

FOREIGN POLICY OF INDIA

COURSE CODE: M23PS05DE

Discipline Specific Elective Course

Post Graduate Programme in Political Science

Self Learning Material



SREENARAYANAGURU
OPEN UNIVERSITY

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The State University for Education, Training and Research in Blended Format, Kerala

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Foreign Policy of India

Course Code: M23PS05DE

Semester- IV

Discipline Specific Elective Course
Postgraduate Programme
in Political Science
Self Learning Material
(with Model question paper sets)



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The State University for Education, Training and Research in Blended Format, Kerala



Foreign Policy of India

Course Code: M23PS05DE

Semester- IV

Discipline Specific Elective Course

Postgraduate Programme

in Political Science

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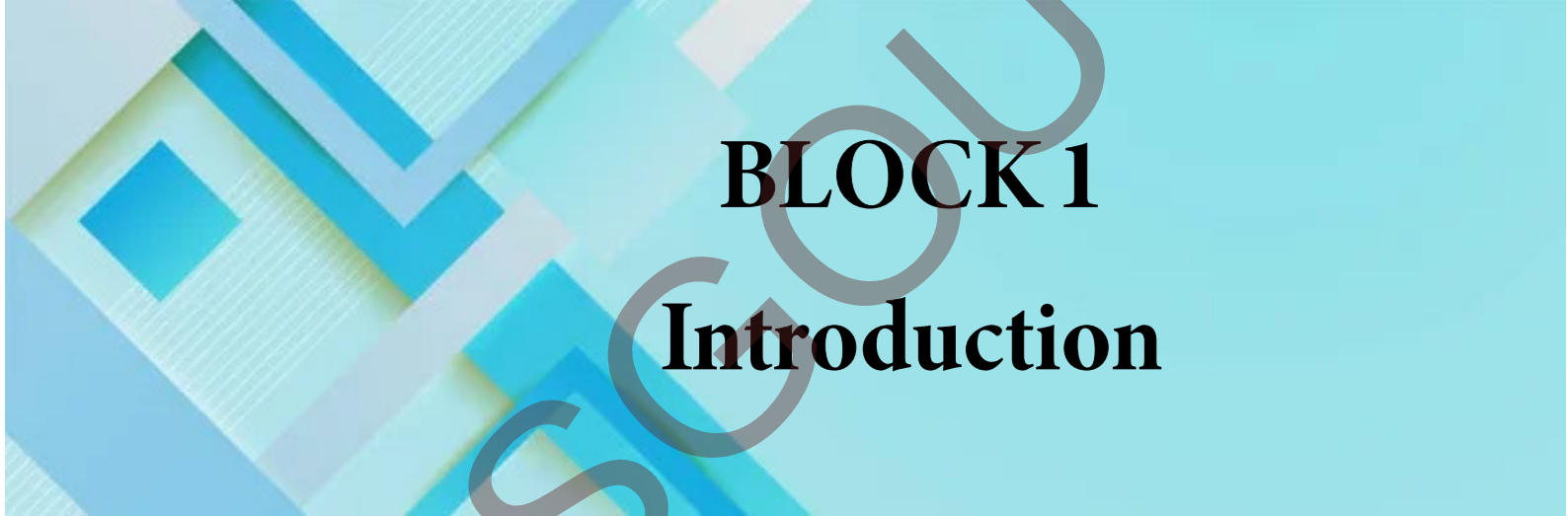


Regards,
Dr. Jagathy Raj V. P.

01-06-2026

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BLOCK 1

Introduction

and responsible role in the world. They believed India should avoid military blocs and support newly independent nations. These ideas guided India's actions for many years (Ganguly, 2016, pp. 2–4).

However, foreign policy does not remain the same forever. Over the years, India has faced new pressures, including wars, border disputes, economic challenges, and global changes. Each new situation forced India to adjust its policies. Scholars note that Indian foreign policy shows both continuity (old principles) and change (new strategies) as the country responds to a changing world (Harshe & Seethi, 2005).

Because so many different factors influence foreign policy, scholars developed several approaches to understand it. These approaches help us see different layers of foreign policy — power, cooperation, identity, institutions, and global inequality. In this unit, we study these approaches with simple explanations and examples from India.

Keywords

National Interest, Power, Identity, Sovereignty, Security, Cooperation, Approaches, Realism, Liberalism, Constructivism, Postcolonial/Marxist approach

Discussion

Foreign policy comprises the decisions and actions by which a nation engages with other nations and international organisations. It encompasses the nation's articulations, conduct, and the nature of the relationships it endeavours to establish with the global community. This policy is influenced by numerous factors, as countries do not act based on a singular reason. Rather, they respond to multiple pressures concurrently, including security requirements, economic interests, political values, and historical experiences. Consequently, scholars have formulated various frameworks to analyse the motivations and behaviours of nations. Each framework emphasizes a different aspect of foreign policy (Ganguly, 2016).

One of the first key factors in the study of foreign policy is national interest, which refers to what a country seeks to achieve in its relations with the outside world. National interests may include security, economic growth, political influence, access to resources, territorial integrity, and international status. Different countries prioritise different interests depending on their historical experiences, geographic position, level



of development, and global environment. National interest is not fixed; it changes over time as international conditions and domestic priorities change. Closely connected to national interest is the concept of power. In foreign policy, power does not mean only military strength. It also includes economic capacity, technological advancement, diplomatic influence, and cultural appeal. Together, these elements are often described as a country's comprehensive national power. States rely on different forms of power in different situations, depending on their goals and the challenges they face. We also use the term identity in foreign policy. Identity refers to how a country sees itself and how it wishes to be perceived by others. A state's identity is shaped by its values, political ideas, social beliefs, and historical experiences, and this self-image influences foreign policy choices. Countries with similar material conditions may behave differently because they see themselves differently. Foreign policy is also shaped by historical experiences. Past experiences such as wars, colonisation, alliances, or long-standing rivalries leave deep marks on national thinking and influence how states view sovereignty, security, cooperation, and external intervention. In addition, foreign policy increasingly involves cooperation, as many contemporary challenges—such as trade disputes, climate change, terrorism, pandemics, and environmental problems—cannot be addressed by states acting alone. International and regional institutions provide platforms for dialogue and collective action. Finally, foreign policy is shaped by domestic factors, including political leadership, government institutions, bureaucratic capacity, public opinion, and available resources. Decisions are often the result of internal debates, institutional routines, and administrative constraints, making foreign policy not only an external activity but also a deeply domestic process.

Because foreign policy has a wide range of dimensions, including security, ideas, economy, identity, history, and institutions, scholars have developed many approaches. No single approach explains everything. Each gives us a useful way to analyse India's behaviour. In the following section, we will examine the major approaches, including Realism, Liberalism, Constructivism, Role Theory, Bureaucratic Politics, and Marxist/Postcolonial perspectives. Each approach will be explained in simple language with Indian examples.

1.1.1 Discussion

Scholars have developed several approaches to understand the different actors and dimensions of foreign policy. No single approach can fully explain a country's foreign policy behaviour. Therefore, it is useful to study foreign policy through multiple perspectives. In this unit, the discussion draws on the Realist, Liberal, Constructivist, Historical and Role Theory, Bureaucratic and Decision-Making, Marxist/Dependency, and Postcolonial approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of foreign policy.

1.1.1.1 Realist Approach: Power, Security and Strategic Autonomy

Realism is one of the oldest and most widely used approaches in the study of foreign policy. Realists begin by stating that the world lacks a single authority or global government to protect countries, hence it is anarchic in nature. Each country must therefore look after its own safety. This creates a situation where nations worry about threats, competition, and the balance of power (Ganguly, 2016).

Realism has been shaped by several influential thinkers. Thucydides, an ancient Greek historian, is considered an early realist for describing how fear and power shaped relations among Greek city-states. In the 20th century, Hans Morgenthau became the leading voice of classical realism, arguing that politics is governed by objective laws rooted in human nature. Later, Kenneth Waltz introduced structural realism, which focuses on the anarchic international system rather than human nature. Other important contributors include John Mearsheimer, known for offensive realism, and Stephen Walt, who emphasises threat perception. These scholars collectively shaped the foundations of realist thinking.

A central assumption of realism is that states are the primary actors in international politics. Realists focus on states because they possess military power and make authoritative decisions about war, peace, and diplomacy. States are assumed to behave rationally, meaning they assess threats, calculate risks, and choose actions that protect their security and survival. In an uncertain and competitive international environment, realists argue that countries cannot rely fully on trust or goodwill. Although states may speak the language of friendship and cooperation, their behaviour is ultimately guided by national

- ❑ Widely used approach

- Foundations of realist thinking

- ❑ States are the primary actors



❑ Realism and India's foreign policy

6

At the same time, realism cannot fully explain India's foreign policy. It struggles to account for the early emphasis on moral leadership, anti-colonial solidarity, and peaceful cooperation after independence, which were shaped more by ideas, identity, and historical experience than by material power. These limits point to the need for complementary approaches.

The Shock of 1962

- The 1962 Sino-Indian War marked a major turning point.
- India increased defence spending, created new army divisions, and began modernising its military in the years that followed.
- This shift showed a clear move toward realist thinking in national security.

1.1.2 Liberal Approach: Cooperation, Trade and - Institutions

Liberalism offers a different and more optimistic way of looking at foreign policy. Instead of seeing the world mainly as a place of conflict, liberals see the possibility of cooperation. They argue that countries benefit from working together for their shared interests, such as through trade, international organisations, and development. Cooperation reduces conflict and increases prosperity.

Liberalism has a long intellectual history beginning with Immanuel Kant, who proposed that republics (democracies) are less likely to fight wars and that international cooperation promotes peace. In the modern period, scholars like Woodrow Wilson promoted liberal internationalism, advocating for the League of Nations. Later, thinkers such as Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye developed theories of complex interdependence, arguing that states are connected through multiple channels beyond military power. Andrew Moravcsik contributed by emphasising the role of domestic politics in shaping foreign policy preferences.

☐ Immanuel Kant

☐ Interdependence

A key idea in liberalism is interdependence. When states trade, invest, and interact frequently, they become economically linked. This reduces the likelihood of war because conflict becomes costly. Liberal scholars believe that



❑ Liberalism in Indian reforms

strong economic connections encourage peace and create mutual benefits. Liberalism also highlights the importance of international institutions such as the United Nations, World Trade Organization, and regional organizations. These institutions create rules, resolve disputes, and encourage states to follow predictable patterns of behaviour. They help reduce misunderstandings and provide platforms for dialogue. Another aspect of liberalism is its emphasis on domestic politics. Liberal theorists argue that a state's internal character matters. For example, democracies may behave differently in foreign policy compared to authoritarian states. Public opinion, political parties, and civil society can shape foreign policy choices.

Liberalism is especially useful for understanding India after the 1991 economic reforms. When India opened up its economy, trade and investment became central to its foreign policy. India began to build deeper economic relations with East Asia, the United States, Europe, and the Gulf. Liberal ideas explain why India focused more on markets, technology partnerships, and global economic institutions during this period (Engaging the World, pp. 45–52). It also explains India's participation in international organisations. India plays an active role in the United Nations, the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the G20, the ASEAN Regional Forum, and other platforms. India believes that global rules and institutions help create stability. These platforms allow India to present its views, build partnerships, and solve problems peacefully. Another liberal idea is interdependence, the belief that countries connected through trade are less likely to fight. This helps explain why India continues to trade with China even when political relations are tense. Liberal scholars argue that economic links can reduce misunderstandings, increase communication, and make conflict costly. However, liberalism also has limits. It cannot fully explain why India and China still face serious border disputes despite strong economic relations. Nor can it explain situations in which security and strategic concerns outweigh economic cooperation. In these cases, realist ideas still matter. Foreign policy often requires striking a balance between cooperation and caution.

1.1.3 Constructivist Approach

Constructivism shifts attention away from material factors such as power and wealth and toward ideas, beliefs, and identity. It argues that foreign policy is not shaped only by power or economic interests. Instead, it is also shaped by a

country's understanding of itself and its interpretation of the world. Constructivist scholars say that states act based on “who they think they are.” Identity, values, and historical memories, therefore, become important.

❑ Challenged power-based explanations

Constructivism was shaped mainly by scholars who challenged materialist and power-based explanations. Alexander Wendt is the most influential figure; he famously argued that "anarchy is what states make of it," meaning that state behaviour depends on shared ideas rather than material forces. Nicholas Onuf introduced the term "constructivism," while Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink showed how norms influence state behaviour. Peter Katzenstein highlighted the importance of culture and identity in shaping national security. One central idea in constructivism is that states act based on their identity, their sense of who they are and what values they represent. Identity influences how states define their goals. For example, a state that sees itself as peaceful will behave differently from a state that sees itself as a regional power. Constructivism also emphasises the role of norms, which are shared expectations about appropriate behaviour. Norms influence how states judge what is acceptable in international politics. Over time, norms become part of a state's foreign policy culture. Unlike realism or liberalism, constructivism does not assume that states always act rationally in a narrow sense. Instead, it argues that states act on the basis of meanings, historical memories, and moral commitments. Foreign policy, therefore, cannot be understood without studying the social and cultural context in which decisions are made. Constructivists highlight that ideas are powerful: they shape national interests, influence diplomatic choices, and guide state behaviour even when material incentives suggest alternative actions.

❑ Constructivism and early foreign policy

Constructivism explains India's early foreign policy well, as India saw itself as a peaceful, anti-colonial nation after independence. Indian leaders believed that India should support global peace, cooperation, and decolonisation. These ideas came from the freedom struggle, which created a strong moral identity for the new nation (Prasad, 1960). Policies such as nonalignment and Panchsheel reflected this identity. India did not want to join either the Western or the Soviet bloc during the Cold War because it believed in independent judgment and peaceful coexistence. Constructivism helps us understand these choices by showing how India's beliefs influenced its behaviour even when power politics suggested otherwise (Ganguly, 2016). Constructivism can also explain India's long-



□ Limits

- ❑ Countries behave according to the “role”

☐ Social psychology
and international
relations

Role theory draws on social psychology and international relations. Kalevi J. Holsti is the most important scholar in this field. He introduced the idea of "national role conceptions," explaining how leaders define appropriate roles for their states. George H. Mead and later scholars such as Stephen G. Walker, Sebastian Harnisch, Cameron Thies, and Lisbeth Aggestam expanded role theory by examining how domestic politics, leadership beliefs, and historical narratives shape foreign policy roles. Historical experience plays an important part in shaping national roles. Events such as struggles for independence, wars, and diplomatic traditions influence the roles a state adopts. These roles do not change quickly; they tend to persist unless new circumstances challenge them. Leadership also matters. Leaders use foreign policy to express certain values or visions. Their beliefs and experiences influence the roles they choose for the state. When leaders change, some roles may evolve while others remain stable. Role theory helps explain why states sometimes act consistently over long periods, even when the material environment changes. It provides insight into the symbolic and identity-based dimensions of foreign policy.

❑ India and role theory

India's foreign policy after 1947 is a strong example of this approach. India's historical experiences strongly influenced its role. As a country emerging from colonisation, India felt a responsibility to support other newly independent nations. This encouraged India to take the role of a leader of the Global South. Scholars like Prasad (1960) note that India's foreign policy cannot be understood without recognising this historical consciousness. Leaders also play an important part in role theory. Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru believed India should act as a moral force for peace, disarmament, and justice. His vision shaped India's role as a peaceful, responsible, and independent actor. Sumit Ganguly (2016) observes that these beliefs guided many decisions even when conditions were difficult. Role theory also helps explain why India continues to participate in UN peacekeeping missions and support multilateralism. India has long played a responsible role as an international actor, committed to cooperation and global stability. This role continues across different governments and political parties. However, role expectations can sometimes limit flexibility. When India needed to act more assertively for security reasons, such as during the 1971 Bangladesh crisis, its actions did not fit neatly into the peaceful role it had built earlier. Role theory helps us understand these tensions between identity and necessity.

India's Self-Chosen Roles

India has chosen several roles over time:

- Leader of the Global South
- Peace promoter
- Bridge between great powers
- Defender of sovereignty

These roles influence how India responds to world events.

1.1.5 Bureaucratic / Decision-Making Approach: Institutions, Processes & State Capacity

❑ Outcome of interactions

The bureaucratic approach argues that foreign policy is not made by a single leader or a unified state. Instead, it is the outcome of interactions among many government institutions and officials. Each institution—such as foreign ministries,



defence establishments, intelligence agencies, and economic departments—has its own interests, expertise, and routines.

□ Graham Allison

This approach is rooted in the work of Graham Allison, who introduced the bureaucratic politics model and the organisational process model in his study of the Cuban Missile Crisis. According to Allison, states do not act as unified actors; instead, policy outcomes result from bargaining among bureaucracies. James March and Herbert Simon also influenced this approach through their work on organisational behaviour and bounded rationality. These scholars highlight how routines, institutional culture, and limited information shape decision-making. The approach highlights the role of bureaucratic politics, where different agencies may compete for resources, influence, or control over policy areas. Decisions are therefore shaped by negotiation, compromise, and institutional culture. State capacity is also a key idea in this approach. State capacity refers to the ability of government institutions to collect information, coordinate across ministries, implement policies, and sustain diplomatic engagement. Limited capacity can restrict a country's influence abroad, while strong capacity can enhance it.

Overall, the bureaucratic approach reminds us that foreign policy is shaped not only by ideas or power but also by administrative structures, institutional strengths, and internal decision-making processes.

□ Institutional structure

In India, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) plays a central role, working alongside the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), the Ministry of Defence, intelligence agencies, and economic ministries. Each institution brings different priorities. For example, diplomats may prefer dialogue, while security agencies may focus on threats. Scholars also point out issues of state capacity in India's foreign policy. India has a relatively small diplomatic corps compared to major powers. This limits the speed and scale of its international engagement. The Oxford Handbook notes that despite increasing global ambition, India's institutional capacity remains stretched (Malone, Mohan & Raghavan, 2015).

□ Explain continuity across governments

This approach is useful to explain why some policies take time or face delays. It also helps explain continuity across governments, because bureaucratic structures remain even when political leaders change. However, this approach cannot explain why a particular policy is chosen. It explains how

decisions are made and implemented, not always why. For that, we still need realist, liberal, or constructivist explanations.

