercion, such as military threats or

economic sanctions, but by having other countries genuinely admire its values, emulate its example, and aspire to its level of prosperity and openness. Soft power, in essence, revolves around setting agendas and attracting others rather than forcing change through coercive means.<sup>110</sup> It hinges on a country's ability to shape the preferences of others and co-opt them into sharing similar aspirations. The evolution of the concept has profound implications for countries worldwide, particularly for developing nations like India,

<sup>109</sup> David M Malone, 'Soft Power in Indian Foreign Policy' (2011) 46 Economic and Political Weekly 35.

<sup>110</sup> Obja Borah Hazarika and Vivek Mishra, 'South Asia As A Battleground: SOFT POWER CONTESTATION BETWEEN INDIA AND CHINA' (2016) 20 World Affairs: The Journal of International Issues 112.



influencing foreign policy choices and alternatives. Recognizing the intrinsic link between soft power and societal and cultural attributes, India's claim to a significant leadership role in the twenty-first century lies in the appeal of its society and culture to the global community. While these assets may not directly translate into immediate support, they significantly enhance India's intangible standing on the world stage. Soft power becomes a tool to make others want the outcomes that India desires. India, in the realm of soft power, holds a strong position in certain areas and exhibits considerable potential in others. The Indian diaspora stands out as a pivotal element, often considered the nation's most potent "instrument" of soft power.<sup>111</sup> Beyond its cultural and civilizational wealth, India's vibrant democracy, free media, independent judiciary, dynamic civil society, and its impressive struggle for human rights since independence collectively make it an attractive model for many worldwide. Moreover, India's nonviolent resistance against colonialism serves as a beacon for freedom movements and newly independent countries, particularly during the 1950s and 1960s. This historical achievement contributes to India's soft power by inspiring others through its narrative of resilience and successful defiance against oppression. As India continues to navigate the complexities of international relations, understanding and harnessing soft power becomes crucial. Leveraging its cultural richness, democratic ethos, and historical narratives, India has the potential to wield influence not through force, but through the voluntary admiration and emulation of others.<sup>112</sup> In a world where attractiveness and persuasion play an increasingly significant role in diplomacy, India's soft power becomes a formidable asset in shaping its global image and fostering international cooperation. The following

provides an elaboration on various elements that form the diverse and multifaceted foundation of soft diplomacy.

### Harmony in Diversity Landscape

The strength of diversity, epitomized by the multifaceted tapestry of India, extends far beyond its borders, weaving a narrative that resonates globally. India, with its storied history of seers, sages, spiritual leaders, and healers, has emerged as a beacon of light, casting its influence across continents for centuries.<sup>113</sup> At the heart of this influence lies the profound cultural power that India wields, a power that has left an indelible mark on the world's collective consciousness. In the contemporary era, Indian spirituality has transcended geographical boundaries, attracting seekers and enthusiasts from every corner of the globe. The universal appeal of Indian spiritual teachings and practices is a testament to the inclusive nature of its wisdom, offering solace and guidance to individuals from diverse backgrounds. The ethos of unity in diversity, deeply ingrained in the fabric of Indian culture, has become a source of inspiration for people worldwide. The vitality of India's diverse cultural heritage is not confined to its borders alone. Every region, every community, and every cultural facet within India and beyond contributes to a global symphony of human expression. The Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) stands as a proud guardian of this cultural wealth, actively fostering connections between India and other nations. Its existence becomes a source of both pride and joy, as it plays a pivotal role in bridging cultural gaps and fostering mutual understanding.

### Indian Diaspora and Cultural Echoes in Global Affairs

The vibrant Indian Diaspora stands as a testament to the global influence of Indian culture, weaving a rich tapestry across the

<sup>111</sup> Amit Kumar Gupta, 'Soft Power of the United States, China, and India: A Comparative Analysis' (2013) 26 *Indian Journal of Asian Affairs* 37.

<sup>112</sup> 'Soft and Hard Power in India's Strategy Towards Southeast Asia' (S Rajaratnam School of International Studies 2013) <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep05896.6>> accessed 11 December 2023.

<sup>113</sup> Shrey Khanna and P Moorthy, 'Analysing India's Soft Power Functioning in the Twenty-First Century: Possibilities and Challenges' (2017) 73 *India Quarterly* 292.



continents. With a staggering population exceeding 30 million, these individuals, dispersed across the world, form a dynamic and thriving community that actively participates in the global cultural landscape. Among its ranks are Nobel Laureates, Booker Prize winners, Emmy Awardees, visionary physicians, accomplished engineers, astute businessmen, tech-savvy IT specialists, creative artists, and revered spiritual leaders. This diaspora isn't merely a collection of individuals; it is a reservoir of talent and excellence that resonates with the ethos of Indian culture. Regardless of their chosen fields, members of the Indian Diaspora have consistently achieved success, emerging as influential figures in business, education, space exploration, entertainment, and community service.<sup>114</sup>

