

Foreign Policy of India: Challenges and Opportunities During Global War Crises

Dr. Divakara K

Associate Professor
Political science, GFGC, Thyamagondlu

Abstract:

India is a member of several intergovernmental organisations, such as the United Nations, the Asian Development Bank, BRICS, and the G-20, which is widely considered the main economic locus of emerging and developed nations. India exerts a salient influence as the founding member of the Non-Aligned Movement. India has also played an important and influential role in other international organisations, such as the East Asia Summit, World Trade Organization, International Monetary Fund, G8+5 and IBSA Dialogue Forum. India is also a member of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. As a former British colony, India is a member of the Commonwealth of Nations and continues to maintain relationships with other Commonwealth countries. According to the MEA, the main purposes of Indian diplomacy include protecting India's national interests, promoting friendly relations with other states, and providing consular services to "foreigners and Indian nationals abroad.

Key Words: The United Nations 1948, Ministry of External Affairs, Cold War politics, United Kingdom in 1947, The Arab League and Iran, Jinping and Narendra Modi, The BRICS summit, Security Agreement COMCASA, ASEAN India Bazaar, The idea of 'a civilisational state.

INTRODUCTION:

In recent decades, India has pursued an expansive foreign policy, including the neighborhood-first policy embodied by SAARC as well as the Look East policy to forge more extensive economic and strategic relationships with East and Southeast Asian countries. It has also maintained a policy of strategic ambiguity, which involves its "no first use" nuclear policy and its neutral stance on the Russo Ukrainian War. India is a member of several intergovernmental organisations, such as the United Nations, the Asian Development Bank, BRICS, and the G-20, which is widely considered the main economic locus of emerging and developed nations. India exerts a salient influence as the founding member of the Non Aligned Movement. India has also played an important and influential role in other international organisations, such as the East Asia Summit, World Trade Organization, International Monetary Fund IMF, G8+5 and IBSA Dialogue Forum. India is also a member of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. As a former British colony, India is a member of the Commonwealth of Nations and continues to maintain relationships with other Commonwealth countries.

❖ **Jawaharlal Nehru, the, addressing the United Nations 1948 :** India's second prime minister, Lal Bahadur Shastri 1964-66, expanded the Prime Minister's Office sometimes called the Prime Minister's Secretariat and enlarged its powers. By the 1970s, the Office of the Prime Minister had become the de facto coordinator and supra-ministry of the Indian government. The enhanced role of the office strengthened the prime minister's control over foreign policymaking at the expense of the Ministry of External Affairs. Advisers in the office provided channels of information and policy recommendations in addition to those offered by the Ministry of External Affairs. A subordinate part of the office the Research and Analysis Wing RAW functioned in ways that significantly expanded the information available to the prime minister and his advisers. The RAW gathered intelligence, provided intelligence analysis to the Office of the Prime Minister, and conducted covert operations abroad.

India's international influence varied over the years after independence. Indian prestige and moral authority were high in the 1950s and facilitated the acquisition of developmental assistance from both East and West. Although the prestige stemmed from India's nonaligned stance, and in particular the position it placed Indian diplomats, like Menon, to mediate or conciliate in others' disputes, the nation was unable to prevent Cold War politics from becoming intertwined with interstate relations in South Asia. On the intensely debated Kashmir issue with Pakistan, India lost credibility by rejecting United Nations' calls for a plebiscite in the disputed area. Even before independence, the Indian colonial government maintained semi-autonomous diplomatic relations. It had colonies such as the Aden Settlement, that sent and received full missions. India was a founder member of both the League of Nations and the United Nations. After India gained independence from the United Kingdom in 1947, it soon joined the Commonwealth of Nations and strongly supported independence movements in other colonies, like the Indonesian National Revolution. The partition and various territorial disputes, particularly that over Kashmir, would strain its relations with Pakistan for years to come. During the Cold War, India adopted a foreign policy of not aligning itself with any major power bloc. However, India developed close ties with the Soviet Union and received extensive military support from it.

➤ **Post-Cold War :** The end of the Cold War significantly affected India's foreign policy, as it did for much of the world. The country now seeks to strengthen its diplomatic and economic ties with the United States, the European Union trading bloc, Japan, Israel, Mexico, and Brazil. India has also forged close ties with the member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the African Union, the Arab League and Iran. Though India continues to have a military relationship with Russia, Israel has emerged as India's second-largest military partner while India has built a strong strategic partnership with the United States. The foreign policy of Narendra Modi indicated a shift towards focusing on the Asian region and, more broadly, trade deals.

