

Changing dynamics of India's foreign policy: Analysing the shift in nature by observing the different phases of India's foreign policy

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I. Introduction:

International relations are driven by actors, factors, and dynamics. Ideologies serve as a nation's spotlight, shield or guidance while forming its foreign policy. The two most prevalent ideologies during 19th and 20th century have been Idealism and realism.

India has always pursued its international relations (IR) and foreign policy in a highly liberal and idealistic manner. The vedic virtues of "sarve bhawantu sukhinah," "sarve santu niramaya," (may all be happy and healthy) and "Vasudhaiva kutumbkam" (whole earth is but one family) served as an inspiration for Indian idealism. It held a belief in the prosperity and tranquility of all. Global politics have undergone significant shifts in the 30 years since India's significant shift in its foreign and economic policy. India has made certain adjustments to its foreign policy either on its own initiative or as a result of compulsion in order to safeguard its interests in a world that is changing. However, India's foreign policy still adheres to some fundamental principles, which are occasionally modified in order to serve the country's interests. In terms of personality, Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first prime minister, was regarded as the principal architect of Indian foreign policy in the early years of its independence, and Nehruvian policies continue. However, Indian foreign policy has been shaped by successive prime ministers, including those who led coalition governments. Some academics started talking about a "Modi Doctrine" and how Narendra Modi's foreign policy is "different" after he was elected to power in 2014, highlighting the role of a leader and political leadership. Mohan (2015) claims that Modi has "re-energized" India's foreign policy. In 2016, Pant (pp. 13–14) observes indications of a fresh dynamism and pragmatism in Modi's foreign policy. On another level, Hall (2015) finds that Modi's foreign policy goals are similar to those of Manmohan Singh and Atal Bihari Vajpayee, despite his newfound enthusiasm.

This paper briefly traces the shifts, phases and makes an attempt to predict the future of nature of India's foreign policy keeping the vital International relation theories in the context. The paper tries to substantiate that there has been a discernible shift in the way India frames and executes its foreign policies after the advent of NDA government, both ideologically, and empirically.¹

The paper also tries to find the answers to these questions:

- A) How has India's foreign relations changed particularly with regard to the US and China after 2014?
- B) What can we prognosticate about India's political ambitions and stance in the international world order based on the ideology it follows?

¹ Hypotheses of the research

Indian Foreign Policy:

Domestic and international factors shape India's or any nation's foreign policy. Domestically, India's goals and principles for its foreign policy have been heavily influenced by the country's history, culture, geography, and economy. The Cold War rivalry between NATO and the Warsaw Pact, the UN's founding, the arms race, particularly the nuclear arms race, anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism, and other factors all contribute to the international factor. Numerous experts have suggested the Three S's—Space for Strategic Autonomy, Stability—both within and outside the neighborhood, and Strength—Economic, Military, and Soft Power to Protect and Advance Indian Interests—as the most effective way to summarize the goals of Indian Foreign Policy.

After a thorough research by many scholars and experts it has been concluded that India's foreign policy can be divided into seven phases of evolutions briefly mentioned below:

1. *The Power of Ideas (1947-1962)*: As a steadfast idealist with a socialist and Gandhian outlook, he had a lasting impact on Indian foreign policy for many years to come. The national movement and the prevalent progressive philosophies of the time served as inspiration for the concepts themselves. At the time, the country's foreign policy was based on non-alignment. Through the Non-Alignment Movement (NAM), India rose to the top of the list of third-world nations. India strongly opposed apartheid and backed efforts to decolonize the country. We also emphasised the need for peacekeeping and disarmament.

2. *The Fractured Years (1962-1970)*: Mr. Nehru, our Prime Minister, was also killed in the Sino-Indian War. Although tough, Lal Bahadur Shastri's leadership was not as effective on a global scale as his predecessor's. This had an effect on Indian foreign policy. After Pakistan attacked us in 1965, we were forced to start a new war. In addition, because we questioned the US's role in Vietnam, the US imposed food sanctions on us. We also had some time to think about things, and we came to the conclusion that the universe was built on realism rather than idealism.