A striking example of this global impact is evident in India's significant contribution to research and development, providing a substantial 75% of the human resources for NASA, the world's foremost hub of innovation. The helm of global tech giant Google is steered by an individual of Indian origin, Sathya Nadella, exemplifying the diaspora's prowess in leadership and technology. The allure of Indian arts and entertainment, particularly Bollywood, transcends geographical boundaries. Indian music and dance, once confined to the subcontinent, have now become global phenomena, captivating audiences worldwide.<sup>115</sup> Nations as diverse as Turkey, Russia, and various Gulf nations have dedicated channels to broadcast Indian movies and dramas, albeit in dubbed formats, fostering a cross-cultural exchange that goes beyond linguistic barriers.<sup>116</sup>

Bollywood, often hailed as India's soft power, serves as a cultural bridge, connecting the Indian Diaspora to their roots while simultaneously kindling the interest of host countries in the diverse and vibrant tapestry of

Indian traditions. Festivals such as Diwali and Holi, once celebrated primarily in India, have found resonance in foreign lands, with some countries adopting these festivities as part of their cultural calendar. Thus, the vibrant Indian Diaspora is not merely a demographic statistic; it is a living testament to the enduring influence of Indian culture on the global stage. Through their achievements, contributions, and cultural exports, the diaspora continues to shape a world where the essence of India resonates far beyond its geographical borders.

### **Yoga in the Heart of Diplomacy**

Yoga, deeply rooted in the spiritual essence of India, serves as a profound gateway to understanding the cultural and heritage-rich tapestry of the nation.<sup>117</sup> More than a mere physical practice, yoga encompasses a holistic approach to life, embodying the profound Sanskrit concept of "to unite." This ancient discipline is a priceless gift from India's cultural heritage, offering a pathway to a healthy and balanced existence. In the intricate language of Sanskrit, the term "yoga" signifies the union of mind and body, thought and action, restraint and fulfillment. It reflects a harmonious connection between humanity and nature, encouraging a holistic perspective on health and well-being. Unlike a mere exercise regimen, yoga is a transformative journey aimed at discovering a profound sense of oneness with oneself, the world, and the natural order. The allure of yoga extends far beyond the borders of India, captivating both its own citizens and people from diverse corners of the globe. Individuals, whether native to India or foreign visitors, increasingly turn to yoga and meditation as potent tools for stress relief and mental rejuvenation. As the demands of modern life escalate, the ancient wisdom embedded in yoga offers a timeless sanctuary for those seeking balance and inner peace. Yoga's global significance is further emphasized by its association with Ayurveda, forming a powerful duo that symbolizes India's spiritual

<sup>114</sup> Ian Hall, 'India's New Public Diplomacy' (2012) 52 Asian Survey 1089.

<sup>115</sup> Manoj Kumar Mishra, 'Soft And Hard Power In India's Foreign Policy' (2016) 20 World Affairs: The Journal of International Issues 34.

<sup>116</sup> Hazarika and Mishra (n 3).

<sup>117</sup> Hall (n 7).



and holistic traditions. These practices, embraced and revered worldwide, transcend geographical boundaries, becoming emblematic of India's rich cultural contributions to the global community. In the broader context, yoga becomes a reflection of India's ethos a nation celebrated for its unity in diversity. By fostering a connection between individual well-being and the greater cosmic order, yoga exemplifies the profound philosophy that underpins India's cultural landscape. Through the universal language of yoga, India not only promotes physical well-being but also imparts a timeless wisdom that transcends cultural differences, echoing the nation's commitment to unity and harmony.

### **Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam Beyond Geopolitics Borders**

The doctrine of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, derived from the Maha Upanishad, has evolved into a versatile and pervasive concept within India's diplomatic discourse. Serving as a guiding principle for India's foreign policy, this ancient Sanskrit phrase, meaning "the world is one family," has transcended its linguistic origins to encapsulate a broader vision of global unity and cooperation. In the diplomatic arena, Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam has become a nuanced and adaptable tool, finding relevance in a myriad of scenarios. Its applications are diverse, reflecting India's commitment to ideals and liberal concepts that resonate with the global community. This phrase is not merely a rhetorical flourish; it serves as a beacon for conveying India's vision of a harmonious world built on the principles of global norms, themes of globalization, and shared global commons. At its core, Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam advocates for the interconnectedness of all humanity, emphasizing the belief that the world is intricately linked as a single family. The phrase suggests that an ideal world, characterized by cooperation, understanding, and mutual respect, is not only desirable but also achievable through diplomatic negotiations and collaboration. Leaders across generations, from Jawaharlal Nehru to Narendra Modi, have

invoked the profound wisdom encapsulated in Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam to articulate India's global outlook. It has become a recurrent theme in India's diplomatic lexicon, reflecting a continuity of vision and values over time. The mantra encapsulates a timeless perspective that transcends political ideologies, symbolizing a collective aspiration for a world where boundaries, both physical and ideological, are overcome by the recognition of our shared humanity. India, as a proponent of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, is actively taking steps to disseminate and promote this concept globally. By doing so, the country seeks to contribute to the fostering of a more interconnected and harmonious world order. The notion goes beyond mere rhetoric; it underlines a commitment to building bridges, fostering understanding, and embracing diversity as essential components of a shared global destiny. In essence, Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam has become more than a philosophical concept; it is a diplomatic mantra that encapsulates India's vision for a world bound together by the shared values of unity, cooperation, and the recognition of our interconnected destinies.

