

RECALIBRATING INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY APPROACH

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In a world where globalisation has interconnected nations like never before, the landscape of foreign policies and international relations has become more fluid, adapting to the ever-changing dynamics of the global arena. The traditional notion of rigid alliances and fixed ideologies guiding foreign relations has given way to a pragmatic approach where states navigate through a nuanced web of relationships based on their immediate needs and long-term goals. India's foreign policy stance, rooted in the principle of non-alignment, reflects a strategic balance between various power blocs, allowing the nation to safeguard its sovereignty and pursue its national interests without being tethered to a single geopolitical entity. The country's foreign policy decisions are carefully crafted to ensure that they align with its economic growth objectives while also factoring in the shifting sands of global power dynamics. As India charts its course in the international arena, it does so with a keen eye on both the economic opportunities and security challenges that lie ahead. The country's engagement with major powers and regional actors is driven by a well-calibrated strategy that seeks to leverage its position as a key player in the global economy while also safeguarding its strategic autonomy.

Furthermore, India's foreign policy objectives are not just shaped by external factors but also by its internal dynamics, including domestic politics, economic imperatives, and societal aspirations. The country's ability to navigate through these complex layers of influence and still maintain a sense of agency in shaping its foreign policy narrative reflects its evolving role as a global power with unique geopolitical significance. India's commitment to a non-aligned foreign policy stance, amidst the evolving dynamics of the global order, underscores its ability to adapt to changing circumstances while remaining steadfast in pursuing its national interests. By balancing its strategic engagements and economic partnerships, India continues to carve a niche for itself in the international arena, asserting its presence as a key player in shaping the future of global governance and diplomacy.

This multifaceted approach will ultimately ensure that the proposed command structures align with India's overarching defence objectives and geopolitical realities, fostering resilience and readiness in an unpredictable global security environment.

THE NEW PARADIGM



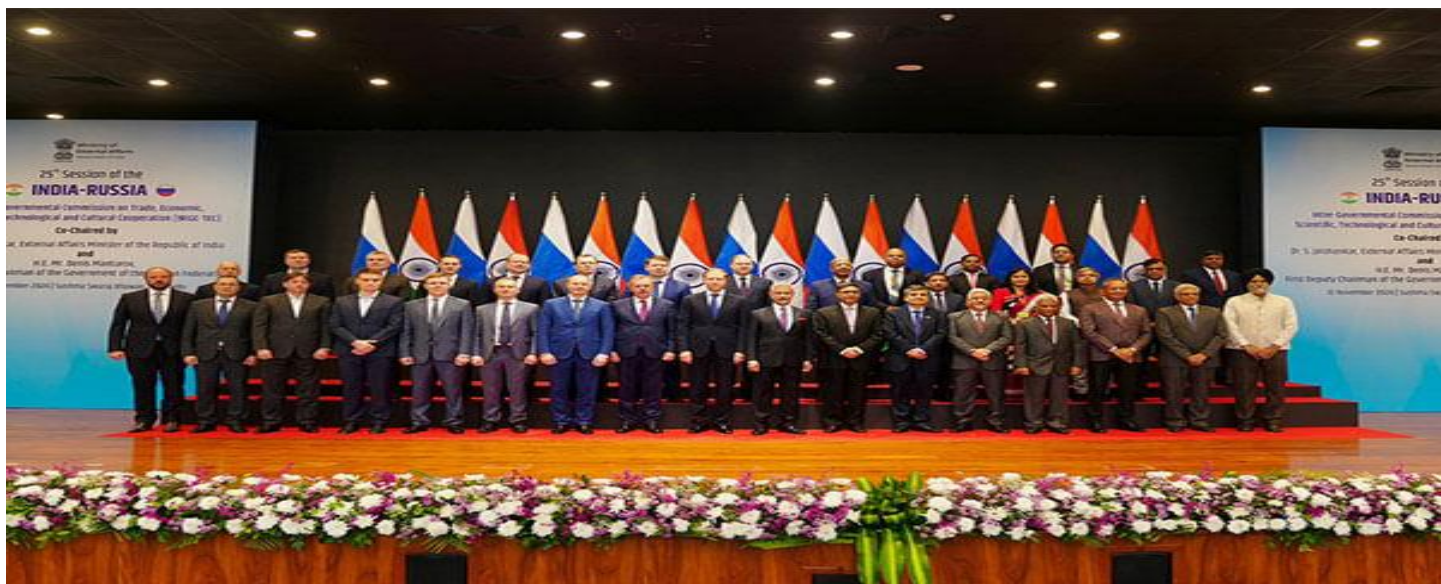
India's foreign policy paradigm is undergoing shifts and transitions in foreign policy approaches through the prism of non-alignment, through vociferous articulation of its concerns and its rights to pursue its foreign policy relations with states that would prove beneficial for the state's overall well-being. The United States' imposition of tariffs on India's export items as a response measure to India's continued strengthened relations with Russia catapulted to serious nuances that have coerced New Delhi to refurbish its foreign policy agendas. This step is undertaken to prevent New Delhi from becoming a victim of coercive diplomacy and enable us to carry on with our independent foreign policy goals. India's approach towards Russia has a clarified policy of not following any sanctions imposed on countries other than those imposed by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). India's foreign policy approaches are more ancient than the Westphalian norms of diplomacy.

