

Indian Foreign Policy: A Paradigm Shift And The Future

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Abstract:

India, an older country and a younger state, is at a pivotal point in its interaction with the rest of the globe at the age of 75. Beyond all recognition, the world has altered since India attained independence in 1947. The brief uni-polar era of American hegemony after the bipolar world of the US and the USSR, to a world where, misled by multi-polar illusions, China and the US are moving toward another bipolar conflict. In the volatile world of today, India must define its unique foreign policy character and shape the parameters of its engagement to strike a balance between national interests and moral ideals. India's fundamental security and development aspirations are inextricably entwined with its foreign policy. India had actually earned its long-sought freedom from foreign dominion. India's emphasis on the independence of foreign policy is therefore only reasonable.

Keywords: National interest, Global power, Diplomatic ties, International politics, Power play.

INTRODUCTION:

The tool used by a nation to achieve its national interests is its foreign policy. It is essential to presenting a particular image of a nation and attaining many of its goals. India is thus moving toward becoming a regional giant with significant influence on international politics. A nation's foreign policy is characterized by two elements: domestic and international, Indian foreign policy's goals and guiding principles have been significantly influenced by the country's history, culture, geography, and economics. India is a significant regional power, an emerging global power, and a prospective superpower. As it has the second-largest armed force, the third-largest economy by nominal GDP rates, and the fifth-largest economy by purchasing power parity. India now has a significant international presence and voice in world affairs.

India has established a wide network of diplomatic ties with other nations and is currently categorized as a newly industrialized nation. It may also be seen from the past, as India played a significant role in the Non-Aligned Movement's establishment. In order to establish more wide economic and strategic ties with other East Asian nations, India in recent decades has undertaken a more expensive foreign strategy that includes the neighborhood first policy exemplified by SAARC as well as the Look East Policy. India is a part of both the G20 and the BRICS, a grouping of the world's developing economies. India is also actively vying for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council in order to have more significant impact on world politics. India significantly changed its foreign and economic policies under the direction of PM Narendra Modi in order to advance its interests internationally. However, several of the fundamental ideas of Indian foreign policy continue to be followed, albeit with occasional modifications to serve the nation's interests.

INDIAN FOREIGN POLICY

India's foreign policy is based on three interlocking circles:

1. India's immediate vicinity, where it has made an effort to strengthen its position and prevent "foreign powers" from interfering or having a direct impact there.
2. A vast region spanning Asia and the Indian Ocean littoral where India has worked to counterbalance the influence of foreign states and keep them from undermining its own national interests.
3. Throughout the entire world, India has worked to establish itself as one of the major nations and a crucial role in world peace and security.

India's foreign policy underwent a significant transformation in the 20th century, ushering in a realist era in its dealings with other countries. The highlights of the foreign policy from 1960 to 1980 included the first nuclear test in Pokharan in 1974, India's involvement in East Pakistan and the founding of Bangladesh, as well as tight and cordial ties with the Soviet Union. Indian foreign policy needed to be redesigned with the fall of the Soviet Union. India has to avoid the real prospect of being pushed to the margins of the new global order. Thus, India transitioned from a closed economy to a global economy.

India's international relations have been impacted by its delicate juggling act between combating the threat of international terrorism without alienating its Muslim minority and its need for energy security to maintain its current rate of economic growth. The Act east policy promoted the importance of historical cultural and ideological ties with the nations of East and South-East Asia while also reviving political and economic ties with them. India recognized the significance of correcting the imbalance in its foreign policy at this time and adopted the Act East Policy to enhance ties with its neighbors in South East Asia for the purpose of military cooperation and strategic defense with countries concerned about the rise of China's economic and strategic influence. India's position in the region was strengthened by the solidified economic, military, and cultural ties with the Philippines, Singapore, Vietnam, and Cambodia as well as by free trade agreements with Sri Lanka and East Asian economies, including the Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement with Singapore.

INDIA FIRST POLICY: REALISTIC DIPLOMACY

With 75 years of independence, India is more confident and upbeat about putting "India First" on the international stage. India makes its own decisions, and its autonomous foreign policy cannot be threatened. India, which has one-fifth of the global population, is entitled to take a stand and consider its own interests. National interests should always come first in international interactions, and India has surely upheld this principle when it comes to its foreign and national security policies. The self-assured India of today is steadfast in the pursuit of its fundamental interests while also having a fresh voice in the global firmament, one that is founded in its home realities and civilizational ethos. The world will interact with India on its terms because it is confident in its identity and priorities.

India's foreign policy now has a clearer sense of purpose. It is sensible. Additionally, it contains a strong dose of realism that aims to engage in multiple directions with world politics. Regarding India's relations with Asia, there appears to be an unfinished agenda. Similarly, the Pakistan problem and the associated "lack of impetus" continue to impede India-China relations. With the same zeal, contacts with Africa, South America, and Central Asia must be strengthened. The objectives and themes have been well thought out and are much more clearly defined than they were previously.

