

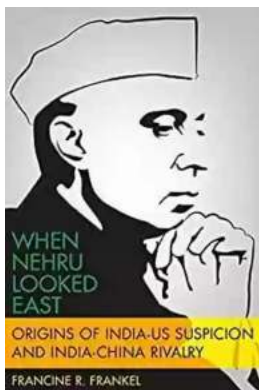
Exploring the Impact: When Nehru Looked East - A Journey Through History

India, a land of diversity and rich cultural heritage, has always maintained strong diplomatic ties with various nations around the world. One such significant phase in Indian history was when Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, turned his attention towards the East and initiated a new era of international relations.

During Nehru's tenure, which began in 1947 and lasted until his demise in 1964, he envisioned a united and prosperous Asia by forging alliances with countries in the Eastern hemisphere. This diplomatic shift not only aimed to foster economic growth but also to foster cultural exchanges and geopolitical stability in the region.

The Historical Context: Post-Independence India

After India gained independence from British rule in 1947, Nehru faced the immense responsibility of rebuilding a nation ravaged by years of colonialism. Hoping to bring about social equality and economic progress, he initiated various policies and reforms, one of which was to strengthen India's ties with the East.



When Nehru Looked East: Origins of India-US Suspicion and India-China Rivalry (Modern South

Asia) by Oleg Benesch (Kindle Edition)

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It is crucial to understand the historical context in which Nehru's "Look East" policy took shape. The aftermath of World War II had drastically altered the global geopolitical landscape. The wave of decolonization saw many Asian countries gain independence and struggle to establish themselves as sovereign nations.

Nehru recognized the importance of collaborating with neighboring countries to tap into their economic potential and ensure regional stability. Hence, the initiation of the "Look East" policy became a pivotal moment in Indian history, influencing both the country's domestic and international affairs.

The Economic Aspect: Strengthening Economic Ties

Nehru realized that for India's economy to flourish, it was imperative to establish strong trade and economic relations with countries in the East. He believed that Asian nations possessed immense potential for growth and development, and by mutually benefiting from trade, India and its neighbors could collectively progress.

One of the significant initiatives taken under Nehru's "Look East" policy was the establishment of the Colombo Plan in 1950. This plan aimed at facilitating economic and technical cooperation among Asian countries in the areas of agriculture, industry, and infrastructure development. India actively participated in this initiative and offered technical assistance, scholarships, and grants to its neighboring nations.

In addition to the Colombo Plan, Nehru played a crucial role in the formation of the Asian Clearing Union in 1974. This regional payment arrangement aimed to promote trade and financial cooperation among Asian countries by enabling them to settle payments in their local currencies. Such endeavors not only boosted economic ties but also fostered cultural exchanges and better understanding among nations.

The Cultural Exchange: Nurturing a Cross-Cultural Bond

Nehru firmly believed that fostering cultural exchanges and understanding played a significant role in building peaceful relations between nations. He emphasized the need for people-to-people contact, promoting Indian art, literature, and philosophy, while also embracing the cultural heritage of Asian countries.

Under Nehru's leadership, the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) was established in 1950. The ICCR played a vital role in strengthening cultural ties with East Asian countries by organizing cultural exchanges, scholarships, and inviting renowned artists, scholars, and intellectuals from the East to share their cultural heritage in India.

Nehru also initiated the establishment of the Sangeet Natak Akademi, which aimed at promoting Indian classical music, dance, and theater. By showcasing India's cultural magnificence, Nehru hoped to create a mutual appreciation and understanding between India and its eastern counterparts.

The Geopolitical Significance: Countering Cold War Dynamics

Another crucial aspect of Nehru's "Look East" policy was to counter the Cold War dynamics prevailing at that time. The world was divided into two ideological camps, with the United States and the Soviet Union vying for global influence.

Nehru, being a staunch advocate of non-alignment, sought to maintain India's independent position amidst the Cold War rivalry. By forging ties with countries in the Eastern hemisphere, Nehru aimed to establish a balance of power and ensure that India's interests were well-protected.

India actively participated in various regional forums, such as the Bandung Conference in 1955, where leaders from several newly independent Asian and African nations came together to discuss cooperation and promote decolonization.

The Legacy: Nehru's Impact on India's Foreign Policy

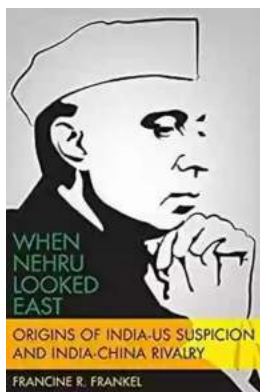
Nehru's "Look East" policy laid the foundation for India's subsequent foreign policy strategies and remains a critical milestone in India's diplomatic history. His vision and initiatives not only shaped India's regional engagement but also influenced its global position and aspirations.

The "Look East" policy was later rebranded as the "Act East" policy by the subsequent Indian governments, highlighting the continued importance placed on deepening India's engagement with the East.

Today, India's focus on the East extends beyond trade and economics. It includes security cooperation, joint military exercises, and partnerships in various sectors like technology, healthcare, and infrastructure development.

Nehru's visionary "Look East" policy revolutionized India's approach to international relations, giving it a new direction and setting the stage for future engagement with the East. His determination to establish strong diplomatic ties, foster economic growth, and promote cultural exchanges continues to shape India's foreign policy even today.

By recognizing the significance of Nehru's "Look East" policy, we acknowledge the enduring impact it has had on India's history and reaffirm the importance of building bridges with the East to create a more prosperous and harmonious future.



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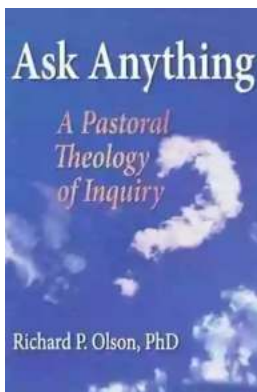


Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first Prime Minister and Minister of External Affairs from 1947 to 1964, set the framework of foreign policy which has remained India's reference point until the present. One of the most significant leaders of the twentieth century, Nehru came to power in the early years of the Cold War, determined to assert independent India's influence and interests in Asia and beyond. Drawing on the Nehru Papers, Francine Frankel's *When Nehru Looked East* reinterprets the doctrine of non-alignment with which Nehru is most closely identified to reveal its strategic purpose.

Analyzing India-US and India-China relations during this period, Frankel explains how these parties came to distrust each other. From the outset, Nehru's vision of

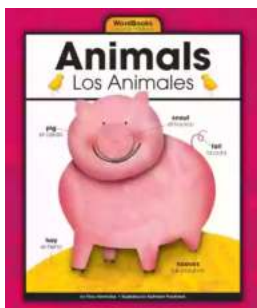
India's destiny as a great power collided with that of the US as leader and protector of the free world. He considered the US a rival in South and Southeast Asia and the Middle East and carried out an active diplomacy to dissuade newly independent nations from joining US-led anti-communist mutual security alliances and instead follow India's example of non-alignment. He did not see a threat from the Soviet Union and believed, despite the dispute with China over the northern border, that India's approach would bring India and China together as advocates of Asianism to counter American penetration in the region. This historic miscalculation, manifested in the 1962 China-India War, overthrew the pillars of Nehru's foreign policy.

Frankel provides the most authoritative account yet of the origins of India-US suspicions and India-China rivalries. Outlasting the Cold War, Nehru's worldview lived on in the mindset of successor generations, making it difficult for the US and India to form a strategic partnership and establish a natural balance in Asia.



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