In fact, India's foreign policy approaches are more ancient than the Westphalian norms of diplomacy. The logic of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' (the world is a family) emanates from the Maha Upanishad originating from Hitopadesha.¹ The Mandukya Upanishad lays stress on the philosophy of universalism and if the philosophy is comprehended in the conceptual sense, rather than literal sense, one could understand that the non-alignment policy holds relevance and influence from our own understanding of universalism.

The honourable External Minister of India, Shri S. Jaishankar's visit to Russia clearly solidifies this stance of India to not allow its state-to-state relations being defined by third-party states. He encouraged for more "joint ventures" between the two states and to improve cooperation by "diversifying the bilateral trade basket." Shri Jaishankar met the First Deputy Prime Minister Denis Manturov in Moscow recently and discussed the prospects of India-Russia relations under the India-Russia Inter-Governmental Commission for

¹ Arun Kumar Kar, "The concept of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (The World is a Family): Insights from the Mahopanishad," *National Journal of Hindi and Sanskrit Research*, 2023, <13-49-Arun.Kumar_.Kar_.pdf>

Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technological, and Cultural Cooperation (IRIGC-TEC).



There is little doubt that Shri Jaishankar is echoing the foreign policy beliefs of his predecessor, Late Shrimati Sushma Swaraj, who stood firm against the United States imposed sanctions. In fact, despite the sanctions concern from the United States, India progressed with the procurement of the Russian air and missile defence system, S-400 systems which proved its mettle during Operation Sindoor in 2025. These firm attributes of both the External Minister and the Prime Minister are well complimented with compassion and commiserations for states that are experiencing war-like situations.

This is precisely the reason why India has found itself as a solace for Ukraine, who is fighting Russia, and seeking India's contribution in ensuring peace is achieved. India has also vouched for strengthening mutually beneficial cooperation with Ukraine in August 2025 and standing firm in its commitment to ensure "peaceful resolution of the conflict through dialogue and diplomacy."² India made clear through this statement that while India remains firm in her policies to continue partnerships with Russia, it also seeks peace in the region through the avoidance of war. Again in September 2025, India

² "Ukraine counts on India's contribution to ending war with Russia: Zelensky," *The Hindu*, August 26, 2025, <Ukraine counts on India's contribution to ending war with Russia: Zelenskyy - The Hindu>

expressed its concerns regarding the security situation in Poland and hoped for early cessation of the hostilities and a “durable solution to the Ukraine conflict.” ³

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The External Minister has already clarified India’s need to practice an approach of seeking for “partners, not preachers.”⁴ This clearly explains India’s approach of its policies that would vary for each country according to the narratives that India wants to pen down rather than being coerced by narratives of another state system. New Delhi is also careful to avoid coercion by philosophies and beliefs in its foreign policy approaches that are influenced by state systems who do not practise what they preach. ⁵ Hence, the strong stance on India’s part to stand firm against US tariffs is a part of the process of searching for partners who could become conducive for India’s economic and financial growth.