### **Global Harmony from the Lense of Non-violence**

Non-violence, as exemplified by the teachings and practices of Mahatma Gandhi, stands as a powerful force that transcends mere absence of physical force. Rooted in the religious principle of ahimsa, which emphasizes non-harm, Gandhi elevated this concept to a transformative tool for mass action, notably during India's struggle against British imperial rule in the 20th century.

At the core of Gandhi's philosophy was "satyagraha," meaning 'truth force.' This non-violent doctrine aimed not only to challenge colonial domination but also to combat social injustices such as racial discrimination and untouchability. Unlike conventional forms of resistance, satyagraha sought to convert the opponent, appealing to their conscience and winning over their mind and heart. Gandhi



adamantly asserted that satyagraha was not a weapon of the weak but a potent force that categorically rejected violence, always insisting upon truth.

Various techniques were employed in the arsenal of non-violent protest, including peaceful demonstrations, sit-ins, picketing, vigils, fasting, hunger strikes, strike blockades, and civil disobedience. Gandhi believed that nonviolence was not exclusive to a particular group; rather, it could be wielded by anyone, irrespective of age or gender, as long as they possessed a deep faith in the God of Love and harbored an equal love for all humanity. For Gandhi, non-violence was not a passive stance but an active force of the highest order. It was described as "soul force" or the power of the divine within each individual. When accepted as the guiding principle of life, non-violence was expected to permeate every aspect of one's being and not be confined to isolated acts. Gandhi's conviction in the efficacy of non-violence was evident in India's historical resistance to invasion, as he contended that despite facing numerous incursions over 3000 years, India refrained from imposing its will on other nations due to a deep-rooted respect for the freedom of others. In essence, non-violence, as championed by Mahatma Gandhi, transcends the physical realm and emerges as a moral and spiritual force capable of effecting profound societal transformation. It embodies the conviction that, when wielded with unwavering commitment to truth and justice, non-violence has the potential to bring about enduring and positive change in the hearts and minds of individuals and societies alike.

### **The Cultural Mosaic of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations**

The Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) is at the forefront of India's global cultural engagement, employing a diverse array of initiatives to foster mutual understanding, promote cultural diplomacy, and uphold the principles of international cooperation outlined in Article 51 of the Indian Constitution. These

initiatives not only showcase India's rich cultural heritage but also contribute to the global conversation on peace, security, and harmonious relations between nations. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, a luminary in the Indian independence movement, contributed significantly to the nation not only as a freedom fighter but also as a visionary leader in the realm of education and culture. His multifaceted talents as a scholar and poet enriched the tapestry of India's cultural heritage. During his tenure as India's first Education Minister, Maulana Azad orchestrated a transformative era in education. He spearheaded a multitude of initiatives aimed at enhancing primary and secondary education, scientific education, and the establishment of universities. His efforts extended to the realm of arts and culture, leading to the creation of institutions like the Sahitya Akademi, Sangeet Natak Akademi, Lalit Kala Akademi, and the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR). This holistic approach aimed at nurturing intellectual and artistic pursuits across the nation. The establishment of the ICCR on April 9th, 1950, stands out as one of Maulana Azad's pivotal contributions. The goals of the ICCR, as envisioned by him, reflected a commitment to active participation in formulating strategies and training programs, fostering and strengthening cultural relations between India and other nations, promoting cultural exchanges, and developing meaningful relationships with countries worldwide. These goals were rooted in the understanding that cultural understanding is essential for comprehending the intricacies of individual values, conventions, and histories that weave together the fabric of each state and culture. Recognizing the profound impact of cultural linkages on fostering people-to-people relationships, the ICCR, under Maulana Azad's influence, became a global facilitator of cultural exchange. By organizing numerous cultural events around the world and facilitating the exchange of artists and intellectuals through scholarships and fellowships, the ICCR played a



pivotal role in connecting people and spreading Indian culture internationally. This approach not only celebrated the diversity of people globally but also laid the foundation for an ecosystem of long-term peace and harmony.

