



A REVIEW ON INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY IN THE CHANGING GLOBAL LANDSCAPE

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ABSTRACT

This study examines and evaluates the Indian foreign policy in the present context and how the domestic nationalistic environment has affected country's external dimensions. The research question for this thesis is to identify the changes within India's foreign policy and how it has changed India's global image and reputation. I have used the theory of compatibility and Consensus. The aspects of a nation's internal, external and systematic referents could be understood in a simple way through this process. Deductive approach has been opted as the methodology for this research, along with the comparative method to understand the growth trajectory. Primary as well as secondary sources have been utilised to explore various readings available on this study. The geopolitical transition happened in the past few decades has assisted the country to put forward a strong image as a stable economy. We can conclude that the emergence of the current regime, nationalistic emotions and domestic stability has built a reliable consensus at home for India, to redefine itself as a compatible global leader at the world stage. By employing a continuity-and-change framework, the study demonstrates that India's foreign policy has not undergone a radical departure from its post-independence principles.

Keywords: *India's foreign policy, India's global image, growth trajectory, post-independence principles, stable economy.*

INTRODUCTION

Historically, India's foreign policy under leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru emphasized moral universalism, non-alignment, and the promotion of a just international order. These principles emerged from India's colonial experience and its desire to preserve sovereignty and independence in global affairs. Over time, however, geopolitical constraints, economic challenges, and security threats necessitated recalibration. India's strategic behavior today reveals a hybrid approach—balancing traditional non-alignment with issue-based alignments, maintaining ties with both Western and non-Western powers, and pursuing national interests through flexible multilateralism. The end of the Cold War, the onset of globalization, and India's economic liberalization in the 1990s ushered in new priorities—economic integration, technological advancement, and strategic partnerships. The 21st century further intensified these imperatives, compelling India to reposition itself as both a regional stabilizer and a responsible global actor. By analysing key diplomatic initiatives, strategic partnerships, and India's role in multilateral organizations, the study highlights how India navigates complex geopolitical landscapes while striving to enhance its global standing. In an era marked by rapid geopolitical shifts, India's foreign policy has evolved to address emerging challenges and opportunities on the global stage.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Dr. Ravi Prakash Singh (2025) India's foreign policy in the twenty-first century must navigate a complex international landscape characterized by shifting geopolitics, the emergence of multipolarity, and regional instability. Rising globally, India must reconcile its strategic

autonomy with growing foreign ties. Among the main issues are border tensions with China, shifting relations with Pakistan, managing connections to longstanding friends such as the US and Russia, and navigating the changing geopolitical landscape amid the Ukraine crisis and IndoPacific rebalancing. Particularly in light of COVID-19, India also needs to address climate promises, global supply chain disruptions, and the demands of economic diplomacy. The rise of soft power and digital diplomacy via diaspora, culture, and developmental cooperation adds even more to its worldwide significance. The need to combine moral standards, security needs, and economic objectives still limits strategic coherence nonetheless.

Rehana Begum (2025) India's foreign policy is shaped by its historical legacy, strategic interests, and evolving global dynamics. As a rising global power, India seeks to balance its relationships with major powers, engage in multilateral forums, and promote regional stability in South Asia. India's foreign policy emphasizes economic diplomacy, defense partnerships, and active participation in global governance, aiming to enhance its influence and contribute to addressing global challenges such as climate change, terrorism, and regional conflicts. With a focus on national security and economic growth, India continues to pursue a pragmatic approach to maintain strategic autonomy while fostering mutually beneficial ties with nations across the world. In recent years, India's foreign policy has been characterized by a more assertive and pragmatic approach, reflecting its growing global stature and strategic priorities.