1.1.6 Marxist and Dependency Approaches

❑ Highlight global inequality

Marxist and dependency approaches to foreign policy highlight global inequality and the unequal distribution of wealth and power. It argues that powerful countries dominate weaker ones through economic, political, and ideological control. Dependency theorists emphasise the economic dimension. They argue that developing countries are often locked into unequal trade and financial relationships that limit their autonomy. From this perspective, foreign policy is shaped by efforts to reduce dependence on powerful states. Postcolonial approaches, on the other hand, emphasise the cultural and historical impact of colonialism. They argue that colonial experiences continue to influence how states see themselves and how others treat them. Postcolonial scholars study how ideas of race, identity, and historical injustice shape foreign policy positions. Both Marxist and postcolonial perspectives highlight structural constraints in the international system. They draw attention to issues of exploitation, unequal development, and struggles for justice. These approaches are useful for understanding why developing countries often advocate for fairer global governance and resist pressure from powerful states.

1.1.7 Postcolonial Approach

❑ Unfair global structures

Postcolonial scholars show how colonial history shapes current global relations and how countries like India respond to these structures (Harshe & Seethi, 2005). India's foreign policy often reflects concerns about fairness in the world order. India has supported reform of the UN Security Council, defended the rights of developing countries, and taken strong positions on issues like trade justice and climate equity. These positions come not only from national interest but also from India's historical memory of colonial exploitation. This approach also helps explain India's leadership in groups such as the Non-Aligned Movement, the G-77, and BRICS. These platforms allow India to challenge unfair global structures and promote a more equal international system.

However, this approach does not fully explain India's security concerns or strategic decisions. It also struggles to explain its cooperation with major powers, such as the United States, especially after 2005. Thus, it provides one important dimension, but must be combined with other perspectives.



India's long-standing support for developing countries stems from its shared colonial history and commitment to fairness. This identity continues to shape India's positions from anti-colonial struggles to debates on trade, climate, and global governance.

Foreign policy is complex. Each approach we studied highlights one important aspect of how countries behave. Realism focuses on power and security. Liberalism emphasises cooperation and institutions. Constructivism draws attention to ideas, identity, and values. Role theory explains how historical experience and leadership shape national roles. The bureaucratic approach shows how internal government structures influence decisions. Finally, postcolonial and Marxist perspectives highlight inequality and global power structures.

1. What is foreign policy, and why do countries need it? Give one example from India's experience.
2. Which approach focuses mainly on power, security, and national survival in an anarchic world? Name the two key thinkers associated with it.
3. How did the 1962 Sino-Indian War change India's foreign policy thinking? Which approach best explains this shift?
4. What is the central idea of the Liberal approach, and how does it explain India's trade relations with China despite political tensions?
5. According to the Constructivist approach, why did India choose non-alignment during the Cold War instead of joining either superpower bloc?
6. What does Role Theory suggest about how a country behaves in international relations? Name two "roles" that India has chosen for itself.

7. Why does the Bureaucratic approach say that foreign policy is not always made by a single leader? What role does the Ministry of External Affairs play in India?
8. How does the Postcolonial/Marxist approach explain India's support for the Non-Aligned Movement, G-77, and fairer global governance?

Assignment

1. Critically examine the major theoretical approaches to foreign policy analysis — realism, liberalism, and constructivism — and assess which framework most effectively explains India's foreign policy behaviour since independence.
2. How do comparative and area studies approaches contribute to a more nuanced understanding of foreign policy? Discuss with reference to India and at least one other Asian state.
3. Evaluate the role of domestic determinants — such as public opinion, interest groups, and bureaucratic politics — in shaping India's foreign policy decisions. Illustrate your answer with at least two case studies.
4. Analyze the contribution of political psychology to foreign policy analysis. How do the personal beliefs, perceptions, and cognitive styles of individual leaders influence foreign policy outcomes in India?

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Suggested Reading

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Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

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UNIT 2

Determinants of Foreign Policy

Learning Outcomes

After studying this unit, the learner will be able to:

- explain the meaning of determinants of foreign policy
- identify the major domestic, external, and systemic determinants shaping foreign policy
- analyse how different determinants interact in shaping foreign policy decisions

Background

In daily life, decisions are seldom based on just one reason. Whether choosing a career, moving to a new location, or responding to a crisis, multiple factors influence the outcome. Personal background, resources, social surroundings, past experiences, and external pressures all play a role. This same principle holds at the state level. Foreign policy decisions are influenced by a wide range of factors. They are shaped not only by internal factors such as geography, economic capacity, political conditions, leadership preferences, and institutional constraints, but also by external pressures from the international environment. These different influences often interact, sometimes pulling policy in various directions, making the process quite complex. Understanding foreign policy is more than just knowing what a country does; it is about exploring why those decisions are made and what influences them. These influences are called the determinants of foreign policy. By learning about these determinants, we go beyond simple facts and start to see the deeper forces that shape how states behave on the world stage.

Keywords

International System; National Interest; Leadership; Political Institutions; Economy; History; Geography; Culture; State Capacity.

Discussion

The term 'determinants of foreign policy' refers to the various factors and conditions that shape how a country develops and manages its external relations. These determinants help explain why nations act differently in comparable situations and why a country's foreign policy may evolve. They function both as constraints and enablers, influencing the options available and the decisions ultimately made by policymakers.

It is essential to differentiate determinants from the approaches or theories covered earlier. Approaches such as realism or liberalism offer frameworks for understanding how foreign policy is analysed, while determinants are the real forces—material, political, social, and historical—that influence policy choices. In essence, approaches focus on analytical methods, whereas determinants reveal the actual factors shaping foreign policy.

Scholars commonly classify the determinants of foreign policy into three broad categories: domestic, external, and systemic. This classification provides a clear and structured way to organise the many influences that shape foreign policy decisions and helps in analysing otherwise complex foreign policy behaviour. Foreign policy outcomes are seldom shaped by a single determinant. Rather, they result from the interaction of domestic conditions, external relationships, and systemic pressures. Recognising this interaction is essential for developing a comprehensive and balanced understanding of foreign policy. The sections that follow examine each category of determinants in detail and explain how they influence foreign policy behaviour.

1.2.1 Discussion

Foreign policy decisions are influenced by various factors acting at different levels, rather than a single cause. Scholars such as James N. Rosenau (2006) and Valerie M. Hudson & Benjamin S. Day (2019), in the field of Foreign Policy Analysis, highlight that foreign policy results from the interplay of internal conditions, external ties, and broader systemic forces. For clarity, these determinants are often categorized into domestic, external, and systemic groups. Domestic factors originate within the state and shape its priorities and capabilities. External factors stem from interactions with other nations and regional contexts. Systemic factors function at



the level of the entire international system. Rarely do foreign policy outcomes result from a single determinant; instead, they emerge from ongoing interactions among domestic, external, and systemic forces, which can either strengthen or limit one another. To understand foreign policy, it is essential to analyze how these forces operate together and how their significance might change over time and different situations. The following sections will detail each category of determinants and their influence on foreign policy behaviour.

1.2.1.1 Domestic Determinants of Foreign Policy

Domestic determinants are internal factors within a state that shape how foreign policy is formulated and implemented. These determinants influence a country's priorities, capabilities, and style of engagement with the outside world. In the following sub-sections, foreign policy is examined through key domestic determinants, including geography, historical experience, economic conditions, political leadership, domestic political system, bureaucracy and state capacity, and culture, ideology, and national identity. Each of these factors plays a distinct role in shaping foreign policy choices, and together they help explain why states respond differently to similar international situations.

□ Geography

Geography is one of the most enduring domestic determinants of foreign policy because it shapes a state's external behaviour in relatively permanent ways. Scholars such as Halford Mackinder and later Nicholas Spykman, writing within the tradition of classical geopolitics, argued that a country's physical location, size, terrain, climate, and access to seas strongly influence its security concerns and strategic priorities. Unlike leadership or policy preferences, geography changes slowly, making its influence long-term and structural. As a result, states must formulate foreign policy within the geographical constraints and opportunities they face (Mackinder, 1904; Spykman, 1942).

□ Threat perception and strategic calculation

Geography affects foreign policy primarily through threat perception and strategic calculation. Countries sharing long land borders often face greater security challenges than island states or geographically isolated countries. Natural features such as mountains, deserts, and oceans can act as defensive barriers, while open terrain may increase vulnerability. Access to seas and navigable waterways enhances trade, naval power, and diplomatic reach, leading many coastal states to emphasise maritime security and commercial diplomacy. In contrast,

landlocked states tend to prioritise regional cooperation and transit arrangements. In this way, geography shapes both security strategies and patterns of external engagement. Geography also shapes foreign policy through resource distribution and environmental conditions. The availability of natural resources influences external economic relations, while climatic factors affect issues such as food security, water sharing, migration, and climate cooperation. These geographical realities increasingly shape diplomatic priorities in a world facing environmental stress and resource competition.

☐ Historical experience

The importance of geography can be illustrated through the case of India. India's vast territory, diverse terrain, long land borders with several countries, and extensive coastline have significantly shaped its foreign policy priorities. Its location in South Asia places it close to regions of strategic importance, including the Indian Ocean, West Asia, Central Asia, and East Asia. India's maritime geography has led to a growing emphasis on ocean security, trade routes, and regional connectivity, while its land borders have made territorial security and neighbourhood relations central concerns of foreign policy (Ganguly, 2016; Malone et.al., 2015).

☐ Past experiences influences

Historical experience is a crucial domestic determinant of foreign policy because it shapes how states understand international politics and interpret present challenges. Scholars such as E. H. Carr have argued that foreign policy cannot be separated from historical context, as past experiences influence how states define interests, assess threats, and evaluate cooperation. Wars, colonial rule, alliances, and diplomatic successes or failures leave enduring impressions that shape foreign policy traditions. History, therefore, provides the background assumptions within which foreign policy decisions are made rather than serving merely as a record of past events (Carr, 1939).

☐ Processes of memory, learning, and caution

Historical experience influences foreign policy primarily through processes of memory, learning, and caution. States often draw lessons from past events and apply them, sometimes selectively, to contemporary situations. Experiences of defeat may encourage caution and defensive strategies, while experiences of success may foster confidence and assertiveness. Historical grievances can sustain long-term rivalries, while shared experiences may support cooperation. In this sense, foreign policy is often guided not only by present conditions but also by interpretations of the past. History



□ Economic Conditions

❑ Economic strength underpins national power

- ❑ Opportunity and constraint

22



foreign policy goals. As a result, economic priorities often drive foreign policy objectives, including trade agreements, market access, energy security, and technological partnerships.

☐ Political Leadership

The importance of economic conditions is evident in India. Scholars of Indian foreign policy note that for several decades after independence, limited economic capacity constrained India's external engagement and encouraged a cautious foreign policy orientation. The economic reforms initiated in the early 1990s marked a significant shift, as higher growth and global integration expanded India's diplomatic and strategic options. Since then, trade, investment, energy security, and technology cooperation have become central concerns of India's foreign policy. This transformation highlights how changes in domestic economic conditions can reshape foreign policy priorities and external behaviour (Ganguly, 2016; Bajpai & Pant, 2013).

☐ Role in interpreting the national interest

Political leadership is a key domestic determinant of foreign policy because leaders play a central role in interpreting the national interest and choosing among available policy options. Scholars such as Margaret G. Hermann and Valerie Hudson have emphasised that foreign policy decisions are shaped not only by structural constraints but also by leaders' beliefs, personalities, and perceptions. Leadership matters most during periods of crisis or uncertainty, when established rules and routines offer limited guidance and individual judgement becomes crucial (Hudson & Day, 2019).

Leadership influences foreign policy through decision-making style, risk orientation, ideological commitments, and diplomatic preferences. Some leaders favour caution and continuity, while others pursue assertive or transformative policies. Differences in leadership can therefore result in changes in tone, priorities, and methods of foreign policy, even when broader national interests remain relatively stable. Leadership effects are particularly visible in agenda-setting and crisis management.

☐ Domestic Political System

The role of political leadership is clearly evident in India's foreign policy. Scholars note that different Indian leaders have left distinct imprints on foreign policy orientation, reflecting their ideological beliefs, historical experiences, and assessments of the international environment. While early leaders emphasised autonomy and moral leadership, later leaders operated in a more globalised, competitive context, placing greater emphasis on economic diplomacy and strategic partnerships. These



State capacity also affects a country's ability to sustain diplomatic engagement and respond to international challenges. Countries with well-trained bureaucracies, sufficient resources, and efficient administrative systems are better able to manage complex negotiations, maintain overseas missions, and implement long-term strategies. In contrast, limited administrative capacity can constrain a country's foreign policy ambitions, delay implementation, and reduce its international influence, regardless of its intentions or goals.

❑ Culture, Ideology and National Identity

In India, scholars note that foreign policy is shaped by the interaction among multiple institutions, including the Ministry of External Affairs, the Prime Minister's Office, and sector-specific ministries. While political leadership sets overall direction, bureaucratic expertise and coordination affect execution. Constraints related to staffing and institutional capacity have at times limited the reach and speed of India's diplomatic engagement, highlighting the role of bureaucracy as a determinant of foreign policy (Harshe & Seethi, 2005; Ganguly, 2016).

Culture, ideology, and national identity shape foreign policy by influencing how states perceive the international system and define appropriate behaviour. Scholars such as Alexander Wendt and Peter Katzenstein argue that foreign policy cannot be fully understood without examining ideas, norms, and identity. These factors shape how states interpret threats, choose partners, and justify actions, often beyond material considerations (Wendt, 1999).

❑ Ideology and identity

Ideology and identity affect foreign policy by setting normative boundaries on acceptable conduct. States often act in ways that are consistent with their self-image, even when choices may appear materially advantageous. Foreign policy preferences regarding peace, intervention, cooperation, or leadership are often shaped by ideological commitments and national narratives. These influences help explain continuity in foreign policy behaviour that cannot be fully accounted for by power or economic interests alone.

In India's case, scholars emphasise that foreign policy has long been influenced by ideas of autonomy, peace, and moral responsibility rooted in historical and civilisational self-understanding. Early emphasis on nonalignment and peaceful coexistence reflected this identity, and elements of this outlook continue to shape India's diplomatic style. Even as India's



foreign policy has become more pragmatic, identity-based concerns remain visible in its emphasis on autonomy and multilateral engagement (Prasad, 1996; Bajpai & Pant, 2013).

1.2.2 External Determinants of Foreign Policy: An Overview

□ Regional Environment and Neighbourhood

External determinants refer to factors outside the state that influence foreign policy choices. These determinants arise from a state's interactions with other states and its position within the international environment. Unlike domestic determinants, which shape internal capacities, external determinants operate through pressure, opportunity, and response. They often compel states to adjust policies in reaction to developments beyond their control. The following sub-sections examine how regional environments, diplomatic relationships, alliances, and major power behaviour act as external determinants shaping foreign policy choices.

The regional environment is often the most immediate external determinant of foreign policy because developments in neighbouring states directly affect security and stability. Scholars such as Barry Buzan argue that security dynamics tend to cluster regionally, creating patterns of threat perception and interaction that strongly influence state behaviour. As a result, foreign policy priorities are frequently shaped more by regional concerns than by distant global issues (Buzan, 1991).

The regional environment shapes foreign policy through both cooperation and conflict. Regional organisations, trade arrangements, and security dialogues provide opportunities for collaboration, while unresolved disputes and power asymmetries generate tension. States must constantly balance regional engagement with national interests, adjusting policies as regional conditions evolve. Stability in the neighbourhood often enables broader global engagement, while regional instability can constrain foreign policy options.

□ Bilateral and Multilateral Relationships

In India's case, the regional environment of South Asia has been a persistent external determinant of foreign policy. Relations with neighbouring countries, issues of border security, regional cooperation, and cross-border challenges have required sustained diplomatic attention. India's foreign policy has therefore devoted significant effort to managing its immediate neighbourhood while simultaneously seeking broader regional and global engagement.

Bilateral and multilateral relationships influence foreign policy by shaping diplomatic options and strategic choices. Scholars such as Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye emphasise that growing interdependence increases the importance of sustained diplomatic engagement and institutional cooperation. Foreign policy is therefore shaped not only by power considerations but also by patterns of interaction and mutual dependence (Keohane & Nye, 1977).

Multilateral institutions and forums influence foreign policy by promoting rules, norms, and cooperative behaviour. Participation in international organisations enables states to amplify their voice, manage disputes peacefully, and coordinate responses to global issues. At the same time, institutional commitments can limit unilateral action, requiring states to balance autonomy with cooperation.

☐ Alliances and Strategic Partnerships

India's foreign policy reflects this dual reliance on bilateral and multilateral engagement. Scholars observe that India has pursued strong bilateral ties while also remaining active in regional and global institutions to advance its interests. This approach demonstrates how external diplomatic relationships shape both the style and substance of foreign policy (Bajpai & Pant, 2013; Malone, Mohan & Raghavan, 2015).

Alliances and strategic partnerships act as external determinants by influencing security calculations and diplomatic alignment. Scholars such as Stephen Walt argue that states form alliances primarily in response to perceived threats rather than simple power considerations. Alliance choices, therefore, reflect external pressures and assessments of risk (Walt, 1987).

States use alliances to deter threats, share burdens, and enhance credibility, but alliances can also reduce policy autonomy. Strategic partnerships offer greater flexibility by allowing cooperation without binding commitments. The choice between alliances and partnerships reflects how states assess risks, trust, and long-term interests.

☐ Behaviour of Major Powers

India's preference for strategic partnerships rather than formal alliances reflects this logic. Scholars note that India has sought flexible cooperation with multiple powers while avoiding binding commitments that could restrict independent decision-making. This approach highlights how external security conditions shape alliance behaviour (Ganguly, 2016).



❑ Shifts in major power behaviour

The behaviour of major powers is a crucial external determinant of foreign policy, particularly for developing and middle powers. Scholars such as Kenneth Waltz and John Mearsheimer argue that shifts in major power behaviour reshape the strategic environment and influence how other states respond. Foreign policy is often adjusted in reaction to changing power relations (Waltz, 1979; Mearsheimer, 2001).

States respond to major powers through strategies such as balancing, bandwagoning, or selective cooperation. These responses depend on threat perception, economic dependence, and strategic calculation. Shifts in major power relations can therefore trigger significant changes in foreign policy orientation.

