

INDIA EMERGING WORLD POWER: THE CRUSADING CHALLENGES

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“We who are free- and who prize our freedom above all other gifts of God and nature- must know each other better; trust each other more; support each other.” These sonorous words uttered by Dwight Eisenhower in Delhi in 1959 with profound implications to dent into the estranged Indo-U.S. relations, could not be able to penetrate into the cold war miasma, which shrouded their vision and outlook, nearly took forty five years to find renewed resonance in their relations when the American President Bush calls India a natural partner of the United States. It was a historical baffling and intrigue to hold that the two countries being the largest democracies could not become firmer friends. The phase of Indo- U.S. relation during the cold war is as flummoxing as foggy while confining it to the intricate yet proverbial syndrome whether “egg is first or hen is first.” The question stays whether it was Nehru’s Fabian upbringing in England during his college days and impeccable socialistic credentials and inclination to Soviet Union’s socialistic and state controlled economy as the key to resolving India’s premier problems of poverty, which remained important causal considerations in American policy making to sideline India. From American point of view, Nehru’s defining India’s foreign policy in terms of its greatness of civilization, independence and sovereignty and non-alignment, and seeking a major status at par with great powers in the international realm but in disproportionate to its military and economic power appeared to be too ambitious, unaccommodating and vast to fit into American strategic Procrustean bed.

Divergent Foundation

The irony is at its grandeur when one thinks that two countries India and the United States being the largest democracies in both East and West respectively, could not be able to find in that democracy, a commonality and connectivity to weave together all divergent and

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similar strands into a nice tapestry of enduring friendship and goodwill during all these years. While India was an inchoate, and nascent democracy just starting from a scratch on a western paradigm leaving aside all its crusted cultural specificity and significance formed by centuries of experience and achievement amidst a pluralistic society, America was by then a fully matured, consummate and quite experienced democracy built on its home spun political, liberal and market economy, and was on a missionary crusade quite emblematic of effete colonial days to externalize its domestic imperatives of providing an inordinate consumption and extravagant life style to its people on exorbitant production of wealth at the cost of both nature and other countries in South, as to be the foundation of other people's political and economic edifice. Both differed in what fundamentally defines democracy in its rhetoric, content and contour. Just arising afresh from the tumultuous travail and tribulation of an independence struggle against British imperialism on Gandhian principles of non-violence, truth, rights, and unencumbered self rule- nonpareil and inspiringly showing beacon to all other freedom struggle elsewhere in the world-India was not oblivious of the intrinsic human values outsourced partly to its inherited, enriched and glorious past and the other to the configuration of these values by the mentors of freedom struggle in their experiences in the context of a different and changing world quite different from their world view. To a country believing in non-violent means of protestations, speeches derived from their ardent adherence to these intrinsic human and saintly values personified in Mahatma Gandhi and Indian spiritual history, became important arsenals in their struggle to ignite all scattered sparks of discontent into mass volcanic movement. Similarly, it is not surprising to find that a country long habituated to speeches and saintly maxims during freedom struggle would ultimately be guided by this while behaving in its international relations, and world politics. The reputation that India found heaped on it from all over the world for its showing a different and unique path of freedom, Nehru tried to use it as source and strength of his foreign policy after his investiture as first Prime Minister of India. If a mighty British empire could be crumbled to shreds by an unarmed India believing impeccably in its values and moral strength, why modern India under Nehru would not occupy the same position as with the world powers, and cast judgment on world issues objectively and freely? Thus, aware that moral words secreted from its enriched culture are mightier than sword, Nehru chiseled Indian foreign policy on this, and started to carve out a niche

for itself in world politics disproportionate to its economic and military status and coeval with its high culture and greatness of civilization by simply casting judgments on issues afflicting nations and humanity on principles of justice, rights and democracy. He said, "I just do not see why the possession of great armed might or great financial power should necessarily lead to right decisions or a right mental outlook...I am not prepared... to give up my right of independent judgment to anybody else in other countries."¹ Initially, India reaped rich diplomatic dividends but later on when faced with a different world and mindset, India faced its waterloo from the China in 1962 war. An excerpt from one of Nehru's speech would enlighten on what constitutes the bedrock of Indian foreign policy:

India is a country with a tremendous vitality which it has shown through its history. It has often imposed enough of its own cultural pattern on other countries, not by the force of its arms but by the strength of its vitality, culture and civilization. There is no reason why we should give up our way of doing things, our way of considering things, simply because of some particular ideology, which emanates from Europe.... We should be flexible in mind and we should be receptive, but I have also no doubt at all that we should not allow ourselves... to be swept off our feet by any wind from anywhere. We should approach these problems, whether domestic or international problems, in our own way.²

In other words, a country adopting western democracy from its very birth as a nascent nation state went by the rulebook of what democracy is. So strict adherence to the nomenclatural exactitude of democracy is what marked the difference between India and America. On the other hand, Washington understood democracy as a rhetoric and euphemism to spread its domestic imperatives built on the edifice of Hobbes and Locke's possessive individualism and Newtonian and Cartesian view of world to all parts of the globe as it has at present culminated in globalization. Very honestly speaking, it earnestly wanted in pursuance of the above objective that all the nations of the world put on American political and economic straightjacket irrespective of their divergent culture and civilization. When this assumed the character of a cultural hegemony pontificating to all

¹ Jawaharlal Nehru, *India's Foreign Policy, Selected Speeches, September 1946-April 1961* (New Delhi: The Publication Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1961), p. 80.

² *Ibid*, p.39.