

The Evolutionary Changes in Foreign Policy Principles: Strategic Adaptation in India and Switzerland

Aswani E M, Dr Riju Saimon

Research Scholar under Riju Saimon

Professor of Political Science, Govt College Kottayam

Abstract: India and Switzerland are two nations stands neutral in both world wars and cold war, also both stand as neutral in many international conflicts. In their foreign policies India holds non alignment policy and Switzerland hold neutrality policy. Both are most celebrated policies in international sphere. The paper is analysing transformation in the fundamental policy principles of India and Switzerland. That is the foreign policy of nations are influenced by changing international environment and economic conditions. After the industrialisation there began the globalisation period and the nations began to liberalise their policies for accessing the trade and economic relations more easily for the development and mutual benefits, but in essence it made reflections in their foreign policy principle. With analysis on these two nations both India and Switzerland are now began to liberalise their foreign policy with increasing bilateral relations. The Indian policy of non-alignment changed into multi-alignment and the Swiss neutrality shifted towards active neutrality and cooperative neutrality. The paper presents how the changes made in principles and how the actions taken by these nations are affecting the foundational principles of the foreign policy of these nations.

Keywords: non-alignment, strategic autonomy, multi-alignment, neutrality policy, active neutrality, cooperative neutrality

I.INTRODUCTION

India and Switzerland are two different nations from different continents of the globe, where India tends to the policy of Non-Alignment, and Switzerland holds a Neutrality policy; both policies prevented the nations from joining any of the military alliances during the Cold War and saved the nations with a wide margin from the deadlock of the Cold War. But when there is a close analysis of their policies, it can be detected that India, as an Asian nation and with other strategic

interests, had a soft corner with the Soviet Union, and when it comes to Switzerland, as a Western nation, there is a close relation with the United States, even during the period of the Cold War. The paper analyses their policy changes with the developing global integration, and it became relevant in a multi-polar world, where the US and Russia had an upper hand, along with China.

Non alignment is a core principle of the India's foreign policy which had its origins from India's first democratically elected Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, who proposed the policy after India's independence especially on the period of Cold War, where the world was divided into two blocs one of the USA or West side holding capitalism and democracy and the second Soviet Union or the East holding the principles of socialism and communism. During the period, India didn't align with either of the two blocs, became the champion of non-alignment, held the principle of non-participation in any military alliances, and advocated for peacebuilding.

When it came to the Swiss context, the neutrality policy of Switzerland is much older than India's non-alignment is celebrated all over the world for its rigid functionality, which saved the Swiss people from both World Wars and kept the nation free from the Cold War and made the policy of Switzerland clear in front of the world powers. In Switzerland, the nation has held Armed Neutrality since 1815. Armed Neutrality allows the nation to defend itself with its entire military equipment against any attack on the Swiss people or on the Swiss territory. Switzerland was well established nation with bunkers and emergency tunnels for the safety and security of the nation. The neutrality stands for the basic principles of non-participation to any of the military alliances, any bloc

during armed conflicts, and covers the principles of cooperation for world peace.

The paper aims to present the changes in these policies with the rising bilateral partnerships and geopolitical polarisation. Indian foreign policy has shifted from Non-Alignment to Self-Autonomy in the post-Cold War period, and now it holds the multi-alignment policy, especially after the Modi regime in 2014. On the other hand, Switzerland recently introduced two alternative changes to the traditional Neutrality policy, which are active neutrality and cooperative neutrality. The former is keeping neutrality in one hand and actively participate international affairs. Cooperative neutrality meant making unity with Western partners by keeping non-participation in military conflicts. From the two cases of the different nations, the paper analyses the real-world challenges under the multipolar three-party dominant world system with the increasing solidarity among nations through different aspects.

