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# Revisiting Bose's Legacy in Indian Foreign Policy, and the Relevance of His Ideas on Paradigm Shifts in International Relations

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### Abstract:

Subhash Chandra Bose's ideas regarding international politics, along with his responses and achievements in the established paradigm of international relations, altered and shaped India's foreign policy before and after it achieved independence. Bose's contributions to India's independence were well represented in the formation of the provisional government-in-exile during the Second World War, which generated new paradigms and optimism in India's freedom struggle. After independence, Bose's ideas persisted and were occasionally represented in India's international politics. This article will look at Bose's ideas and experiences in international politics, as well as his vision for a powerful independent India. This article consists of three parts: the first is an introduction that analyses Subhash Chandra Bose's experiences in India's freedom struggle in the context of international relations; the second part discusses the relevance of Subhash's ideas and paradigms of international relations; and the third part demonstrates the significance of Bose's ideas in contemporary Indian foreign policy.

**Keywords:** Subhash Chandra Bose, Indian freedom struggle, international politics, paradigms of international relations.

### Introduction:

*"Speaking as a cold-blooded realist, I may say that all the facts of the present-day situation are so much to our advantage that one should entertain the highest degree of optimism. Shall we have the political foresight to make the most of our present favourable position or shall we miss this opportunity, which is rare opportunity in lifetime of a nation?"*

*Subhash C. Bose*

Subhash's ideas on international relations and foreign policy were well reflected in his speeches and writings as he spoke in the 52nd session of INC (Indian National Congress) held in Tripuri in March 1939. It was the time when the entire world was following the policy of appeasement and Great Britain had just signed the Munich Agreement, which reflected the weakness of the major colonial powers, specifically Britain. Subhash himself has many times announced from the platforms of the INC that the Munich agreement is the abject surrender of Britain to Nazi Germany, which is an absolute favour for us to raise the issue of "Swaraj."

The political ideology of Subhash Chandra Bose has evoked so many debates and misunderstandings due to his excessive realist attitude toward politics. Britishers have so many times portrayed him as "communist" in fascist regimes or pro-fascist countries and as "fascist" in democratic or socialist countries. During the second world war, Bose collaborated with axis powers for the independence of India by military intervention, he was considered and portrayed as an "Indo-fascist adventurer" and even the upcoming military dictator of India. Even in today's India Bose's ideas on politics, his belief, faith, and convictions have been misunderstood drastically. Historically, Bose's participation in the Indian national movement demonstrated characteristics of his personality as a nationalist, socialist, secularist, and democrat. The political philosophy of Subhash was fertilised with the knowledge of eastern philosophies and western thoughts, thus resulting in the "doctrine of reality." More explicitly, Bose's political philosophy was based on rationalism, pragmatism, and spiritualism. Bose's political philosophy had a spiritual base of nationalism, irredentism, non-sectarianism, and secularism. His aspirations, hopes, and goals towards the freedom struggle of India also reflect his ideas on international relations in terms of complete independence with complete severance of the British connection, "swaraj," which reflects Bharat as a sovereign nation-state.

The major ideas that reflected Subhash's views on the economic, political, and strategic development of independent India were based on various factors. Subhash's views on the economic development of India seem to be derived from a "massive industrialization model" based on indigenous Indian experiences. His idea of the industrialization of India was based on the regeneration and reinvigoration of the industry within the safeguarded village economy. He was also inspired by the industrialization of Germany and Japan, which was based on indigenous experiences of manufacturing processes and not upon the British industrial model. Subhash wanted the state's control over industries like power and machinery, which was inspired by his inclination towards socialism. He was strictly against the liberal understanding of economic policies. He strongly opposed the free trade policy, also

called "laissez-faire," which was discriminatory in nature and practices. The mandate for the forceful implementation of the laissez-faire policy by the British was the next step in terms of capitalism and imperialism, also called "financial capitalism."

Subhash strongly opposed the financial drain on the Indian economy. There are various discourses on the industrial model of the Subhash as it was inspired by Germany and Japan, and Subhash was a keen follower of communism, which is contradictory in nature, and it has always raised the issue of Subhash's inclination towards "industrial capitalism" in practice and "industrial socialism" in nature. Subhash was also indirectly opposing the Bretton Woods institutions and their mandate for a free-market economy based on liberalism. British India was the founder member of many Bretton Woods institutions, like the International Monetary Fund and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development later became World Bank. Subhash never opposed British India's formal engagements with Bretton Wood institutions, but his ideas and views were clearly reflected against the idea behind the Bretton Wood institutions established by the major colonial powers and the United States of America, which was economic liberalism. Bose talked of developing international contacts with Indian cultural organisations and Indian chambers of commerce to raise India's profile across the globe. Bose stressed that a free India would be a positive force in the world.