India's foreign policy has evolved in response to changes in major power behaviour across different periods. Scholars highlight how India has adjusted its engagement strategies while seeking to preserve strategic autonomy. This demonstrates how external power dynamics are an important determinant of foreign policy behaviour (Malone et al., 2015).

1.2.3 Systemic Determinants of Foreign Policy

❑ Structure of the International System

Systemic determinants operate at the level of the international system as a whole and influence all states, regardless of their internal characteristics. These determinants arise from the structure of the international system, the distribution of power, the presence of international norms and institutions, and the emergence of global challenges. Unlike domestic and external determinants, systemic factors shape the overall environment within which states formulate foreign policy, setting broad constraints and opportunities that affect state behaviour.

The structure of the international system is a foundational systemic determinant of foreign policy. Scholars such as Kenneth Waltz argue that the absence of a central authority in world politics creates an anarchical condition, compelling states to prioritise survival and self-help. This structural condition shapes foreign policy behaviour by generating uncertainty, competition, and security concerns, regardless of a state's internal characteristics (Waltz, 1979).

Different systemic structures—such as unipolar, bipolar, or multipolar systems—create different foreign policy incentives. In a bipolar system, states tend to align with one of the dominant powers, while in a multipolar system, states enjoy

❑ Distribution of Power

greater flexibility but face more complex strategic calculations. Changes in systemic structure often lead to adjustments in foreign policy priorities and alignments. India's foreign policy has reflected sensitivity to changes in the international system. Scholars note that during the Cold War's bipolar structure, India pursued nonalignment to preserve autonomy, while the post-Cold War transition expanded India's strategic and diplomatic options. This illustrates how systemic structure shapes long-term foreign policy orientation (Ganguly, 2016; Malone, Mohan & Raghavan, 2015).

The distribution of power among states is another key systemic determinant influencing foreign policy. While systemic structure refers to the overall arrangement of the international system, power distribution concerns the relative capabilities of states within that system. Scholars such as John Mearsheimer emphasise that power shifts generate competition and strategic recalculation, shaping how states define threats and opportunities (Mearsheimer, 2001).

❑ International Norms and Institutions

Shifts in global power, such as the rise or decline of major powers, create new opportunities and constraints. States may pursue balancing strategies, seek partnerships, or adjust diplomatic priorities in response to these shifts. As power distribution changes, foreign policy strategies are often recalibrated. India's foreign policy has increasingly been shaped by changes in global power distribution. Scholars highlight how the emergence of new power centres has expanded India's diplomatic space while also requiring careful balancing among competing powers. India's pursuit of strategic autonomy reflects an effort to navigate these systemic power shifts (Bajpai & Pant, 2013; Ganguly, 2016).

❑ Systemic determinants

International norms and institutions function as systemic determinants, shaping expectations of acceptable behaviour in international relations. Scholars such as Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink argue that norms influence how states define interests and justify actions, even in an anarchic system. Institutions provide rules and procedures that structure cooperation and constrain unilateral behaviour (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998). Institutions such as international organisations and regimes facilitate cooperation, manage conflicts, and coordinate responses to shared problems. Participation in these institutions affects foreign policy by encouraging rule-based behaviour and long-term engagement, even as states seek to protect autonomy.



Global Challenges and Transnational Issues

India's engagement with international norms and institutions illustrates this systemic influence. Scholars note that India has used multilateral platforms to advance its national interests while advocating reforms that address the concerns of developing countries. India's participation demonstrates how norms and institutions shape foreign policy behaviour without eliminating autonomy (Harshe & Seethi, 2005; Malone et al., 2015).

Global challenges such as climate change, terrorism, pandemics, economic crises, and technological change have emerged as important systemic determinants of foreign policy. These issues transcend national borders and require collective responses, reshaping traditional understandings of security and diplomacy. Transnational issues encourage cooperation but also generate new forms of competition and vulnerability. States must coordinate policies while managing domestic constraints, resulting in complex foreign policy responses that balance national interests with global responsibilities.

The impact of global challenges on India's foreign policy has become increasingly significant. Issues such as climate change, global health emergencies, terrorism, energy security, and digital governance have moved to the centre of India's external engagement. India has actively participated in international climate negotiations, advocated the principle of climate justice, and highlighted the concerns of developing countries. During global health crises, India has engaged in vaccine diplomacy and health cooperation, reflecting the growing link between domestic capacity and global responsibility. India has also addressed terrorism through multilateral platforms and regional cooperation, while engaging globally on emerging issues such as cybersecurity and digital public infrastructure. These engagements demonstrate how systemic global challenges have pushed India to broaden its foreign policy agenda and adopt issue-based, multilateral, and norm-oriented strategies while continuing to safeguard national interests (Ganguly, 2016; Malone et.al., 2015).

❑ Global challenges and India's foreign policy



Summarised Overview

This unit examined the determinants of foreign policy, focusing on the various factors that shape how states formulate and conduct their external relations. It showed that foreign policy decisions do not emerge from a single source but result from multiple interacting influences. For analytical clarity, these influences were classified into domestic, external, and systemic determinants.

Domestic determinants highlighted how internal factors such as geography, historical experience, economic conditions, leadership, political institutions, bureaucratic capacity, and national identity shape foreign policy priorities and capabilities. These factors explain why states facing similar international conditions may still adopt different foreign policy strategies. External determinants demonstrated how a state's regional environment, diplomatic relationships, alliance choices, and responses to major powers influence foreign policy behaviour. Systemic determinants revealed how the broader international structure, power distribution, global norms, and transnational challenges shape the overall context within which foreign policy decisions are made.

Together, these determinants provide a comprehensive framework for understanding foreign policy behaviour. The unit emphasised that foreign policy outcomes are rarely the result of one determinant acting alone. Instead, they emerge from the dynamic interaction of domestic conditions, external pressures, and systemic constraints. Understanding these interactions is essential for analysing both continuity and change in foreign policy.

Self-Assessment Questions

1. What is the difference between an "approach" to foreign policy and a "determinant" of foreign policy? Explain in your own words.
2. How does India's geography — its long coastline, land borders, and location in South Asia — shape its foreign policy priorities?
3. In what way did India's colonial experience under British rule influence its foreign policy after independence in 1947?
4. How did the 1991 economic reforms change the priorities of India's foreign policy? Name two new areas of focus that emerged.
5. What does "state capacity" mean, and how does a limited diplomatic corps affect India's ability to engage internationally?
6. How does the regional environment of South Asia act as an external determinant of India's foreign policy? Give one example.



7. What is the "security dilemma," and how does the behaviour of major powers like China and the United States influence India's strategic choices?
8. Name two global challenges that have become important systemic determinants of India's foreign policy in recent years, and explain how India has responded to them.

Assignment

1. Examine how the anti-colonial legacy and nationalist thought shaped the foundational principles of India's foreign policy. To what extent do these ideological underpinnings remain relevant in contemporary Indian diplomacy?
2. Critically evaluate non-alignment as a strategy of autonomy. Was it a principled ideological stance or a pragmatic instrument of statecraft? Support your argument with historical evidence.
3. Analyze the Panchsheel principles as a framework for normative diplomacy. Discuss their origin, content, and the extent to which they have been upheld or violated in India's bilateral relations.
4. Compare and contrast the anti-colonial and non-alignment traditions in India's foreign policy ideology. How have these traditions evolved in the post-Cold War era under the rubric of 'strategic autonomy'?

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UNIT 3

Nehruvian and Post Liberalisation Phases of India's Foreign Policy

Learning Outcomes

After studying this unit, the learner will be able to:

- explain the historical context and core ideas of the Nehruvian phase of India's foreign policy
- identify the main principles that guided India's foreign policy during the early decades after independence
- analyse the impact of economic liberalisation on India's foreign policy priorities and external engagement
- compare the Nehruvian and post-liberalisation phases in terms of objectives, strategies, and diplomatic style
- evaluate the elements of continuity and change in India's foreign policy across the two phases

Background

In the previous unit, we examined the domestic, external, and systemic determinants that shape foreign policy decisions. These determinants help explain why foreign policy does not remain constant and why different phases emerge over time. In this unit, these analytical ideas are applied to the study of India's foreign policy across two major phases. The Nehruvian and post-liberalisation phases are analysed by examining how changes in domestic conditions, external environments, and systemic pressures influenced India's foreign policy priorities, strategies, and diplomatic style.

In 1947, when India became independent, the world had already grouped into rival military blocs under the shadow of the Cold War, and newly independent countries were under pressure to choose sides. India was poor, recently decolonised, and still in the process of building its state institutions. Given the scenario, India, under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru, chose to avoid military entanglements and to prioritise peace and development in its foreign policy. For the next few decades, India followed this Nehruvian



approach, emphasising the principles of non-alignment and peaceful coexistence. When the Cold War ended, and globalisation took over the political economy, India opened its economy to the world. It simultaneously redesigned its foreign policy to foster trade, investment, technology transfer, and strategic partnerships. In other words, since 1991, while adhering to earlier principles, India's foreign policy has become more pragmatic and outward-looking.

Keywords

Non-Alignment, Strategic Autonomy, Moral Leadership, Economic Liberalisation, Strategic Partnerships

Discussion

India's foreign policy has evolved through different phases in response to changing domestic conditions, international environments, and global power structures. While maintaining the protection of national interest as a primary objective, the strategies guiding foreign policy have changed over time. This unit focuses on two major phases- the Nehruvian phase and the post-liberalisation phase. The Nehruvian phase, which developed in the early decades after independence, emphasised non-alignment, peaceful coexistence, and moral leadership in world affairs. The second phase is post-liberalisation, which began after the 1991 economic reforms and marked a shift towards greater economic engagement, strategic partnerships, and pragmatic diplomacy.

1.3.1 Discussion

India's foreign policy cannot be understood as a single, unchanging strategy. Instead, it has developed through distinct phases shaped by historical context, leadership ideas, domestic priorities, and international conditions. Applying the determinants discussed in the previous unit, let us understand the two key phases that reflect a particular combination of domestic, external, and systemic influences.

1.3.1.1 The Nehruvian Phase of India's Foreign Policy

Independent India was a newly decolonised country facing poverty, underdevelopment, and the task of nation-building. At

❑ Formative years
(1947-1950)

the international level, the Cold War had divided the world into rival power blocs led by the United States and the Soviet Union. Under these circumstances, Indian leaders believed that foreign policy should safeguard independence, avoid entanglements in military conflicts, and create conditions for domestic development. Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister, viewed foreign policy not only as a tool for national security but also as a means to promote peace and justice globally. The Nehruvian phase of India's foreign policy is generally dated from 1947 to 1964. It represents the foundational period of India's foreign policy. It evolved in response to domestic challenges, regional developments, and changes in the international system. Some scholars consider that Nehruvian ideas and vision continued to influence the country's foreign policy even after 1964. The Nehruvian phase reflected India's response to decolonisation, the Cold War, and the need to protect national autonomy while promoting peace and cooperation. Let us try a chronological analysis of the strengths and limitations of this phase.

❑ Non-Aligned
Movement &
Asian-African
solidarity (1950-
1955)

In the early years, India's priorities were shaped by the need to protect sovereignty, secure territorial integrity, and avoid external entanglements that could threaten the nation. At the same time, on the international front, the Cold War and the pressure from the two superpower blocs were creating new challenges. Hence, the Nehruvian approach to foreign policy during these formative years was based on caution and cooperation, as peace was considered essential to the country's economic planning and social reform (Ganguly, 2016).

❑ Non-alignment
and peaceful
coexistence

The two central principles of the Nehruvian phase were non-alignment and peaceful coexistence. Non-alignment was not neutrality or isolation, but an active strategy to engage with multiple countries while avoiding dependence on any single power. Through the Bandung Conference (1955) and the later Non-Aligned Movement envisaged by Jawaharlal Nehru of India, Josip Broz Tito of Yugoslavia, and Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt, India sought to build solidarity among newly independent countries in Asia and Africa. This was India's response, as an independent and responsible actor, to the Cold War and the dominance of great powers in world politics. Non-alignment enhanced India's diplomatic visibility, projecting India as a leader of the developing world despite its limited material and military power. Over time, the movement expanded in membership and scope, addressing issues such as disarmament, development, and reform of international institutions (Harshe & Seethi, 2005).



- ❑ The 1962 War & its Impact (1960-1964)

The mid-1950s witnessed India's strong faith in international norms and diplomacy. India viewed China as a partner in promoting Asian solidarity and anti-colonial cooperation. The output was the Panchsheel agreement- the five principles of peaceful coexistence. These principles emphasised mutual respect for sovereignty, non-aggression, non-interference, equality, and peaceful coexistence. Nehru believed that adherence to such norms could reduce conflict and create a stable, rule-based international environment for development. However, underlying border disputes and strategic differences between India and China remained unresolved. Consequently, the emphasis on norms and trust, while morally appealing, limited India's preparedness for emerging security challenges (Prasad, 1996; Ganguly, 2016). Despite later setbacks, Panchsheel left a lasting imprint on India's diplomatic language and commitment to rule-based international conduct. Peaceful coexistence emphasised mutual respect for sovereignty, non-aggression, non-interference, and equality. India also strongly supported anti-colonial movements and newly independent countries, believing that freedom and equality were essential for a stable international order.

Growing tensions between India and China complicated the late Nehruvian period, and the 1962 Sino-Indian war worsened the situation, exposing serious weaknesses in India's defence preparedness and strategic assessment. The war with China prompted India to rethink its approach to hard security challenges, particularly those arising in its neighbourhood, and to become cautious in its external relations. However, India did not abandon the principles of non-alignment or strategic autonomy. This period demonstrated the limits of idealism in foreign policy and highlighted the importance of material capabilities alongside normative commitments.

During the Nehruvian era, the belief that multilateral cooperation was essential for peace and equality guided India in engaging with international institutions. India actively participated in United Nations debates on issues such as decolonisation, racial discrimination, and international peace. The strong faith in the United Nations as a forum for peaceful

Engagement with International Institutions

❑ Legacy of the Nehruvian Phase

conflict resolution led India to contribute to UN peacekeeping operations. During the early and mid-1950s, India focused on promoting Afro-Asian cooperation and the Non-Alignment Movement. The 1962 Sino-Indian War compelled India to be cautious in its expectations from the international institutions and marked a shift from idealistic institutionalism to a more restrained and realistic engagement.

Scholarly assessments of the Nehruvian phase are mixed. Nehru's intellectual outlook was shaped by liberal internationalism, anti-imperialism, and a strong faith in international cooperation. The supporters of the Nehruvian foreign policy applaud it for preserving autonomy, avoiding Cold War entanglements, and establishing India's international credibility, even at a time when a newly independent nation was vulnerable.

Critics counter this by highlighting the excessive idealism and underestimation of security threats, which weakened India's strategic position. Most contemporary scholars adopt a balanced view, recognising that Nehruvian foreign policy reflected the constraints and possibilities of a newly independent, resource-poor country. Its emphasis on autonomy, non-alignment, and multilateralism continues to influence India's foreign policy even in later phases (Prasad, 1996; Bajpai & Pant, 2013).

1.3.1.2 The Post-Liberalisation Phase of India's Foreign Policy

❑ The Transition Period of Early 1990s (1991-1995)

The post-liberalisation phase marks a major shift in India's foreign policy following the 1991 economic reforms. It may be seen as a reflection of the changing domestic economic priorities, a transformed international system after the sudden end of the Cold War, globalisation, and India's growing engagement with global markets and institutions. India's shift from a closed, state-led economy to a more open and market-oriented system, with economic reforms that reduced trade barriers, encouraged foreign investment and integrated India more closely with the global economy. During this phase, foreign policy began to emphasise economic growth, access to technology, energy security, and trade relations.

India faced a severe balance-of-payments crisis in 1991, with low foreign-exchange reserves and declining economic growth. This, along with the end of the Cold War, following



❑ Greater global influence

negotiations on trade, climate change, development, and global governance reforms. It increasingly sought to represent the interests of developing countries. India's evolution from a rule-taker to a selective rule-shaper in some areas is reflected in its participation in global forums. Recently, India's engagement with international institutions reflects its aspiration for greater global influence, and it is demanding reforms in global governance institutions, especially the United Nations. This stage is marked by a more strategic use of institutions- seeking leadership roles, building coalitions with like-minded states, and using multilateral platforms to address global issues like climate change, health, and digital governance, while protecting its strategic autonomy and national interest.

Summarised Overview

Liberalisation has compelled India to strengthen its ties with major economic powers and emerging economies. This new strategy of economic diplomacy became central, replacing earlier ideological alignments. At the other end, while avoiding formal military alliances, India maintained its strategic autonomy and participated in the United Nations and other global forums. India continues to maintain multilateralism and issue-based cooperation with multiple powers, allowing the country to engage simultaneously with different countries on trade, security, and technology without binding commitments. This outcome-oriented foreign policy focuses on tangible benefits rather than symbolic positions.

Self-Assessment Questions

1. What were the two central principles of the Nehruvian phase of India's foreign policy, and what did each mean in practice?
2. What is the Non-Aligned Movement, and why did Nehru believe it was important for India and other newly independent countries?
3. What are the five Panchsheel principles? Why did Nehru consider them important for India's relations with China?
4. How did the 1962 Sino-Indian War affect India's foreign policy? Did India completely abandon the Nehruvian principles after the war?
5. What domestic and international pressures led India to undertake economic liberalisation in 1991, and how did this change the focus of its foreign policy?
6. Why did India conduct nuclear tests in 1998, and how did this event reflect the idea of "strategic autonomy" in the post-liberalisation phase?