FROM NON-ALIGNMENT TO MULTI-ALIGNMENT

1.1. Historical context

“The Non-Alignment Movement was created during the period of post-colonialism and independent struggles among Asia, Africa, Latin America, and at the time, the Cold War was at its peak. Even if there were some meetings held before 1955, the Bandung Asian-African conference of 1955 (April 18-24) is considered the first formal meeting on the non-alignment movement, which was attended by 29 state heads of newly independent third-world nations. The post-colonial leaders of afro-Asian nations, such as Jawaharlal Nehru of India, Gamal

Abdel Nasser of Egypt, Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Ahmed Sukarno of Indonesia and Josip Broz Tito of Yugoslavia, are the founding fathers of the Non-Alignment Movement. The first official summit conference of NAM took place at Belgrade in 1961, September 1-6 and was attended by 25 countries. Jawaharlal Nehru, the then Prime Minister of India, who is the architect of India’s foreign policy, is the one who founded the lines of non-alignment in the wake of the Cold War to not participate in the Anglo-American pact, and then became a representative of the Non-Aligned Movement.” (Davar, 2025)

“Ten principles of Bandung:

1. Respect for fundamental human rights and the objectives and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.
2. Respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nations.
3. Recognition of the equality among all races and of the equality among all nations, both large and small.
4. Non-intervention or non-interference into the internal affairs of another country.
5. Respect for the right of every nation to defend itself, either individually or collectively, in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations.
6. A. non-use of collective defence pacts to benefit the specific interests of any of the great-powers. B. Non-use of pressure by any country against other countries.
7. Refraining from carrying out or threatening to carry out aggression, or from using force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any country.
8. Peaceful solution of all international conflicts in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations.
8. Promotion of mutual interests and of cooperation.
9. Respect for justice and international obligations.” (India, 2012)

1.2. Non-Alignment Movement after the Cold War

Even during the period of the Cold War in the 1970s, India signed a friendship treaty with the USSR, which gained global criticism against the non-alignment policy. After the Cold War with destruction of the USSR, the world entered into a unipolar system under US dominance. The new trends of Liberalisation, Privatisation and Globalisation have emerged, and the Nations upgraded their foreign policies. In the case of India, the nation holds the Policy of Strategic Autonomy, which maintains its national interest even under the bilateral agreements and treaties. “Strategic autonomy means that India seeks to make its own decisions based on its national interest, without being overly dependent on any one country or group of countries. In the post-Cold War era, India’s foreign policy emphasised the need for “strategic autonomy,” a term that captured the essence of non-alignment in the 21st century. This is particularly important as India

faces growing influence from China, the United States, and regional powers in Asia”. (institute, 2025)

A nation's foreign policy determination is deeply rooted in its national interest, leadership, geographical status, etc. The leadership and political ideology that led a nation have a serious role to play in the nation's foreign policy formation, along with the global trends and international affairs, which become more important in the present globalised scenario.

Likewise, the Indian foreign policy got modified with its changing leadership and changing bilateral engagements and agreements. When coming to the present context India is nation which engaged more actively in international affairs and is a part of majority of the international agreements and inter-state governmental organizations begin from UNO, ASEAN, SAARC, BRICS, QUAD, and several bilateral agreements are also there which are existing in the fields of trade, finance, military, weapon transactions etc. that is, along with surviving under non alignment policy now India shifting towards multi alignment policy to manage its position in international sphere.

With the emergence of China as a supreme world power creating more challenges to India, and with the present leadership, India tries to maintain healthy relations with its neighbourhood, including China. But the Belt and Road policy, technological and financial aids, scholarships and overseas tourist attractions and the diplomatic moves in the Pacific Ocean, all of these are threatening the national security and concerning policy formation in India. The increasing bilateral relations and weapon transactions among India with Russia, America, Japan and other nations are putting India's non-alignment policy under pressure. In present at 2026, it was around 70 plus years since the Bandung conference was held, and NAM had 120 countries as its members today. It was a long time since India hosted a NAM summit; the last summit under India's chair was held at New Delhi in 1983, the 7th summit, now it is more than 40 years passed since then. The latest 19th NAM summit was held at Kampala, Uganda, in 2024, from January 15-20, which focused on development challenges and Global South cooperation. Even though NAM is portrayed as an independent and neutral bloc, it stands for multilateralism and Global

South solidarity. After the Cold War, with economic liberalisation and globalization the bilateral relations got boosted, and the non-alignment movement is getting weaker; that's why the member countries today make narrow interpretations of non-alignment in their foreign policy, especially India, which is one of the founding members.

