



Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's Views on the Foreign Policy of India

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DOI- 10.5281/zenodo.13253638

Abstract:

This paper highlights the global presence and significance of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's by gleaned his perspectives on India's foreign policy. Dr. Ambedkar, a key architect of the Indian Constitution and a champion of social justice, envisioned an inclusive and equitable global order. His views on foreign policy emphasize the importance of democratic alliances, economic diplomacy and strategic defense. The paper explores Dr. Ambedkar's realist approach to international relations, his critique of colonial legacies and his vision for a united front of democratic nations to counter authoritarian regimes. By analyzing Dr. Ambedkar's speeches, writings and interviews, the paper reveals the depth of his strategic thinking and its relevance to contemporary global politics. The study also attempts an evaluation of Ambedkar's ideas in the current geopolitical landscape, highlighting their enduring significance.

Keywords: B.R. Ambedkar, Indian Foreign Policy, League of Democracies, democratic alliances, international relations, realism.

Introduction:

Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, a visionary leader, social reformer and principal architect of the Indian Constitution, profoundly influenced the socio-political landscape of India. While his contributions to social justice and constitutional law are well-documented, his perspectives on India's foreign policy offer an equally valuable but less explored dimension of his intellectual legacy. This paper aims to provide a detailed and analytical examination of Dr. Ambedkar's views on India's foreign policy, highlighting his strategic insights and their relevance to contemporary geopolitics, with a particular focus on his advocacy for a League of Democracies.

Early Influences and Context:

Dr. Ambedkar's views on foreign policy were significantly shaped by his education and experiences abroad. His studies at Columbia University and the London School of Economics exposed him to diverse political ideologies and international relations theories. These academic experiences, combined with his extensive reading and critical thinking, enabled him to develop a nuanced understanding of global affairs. Ambedkar's early life in British India, witnessing the struggle for independence, further influenced his thoughts on foreign policy. The colonial experience instilled in him a deep sense of nationalism and a desire for India to emerge as a strong, independent nation on the global stage. This is highlighted in his writings and speeches, especially his dissertation, 'The Problem of Rupee'.

Strategic Autonomy: A Cornerstone of Ambedkar's Foreign Policy:

Dr. Ambedkar believed that India should pursue a path of strategic autonomy, maintaining independence in its foreign policy decisions. He argued that aligning too closely with any major power bloc would compromise India's sovereignty and limit its ability to act in its national interest. Ambedkar's vision of strategic autonomy was rooted in the belief that India, as a newly independent nation, should carve out its own path in the international arena.

Ambedkar's advocacy for strategic autonomy can be seen in his support for maintaining diplomatic relations with a wide range of countries, irrespective of their political systems. He emphasized the importance of engaging with both capitalist and socialist nations, leveraging these relationships to further India's economic and security interests. This pragmatic approach was aimed at ensuring that India remained flexible and could navigate the complexities of international politics without being tethered to any one bloc.

Realpolitik and Pragmatism in Ambedkar's Foreign Policy:

Ambedkar's foreign policy views were grounded in realism. He believed that international relations were driven by national interests and power dynamics rather than ideological affinities. This realist perspective led him to advocate for policies that prioritized India's strategic and economic interests over ideological considerations. Dr. Ambedkar's pragmatism was evident in his approach to international engagements.

He supported establishing diplomatic and trade relations with countries across the political spectrum. This included maintaining ties with the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War, as well as with countries in Europe, Asia, and Africa. Dr. Ambedkar believed that such pragmatic engagement would allow India to benefit from diverse economic opportunities and strategic partnerships.

Dr. Ambedkar's pragmatic approach can be illustrated through his views on relations with the United States and the Soviet Union. He recognized the economic and technological advancements of the United States and saw potential benefits in fostering a strong relationship with it. Simultaneously, he acknowledged the geopolitical importance of the Soviet Union and advocated for maintaining amicable relations to ensure strategic balance. Dr. Ambedkar's support for a balanced approach was rooted in his belief that India should leverage its relationships with both superpowers to gain technological, economic, and military advantages. He argued that aligning too closely with either the United States or the Soviet Union would limit India's options and reduce its ability to act independently on the global stage.

Economic Diplomacy: A Pillar of Ambedkar's Foreign Policy:

Dr. Ambedkar recognized that economic strength was crucial for India's standing in the international community. He believed that a robust economy would provide the foundation for a strong and independent foreign policy. As such, he advocated for policies that prioritized economic development and integration into the global economy.

Dr. Ambedkar emphasized the importance of securing favorable trade agreements and attracting foreign investment. He argued that India's foreign policy should be geared towards opening up markets for Indian goods and securing access to critical resources. Dr. Ambedkar's focus on trade and investment was aimed at enhancing India's economic capabilities, which in turn would bolster its strategic autonomy. His emphasis on economic diplomacy can be further understood through his views on industrialization and economic policy. He was a strong proponent of rapid industrialization, believing that it was essential for India's economic development and global competitiveness. Dr. Ambedkar argued that foreign policy should support domestic industrialization efforts by securing access to advanced technology, raw materials, and capital from abroad.