❖ **Role of the Prime Minister Making in Indian foreign Policy :** Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first Prime Minister, promoted a strong personal role for the Prime Minister. Nehru served concurrently as Prime Minister and Minister of External Affairs; he made all major foreign policy decisions himself after consulting with his advisers and then entrusted the conduct of international affairs to senior members of the Indian Foreign Service. He was the main founding father of the Panchsheel or the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence. His successors continued to exercise considerable control over India's international dealings, although they appointed separate ministers of external affairs.

❖ **With Western countries :** Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, India has forged a closer partnership with Western powers. In the 1990s, India's economic problems and the demise of the bipolar world political system forced India to reassess its foreign policy and adjust its foreign relations. Previous policies proved inadequate to cope with the serious domestic and international problems facing India. The end of the Cold War gutted the core meaning of nonalignment and left Indian foreign policy without significant direction. The hard, pragmatic considerations of the early 1990s were still viewed within the nonaligned framework of the past, but the disintegration of the Soviet Union removed much of India's international leverage, for which relations with Russia and the other post-Soviet states could not compensate. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, India improved its relations with the United States, Canada, France, Japan, and Germany. In 1992, India established formal diplomatic relations with Israel and this relationship grew during the tenures of the National Democratic Alliance NDA government and the subsequent United Progressive Alliance UPA governments. In the mid-1990s, India attracted the world's attention to Pakistan-backed terrorism in Kashmir. The Kargil War resulted in a major diplomatic victory for India. The United States and European Union recognised the fact that the Pakistani military had illegally infiltrated Indian territory and pressured Pakistan to withdraw from Kargil. Several anti-India militant groups based in Pakistan were labelled as terrorist groups by the United States and European Union. In 1998, India tested nuclear weapons for the second time see Pokhran-II which resulted in several US, Japanese and European sanctions on India. India's then defence minister, George Fernandes, said that India's nuclear programme was necessary as it provided a deterrence to potential Chinese nuclear threat. Most of the sanctions imposed on India were removed by 2001. The BRICS summit will bring Xi Jinping and Narendra Modi together in person. Do you expect any breakthroughs in the difficult relationship between China and India Panda: The BRICS summit provides a rare opportunity for direct dialogue between Chinese leader Xi Jinping and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi at a time when mutual distrust is palpable. The two leaders could address their essential concerns over the prolonged standoff at their border and trade imbalances in a multilateral setting, where both leaders can explore cooperative avenues under the BRICS framework. However, the meeting, if it happens, is unlikely to produce any immediate breakthroughs in their strained relationship. Although there has been some military disengagement along the disputed border between India and China following successful diplomatic and military negotiations, the lack of high-level interaction at the leadership level and India's continued stance that the border needs to be addressed before moving forward with the bilateral relationship, makes it unlikely that the summit will produce any major breakthroughs. Nevertheless, any diplomatic progress, even incremental, could lay the groundwork for reducing regional friction and enhancing cooperation in trade, technology and infrastructure development within BRICS. In keeping with recent trends, India's China stance may soften temporarily due to such a type of leadership meeting, though not permanently as the issues between the two sides are complex and long drawn.

➤ **Conflict Management :** ISDP's approach to conflict management and mediation is based on deep understanding of both the theoretical development but more importantly its practical application. In so doing, it aims at bridging the gap between academia and practitioners. ISDP has always paid particular attention to issues concerning conflict management

and conflict resolution in its areas of focus. From territorial disputes between states to intra-state conflicts involving a multitude of actors, the need to find and promote innovative ways to mitigate conflict and promote peace remains as relevant as ever.