### ***Cultural Diplomacy as a Pillar of Indian Foreign Strategy***

The ICCR primarily engages in cultural diplomacy through the orchestration of cultural festivals both domestically and internationally. These festivals serve as dynamic platforms, exhibiting a spectrum of Indian cultural expressions, including dance, music, yoga, languages, cuisines, and festivals. Concurrently, the Council conducts a diverse range of academic and intellectual pursuits through its Indian Cultural Centres. These activities cover a broad array of subjects, from essay writing competitions to discussions on ethos, customs, and contemporary issues. This comprehensive strategy underscores the ICCR's commitment to presenting a nuanced and all-encompassing perspective of India's cultural richness. In alignment with the constitutional imperative to promote global peace and security, maintain honorable relations between nations, uphold respect for international law, and encourage dispute resolution through arbitration, the ICCR strategically deploys its resources. The Council's multifaceted programs are organized into distinct categories, each contributing to the overarching objective of disseminating a profound understanding of Indian culture worldwide.

### ***The Cultural Tapestry and Approach to Global Diplomacy***

The tapestry of India's cultural richness is intricately woven with myriad traditions, languages, faiths, and rituals, creating a mosaic of diversity that is both vast and profound. This diversity is not merely a testament to historical legacies but serves as a living testament to the wealth and depth that characterize India's cultural landscape. The ICCR's international outreach includes sponsoring visits of Indian cultural delegations abroad and hosting India

Festivals internationally. Simultaneously, it invites foreign cultural troupes and organizes international Cultural Festivals within India, promoting a cross-cultural exchange that transcends geographical boundaries. The Council also engages in art and craft exhibitions both in India and abroad, showcasing India's artistic heritage. To perpetuate India's cultural legacy, the ICCR presents a unique dimension by gifting busts and statues of iconic Indian figures overseas. This gesture not only celebrates India's cultural luminaries but also serves as a symbol of shared values and historical ties between nations. The ICCR's commitment to intellectual discourse is evident through its Annual Lecture Series, including the prestigious Deen Dayal Upadhaya Memorial Oration on World Culture Day. These events serve as platforms for in-depth discussions on cultural, philosophical, and contemporary issues. A notable initiative by the ICCR is the Little Guru App, which serves as an online instructor for the ancient Indian language Sanskrit. Recognizing Sanskrit as a gateway to understanding Indian culture and traditions, the app facilitates learning at various levels, making this classical language accessible globally. Sanskrit's vast literary treasures, spanning mathematics, philosophy, grammar, music, politics, medicine, architecture, metallurgy, drama, poetry, and more, showcase the depth of India's intellectual heritage. In emphasizing the richness of India's classical literature, the ICCR recognizes not only Sanskrit but also other classical languages like Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, and Odia. These languages, along with works in Pali, Persian, and Prakrit, form an invaluable part of India's cultural tapestry. The recognition of official languages in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution reflects the constitutional commitment to linguistic diversity. As India's cultural ambassador, the ICCR has successfully positioned itself as a global force, engaging with the world through a myriad of cultural, intellectual, and educational initiatives. Its efforts resonate with India's commitment to fostering global understanding,



and its programs serve as bridges connecting people across borders, enriching the world with the diversity and profundity of Indian culture. Furthermore, the Council actively promotes yoga, aligning with the global popularity of this ancient Indian practice, and celebrates the International Day of Yoga abroad.

#### INDIAN FOREIGN POLICY IN THE GLOBAL ARENA

India's foreign policy is characterized by a nuanced blend of non-alignment and multi-alignment, reflecting a diplomatic approach that seeks to engage with the global community through soft diplomacy.<sup>118</sup> This dual framework has been a cornerstone of India's international relations, navigating the complex landscape of world politics. Non-alignment, a concept rooted in India's post-independence era, underscores the country's commitment to maintaining independence from the power blocs that defined the Cold War. Even during the leadership of figures like Jawaharlal Nehru, who championed ideals of world peace, toleration, and mutual respect among nations, India adhered to the principle of non-alignment. This policy was not merely a strategic choice but also an expression of India's dedication to safeguarding its national interests amid global uncertainties. In the evolving dynamics of the contemporary geopolitical arena, India has transitioned towards multi-alignment. This approach involves engaging with a diverse array of nations across the globe, emphasizing flexibility and adaptability in its diplomatic strategies. The pursuit of multi-alignment is a manifestation of India's commitment to strategic autonomy – the ability to make independent decisions that align with its national interests while fostering partnerships on a global scale. At its core, India's foreign policy is driven by the overarching goal of protecting and promoting national interests. This quest for strategic autonomy is deeply ingrained, reflecting the country's determination to navigate the turbulent waters of global geopolitics while asserting its distinct identity

and aspirations. Beyond this, India's foreign policy also underscores two additional objectives. First, the elimination of colonialism and racial discrimination forms a crucial component, reflecting India's commitment to global justice and equality. Second, the protection of the interests of people of Indian origin abroad is a key consideration, emphasizing the nation's responsibility toward its diaspora and fostering connections beyond its borders. In the contemporary scenario, India stands as a materially endowed and aspirational nation, actively seeking its rightful place in the international system. This entails not only a pragmatic pursuit of economic and strategic interests but also a commitment to the values of justice, equality, and global harmony. As India continues to evolve, its foreign policy remains at the crossroads, poised to address emerging challenges while staying true to its foundational principles of strategic autonomy and global engagement.<sup>119</sup> India's foreign policy, as articulated by scholars such as Appadurai and M. S. Rajan, is guided by three fundamental objectives that encapsulate the nation's priorities on the global stage.