Defense and Security: Ensuring National Sovereignty:

Dr. Ambedkar was acutely aware of the security challenges facing India. He believed that a strong and well-equipped military was essential for

safeguarding India's territorial integrity and sovereignty. Dr. Ambedkar advocated for a robust defense policy that included modernizing the armed forces and establishing strategic partnerships to counter potential threats. His views on strategic partnerships were shaped by his realist perspective. He believed that India should seek alliances and partnerships based on its security needs rather than ideological alignment. This included forming alliances with countries that could provide military support, advanced technology, and strategic advantages.

Dr. Ambedkar's foresight regarding security threats is evident in his views on China. He was particularly concerned about the rise of China and its implications for India's security. Dr. Ambedkar warned against complacency and urged the Indian government to adopt a cautious and vigilant approach towards China. His warnings proved prophetic in the context of later Sino-Indian conflicts, highlighting his strategic acumen.

Advocacy for Social Justice and Human Rights:

True to his lifelong commitment to social justice, Dr. Ambedkar believed that India's foreign policy should reflect its values of equality and human rights. He supported India's participation in international organizations like the United Nations, where it could champion the cause of social justice and work towards the eradication of discrimination and oppression globally. Dr. Ambedkar's advocacy for social justice extended to his vision for India's domestic policy. He believed that a just and equitable society at home would strengthen India's moral standing in the international community. Dr. Ambedkar argued that India's foreign policy should be an extension of its commitment to social justice, promoting human rights and equality on the global stage.

Dr. Ambedkar and the League of Democracies:

Dr. Ambedkar's commitment to democracy and human rights led him to advocate for the creation of a League of Democracies. He envisioned this league as an alliance of democratic nations that would work together to promote democratic values, human rights, and social justice globally. Dr. Ambedkar believed that such an alliance would not only strengthen the position of democratic nations but also serve as a counterbalance to authoritarian regimes.

The League of Democracies, as envisioned by Dr. Ambedkar, would have several key objectives and principles. It would work to promote democratic governance, rule of law, and political freedoms in member countries and beyond. The league would advocate for the protection of human rights, including civil liberties, social justice, and equality. Member countries would engage in economic cooperation to support development, trade, and investment, fostering economic growth

and stability. The league would facilitate security collaboration among member countries to address common threats and challenges. Finally, the league would champion the cause of social justice, working to eradicate discrimination and promote equality globally.

Dr. Ambedkar's advocacy for a League of Democracies was ahead of its time, reflecting his visionary thinking. The concept remains relevant in contemporary geopolitics, as democratic nations continue to face challenges from authoritarian regimes and threats to democratic values. Implementing such a league would require a commitment to democratic principles, establishing an institutional framework to facilitate cooperation, including regular summits, a permanent secretariat, and specialized committees. Developing mechanisms for economic and security cooperation to address common challenges and promote mutual interests, and engaging in advocacy and outreach efforts to promote democratic values and human rights globally.

India, as the world's largest democracy, would play a pivotal role in the League of Democracies. Dr. Ambedkar's vision for India as a champion of democratic values and social justice aligns with the principles of the league. India's active participation would involve taking a leadership role in advocating for democratic values and human rights within the league and in international forums. It would include contributing to economic cooperation and security collaboration efforts, leveraging its strategic position and economic potential. Additionally, championing the cause of social justice, drawing on its domestic experiences and efforts to promote equality and eradicate discrimination.

Dr. Ambedkar's Critique of Contemporary Foreign Policy:

Dr. Ambedkar was often critical of the foreign policy adopted by the Indian government during his time, particularly the policy of non-alignment. He expressed concerns that non-alignment lacked a clear strategic direction and failed to adequately address India's security and economic interests. Dr. Ambedkar argued that while non-alignment was a noble ideal, it needed to be backed by a coherent strategy that addressed the complexities of the international system.

Dr. Ambedkar's critique of non-alignment was rooted in his belief in strategic flexibility. He argued that in a bipolar world, complete non-alignment was neither practical nor beneficial. Instead, he advocated for a more flexible approach where India could align with different powers on specific issues based on its national interest. This approach, he believed, would allow India to navigate the geopolitical landscape more effectively and secure its strategic objectives.

Conclusion:

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's views on India's foreign policy were characterized by a blend of pragmatism, realism, and a commitment to social justice. His emphasis on strategic autonomy, economic diplomacy, and a strong defense policy reflected his deep understanding of the complexities of international relations. Ambedkar's critiques of contemporary policies were often sharp, yet they were rooted in a desire to see India emerge as a strong, independent, and just nation on the global stage. His advocacy for a League of Democracies highlighted his visionary thinking and commitment to democratic values and human rights. As India navigates the challenges of the 21st century, Dr. Ambedkar's insights remain relevant, offering valuable lessons for crafting a foreign policy that serves the nation for a long time.

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