Aisha Javed (2024) The power transition in the world from unipolar to multipolar in the 21st Century has produced multiple reasons for India to develop its foreign policy. India's Cold War non-alignment foreign policy gave it many opportunities, which it achieved. Within the South Asia region, India is the sole country actively managing and pursuing diplomatic relations with all relevant parties. Consequently, other nations across the globe are closely observing India's involvement in exerting influence and control over the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war. The expansion of its foreign policy and economy in the present-day geopolitical landscape, notably under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has yielded substantial advancements. The Ukraine War has left India's foreign policy choices in the crosshairs of many opponents and allies. Despite the conflict, India is equipped with the policy of promoting diplomacy while it is maintaining to achieve its national interests at the maximum.

Takenori Horimoto (2017) A power transformation appears to be taking place in Asia, brought about by the rapid emergence of China and the relative decline of US influence. India has sought a way to cope with this new situation. India itself has been rising to prominence since the 1990s, particularly its nuclear weapon tests in 1998 onward. Since the start of the twenty-first century, India has been perceived as the next country to follow China in seeking a major power status. Although India has previously tended to conceal its power aspirations, in 2015 it declared its intention to be a leading power. This article elucidates this transformation through India's policy orientation on a local, regional, and global level and its key partnerships with Russia and Japan. India's metamorphosis holds great implications for the transformation of power in Asia.

Dr Kalpana Bhardwaj et al., (2014) Globalization has significantly transformed India's foreign policy and diplomatic engagements across various dimensions. This paper offers a comprehensive analysis of the impacts of globalization on India's diplomatic landscape up to

2013. Examining economic, political, cultural, and social facets, it delineates the nuanced changes brought about by globalization. Economically, India witnessed exponential growth in trade and GDP, soaring from \$18 billion to \$312 billion in exports and from \$326 billion to \$1.87 trillion in GDP between 1990 and 2013. However, challenges emerged, including vulnerability to global financial fluctuations and asymmetric trade agreements. Strategically, India diversified alliances, engaging in international forums, and forging strategic partnerships.

History Of Indian Foreign Policy

In the past, it is evident to note that India has made large impact while dealing with its own goals and ambition, to uphold the growth at the world stage. When we talk about the East Pakistan war 1971 leading to the formation of a new state, or the 1992 Economic reforms, the 1998 Nuclear test or the 2005 US nuclear deals, India has always believed in the effective geo political decisions. India has its own failures as well but it has only learnt from them to come out as a strong, decisive nation to protect its identity and position, maintaining its unique geo political understanding. India has shown steady upward trajectory when we check the growth of foreign policy and its implementation by India. In 2014, domestically as well, world's largest democracy gave single party majority after 30 years which provided much needed stability at the top to establish certainty for relevant issues. This led to the necessary changes at the domestic level which were pending for many decades, India's strong International positions helped it to put forward the changes at home in the right manner while giving strength to take multilateral trade deal decisions on its own will and strength rather forced by other country.



Foreign policy goals

The study has divided the phases in India's growth at world stage in six decades since its independence providing each of them with a thematic structure. Starting from the era of Non alignment in the Nehruvian era, to the practical approach of it post Sino - India war.

In the 80s, India grew up as regional player with the formation of Bangladesh and involvement within Sri Lanka against the militants. Politically and strategically as well, it became an ally of the USSR, when a strategic pact was built between China US relationship but which later on, at the starting of 91, with the dissolution of USSR and world becoming sort of Unipolar has led India to evaluate its own position, to become strategically autonomous. As the era of liberalisation ushered, it also formulated India's view on its diplomatic and strategic judgements, initiating with the look east to the realigned Israel policies.

Current Structure

One of the important factor behind this has been the stable Government and healthy domestic politics of India, which helped it to make the positive image around the globe. Indian economy has been an undeniably supreme factor in attracting the investments, but has been coupled up with the huge technological depth of the Indian market. India played key roles while dealing in the global negotiations of the climate change and renewable energy. It leads the International alliance on solar energy etc. India also maintained steady partnership on development aspect with western country's while taking care and close partnership with the neighbours around. India understood that to acquire the great power at the highest body, it first has to build the base at the local level and that is to create impact in Asia, among its neighbours. This made it easy for the country to rely over different approaches for various parties while dealing with them. The broken world order is a fascinating silver lining for a rising country to lead the world ahead in near future. India has been able to move forward with its positive outlook, continued yet ever-changing foreign policy in the last seven decades and this gives us idea of how closely knit this diplomacy has been. Even when the world was seeing the breaking of USSR and Yugoslavia, India became stronger with its national Unity. It has been able to improve its industrial capabilities, while also packing its defence sector with high end technologies and science.

