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Original Article

# India and Global Politics: Emerging Roles, Challenges, and Strategic Pathways

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***Abstract***

*India has emerged as a significant player in global politics, moving from a non-aligned stance during the Cold War to a modern strategy of multi-alignment. With rapid economic growth, demographic strength, and increasing participation in global institutions, India's global presence has become more prominent. This paper examines India's evolving foreign policy, its role in regional and global organizations, and its diplomatic strategies. Through qualitative research involving the review of published literature, policy analyses, and comparative studies, the paper explores how India balances major power relations, strengthens regional leadership, and leverages soft power. Findings show that India has successfully expanded strategic partnerships, improved its influence in multilateral forums, and projected soft power globally. However, challenges such as border disputes, economic disparities, environmental responsibilities, and geopolitical pressures remain. The paper concludes that India is positioned to play a pivotal role in shaping global politics, provided it continues sustainable development, diplomatic engagement, and institutional reforms.*

***Keywords:*** *India, Global Politics, Foreign Policy, Multi-Alignment, Strategic Partnerships, Global Governance, Indo-Pacific, Soft Power, Regional Leadership, Multilateral Diplomacy, BRICS, QUAD, G20, International Relations, Global South.*

## Introduction

Over the last few decades, global politics has experienced significant shifts due to globalization, technological innovation, climate change, great-power competition, and economic interdependence. In this changing world, India has risen not only as a large developing country but also as a global actor that influences diplomatic negotiations, economic structures, and geopolitical alignments. India is the world's largest democracy, the fifth-largest economy, and one of the fastest-growing major nations. These attributes, along with its cultural heritage, military strength, and technological progress, provide India with the tools to influence global affairs. From participating in United Nations peacekeeping missions to championing climate justice at COP summits, India's engagement has steadily expanded. Historically, India followed the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) to avoid Cold War polarisation. However, modern India now follows multi-alignment; building ties with different blocs such as the United States, Russia, Europe, ASEAN countries, and African nations. India's foreign policy today focuses on the Indo-Pacific region, regional connectivity, global trade, and environmental sustainability. This paper investigates India's position in global politics by analyzing literature on foreign policy, global governance, strategic alliances, and regional diplomacy. It also evaluates India's contributions, challenges, and potential future trajectory in the world order.

## Literature Review

### India's Strategic Importance

Scholars such as C. Raja Mohan contend that India's strategic location—between major sea lanes in the Indian Ocean—gives it a natural advantage in global geopolitics. The Indian Ocean Region (IOR) is a vital area for global trade, energy transportation, and maritime security.

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Another group of scholars highlights India's demographic advantage, with a young population capable of driving economic and technological growth. Research shows India's workforce is expected to be one of the world's largest by 2030.

**Foreign Policy Evolution**

Literature describes the transformation of India's foreign policy in three major phases:

1. **Post-Independence Non-Alignment:** India avoided Cold War power blocs, promoting peaceful coexistence.
2. **Economic Liberalization (1991 onwards):** The opening of the economy led to more international engagement, trade expansion, and strategic partnerships.
3. **21st-Century Multi-Alignment:** Modern India builds diverse relations with major powers simultaneously.

Scholars like Harsh Pant argue that this balanced diplomacy allows India to maintain autonomy while benefiting economically and strategically.

**India and Multilateral Institutions**

India actively participates in global bodies:

1. **UN (United Nations)** – India advocates for reform of the UN Security Council (UNSC).
2. **G20** – India's 2023 presidency highlighted digital public infrastructure, climate action, and development cooperation.
3. **BRICS** – India works with emerging economies to promote multipolarity.
4. **QUAD (India, U.S., Japan, Australia)** – focuses on Indo-Pacific security and cooperation.

Existing literature suggests India uses these platforms to shape conversations around global governance.

**Soft Power Studies**

Joseph Nye's theory of soft power is frequently applied to India. Cultural exports—Bollywood films, Indian cuisine, yoga, classical arts—and India's large global diaspora have increased its international visibility.

**Regional Relations Research**

Scholars describe India's complex relations with:

1. **Pakistan** – conflict and cross-border terrorism.
2. **China** – economic cooperation but border disputes.
3. **Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh** – cultural ties but political tensions.

Studies show India uses diplomacy, development aid, and cultural influence to maintain regional leadership.