1.3. The shift towards Multi Alignment

“After the Cold War, the world became multipolar, and the Indian policy of non-alignment gained a broader definition. However, India later began to form bilateral partnerships, military agreements and weapon transactions, as it had previously with Russia and subsequently with America”. (Solanki, 2025) Today, India shares strategic and defence partnerships with over 40 countries in weapon, technology and personnel transactions. The multi-alignment policy of India is a pragmatic vision of more engaged strategic partnerships with multiple power blocs, such as the US, QUAD, ASEAN, etc., to maximise regional security. By the shift from nonalignment to multi-alignment, India began to keep a stronger relationship with the West, along with keeping the relations with Russia in one hand. China is a major threat to India in the

Asian continent and also a rival to its dominance over the Pacific Ocean. To keep the power dynamics in the continent, India urges to improve its defence and weaponry and eagerly make strategic partnerships with great powers, and actively engage in global governance and make the rigid foreign policies more flexible to deepen defence ties and address security threats with China.

Today India is more active international sphere, and Indians are there all across the world. India maintains good relations with all its neighbouring countries, such as Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, etc., even though there are disturbances in the territories of Indo-Pak and Indo-China and sometimes with other neighbours also. There was a long break after the 1999 Kargil war that India engaged in military attacks against Pakistan. That was in 2016, a counterattack taken by India against Pakistan after the Uri attack on India by Pakistan. Further, in 2019 and 2025, there were major attacks and counter-attacks take place in Indo-Pakistan border. That is how multi-alignment functions, where India increases its weaponry and

strengthens military forces and now stands in a security dilemma with China and Pakistan, the territorial tensions make the nation closer to nuclear powers and became completely far away from the non-alignment principle.

II.SWISS NEUTRALITY: FROM ARMED NEUTRALITY TO ACTIVE AND COOPERATIVE NEUTRALITY

2.1. The neutrality policy of Switzerland

“According to the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, “The law of neutrality, which was codified in The Hague Conventions of 18 October 1907 and is part of international customary law, defines the rights and obligations of a neutral state. The most important of these rights is the inviolability of a neutral state’s territory.” The main obligations are as follows:

- to refrain from participating in wars
- to treat all parties to the conflict equally with regard to the private export of military equipment
- to provide no military support to the parties to the conflict, e.g. prohibition on supplying war-related goods from state-owned stocks or hiring mercenaries
- not make its territory available to the parties to the conflict

The law of neutrality applies to international conflicts but not to internal conflicts, which the majority of conflicts currently represent. The law of neutrality does not apply to a military operation authorised by the United Nations (UN) Security Council, for the latter is acting under a mandate from the community of states in order to re-establish peace and international security. Nor does the law on neutrality prevent neutral states from supporting such operations.

Policy of neutrality refers to the entirety of the measures that a neutral state undertakes on its own initiative to ensure the predictability and credibility of its permanent neutrality. The implementation of the neutrality policy depends on an analysis of the current international environment”. (Switzerland, 2026)

When taking an in-depth analysis of this report, they specifically mention that “the neutrality will be implemented based on the current international environment”, which means the measures of implementation of neutrality are not static and will not

be the same for each context. The Swiss leadership have already mentioned their willingness to actively participate in international affairs. The foreign ministers of Switzerland in the recent period introduced two different aspects of neutrality policy, which are active neutrality and cooperative neutrality; both stand for increased international engagements of the nation and European solidarity.

2.2. Active neutrality and cooperative neutrality

Active neutrality is a concept where the nation is actively engaging in international affairs for the resolution of conflicts and maintenance of peace, while maintaining neutrality on the other hand. In Swiss context the Active neutrality principle was introduced by the former foreign affairs minister Micheline Calmy Rey in her statement “Being quiet and remaining silent is not enough, Switzerland neither take sides, but the side of international law” In an interview taken by “Swissinfo” a news channel in Switzerland she gave her answer on active neutrality is as follows “Neutrality has evolved to address global risks and challenges, like the coronavirus pandemic or sustainable development. Preventive measures and solving global problems form a large part of protecting Switzerland’s security and interests in the world. But the rules of Swiss neutrality law only apply to conflicts between two countries. It is not legally regulated, but results from the neutral state’s willingness to remain neutral in the event of a conflict between two states. The specific political elements that make up neutrality policy are not set in stone; they should take into account foreign policy and security interests”. (Sibilla Bondolfi, 2021) That means a change into traditional neutrality has already occurred during her period of 2003-2011. That is during the period that Switzerland joined the UN and stated that for the UN peacekeeping procedures and peacekeeping force, the Swiss contribution will be given with wide access, and peacebuilding got priority over neutrality.