- ## Assignment

- ## Reference

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Suggested Reading

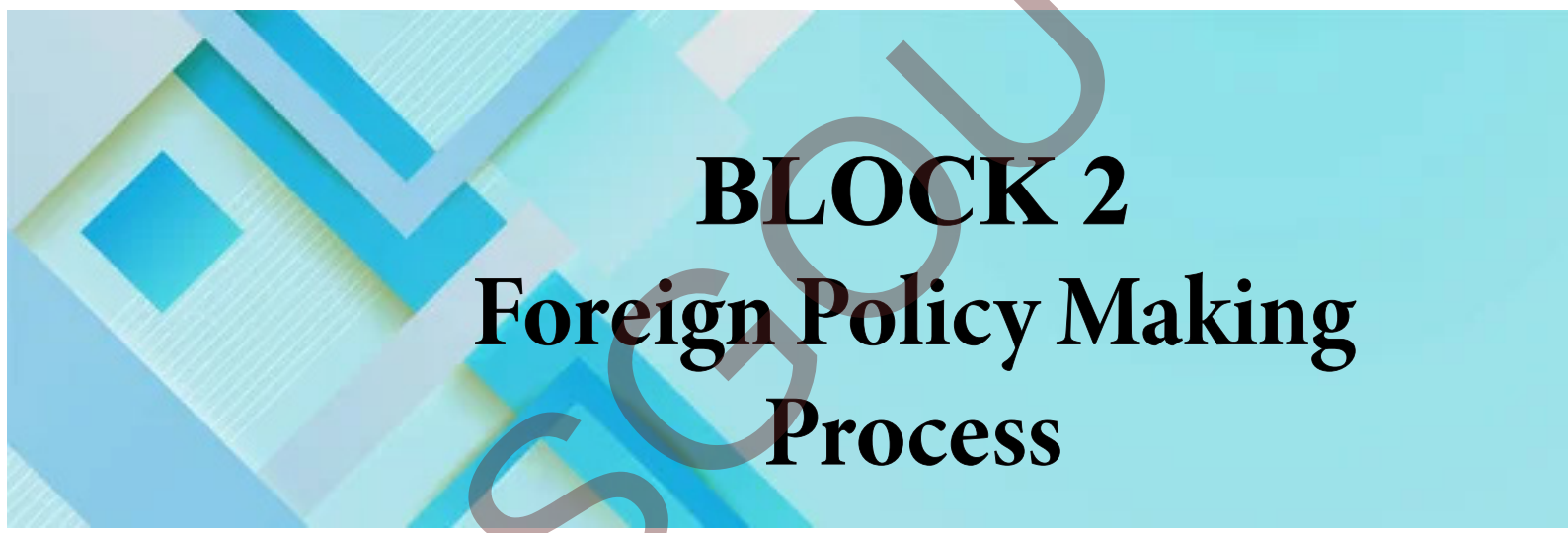
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BLOCK 2

Foreign Policy Making Process

Parliament

After studying this unit, the learner will be able to:

- explain the constitutional position of Parliament in India's foreign policy-making process
- identify the ways in which Parliament exercises oversight over foreign policy decisions
- analyse the role of parliamentary debates and committees in foreign policy matters
- examine Parliament's role in the approval of treaties and international commitments
- evaluate the limitations of parliament in an executive-driven foreign policy system

In the contemporary world, the distinction between domestic and foreign policy has become increasingly blurred. Issues such as trade, security, migration, climate change, and global health directly affect citizens' daily lives. Foreign policy can no longer remain the exclusive domain of diplomats and executive authorities. Hence, in democratic states, while the executive, that is, the government, is constitutionally assigned the predominant task of foreign policy-making, there is a growing demand for greater transparency, accountability, and public participation, and the legislature is found to influence foreign policy decisions through debates, questions, committees, and financial approval. Understanding the legislature's role helps explain how democratic control operates in an area often seen as secretive and technical. This unit examines the role of the Indian Parliament in the foreign policy-making process. It explains Parliament's constitutional position, its instruments of influence, and the limitations it faces in shaping foreign policy outcomes.

Keywords

Parliamentary Oversight, Executive Authority, Treaties, Foreign Policy Accountability, Budgetary Control

Discussion

❑ Constitutional Role of Parliament in Foreign Policy

Foreign policy-making in India is primarily an executive function, carried out primarily by the Prime Minister, the Ministry of External Affairs, and the Cabinet. However, it does not operate in a democratic vacuum. The Parliament, as the supreme legislative body, provides an essential institutional space for scrutiny and accountability, shaping the context, legitimacy, and public justification of those decisions. Let us understand the role of the Parliament in India's foreign policy-making in institutional and political terms, by analysing its constitutional position, procedural mechanisms, and practical influence, as well as the limitations of parliamentary intervention.

According to the Indian Constitution, the Parliament is involved in the country's foreign policy-making process through the principle of executive dominance combined with legislative oversight. It places foreign affairs within the domain of the Union government, recognising that matters such as diplomacy, war, peace, and international negotiations require centralised authority. Parliament is entrusted with the role of legislation, supervision, and democratic accountability. Together, they balance the practical need for efficiency and secrecy in foreign affairs.

Foreign affairs is listed under the Union List (List I) of the Seventh Schedule of the Indian Constitution, which gives the Parliament exclusive power to legislate on matters related to external relations. The key entries relevant to foreign policy include:

- Entry 10- Foreign affairs; all matters which bring the Union into relation with any foreign country.
- Entry 11- Diplomatic, consular, and trade representation.
- Entry 12- United Nations and international organisations.
- Entry 13- Participation in international conferences, associations and other bodies, and implementing decisions made thereafter.



b. Question Hour & Other Parliamentary Questions

☐ Ensure transparency

During Question Hour, Members of Parliament raise starred, unstarred, or short-notice questions on diplomatic relations, foreign visits, international agreements, security concerns, trade disputes, the welfare of citizens abroad, and India's stance in multilateral forums. The government is required to place official information on record. Scholars argue that Question Hour plays a crucial role in ensuring transparency. In addition, instruments such as Calling Attention Notices and Short Duration Discussions allow MPs to draw attention to urgent international developments. These mechanisms enable Parliament to respond quickly to unfolding global events, although their effectiveness depends on political will and executive cooperation. The limitation is that the executive may withhold sensitive information on grounds of national security. One can conclude that these mechanisms enhance accountability and information disclosure/transparency, rather than control decision-making.

c. Parliamentary Committees on External Affairs

☐ Constructive recommendations

Parliamentary Committees, such as the Standing Committee on External Affairs, can be created to examine the functioning of the Ministry of External Affairs or study specific foreign policy issues in detail and present reports to the Parliament after thorough interaction with officials, experts, and diplomats. Committee reports often contain detailed analysis and constructive recommendations on diplomatic priorities, institutional reforms, and strategic challenges. Even though these are effective parliamentary instruments that enable sustained discussion and expert input, the recommendations' non-binding nature is a significant constraint.

d. Parliament and Treaty-making

☐ Article 73

Treaty-making in India is largely an executive function. Article 73 empowers the government to negotiate and sign international agreements without mandatory prior approval of Parliament. Parliamentary involvement becomes necessary only when a treaty requires changes in domestic law or imposes financial obligations. Hence, one can say that parliamentary discussion of treaties is usually post-facto, focusing on implementation rather than negotiation.



All expenditure related to foreign policy, including diplomatic missions, international organisations, aid commitments, and foreign travel, requires parliamentary approval. Although Parliament rarely rejects foreign policy budgets, its financial powers ensure a financial scrutiny that provides an additional layer of accountability. It also allows Parliament to connect foreign policy decisions with domestic economic priorities and public interest.

In recent years, Parliament has also been part of diplomacy, with MPs participating in international parliamentary forums and bilateral exchanges. Though it does not replace executive-led foreign policy, scholars consider such initiatives to enhance India's soft power and democratic image.

Empirical cases reveal how Parliament engages with major foreign policy decisions and also highlight the structural limits of parliamentary intervention in an executive-dominated system. Several important foreign policy issues of recent decades have been the subject of serious discussion in Parliament.

One prominent example is the India-United States Civil Nuclear Agreement, the “123 Agreement”, formalised in 2008. The Agreement generated intense debate in Parliament, particularly regarding sovereignty, strategic autonomy, and India’s non-aligned tradition. The issue became politically sensitive because the government at the time was operating under a coalition arrangement, making it vulnerable to shifts in parliamentary support. The Left parties, which were providing outside support to the government, strongly opposed the agreement, arguing that it would compromise India’s independent foreign policy. In 2008, they withdrew support, leading to a confidence vote in Parliament, where the government narrowly

survived. Although Parliament did not negotiate the agreement, these developments demonstrate how foreign policy decisions can create serious political vulnerability for the executive, especially in coalition regimes, and highlight the importance of securing democratic legitimacy. This episode is often cited as one of the clearest examples of parliamentary pressure shaping the political feasibility of foreign policy decisions in India.

Another instance of intense discussion was on India's engagement with multilateral trade negotiations, including debates around India's withdrawal from the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). Members of Parliament raised concerns about the domestic industry, farmers' interests, and economic sovereignty. The discussion reflected how foreign economic policy become linked with domestic political priorities, even when the final decision rests with the executive.

❑ Limitations of Parliamentary Involvement in Foreign Policy

Parliament has always engaged with security-related foreign policy issues, such as border tensions and regional conflicts. Statements by the government following major developments are often followed by parliamentary questions and debates, which help place executive actions under public scrutiny.

❑ Executive dominance

One major limitation of Parliament's role in foreign policy-making is executive dominance. Foreign policy decisions are often taken by a small group within the executive, with Parliament being informed only after key choices have been made. Consequently, another limitation is the reactive nature of parliamentary engagement. Debates and questions usually occur after events unfold, reducing Parliament's ability to shape policy at the formulation stage. Access to classified information is limited, further constraining meaningful scrutiny. Scholars also point to procedural and political constraints. Time limitations, party discipline, and lack of specialised expertise among MPs reduce the effectiveness of parliamentary oversight. Committee recommendations are non-binding, and follow-up mechanisms are weak, limiting long-term impact. As a result, Parliament's influence remains largely indirect, operating through political pressure rather than institutional control.



Summarised Overview

Most scholars agree that Parliament in India plays a supportive rather than decisive role in foreign policy-making. It functions as a forum for debate, oversight, and legitimacy, but not as a centre of decision-making. This pattern is not unique to India; executive dominance in foreign policy is common across democracies. However, the extent of parliamentary involvement varies significantly across countries. Scholars assessed that strengthening parliamentary committees, improving access to information, and increasing pre-decision consultation could enhance Parliament's role without undermining executive efficiency. Overall, Parliament should be understood as an institution that democratises foreign policy, even if it does not control it. Its importance lies in ensuring that foreign policy decisions remain connected to democratic debate and public accountability.

Self-Assessment Questions

1. Why is Parliament's role in foreign policy considered indirect?
2. What is the significance of Question Hour in foreign policy oversight?
3. Why is Parliament's role in treaty-making limited?
4. What is meant by parliamentary diplomacy?
5. Analyse the instruments through which Parliament influences foreign policy.

Assignment

1. Critically examine the constitutional and institutional role of the Indian Parliament in shaping foreign policy. How does the absence of a dedicated foreign affairs committee limit parliamentary oversight?
2. Analyze three significant parliamentary debates on foreign policy issues — such as the India–US Civil Nuclear Deal, the Doklam standoff, or India–China relations — and evaluate Parliament's impact on actual policy outcomes.
3. Discuss the limitations of parliamentary engagement in foreign policy in India. How do executive dominance, party discipline, and information asymmetry constrain meaningful deliberation?
4. Comparatively assess the role of the legislature in foreign policy-making in India and the United States. What institutional reforms could strengthen India's parliamentary role in foreign affairs?

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Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

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UNIT 2

PMO, Ministry of External Affairs and National Security Council

Learning Outcomes

After studying this unit, the learner will be able to:

- explain the institutional structure of foreign policy-making in India
- identify the role of the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) in foreign policy decisions
- analyse the functions of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) in policy formulation and implementation
- examine the role of the National Security Council (NSC) in coordinating foreign and security policy
- evaluate how coordination among these institutions shapes India's foreign policy outcomes

Background

Foreign policy-making is not the output of the efforts of a few individuals or even an institution. In modern states, foreign policy is the result of coordination among multiple executive bodies, each with specific roles and responsibilities. As international issues become more complex, foreign policy-making requires expertise in diplomacy, security, economics, and strategy. In India, foreign policy is formally conducted by the executive. Over time, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), and the National Security Council (NSC) have emerged as the most important institutions in this process. Each of these bodies contributes differently- the PMO provides leadership and direction, the MEA manages diplomacy and implementation, and the NSC focuses on strategic and security coordination. Understanding how these institutions function and interact is essential for explaining how foreign policy decisions are actually made, beyond constitutional provisions or broad principles. This unit focuses on these key institutions to explain the internal workings of India's foreign policy-making process.



Keywords

NSC, Foreign Policy Coordination, Executive Authority, Policy Implementation

Discussion

This unit examines three central institutions involved in India's foreign policy-making process: the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), and the National Security Council (NSC). These institutions do not function in isolation. Their interaction determines how information is processed, how options are evaluated, and how final decisions are taken. By analysing these institutions in this unit, we can understand the practical mechanics of decision-making, explain why foreign policy decisions sometimes reflect continuity, sometimes change, and often involve trade-offs between competing interests.

Foreign policy-making in India follows a centralised but coordinated institutional framework. The Prime Minister occupies a key position in this framework, but decision-making involves constant interaction with ministries, advisors, and security institutions. While the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) sets the priorities, coordinating among ministries, and providing final approval on major decisions, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) acts as the principal diplomatic institution, responsible for negotiations, diplomatic communication, and policy implementation and the National Security Council (NSC) brings together strategic, defence, and security perspectives to support informed decision-making. In the following pages, let us analyse these institutions and how their interaction and coordination shape foreign policy outcomes.

A. Prime Minister's Office and Foreign Policy-Making

In India, constitutionally, executive authority is vested in the President of India, but in practice, real power lies with the Prime Minister and the Council of Ministers. Over time, foreign policy has become increasingly prime minister-centric, with major strategic decisions being taken at the highest political level. Scholars note that this concentration of authority reflects the need for coherence, speed, and political legitimacy in handling sensitive international issues. The Prime Minister represents

❑ Evolution and Functions of the PMO



India in high-level diplomatic engagements, including bilateral summits, multilateral forums, and international negotiations. These interactions often set the overall tone and direction of foreign policy. It is then operationalised by the bureaucracy. Hence, one can argue that India's foreign policy priorities frequently reflect the Prime Minister's political vision, leadership style, and strategic assessment of global developments.

❑ PMO as the Nodal Point of Inter-Ministerial Coordination

Originally the Prime Minister's Secretariat, a small support unit under Nehru, the PMO has evolved into India's central power hub, reflecting India's growing governance complexity and the PM's increasing central role, despite remaining an extra-constitutional body. Under Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi, it expanded for greater coordination and tech, and over time, it grew in terms of personnel, expertise, and influence, becoming a strong policy coordination centre in the 1990s, a consultative body during the UPA, and consolidating power further under Modi. It consists of senior civil servants, advisors, and specialists who assist the Prime Minister by providing policy inputs, coordinating among ministries, and monitoring implementation. In foreign policy-making, the PMO performs several crucial functions. It receives inputs from the Ministries of External Affairs, Defence, and Home Affairs, as well as from economic ministries. These inputs are analysed and synthesised to present consolidated policy options to the Prime Minister. This process helps reduce inter-ministerial conflict and ensures that foreign policy decisions align with broader national priorities.

❑ Relationship between the PMO and the Ministry of External Affairs

One of the most important roles of the PMO is inter-ministerial coordination. Foreign policy issues often overlap with defence, trade, energy, technology, and internal security. The coordination of these diverse policy domains has become especially important in an era of globalisation, where domestic and foreign policy concerns are deeply interconnected. An example is trade negotiations, which involve the MEA, the Ministry of Commerce, and the Ministry of Finance, while security issues involve coordination with defence and intelligence agencies. The PMO acts as the final converging point where competing perspectives are balanced and reconciled. Scholars agree that this centralised coordination has increased decision-making efficiency, though others argue that it has reduced the autonomy of individual ministries.

The Ministry of External Affairs is the primary institution responsible for diplomacy, but it's not incorrect to say that its



☐ PMO and the National Security Council

functioning is closely shaped by the PMO. Major foreign policy initiatives and strategic agreements are typically vetted by the PMO before implementation. This does not mean that the MEA is marginalised. Rather, the MEA provides expertise, diplomatic assessments, and institutional memory, while the PMO provides political direction and final approval. The balance between these two institutions varies across governments, depending on leadership style and administrative preferences. However, the growing role of the PMO has clearly reinforced political control over diplomatic decision-making.

☐ Strategic coordination

The role of the PMO in foreign policy has been strengthened by the presence of the National Security Council, led by the National Security Advisor (NSA). The NSA, located within the PMO, serves as the principal advisor to the Prime Minister, and the NSC provides independent assessments that often complement inputs from the MEA and defence establishments. This arrangement has enhanced strategic coordination, especially in areas such as border management, counter-terrorism, and regional security. The NSA's proximity to the Prime Minister ensures that security considerations are fully integrated into foreign policy decisions. At the same time, scholars note that this has further centralised decision-making authority within the PMO.

☐ Prime ministerial diplomacy

In recent decades, Indian foreign policy has witnessed a rise in prime ministerial diplomacy, where the Prime Minister personally leads diplomatic initiatives. Several major foreign policy decisions illustrate the PMO's influence. High-profile bilateral visits, participation in international summits, and direct engagement with world leaders have become defining features of India's foreign policy practice. These interactions often produce political commitments that guide subsequent bureaucratic action. It ensures coherence, rapid decision-making, and clear political leadership. Such diplomacy enhances India's global visibility and allows the Prime Minister to directly communicate national priorities. However, it also underscores the PMO's importance in preparing briefing materials, coordinating follow-up actions, and ensuring policy coherence. And, critics argue that over-reliance on the PMO may strain administrative capacity and limit policy innovation.

B. Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and Foreign Policy-Making

❑ Organisational Structure and Functional Divisions

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) is the central administrative institution responsible for conducting India's foreign relations. It functions as the government's primary channel for diplomacy, negotiation, and international communication. While strategic direction comes from the political leadership, the MEA provides the institutional continuity, expertise, and operational capacity required for foreign policy formulation and execution. Scholars consistently describe the MEA as the "permanent arm" of India's foreign policy, ensuring stability across changes in governments and leadership. The MEA represents India in bilateral and multilateral engagements, manages diplomatic missions abroad, and serves as the main interface between India and the international system. It also acts as the repository of institutional memory, preserving diplomatic experience and policy precedents accumulated over decades.