❖ **From the Russian perspective** : the meeting is fundamentally about strategic reassurance and survival. Since the Ukraine war transformed Russia's relationship with the West into a long-term confrontation, China has become Moscow's most critical geopolitical and economic partner. Putin needs continued Chinese purchases of energy, technological cooperation, diplomatic cover at international forums, and broader political legitimacy. More importantly, the Kremlin wants proof that Beijing will not quietly drift toward accommodation with Washington at Russia's expense. For China, however, the calculation is broader and more sophisticated. Beijing sees Russia as both a strategic asset and a geopolitical buffer against Western pressure. A weakened but stable Russia serves China's interests because it distracts the United States and NATO, fragments Western strategic focus, and accelerates the emergence of a more multipolar order. At the same time, China is careful not to become trapped inside Russia's confrontations. Beijing's approach is transactional. Xi wants to preserve the partnership without inheriting Russia's isolation. That is why China continues to balance its anti-Western rhetoric with economic pragmatism and selective engagement with Europe and the United States. Yet this partnership still contains hidden anxieties. Russia worries privately about long-term Chinese influence in Siberia, Central Asia, and the Arctic. China, meanwhile, remains cautious about being dragged into Russia's military adventurism or economic instability. These tensions create openings for Western diplomacy. The West should therefore avoid policies that mechanically push Moscow and Beijing closer together. Strategic differentiation matters. Europe, in particular, may eventually need a more nuanced Russia policy once the Ukraine war stabilizes, while simultaneously maintaining deterrence toward China in the Indo-Pacific. The key objective should not necessarily be to "break" the partnership immediately, but to prevent it from evolving into a formalized anti-Western strategic alliance with deep military integration.

➤ **The idea of 'a civilisational state** : Two key interpretations of Indian civilisation stand out. The first presents India as a bridge between East and West, linking major powers and regions – a role similarly claimed by Russia, Türkiye and aspiring middle powers such as Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan. The second, more dominant perspective is shaped by Hindutva, or Hindu nationalist thought, has long influenced how countries such as India and Russia define and project their identities on the global stage. Both draw on deep historical narratives to present themselves not merely as nation states, but as civilisations with distinct values and global responsibilities. Yet, while they share this underlying outlook, the ways in which they express and apply it differ significantly. In India's case, the civilisational narrative has gained prominence under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, becoming central to the country's self-definition. In May 2022, Foreign Minister Jaishankar noted that Modi's approach emphasizes not only security and development but also India's Modi at the bilateral meeting with President of Russia. when Jaishankar pointed to the growing use of the historical name Bharat as a sign of India asserting itself as a civilisational state.

which underpins the current government's ideological orientation. This vision calls for India to be guided by Hindu values in both identity and governance. As one of the world's great civilisations, India aspires not only to rise in power but to lead globally, drawing strength from its deep cultural and spiritual heritage. Russia similarly defines itself as a civilisational state with a distinct global role. Like

India, it draws upon a sense of historical depth and cultural continuity. Central to this identity is the ideology of Russkiy Mir Russian World, which has become foundational to the Kremlin's domestic and foreign policy since the early 2000s. This vision presents Russia as the guardian of Russian culture, language, and values whilst positioning itself as the defender of Christian civilisation against what it regards as the moral decline of the West. To institutionalise and promote this worldview, the Russian government established the Russkiy Mir Foundation in 2007, in cooperation with the Russian Orthodox Church. Russkiy Mir also serves to justify Russia's actions abroad, particularly in the post-Soviet space, where the Kremlin portrays itself as the protector of Russian speakers.⁸ This worldview is reflected in key Russian strategic documents. The 2021 National Security Strategy identified the protection of traditional Russian values as a strategic priority.

❖ **Later, the 2023 Foreign Policy Concept framed Russia as a Eurasian :** power uniquely positioned to unite peoples who share the cultural and civilizational values of the Russian World. However, Russia's defence industry is currently focused on supporting the military invasion of Ukraine, while grappling with challenges posed by international sanctions. These factors have undermined Russia's capacity to fulfil its defence export commitments, resulting in notable delays in delivering critical military equipment to India. The final dispatchment of the previously mentioned S-400 air defence missile system have, for instance, been postponed several times and is now projected for 2026. Similarly, the lease of the nuclear-power attack submarine SSN, signed in 2019 under a decades-long agreement, is expected to be postponed, with delivery unlikely before 2028. These setbacks highlight broader difficulties within Russia's defence manufacturing sector caused by the war, including insatiable domestic demand and restricted access to critical components. Furthermore, disruptions in the supply of spare parts and maintenance support for India's existing Russian-made equipment have raised concerns about New Delhi's operational readiness. Taken together, this development has heightened doubts in New Delhi regarding Moscow's reliability as a defence partner, underscoring the need for New Delhi to diversify its partners and mitigate dependency risks. With that being said, the satisfactory performance of the S-400 system during the May 2025 clash between India and Pakistan, underscores the quality of the equipment. India, not part of the Price Cap Coalition, refrained from imposing sanctions of their own and instead took advantage of the reduced price. The increased imports have benefited the country with cheap energy, which in turn has allowed New Delhi to abstain from raising prices for domestic end consumers. This could otherwise have been a mobilisation factor for social unrest, as seen in neighbouring Sri Lanka and Pakistan. ICRA, a rating agency, has estimated that switching to Russian oil has saved India at least \$13 billion since February 20, and whilst criticised for supporting the Russian war effort, New Delhi has largely avoided violating Western sanctions by adhering to the market cap of \$60-perbarrel. According to both Indian and U.S. officials, India's imports have contributed to stabilising world market prices by preventing a cost surge, while simultaneously controlling inflation domestically. India-US ties have entered a fraught and intricate phase, marked by tensions that challenge India's long-cherished strategic autonomy. Once overly hyped as a burgeoning partnership of mutual benefit, the Indo-US relationship is now strained by diplomatic pressures, economic threats and a shifting global order. India's signing of four foundational US defense agreements the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement LEMOA, the Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement COMCASA, the Industrial Security Annex ISA and the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement BECA positioned it as a strategic partner and ally. However, these agreements, coupled with

