

India's Strategic Tilt: Global Alliances for National Gain

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Abstract

The research aims to explore India's strategic tilt towards the great powers. How it creates an effect on its national gains. Study of this research aims to dive into India's strategies by examining its geo-strategic location which is crucial for the global powers. By analyzing them this paper examines the motives, designs, and tactics of India to become a superpower and also the factors that are contributing to capturing the global powers' attention. This research questions what factors pitch in India's balancing act, specifically in dealing with the relations with the USA, China, and Russia. And in what ways does India's cultural diplomacy aid in shaping the global perception of the country? The research implies a qualitative method for data collection. Narrative techniques were used for data analysis. The findings of this research will conduce to the understanding of how India strategically plays in the international arena with the great powers and what are their assumptions on it. It is recommended that India play a positive role in the peaceful existence of neighboring nations and resolve all issues with other countries peacefully.

Keywords: India, Relations, strategic tilt, global alliances.

Introduction

The Indian subcontinent has always been the attention of the great powers due to its population, rich resources, and reserves. The US-China rivalry and the rise of China in the Indian Ocean, its OBOR project has created attention again towards India. The world's fastest-growing economy of the world, its interests are attached to the global powers. It aims to maximize its interests by maximizing its national gains from the global powers¹⁵.

The country has gained its values and traditions while actively participating in international politics. Through its alliances and partnerships, it aims to stand and secure its interest in the economy, trade security, etc. India has followed an independent foreign policy by keeping a distance and forming alliances with every country. While having relations with Russia by collaborating in Defence and dialogue firms, simultaneously, it has maintained relations with the US and China, following the containment policy of the US by accepting the QUAD and BRICS. Balancing is a trick for India and it has been following it since inception¹⁴.

It is becoming a part of alliances through which it can help itself flourish. Groups like BIMSTEC and SAARC, India are connecting for trade and commerce perspectives. Thus India's foreign policy has been evolving since the Cold War it has followed the non-alignment movement but now it is delicate towards becoming a regional power. This article will capture India's policies from the historical perspective as well as in the new era³.

Objective of the study

1. To explore India's strategies by examining its geo-strategic location which is crucial for the global powers in bring peace
2. To explore India's strategies by examining its geo-strategic location which is crucial for the global peace and neighbouring relation

Research questions

- Q.1. What factors pitch in India's balancing act, specifically in dealing with the relations with the USA, China, and Russia?
- Q.2. In what ways does India's cultural diplomacy aid in shaping the global perception of the country?

Hypothesis

India aligns with the global alliances through a soft balancing strategy for its national gains.

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Research gap

The research gaps that were seen while researching are under-discussed. There is very limited research on the role of non-state actors e.g. multinational companies, NGOs, etc. in shaping India's balancing tricks. Digging into further, in-depth analysis with future outcomes of the strategies implied by India is not discussed. There is a little debate of India getting used by the USA to contain China should be derailed and be spoken about in detail by the Indian authorities.

Theoretical framework

The concept implied in this paper is soft balancing. This idea was initiated in international relations by Robert J. Pape. It is a recent addition to the balance of power theory in which a nation uses non-military means like economy, alliances, cooperation, and cultural effectiveness to check the impact of a power state. In Indian foreign policy, soft balancing can be seen in its various forms as in diplomatic soft balancing, India is grabbing its position in firms like BRICS, QUAD, Bimsteck, SAARC, and many more.

Economically, India is trying for economic ties with every country for its economic growth also does not depend on a single power for economic strength it is coping to make economic relations with every country.

The most effective policy of India in terms of soft balancing is cultural diplomacy and narrative building. It projects its culture and its values positively in the world in the form of movies, and dramas which have a greater impact on every screen. India follows an independent foreign policy. It usually safeguards its national interest.

India does not get involved in direct military confrontation; rather it creates a strong narrative with its voice to be heard in the international arena. Just as climate change, in tourism, India has made everyone reluctant towards it by holding a key summit of G20 countries held in Srinagar. Many powerful states are coping with it in different domains of tourism.

India is using every soft power means to influence the powerful states. Either diplomatically, in economic assistance to Afghanistan, cultural ties, and cross-border crime prevention, India is increasing its dominance through this act of soft balancing.

Soft balancing is a tool through which India can achieve its goals. It is a smart way of achieving through various means. It makes the countries work together in a firm like BRICS as well as makes a state reluctant and self-sufficient, independent towards its policies and goals. But somehow soft balancing could not be working similarly as it works for some of the superpowers. While soft balancing has advantages the weakness should also be dealt with in¹³.

Significance of the study

This study has importance for the peaceful existence in South Asia. It is also important for global peace. It is also important to keep good and cordial relations with neighboring countries, particularly with Pakistan and China. The positivity of India will bring happiness to the whole planet.

