

# The Concoction of Panchsheel and Panchmrit: A New Perspective in India's Foreign Policy

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## Abstract

*Post-1991 reforms obligation weighted on New Delhi to take a paradigm shift in their foreign policy for pragmatic approaches as India had liberalised its economy, which led to the opening of its frontier to the Global world. Now in the multi-polar Global world, the International Relations scholars question the idealistic notion of Panchsheel, advocates the need for more pragmatism in India's Foreign Policy which coincides with the emergence of Panchamrit proposed by the National Executive of Bharatiya Janata Party in 2015, to replace Panchsheel. The study aims to understand the philosophical distinction between Panchsheel and Panchamrit, how they could be as a strategic resolve and restraint respectively in India's Foreign Policy than 'the debate of replacement'. In the context of concocting 'the Panchsheel and Panchamrit' in the external affairs relations, how could India steer with this concoction to become a stabilising power? This paper advocates for the middle path between the two and such concoction intends to bring 'Liberal Realism' of British School of International Relations into India's Foreign Policy.*

**Keywords:** Panchsheel, Non-Alignment Movement (NAM), Panchamrit, the middle path, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Indian National Congress (INC), India's Foreign Policy (IFP), British School of International Relations.

## Introduction

The then Prime Minister, Late Hon' Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, has to be credited for architecting India's Foreign Policy immediately after the independence, such as the policy of Non-Alignment. The objective of Nehruvian vision in India's Foreign Policy was to make India a Global player; his policies intended to maintain strategic autonomy in the Foreign Policy decision-making, mutual understanding between nations to respect the sovereign values (a feature of the Westphalian system), peaceful co-existence, disarmament, decolonisation, etc. The Sanskritized form of Nehru's Foreign Policy shall be called Panchsheel, whose first appearance explicitly in the title content of the 1954 Indo-China agreement, later implicit appearance at 1955 Bandung conference's ten principles outcome which formed the basic skeletal frame for Non-Alignment Movement as an Organization. The relevance of Panchsheel was not confined to just Nehru's tenure; one could deduce its presence during the reign of subsequent Prime Minister like Indira Gandhi, Rajiv Gandhi, I. K. Gujral, etc. Now post 1991's Liberalisation, Privatisation and Globalisation reforms, these policies steer India to a Global World, and in a global world where the borders are redundant commences to question the relevance of Panchsheel in the 21st century, and moots a question how does the Panchsheel be relevant in the age of Globalised World?

Amb. Rajiv Shikri IFS (retired) opined that in the Post-cold war era, the Nation-States faces heat from the ‘New World Order’ and added that “Long-established principles of international relations like the sovereignty of States, equality between States and non-interference in internal affairs of States were cast aside in the name of humanitarian interventionism, or to tackle the problem of failed States” (Shikri, 2009). In addition to such heats from ‘New World Order’ like the rise of regional hegemony, criticisms have been recorded by a sizeable majority of scholars who analyse India’s Foreign Policy that there is a dilution in India’s strategic autonomy in Foreign Policy (Pande, 2017). The academic debates mentioned earlier propounds an empirical question of how does Panchsheel, as a philosophical guide to New Delhi, will be in a position to glue the strategic autonomy in the ‘New World Order’? The ‘New World Order’ which intends to make borders redundant, draws certain features from Hedley Bull’s ‘International Society’, the formation of ‘International Society’ according to Bull it is by the convergence of Nation-State’s common interest which will then leads to the formation of ‘World Society’ (Bull, 2002). The thoughts of British School of International Relations scholars when compared with that of India’s Vasudeva Kudumbam policy visions the same, but a limitation rises when it comes to a pragmatic approach which Shikri also mentioned in his context about ‘New World Order. In this context, this study intends to critically analyse the relevance of the Panchsheel in the 21st century and the newly evolved “Pancharjit”, as proposed by a national party of India – Bharatiya Janata Party’s National Executive at Bengaluru in 2015, to replace Panchsheel by the latter. This paper postulates how Panchsheel and Pancharjit shall be concocted together in India’s Foreign Policy as a strategic resolve and strategic restraint through empirical documental analysis and the alter aim of such concoction is to draw the liberal realism, which is widely known in the British School of International Relations, directly into India’s Foreign Policy and this study scopes to project India’s Soft Power in the Global World.