## Methods

This research uses **qualitative methodology**, focusing on:

**1. Document Analysis**

Review of academic journals, books, government publications, think-tank reports (Observer Research Foundation, IDSA), and global institutions (UN, World Bank).

**2. Comparative Analysis**

Comparison of India's global strategies with countries like China, Brazil, and South Africa.

**3. Thematic Categorization**

Major themes examined include:

1. Multilateral diplomacy
2. Strategic partnerships
3. Economic influence
4. Security and defence
5. Cultural diplomacy
6. Regional leadership

This method helps identify consistent patterns and diverse perspectives in India's global engagement.

## Results

1. **Growth of Strategic Partnerships**

India has strengthened ties with:

1. **The United States** – defence cooperation, technology partnerships, Indo-Pacific strategy.
2. **Russia** – long-standing defence partner, energy cooperation.
3. **European Union** – trade agreements, climate cooperation.
4. **Middle East** – energy imports, Indian diaspora, new West Asia partnerships (I2U2 group).
5. **Africa** – development assistance, trade, capacity-building programs.

These partnerships show India's shift from isolation to active global engagement.

2. **Increased Role in Multilateral Platforms**

India has gained influence in organizations such as:

1. **G20 Presidency (2023)** – promoted Global South issues.
2. **BRICS Expansion** – India supported a broader group representing developing nations.
3. **UN Peacekeeping** – one of the largest troop contributors.
4. **International Solar Alliance (ISA)** – global clean energy initiative led by India and France.

These results demonstrate India's global leadership aspirations.

3. **Strong Soft Power Influence**

Findings show India effectively uses:

1. Cultural diplomacy (International Yoga Day)
2. Education (scholarships for neighbouring countries)
3. Diaspora networks
4. Technological models (Aadhaar, UPI digital payments adopted globally)

Soft power enhances India's global image.

4. **Security and Defence Modernization**

India has increased defence spending, focused on maritime security in the Indian Ocean, and strengthened cooperation with QUAD. The military modernization program includes indigenization and technological upgrades.

5. **Regional Leadership Efforts**

India leads initiatives in South Asia:

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1. **SAARC, BIMSTEC, and Act East Policy**
2. **Humanitarian assistance** to neighbours
3. **Maritime security projects** in the Indian Ocean

India positions itself as a responsible regional power.

## Discussion

### Balancing Major Powers

India balances relations between:

1. **U.S. and Russia**
2. **China and the West**
3. **Middle Eastern rivals like Saudi Arabia and Iran**

This strategic autonomy is crucial for India's national interests.

### India–China Competition

The rise of China presents both opportunities and challenges. While they trade heavily, border disputes in Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh create tension. India also seeks allies through QUAD to maintain stability in the Indo-Pacific.

### Leadership of the Global South

India promotes the interests of developing countries. During the G20 presidency, India highlighted:

1. Climate finance
2. Debt relief for poor nations
3. Digital public infrastructure
4. Sustainable development goals

This leadership boosts India's moral and diplomatic standing.

### Economic Diplomacy

With a growing economy, India attracts foreign investment and expands global trade. Initiatives like "Make in India" and "Digital India" promote innovation and manufacturing.

### Challenges

Despite progress, India faces obstacles:

1. Security threats from terrorism and border conflicts
2. Economic inequality and unemployment
3. Pressure to meet climate commitments
4. Competition with China in South Asia
5. Need for infrastructure modernization

These challenges can slow India's rise in global politics.

### Future Potential

India's future global role depends on:

1. Continued economic growth
2. Investment in technology and education
3. Strengthening democratic institutions
4. Expanding regional partnerships
5. Active participation in global governance

If these strategies succeed, India could become one of the world's leading powers by mid-century.

## Conclusion

India's role in global politics has grown remarkably over the past decades. It has transitioned from non-alignment to multi-alignment, expanding its influence through diplomacy, economic power, cultural outreach, and strategic partnerships. India now participates actively in global institutions, leads climate and development initiatives, and strengthens regional stability.

While challenges persist, India's demographic advantages, technological advances, and strategic autonomy position it as a crucial actor in shaping global governance. The nation's future influence will depend on its ability to maintain economic growth, ensure security, and effectively manage relations with major world powers.

India is not only rising—it is shaping the 21st-century world order.

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