❑ Functions of MEA

The MEA is headed by the Minister of External Affairs, assisted by Ministers of State, with the Foreign Secretary as the top administrative official. While the Minister provides political leadership and represents India in international forums, the Foreign Secretary coordinates policy formulation, supervises diplomatic missions, and ensures the smooth functioning of the ministry. The ministry is organised into several territorial divisions (like East Asia, Latin America), functional divisions (like Consular, Passport & Visa), and specialised desks (Like Disarmament, UN) and is managed through a hierarchy of Secretaries, Additional Secretaries, Joint Secretaries, Directors, Deputy Secretaries, and Under Secretaries. The bureaucratic hierarchy enables coordination between political direction and diplomatic practice. MEA also has an overseas presence through Embassies/High Commissions, headed by Ambassadors/High Commissioners, and Consulates, headed by Consul General.

- a. **Policy Formulation:** The MEA plays a crucial role in policy formulation by providing analysis, policy briefs, and diplomatic assessments to the political leadership. The MEA synthesises inputs from Indian missions abroad, intelligence assessments, and inter-ministerial consultations to prepare policy options. Although final decisions are taken at the political level, the MEA shapes the range of available choices through analysis and advice. In this sense, the



❑ Role of MEA

- The MEA's greatest strength lies in its professional diplomatic service, institutional memory, and global network of missions. It ensures continuity and stability in foreign policy across political changes. At the same time, the MEA faces limitations, including staff shortages and reduced influence in high-level strategic decisions. Scholars argue that while the MEA remains

indispensable, its role has been reshaped by greater political centralisation and the growing role of specialised agencies. To summarise, it provides expertise, continuity, and operational capacity, even as political leadership and strategic direction increasingly come from the PMO.

C. National Security Council and Foreign Policy-Making

❑ Composition and Structure of the NSC

The National Security Council (NSC) was established by the former Prime Minister of India, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, on 19 November 1998, to address the growing complexity of India's security and foreign policy environment. As India's international engagement expanded and security challenges became more interconnected, the NSC was created to provide a coordinated institutional mechanism supporting the traditional ministerial institutions in integrated strategic planning. The rationale for the NSC lies in recognising that foreign policy and national security are closely linked. The NSC assesses issues such as border management, terrorism, regional instability, cyber threats, and great power rivalry, and formulates strategic responses that bring together diplomatic, military, intelligence, and strategic perspectives under a unified framework.

❑ Strategic Advisory Role of the NSC

The NSC has a three-tiered structure: the apex NSC (chaired by the Prime Minister), the operational Strategic Policy Group (SPG) for coordination, and the advisory National Security Advisory Board (NSAB) for long-term analysis, all supported by the National Security Council Secretariat (NSCS). The National Security Advisor (NSA) heads the Secretariat and plays a crucial role in integrating inputs and advising the PM on strategic matters. Chaired by the PM, the core members of the NSC include senior ministers responsible for external affairs, defence, and home affairs. The NSA serves as the principal advisor to the PM on security and foreign policy matters and acts as the key link between the NSC, the PMO, and various security agencies. The NSC provides long-term strategic assessments for foreign policy decisions. The NSA's location within the PMO further centralises strategic decision-making.

❑ Relationship between the NSC, PMO, and MEA

The primary function of the NSC is to provide strategic advice to the PM and the cabinet. Unlike the MEA, which focuses on diplomacy and negotiation, the NSC concentrates on long-term security planning, threat assessment and crisis management. It evaluates regional and global developments that have implications for India's foreign policy and national security. It prepares strategic reviews and advisory inputs to



□ PMO and MEA

- Integrating diverse perspectives

❑ Role of institutions

Foreign policy-making in India does not occur within isolated institutions. Instead, it emerges from continuous interaction and coordination among the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), and the National Security Council (NSC). Each institution performs a distinct function, but effective foreign policy outcomes depend on how well these roles are aligned and integrated. Coordination among these bodies occurs through formal mechanisms such as inter-ministerial consultations, strategic briefings, and advisory processes, as well as informal interactions at senior levels. While centralisation enhances coherence and speed, it can also reduce institutional autonomy and internal debate. Effective foreign policy-making, therefore, depends on maintaining a balance between political leadership and institutional expertise.

Summarised Overview

Unit II highlights the executive-driven nature of India's foreign policy-making process. The Prime Minister and the PMO occupy a dominant position, setting priorities and providing strategic direction. The MEA remains indispensable for diplomacy and implementation, while the NSC has strengthened strategic and security coordination. This institutional framework has enabled India to respond more effectively to complex international challenges. At the same time, it raises important questions about centralisation, transparency, and accountability. Understanding this balance is essential for analysing how foreign policy decisions are taken in practice.

Self-Assessment Questions

1. Examine the role of the Prime Minister's Office in India's foreign policy-making process.
2. Analyse the functions and limitations of the Ministry of External Affairs.
3. Who is the National Security Advisor, and why is the post important?
4. Discuss the role of the National Security Council in integrating foreign and security policy.
5. Evaluate the importance of institutional coordination in India's foreign policy-making.

Assignment

1. Analyze the growing centralization of foreign policy decision-making in the Prime Minister's Office (PMO). What are the implications of PMO dominance for institutional balance and diplomatic coherence in India?
2. Examine the structure, functions, and evolving role of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) as the principal diplomatic institution. How effectively has the MEA adapted to India's growing global ambitions?
3. Critically assess the establishment and functioning of the National Security Council (NSC) in India. How does the NSC coordinate strategic planning across civilian and military institutions?
4. Compare the relative influence of the PMO, MEA, and NSC in major foreign policy decisions such as the Kargil War response, the India-US nuclear deal, and India's response to the COVID-19 pandemic diplomacy. What does this reveal about institutional dynamics?



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Role of Diplomats and Think Tanks

Learning Outcomes

After studying this unit, the learner will be able to:

- explain the role of professional diplomats in foreign policy-making
- analyse the functions of the Indian Foreign Service (IFS) in diplomacy and negotiation
- understand the contribution of diplomatic practice and expertise to policy formulation
- examine the growing role of think tanks in foreign policy debates and advisory processes
- evaluate the interaction between state actors and knowledge institutions in India's foreign policy-making

Background

Foreign policy is not shaped only by political leaders and formal institutions. It also depends heavily on professional expertise, negotiation skills, and knowledge production. In India, the Indian Foreign Service (IFS) has historically been responsible for conducting diplomacy, representing the country abroad, and advising political leadership on international developments. Alongside diplomats, think tanks and research institutions have emerged as important actors that provide analysis, policy ideas, and strategic assessments. These actors operate at the intersection of government, academia, and international policy networks. This unit examines how diplomats and think tanks contribute to foreign policy-making, how their roles have evolved, and how they complement formal executive institutions.

Keywords

Indian Foreign Service (IFS); Diplomacy; Policy Advisory; Strategic Analysis

Discussion

The formulation and implementation of foreign policy decisions of the country rely heavily on two significant non-political actors, namely, diplomats and think tanks. Diplomats provide continuity, expertise, and negotiation skills, while think tanks contribute ideas, research, and strategic perspectives. These actors do not exercise formal authority, but they shape the content, quality, and direction of foreign policy. Together, they help bridge the gap between political intent and policy outcomes. Understanding their role is essential for analysing how foreign policy works in practice.

Diplomats and Foreign Policy-Making in India

The origins of India's diplomatic system can be traced back to the colonial period under British rule. During this time, foreign relations were managed by the British Indian administration, and diplomatic representation was limited and controlled from London. However, the late colonial period saw the emergence of an external affairs structure within India, particularly with the establishment of the External Affairs Department. The Indian Foreign Service (IFS) was formally created in 1946, just before independence, marking the transition from a colonial administrative framework to a sovereign diplomatic service. After 1947, the IFS was reorganised to reflect India's independent foreign policy priorities, combining elements of colonial administrative experience with new national objectives.

Indian diplomats have played a significant role in shaping India's international standing. They contributed to India's leadership in multilateral forums, negotiations on decolonisation, peacekeeping, trade, and global governance. Their work has helped project India as a responsible international actor and articulate its interests in complex global settings. Over the decades, diplomats have also contributed to shaping India's foreign policy identity—balancing principles such as autonomy and multilateralism with evolving strategic and economic priorities. Their role has been especially important in

☐ Recruitment and Training



sustaining foreign policy coherence during periods of political change.

❑ Functions

Indian diplomats are career civil servants belonging primarily to the Indian Foreign Service (IFS). The IFS is one of the three All-India central civil services dealing with the core sovereign functions of the state, alongside the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) and the Indian Police Service (IPS). Recruitment to the Indian Foreign Service is conducted through the Civil Services Examination administered by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC). Diplomats are recruited, trained, and governed by formal service rules, which distinguish them from political appointees or temporary advisors. This career-based system ensures continuity, professionalism, and institutional memory in India's foreign policy. Unlike elected representatives, diplomats are expected to remain politically neutral and serve successive governments regardless of ideological orientation. This neutrality allows foreign policy to retain stability even during political transitions. Scholars often describe diplomats as the “permanent executive” of foreign policy.

Some of the primary functions of diplomats are:

❑ Represent national interests

a. Agents of the State: Diplomats are the official representatives of the state in the international system. Their primary responsibility is to represent national interests, maintain diplomatic relations, and communicate government positions to foreign counterparts. In India, this role is performed mainly by officers of the Indian Foreign Service (IFS), who serve in embassies, high commissions, consulates, and multilateral missions.

b. Policy Formulation and Advisory Functions: Inputs from Indian missions abroad, analytical assessments, and diplomatic cables form a key source of information for the Ministry of External Affairs and the Prime Minister's Office. Senior diplomats often contribute to the drafting of foreign policy documents, speeches, and strategic frameworks. Diplomats help political leaders understand international constraints, opportunities, and risks. Their advice is especially important in areas requiring historical knowledge, cultural sensitivity, and awareness of foreign political systems. In this way, diplomats shape the content

☐ Prominent Career Diplomats

☐ Legacy

and framing of foreign policy, even if authority rests with elected leaders.

- c. **Diplomacy, Negotiation, and Implementation:** Negotiation is at the core of diplomatic practice. Indian diplomats negotiate treaties, agreements, joint statements, and resolutions in bilateral and multilateral settings. Successful negotiation requires technical expertise, persuasion, and long-term relationship building. Diplomats also play a key role in implementing foreign policy decisions. They follow up on agreements, manage crises involving Indian citizens abroad, and coordinate with host governments.
- d. **Historical and Institutional Role:** India's diplomatic tradition predates independence. Early Indian diplomats helped articulate ideas of equality, justice, and anti-colonialism in international forums. This legacy influenced post-independence diplomacy, particularly India's emphasis on moral arguments and multilateral engagement. Scholarly studies highlight how Indian diplomats contributed to shaping India's early foreign policy narrative and international. This tradition continues to inform India's diplomatic style, even as strategic and economic considerations have gained prominence.

India can boast of a long array of efficient career diplomats. Here are a few prominent diplomats:

- **V. K. Krishna Menon (*High Commissioner to the UK: 1947–1952; Defence Minister later*):** One of the most influential figures in early Indian diplomacy. He played a major role in articulating non-alignment, anti-colonialism, and India's position at the United Nations, especially on Korea and the Suez Canal.
- **B.N.Rau (*Permanent Representative to the UN: late 1940s*):** Represented India at the United Nations and contributed to shaping early international legal and diplomatic positions of India. As India's representative, he chaired the Security Council when it recommended aid to South Korea in 1950. He had served as the Constitutional Advisor to India's Constituent Assembly.



- **K. R. Narayanan (*Ambassador 1970s–80s*)**: One of India's finest diplomats. He played a key role in building India–China relations after 1971 Bangladesh War. Strong advocate of non-alignment within non-alignment.
- **J. N. Dixit (*Foreign Secretary: 1950s–60s*)**: Played an important role during the post–Cold War era. He was instrumental in India's economic liberalisation period. He was also associated with neighbourhood diplomacy and strengthening ties with South Asia.
- **Shyam Saran (*Foreign Secretary: 1990s–2000s*)**: Played a key role in major strategic initiatives, including the 1998 nuclear tests.

and global outreach. Also coordinated diplomatic preparations related to India's G20 presidency.

- **S. Jaishankar (*Foreign Secretary: 2015–2018*):** Served as Ambassador to China and the United States and as Foreign Secretary (2015–2018). Known for shaping contemporary Indian foreign policy thinking and strategic engagement with major powers.

Think Tanks and Foreign Policy-Making

Think tanks have emerged as important knowledge institutions in India's foreign policy-making process. Traditionally, foreign policy analysis and advice were dominated by government institutions such as the Ministry of External Affairs and the diplomatic service. Over time, however, the growing complexity of international relations has created demand for specialised research, policy analysis, and long-term strategic thinking beyond the formal bureaucracy. Think tanks function as organisations that produce research, policy briefs, and strategic assessments on international issues. They operate at the intersection of academia, government, and public debate. Although they do not possess formal decision-making authority, they influence foreign policy by shaping ideas, framing debates, and supplying expertise to policymakers.

❑ Organisations that produce research

Foreign policy Think Tanks perform several interconnected functions, such as:

- a. Research, Advice and Debate:** Think Tanks primarily conduct thorough evaluations of international developments, regional dynamics, and global governance issues to understand complex global trends and anticipate future challenges. Further, they provide policy advice through reports, briefings, closed-door consultations, and participation in official dialogues. These inputs often complement bureaucratic assessments by offering alternative perspectives or long-term strategic thinking. Think tanks also contribute to public discourse by publishing articles, organising conferences, and engaging with the media, thereby shaping elite and public understanding of foreign policy.

❑ Offer alternative perspectives



❑ Prominent Think Tanks

- ❑ Specialised expertise of scholars

- b. **Track II Diplomacy:** Indian think tanks participate in bilateral and multilateral Track II dialogues on security, regional cooperation, and strategic stability. Track II diplomacy refers to informal dialogues involving academics, former officials, experts, and civil society actors. These dialogues operate alongside official diplomacy (Track I) and allow discussion of sensitive issues in a less rigid environment. Such dialogues help build mutual understanding, test policy ideas, and maintain communication during periods of official diplomatic strain. The Ministry of External Affairs has acknowledged the importance of think tank-led dialogues in strengthening India's global intellectual and diplomatic engagement.
- c. **Government Engagement:** Such dialogues help build mutual understanding, test policy ideas, and maintain communication during periods of official diplomatic strain. The Ministry of External Affairs has acknowledged the importance of think tank-led dialogues in strengthening India's global intellectual and diplomatic engagement.
- d. **Strategic and Security Discourse:** They analyse topics such as regional security architectures, maritime strategy, great power competition, and emerging security challenges. Their research contributes to policy debates on long-term strategic orientation rather than day-to-day diplomacy. By producing scenario-based analysis and strategic assessments, think tanks complement the work of institutions such as the National Security Council.
- e. **Policy Innovation:** One of the strengths of think tanks is that they bring together the specialised expertise of scholars, former diplomats, military officers, economists, and technologists. This multidisciplinary expertise allows think tanks to address foreign policy challenges that cut across traditional domains. Think tanks often introduce new policy concepts and frameworks into foreign policy debates. While not all ideas are adopted, they expand policymakers' options. In this sense, think tanks function as idea incubators within the foreign policy system.

The following list highlights some of the most prominent Indian think tanks and their key contributions.

- **Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA):** Established in 1943, ICWA is India's oldest and most authoritative foreign policy think tank. It has traditionally served as a bridge between the government and the academic community. ICWA conducts research on international relations, organises conferences, and supports Track II dialogues. It has played a significant role in shaping India's engagement with multilateral institutions and regional organisations.
- **Institute for defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA):** Established in 1965, IDSA focuses on defence, security, and strategic studies. It provides policy-relevant research to the government, especially on national security, military affairs, and regional stability. IDSA scholars frequently contribute to debates on India's strategic posture and defence diplomacy.
- **Observer Research Foundation (ORF):** Established in 1990, ORF emerged during the post-Cold War period and has become one of India's most visible think tanks globally. It works on geopolitics, global governance, technology, climate change, and regional studies. ORF actively engages with international policy networks and supports Track II diplomacy.
- **Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies (IPCS):** Established in 1996, IPCS focuses on peace, conflict resolution, and regional security, particularly in South Asia. It contributes to Track II dialogues and research on conflict management and regional cooperation.

❑ Democratisation
of foreign policy

Think tanks contribute to the democratisation of foreign policy by expanding debate beyond government institutions. Through publications, public events, and media engagement, they help inform citizens and students about international affairs. They contribute research, expertise, and informal diplomacy, complementing the work of official institutions. While they do not wield direct power, their role in shaping ideas, informing debate, and supporting strategic thinking has grown steadily. This role is especially important in a democracy where foreign



Summarised Overview

Self-Assessment Questions

- ## Assignment

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- SRI NARAYANAGURU

4. Critically assess the role of public diplomacy — including cultural diplomacy, digital outreach, and people-to-people ties — in projecting India's image internationally. How effective is India's public diplomacy infrastructure compared to leading global powers?

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Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

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SGOU



BLOCK 3

India as a Regional Power

SGS

India as an Asian Power

After studying this unit, the learner will be able to:

Discussion

To describe India as an Asian power is to recognise that India's foreign policy is deeply shaped by its geography, history, and regional environment. It is established beyond doubt that India's size, population, economy, military capacity, and civilisational influence give it the potential to act as an Asian power, playing a significant political, economic, and strategic role within Asia, even if it does not dominate the entire region. However, one must not mistake India's role in Asia as having been uniform or uncontested. Its influence varies across different sub-regions such as South Asia, Southeast Asia, East Asia, Central Asia, and West Asia. In some regions, India has acted as a leader; in others, it has faced strong competition or structural limitations. These variations can only be understood by examining India's Asian engagement region by region and tracing how this engagement has changed over time.