³ “S Jaishankar Speaks With Polish Counterpart, Reiterates Call To End Ukraine Conflict,” September 12, 2025,< S Jaishankar Speaks With Polish Counterpart, Reiterates Call To End Ukraine Conflict>

⁴ “We look for partners not preachers’: Jaishankar says Europe must show sensitivity to strengthen India ties,” *The Indian Express*, May 5, 2025, <‘We look for partners not preachers’: Jaishankar says Europe must show sensitivity to strengthen India ties | India News - The Indian Express >

⁵ “Jaishankar says India is looking for partners, not preachers; highlights New Delhi’s ‘Russia Realism,’” *The Hindu*, May 5, 2025, <Jaishankar says India is looking for partners, not preachers; highlights New Delhi's 'Russia realism' - The Hindu>



The United States remains a very important partner for India, but such partnerships can grow from strength to strength through mutual cooperation and understandings. Europe also remains crucial for India's foreign policy, but the External Minister clearly mentions the need for Europe to ponder upon India's own concerns and apprehensions. The Foreign Minister of Federal Republic of Germany Johann Wadephul visited India in the first week of September 2025 and strengthened the Indo-German relations focusing on expansion of economic partnership.⁶ This visit was followed by the Indian PM's visit in July 2025 to the United Kingdom following which India-UK Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) was signed.⁷

Earlier in February 2025, PM Modi also visited France to attend the Artificial Intelligence Action Summit in which both the countries vowed to strengthen their bilateral partnership.⁸ New Delhi is also keen to strengthen its relations with Caribbean nation and in July 2025, PM Modi visited Trinidad and Tobago

⁶ "Visit of H.E. Mr. Johann Wadephul, Foreign Minister of Federal Republic of Germany to India (September 1-3, 2025), *Ministry of External Affairs*, September 3, 2025, <Visit of H.E. Mr. Johann Wadephul, Foreign Minister of Federal Republic of Germany to India (September 01-03, 2025)>

⁷ "PM Modi, UK PM Meet Industry Leaders Following India-UK Trade Pact," *DD News*, July 24, 2025, < PM Modi, UK PM meet industry leaders following India-UK trade pact>

⁸ "Visit to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to France," *Ambassade De France En Inde*, February, 2025, <Visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to France - La France en Inde / France in India>

and he was also conferred with the nation's highest civilian honour.⁹ Even amid the challenging times concerning the Ukrainian conflict, PM Modi has viewed the India-France Strategic Partnership beyond the prism of investments and strategic goals towards “fostering global peace and stability.” This is also India's way of displaying to the Caribbean that they matter to India and India is keen to progress with its relations with the region. In addition, Mr. Modi also visited Namibia in 2025 to strengthen ties with the African nation.¹⁰ In this trip, another African country, Ghana was also in the list, and this was the first time a PM from India visited Ghana in the last three decades proving India's strong solidarity with Africa.¹¹ Ghana is also a part of India's Team-9 initiative in Western Africa. These developments are indication of India's deepening interests to secure amicable ties with Africa and to develop partnerships to mitigate the challenges in African continent so as to develop a viable economy for both the regions. The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCTA) identified two important potential areas of cooperation being logistics and automobiles. India is keen to strengthen ties with the Sahelian countries in Africa too and Burkina Faso was included as one of the West African countries under Government of India's Team-9 initiative and Pan African e-Network Project.¹²

India has also identified the economic potential in East Africa and is viewed as an able and just partner promoting regional development.