#### Territorial Integrity and Independence of Foreign Policy

The preservation of territorial integrity and the safeguarding of national boundaries from external aggression are paramount concerns for any sovereign nation. India, having achieved hard-earned independence after a prolonged struggle against foreign rule, naturally places significant emphasis on the independence of its foreign policy.<sup>120</sup> The historical context of India's freedom struggle is reflected in its commitment to Afro-Asian solidarity, the endorsement of non-interference in the internal affairs of other nations, and the adoption of the policy of nonalignment. These principles underscore India's determination to chart its own course

<sup>118</sup> 'Soft and Hard Power in India's Strategy Towards Southeast Asia' (n 5).

<sup>119</sup> Akhil Gupta and Aradhana Sharma, 'Globalization and Postcolonial States' (2006) 47 *Current Anthropology* 277.

<sup>120</sup> James E McGinley, Louis P Kelley and Laura M Thurston Goodroe, 'Soft Power: The Limits of Humanitarian Intervention' (2012) 30 *American Intelligence Journal* 34.



and protect its sovereignty in the realm of international relations.

### **Promoting International Peace and Security**

Recognizing the intrinsic link between global peace and development, India, as a newly independent and developing country, actively seeks to contribute to international peace and security. This commitment is evident in India's emphasis on disarmament initiatives and its policy of avoiding military alliances. By steering clear of entanglements in such alliances, India aims to foster a peaceful global environment conducive to the well-being of nations and sustainable development.

### **Economic Development of India**

India's foreign policy is intricately linked to its economic aspirations.<sup>121</sup> The nation has transformed into the world's fastest-growing economy, boasting a thriving agricultural sector and significant achievements in various industries. With the fourth-largest army and substantial agricultural production, India's economic prowess is projected to make it the third-largest economy by 2030, with an estimated GDP of \$30 trillion.<sup>122</sup> India's impressive economic standing is further illustrated by its extensive postal network, the 19th largest exporter and 10th largest importer status globally, and landmark achievements in space exploration, such as the successful Mars Orbiter Mission (Mangalyaan). These economic milestones not only enhance India's global stature but also shape its foreign policy agenda by fostering international collaborations and partnerships for mutual economic benefit.<sup>123</sup>

### **The Basic Principles of Indian Foreign Policy**

India's foreign policy is guided by a set of fundamental principles that aim to achieve its overarching objectives. These principles, enshrined in Article 51 under the Directive

Principles of Policy in the Constitution of India, play a pivotal role in shaping the nation's diplomatic approach on the global stage.<sup>124</sup> These principles have not only stood the test of time but also become integral to international law and India's foreign policy practices.<sup>125</sup>

### **Promotion of International Peace and Security**

The foundational principle of India's foreign policy is the promotion of international peace and security. Recognizing the inseparable link between peace and development, Indian policymakers, notably Jawaharlal Nehru, emphasized the need for durable global peace for the progress of nations.<sup>126</sup> This principle underscores India's commitment to fostering an international environment conducive to social and economic development, wherein the destructive consequences of conflict are minimized.

### **Friendly Relations with Other Countries**

India places great emphasis on cultivating and maintaining friendly relations with other nations. This principle reflects a commitment to diplomacy based on mutual respect, cooperation, and understanding. Establishing and nurturing positive relationships with both major powers and neighboring nations is seen as essential for promoting regional and global stability.<sup>127</sup>

### **Respect for International Law and Organizations**

A cornerstone of India's foreign policy is respect for international law and international organizations, notably the United Nations (UN). Adherence to established norms and regulations ensures a rule-based international order. India actively participates in international forums, supporting initiatives that promote

<sup>121</sup> Amit Gupta, 'India's Soft Power' (2006) 1 Indian Foreign Affairs Journal 45.

<sup>122</sup> Howard L Erdman, 'The Foreign Policy Views of the Indian Right' (1966) 39 Pacific Affairs 5.

<sup>123</sup> Archie Singham and Shirley Hune, 'The Non-Aligned Movement and World Hegemony' (1987) 18 The Black Scholar 48.

<sup>124</sup> KP Karunakaran, 'A New Perspective on Indian Foreign Policy' (1979) 40 The Indian Journal of Political Science 26.

<sup>125</sup> Singham and Hune (n 16).

<sup>126</sup> Zhiqun Zhu, 'China-India Relations in the 21 St Century: A Critical Inquiry' (2011) 24 Indian Journal of Asian Affairs 1.

