

# The Evolution of India's Foreign Policy: From Nonalignment to Assertive Multi-Alignment under Modi

Abbagone Vinod Venkatesh

[abbagonekamal93@gmail.com](mailto:abbagonekamal93@gmail.com)

## Abstract

India's foreign policy has transformed significantly since independence, shifting from a nonaligned Cold War stance to an assertive multialigned approach under Prime Minister Narendra Modi. This paper analyzes key ideological, strategic, and economic developments shaping this evolution. It examines the enduring influence of Hindu nationalism, India's engagement with global power blocs, and economic initiatives such as 'Make in India' to understand India's positioning in contemporary international relations.

## 1. Introduction

India's foreign policy has historically reflected the nation's pursuit of strategic autonomy. From Nehru's doctrine of nonalignment to Modi's multialignment strategy, India's diplomatic trajectory embodies both ideological continuity and pragmatic adaptation. This article explores the shift from nonalignment to multialignment, focusing on the Modi era's assertiveness, Hindu nationalist influence, and global ambitions.

## 2. Historical Background: Nonalignment as Strategic Autonomy

Following independence in 1947, India adopted a nonaligned posture during the Cold War, seeking to remain outside formal power blocs led by the United States or the Soviet Union. Spearheaded by Nehru, nonalignment promoted peaceful coexistence, self-reliance, and moral leadership. However, critics have argued that this approach restricted India's strategic depth and left it vulnerable during regional conflicts, particularly with China and Pakistan.

## 3. From Nonalignment to Multialignment

The end of the Cold War saw the erosion of bipolarity and the rise of new regional dynamics. India began diversifying its diplomatic partnerships, gradually moving toward a multialigned approach. This strategy emphasizes engaging with competing powers—such as the U.S., Russia, and China—on issue-based cooperation rather than ideological alignment. Multialignment reflects India's intent to maximize strategic gains while maintaining autonomy in foreign affairs.

## 4. Hindu Nationalism and Its Diplomatic Expression

The rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its emphasis on Hindu nationalism has reshaped India's foreign policy narrative. The Modi government has projected a civilizational identity in global forums, linking

domestic ideological themes with international posturing. Diplomatic speeches and global outreach now often emphasize India's cultural heritage, ancient wisdom, and national pride, subtly departing from the secular and non-communal tone of previous governments.

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#### 5. Modi's Foreign Policy: Continuities and Breakthroughs

Modi's foreign policy reflects both continuity and innovation. While retaining strong ties with Russia and the Global South, India under Modi has actively pursued deeper ties with the United States, Japan, Australia (QUAD), and Middle Eastern states. The 'Act East' policy, strategic defense pacts, and high-profile summits signal India's growing role as a balancing power in a multipolar world. The government's pragmatic stance toward China, particularly amid tensions over the Belt and Road Initiative, also marks a shift toward realism.

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#### 6. Economic Diplomacy and Global Positioning

Under Modi, economic initiatives like Make in India, Digital India, and Startup India have been central to foreign engagement. Economic diplomacy is increasingly used to attract foreign investment, facilitate technology transfer, and promote India as a manufacturing and innovation hub. India's engagement with ASEAN, BIMSTEC, and Africa reflects a calibrated approach to regional connectivity and economic influence.

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#### 7. Conclusion

India's foreign policy evolution from nonalignment to multialignment illustrates a strategic shift driven by domestic ideology, leadership style, and global realignments. Modi's assertive diplomacy, coupled with economic ambition and civilizational pride, has redefined India's image on the global stage. As India continues to navigate regional and global uncertainties, its multialignment strategy is likely to remain central to securing both strategic autonomy and global influence.

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