In his speeches and letters, Subhash's political ideas came out in the form of democracy, secularism in the spirit of Bhartiya to stop the cultural and political fragmentation of Indian society, and socialism to fight against the dominance of capitalism from outside India. He was a strong believer in the idea of democracy and the specifically Indian experience of Indian democracy. Bose strongly opposed the artificial creation and fragmentation of Indian states by the Britishers and demanded the unity of India in the form of federalism and nationalism. He was also against the idea of communal politics. The Indian freedom struggle was fought on two fronts: the first was within the country, which tried to generate nationalist sentiments among the people, mostly by peaceful means, and another was outside the country, by people outside the country, who wanted to weaken the British hold over India by violent means and with the help of another foreign power (Sareen, 2004). Many revolutionaries and nationalists from outside the country joined forces with international communism and countries against Britain; however, it was not a fight between communism and capitalism, despite the fact that world wars were primarily about control and subjugation over colonies and empires.

Subhash was a realist by nature, an idealist in his philosophy, and a diplomat by profession. He was aware of the global situation and Britain's position in world affairs. He analysed that Britain herself was called "the mistress of the seas," but the modern air force, as a powerful element in modern warfare, has demolished the British blinkeredness and rudely disrupted the balance of power in world politics. He realised that the support of Germany and Japan with modern air force warfare technologies and armaments would help against Great Britain. Bose also said, "We have no enmity towards the British people; we are fighting Great Britain and want full liberty to determine future relations with her." Once we'll have real self-determination, there is no reason why we shouldn't enter into the most cordial relation with the British people."

Subhash wasn't hesitated to use cohesive force to achieve the goal of the freedom struggle of India. It was a pre-existing idea in the form of the formation of the Indian National Army under Mohan Singh. Bose was only strategically following the method of cohesive attack on British colonialism with the help of axis powers. He was also inspired by the national and freedom movements of other countries, Garibaldi took help from outsiders to fulfil the unification of Italy, Sun Yet-sen stood in Japan to free China and Irish revolutionaries took help from America to attain their independence. Bose was aware of these historical incidents and the domestic criticism of irredentism by the leaders of the Indian national congress, still, he has broken out of INC to form an alliance with the Axis powers against British imperialism.

Subhash was convinced that all the actions of the INC and Gandhi's idea of struggle weren't sufficient for India to attain her freedom. Bose wasn't in favour of the ideologies of Nazism and fascism; he personally experienced Nazism and fascism as a danger to the established world order, but he was well interested in the exploitation of Britain's situation in favour of India's freedom. With the commencement of the Second World War, Bose advocated the policy of direct action against British rule in India. Many historians have argued that India wasn't well prepared for direct action against British rule, but just two or three years later, even Gandhi and the INC called for direct action in the form of the Quit India movement in 1942 CE. It was the time when every freedom revolutionary was ready for fighting with all violent means to make India independent. Bose tried the radicalization of realism in politics within the domestic affairs of the British-led Indian government during the freedom struggle.

Subhash was critical and disinclined toward the Gandhian spirit of seclusion from the outside world of politics, but he was also a follower of the idea of "Vashudhaiv Kutumbkam," as an idealist by philosophy. Bose argued so many times that INC had no foreign policy in virtual, however, there were many personal ideas and opinions of various leaders of the INC likewise Nehru, Gandhi, and Vallabhbhai Patel, and most of the foreign policy drafts of INC were prepared by Nehru. There was a huge necessity for foreign policy and international contacts of the INC against the imperialist regime of Great Britain. It seemed like a vacuum was created in the context of foreign affairs during the Indian freedom struggle. Bose was truly clear and realistic that the Indian freedom struggle must utilise and exploit every world affair context, its advantages, and disadvantages, and seek foreign help from any country against Britain irrespective of ideological similarities or differences, internal politics, and international politics. The mandate of the Forward Bloc was to make India independent, and ideas were majorly inclined towards socialism and Marxism. Bose himself was a strong believer in class struggle and socialism, but historically evidently, he made an alliance with axis powers (Japan and Germany) against Great Britain.