3. *The Idea of Power (1970-1989)*: In the political system of India, By 1971, Indira Gandhi had established her authority. Her reign was characterized by centralization, authoritarianism, and bravery in the face of difficulty. For the first time, Indian foreign policy acknowledged the significance of power. We went back to our Kautilyan roots. The 1971 Indo-Pak War, our first nuclear weapon test in 1974, leaving the Non-proliferation treaty, closeness to Soviet Union, erosion of Non-Alignment, happened during this phase.

4. *The Years of Reflection (1990-1998)*: Early in the 1990s, India's performance was not great. The current foreign exchange crisis was brought on by the poorly managed economy. Mutinies occurred at that period in the North East, Punjab, and Jammu and Kashmir, respectively. We made contact with the United States and stressed the necessity for tighter connections as the Soviet Union, our biggest "friend" on the international stage, quickly fell apart, leaving us "friendless." The strong success of the Indian economy, which masked internal political weakness, set in motion the next crucial phase of Foreign Policy.

5. *The Reality of Power (1998-2011)*: Regardless of the US's reaction to sanctions, it before long turned out to be certain that democratic India, with its populace and quickly extending economy, could be a partner from now on. This ignited the Talbott-Jaswant Singh discussions, which extraordinarily upgraded ties between the US and India. Now, the Indian economy was growing at a rate of about 8% per year. We witnessed the rise of the middle class and the IT revolution. India also increased its soft power due to its well-known democracy and robust economy. Strong ties between the United States and China were strengthened by a Look East Policy.

6. *Back to the Future (2011-2014)*: The NAM 2.0 paper was written by a group of thinkers and published in 2011. This made it clear that strategic autonomy was necessary for Indian foreign policy. Despite criticism that it overemphasized the now-defunct Non-Alignment concept, strategic autonomy has continued to play a significant role in directing India's foreign policy.

7. *Enlightened National Interest (2014)*: Let's analyse this phase in a more detailed manner particularly. Following the 2014 general elections, Mr. Narendra Modi, who is regarded as India's most powerful Prime Minister since Mrs. Gandhi, rose to fame. With this change in leadership came a shift in foreign policy that was in line with India's impact on the world order. The present foreign policy of India is based on Enlightened National Interest, which is effectively "National Interest Plus." It is based on Aristotle's idea of Enlightened Self Interest, which states that individuals who act in ways that enhance the interests of others (or the interests of the organisation or groups to which they belong) do so at the expense of their own interests in the long run. Enlightened national interest prioritises a shared future vision for everyone over narrow national interest. Not to forget that it adheres to the Vasudaiva Kutumbakam idea that is prevalent in India. A soft power and neighbourhood first approach is used to modify the Gujral Doctrine of the 1990s. The cautious approach employed during Non-Alignment has been replaced with a bold "multi-alignment" with important countries while yet preserving our strategic autonomy. At initially, there was a greater willingness to communicate with Pakistan, but the nation's attitude toward supporting terrorism has led to a standstill. "Though India is not a permanent member of the UN Security Council, all the permanent members look up to Modi for his opinion and try to get his consent

as far as possible. Modi's well thought out and assertive foreign policy has been well executed by our equally competent External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar. The duo is a deadly combination and they are bringing laurels for the country by their deft diplomatic and political moves."² In his book "Asian Drama," Gunnar Myrdal referred to India as a soft state, or a country that readily bends and sacrifices its interests. This image has certainly altered under the Modi Government.

Let's talk about the changes in India's policies and outlook towards the United States and China. Narendra Modi made a stand at Doklam in 2017, and after a 73-day stalemate, China was forced to change course. Again, following the Galwan Valley incident, in which twenty members of the Indian armed forces were murdered, China and India have been locked in a protracted standoff on the Ladakh frontier for more than two years. Since then, India has maintained its position. On the Ladakh border, the disengagement process has now begun. The US-led NATO is concerned about China's growing power on the world stage. Another thing that worries them is its growing closeness to Russia. India is their best hope, which is why the US, Australia, Japan, and India have formed the Quad alliance in an effort to stem the rise of China's power in the Indo-Pacific region. "Primarily to deal with the Chinese challenge, India is strongly promoting a Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) which also includes Japan, the USA, and Australia. Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi termed QUAD a 'huge security risk' which has the potential to 'stir confrontation among different groups ... to maintain the dominance and hegemonic system of the US' (Jiangtao, 2020)."