increasing US trade pressure under President Donald Trump, have raised serious questions about India's ability to maintain an independent foreign policy. This article critically examines the trajectory of US-India relations, the carrot-and-stick approach of Trump's policies, the myth of India's strategic autonomy and the challenges India faces in navigating a multipolar world. It argues that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's pro-American tilt has miscalculated India's strategic and economic capacity, risking its autonomy and global standing. Despite these setbacks, the narrative of a robust US-India "friendship" was carefully cultivated. In contrast, Trump's second term has adopted a "stick" approach, marked by economic and diplomatic coercion. Trump has criticized India's oil and arms purchases from Russia, threatening tariffs first of 25% and now 50% on Indian goods and additional penalties. This pressure stems from India's continued engagement with Russia and its role in the BRICS grouping, which Trump perceives as an anti-American bloc. By leveraging tariffs and public criticism, Trump aims to curb India's economic autonomy and align its policies with US interests, particularly in ongoing trade negotiations with China. For instance, Trump's push for India to open its agricultural market to US products such as genetically modified corn, soybeans, dairy, and fruits threatens India's domestic producers. His demand that India halt Russian oil purchases in favor of pricier US alternatives further strains India's economy. Trump's rhetoric has also been humiliating. He has called India's economy "dead" for not aligning with US economic interests and threatened 150-250% tariffs on India's pharmaceutical exports, a critical sector. Additionally, his deportation of Indian illegal immigrants via military aircraft and his repeated claim of halting India-Pakistan airstrikes in India's Operation Sindoor have embarrassed New Delhi. A particularly egregious slight was Trump's plan to host Modi alongside Pakistan's army chief at a White House dinner, an invitation Modi declined. These actions reflect a broader pattern of American exceptionalism, where the US seeks to subordinate India's ambitions to its hegemonic interests. What Modi fails to grasp is that friendship with America is like the Cuscuta plant commonly known as dodder or amarbel in Hindi once it entwines itself around a tree, it eventually destroys its host.

➤ **During the 25-year Commemorative Summit in New Delhi ;** January 2018, India and ASEAN have further agreed that our Strategic Partnership will be focused inter-alia on building cooperation in the maritime domain. Adoption at Leaders' level of ASEAN-India Joint Statement on Maritime Cooperation, and ASEAN-India Joint Statement on Strengthening Food Security and Nutrition in Response to Crises. The year 2024 marked 'A Decade of India's Act East Policy'. Started with the visit of ASEAN Secretary General's visit to India Feb 2024, the year 2024 was several commemorative activities to mark the milestone, which included ASEAN India Bazaar, 1st ASEAN-India Women Scientists Conclave, celebration of IDY at ASEAN Headquarters, Artist Camp Exhibition, inauguration of AIPMU at ASEAN Delhi Declaration was issued on the occasion. The year 2022 marked 30 years of ASEAN India relations and it was celebrated as the 'ASEAN-India Friendship Year'. Its most important outcome was the elevation of ASEAN-India Strategic Partnership to 'Comprehensive Strategic Partnership CSP'. A Joint Statement on ASEAN-India Comprehensive Strategic Partnership was issued at the Commemorative Summit on 12 November 2022 in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. The 20th ASEAN-India Summit was held on 07 September 2023 where Indian delegation was led by Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi. Key outcomes included . Headquarters, 8th edition of ASEAN-India Network of Think Tanks AINTT, 3rd edition of Music Festival, 2nd Startup Festival, Media Exchange visits etc. Mission, in consultation with CSIS-Indonesia, organized a Seminar on the theme,

Commemorating A Decade of India's Act East Policy Reflections and the Way Forward for ASEAN-India Relations" in Jakarta on 06 February 2025. At the invitation of Govt. of India, Secretary General of ASEAN, Dr. Kao Kim Hourn visited India from 12 to 15 February 2024. During the visit, SG met with the Ministers and Govt.