**The Need for Pragmatism in India’s Foreign Policy**

Immediately after independence, India took

idealistic and pacifistic approaches to be neutral in the world order filled with bloc politics in that contemporary era. Still, the need for pragmatism in IFP was realised after India’s crushing defeat in Indo-China 1961 war. This realisation goes with Surjit Mansingh description of Indira’s Foreign Policy as ‘Hard Realism’ and to quote the exact stanzas of Indira’s words in his writing from The Oxford Handbook on India’s Foreign Policy “Indira Gandhi once described her father, Jawaharlal Nehru, as a ‘saint who strayed into politics’ and herself as ‘a tough politician’. This remark has been quoted frequently and Indira Gandhi described as a practitioner of realpolitik: expedient, unprincipled, and ruthless in her pursuit of power” (Mansingh, 2015); this quote from Mansingh convinces that pragmatism is more needed in Foreign Policy and the crushing defeat of Pakistan which lead to Pakistan’s bifurcation. Beyond Pakistan, the instances where India’s Maritime Doctrine 2007 mentioned “South China Sea as an area of Strategic Interest to India” (India’s new naval doctrine, 2004) and then Ministry of External Affairs Yashwant Sinha argument that the South China Sea is India’s extended neighbour depicts the ‘realpolitik’ in India’s Foreign Policy.

The Centre for Policy Research report in 2012 titled ‘Non-Alignment 2.0: A foreign and strategic policy for India in the 21st Century in its chapter 3 ‘External Challenges’ itself posted a diagnosis which India’s policymakers shall not negate “India’s hard power has as its instrumentalities the Armed Forces under the Ministry of Defence, the Para-Military Forces and Central Armed Police Forces under the Ministry of Home, and the State Police under the respective State Governments. The Armed Forces constitute one of the instruments that deal with external threats while internal threats..... to ensure the creation of a stable and peaceful environment to facilitate maximum economic development concurrent with equitable growth” (Center for Policy Research, 2012). The above diagnosis is in synchronisation with the increase in India’s Annual Budget to Military, several strategic deals which India inked to buy arms of higher standards (diversification of Arms Suppliers to include from ‘only Russia’ to ‘Russia, Israel, USA, France, etc.), incorporation of Offset clause

in Defence Procurement Procedure. The increasing military does not justify India's ethos because India as a civilisation sees good for all and World at large. In such a context, India keeping external challenges at a manageable limit and soft power tag intact, policy innovation is needed. The relevance of Panchsheel shall not be negated in such innovation as well; China's proposed 'Two plus One' diplomacy for Trilateral talks among India, China and Nepal describes the ethos of Panchsheel which then Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai said: "vision of Panchsheel as the framework, not only for relations between the two countries but also for their relations with all other countries, so that a solid foundation could be laid for peace and security in the world" (Ministry of External Affairs).

Post-cold war, there has been a call for more pragmatism in India's Foreign Policy. The Prime Minister preceding the post-cold war era worked immensely to pragmatize India's Foreign Policy. This approach synchronises with India's Policy Reform of 1991, which changed the basic architect of India's Economy and the 1991 reforms also made Economic criteria a more dominant feature in India's Foreign Policy; Prof. Harsh V. Pant opines that partnership in the 21st century cannot be non-economic (Singh, Pant, & Gupta, 2019). India, the reform era followed by seeking foreign direct investment, shifted her strategy from NAM's Collective Bargaining to New Era's Myriad Plurilateral Format (Michael, 2016). This shift coincides with the policy to look for more diversification in the engagement, which India started incorporating accommodative policies in engagement; India's policymakers were well aware of the fact that India been dubbed as Big Brother and showing its asserting attitude in engagement. To overcome such dubbed tagline, India under the Prime Ministership of I. K. Gujral chosen non-reciprocating accommodative policy with neighbour and I. K. Gujral in his Chatham House speech in London (1996) viewed "The United Front Government's neighbourhood policy now stands on five basic principles: First, with the neighbours like Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, and Sri Lanka, India does not ask for reciprocity but gives all that it can in good faith and trust. Secondly, no South Asian country will allow its territory to be used against the