Literature review

Numerous scholars have delved into the historical perspectives of India's foreign policy. During the Cold War, India's policy was non non-alignment movement. It gradually changed due to the change of the momentum in the international arena. Famous researchers like Bhabani Sen Gupta¹ had put down the Indian past decisions that have set the path for its strategic tilt.

The rise of China has created numerous researchers to delve into the research for China's rise and change in Indian foreign policy. Researcher and Indian strategic expert Raja Mohan² has analyzed the contribution of India's foreign policy changes regarding the evolving world order. He has emphasized that India should be strategic and practical in its policies especially in nowadays where power is an essential tool among the states.

Ashley J. Tellis³, a famous scholar and strategist has written about how India is concerned with changes in the world that are happening. With the increasing impact of China, India is moving towards the "strategic calculus" approach. He also emphasizes how India changes its approach carefully regarding the changes in the international world. Tellis highlights the importance of strategic

¹ Sen Gupta, Bhabani. "India in the twenty-first century." *International Affairs* 73, no. 2 (1997): 297-314.

² Mohan, C. Raja. "India and the changing geopolitics of the Indian Ocean." *Maritime Affairs* 6, no. 2 (2010): 1-12.

³ Blackwill, Robert D., and Ashley J. Tellis. "The India Dividend: New Delhi Remains Washington's Best Hope in Asia." *Foreign Aff.* 98 (2019): 173.

partnerships and that India should build strong friendships and work with them. Also, it should enhance its military according to the needs of security.

Tanvi Madan⁴ and Sumit Ganguly⁵ has emphasized the strategic partnership of the USA and India. The diplomatic ties, Defence collaboration, trade values and agreements, etc. with the US as this literature review seeks the importance of US relations with India.

Brahma Shelley⁶ a master in security issues and strategy has mostly written about geopolitics, international relations, and collaboration. Recently, he has provided the link of India to be a part of QUAD and its role in the alliance.

Paul Smith and Tara Kartha have emphasized that the Indian Ocean is becoming a battlefield for powerful nations such as America and China. India is making alliances with powerful nations

Historical Perspectives of India's relation and Superpowers Indulging in India

India's relationship with the superpowers has evolved since the Cold War. The former Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru linked the Indian foreign policy with the principles of panchsheel and non-alignment movement. Newly independent countries followed this nonalignment movement to remain fittest in the international arena, it was a smart move. India desired to maintain its territorial sovereignty and independent foreign policy as it did not join any superpower bloc like NATO or WARSAW. The relationship began to shift when the USA offered assistance to the prime minister of India in 1954. India's image as a soft power was printed when it helped the African national movements and supported the Indonesian colonial war to end the Dutch rule. India managed to make a different place on the world stage. The shift in relations deteriorated in 1962 when the Sino-India war occurred during these times India strengthened its ties with the Soviet Union¹¹.

In today's era big powers also stand with India. An Indian relationship is important for the superpowers due to various reasons. The most crucial reason is its geographic location. It lies in the center of the Indian Ocean which is a hub of economic zones. Indian Ocean is a key emerging zone for political purposes. The world's total maritime oil trade takes place from the Indian Ocean. Important choke points are present near to Indian Ocean such as the Strait of Malacca, the strait of Hormuz, and Bab-al-Mandeb. The Indian Ocean is a pivotal zone of strategic competition⁷.

Dealing with the Super Powers

Throughout history, India has built strong relations with the superpowers through various factors. India has involved its multi-alignment strategy. The relationship between India and the USA has evolved. After the independence, the relations with the USA were not that present as India was more prone towards the USSR. After the disintegration of the USSR, India was friendless. India accepted globalization, and gradually adopted liberalization which was an attractive feature of the USA as it shifted its economy towards capitalism. India attractively opened itself for investment. India's demographic features have a great advantage just as more young population working age groups attractive market, and cheap labor which serves as an attraction not only for the USA but also for foreign direct investment. The US-India trade relations were further assisted when in 2005 Open Skies Agreement was signed for commercial and trade agreements. Although the USA was not ready for India to become a nuclear country, imposed sanctions on India but later they were lifted by the Bush administration. The US-India relations were emphasized when India began to receive deliveries of the s-400 air defense system in December 2021. The US on the other hand has applied CAATSA on Turkey for buying s-400 from Russia but it didn't apply CAATSA on India. The recent developments of alliances to contain China like QUAD, and AUKUS have strengthened their friendship⁹.

India and Russia relations have evolved since the Cold War. Both countries have delved into strategic partnership, defense cooperation, and technology evolution. Russia was a supporter of India's industrialization process. Both have agreed on economic cooperation through various firms just like the international north-south transport corridor for trade purposes. India and Russia both are collaborating on international firms for instance BRICS.

