

## India in the United Nations: Interplay of Interests and Principles (C.S.R. Murthy)

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**Murthy C.S.R., *India in the United Nations: Interplay of Interests and Principles*. India: Sage Publications, 2020.**

Globalization and co-dependency are the favorite allies of the current world order. The pinnacle of a country's foreign policy is to strike a balance between the willingness to maximize national interest and the need to adhere to the purpose and principles of the United Nations Charter. The scholarly work by C.S.R. Murthy in his book 'India in the United Nations: Interplay of Interests and Principles' is a window to understanding this balance as created by the Indian diplomatic efforts. The book tries to outline India's continuous efforts to define its political, economic, legal, and moral priorities and strategies. The twin arguments of the book aim to explore India's growing profile and aspirations in the international realm along with India's commitment to the larger principles of the world order. While the book is easy to understand, it is both well-researched and well-structured.

Being a founding member, India has a rich, long-standing history of association with the United Nations. In the past 77 years, India has played an active role in the political and security processes and made significant contributions to the policies and programs of the United Nations. The task of systematically understanding this vast relationship has been made relatively simple in this book as it presents itself as a truly holistic information tool. Murthy has divided the contents of the book into three strands, each based on a thematic subsection of the said relationship. The first theme is a 'historical timeline' of India's participation in the UN, which is a great way of introducing the readers to the general idea of the book. The first two chapters talk about the general direction of India's participation. They highlight that the Cold War period of

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India's engagement with the UN was inconsistent considering the 'Iron Curtain' and how each side of the curtain engaged with India. Jawaharlal Nehru coupled commitment to the UN with the compulsion of safeguarding the country's interests. With the nonalignment policy in place, India was keen to expand the UN's influence on the ground. The 1950 Korean conflict gave India the opportunity to establish a non-confrontational approach to ease the problems between the East and the West. Similar approaches were adopted during the Suez Canal issue in 1956 and the mobilization of Afro - Asian countries to vent their collective voices. However, Nehru's hope to seek the UN's support in the Jammu Kashmir question did not pan out. After Indira Gandhi preferred to use the UN only when it suited India's interests since addressing domestic issues was more important. India did not partake in peacekeeping activities for more than two decades. Murthy points out that there were mixed trends at this stage. Apart from India's inactivity in the Non-Proliferation Treaty in 1968, the liberation of East Pakistan is a brilliant example of India using the UN to fulfil its goals under the leadership of Indra Gandhi. However, Rajiv Gandhi talked about environmental protection, cooperation to end the 'menace' of terrorism and pledged to support nuclear disarmament aiming to reinforce the Nehruvian foreign policy strategy. While Rajiv Gandhi crafted his image as a modernist statesman, he was known to show susceptibility to come under American pressure. A common trend that the author notices is that all three Nehru - Gandhian era prime ministers took "more than ordinary interest in foreign policy." Moving on the book talks about the pragmatic conservatism of the unipolar 1990s. With domestic political instability and a new international context post-Cold War, this section also analyses the quality of India's role through a set of case studies and cardinal issue areas covering human rights, economic development, and institutional reforms. The first theme of this book is particularly helpful for those who are new to this area of study or are reading out of curiosity as it gives an excellent background to comprehend the arguments of the book further.

The second strand of the book features India's aspirations, experiences, and obstacles while working with the United Nations. In 2021, India entered the United Nations Security Council as a non-permanent member for the eighth time. The book published in 2020, argues how India's tool kit to act on principled positions and provide different perspectives on the committee's actions was worthy of assessment. India's experience has some valuable insights. In both the Gulf War and the situation in Yemen, India advocated for the territorial sovereignty of the concerned states. It also denounced the military adventures of South Africa in its neighboring

countries like Zambia, Zimbabwe etc during the 1970s and 1980s. While this section is full of case study facts, the narrative style of writing makes it easy to read, grasp and keeps the reader engaged. Murthy grabs the opportunity to provide a critical evaluation of the structure of the council in the context of the argument to make the UNSC more democratic and representative in its functioning. The author goes on to provide clarity about the criteria India suggests for the expansion of the UNSC member states. The author in this section also extensively discusses the variety of problems India has assisted to address at the UN including but not limited to non-traditional threats, inter and intra-state armed conflicts, sustainable development etc. India's constant policy of advocacy by peaceful resolution has been called attention to throughout the three chapters of the second part of the book. The third part of the book comprises five chapters dealing with substantive issues of contemporary relevance like a detailed account of India in the UN peacekeeping operations, the India - Pakistan Conflict, India's stance against international terrorism, Indian diplomacy at the UN, and India's approach to multilateral governance of the internet. Each chapter provides a coherent learning of these topics. Some sub-topics like the contributions of the civilian police in international peacekeeping activities, India's deliberate policy to keep the UN away from its negotiations with neighbors, and criticism of advanced countries for being unable to keep up the standards of the ODA are especially interesting and provide some eye-opening insights and frames of reference.

To conclude, the author identifies some factors that determine the current engagement in the present context. Showcasing his own specialization, Murthy has brought in ideas of political investments and an excellent rate of winning elections with good margins to show how the domestic political scenario of India has influenced and can influence India's engagement with the United Nations for either interest or principles. The book is wealthy with detail. Drawing from the history of the problems faced in today's patterns of the United Nations and Indian working intersection, this book provides a great understanding of the subject matter and is worth a read!