Indian economy has been the biggest story in its domestic and international growth in the market. India has been able to comprehend the diplomatic prowess to its own benefit to increase the collaborations based on the wider approval of Education, technology and capacity building.



Global Position as the leading power

In the recent decade, we have seen the growth of China and its assertion around the world economically with high rate of engagements which also meant, on the other hand for US, to become quite uncertain in the aftermath of Iraq. Europe, too went inwards for its own concerns, Japan has maintained its slow pace strategy. This was the starting of multidimensional and

multi polar world where the equations at the local, regional level would play huge role, on how one turns out at the global level. This has also evolved India's position and foreign policy. India believes that a multipolar world requires a multi-polar Asia at its centre, considering the fact that more than half the world population resides within it. What it requires is to work with different actors at multiple issues for various projects. India aspire to be a leader in the multi polar world, acquiring the position of a global power with its unique features of a mixture of strengths, relationships and the stands on various world issues. The free trade agreements, came into picture post the wave of globalisation also posed new challenges against the country, and in the present time it is worth observing the stance of India during the negotiations of RCEP where it pulled out of the agreement, effectively diluting the whole pact. India already has 12 Free trade agreements with 15 RCEP partners, so the free will to not join came out of a sound appropriation of the profit loss analysis, which came from the sheer understanding of the domestic and international impact of the same. India has always been eager to talk to multiple players when it comes to development of the country and that has formed the base for the India's non-aligned position on bigger questions. India did took sides in the past, but in the recent years India has shown maturity to deal with these nations through various innovative strategies. India is being able to host the US President in the same year as of the Malappuram summit with Chinese head and took part with Putin on Bilateral relations at Vladivostok.

Economic changes within India

It is necessary to match the international aspirations to correct and reconstruct the domestic shortcomings and that definitely begins with the economic changes. India has successfully brought tax changes in the form of Goods and Services Tax making the 29 states of India in one large market, having similar tax rates. It was a historical step for a country with a population of more than a billion to simplify the tax process and unify the country as team India. This also showcases the Cooperative federalism of India where the state and the union takes the decision together. Though it is a work in progress, it is being able to make the tax slabs leaner and more efficient. The passage of this act took more than 30 years and this has brought India in top nations around the world having structured tax system.

Global economy and India

Through the Make in India scheme, India promoted the indigenous manufacturing of maximum products to decrease its dependence on the foreign products. It has remarkably improved the ranking of India on ease of doing business. The Government also opened up the Foreign direct investment to larger industries to give space to bigger companies to open their plants at home. As in China, India believes that to make the country powerful and take it out of the poverty it is necessary to India a manufacturing hub through various labour intensive reforms and easing the business process in the country. These points are important to mention in this analysis to understand the country's preparations for the global leader's fight. The domestic and International linkage could only be built when there is understanding of the issues at each level. India has been to make necessary and bold changes in the domestic laws and plan of schemes to accommodate and comfort each citizen of the country and to attract the investors from outside as well.

Climate Change and Global Health

Climate change and global health have increasingly become integral components of India's foreign policy as the country adapts to the challenges posed by a rapidly changing geopolitical landscape. Recognizing that environmental degradation and health crises are interconnected global issues, India has sought to position itself as a proactive player in international discussions and initiatives aimed at addressing these challenges. India has committed to ambitious targets under the Paris Agreement, aiming to reduce its carbon emissions and increase the share of renewable energy in its energy mix. The country's emphasis on sustainable development reflects its understanding that climate resilience is essential for national security and economic stability. As Prime Minister Narendra Modi stated at the 2021 COP26 summit, "India is committed to a sustainable future and will work towards achieving net-zero emissions by 2070".