Under the energetic leadership of PM Modi, India's foreign policy has undergone a fundamental transformation. In just a little more than eight years, he has gone from nobody to being a global authority on significant international matters. S. Jaishankar, the external affairs minister, has done a commendable job of carrying out PM Modi's thoughtful and bold foreign policy. The two make a lethal combination and are bringing honor to the nation with their astute diplomatic and political maneuvers.

SHAPING GLOBAL AGENDA

The main goals of Indian foreign policy today are to improve India's reputation abroad, build partnerships on an equal footing with generosity toward less developed countries, actively shape the global agenda and

major issues, actively explore and leverage foreign relationships for domestic development, develop a people-centric foreign policy, and use Indian culture and ideas to influence international initiatives and discourses. One of the greatest achievements of Indian diplomacy is the deft balancing of nations and alliances that are at odds with one another. India today is a unique country that buys S-400 missiles and oil from Moscow while maintaining historically closest ties with Washington and other QUAD partners. India participates influentially in QUAD, BRICS, and G-7 and G-20 summits and develops understanding of India's position on Ukraine by all of India's partners. India has developed close ties with Israel and the Gulf countries (particularly the UAE) while maintaining cordial relations with Tehran, much to the envy of the United States.

The conduct of the first-ever summits of the International Solar Alliance, Summit with Central Asian nations, Summit with Pacific Island nations, and India-Nordic Summit demonstrates the proactivity of Indian foreign policy. India took on global obligations by giving the globe with vaccines and medications during the epidemic, by helping the Ukrainian people in need, and by delivering wheat to underdeveloped countries. Another important advancement in Indian diplomacy is that it has successfully challenged Western moral superiority. The Indian foreign policy elite have acknowledged for the first time that no country has the right to assess another's human rights. On global concerns like the world trade system, climate change, terrorism, intellectual property rights, global governance, and health risks, India supports a worldwide discussion and global agreement. India exported 60 million doses of vaccines as part of the "Vaccine Diplomacy" project, with 10 million doses being given out and around other 40 million sold.

CURRENT CHALLENGES TO INDIAN FOREIGN POLICY

India currently has many internal difficulties as well. If a nation is weak at home, it cannot be strong overseas. When bolstered by its hard power, India's soft power assets make sense. India can effectively participate in global affairs when it is both internally and externally powerful. Russia-Ukraine issue, where nations like India struggle to decide between politics and moral imperative, there is unquestionably a complex international political issue at hand. By directly opposing Russia, which is a trade partner and a powerful player in the Eurasian region, India endangers its regional interests. In this situation, India must maintain a fair balance of relations between America, U.S. and Russia. On other hand, despite not being a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention or its 1967 Protocol, India has taken in some of the most refugees globally. Here, finding a balance between national interest and human rights protection is difficult. India still has a lot it can do to help with finding long-term solutions as the Rohingya situation develops. These acts will be crucial in deciding India's position on human rights in the region and around the world.

China and Pakistan are two of India's strategically hostile neighbors. To strategically weaken India, China has given Pakistan access to missile technology. Both have a stake in the land of India. With a Line of Control in J&K with Pakistan and a Line of Actual Control with China, India is the only significant nation in the world whose boundaries are in dispute. India's challenge is to interact with both positively while also being ready to confront them if required. India must avoid a two-front conflict, but it cannot give up too much to either of its enemies.

FUTURE: WAY FORWARD

India is in a unique position to operate as a bridge between various interests and worlds in the twenty-first century because it's anchored in Asia and is the most "western" and liberal of the non-western powers. India also has a big worldwide footprint despite being a poor and developing nation. It still operates in an informal economy, while having the capacity to become a technological powerhouse. India should be dedicated to democratic principles and believe that stable democracies provide a superior level of security

assurance. However, it does not "push" democracy or regard it as an idea that divides states along ideological lines. India's biggest strategic asset is its diversity of identity and interests.

Strategic independence remains a strong pillar of Indian foreign policy development. India's foreign policy motto has changed from nonalignment to multi-alignment, which represents an effective strategy to address transnational issues of the 21st century, despite some of the most significant developments and the start of a "new era" since the 1990s. The general development of the country has been greatly influenced by foreign policy, which continues to be an important factor. The major objective of Indian foreign policy going forward should be to maintain equilibrium in relations with the US, Russia, and China. Despite the highest level of Indo-US relations since independence, there hasn't been significant development in many areas. The laudable objective of stability while promoting inclusive growth can only currently be accomplished by an innovative foreign policy. India must also make sure that it participates in the areas of the global system that involve "rule-making" rather than "rule-following." India must play the part of a "leading power" in the international system—one that establishes international standards and institutional frameworks rather than allowing others to do so.

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