3.1.1 Conceptualising India as an Asian Power

❑ India as an asian power

An Asian power may be defined as a state that exercises significant influence within Asia through its political presence, economic relations, military capabilities, diplomatic engagement, and cultural connections. Such a power may not control the entire region, but it plays an important role in shaping regional outcomes and responses. India's geographical location at the centre of South Asia gives it a natural stake in Asian affairs, even if its influence varies across sub-regions. India's claim to Asian power status rests on several other structural factors as well. These include its large population, expanding economy, growing military capabilities, strategic location for maritime access, and long civilisational history. These structural features give India the potential to influence political, economic, and security developments across Asia. Having said this, one must not presume that being an Asian power means exercising constant leadership or dominance. Power in Asia is uneven and contested, with multiple strong actors, including China, Japan, and regional groupings such as ASEAN. India therefore operates in a complex environment where cooperation, competition, and constraints coexist. This makes India's Asian role more situational and selective, rather than absolute or uniform.



3.1.2 India and Various Regions of Asia

In the following sections, let us examine India's relations with specific parts of Asia in detail to develop a clear understanding of how India qualifies as an Asian power with differential influence. We begin with South Asia, India's immediate neighbourhood and the region where India's influence, responsibilities, and limitations are most clearly visible. Further, we shall proceed to explore India and Southeast Asia, followed by other regions.

A. India and South Asia

South Asia includes Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, with Afghanistan often included, though it may otherwise be classified as part of Central Asia. Primarily bound by geography, history, and culture, India's relationship with South Asia has undergone transformations across various phases. India shares borders with almost all South Asian countries and occupies a central position in the region. Once administered as a single colonial unit, after 1947, the region was split into many sovereign states, with India at its centre, creating both opportunities and challenges for India.

In the early years of independence, India sought to play a leadership role in South Asia, guided by principles of peaceful coexistence, non-interference, and regional cooperation. Indian leaders believed that shared anti-colonial experiences and economic interdependence would encourage cooperation. India supported regional stability and avoided formal military alliances within South Asia. However, political tensions, especially with Pakistan, limited the success of this approach.

During the Cold War, India's South Asian policy became increasingly shaped by security concerns. Conflicts with Pakistan, the 1962 war with China, and internal instability in neighbouring countries affected India's regional posture. India intervened selectively when it believed its core security interests were threatened, most notably in the creation of Bangladesh in 1971. Another important example was India's intervention in Sri Lanka in 1987 through the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord, which led to the deployment of the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) to manage the ethnic conflict. While the intervention was intended to stabilise the region and prevent external involvement, it became controversial and faced resistance from local groups, eventually leading to India's withdrawal in 1990.

These interventions enhanced India's role as a regional security actor but also contributed to perceptions of interventionism and mistrust among some neighbours.

☐ Pragmatic regional engagement

The post-1991 period marked a shift toward a more pragmatic and economically oriented approach to South Asia. India focused on trade, connectivity, and development cooperation with its neighbours. Regional institutions such as the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) were used to promote dialogue, although political tensions often limited their effectiveness. India also began to balance regional engagement with broader Asian and global priorities. In recent years, India's influence in South Asia has faced new challenges. Smaller South Asian states, such as Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Bhutan, and the Maldives, have diversified their external partnerships to reduce dependence on India, and China's growing presence in the region has altered the strategic environment. India continues to emphasise neighbourhood-first policies, development assistance, and connectivity projects, but its leadership is no longer uncontested. This reflects the limits as well as the responsibilities of being a regional power.

☐ Limits of regional powers

Overall, India's engagement with South Asia shows that regional power does not guarantee regional dominance. India remains the most significant actor in South Asia, but its ability to shape outcomes depends on diplomacy, economic cooperation, and sensitivity to neighbours' concerns. This complex relationship forms the foundation of India's wider Asian role.

B. India and Southeast Asia

☐ India and south east asia

Southeast Asia is a diverse region in Asia, split into mainland (Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam) and island (Indonesia, Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei, Timor-Leste) areas. India and Southeast Asia share deep historical roots. India has maintained strong cultural, religious, and commercial links with the region for centuries. These early connections created a sense of familiarity and shared heritage, which later shaped India's perception of Southeast Asia as a natural extension of its Asian engagement. Post-independence, however, India's engagement with Southeast Asia became limited and cautious. The Cold War period saw Southeast Asia emerge as a region of intense great power rivalry, and many countries in the region aligned themselves with the power blocs. At the same time, India was focused on South Asia and non-



- ❑ The look - east policy

- ❑ From look east to act east

- ❑ Strategic importance of southeast asia

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Competition from other major powers, especially China, connectivity limitations, and gaps in economic integration restrict India's influence. Therefore, India is threading carefully in the region, fostering cultural links to strategic partnerships, leveraging its image as a stabilising and cooperative partner rather than a dominant power. This region represents one of the most successful examples of India's post-Cold War re-engagement with Asia.

❑ India–ASEAN trade relations

India–ASEAN trade patterns further illustrate the growing but still evolving nature of this relationship. In recent years, total trade between India and ASEAN has reached approximately USD 130–135 billion, making ASEAN one of India's largest trading partners. Of this, India's exports to ASEAN amount to around USD 40–45 billion, mainly petroleum products, machinery, and pharmaceuticals, while imports from ASEAN are significantly higher at about USD 85–90 billion, including electronics, machinery, palm oil, and coal. This has resulted in a persistent trade deficit for India, indicating structural imbalances in the trade relationship. Despite steady growth in overall trade, ASEAN's share of India's global trade remains moderate, suggesting that the full potential of economic integration between India and Southeast Asia has yet to be realised.

C. India and East Asia

❑ India and East Asia

East Asia is a major subregion of Asia, culturally and geographically defined by countries such as China, Japan, South Korea, North Korea, and Mongolia, as well as Taiwan and the Special Administrative Regions of Hong Kong & Macau. India's engagement with East Asia, particularly with China, Japan, and the Republic of Korea, has been central to its evolution as an Asian power. Interestingly, East Asia hosts some of the world's major centres of political and technological power, as well as advanced economies. India has therefore been cautious in its approach to this region, combining diplomacy, economic cooperation, and strategic balancing, and has been influenced by changing regional and global conditions.

❑ India - China relations

The early relations between India and East Asian countries were influenced by post-independence idealism and Asian solidarity. Amongst these countries, the association with China has been quite complicated. Diplomatic relations with China were established in 1950, and India was among the first non-socialist countries to recognise the People's Republic of China. The Panchsheel Agreement (1954) was significant for establishing



- India - Japan strategic partnership

India's engagement with Japan represents one of the strongest pillars of its East Asia policy. Diplomatic relations date back to 1952, following the San Francisco Peace Treaty. In the early decades, India's non-aligned posture and Japan's close alignment with the United States made the relationship between the two countries cordial but limited in strategic depth. Japan viewed India primarily as a developing country rather than a strategic partner, while India focused more on relations with the Soviet Union and Asian solidarity movements. The engagement was largely confined to diplomatic exchanges, cultural contacts, and limited economic interaction. But ties deepened significantly after the 1990s. The India–Japan Global Partnership (2000) and its elevation to a Special Strategic and Global Partnership (2014) marked major milestones. Concrete cooperation is visible in infrastructure projects such as the Mumbai–Ahmedabad High-Speed Rail, supported by Japanese investment and technology, and in defence agreements, including the Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (2020).

India - South Korea relations

Relations with the Republic of Korea (South Korea) have also expanded steadily. During the Cold War, relations were largely shaped by ideological and geopolitical factors. India maintained a non-aligned position during the Korean War (1950–1953) and supported a peaceful resolution rather than military intervention. India chaired the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission (NNRC) after the war, playing an important diplomatic role in managing prisoner repatriation. South Korea's strong alliance with the United States and India's closer ties with socialist and non-aligned countries reduced the scope for deeper engagement. Economic and political ties expanded only slowly and gained momentum mainly after the end of the Cold War. The India–Korea Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), signed in 2009, strengthened trade and investment ties. South Korean companies have played



a visible role in India's manufacturing and technology sectors. Political relations were further upgraded with the establishment of a Special Strategic Partnership in 2015, reflecting growing convergence on regional stability and economic cooperation.

❑ India's re-engagement with China

It is evident that in the early years of the Cold War, India's relations with countries in East Asia were mostly reluctant. A gradual re-engagement with East Asia began in the late Cold War and early post-Cold War period. India normalised relations with China through a series of confidence-building agreements, including the Agreement on the Maintenance of Peace and Tranquillity along the Line of Actual Control (1993) and the Agreement on Confidence Building Measures in the Military Field (1996). These agreements helped stabilise the border and allowed broader diplomatic and economic engagement to resume. However, in recent years, especially after the 2020 border crisis, India–China relations have become more strained, highlighting the limits of earlier confidence-building mechanisms.

❑ India in East - Asian multilateralism

Beyond bilateral ties, India has engaged East Asia through regional institutions and multilateral forums. Participation in the East Asia Summit (since 2005) and regular strategic dialogues with Japan, South Korea, and China have allowed India to articulate its views on regional security, connectivity, and economic cooperation. In recent years, this engagement has expanded through Act East Policy initiatives, growing strategic partnerships with Japan and South Korea, and participation in broader Indo-Pacific discussions. These platforms give India a voice in shaping the East Asian regional order without relying on formal alliances.

❑ Constraints in India's East Asia policy

Despite expanding engagement, India's East Asia policy faces structural constraints. Economic interdependence with the region remains uneven, and relations with China continue to be marked by competition and periodic crises. India's decision to stay out of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) in 2019 also reflects concerns about trade imbalances and domestic economic vulnerabilities. India, therefore, pursues a cautious strategy that combines engagement with risk management, reflecting the realities of power politics in East Asia.

D. India and Central Asia

The term Central Asia usually refers to five countries that became independent after the breakup of the Soviet Union



in 1991. These countries are geographically located between Eastern Europe, South Asia, and East Asia and share historical, cultural, and strategic linkages. The countries are Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, collectively called the Central Asian Republics (CARs). India's engagement with Central Asia is rooted in long-standing historical and cultural connections. For centuries, trade routes such as the Silk Route connected the Indian subcontinent with Central Asian societies, enabling exchanges of goods, ideas, and people. These links weakened during the colonial period and the Cold War, but they continued to shape India's perception of Central Asia as part of its extended Asian neighbourhood. During the Cold War, India had little direct engagement with individual CARs because the region formed part of the Soviet Union, although India maintained close relations with the Soviet leadership. As a result, India's presence in the region remained largely diplomatic and symbolic rather than economic or strategic.

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, India promptly established diplomatic relations with the independent CARs. Energy security and connectivity have been central to India's Central Asia strategy. India has shown interest in Central Asian oil and gas resources and supported regional connectivity projects to improve access. Although geographical constraints have limited overland access, India has sought alternative routes and diplomatic mechanisms to remain engaged with the region. Recognising the region's importance, India launched the "Connect Central Asia" policy in 2012, focusing on political dialogue, economic cooperation, security engagement, and people-to-people contacts. India also became a full member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in 2017, alongside the CARs, which provided a platform for dialogue on security, counter-terrorism, and regional stability. Further, the India–Central Asia Dialogue and the ministerial meetings discussed cooperation in trade, security, and development.

India continues to increase high-level diplomatic engagement with the region. The first India-Central Asia Summit, held in 2022, marked an important milestone, underscoring India's intention to play a more visible role in the region. Joint statements and cooperation agreements have focused on security, capacity-building, digital connectivity, and cultural exchange. Despite these efforts, India's role in Central Asia faces structural limitations. Geographic distance, limited connectivity, and competition from other regional powers

constrain India's influence. As a result, India's engagement remains selective and partnership-oriented rather than dominant. This reflects a realistic approach to exercising regional power within constraints.

E. India and West Asia

❑ India and West Asia

West Asia (often called the Middle East) includes the following countries with which India maintains diplomatic relations: Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Oman, Kuwait, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Palestine, and Yemen. It is a region of immense historical depth, often called the “Cradle of Civilisation,” with diverse cultures and faiths. India's relations with these countries vary significantly due to differences in religion, political systems, regional conflicts, and strategic interests. India's engagement with West Asia has historically been shaped by three core interests: energy security, diaspora welfare, and regional stability. Given the complexities of the region's political environment, India pursued a balanced and pragmatic approach, maintaining relations with rival states and conflicting parties.

❑ India's cold war approach to West Asia

During the Cold War, India's relations with West Asia were shaped mainly by non-alignment, anti-colonial solidarity, and political restraint. India avoided formal alliances and sought to maintain friendly relations with different countries in the region, despite ideological divisions and regional conflicts. India supported Arab nationalism and opposed colonial influence, thereby building goodwill among Arab states. India also adopted a cautious position on regional conflicts. It supported the Palestinian cause and advocated a peaceful resolution to the Arab–Israeli conflict, while avoiding direct involvement in military or political disputes. This approach reflected India's broader foreign policy preference for diplomacy and moral leadership rather than power politics.

❑ India and the GCC countries

Relations with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, especially Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar, Oman, and Kuwait, form the backbone of India's West Asia policy. Since the 1970s, these countries have been major suppliers of crude oil and natural gas to India. Importantly, millions of Indian workers live and work in Gulf countries, making the region vital for remittances and employment. Beyond economic ties, GCC countries hold significant political importance for India due to their influence in regional geopolitics, their role in the Islamic world, and their strategic position in global energy markets and



- ❑ Post - cold war shift

❑ India's strategic autonomy

India and Saudi Arabia

To better understand the diversity of India's West Asia policy, it is necessary to examine its bilateral relations with major regional powers.

- a. Saudi Arabia is one of India's largest suppliers of crude oil. Along with other Gulf producers, it forms part of the group that accounts for nearly 46% of India's crude oil imports. India and Saudi Arabia share a relationship rooted in energy cooperation and economic engagement, which has

expanded to include strategic dialogue, defence cooperation, and counter-terrorism collaboration.

❑ India and the United Arab Emirates

- b. The UAE is a key economic and strategic partner, with India's exports to the country alone reaching over USD 37 billion in 2024, making it one of India's largest trading partners. It also serves as a major logistics and financial hub linking India to global markets. The UAE hosts a large Indian diaspora and is one of India's largest trading partners in the region. Relations were elevated with the signing of the India–UAE Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), in 2022, marking a major milestone in institutionalising economic relations.

❑ India and Qatar, Oman, and Kuwait

- c. Qatar is an important supplier of liquefied natural gas (LNG) to India. Oman has historically supported India's maritime interests in the Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean, while Kuwait has been a long-standing energy partner.

❑ India and Iran

- d. India's relations with Iran have been shaped by historical ties, energy interests, and regional geopolitics. Iran has been an important source of crude oil for India, although international sanctions have periodically disrupted trade. India has also cooperated with Iran on connectivity initiatives, most notably the Chabahar Port project, which provides India access to Afghanistan and Central Asia. At the same time, India has had to carefully balance its Iran policy with its relations with other West Asian states and major global powers.

❑ India and Iraq

- e. India's engagement with Iraq has largely focused on energy imports and post-conflict reconstruction. Iraq is a significant oil supplier to India. India has also been involved in humanitarian assistance and capacity-building efforts during periods of instability. Relations remain important but are limited by Iraq's internal political and security challenges.

❑ India and Israel

- f. India formally established full diplomatic relations with Israel in 1992. Since then, cooperation has expanded rapidly, particularly in defence, agriculture, technology, and innovation. Israel has become a key defence partner for India, supplying advanced military equipment and technol-



❑ India and Palestine

ogy. India has pursued closer ties with Israel while maintaining its traditional support for the Palestinian cause, reflecting a policy of diplomatic balance.

- g. India has historically supported the Palestinian cause, backing the creation of an independent Palestinian state through peaceful means. India maintains diplomatic relations with Palestine and has provided development assistance and humanitarian aid. This support coexists with India's growing relations with Israel, highlighting India's balanced West Asia policy.

❑ Contemporary importance of West Asia

The contemporary significance of West Asia has become even more evident in the context of recent regional conflicts, including tensions involving Iran. India's dependence on the region is substantial across multiple dimensions. In terms of energy security, around 50–60% of India's crude oil imports and nearly two-thirds of its natural gas supplies originate from West Asia, making it a critical source of hydrocarbons. At the same time, over 9 million Indians live and work in the Gulf region, forming one of the largest expatriate communities. These workers contribute significantly to India's economy, with the Gulf accounting for around 35–40% of India's total remittance inflows, amounting to tens of billions of dollars annually. Trade linkages are also extensive, with India's total trade with West Asia estimated at around USD 170–180 billion annually, alongside significant exports routed through the region's maritime corridors. These economic, demographic, and strategic linkages underscore that instability in West Asia directly affects India's energy security, economic stability, and diaspora welfare, underscoring the region's critical geopolitical importance to India.

❑ Evolution of India's West Asia policy

Viewed across phases, India's relations with West Asia show a clear evolution from principle-driven diplomacy during the Cold War to pragmatic multi-alignment in the post-Cold War period. While the core interests of energy security and regional stability remain constant, the methods and intensity of engagement have changed significantly. This phase-wise perspective helps explain India's ability to sustain long-term relations across a highly diverse and sensitive region.

Summarised Overview

India's role as an Asian power has not been static. It has evolved through distinct historical phases, shaped by global politics, regional developments, and domestic capacities. In the early years after independence, India viewed Asia largely through the lens of civilisational unity and anti-colonial solidarity. India supported Asian unity, peaceful coexistence, and independence movements across the continent. However, this phase relied more on ideas and diplomacy than on material power. The Cold War imposed significant constraints on India's role in Asia. Regional conflicts, great-power rivalry, and security challenges constrained India's ability to act as a regional leader. Relations with some Asian regions weakened, while others became shaped by strategic concerns rather than cooperation. The end of the Cold War and India's economic liberalisation marked a major shift. India re-engaged with Asia through economic diplomacy, regional institutions, and connectivity initiatives. Policies such as Look East reflected India's renewed focus. In recent years, India's Asian policy has become more pragmatic, differentiated, and interest-driven. India engages different Asian regions in different ways—leadership in some areas, partnership in others, and cautious balancing where competition exists. Strategic autonomy remains central, shaping India's preference for flexible arrangements over rigid alliances. India's Asian power, therefore, lies not in dominance but in consistent engagement, strategic restraint, and adaptability.

Self-Assessment Questions

1. Analyse India's role as an Asian power using a region-wise approach.
2. Examine the evolution of India's Asian engagement across different historical phases.
3. Discuss India's relations with Southeast and East Asia since the 1990s.
4. Assess the importance of West Asia and Central Asia in India's foreign policy.
5. Critically evaluate the strengths and limitations of India as an Asian power.