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### **Relevance of Subhash's ideas and paradigms of international relations:**

The relevance of the Subhash ideas on international relations still continues and shifted within the paradigms of international politics and relations. Although the world has changed and India has also shifted from colonial to post-colonial independence as a sovereign nation-state, after the process of decolonization in the whole world, the global south has emerged as a viable challenger to the global north, mainly for major ex-colonial powers. There are some very crucial and historically important long processes due to which such shifts happen. Kuhn (1962) argued about the scientific revolutions of

the world and empiricism of philosophy in which he examined the paradigms and paradigm shifts. A paradigm is just a basic empirical observation, elucidated as a viewpoint of the world, which involves agreement on the structure of the fundamental units, the significant issues that need to be addressed, and the theory that will be employed to address those issues. Despite "idealism," there are two major paradigms that have ruled out the world in the scenario of international politics: "realism" and "liberalism." Subhash used a certain degree of necessary radicalization of realism to make India independent from the claws of British imperialism.

It is a well-known argument established by political scientists that the international system demonstrates "anarchy," often known as the "might is right" mindset that is commonly acknowledged by the paradigms of "realism" and "liberalism." It is widely known that the existence of elements related to the nation-state, government leaders, alliances, conflict and peace, power, and weapons indicates the paradigm of "realism," whereas the appearance of corporate, trade, competition, MNCs, capital, and BoP demonstrates paradigms most probably related to "liberalism," and if there are characteristics of international morality, the significance of religion and society, transnational secular values, principles, norms, ideas, traditions, etc., the paradigm is certainly "idealism." Subhash's ideas and acts for India's independence were guided and determined by all these characteristics and principles of international politics and political theories. Subhash wasn't afraid of exploiting the well-determined use of cohesive force with the help of the enemies of the British Empire, which reflects realism. At the same time, he was representing the idea of idealism through the principles of Upanishads such as "Vashudhaiv Kutumbkam", which means the whole world is one family, which he mentioned many times by saying that his fight isn't from British people, he is just fighting against the imperialism "Samrajya" to gain self-rule "Swaraj".

Subhash was well aware that international politics and its paradigms affect individuals on three distinct levels. The first level is the individual level, which is constituted of biological theories such as genetics, sex, age, psychology, etc., cognitive theories such as stereotypes, irrational assumptions, prejudice, etc., and cultural theories such as religious perceptions. Subhash had mentioned the "colonialism" of India in the context of the "threat of survival" for INC, which had been caused by disagreements about the nature of the threat, techniques of appeasement, or making concessions to an infuriated power. He had also spoken about "Ethiopia" and her fight against imperialism. The climactic battle of Adwa (1896 CE) had decided and ensured Ethiopia's independence and sovereignty, making Ethiopia the only African country never to be colonised by any colonial or imperial power. All these factors worked at the individual level.

The second way that the international system affects society is through "nationalism" and conflicts between nations, ingroups, and outgroups that vary depending on ideologies and national identification. The probability of conflict increases with the magnitude of disagreement between the notions of colonialism and freedom, imperialism and independence, and most prominently the perspectives of "self" and "other." People living outside their homeland, immigrants, and diaspora also constitute this societal level that is affected, and their attitude toward their conception of "irredentism" reflects this. Subhash was a revolutionary freedom fighter, and his idea of nationalism was quite different from the western idea of nationalism. Bose's ideas on nationalism seem to be the initials of the post-colonialist idea of nationalism. He was a critic of Germany's and Italy's nationalism. Subhash has said many times that the German and Italian ideas of nationalism have shattered the established order in Europe. Subhash said that "Nationalism in India has instilled in us truthfulness, honesty, manliness, and the spirit of service and sacrifice." His idea of nationalism was guided by the spirit of complete freedom in a classless society and the state's socialism. His role in INA was well determined as Irredentism.