interest of another country of the region. Thirdly, none will interfere in the internal affairs of another. Fourthly, all South Asian countries must respect each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty. And finally, they will settle all their disputes through peaceful bilateral negotiations. These five principles, scrupulously observed, will, I am sure, recast South Asia's regional relationship, including the tormented relationship between India and Pakistan, in a friendly, cooperative mould" (Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, n.d.). Gujral's speech in the Chatham house negates the argument that the pragmatic approach in IFP will rule out the relevance of Nehru and Panchsheel. However, the Globalisation phenomenon moots certain avenues which India needs to align and the same Globalisation had made border redundant is another argument.

#### **Strategic Autonomy and India's Foreign Policy: From Panchsheel to Panchamrit**

Since the Westphalian Treaty of 1648, States are considered to be the prime and rational actors in International Relations; the conduct of one state with another state is primely tuned by their internal and external determinants that shape a country's Foreign Policy. India, after her independence, had impediments in framing the objective towards which she shall steer towards, and that contemporary world order is bipolar; the whole world after the devastating Second World War, was engaged in bloc politics and conflicts that period from 1947 to 1990 is said to be Cold War. In that contemporary world order filled with Geo-politics rivalries, India's policymakers have been tasked to quest on a path that benefits India's interest, and however, aligning either one of the sides will create conflicts. Conflict management in Foreign Policy comprises two variants: 'Strategic Resolve' and 'Strategic Restraint', are 'coercive means by the military' and 'dialogue means by the diplomacy' respectively (Ganguly & Kapur, 2019). In this context, the then Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru incorporated an idealistic vision into India's external engagement and later called Panchsheel. An insight into the ethos of Panchsheel, with inputs from Ministry of External Affairs – India's publication document, elucidates as follows

“Panchsheel was born..... to a world asking for a new set of principles for the conduct of international relations that would reflect the aspirations of all nations to co-exist and prosper together in peace and harmony” (Ministry of External Affairs), a nuance of the vision of Panchsheel is very clear that India (Bharat) as a civilisation from Ancient era to Modern Era wants peace and harmony; the coherent adaptation of Panchsheel was to bring peace and harmony to World which was shuddered by Cold War’s Bloc Politics (Kennedy, 2015).

The Indo-China Panchsheel Treaty, otherwise called the five principles of Peaceful co-existence; inked on 29th April 1956 for trade between Tibet region of China and India, has the following principles like “Mutual respect’s territorial integrity and sovereignty, Mutual non-aggression, Mutual non-interference, Equality and mutual benefit, and Peaceful co-existence” (Ministry of External Affairs). The inking of this treaty paved the way for Panchsheel being a solid doctrine for India’s External Relations, the passage of Panchsheel was later incorporated in the outcomes of the Bandung conference, which cemented a strong foundation for the Non-Alignment Movement and this culminated in India being an unofficial spokesperson for the NAM countries in the several international forums like The United Nations. This progress glued Panchsheel as a strong doctrine in IFP’s strategic restraint framework but a huge setback which India received in Indo-China War 1961 questioned the credibility and validation of Panchsheel, here certain corrections where needed which was provided by Indira Gandhi. Indira’s correction to Panchsheel was viewed as “Hard Realism” (Mansingh, 2015). However, Indira’s vision was realistic through the prism of Panchsheel which we could infer from India’s status quo preference over the revisionist post-1971 Indo-Pakistan war.