❖ **Resilience in the Evolving Strategic Environment** : Hon'ble Prime Minister led the Indian delegation, for the 11th time, at the 21st ASEAN-India Summit, held at Vientiane, Lao PDR on 10 October, 2024. Two Joint Statements Joint Statement on Strengthening ASEAN-India Comprehensive Strategic Partnership for Peace, Stability and Prosperity in the Region in the Context of the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific with the Support of India's Act East Policy AEP and ASEAN-India Joint Statement on Advancing Digital Transformation, were adopted at the Summit. The 1st ASEAN-India Track .

❖ **Cyber Policy Dialogue was held in Singapore 1.0** : on 16 October 2024 and 1st ASEAN-India Cruise Dialogue was held in Sabang, Aceh, Indonesia on 29-30 October 2024. An MOU between International Solar Alliance ISA and ASEAN Centre for Energy ACE was signed on 08 October 2024. An MoI between National Disaster Management Authority NDMA and ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management AHA Centre was signed on 24 October 2024 ASEAN-India Senior Officials meeting on Transnational Crime SOMTC India SOM level The 11th SOMTC India consultation was held on 27 .

✓ **28 June 2024 in Vientiane, Lao PDR** : ASEAN-India Working Group on S and T AIWGS Secretary level The 14th meeting was held virtually on 07 August, 2023 and Dr. Rajesh Gokhale, Secretary DST participated in the meeting. ASEAN led frameworks In addition to the above India ASEAN mechanisms, India also engages the ASEAN multilateral platform through participation in meetings of various ASEANled framework multilateral platforms chaired by ASEAN. In particular, India regularly participates in the meetings of the East Asia Summit EAS,

✓ **ASEAN Regional Forum ARF** : ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting ADMM and the Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum EAMF meetings and its supporting processes. These ASEAN led frameworks are widely expected to eventually evolve into the principal building blocks of an ASEAN centered regional security architecture.

➤ **East Asia Summit EAS Process** : The most important among the ASEAN-led frameworks is the EAS which is a Leaders-led forum, launched in December 2005, made up of leaders from the 10 ASEAN countries and India, US, Australia, New Zealand, RoK, Japan, Russia, China. East Asia Summit EAS The 19th East Asia Summit was held on 11 October 2024 in Vientiane, Lao PDR. Hon'ble Prime Minister led the Indian delegation. Chairman's Statement was issued on this occasion. East Asia Summit Foreign Ministers' Meeting EAS FMM The 14th EASFMM was held on 27 July, 2024 in Vientiane, Lao PDR. Ministerial meetings are supported by EAS Senior Officials' Meeting EAS SOM and East Asia Summit Ambassadors Meeting in Jakarta EAMJ now called as EAS Group. Other important EAS Meetings include East Asia Summit Economic Ministers Meeting Minister level The 12th meeting was held on 21 September 2024 in Vientiane, Lao PDR. Hon'ble Minister of Commerce and Industry Shri Piyush Goyal led the Indian delegation. EAS Energy Ministers' Meeting Ministerial level The 18th EAS Energy Ministers' Meeting 18th EAS EMM took place on 27 September 2024 in

Vientiane, Lao PDR. EAS Education Ministers' Meeting Ministerial level. The 9th EAS Senior Officials'

➤ **On Education Meeting and the 7th EAS Education Ministers' Meeting** : were held on 24 and 26 August, 2024 respectively in Burian Province, Thailand. ASEAN-Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus ADMM-Plus The 11th ASEAN-Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus ADMM-Plus took place on 21 November, 2024 in Vientiane, Lao PDR. Hon'ble Raksha Mantri Ji led the Indian delegation. ADMM-Plus is supported by Senior Officials' Meeting; Working Group level meetings; and seven Expert Working Group EWG mechanisms. India, along with Malaysia, is co-chairing the ADMM Plus EWG on Counter Terrorism for the cycle 2024-2027. The 1st ASEAN-India Informal Defence Ministers' Meeting was held in November 2022. ASEAN Regional Forum ARF In the ASEAN Regional Forum, the highest-level meeting is held at the Foreign Ministers' level. It is supported by the Senior Officials' Meeting. Several technical working group meetings also take place under ARF. Hon'ble EAM participated at the 31st ARF held on 27 July 2024 in Vientiane, Lao PDR. ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly AIPA India participates as an Observer in the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly AIPA. Hon'ble MP Rajya Sabha Shri Rameswar Teli represented India at the 45th AIPA General Assembly on 19,22 October 2024 in Vientiane, Lao PDR. ASEAN-India Centre AIC was established on 21 June, 2013 inside the Research and Information System for Developing Countries RIS, New Delhi. The Centre has been doing work in support of strengthening the ASEAN-India relations. ASEAN-India economic engagements . The three main formal institutional mechanisms being used to promote the