The third penetration of international politics occurs at the systemic level, which relates to the very essentials and is associated with the fundamental elements of statecraft, militia, society, or culture. Subhash was a probationary Indian Civil Service officer but later resigned from the service on the very essentials and is associated with the fundamental elements of statecraft, militia, society, or culture. Subhash was a probationary Indian Civil Service officer but later resigned from the service on April 22, 1922, by writing that "I desire to have my name removed from the list of probationers in the Indian Civil Service." A diplomat by profession, he later became a pacifist icon and sought alliances with Nazi Germany and Japan to overthrow the British Raj during the Second World War. His main agenda was focused on the Britishers from British India, and he was ready with the blueprints, but he also criticised the leftists, rightists, and some congresspersons, including Gandhi, for their domestic policies regarding the Indian National Movement. Subhash has considered the persons as the agents of British imperialism, who have not protested the war policies of British India, and the role of Great Britain during the second world war.

Subhash soon felt that INC is not enough resisting for carrying out the Indian freedom struggle with the pace of changes in the international environment, lost its vitality and could not sustain the situation of post-war India, seemed to be stagnated and majorly focused on domestic matters, then he declared the foundation of his political party names as "Forward Bloc." Subhash wanted to establish a systematic resistance to British imperialism through the use of force and cohesive power from outside the country. Subhash knew how to intelligently use these three distinct factors for the complete freedom and interests of India. In India's case, it was "complete freedom" from the paradigm of Indians at the individual, societal, and systemic levels.

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### **Bose's ideas and shifts in India's international relations:**

Subhash's idea of independent India (Bharat) was guided by the strong realist nation state strongly fighting for its sovereign national interests with idealist cultural traditions and practices. His independent Bharat must be a multicultural civilizational state with the unification of various lines, migrations, and histories over a period of time. Imperialists and colonisers caused the fragmentation of Indian society and culture for imperial gain. This disintegration, denial of Indian culture, and western racial superiority caused by British colonialism were the major obstacles to the fight against the colonial power. Subhash was the only leader who was cold-shouldered by the INC and inclined towards the Indian cultural unification spirit,

knowing it had applications in both internal and international politics. Although India wasn't a nation-state till independence, its various cultural fragments were guided towards cultural unity, however, there were some antisemitic conflicts and issues which occurred as communalism.

After independence, India's foreign policy was heavily influenced by Nehruvian ideas. Nehruvian believed that the use of power politics unnecessarily leads to constant rivalries, conflicts, and lastly wars. Their security aspects of foreign policy were defensive. Subhash wanted to establish India as a great nation-state in South Asia, in the case of security and strategy with the help of foreign powers and economic activities like massive industrialisation with the ownership of the state. However, Nehruvian defensive policies weren't absolutely successful due to constant changes in the balance of power and the interference of other countries. It didn't suit India's national interests or peaceful world vision, and it was shattered by the Indo-Pak and Indo-China wars. Subhas always wanted India to be a renowned south Asian power in the world, which would justify great power status recognition from the international community. The Nehruvian international politics determined India as a nonaligned and peaceful nation-state, which further faced cultural, military, and security threats from its neighbouring nation-states. Pakistan emerged as a great cultural threat by challenging the cultural unification of India, and China emerged as a major security and military threat to India, thereby creating challenges to the "maintenance of the idea of *Vashudhaiv Kutumbkam*."

Subhas's ideas on international relations were always inclined towards political realism. The idea of political realism in international relations is also determined by the "Mandala Theory of Kautilya." This theory already propounded that immediate neighbours as a country are natural enemies, which somehow became a fact in the case of independent India. Mandala theory also emphasised the role of friendship, enmity, diplomacy, and indifference in foreign policies. Subhas acts and ideas historically seemed to be more inclined towards Mandala theory.

Contemporary Indian foreign policy strategists are now reversing some strategic and security aspects of Indian foreign policy without distressing the essential cultural aspects of "*Vashudhaiv Kutumbkam*." They perceive India as Subhas perceived it while India was fighting against British imperialism. Subhas always wanted India to sustain itself as a powerful state actor in South Asia in an environment of power politics and anarchy. He never wanted an expansionist foreign policy but to restrict the fragmentation of the idea of Bharat and sustain its cultural unity. Contemporary foreign policy strategists have now emerged as major critics of Nehruvian nonalignment and third-world hierarchical conceptions. They are advocating for India as a powerful actor in South Asia to address and fulfil its deficit of defence and strategic challenges modelled by the Pakistan-China alliance. Subhas's way of fighting against British imperialism was totally based on realism, mostly on radical realism, and the demand for free, independent, and completely sovereign statehood for the best negotiations on its own terms and conditions in the international community, which is still relevant and needed for India to become a powerful state actor in South Asia and world politics to sustain its economic, security, and strategic interests.

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