⁹ Dharvi Vaid, “Indian PM Modi receives Trinidad and Tobago's highest honor,” *DW*, July 5, 2025, <Indian PM Modi receives Trinidad and Tobago's highest honor – DW – 07/05/2025>

¹⁰ “PM Modi Concludes His Successful 5-Nation Visit To Ghana, Trinidad and Tobago, Argentina, Brazil and Namibia,” *News on Air*, July 10, 2025, <PM Modi concludes his successful 5-nation visit to Ghana, Trinidad & Tobago, Argentina, Brazil, Namibia>

¹¹ “Prime Minister arrives in Ghana on a State visit (July 02, 2025), *Ministry of External Affairs*, <Prime Minister arrives in Ghana on a State Visit (July 02, 2025)>

¹² “Brief on India Burkina Faso Relations,” *MEA*, March 26, 2025, <Burkina-faso-26-03-2025.pdf>



India has also identified the economic potential in East Africa and is viewed as an able and just partner promoting regional development. The Indian PM's visit to Mauritius in March 2025 indicates India's active interest to strengthen relations with Mauritius and in this visit India and Mauritius also elevated their ties to Enhanced Strategic Partnership and also introduced the MAHASAGAR (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions).¹³ The East African country is viewed as crucial maritime partner for India and important under Vision Security and Growth For All in the Region (SAGAR).¹⁴ One of the key developments of this Mauritius visit was an Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and Central Bank of Mauritius on Local Currency Settlement System that would facilitate smooth financial transactions.¹⁵ PM Modi also included South American country Argentina in his list of state-visits in 2025 in which India and Argentina agreed to strengthen cooperation and take the partnership to "greater heights."¹⁶ Mr. Modi's trip to Brazil to attend the Brazil Russia India China South Africa (BRICS) Summit to address non-traditional security challenges also witnessed the PM strengthening bilateral relations

¹³ "India-Mauritius Relations," *Drishti IAS*, March 15, 2025, <India-Mauritius Relations>

¹⁴ "India-Mauritius Joint Vision for an Enhanced Strategic Partnership," *Ministry of External Affairs*, March 12, 2025, <India-Mauritius Joint Vision for an Enhanced Strategic Partnership (March 12, 2025)>

¹⁵ "India, Mauritius Ink 8 MoUs To Bolster Strategic, Economic Relations," *DD News*, March 12, 2025, <India, Mauritius ink 8 MoUs to bolster strategic, economic relations>

¹⁶ "Modi in Brazil highlights: PM Modi arrives in Brazil where he will attend BRICS summit," *The Hindu*, July 6, 2025, <Modi in Brazil highlights: PM Modi arrives in Brazil where he will attend BRICS Summit - The Hindu>

with Brazil to ensure deepened strategic ties¹⁷ as the two states status of 'Strategic Partnership' since 2006.¹⁸

*Recently, India's Prime Minister, **Shri Narendra Modi**, participated in the **Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)** summit in Tianjin where he met the **Chinese President Xi Jinping***



¹⁷ "PM Modi Reaches Brazil on Fourth Leg Of His 5-Nation Tour; To Participate In 17th BRICS Summit Beginning Tonight," *News on Air*, July 6, 2025, < PM Modi reaches Brazil on fourth leg of his 5-nation tour; To participate in 17th BRICS Summit beginning tonight>

¹⁸ "Joint Statement: India and Brazil- Two Great Nations with High Purposes," *PIB Delhi*, July 9, 2025, <Press Release:Press Information Bureau>

Recently, India's Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, participated in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit in Tianjin where he met the Chinese President Xi Jinping. On a positive note, Mr Jinping described India's relations with China as "partners, not rivals."¹⁹ This softened stance comes despite China's aggressive and assertive military postures vis-à-vis India and its aiding of Pakistan militarily. Nevertheless, India and China's relations are old wine in new bottle. During the illustrious reigns of Harshvardhana and Chandragupta II in the vibrant and culturally rich land of Bharatvarsha during the medieval period, two renowned Chinese scholars, Hiuen Tsang and Fa Hien, embarked on remarkable journeys to India. Their primary purpose was to delve into the profound teachings of Buddhism, a spiritual path that had begun to flourish across the subcontinent. As they traversed the diverse landscapes of India, their insightful observations and detailed accounts not only illuminated the intricacies of Buddhist philosophy but also provided a fascinating glimpse into the economic and social structures that characterized the governance systems of that era.