<sup>127</sup> HHS Viswanathan, 'India's Soft Power Diplomacy: Capturing Hearts and Minds' (2019) 14 Indian Foreign Affairs Journal 129.





justice, equality, and the peaceful resolution of conflicts.<sup>128</sup>

### ***Peaceful Settlement of International Disputes***

India advocates for the peaceful settlement of international disputes as a means to maintain global harmony. This principle underscores a commitment to resolving conflicts through diplomatic means, dialogue, and negotiation rather than resorting to violence or coercion. It aligns with the broader goal of contributing to a world order characterized by stability and cooperation.<sup>129</sup>

### ***Panchsheel - The Five Principles of Foreign Policy***

An integral part of India's foreign policy, especially in bilateral relations, is the Panchsheel, a set of guiding principles proposed by Jawaharlal Nehru. These principles were enshrined during the signing of a peace agreement with China in 1954 and later incorporated into the Bandung Declaration in 1955.<sup>130</sup> The Panchsheel principles include:

- i. Mutual respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty.
- ii. Non-aggression against each other.
- iii. Non-interference in each other's internal affairs.
- iv. Equality and mutual benefit.
- v. Peaceful co-existence.

These principles, deeply rooted in the Bandung Declaration, are core tenets of India's non-aligned stance and continue to shape the nation's foreign policy conduct.<sup>131</sup> They emphasize the importance of mutual respect, cooperation, and peaceful coexistence in international relations, serving as a guide for India's engagements with other countries.

### ***The Odyssey of Non-Alignment***

India's policy of non-alignment stands as a cornerstone of its foreign relations, representing a steadfast commitment to maintaining independence and autonomy in the arena of international affairs. Formulated in the post-Second World War era, this policy distinctly set India apart from aligning with any military alliance, especially those led by the two superpowers of the time, the USA and the Soviet Union, both entangled in the intense Cold War rivalry.<sup>132</sup> Non-alignment, as espoused by India, should be carefully distinguished from concepts such as neutrality, non-involvement, or isolationism.<sup>133</sup> It is not a passive stance but rather a positive and dynamic approach, emphasizing the importance of an independent and case-by-case evaluation of international issues.<sup>134</sup> The essence lies in avoiding allegiance to any military bloc, ensuring that India's foreign policy remains free from external influences. By steering clear of military alliances and superpower blocs, India aimed to safeguard the sovereignty of its foreign policy. This was a strategic move, allowing India to resist succumbing to the pressures and tensions of the Cold War, thereby preserving its autonomy and decision-making capabilities in global affairs. This principled stance found resonance in many developing countries across Asia, Africa, and Latin America, providing them with an example of how to protect their foreign policy independence amid the ideological struggles of the time.<sup>135</sup> India played a pivotal role in popularizing and solidifying the concept of non-alignment by taking a leadership position in the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). In 1947, under the guidance of Jawaharlal Nehru, India convened the Asian Relations Conference in New Delhi, laying the groundwork for the idea

<sup>128</sup> Singham and Hune (n 16).

<sup>129</sup> Prasanta Sahoo, 'A History Of India's Neighbourhood Policy' (2016) 20 World Affairs: The Journal of International Issues 66.

<sup>130</sup> Rajiv Sikri, 'The Tibet Factor in India-China Relations' (2011) 64 Journal of International Affairs 55.

<sup>131</sup> Taru Dalmia and David M Malone, 'Historical Influences on India's Foreign Policy' (2012) 67 International Journal 1029.

<sup>132</sup> Alexander E Davis, 'A Shared History?: Postcolonial Identity and India-Australia Relations, 1947-1954' (2015) 88 Pacific Affairs 849.

<sup>133</sup> Robert J Palmer, 'Foreign Affairs 50-Year Index' (1972) 50 Foreign Affairs 1.

<sup>134</sup> Muammar Qaddafi, 'A Critique of the Non-Aligned Movement' (1987) 18 The Black Scholar 40.

<sup>135</sup> Sarah Joseph, 'Politics of Contemporary Indian Communitarianism' (1997) 32 Economic and Political Weekly 2517.



of Asian solidarity.<sup>136</sup> Subsequently, in 1949, India organized another Asian Relations Conference focused on supporting Indonesia's independence, showcasing its commitment to opposing colonial rule in other nations. The Bandung Conference of 1955 marked a significant milestone in the propagation of non-alignment. Convened in Bandung, Indonesia, it brought together countries from Asia and Africa.<sup>137</sup> During this conference, leaders laid down ten fundamental principles of international relations, including the renowned Panchsheel, a set of five principles emphasizing peaceful coexistence.<sup>138</sup> The Bandung Conference solidified the Afro-Asian unit, with leaders pledging to collaborate for colonial liberation, peace, and fostering cultural, economic, and political cooperation among developing nations.

