

## **India's Foreign Policy in the 21st Century: Continuity and Change**

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### **ABSTRACT**

India's foreign policy in the 21st century navigates a nuanced path, blending continuity with adaptation to evolving global dynamics. Rooted in the principles of non-alignment and sovereignty laid down by Jawaharlal Nehru, India maintains strategic autonomy while engaging globally. The legacy of non-alignment shapes its diplomatic stance, emphasizing independence and principled multilateralism. Globalization has spurred India to adopt a proactive stance, exemplified by initiatives like the "Act East" policy, focusing on Southeast and East Asia for economic cooperation and regional stability. Addressing security challenges such as terrorism and cybersecurity, India enhances global cooperation, bolstering regional security frameworks. Economically, liberalization drives India's integration, attracting foreign investment, particularly in IT and renewable energy. Strategically, India diversifies partnerships across Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East, while deepening ties with major powers like the US, Russia, and Japan. Multilaterally, active participation in forums like the G20 underscores India's advocacy for global governance reforms, reflecting its ambition for a UN Security Council permanent seat. In conclusion, India's foreign policy in the 21st century evolves strategically, anchored in historical principles yet responsive to contemporary imperatives, asserting its pivotal role in a swiftly evolving global landscape.

***Keywords: India, Foreign Policy, Non-Alignment, Globalization, Strategic Partnerships, Multilateralism.***

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## 1. Introduction

India's foreign policy in the 21st century embodies a dynamic interplay of continuity with historical traditions and adaptation to emerging global realities. Shaped by its legacy of non-alignment and commitment to sovereignty, India has navigated a complex international landscape characterized by geopolitical shifts, economic integration, and strategic partnerships. Since gaining independence in 1947, India's foreign policy has been guided by principles of non-alignment, which were articulated by its first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru. Non-alignment sought to maintain strategic autonomy and independence in the Cold War era, avoiding alignment with any major power blocs. This foundational principle continues to influence India's diplomatic engagements, emphasizing multilateralism and a principled approach to global affairs. However, the onset of the 21st century has witnessed significant transformations in India's approach to foreign policy. Globalization has necessitated a more proactive stance, prompting India to expand its diplomatic footprint and economic engagements worldwide. This shift is evident in initiatives like the "Act East" policy, which underscores India's outreach to Southeast Asia and East Asia, aiming at enhancing economic ties and strategic cooperation.

Moreover, India's foreign policy has evolved in response to security challenges, including terrorism and cybersecurity threats. Enhanced cooperation with global partners on counter-terrorism measures and maritime security reflects India's proactive approach to safeguarding its national interests while contributing to regional and global stability. Economically, India has embraced globalization by promoting trade liberalization and attracting foreign investment. The country's role in forums like the G20 reflects its growing influence in shaping global economic policies. Additionally, India has leveraged its demographic dividend and technological prowess to emerge as a significant player in sectors such as information technology, pharmaceuticals, and renewable energy. Strategically, India has diversified its partnerships beyond traditional allies, forging closer ties with countries in Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East. Simultaneously, strategic partnerships with major powers like the United States, Russia, and Japan have deepened, reflecting India's efforts to balance its regional and global interests. Furthermore, India's foreign policy in the 21st century is characterized by a nuanced approach to multilateralism. The country actively participates in international organizations and initiatives, advocating for reforms to reflect contemporary global realities. India's aspirations for a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council exemplify its quest for a more inclusive and representative global governance architecture [1-2].

## 2. Research Background

Nolte, D. (2010) article, the concept of regional power in International Relations (IR) is analyzed amidst varying definitions. It explores theoretical perspectives on power hierarchies and regional power, distinguishing it from 'middle powers'. The article proposes an analytical framework to differentiate and compare regional powers, discussing their impact on global politics and the significance of regional governance structures. Larson, D. W., & Shevchenko, A. (2010) argue that

the United States requires support for global governance, especially from rising powers like China and Russia. Cooperation is complex due to differing values, but understanding status concerns could foster collaboration. Cooper, A. F. (2010) examines the G20's emergence post-2008 recession, highlighting its dual role as a crisis manager and global steering committee, reflecting shifts in international dynamics. Li, X., & Worm, V. (2011) explore China's peaceful rise strategy, emphasizing soft power as integral to its global influence, with a focus on cultural, economic, and diplomatic channels. Cantir, C., & Kaarbo, J. (2012) challenge role theory's assumptions in Foreign Policy Analysis, highlighting how contested roles among elites and masses shape policy decisions. Cooper, A. F. (2013) discusses the evolving role of middle powers in a multipolar world, focusing on their influence within the G20. Pan, C. (2014) critiques the geopolitical concept of the 'Indo-Pacific', suggesting it exacerbates regional rivalries. Blanchard, J. M. F. (2015) examines Chinese leadership's impact on foreign policy, particularly under Xi Jinping. Callahan, W. A. (2016) analyzes Xi Jinping's peripheral diplomacy, emphasizing China's strategy to reshape regional and global governance. Naik, G. M., & Ahmad, P. (2017) assess the China-Pakistan relationship and its implications for India's regional strategy in South Asia. YADAV, S. K (2021). India is rising as a global power center in the multi-polar world. The emerging multipolar world has an opportunity as well as challenges to India's foreign policy. The Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has emphasized on 'India first' approach to ensure domestic economic progress, security, and putting India's interest at the different international forums. Modi government has tried to engage with all major powers, promoting and reintegrating India with the global economy, promoting greater cooperation with South Asian countries, the Middle East, Central Asia.

### **3. Insights India's Foreign Policy**

**Historical Continuity of Non-Alignment:** India's foreign policy has maintained continuity with its non-aligned stance since independence, emphasizing strategic autonomy and independence in global affairs [4].

**Adaptation to Globalization:** The 21st century has seen India adapt to globalization through initiatives like the "Act East" policy, expanding economic ties and strategic partnerships across Asia-Pacific and beyond [5].

**Security Challenges and Strategic Responses:** India's foreign policy has evolved to address contemporary security threats, including terrorism and cybersecurity, through enhanced international cooperation and regional security initiatives [6].

**Economic Diplomacy and Global Engagement:** India's economic diplomacy focuses on trade liberalization, attracting foreign investment, and leveraging technological advancements to enhance its global economic footprint.

**Diversified Strategic Partnerships:** India has diversified its strategic partnerships beyond traditional allies, fostering relations with countries in Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East, while deepening ties with major global powers [7-8].

**Multilateral Engagement and Global Governance:** India actively engages in multilateral forums like the G20 and advocates for reforms in global governance institutions, aiming for a more inclusive and representative international order.

#### **4. Conclusion**

India's foreign policy in the 21st century strikes a delicate balance between tradition and adaptation, anchored in the foundational principles of non-alignment and sovereignty established by its early leaders. While remaining committed to autonomy and principled multilateralism, India has adeptly responded to the imperatives of globalization by expanding its economic footprint and strategic engagements across diverse regions. Strengthened cooperation on security fronts reflects India's proactive stance in ensuring regional stability amid evolving threats, while economic liberalization has positioned India as a magnet for foreign investment and a hub of innovation. Strategically, India has broadened its alliances beyond traditional partnerships, forging ties with emerging economies and major global powers, thereby enhancing its influence in international forums such as the G20. Through these efforts, India not only safeguards its national interests but also endeavors to reshape global governance frameworks to better align with contemporary realities. In India's foreign policy evolution signifies its aspiration for leadership in a multipolar world, leveraging historical principles to navigate the complexities of global engagement with foresight and strategic acumen.

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