❖ **India-ASEAN economic connect** : are as follows ASEAN Economic Ministers' India Consultations AEM India The ASEAN Economic Ministers AEM is one of the main ASEAN's sectoral bodies and therefore AEM-India meetings, one of our most important sectoral body engagements, are attended by the Minister MoS for Commerce and Industries. In recent times main agenda of discussions in AEM-India meetings has been review of ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement AITIGA. The ASEAN India Framework Agreement on Comprehensive Economic Cooperation 2003 Finalized during the 2nd Summit meeting in 2003, the agreement provides the 'mandate' for the creation of an ASEAN-India Free Trade Area. Subsequently, under its provisions.

❖ **ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement** : AITIGA, signed 2009, in force 1 January 2010 the ASEAN-India Agreement for Trade in Services AITISA, signed 2014 and all parties ratified it in 2018 and, Agreement on Investment signed 2014, have been finalized and ratified by all parties were concluded. ASEAN-India Business Council AIBC Set up in 2003 as part of the measures contemplated to promote Comprehensive Economic Cooperation between India and the ASEAN region, it was meant to serve as a private sector mechanism to provide Governments on both sides with authoritative feedback on their current policies and also recommend steps that Governments could take to further promote the ASEAN -India economic partnership. The 5th ASEAN-India Business Summit was held at Kuala Lumpur on 06 March 2023 by EoI, Kuala Lumpur. The last AIBC meeting took place on the sidelines of AEM-India Consultation, held in Vientiane on 20 September 2024. Trade in Commodities: The commodity trade between India and ASEAN region has reached USD 120.87 billion in the financial year 2023-2024, with exports to ASEAN worth USD 41.20 billion and imports from ASEAN worth USD 79.67 billion. The ASEAN remained 2nd largest trading partner of India in 2022-23 and 2023-24.

➤ **INDIAN POLICY WITH IRAN :** India's government prioritises pragmatic decisions over ideological positions. Foreign policy often involves difficult choices that may clash with popular sentiments or moral views. The Modi government follows a selfish foreign policy, focusing on national advantage. It believes the Israeli-American coalition will prevail in the conflict. Hence, India has aligned more with their stance while maintaining minimal diplomatic gestures towards Iran. The timing of Prime Minister Modi's visit to Israel just before the war raised questions about India's diplomatic signalling. Strategic autonomy is a key term in India's foreign policy discourse. It implies independent decision-making free from external pressure. However, critics argue that India's current policy leans more towards dependency on the U.S. and Gulf states. True autonomy would allow India to express balanced views, such as condoling Iran's leader's death without jeopardising other relations. India's diplomacy in this conflict reflects a cautious strategy to safeguard its broader interests amid geopolitical tensions.

India-Iran Relations Amid Conflict: This is the geopolitics of hubris. Only the power to overwhelm matters. As US Vice President J.D. Vance declared in May 2025 when we throw a punch, we throw a punch hard and we do it decisively. But there is no decisive punch in the Iran conflict. Nor are there compromises amid the irreconcilable positions. This war of attrition will end when one side walks away in pain, holding little but fig leaves. Paradoxically, the victor is China, its ascent accelerating from dominant economic power to hegemon. India is a minor power caught up in the torrent. An ever-tightening vice is gripping its industry and agriculture, with the burden falling on its huge surplus labour force. India and Iran share historical and civilisational ties. Despite India's restrained stance, Iran has shown goodwill by allowing Indian oil tankers safe passage through the Strait of Hormuz. This gesture puts stress on Iran's interest in maintaining ties with India. India's priority remains the safety of its 9,000 citizens in Iran. The government has actively engaged with regional leaders to protect these nationals. The war's outcome will influence India's future relations with both Iran and its allies.