The advent of Globalisation which followed 1991 reforms with a tag name of ‘Rao-Manmohan’ policy, questioned the idealistic notion of Panchsheel by proffering a question of how can India rows safely to have its interest met in a Globalised World? Does Panchsheel will still be a policy to meet India’s interests? In this timeline, BJP’s National Executive Committee mooted a need for new pillars in foreign

policy and a resolution in 2015 for the same which propounds a new doctrine for IFP, named as “Panchamrit”, “The Bharatiya Janata Party takes pride..... a bold, proactive and innovative foreign policy that is aligned with our Government’s primary goal of accelerating national economic development; and to fulfil Bharat’s global responsibilities as the world’s most populous youth nation and largest democracy. Sampan – dignity and honour; Samvad – greater engagement and dialogue; Samriddhi – shared prosperity; Suraksha – regional and global security; and Sanskriti evam Sabhyata – cultural and civilisational linkages; these five themes have become the Panchamrit - new pillars of our foreign policy” (Bharatiya Janata Party, 2015).

### **Does Panchamrit Discredit Nehru: A Critical Examination?**

Post-BJP’s resolution for “The Need of Muscular Foreign Policy – Panchamrit”, a wild forest fire like criticism started to spurt across various disciplines of Social Science, and a strong question has been mooted Does the NDA ruling Government is trying to dislodge the basic tenets of India’s Foreign Policy and by discrediting Nehru’s contribution? This coincides with the election campaign speeches of senior BJP Political Leader’s rhetorical criticism of previous government steered by Congress. However, a clear disclaimer shall be made before proceeding further that all the rhetorical speeches by political leaders are for political interest. Still, a critical study is needed to understand that Panchamrit and Panchsheel are distinct and not homologous. In this regard, an article published in the Indian National Congress’s website titled “Panchsheel to Panchamrit: Discrediting Nehru, but appropriating his policies” needs to be studied because the arguments mooted in that article forms a part of the null hypothesis mooted by us in this study.

The article published by the INC posts an argument “the current government drawing on a policy made by Nehru decades ago to solve diplomatic impasses.... Renaming of..... without attribution, is a clear case of moral hypocrisy and intellectual deficit” (Indian National Congress, 2017). The author negates the above arguments of INC’s vindictive rhetoric by quoting official words of the then Prime Minister

of India Atal Bihari Vajpayee on 23rd June 2003 at Beijing University “One cannot wish away the fact that before good neighbours can truly fraternise with each other, they must first mend their fences. After a hiatus of a few decades, India and China embarked on this important venture a few years ago. We have made good progress. I am convinced that, with steadfast adherence to the Five Principles of peaceful coexistence, with mutual sensitivity to the concerns of each other, and with respect for equality, our two countries can further accelerate this process so that we can put this difference firmly behind us” (Ministry of External Affairs). She further negates that the principle of Panchsheel was mooted for the sole motive to respect the sovereign values which forms the central theme of the Westphalian treaty and for peaceful co-existence; criticises the Panchsheel for not explicitly stating the civilisation values which India(Bharat) professes; her another core argument is from the official resolution of BJP’s National Executive Committee is “...speed and resolve on a scale rarely seen in our external engagement, to restore Bharat’s position in international affairs, rebuild partnerships across the board and cross new frontiers in our foreign relations. Our global aspirations have been matched by greater global engagement with countries of all regions ignoring power-bloc politics” (Bharatiya Janata Party, 2015). The very objective which Panchsheel and Panchamrit floated were to keep away from ‘power-bloc politics’, but the difference in approaches ‘how to keep away from power-bloc politics’ is the area of concern that needs to be discussed more elaborately.

Now, a new question gets propounded what are the philosophical differences between Panchsheel and Panchamrit, and how do they guide to keep away from the power-bloc politics? The answer to the propounded question shall be deduced from a deeper understanding of the terminology involved in them; the Panchsheel as a philosophy postulates simply the values of Westphalian orders, nothing beyond, and these values guided India to be recognised by many sovereign nations that India is a Peace, Responsible and Soft Power Nation and these taglines had helped India at many distress situation, for instance, to evade US’s sanction post-Pokhran II, Indo-Japan Civil Nuclear Deal 2017, Active Engagement with

ASEAN Nation, etc. Though achievement shall be feasted, there were certain fallacies which India faced from its immediate neighbours through Wars, for instance, 1961 Indo-China War, String of Pearls encirclement, Loss of commanding position in RCEP negotiation. All these fallacies shall be looked upon and a need for strategic resolve thus justified through Panchamrit.