### ***The policy of Resisting Colonialism, Imperialism, Racism***

India's staunch commitment to resisting colonialism, imperialism, and racism has been deeply rooted in its historical experiences as a victim of these oppressive forces.<sup>139</sup> Viewing them not just as national concerns but as global threats to international peace and security, India has consistently advocated for the eradication of these evils in all their forms. As a testament to its dedication to combating colonialism, India played a pioneering role by bringing the issue of apartheid to the United Nations as early as 1946.<sup>140</sup> This marked the initiation of India's active involvement in international forums to address the challenges posed by colonialism. The commitment to opposing colonial rule was further demonstrated through India's advocacy for the independence of Indonesia. The organization of

the Asian Relations Conference, spearheaded by India, underscored its efforts to mobilize support for the liberation of nations grappling with colonial oppression. India's role in the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) became a pivotal platform for advancing the cause against colonialism.<sup>141</sup> Through sustained diplomatic efforts and engagement in various international forums, India contributed significantly to the liberation of some African countries in 1964, helping them break free from the shackles of colonial rule.<sup>142</sup> The NAM, with India's active participation, emerged as a collective voice against imperialism, offering support to nations striving for independence and self-determination. One of India's notable endeavors was its relentless campaign against apartheid in South Africa. Initiating diplomatic efforts within the framework of NAM,<sup>143</sup> India played a key role in the establishment of the Africa Fund (Action for Resisting Imperialism, Colonialism, and Apartheid) in 1986. This fund aimed to provide assistance to frontline states that were victims of South African aggression, supporting their resistance against apartheid. India's substantial contribution to this fund highlighted its commitment to the cause and solidarity with nations fighting against racial oppression. The culmination of these efforts came with the end of racialism in South Africa in 1990. This historic development was a significant triumph for Indian policy and the global struggle against racism and apartheid. India's persistent diplomatic endeavors, both within NAM and other international platforms, played a crucial role in achieving this milestone, symbolizing the success of its policy against colonialism, imperialism, and racism.

### ***India's Advocacy for Peacebuilding Diplomacy***

The principle of seeking political solutions and advocating for the peaceful settlement of international disputes stands as a fundamental

<sup>136</sup> Padma Srivastava, 'Jawahar Lal Nehru's Perception of Africa' (1996) 52 India Quarterly 21.

<sup>137</sup> K Raman Pillai, 'The Cpi on India's Foreign Relations' (1969) 25 India Quarterly 229.

<sup>138</sup> Yang Zewei and Ranni Thakur, 'Role Of Panchsheel In Building International Order' (2004) 8 World Affairs: The Journal of International Issues 35.

<sup>139</sup> Philip D Curtin, 'The Black Experience of Colonialism and Imperialism' (1974) 103 Daedalus 17.

<sup>140</sup> Mark Tunick, 'Tolerant Imperialism: John Stuart Mill's Defense of British Rule in India' (2006) 68 The Review of Politics 586.

<sup>141</sup> Richard M Fontera, 'Anti-Colonialism as a Basic Indian Foreign Policy' (1960) 13 The Western Political Quarterly 421.

<sup>142</sup> Paul Teed, 'Race Against Memory: Katherine Mayo, Jabez Sunderland, and Indian Independence' (2003) 44 American Studies 35.

<sup>143</sup> Satadru Sen, 'Goodbye to Non-Alignment and All That' (2001) 36 Economic and Political Weekly 4455.



tenet within India's foreign policy framework. This unwavering commitment is not only enshrined in the Constitution of India, particularly within the Directive Principles of State Policy, but is also aligned with the principles set forth in the Charter of the United Nations.<sup>144</sup> India's approach to conflict resolution has been characterized by diplomatic finesse, emphasizing dialogue and negotiation as essential tools for fostering global harmony.<sup>145</sup> India has consistently demonstrated its commitment to the peaceful settlement of disputes on the international stage. A shining example is its significant role in the resolution of the Korean conflict, where Indian diplomacy played a constructive and mediating role. Furthermore, India has been a steadfast supporter of negotiated settlements for complex and sensitive issues such as the Palestine problem, the Kashmir conflict, and border disputes with neighboring countries.<sup>146</sup> By championing dialogue and compromise, India has sought to address these challenges through diplomatic means, reflecting its belief in the efficacy of political solutions. The commitment to peaceful conflict resolution extends to contemporary issues as well. India actively advocates for the peaceful settlement of the Iranian nuclear issue, demonstrating a dedication to addressing global challenges through dialogue and negotiation rather than resorting to confrontational approaches. Additionally, India takes a principled stance on issues like the democratic upsurge in the Middle East, emphasizing the need for inclusive and diplomatic solutions rather than foreign military intervention. India's enduring commitment to the peaceful settlement of international disputes is deeply ingrained in its foreign policy ethos.<sup>147</sup> This principle serves as the cornerstone of India's approach to global affairs, guiding its

interactions with the international community.<sup>148</sup> By upholding the value of diplomatic solutions and political dialogue, India not only contributes to the promotion of international peace and stability but also establishes itself as a proponent of a world order built on cooperation, understanding, and peaceful coexistence. This commitment underscores India's role as a responsible and constructive player in the global arena, dedicated to resolving conflicts through peaceful means.