This commitment not only underscores India's responsibility as a major emitter but also highlights its role in global climate governance. On the global health front, the COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the importance of health security as a critical aspect of foreign policy. India's response to the pandemic, particularly its role as a major vaccine producer and supplier through initiatives like the Vaccine Maitri program, has reinforced its position as a leader in global health diplomacy. By providing vaccines to numerous countries, India has demonstrated its commitment to global health equity and solidarity, which are essential for addressing health crises that transcend national borders. As noted by health expert Dr. Soumya Swaminathan, "India's ability to leverage its pharmaceutical capabilities for global health is a testament to its strategic foresight in foreign policy".

The Independence of India: New Beginning of Independent Foreign Policy

Having a long struggle India got its independence on 15 August, 1947. This was the touching moment to the whole country. On the greatest occasion of the freedom, Jawaharlal Nehru said, "At this solemn moment when the people of India, through sufferings and sacrifice, have secured freedom, ... I a member of the Constituent Assembly of India do dedicate myself in all humility to the service of India and her people to the end that this ancient land attain her rightful place in the world and make her full and military contribution to the promotion of world peace and welfare of mankind".⁴⁷ After independence the period was very decisive from the point of foreign policy. India emerged as a free nation for taking its rightful place in the comity of nations. The primary objective of Indian foreign policy was to achieve economic, political, social, scientific and technological development within a peaceful and democratic framework. For the achievement of these objectives there was a need to fashion a rightful foreign policy.

Economic factor

After independence India got a shattered economy. Due to the "Drain theory of the Britishers" the Indian economy was massively destroyed by them. The first and foremost requirement of that period was the economic progress of country. It remained the essential ingredient. It was believed by many Indians that despite the technological advances which were made during the British rule, their living standards had declined under colonial rule. It was convinced by them that their country was exploited by the British investors. There was a need for private investment. Therefore, from businessman to economic planners had broad consensus that this was the responsibility of Government and it should play an important role in the economic

affairs. Thus, economic development had become a categorical imperative need of domestic policy due to the staunch poverty. Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru had a special view in this matter, therefore he connected the economic policy and until India has properly evolved its economic policy, her foreign policy will be rather vague and inchoate. He further said emphasizing economic component in foreign policy, "it is well for us to say that we stand for peace and freedom and yet that does not convey much to anybody except a pious hope.... What then we stand for? Well, you have to develop this argument in the economic field. We have to develop economic scheme or policy that will govern foreign policy". Thus, for the fulfilment of the task of nation building, there was necessary to be a peaceful environment. In this aspect he said "without peace all our dreams are vanished and reduced to ashes".

CONCLUSIONS

This study dealt with the Indian foreign policy and how it has been influenced by the domestic political changes. I focused entirely on the Indian state to understand the growth in its international potential and a strong, stable power. The study revealed that how the domestic policies were managed to aid the diplomats assert their views outside and the reverse as well, when the strong decision making at the international forum indirectly helped the government domestically. The research found that the rapidly growing Indian economy has become the most powerful weapon in the hands of state now, as the western countries respect the market which India provides, thereby significantly decreasing their interference in internal matter. India's massive diaspora also played an important role in the outreach of Indian diplomacy during the past six years and this has been ably utilised by the Indian Prime Minister through his mass appeal and superior oratory skills. India also expanded its foreign relations with many countries and became part of new organisations, either as observant or a member. Thus, foreign policy is determined by the national interests. The personality and predilections of leaders of a nation make an effective contribution to this. It was no more accident that during his long innings as Prime Minister he was always his own Foreign Minister. Because he played such a profound and overriding role in formulating, administering and articulating India's foreign policy. No wonder then that he had laid down the basic tenets of Indian foreign policy even before the country was fully free.

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