Through their writings, they captured the essence of a society marked by its dynamic trade networks, intricate social hierarchies, and the interplay of various cultural influences, thereby enriching our understanding of this pivotal period in Indian history. Hence, there are greater scopes and opportunities in this relationship than viewed from the narrow lenses of territorial disputes, but such scopes and opportunities could only fructify when Beijing is willing to comprehend India's apprehensions and view this relationship from a broader perspective that would benefit both the countries. The shift from the notion of Asia Pacific region to Indo-Pacific region was not viewed in positive light by Beijing. But India is in partnership with the United States to improve its strategic and military presence in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). Both the countries have participated in joint military exercises to exercise their influence in the IOR.²⁰

¹⁹ Aniruddha Dhar, "What Chinese, US media said on PM Modi-Xi Jinping meeting at SCO summit amid Trump tariff tensions," *Hindustan Times*, September 2, 2025, <What Chinese, US media said on PM Modi-Xi Jinping meeting at SCO summit amid Trump tariff tensions | World News>

²⁰ Lt.Cmdr. Seth Koeing, "U.S.-Indian forces go high-tech at Tiger Triumph 2025," *United States Pacific Command*, April 10, 2025, <U.S.-Indian forces go high-tech at Tiger Triumph 2025 > U.S. Pacific Fleet > News>

India is also aware that a calm approach towards China could make its Asian partners like Japan apprehensive. The Indian PM has already met the Japanese PM, Shigeru Ishiba in August 2025 before attending the SCO meeting and this move of visiting the Japanese PM before attending the SCO is an obvious way for India to put across a message that amid the tariff chaos, each of India's partners remains important. Both Japan and India agreed to strengthen their economic and defence ties in this recent PM Modi's visit and agreed to boost Japanese private investment in India.²¹ India's Middle East policy is also calculated with greater focus on its own strategic imperatives and influenced by its own foreign policy nuances and attributes rather than the larger geopolitical security environment.

For instance, amid the strengthened ties with old friend Israel, India has also managed to keep pace with its camaraderie with Iran and in May 2025, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Aragchi visited India and to discuss the possible scopes and challenges of the Indo-Iran relations with his counterpart, Shri Jaishankar.²² In the recent Israeli attacks on Qatar in September 2025, India has also expressed its concerns and dismay over these developments expressing condemnation of violation of sovereignty of Qatar and wished for speedy development in peace and order through dialogue and diplomacy.²³

²¹ Mari Yamaguchi, "India's Modi agrees with Japan's Ishiba to boost economic ties and cooperation," *Associated Press*, August 30, 2025, <India's Narendra Modi agrees with Japan's Shigeru Ishiba to boost ties | AP News>

²² "Iran, India reaffirm strategic ties at high level talks in New Delhi," *Tehran Times*, May 9, 2025, <Iran, India reaffirm strategic ties at high-level talks in New Delhi - Tehran Times>

²³ "Condemn Violation of Sovereignty: PM Speaks To Qatar Emir After Israel Strikes," *NDTV*, September 10, 2025, <Condemn Violation Of Sovereignty: PM Speaks To Qatar Emir After Israel Strikes>



UNDERSTANDING INDIA

The idea of Bharata emanates from the notion of Bhava (emotions), Raga (melody) and Taala (beats) which signifies the rich tapestry of emotions that infuse art and performance with depth and meaning; Raga, representing the harmonious medley of melodic structures that evoke a wide range of feelings and atmospheres; and Taala, the rhythmic beats that provide a structured framework, guiding the flow and pace of artistic expression. Together, these components form the essence of Bharata, creating a vibrant and dynamic foundation for the performing arts, where the fusion of emotions, melodies, and rhythms culminates in a profound experience that resonates with both the artist and the audience alike. We should knit these metaphors that suit India's foreign policy objectives. India's foreign policy objectives and decisions should be knitted with the perfect emotions that could strengthen its non-alignment policy (Bhava), in which India is able to voice its opinions drawing distinction between just and unjust, with perfect balancing of its relations with each country by strengthening ties (raga) and obey only restrictions imposed by supranational bodies, and implementing policies and taking actions that would help India benefit from these ties (taala) towards making the country a strong economy with powerful governance.