Assignment

1. Analyze India's geopolitical and strategic position in Asia. How do geography, demography, economic weight, and military capability together define India's profile as an Asian power?
2. Critically examine India's bilateral relationships with China and Japan and their significance for India's role as an Asian power. How does the India–China rivalry shape India's broader regional strategy?



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SGOU



India and Indo-Pacific

Discussion

❑ The Indo-Pacific except

The term Indo-Pacific refers to a broad strategic and geographical space that links the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean. It is not only a geographical idea, but also a way of understanding how power, security, and cooperation operate in contemporary Asia. For India, the Indo-Pacific represents an expansion of its regional outlook beyond continental Asia. It highlights India's growing maritime role, its economic integration with East and Southeast Asia, and its interest in maintaining open and stable sea routes. At the same time, India has been careful to frame its Indo-Pacific engagement as inclusive, cooperative, and non-exclusive, consistent with its long-standing emphasis on strategic autonomy. This unit examines India's approach to the Indo-Pacific by tracing the evolution of the concept, analysing India's official position, and assessing the opportunities and challenges that arise from this emerging regional framework.

3.2.1 Indo-Pacific: Key Characteristics

❑ Key characteristics

The Indo-Pacific refers to a broad strategic and geographical region that connects the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean into a single, continuous maritime space, extending from East Africa to the Americas. Unlike earlier concepts such as "Asia-Pacific," the Indo-Pacific highlights the growing importance of oceans, sea routes, and maritime connectivity in shaping international politics. The concept gained wider acceptance in the early twenty-first century as global trade, energy flows, and security challenges became increasingly ocean-based. It represents a major global geopolitical and economic hub, accounting for over 60% of global GDP and nearly half of maritime trade, with key focus areas in the South China Sea and the Strait of Malacca.

❑ Global interpretation

Various major powers, including Japan, the United States, Canada, and the European Union, have articulated their own Indo-Pacific strategies, reflecting both shared concerns and differing priorities. Japan was among the earliest to promote the idea of a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific," emphasising rule-based order, connectivity, and maritime security. The United States views the Indo-Pacific primarily through a strategic lens, focusing on maintaining regional balance and countering China's growing influence. The European Union's Indo-Pacific strategy highlights sustainable development, multilateralism,



and economic partnerships, while Canada's approach combines security concerns with trade diversification and regional engagement. Although these visions converge on principles such as openness, inclusiveness, and rule of law, they differ in emphasis, scope, and strategic intent, reflecting each actor's geopolitical interests.

❑ Defining the Indo-Pacific

Another important feature of the Indo-Pacific concept is the lack of a universally agreed geographical definition. Different countries interpret the Indo-Pacific region differently. For some, particularly the United States and Japan, the Indo-Pacific extends from the western shores of the Americas to the eastern coast of Africa. Others adopt a narrower view, focusing primarily on the Indian Ocean and the Western Pacific. The European Union tends to emphasise maritime connectivity between the Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean, while some Southeast Asian perspectives prioritise ASEAN centrality within a more limited regional scope. These variations reflect differences in strategic priorities and underscore the flexible, evolving nature of the Indo-Pacific concept.

3.2.2 Characteristics of Indo Pacific

Let us look into the key characteristics of the Indo-Pacific:

❑ Maritime orientation

a. One major characteristic of the Indo-Pacific is its maritime orientation. The region contains some of the world's busiest Sea Lanes of Communication (SLOCs), through which a large share of global trade and energy supplies pass. Economic interdependence in the region makes maritime security and protection of trade routes central concerns for regional actors.

❑ Strategic diversity

b. Another defining feature of the Indo-Pacific is its strategic diversity. The region includes developed economies, developing countries, island states, and major military powers. Political systems, security interests, and economic priorities vary widely across the region. This diversity makes the Indo-Pacific a complex and dynamic space where cooperation and competition coexist. No single power dominates the entire region, leading to overlapping partnerships and flexible alignments.

❑ Rules-based order

c. Many regional actors stress respect for international law, peaceful resolution of disputes, and freedom of navigation. India has consistently supported this approach, arguing that

❑ Non-traditional security challenges

stability in the Indo-Pacific depends on cooperation rather than confrontation. India's position differs from some other interpretations by emphasising that the Indo-Pacific should remain inclusive and exclude no country.

- d. Issues such as climate change, disaster relief, piracy, cyber threats, and maritime pollution affect all countries in the region. These shared challenges require collective responses, reinforcing the idea that the Indo-Pacific is a space for both cooperation and competition.

Taken together, the Indo-Pacific is best understood as a connected maritime region, shaped by trade, security, diversity, and cooperation. For India, it represents an extension of its regional role as an Asian power, grounded in openness, inclusiveness, and strategic autonomy.

3.2.3 Evolution of India's Indo - Pacific Approach

❑ Evolution of India's Indo - Pacific outlook

India's engagement with the Indo-Pacific did not emerge suddenly. For a long time after independence, India's foreign policy remained largely continent-focused, shaped by land borders, regional conflicts, and non-alignment. Maritime issues were important for trade, but they did not form the core of India's strategic thinking. During this period, India did not use the term "Indo-Pacific" and instead engaged Asia through sub-regional and bilateral frameworks. A gradual shift began after the end of the Cold War. Economic liberalisation in the early 1990s increased India's dependence on external trade and maritime routes. As India's trade with East and Southeast Asia expanded, the security of sea lanes connecting the Indian Ocean and the Pacific became more important. The Look East Policy laid the groundwork for a broader maritime outlook.

❑ India's Indo - Pacific vision

India's Indo-Pacific thinking became more visible in the 2000s, as India expanded naval outreach, participated in regional forums, and strengthened ties with East and Southeast Asian countries. India began to be described by some observers as a "net security provider" in the Indian Ocean region. However, Indian officials remained cautious in their language and avoided formal strategic labels that could suggest alliance politics or exclusionary blocs. A clear articulation of India's Indo-Pacific approach came in 2018, when the Prime Minister outlined India's vision at the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore. India defined the Indo-Pacific as a free, open, inclusive, and rules-based region, stretching from Africa's eastern coast to



❑ Consolidation of India's strategy

- ❑ India's Indo - Pacific approach

Inclusiveness

- ❑ Respect for international law

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do-Pacific depends on rules rather than unilateral actions. This position aligns with India's broader support for multilateralism in global and regional affairs.

☐ ASEAN centrality

- c. India recognises ASEAN as an important platform for regional dialogue and cooperation and supports ASEAN-led mechanisms such as the East Asia Summit. By emphasising ASEAN centrality, India seeks to promote balance, avoid dominance by any single power, and strengthen regional institutions that encourage consensus-building.

☐ Connectivity and development

- d. India supports transparent, sustainable, and inclusive connectivity initiatives that respect national sovereignty and financial responsibility. Infrastructure development, capacity-building, and digital cooperation are seen as tools to promote shared growth across the region. India positions itself as a development partner rather than a dominant power.

☐ Strategic autonomy

- e. Even while engaging multiple partners in the Indo-Pacific, India maintains flexibility in its foreign policy choices. It avoids formal military alliances and prefers issue-based cooperation. This allows India to pursue its interests without being tied to the strategic priorities of any single power.

☐ Cooperation in non-traditional security areas

- f. Disaster relief, humanitarian assistance, climate change, piracy, and maritime safety are areas where India promotes joint action. These shared challenges reinforce India's argument that the Indo-Pacific should be a space for collaboration rather than confrontation.

India's Indo-Pacific vision is best understood as normative and principle-driven. It seeks to balance engagement with autonomy, openness with stability, and cooperation with restraint.

3.2.5 " India's Engagement and Initiatives in the Indo - Pacific "

India's engagement in the Indo-Pacific is carried out through a combination of diplomatic, economic, maritime, and institutional initiatives. Rather than relying on a single platform, India participates in multiple regional mechanisms and partnerships. This approach reflects India's preference for multi-layered engagement and flexible cooperation, consistent with its emphasis on strategic autonomy.



❑ Participation in regional institutions

❑ Maritime cooperation and naval diplomacy

❑ Connectivity and infrastructure initiatives

❑ Economic engagement and trade

❑ Humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR)

- a. India plays an active role in ASEAN-led institutions, which form the core of its Indo-Pacific engagement. The East Asia Summit and the ASEAN Regional Forum are among the forums in which India participates, and they allow India to engage with a wide range of regional actors on political, security, and economic issues, while supporting ASEAN centrality in regional architecture.
- b. India conducts naval exercises, coordinated patrols, port visits, and capacity-building programmes with countries across the region. The Indian Navy plays an important role in ensuring maritime safety, providing humanitarian assistance, and conducting disaster relief operations.
- c. Projects related to ports, roads, digital connectivity, and capacity-building aim to enhance regional integration and economic growth. India presents these initiatives as development partnerships that promote connectivity.
- d. India has expanded trade, investment, and supply-chain cooperation with countries in East and Southeast Asia. While India has adopted a cautious approach to large multilateral trade agreements, it continues to pursue bilateral and regional economic partnerships.
- e. India has emerged as an important provider of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief in the Indo-Pacific. The Indian Navy and Air Force have been involved in relief operations following natural disasters, reinforcing India's image as a responsible regional actor.

Summarised Overview

This unit examined India's engagement with the Indo-Pacific, an emerging regional framework that connects the Indian and Pacific Oceans through maritime trade, security, and cooperation. The unit began by defining the Indo-Pacific and identifying its key characteristics, such as maritime connectivity, diversity, and the importance of a rules-based order. The discussion traced the evolution of India's Indo-Pacific approach, showing how India gradually moved from a continent-focused outlook to a broader maritime perspective. The unit highlighted India's official vision of the Indo-Pacific as inclusive, cooperative, and non-exclusive, with strong emphasis on ASEAN centrality, strategic autonomy, and respect for international law. The unit also examined India's engagements and initiatives in the Indo-Pacific, including participation in regional institutions, maritime cooperation, development partnerships, and humanitarian assistance. Overall, the unit showed that India's Indo-Pacific strategy extends its role as an Asian power, shaped by pragmatism, flexibility, and long-standing foreign policy principles.

Self-Assessment Questions

1. Trace the evolution of India's Indo-Pacific approach.
2. Explain the key principles guiding India's Indo-Pacific vision.
3. Examine India's major engagements and initiatives in the Indo-Pacific.
4. Analyse the opportunities and challenges India faces in the Indo-Pacific.
5. Critically assess India's Indo-Pacific strategy in the context of strategic autonomy.

Assignment

1. Critically examine the evolution of the Indo-Pacific as a strategic construct. How has India's understanding and operationalization of the Indo-Pacific concept evolved under the 'Act East Policy' and the 'SAGAR' doctrine?
2. Analyze India's partnerships with the United States, Japan, and Australia within the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad). What are the strategic objectives, limitations, and risks for India in participating in the Quad?
3. Evaluate India's approach to economic and infrastructure connectivity in the Indo-Pacific. How do initiatives such as the Asia-Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC) and India's port development projects compare to China's Belt and Road Initiative?
4. Assess the strategic implications of India's growing naval presence and maritime diplomacy in the Indo-Pacific. How does India's maritime strategy address the twin challenges of Chinese expansionism and ensuring freedom of navigation?

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3.3.1 Origin, Composition and Characteristics of BRICS

BRICS is an intergovernmental grouping of ten major emerging economies that seek to enhance cooperation and reform the international system. Although BRICS is not a formal international organisation with a permanent secretariat, it has developed into an important platform for political dialogue, economic coordination, and development cooperation. BRICS is a flexible multilateral platform central to India's Global South diplomacy, and it serves multiple purposes. This unit examines BRICS as an instrument of India's foreign policy, focusing on its evolution, institutions, achievements, and limitations.

❑ BRICS and India's foreign policy

The term BRIC was first coined in 2001 by Goldman Sachs economist Jim O'Neill to describe four fast-growing economies—Brazil, Russia, India, and China. Initially, it was an economic label rather than a political project. However, these countries soon recognised the potential value of collective engagement and began meeting at the political level. The first BRIC summit was held in 2009, marking the transformation of the concept into a diplomatic forum. South Africa joined in 2011, expanding the grouping into BRICS. Unlike traditional alliances, BRICS is based on consensus, voluntary cooperation, and respect for sovereignty. It does not function as a military bloc or ideological alliance. Instead, it focuses on shared interests such as development, reform of global governance, and cooperation among emerging economies.

❑ Origin and nature of BRICS

In recent years, the BRICS has undergone significant development, with the decision to expand its membership. Originally comprising five countries, the grouping agreed to invite additional members as part of a broader effort to enhance the representation of the Global South. Subsequently, from 2024, the membership was extended to Egypt, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Iran and the UAE. Collectively, BRICS comprises more than a quarter of the global economy and nearly half the world's population.

❑ Expansion of BRICS

On 24 October 2024, an additional 13 countries, namely Algeria, Belarus, Bolivia, Cuba, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Nigeria, Thailand, Turkey, Uganda, Uzbekistan and Vietnam, were invited to participate as "partner countries". The partner status would allow these countries to engage with

and benefit from BRICS initiatives. This expansion reflects the growing interest among developing countries in alternative multilateral platforms. Supporters of expansion argue that it strengthens BRICS' legitimacy, increases its global reach, and enhances its ability to influence international institutions. At the same time, critics point out that a larger membership could make consensus-building more difficult due to differences in economic size, political priorities, and regional interests. Expansion also raises questions about institutional capacity. Existing mechanisms, such as the New Development Bank and ministerial forums, may need adjustment.

Let us examine the institutional framework of the BRICS. Although BRICS is often described as an informal grouping, it has gradually developed a structured institutional framework to support cooperation among its members. The most important institutional requisites are:

☐ Annual BRICS Summits

☐ Ministerial meetings (Foreign, Finance, Trade)

☐ New Development Bank

☐ Supporting mechanisms

- a. At the core of the BRICS framework are the annual BRICS Summits, where heads of state and government meet to set broad priorities and issue joint declarations. These summits provide political direction and signal collective positions on global and regional issues.
- b. These meetings allow coordination on specific policy areas such as global governance reform, economic cooperation, counter-terrorism, and development issues. Sectoral working groups have also been established to promote cooperation across areas such as health, education, science and technology, energy, and climate change.
- c. Headquartered in Shanghai, the NDB was established in 2014 to finance infrastructure and sustainable development projects in BRICS and other developing countries. The bank represents a concrete effort to provide alternatives to traditional Western-led financial institutions, while operating on principles of equality and shared governance.
- d. BRICS has also created several supporting mechanisms, such as the BRICS Business Council, BRICS Think Tank Council, and forums for civil society and academia. These platforms aim to deepen people-to-people contacts, policy research, and private-sector engagement. Together, these institutions provide BRICS with continuity beyond annual summits, even though it remains a flexible, consensus-based grouping.

❑ Institutional development of BRICS

The BRICS has implemented other initiatives that could reform the global financial system, such as the BRICS Contingent Reserve Arrangement, BRICS PAY , and the BRICS Joint Statistical Publication. It has also advanced de-dollarization to reduce the use of the U.S. dollar as reserve currency. In its first 15 years, BRICS has established almost 60 intragroup institutions and an extensive network, including think tanks and dialogues. Some commentators consider BRICS the alternative to the G7 and a major political force in the global international order.

3.3.2 Characteristics of BRICS

The key characteristics of BRICS are:

❑ Informal institutional structure

a. Unlike traditional alliances, BRICS is based on consensus, voluntary cooperation, and respect for sovereignty. It does not function as a military bloc or ideological alliance. Instead, it focuses on shared interests such as development, reform of global governance, and cooperation among emerging economies.

❑ Diversity

b. BRICS countries differ widely in political systems, levels of development, regional priorities, and global alignments. While China is the largest economy, India, Brazil, and South Africa play important balancing roles within the group.

❑ Advocates a multipolar world order

c. BRICS countries differ widely in political systems, levels of development, regional priorities, and global alignments. While China is the largest economy, India, Brazil, and South Africa play important balancing roles within the group.

India's participation in BRICS is guided by a combination of economic, political, and strategic interests. For India, BRICS is not an alliance but a platform to increase its voice in global governance while preserving strategic autonomy. Some of the prominent reasons for India joining the BRICS would be:

❑ Reforming global governance

- **Reforming global governance:** India has consistently used BRICS forums to support demands for reform of institutions such as the United Nations Security Council, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank.



❑ Economic cooperation within BRICS

India's trade relations with BRICS

□ BRICS and South-South cooperation

□ BRICS as a platform of engagement

❑ India's role in BRICS

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such as counter-terrorism, digital public infrastructure, health cooperation, and people-to-people exchanges.

3.3.3 India's Role in BRICS Institutional Frameworks

❑ India's institutional role in BRICS

India has played an active role in shaping and strengthening the institutional mechanisms of BRICS. From the early years of the grouping, India supported the development of regular summits, ministerial meetings, and sectoral working groups to ensure continuity and coordination. India has consistently argued that BRICS should remain inclusive, development-oriented, and consensus-based, rather than becoming a rigid or ideological bloc.

❑ India and BRICS summits

- Annual Summits: India has been an active participant since the first summit in 2009. India has hosted BRICS annual summits three times: in 2012 (New Delhi), 2016 (Goa), and virtually in 2021 (13th Summit) under its chairmanship, marking its third hosting role with the theme "BRICS@15". Indian leaders have used summit declarations to emphasise issues such as multilateralism, reform of global governance, counter-terrorism, and respect for sovereignty. When India hosted BRICS summits (e.g., 2012, 2016, 2021), it deliberately selected developmental and people-centric themes, such as inclusive growth, digital cooperation, and health collaboration. This reflects India's attempt to anchor BRICS in functional cooperation, rather than ideological positioning.

❑ India in BRICS ministerial meetings

- Ministerial meetings: India plays an important role in ministerial-level BRICS meetings, especially those of foreign ministers, finance ministers, and trade ministers. Through these forums, India coordinates positions on global issues emphasising the importance of dialogue-based conflict resolution and adherence to international law. In foreign ministers' meetings, India has consistently:

- ▶ Supported multilateralism without alignment,
- ▶ Avoided endorsing language that could be interpreted as anti-Western, and
- ▶ Insisted on references to international law and sovereignty.