Moreover, Modi informed Washington that New Delhi is prepared to cooperate with the United States in a constructive manner. The visit was successful in turning around the deteriorating relationship by soothing Trump even as Modi engaged with the larger international community on Kashmir. Furthermore, even if they had different reactions to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the Biden administration made a wise decision to strengthen its alliance with India. A week after President Biden referred to India and the United States as "indispensable allies" on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of Indian independence, a question on the India-U.S. However, India places far greater value on its economic ties with the United States than it does with Russia. The commercial connection between the United States and India has to be expanded. This includes fresh initiatives to settle the numerous trade issues between the United States and India that are preventing bilateral trade from achieving its full potential. India's economic future is unquestionably more dependent on the United States and other democracies than it is on Russia.

India's realist foreign policy and India's strategy of Multi-alignment:

Realists place military might at the centre of their idea, whether it be used as a preventative measure to ensure survival or as an offensive one to increase power, or both. Most realists agree that power is vital, but hard power is ultimately the most significant form of power. India has become a regional hegemon in South Asia thanks to its military might, and it plays an essential role in the multipolar world of today. Made considerable investments in border infrastructure and security because to the unpredictable and transitory nature of its borders with China and Pakistan. Additionally, it has signed bilateral defence agreements with a number of countries, significant ones being those with the United States of America (USA), Russia, Israel, and France; the recent delivery of French Rafale jets is evidence of this strategic alliance.

India's realist pragmatism in using the multilateral and regional forums to advocate for common standards is demonstrated by the Coalition on Disaster Resilient Infrastructure, International Solar Alliance, QUAD, multilateral and plurilateral engagements in disaster diplomacy, vaccine development, and medical aid while supporting the efforts of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) to coerce Pakistan on regulating terrorist activities. Therefore, India's true problem is creating the necessary capabilities in the political, economic, and military realms, which India wants to address through its multi-alignment policy. To represent India as an emergent world power through rhetoric, diplomacy, market power, and strategic relationships, India's multi-vector foreign policy has been transformed by the development of regional and global events in the twenty-first century.

II. Conclusion:

Under the leadership of Dr. Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, an experienced diplomat appointed as India's first External Affairs Minister based solely on merit defends pragmatic realism strategies to wield the balance of power while accepting tactical concessions for long-term advantage. Along with other India stalwarts like Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, and National Security Advisor Ajit Doval, this helped India change its military posture and openly support USA-led policies in the Indo-Pacific in order to better fit into the region's new, realistic structure as promoted by Kenneth Waltz. The cornerstone of our tried-and-true foreign

² <https://www.dailypioneer.com/2022/state-editions/paradigm-shift-in-india-s-foreign-policy-paradigm-shift-in-india-s-foreign-policy.html>

policy, the current government is carefully handling the situation without endorsing any particular group. The change is that India's leadership is now equipped to take advantage of the current situation since it has become stronger and more assertive. The major objective of future Indian foreign policy should be to maintain equilibrium in ties between the US and China. A linked, integrated South Asia is one of the main objectives of foreign policy. If Pakistan is not amenable to the same, then the remaining countries must be the major emphasis. The BBIN (Bangladesh Bhutan India Nepal) corridor is a start in this direction. The linkages with South East Asian nations made possible by the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transport Corridor and the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway can help the north-eastern region of India prosper. "Only a creative foreign policy can currently achieve the noble goal of stability while fostering inclusive growth. India must also make sure that it participates in the "rule-making" rather than the "rule-following" aspects of the international order. To achieve this goal, one must be a permanent member of the UN and a member of all significant international organisations."³

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³ <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00358533.2022.2082737>