### **Panchsheel and Panchamrit, Co-existence in Liberal Realism; Reality or Myth?**

Liberal Realism as an international relations framework finds its passage in the British School of International Relations. The fascinating part of the British School of International Relations is their formulation of ‘Society of States’ in an anarchic Global Environment where the Sovereign States does not yield to the wills of High Power states (Bull, 2002). Though the period of India’s advocacy for disarmament and decolonisation with the English School is different, an empirical coherence we can deduce between the foreign policy of India with the British School. This coherence we can relate primarily from the Indian side: the colonial gags and suppressing which India had faced and the British side: the lesson learned from their mistakes committed in the path. The co-incidence between the IFP and British School of International Relations is the advocacy of ‘The Middle Path. According to Derek Drinkwater, in his book titled ‘Sir Harold Nicolson and International Relations: The Practitioner as a Theorist’, he recorded Sir Harold Nicolson’s opinion on Britain’s Foreign Policy “Britain’s foreign policy and diplomacy fluctuated between idealism and realism. The typical British approach to any international problem proceeded from the idealistic to the realistic..... The purpose of statecraft and diplomacy was to reconcile the practical and the ideal by employing a standard deducible from the ethical and political writings of classical authors. It is one based on ‘prudence’ (a fusion of ‘practical wisdom’ and ‘philosophic wisdom’)” (Drinkwater, 2005). Though the words of Sir Harold just took the context of Britain, the idea mentioned by him finds ample space in IFP, which moots a valid argument that the statecraft shall be pragmatic and such pragmatism shall abide by ideals.

In a co-existence framework, the Panchsheel and Pancharmit completes as well as compliments each other by explicitly stating how does India wants Peace in the Globalised World, here the argument for ‘myth’ is it feasible? The argument for co-existence of the two philosophies as a ‘myth’ or not reality since 2015: Post BJP’s National Executive Committee resolution till today, any Union Ministry website or Press Information Bureau had endorsed Pancharmit explicitly in an open forum, this ignites an argument ‘is Pancharmit just a political ambition and vision of BJP?’ However, the author, upon critical examination, opines that myth shall also be a valid ground to be viewed upon because the foreign relations are not decided just by political rulers indeed a good number of Indian Foreign Service, think tanks, academician plays a role and they view incorporation Pancharmit into gazette will draw politicisation of External Relations. The other argument that the co-existence is ‘reality’ is that the explicit mentions in the official gazette were not found but the implicit projection was noted in several instances. For instance, a shift in the conduct of bilateral relation with Pakistan by using phrases like ‘Terror and Talks cannot go together, ‘Branding Pakistan as Terroristan in UN General Assembly, ‘Balakot Air Strike’; with China by using a novel innovative strategy ‘military pacifistic approach’ in Dhoklam, the way Chennai Connect happened as the destined location been part of Vladivostok-Chennai Maritime Corridor which was inked just a month before the Chennai Connect; with the USA by scheduling Howdy Modi at Houston, Texas post-Act Far East’s pronouncement at the 5th Eastern Economic Forum in Vladivostok. A closer study of the philosophy reveals that Panchsheel just talks about respecting another nation, but Pancharmit incorporates civilisation link, shared prosperity, Global security. The above arguments negate the fact that such concoction is a myth; the reality is that India using such a pragmatic policy not just after the 2015 BJP’s Pancharmit resolution but prior as well. The pragmatic realisation has been elucidated earlier; the Ministry of External Affairs, in their Annual Report 2018 – 19, stated “pragmatic and an outcome-oriented engagement, to enhance India’s security, uphold its territorial integrity, and, to promote and

facilitate India’s economic transformation. This was done pro-actively through strengthened bilateral, regional and multilateral partnerships and, by seeking to build influence in key global forums. The pace of our outreach efforts with the Indian diaspora also continued, with characteristic vigour and innovative mechanisms” (Ministry of External Affairs, 2018). The Annual Report 2018-19 implicitly legitimises that concoction is a reality; now the legitimised concoction supports the need for the strong doctrine to rule out the arguments of ‘The Myth of Indian Strategic Restraint’ (Ganguly & Kapur, 2019). The proper incorporation of the doctrines in the resolve and restraint would be the pragmatic policy viewed by Sir Harold Nicolson.