. Constrained policy options have forced a licence and permit raj, suppressing price shocks and relying on rationing and administrative actions. These temporary aids will soon falter. Notwithstanding the indefinite ceasefire, the continuing economic crisis is deepening the wounds. The rise of China as a competing hegemon could spawn minor and major wars, a modern form of the era Thucydides described when Sparta sought to dethrone Athens. In June–July 2025, the US and Israel bombed Iranian nuclear sites in an operation dubbed the Twelve Day War. In the negotiations that followed, the US alleged that the Iranians were not acting in good faith. The American negotiators Jared Kushner and Steve Witkoff, long dogged by accusations of personal financial interests in West Asia, were arrogant amateurs. Any hope of compromise collapsed on February 26, 2026. Two days later, the US and Israel launched a coordinated strike on Iran. The genie had escaped. A US Tomahawk cruise missile struck a school compound in Minab, killing children and teachers. Almost at the same time, a decapitation strike killed Iran's top leadership. Americans and Israelis have normalised targeting enemy leaders. The question was, who could tolerate the pain longer. The Strait of Hormuz is a key global choke point. After Iran closed it, about 20 per cent of the world's oil flow came to a near halt. Daily ship transits collapsed to a skeletal trickle as the waterway transitioned from a global highway to a high-risk gauntlet under Iranian control. Several Gulf oil companies declared force majeure, meaning that they would no longer honour delivery contracts. Whether it yields tactical gains is doubtful, but it certainly erodes moral and legal restraints. Iran is at best a third-rate military power. It struck back on March 2 by closing the Strait of Hormuz, which it had often threatened but never executed. The war of attrition had begun.

India and Iran share a millennia-long history of interactions. The contemporary relationship draws upon the strength of these historical and civilisational ties, and continues to grow further marked by high-level exchanges, commercial and connectivity cooperation, cultural and robust people-to-people ties.

❖ **Political relations India-Iran cooperation :** India and Iran signed a friendship treaty on 15th March 1950. The visit of Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee to Iran and the signing of the Tehran Declaration in April 2001, followed by the visit of President Seyyed Mohammad Khatami and the signing of the New Delhi Declaration in 2003 deepened the India-Iran cooperation. The bilateral relations were further boosted by the visit of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi to Iran in May 2016. During the visit, a joint statement titled “Civilizational Connect, Contemporary Context” was issued, and the Trilateral Agreement on Trade, Transport and Transit between India, Iran and Afghanistan was signed. President Hassan Rouhani visited India in February 2018, during which a joint statement titled “Towards Prosperity Through Greater Connectivity” was issued. Prime Minister Modi met President Masoud Pezeshkian on the sidelines of the 16th BRIC Summit in Kazan, Russia in October 2024 where the two leaders discussed ways to further strengthen the bilateral relations. This was their first meeting since President Pezeshkian assumed office in July 2024. Prime Minister Modi had met President Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi on the sidelines of BRICS Summit in August 2023 and on the sidelines of the SCO Heads of State Summit in Samarkand, Uzbekistan in September 2022. Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar visited Iran on 22 May 2024 to attend the official ceremony to pay condolences following the demise of President Dr. Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi, Foreign Minister Dr. Hossein Amir-Abdollahian and other Iranian officials in May 2024. There have been two Parliamentary speaker-level visits between India and Iran, with Lok Sabha Speaker Meira Kumar visiting Iran in 2011, followed by a return visit by the Speaker of Majlis, Dr Ali Larijani to India in 2013. In July 2024, Nitin Gadkari, Transportation and represented Government of India at the swearing-in ceremony of President Pezeshkian. In May 2024, Sarbananda Sonowal, Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways visited Iran to witness the signing of the long term Contract on Development of the Chabahar Port. External Affairs Minister Dr. Subrahmanyam Jaishankar visited Iran in January 2024. EAM had visited Iran in July and August 2021 where he called on President Raisi. Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian visited India in June 2022. In August 2022, Sarbananda Sonowal, Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways visited Iran, during which the MoU on Recognition of Certificates of Competency in Unlimited Voyages between Iran and India was signed.