Since China shifted from geopolitical to geoeconomic terms, it has been investing billions of dollars in its OBOR project. The US, Japan, France, and Australia perceive it as a threat. All of the

⁴ Madan, Tanvi. "A Note on the China-India-US Triangle and India's Strategy." *for India* (2020): 194.

⁵ Ganguly, Sumit. "India as a Great Power?." *The Rise of India as a World Power* (2023): 10.

⁶ Chellaney, Brahma. "Rising Powers, Rising Tensions." *The SAIS Review of International Affairs* 32, no. 2 (2012): 99-108.

states are considering a strategic partnership with India. The Quad, military exercises just as Malabar are to counter China as well as India's dominant emergence in the Indian Ocean. Although China is a rival to the USA still India is investing and trading with it. India is heavily dependent upon Chinese equipment machinery, home appliances, etc.

Tactics India plays to keep the superpowers in hand

India strategically is balancing through a combination of different tactics. India does not rely on a single alliance. This creates flexibility in engaging in global dynamics. With a growing economy, military capabilities, and diplomacy India is far ahead. India is maintaining a balancing act by not relying on a single power, as it trades with China, Russia, and the USA.

India is creating a new world order as it stays away from military alliances but still supports and trades with those countries e.g. NATO, India is not a part of it nor does it seek to be a part of any military alliance but in terms of fostering its capabilities it is playing a crucial part in BRICS and QUAD⁸.

It also enjoys the leverage of being the only country to get nominated for the permanent Security Council member, every state is in favor except China. India has designed its domestic policies which attract the global powers to do business and initiatives in 2015 Prime Minister Narendra Modi proposed the idea of an international solar alliance through which countries in the tropics can enjoy and rely on natural solar energy, not on fossil fuels. More than 100 countries have joined this council for future energy gains. These types of tactics it is playing to make itself a better state to become a power⁵.

The bilateral trade of India between the two rivals China and the USA has defined India to be balancing and playing in between the states¹². According to the statistics, the US has toppled China to become India's top trading partner by the studies of FY 2021-22.⁷ Although India is actively participating in importing defense supplies from Russia and America even from Israel it has a good amount of goods exchange in terms of defense supplies. For instance, recently, India has procured spice bombs from Israel worth 200 million dollars.⁸

Despite all these factors, India is actively participating in international summits such as G20, BRICS, etc. which makes India's democratic values more prominent towards the great powers.

India's portraying of its soft image through cultural diplomacy and Bollywood

India, a well-known player in the international arena, has numerous tools to deploy its soft image through cultural diplomacy and narrative building through Bollywood movies. The yoga day, set by the United Nations which was initiated by India is a perfect example fitting in cultural diplomacy. From succulent cuisines, many foreigners are attracted to Indian cuisine and their clothes. Even Pakistan has deep-rooted followers that follow the Indian trend. The most famous designer, Sabya Sachi's be seen worldwide. The world's most influential actors and players are from India, an example would be Mukesh Ambani, and the world's richest person is from India.⁹ The movies which are made by Indians have a strong narrative that creates an impact on the viewers such as *Phantom*, *Ek Tha Tiger*, and many others have deployed their message in the youth even if it is a lie it is portrayed internationally. Many of the artists are collaborating with Indian actors such as Ashwariya Bachan, and Deepika Padukone, and the most prominent marriage of Nick Jonas with Priyanka Chopra sets a perfect example of cultural fusion in the West by India¹⁰.

Conclusion

India is making a strategic relationship with the powerful states. It is sometimes called a complicated chess game. With India making powerful relations for its relative gain, countries such as the USA however are feeding India to use against China's hegemonic position. The research concludes that India is trying to be a hegemon by maintaining its position in the international world. Its soft balancing technique is making the countries fall for it. The strategic position of India makes it crucial for the states to be friends. The world keeps changing day by day and India is making alliances day by day. Since its inception, the policy of non-alignment, up till now has balanced its relations with every nation to keep itself engaged in world affairs. By becoming a part of BRICS, and other alliances it is

⁷ <https://www.india-briefing.com/news/us-emerges-as-indias-largest-trade-partner-in-fy-2022-surpasses-china-25190.html/>

⁸ <https://www.businessinsider.in/defense/news/list-of-10-latest-defence-deals-that-india-has-signed-in-the-last-six-months/slidelist/80926534.cms#slideid=80927142>

⁹ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/chasewithorn/2023/04/04/the-25-richest-people-in-the-world-2023/>

dreaming of becoming a hegemon or the next superpower. However, it can only be achieved when India has peaceful relations with every state in its region.

Recommendations

It is recommended that India play a positive role in the peaceful existence of neighboring nations and resolve all issues with other countries peacefully. It is suggested that India may uphold transparent relations with neighboring countries, particularly with China and Pakistan for bringing peace in the region and the whole World.

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