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INDIAN FOREIGN POLICY: EMERGING TRENDS

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Abstract

India's foreign policy has undergone significant changes in the last two decades as the global political and economic environment has shifted. Traditionally guided by non-alignment and peaceful cooperation, India now follows a more confident and flexible approach known as **multi-alignment**. This means India works with many major powers at the same time such as the United States, Russia, Japan, Australia, and European countries while protecting its own strategic autonomy. A key trend is India's increasing focus on the **Indo-Pacific region**, where it aims to ensure maritime security, free trade routes, and stability. India's active participation in the **Quad**, the **Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI)**, and **Malabar naval exercises** reflect this priority.

Another emerging trend is India's renewed emphasis on its neighbourhood through the **Neighbourhood First Policy**, **SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region)**, the **India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway**, and the **Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project**. These initiatives promote connectivity, development, and regional trust.

India's global presence is also rising through its leadership in organisations like the **G20**, **BRICS**, **SCO**, and the **United Nations**. India is influencing global discussions on climate change, renewable energy (especially via the **International Solar Alliance**), digital governance, and health security.

Key Words: Multi- Alignment, Quad, Malabar naval exercises and Brics.

INTRODUCTION

Foreign policy is the strategy a country uses to deal with other nations to protect its national interests security, economy, and global standing. India's foreign policy has evolved from idealistic principles of non-alignment to a more practical, multi-layered, and interest-driven approach. Global changes such as technological competition, China's rise, maritime challenges, climate issues, and economic interdependence have pushed India to rethink and reshape its external strategies. Today, India aims to maintain strategic autonomy while actively engaging with global and regional partners. This shift shows India's desire to become a major global voice and a responsible power.

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India's Shift Towards Multi-Alignment:

India's foreign policy has entered a period of major transformation as the world experiences rapid political, economic, and technological changes. One of the most important features of this change is India's move towards *multi-alignment*. Instead of aligning with just one major power, India is now building strong and independent relationships with several global players at the same time. India's partnership with the United States has grown rapidly in areas like defence, space, cyber security, and emerging technologies. Agreements such as LEMOA, COMCASA, and BECA have made defence cooperation deeper and more structured. At the same time, India continues its long-standing relationship with Russia through projects like the BrahMos missile, the Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant, and energy cooperation. India is also expanding economic and



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technological ties with Europe, Japan, and Australia, especially through initiatives like the India–EU Connectivity Partnership, the iCET programme with the US, and the high-speed rail project with Japan.

Strengthening Ties with the Neighbourhood:

India's foreign policy is equally focused on its immediate neighbourhood. Through the "Neighbourhood First" policy, India aims to strengthen political trust, boost cross-border connectivity, and support economic development in South Asia. Large infrastructure projects such as the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project and the India–Myanmar–Thailand Trilateral Highway are creating new routes for trade and movement. India is also helping neighbouring countries through lines of credit, digital cooperation, humanitarian assistance, and projects like the South Asia Satellite. These efforts aim to build stability in the region and counter the growing influence of external powers.

Growing Focus on the Indo-Pacific Region:

Another strong trend is India's increasing attention to the Indo-Pacific region. This region has become important for global trade, maritime security, and strategic competition. India's Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI), participation in the Quad, and the annual Malabar naval exercises show its commitment to maintaining a free, open, and secure Indo-Pacific. India is also improving maritime cooperation through the Information Fusion Centre – Indian Ocean Region, which helps monitor shipping and strengthen security.

Rise of Economic Diplomacy and Global Trade Links:

Economic diplomacy has become a powerful tool in India's foreign policy. The signing of major trade agreements such as the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) with the UAE and the Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA) with Australia reflects India's new economic confidence. India is also working on FTAs with the UK, EU, and Canada. Connectivity corridors such as the International North–South Transport Corridor (INSTC), the development of Chabahar Port in Iran, and the India–Middle East–Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) are expected to boost trade, energy cooperation, and economic integration with Central Asia, the Middle East, Europe, and beyond.

Expanding Role in Global and Multilateral Platforms:

India's role in global organisations has also expanded. Through the G20 presidency, India introduced the Global Biofuel Alliance and highlighted inclusive digital governance. As a member of BRICS, SCO, and the UN, India is contributing to global conversations on climate change, clean energy, global health, international security, and reforming multilateral institutions. India's leadership in the International Solar Alliance shows its commitment to promoting renewable energy and addressing climate challenges on a global scale.

Enhancing Soft Power and Cultural Diplomacy:

Alongside these strategic and economic initiatives, India continues to use its soft power effectively. Yoga, Ayurveda, Indian cinema, cultural festivals, and the global Indian diaspora have strengthened India's international image. The celebration of International Yoga Day in more than 175 countries demonstrates the global reach of India's cultural influence.

CONCLUSION

India's foreign policy is becoming more dynamic, multidimensional, and globally active. Through multi-alignment, regional leadership, Indo-Pacific strategies, economic diplomacy, and strong soft power, India aims to secure its national interests and contribute positively to world affairs. The emerging trends show India's transition from a regional player to a major global power.



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