### **Concluding Observation**

‘The New World Order’, which emerged after the end of the cold war, bought nonstate actors into international relations, the issues of the war on Global Scales now sidelined in the 21st century; new issues like Pollution, Terrorism, Novel diseases like COVID-19. The strategies of the 20th century though relevant in this century but with new supporting back up are needed. The Pancharmit shall be seen as such back-up needed to support Panchsheel in the Global World and to quote the English School Member’s opinion that the international society shall be more civil and orderly in contrary to the views of the realist (Linklater, 2005). The advocacy of this study intends to place Panchsheel and Pancharmit as the strategic restraint and strategic resolve in IFP, respectively. The practical application of this concoction shall be deduced from the incorporation of the International Day of Yoga, whose proposal was mooted in the first speech of Mr Narendra Modi in the United Nations General Assembly (2014) and his advocacy as opined by Amb. Jawed Ashraf that ‘Yoga for all’ shows the concoction of respect and cultural linkages (Ashraf, 2018). The concoction of respect and cultural linkage though recorded by the ambassador did not mention Panchsheel. Still, we shall not negate the fact respecting a nation is an integral part of Panchsheel.

In the Global world, the border has been redundant and sounds of de-globalization like Brexit spurts. India has to be cautious in dealing with other

countries; Panchsheel as a doctrine advocates for respecting another nation's sovereignty and Gujral doctrine advocating non-reciprocating aids. How the non-reciprocating aids shall be perceived by the other country, for instance, over non-reciprocating aids had affected Indo-Nepal relations due to the rise of Racist attitude in the minds of Nepal's citizens. The twenty-first-century foreign policy conduct relations in the Global World more non-reciprocating aids with much integration are prone to draw counter globalisation spikes like Brexit, J18, Madrid94, etc. A living civilisation, needs to engage and the need for engagement shall not be negated but how to engage needs to be elucidated. Panchamrit's Sanskriti evam Sabhyata, whose advocacy of cultural and civilisational linkages justify that the need for such linkages in the global world to keep the Indian interest safeguarded, for instance, dubbing Trump visit to India as 'The meeting between the Oldest Democracy and Largest Democracy', 'The Buddhist Diplomacy' etc where the cultural and civilisation ties are emphasized which creates more amicable bonds to achieve more diplomatic gains.

Hon' Minister for External Affairs. S. Jaishankar in a lecture on the topic "Beyond the Delhi Dogma: Indian Foreign Policy in a Changing World" mentioned the dogmas which India faces in the multipolar world "the very structure of international order is undergoing a profound transformation and cited the example of American nationalism, the rise of China, the Brexit saga and rebalancing of the global economy. On India walking away from the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), the External Affairs Minister said having no agreement is better than having a bad agreement" (Minster of External Affairs, 2019). In this era, with the rise of such identity, the question of becoming a leading power shall be a myth, to become a leading power India shall seek to be a stabilizing power internationally which India archaically proves to be so through her contribution towards United Nation's Peace Keeping Force, etc. India needs to go more to secure her interest in the fast transforming Global order where many regional players had risen. The engagement with each regional players needs to have a link which moots for shared prosperity for this account India had played the cause for Sustainable

Development Goal, bring the tropic country under one roof through International Solar Alliance, etc. The way ahead to establish the Asian Era in the next century, the South Block has to be accommodative and attempt to exhaust the IFP doctrines like Panchsheel, Gujral Doctrine, Panchamrit, etc to reap maximum benefits for India as a stabilizing power.

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