### ***India's Stalwart Support for International Law***

India's foreign policy is deeply rooted in a profound respect for international law and the foundational principles of sovereign equality among nations, as advocated by the United Nations.<sup>149</sup> Embracing the UN's emphasis on non-interference in the internal affairs of sovereign states, India has consistently championed these principles as essential pillars of a just and equal world order.<sup>150</sup> A noteworthy aspect of India's commitment to international cooperation is its steadfast support for the cause of disarmament led by the UN. In 1988, India proposed an ambitious program for nuclear disarmament before the UN, reflecting its dedication to global security and stability.<sup>151</sup> Although this proposal did not find unanimous acceptance among UN members, India continues to stand unwaveringly committed to the pursuit of universal disarmament. By actively engaging in discussions and initiatives on disarmament, India underscores its belief in the importance of collective efforts to rid the world of the threat posed by weapons of mass destruction. India's contributions to global peace extend beyond rhetoric, with the nation playing a pivotal role in the process of decolonization. Through active participation in UN peacekeeping activities, India has demonstrated its commitment to maintaining peace and stability in regions facing conflicts

<sup>144</sup> VS Sheth, 'Security and Development Issues in African and Indian Foreign Policies: An Overview' (2007) 2 Indian Foreign Affairs Journal 65.

<sup>145</sup> M Muslim Khan, 'India – South Africa Unique Relations' (2010) 71 The Indian Journal of Political Science 613.

<sup>146</sup> Prakash C Jain, 'Towards Class Analysis of Race Relations: Overseas Indians in Colonial/Post-Colonial Societies' (1988) 23 Economic and Political Weekly 95.

<sup>147</sup> MS Rajan, 'Indian Foreign Policy in Action, 1954-56' (1960) 16 India Quarterly 203, 1954-56.

<sup>148</sup> Malone (n 2).

<sup>149</sup> Rakesh H Solomon, 'Culture, Imperialism, and Nationalist Resistance: Performance in Colonial India' (1994) 46 Theatre Journal 323.

<sup>150</sup> R, 'India and the Cold War' (1955) 9 Middle East Journal 256.

<sup>151</sup> Hira Singh and MA Kalam, 'India's Race Problem: Ignorance and Denial' (2017) 45 Social Scientist 75.



and upheavals.<sup>152</sup> The nation's peacekeeping efforts underscore its belief in the collective responsibility of the international community to address and resolve crises, promoting the ideals of harmony and cooperation. Recognizing the need for a more realistic and democratic composition of international institutions, India has been a vocal proponent of reform within the United Nations, particularly in the context of the Security Council. India advocates for a restructuring that reflects the contemporary geopolitical landscape, making the Security Council more representative and accountable. As one of the aspirants to permanent membership on the Security Council, India seeks to contribute actively to the decision-making processes that shape global security and peace.

#### CONCLUSION

In conclusion, India's global engagement exemplifies a sophisticated orchestration of soft power elements prominently led by the ICCR. As a vanguard of cultural diplomacy, ICCR plays a crucial role in shaping India's narrative on the world stage, fostering connections, and deepening understanding among diverse nations. The diverse initiatives undertaken by ICCR reflect a commitment to showcasing India's cultural richness and heritage, reaching far beyond geopolitical boundaries. Through a network of cultural centers, the Council magnifies India's soft power, disseminating art, history, traditions, and contemporary issues globally. By doing so, ICCR not only cultivates a global appreciation for India's cultural tapestry but also lays the groundwork for enduring people-to-people connections. India's foreign policy, marked by a departure from Cold War-era power dynamics, prioritizes a soft power approach. This strategy, characterized by economic attractiveness, cultural cooperation, and a commitment to regional collaboration, positions India as a responsible global actor. The emphasis on regional institutions, such as

SAARC and BIMSTEC, underscores India's dedication to cultivating peaceful peripheries and fostering positive relations with neighboring countries. Moreover, India's recognition of the interconnected nature of global challenges, from climate change to energy and food security, underscores its commitment to collaborative solutions. By actively engaging in international forums and advocating for cooperation and diplomacy, India not only contributes to regional stability but also positions itself as a proactive participant in addressing shared global concerns. In essence, India's multifaceted approach, blending cultural diplomacy with regional and global cooperation, signifies a nuanced understanding of contemporary international relations. By leveraging soft power elements, India seeks not only to enhance its global influence but also to contribute meaningfully to a harmonious and interconnected world.

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<sup>152</sup> Jayantanuja Bandyopadhyaya, 'The Non-Aligned Movement and International Relations' (1977) 33 *India Quarterly* 137.



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