When it comes to cooperative neutrality, the matter is different. The Swiss President Ignazio Cassis proposed Cooperative Neutrality, which maintains solidarity and integrity with the Western partners and improves bilateral relations for the nation’s benefit, while keeping Neutrality in cases of military alliances. In a speech he had given at the WEF in Davos on 23

May 2022, he had stated that “Reality is multilateral” Cassis told an audience at the World

Economic Forum on May 24, 2022: “Neutrality does not mean indifference!”

Switzerland had no membership in the EU or NATO till today, and in the UN till 2002, but now Switzerland is a member of the Security Council of the UN. Apart from the nonmembership in these bilateral alliances, Switzerland shares close relationships with the EU and NATO. With a close analysis of Swiss history, Switzerland, as a nation, participated in NATO’s Partnership for Peace and sanctioned Iraq during the 1990s under NATO, and then, in the wake of 21st century, in 2024, that Swiss accepted the Sanctions against Russia under the EU. So that is how simply a neutral nation functions under the pressure of its bilateral partners, even without any membership in them.

III.CONCLUSION

With the increasing bilateral relations of India, a condition emerges that is the internal context of the nation, including decision making, such as the determination of taxes are now determined by external pressure. Here is a quotation from the Hindu: “India has committed to stop buying Russian oil, and already taken significant steps towards it, said U.S. President Donald Trump, rescinding the 25% punitive tariffs imposed on India in August 2025. The startling claim, which was not denied by the government on Saturday (February 7, 2026), was made in an executive order issued simultaneously with the India-U.S. joint statement on an interim trade agreement framework, and appeared to be a condition for the removal of the punitive tariffs”. (Haidar, 2026) The world, with all its experiences, knows that the US is a nation which hold interventionist strategy from its very beginning. Hence, when neutral states like India began to keep close contacts with the US and such other nations, it is a subject that makes internal and external disturbances with regard to India’s core principles of non-alignment, and the same applies to the case of Switzerland also. India’s transition from non-alignment to multialignment must address China’s neighbourhood and increasing US- India bilateral relations, which are considered as the major diplomatic threats faced by the nation and will

influence the nation’s strategic position in the world. All the frontline media have already covered this concern many times. When all these concerns will become serious is that at the point where the international

order begins to interfere with the sovereignty of a nation, and the nation will begin to suffer from the changes in the international system. In the present globally connected world, international disturbances are affecting the internal affairs of a nation.

When there is a comparison of both Switzerland and India Swiss keeps neutrality as being a part of the West, and India keeps non-alignment as an allied party of global south. Beyond everything, the major concern is that international matters and decisions, along with internal matters, are influenced by their bilateral agreements, which are widely increasing today. In the multi-polar world, with more international engagement, the nation which keep neutral stance can’t stay neutral, literally all the decisions of these nations are taken under pressure of close bilateral relations and partnerships. What is the major difference between non-alignment and multi-alignment is that non-alignment acts with the core principle of mutual non-interference, and multi-alignment will result at mutual interference. In conclusion, almost all neutral nations are moving away from the neutrality policy and have begun to improve their bilateral relations with powerful states, where they get technology, weapons, and energy for their security. But the present global condition is worse, where the global powers are continuously engaged in wars. All corners of the world, such as the West, the Middle East, and the East, are disturbed, and the peace and order in the international as well as national spheres are threatened. The UN and all the international peacekeeping bodies are inactive. In situations like the present, Neutral nations are important to reduce the impact of hostilities and the spread of hatred all across the world.

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