Diplomatic Establishment of India Iran : Ancient civilizational ties, diplomatic relations established March 15, 1950 reflect the longstanding nature of India’s association with Islamic Republic of Iran. Shah of Iran 1956, PM Nehru 1959, PM Vajpayee 2001, President Khatami 2003, PM Modi 2016, President Rouhani 2018 reflect the deepening of India–Islamic Republic of Iran relations through top-level diplomatic engagements. India’s engagement with Islamic Republic of Iran was previously challenged by events like Differing Cold War alignments, impact of sanctions on Iran. India Islamic Republic of Iran relations can be traced through key stages, including Cold War coolness, post-revolution engagement, 1990s convergence, contemporary strategic partnership.

Challenges of foreign Policy of Indian:

- ✓ **Multilateral institutions should be strengthened :** Autonomy must extend beyond traditional military and diplomatic domains to include data sovereignty, digital infrastructure, and critical supply chains. India should continue to project itself as the “voice of the Global South,” balancing great power rivalries while asserting its independent agency.
- ✓ **Uncertainty and Risk of Isolation:** In a multipolar world, multiple big powers constantly shift their alliances and policies. Multi-alignment sounds positive in theory, but in practice they may leave India alone in times of crisis, since no power can be fully relied upon. **Economic and Technological Dependence:** India depends on other major powers for defence equipment, advanced technology, energy, and supply chains. This dependence limits the extent of true autonomy. India must invest in economic growth, technological advancement, and defence modernisation to underpin genuine autonomy. Strategic partnerships should be pursued without dependence, ensuring resilience against sudden shifts in global alignments.
- ✓ **Weakening of Multilateralism:** India hoped multipolarity would strengthen global rules and institutions. Instead, many countries are acting unilaterally or making transactional deals, reducing the effectiveness of multilateral forums. **Secondary Power Status:** In the emerging multipolar world, India is still behind the US and China in terms of economic and military power. This reduces its ability to influence major global decisions.

Conclusion:

The current geopolitical landscape offers middle powers like India a chance to play a significant role. Today's India is not just an observer but an active player on the world stage. In this multipolar world, India has established itself as a significant pole, poised to develop further while also representing the global South. Today's world, shaped by globalization and the political choices of powerful nations, is full of contradictions. While more people are living better lives than ever before, issues like inequality, conflict, and uncertainty continue to affect many. Globalization has shifted the balance of power, making the world economically multipolar but still politically unipolar and somewhat confused. Amidst these changes, Asia's rise presents a significant opportunity for India. By focusing on internal development while maintaining strong global connections, India can create an effective and dynamic foreign policy. India was a founder member of both the League of Nations and the United Nations. After India gained independence from the United Kingdom in 1947, it soon joined the Commonwealth of Nations and strongly supported independence movements in other colonies, like the Indonesian National Revolution. The partition and various territorial disputes, particularly that over Kashmir, would strain its relations with Pakistan for years to come. During the Cold War, India adopted a foreign policy of not aligning itself with any major power bloc.

REFERENCES:

1. EAM S. Jaishankar's Lecture at 4th Ramnath Goenka Memorial; six phases of India's foreign.
2. Doing Business in Ghana 2013. Accra: KPMG. 2012. pp. 15, 21. Archived from the original on 11 June 2014..
3. India, Ghana to finalise gas price 2012. HT Mint.. Archived from the original on 8 May.
4. Work On Ghana-India Fertilizer Project To Begin At Nyankrom". Ghana Money. 13 July 2012. Archived from the original on 22 January 2013.

5. India to establish fertiliser plant in Ghana". Daily Graphic. 21 February 2012. Archived from the original on 5 February 2016. Retrieved 1 January 2013. policy - by Akshat verma
6. The Book Review India.org : Indian Foreign Policy 1941-2022 , Shivshankar Menon.
7. Gandhi, Sajit, The Tilt 2009: The US and the South Asian Crisis of 1971: National Security Archive Electronic Briefing at the Wayback Machine
8. Shalom, Stephen R., The Men Behind Yahya in the Indo-Pak War of 1971 Archived 23 August 2009
9. Cold war games Archived 15 September 2006 at the Wayback Machine. Bharat-rakshak 12 December 2011.
10. The Flawed Architect: Henry Kissinger and American Foreign Policy by Jussi M. Hanhimeaki Page 156, Published by Oxford University Press US
11. The Diplomat.com - India's Foreign Policy Evolution by Uzair Younus
12. Indian Foreign Policy: Oxford - Sumit Ganguly
13. Sharma, Dharendra May 1991. "India's lopsided science". Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists. 47 .4.
14. U.S. State Department Archived 28 December 2020 at the Wayback Machine. State.gov. Retrieved 12 November 2011.
15. Internet sources Etc.