❑ India and new development bank

❑ India and the BRICS business council

❑ India in BRICS academic and think tank forums

- New Development Bank: India is a founding member and equal shareholder, reflecting the BRICS principle of equality among members. India is among the largest recipients of NDB funding for infrastructure, renewable energy, transport, and sustainable urban development projects.
- BRICS Business Council: India views the Business Council as a platform to enhance economic engagement, and Indian business representatives have participated in working groups focused on infrastructure, energy, manufacturing, and digital economy. However, India has remained cautious due to concerns over trade imbalances, especially with China. As a result, India uses the Business Council mainly as a dialogue and networking platform, not as a mechanism for binding economic commitments.
- BRICS Think Tank Council & Academic Forums: Indian research institutions regularly contribute policy papers, analysis, and recommendations to BRICS discussions. These forums enable India to advance ideas on development models, governance reform, and South–South cooperation.

Indian administration considers BRICS to be a platform for addressing the demands of the Global South and to affirm its stance on terrorism and ensuing conflicts across the globe. In summary, India's engagement with BRICS institutions is deliberate, selective, and pragmatic. India invests most heavily in institutions:

- Deliver development outcomes (NDB),
- Enhance diplomatic coordination (summits, ministerials), or
- Amplify India's normative voice (think tanks).

3.3.4 India and China within BRICS: Cooperation, Competition, and Constraints

India and China are the two largest Asian members of BRICS, and their interaction significantly shapes the internal dynamics of the grouping. Despite bilateral tensions, BRICS has provided a multilateral setting in which India and China continue to engage diplomatically. This coexistence highlights the functional importance of the BRICS as a forum that

❑ India - China dynamics within BRICS

enables cooperation even amid rivalry. India and China have collaborated on issues such as global governance reform, development finance, climate change negotiations, and South–South cooperation. At the same time, India–China relations within BRICS are shaped by structural asymmetries, particularly economic imbalance. China’s larger economy and greater financial capacity create concerns about disproportionate influence within BRICS institutions. One important function of BRICS has been its role as a buffer mechanism during periods of heightened India–China bilateral tension. For instance, the Sino-Indian border dispute, such as the 2020 Galwan Valley clash, has been a bilateral non-issue within BRICS. In another example, the 2017 Doklam standoff, which served as a 'forcing event' for the BRICS summit, saw India threaten to withdraw from the Xiamen Summit. This led China to reduce its troops, allowing India to attend the summit.

❑ Contradictions within BRICS

At the same time, BRICS is marked by significant political and economic contradictions that limit its coherence as a unified bloc. Politically, member states differ in their strategic orientations and global alignments. For instance, India’s relations with China are shaped by competition and periodic tensions, while Russia and China often display closer strategic convergence. Similarly, differences in political systems, governance models, and foreign policy priorities complicate consensus-building. Economically, BRICS is highly asymmetrical, with China accounting for the largest share of the group’s GDP and trade, leading to imbalances in influence. Trade relations within BRICS, particularly between India and China, are also uneven, with persistent deficits. These divergences highlight that while BRICS provides a platform for cooperation among emerging economies, it is not a fully integrated or cohesive economic or political bloc.

Summarised Overview

This unit examined BRICS as a major multilateral platform and analysed India’s role within it. The unit explained how BRICS emerged from an economic concept into a political and developmental forum representing major emerging economies. It highlighted the objectives, characteristics, and evolving agenda of BRICS in the context of a changing global order. The unit discussed the institutional framework of BRICS and India’s engagement with each institution. Overall, the unit demonstrated that BRICS is an important, but not exclusive, pillar of India’s foreign policy.



Self-Assessment Questions

1. Explain the evolution of BRICS from an economic concept into a multilateral platform for political and economic cooperation.
2. Examine India's objectives and interests in participating in BRICS.
3. Analyse the major institutional mechanisms of BRICS and evaluate India's role in shaping them.
4. Discuss the significance of BRICS for South-South cooperation and reform of global governance.
5. Evaluate the opportunities and challenges in India-China relations within the BRICS framework.

Assignment

1. Trace the origins and evolution of BRICS from an investment concept to a geopolitical forum. What has been India's role in shaping the BRICS agenda from its founding to the recent expansion?
2. Critically analyze India's strategic and economic interests within BRICS. How does BRICS membership advance India's goal of reforming multilateral institutions such as the IMF, World Bank, and the UN Security Council?
3. Examine the tensions and convergences within BRICS, particularly in the context of India-China rivalry. How has India navigated the partnership while simultaneously engaging in strategic competition with China?
4. Assess the strategic implications of BRICS expansion to include new members such as Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt, and Ethiopia. Does enlargement strengthen or dilute India's position and influence within the grouping?

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BLOCK 4

India's Evolution as a Potential Global Power

SGS

Maritime Policy

Learning Outcomes

After completing this unit, students should be able to:

- understand the historical evolution of India's maritime consciousness
- analyse India's maritime policy across pre-colonial, colonial, Cold War, and post-Cold War phases
- explain the strategic, economic, and security dimensions of India's maritime engagement
- evaluate contemporary maritime initiatives such as SAGAR, MAHASAGAR, and the Blue Economy
- assess India's role in shaping the Indian Ocean and Indo-Pacific maritime order

Background

India's emergence as a potential global power reflects a gradual transformation in the way it understands security, influence, and international responsibility. While India initially focused on territorial consolidation, development, and post-colonial nation-building, changing regional and global conditions increasingly pushed it to engage with wider strategic and diplomatic questions. Maritime expansion, nuclear capability, and soft power each represent different dimensions of this transformation. Together, they illustrate how India seeks to balance security concerns, strategic autonomy, economic interests, and international legitimacy. At the same time, these developments also reveal the tensions between idealism and pragmatism, restraint and assertion, and regional priorities and global aspirations in India's foreign policy evolution.

Keywords

Maritime Security, Indian Ocean Region (IOR), Blue Economy, UNCLOS, Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs), Indo-Pacific

Discussion

4.1.1 Maritime Policy and its Relevance

India's maritime policy has undergone a profound transformation from a largely continental and land-centric outlook to a maritime-oriented strategic vision. Despite possessing a coastline of over 7,500 km, an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of 2.37 million sq. km, and a central location in the Indian Ocean, India has historically underutilised its maritime potential in foreign and security policy. In recent decades, however, the oceans have emerged as a critical arena shaping India's economic growth, energy security, regional influence, and global aspirations. This unit traces the historical evolution, strategic logic, and contemporary contours of India's maritime policy, highlighting how maritime power has become integral to India's rise as a global actor.

❑ Meaning and scope of maritime policy

Maritime policy refers to the set of principles, laws, strategies, and actions adopted by a state to manage and protect its interests in the seas and oceans. It covers how a country uses the maritime domain for security, trade, economic development, environmental protection, and international cooperation. It usually involves multiple sectors, including the navy and coast guard, ports and shipping, trade, energy, fisheries, environmental protection, and maritime law. It is therefore a comprehensive and long-term policy, not just a military strategy.

❑ Historical Foundations of India's Maritime Outlook

Maritime policy is important because the seas are central to a country's security, economy, and global influence. First, maritime policy is crucial for national security. Coastal states must protect their coastlines, territorial waters, and Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) from threats such as piracy, smuggling, terrorism, and illegal fishing. Control over surrounding seas also helps prevent external threats and ensures strategic stability. Second, maritime policy is vital for economic growth and trade. Most global trade is carried by sea. Countries depend on safe and open Sea Lines of



□ Ancient maritime traditions of India

❑ Maritime Policy of Independent India

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power. Naval control remained under British authority, and at the time of independence, India inherited only limited naval capabilities and weak maritime infrastructure. The naval forces available to India were largely a continuation of the colonial-era Royal Indian Navy, which was primarily designed to serve British imperial interests rather than India's strategic needs. As a result, India inherited a small fleet consisting mainly of patrol vessels and outdated ships, with limited operational reach and minimal indigenous shipbuilding capacity. Additionally, key naval bases, training systems, and command structures had been oriented toward British control, leaving India with the task of reorganising and expanding its naval capabilities in the post-independence period. This colonial legacy explains why post-independence India initially prioritised territorial integrity, border security, and continental threats over maritime considerations.

❑ Early maritime policy of India

After independence in 1947, India's maritime policy developed slowly and cautiously. Indian leaders inherited a country with a long coastline and a central position in the Indian Ocean, but also with limited naval capability, weak maritime infrastructure, and pressing land-based security challenges. As a result, India's early foreign and security policy focused more on territorial integrity, land borders, and internal consolidation than on maritime power.

4.1.2 Various Phases of India's Maritime Policy

a. Early Post-Independence Period

❑ Post - independence maritime outlook

In the early decades after independence, India's maritime policy remained relatively subdued. Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru viewed the oceans primarily as spaces of peaceful interaction rather than military competition. Although India supported freedom of navigation and the peaceful use of seas, it avoided naval expansion and did not attempt to project naval power beyond coastal defence. The Indian Navy during this period was small and defensive in orientation, tasked mainly with protecting ports, coastlines, and nearby waters. One can assume that the country's strong inclination towards non-alignment and anti-militarism may have led it to show disinterest in naval expansion or overseas military presence and to treat maritime issues as secondary to diplomacy and international law.



The Cold War environment further constrained India's maritime posture. The Indian Ocean became increasingly militarised, with a direct and measurable impact on India's maritime policy. The United States, the Soviet Union, and later China established naval presence and bases in the region.

- ❑ Cold - war militarisation of the Indian ocean

☐ Defensive maritime strategy

c. India and the UNCLOS

❑ Post-Cold War Maritime Transformation

UNCLOS is a comprehensive legal framework for the world's oceans, negotiated from 1973-1982 to balance the interests of coastal states and maritime powers by defining maritime zones and rights. It established concepts such as territorial waters (12 nautical miles), Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) up to 200 nautical miles, and the continental shelf, and set rules for navigation, environmental protection, research, and dispute resolution. It also declared the deep seabed beyond national jurisdiction as the "common heritage of mankind," preventing monopolization by powerful states. During the Cold War, UNCLOS was vital as it provided a legal alternative to power-based control in a militarized environment. India strongly supported UNCLOS negotiations and upheld the concept of EEZs, the rights of coastal states over their maritime resources, equitable access to ocean resources for developing countries, and the regulation of deep-sea mining as the 'common heritage of mankind.' Ratified in 1995, India has upheld UNCLOS's core principles, including navigation, the peaceful use of the seas, and dispute resolution. More than a legal framework, UNCLOS is a foreign policy tool that mitigates naval risks and promotes rule-based maritime governance in the Indian Ocean.

❑ Institutional and Doctrinal Developments

During the Cold War, India's maritime policy was shaped by non-alignment, legalism, and strategic restraint. The end of the Cold War and India's economic liberalisation in the early 1990s fundamentally changed this approach, allowing India to adopt a more assertive and comprehensive maritime strategy. Rapid growth in trade, energy imports, and overseas connectivity made maritime security central to national development. As of 2024-2025, approximately 95% of India's trade by volume and nearly all its oil imports now transit through sea routes. This dependency is the key driver for the Maritime India Vision 2030. Critical choke points such as the Strait of Hormuz, Bab-el-Mandeb, and the Malacca Strait became directly linked to India's economic stability. India began to recognise the strategic and economic importance of the Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs), particularly in the Indian Ocean Region. Ports, shipping, coastal infrastructure, and naval protection of trade routes became important components of national planning. Naval modernisation accelerated, with increased focus on blue-water capabilities, aircraft carriers, submarines, and maritime surveillance. Simultaneously, India began to define the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) as its primary maritime neighbourhood and expanded its maritime diplomacy through joint naval



❑ India's Evolving Maritime Doctrine

exercises, port visits, humanitarian assistance, and disaster relief (HADR). The Indian Navy emerged as a first responder during regional crises, including piracy, enhancing India's image as a 'net security provider' in the Indian Ocean.

Post-1991 maritime transformation was closely linked to naval modernisation and maritime multilateralism. The Indian Navy shifted from a brown-water, coastal focus to a blue-water orientation, capable of operating far from home waters. This included expanding aircraft carrier capabilities, developing nuclear submarines, strengthening maritime surveillance, and modernizing surface combatants. The Navy's role expanded beyond war-fighting to include maritime domain awareness, evacuation operations, and humanitarian assistance. This period was also driven by new doctrines and policy frameworks. Maritime strategy began to integrate security, economic, and diplomatic objectives. India also strengthened coordination between the navy, coast guard, ports, and civilian maritime agencies. The SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) doctrine, launched in 2015, and the MAHASAGAR, launched in 2025, are examples of India's strategic vision for maritime cooperation in the Indian Ocean region. At the global level, India actively embraced multilateralism and participated in regional forums, information-sharing mechanisms, and joint exercises. Institutions such as the Information Fusion Centre – Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR), established in 2018, underscore India's commitment to cooperative security and transparency. India's approach remained inclusive and rule-based, consistent with UNCLOS and freedom of navigation principles. By the 2000s and 2010s, maritime policy became closely tied to India's global power aspirations. India is increasingly linking maritime governance with climate change, environmental protection, and sustainable development goals.

4.1.3 Strategic Shift in India's Maritime Doctrine

❑ India's evolving maritime doctrine

One of the earliest doctrinal shifts was reflected in the Indian Navy's evolving Maritime Doctrine, which moved from a coastal defence role to a blue-water focus. It identified three main goals: safeguarding Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs), protecting India's maritime zones, including the EEZ, and supporting stability in the Indian Ocean Region. This clarity enabled India to justify naval modernisation and long-range deployments within a defensive, rule-based framework. The 2015 SAGAR initiative framed India's maritime role as inclusive and cooperative, rather than dominance-oriented.

It emphasises collective action, blue economy development, disaster response, and countering threats such as piracy, positioning India as a responsible maritime power that offers cooperative solutions rather than competition. SAGAR positions India as a stabilising force and ‘net security provider’ committed to a free, open, and rules-based maritime order. In March 2025, India upgraded its vision to the MAHASAGAR (“Great Ocean”) approach, signalling an expanded geographical and strategic horizon that links the Indian Ocean with the Indo-Pacific. The key focus areas are maritime domain awareness, capacity building, disaster relief, and economic integration. Other key initiatives, such as Sagarmala, coastal economic zones, port-led development, and the promotion of the Blue Economy, reflect India’s effort to align maritime strategy with domestic growth and global responsibilities. The Indian Maritime Doctrine 2025 (IMD 2025) is the most recent official articulation of India’s maritime thinking issued by the Indian Navy. It is the naval force’s internal strategic guide focusing on technological adaptation (AI, cyber) and multi-domain threats, including countering Chinese influence. According to the Indian Navy, “the doctrine reflects India’s vision of harnessing the oceans for Viksit Bharat 2047, recognises multi-domain and grey-zone threats, formalises the No-War-No-Peace spectrum, and emphasises adoption of emerging technologies and jointness to strengthen India’s role and influence across the region.”

Summarised Overview

India’s maritime policy evolved through historical phases, reflecting domestic priorities, international conditions, and strategic shifts. Despite a long coastline and a central location in the Indian Ocean, maritime concerns were not central to national strategy after independence. India maintained a cautious maritime outlook, shaped by non-alignment, limited naval power, and a preference for international law. During the Cold War, India viewed the seas mainly as areas for peaceful cooperation, not conflict. The growing US and Soviet presence in the Indian Ocean led India to promote diplomatic solutions, such as the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace. India also contributed to UNCLOS to protect its maritime interests, even though its naval power was limited. The end of the Cold War and India’s 1991 economic liberalisation shifted maritime policy. The increased reliance on sea trade, energy imports, and global links made security vital to development. India refocused on the Indian Ocean, expanded its naval power, and adopted a more cooperative maritime stance. In the 2010s, India clarified maritime principles via SAGAR, emphasizing security, cooperation, and international law. This grew through MAHASAGAR, reflecting broader Indo-Pacific engagement. Policy-



Self-Assessment Questions

- ## Assignment

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- SRI NARAYANAGURU

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UNIT 2

Nuclear policy

Learning Outcomes

After completing this unit, learners should be able to:

- understand the historical evolution of India's nuclear policy
- explain the relationship between India's foreign policy principles and the nuclear option
- analyse India's position on global nuclear regimes such as the NPT, CTBT, and IAEA
- examine the development of India's nuclear programme and doctrine
- assess the significance of the India–United States Civil Nuclear Deal

Background

In the modern world, few issues generate as much fear, debate, and anxiety as nuclear technology. The fact that the same scientific knowledge and materials used for peaceful nuclear energy can also be used to develop nuclear weapons creates a moral and political tension. Managing this dual-use nature of nuclear technology is one of the central challenges of nuclear policy, requiring strict regulation, transparency, and international safeguards. For many countries, nuclear weapons are symbols of ultimate power; for others, they represent the gravest threat to human survival. India's engagement with nuclear issues has always been complex and often uncomfortable. India's early leadership, including Jawaharlal Nehru and V. K. Krishna Menon, spoke strongly against nuclear weapons, warning that their use could destroy civilisation itself. They consistently advocated global nuclear disarmament and emphasised the moral and humanitarian dangers posed by nuclear warfare. At the same time, India invested heavily in nuclear science and technology, seeing it as a pathway to development, modernity, and national self-reliance.

This tension between moral opposition and strategic necessity has shaped India's nuclear policy for decades. India did not rush to acquire nuclear weapons, nor did it fully



reject the nuclear option. Instead, it followed a gradual, cautious, and often ambiguous path. External security threats, discriminatory global nuclear regimes, and regional rivalries slowly pushed India towards a nuclear weapons capability, even as it continued to advocate global disarmament. Understanding India's nuclear policy, therefore, requires more than a study of weapons or treaties. It demands an examination of history, foreign policy principles, international norms, and strategic calculations. This unit explores how India navigated these competing pressures and how nuclear policy became a central component of India's foreign and security policy.

Keywords

Nuclear Policy, No First Use (NFU), NPT, CTBT, IAEA, Nuclear Doctrine

Discussion

4.2.1 Evolution of India's Nuclear Policy

India's nuclear policy has evolved gradually rather than abruptly. Unlike some nuclear powers that acquired nuclear weapons rapidly in response to military competition, India followed a slow and deliberate path shaped by its historical experience, ethical concerns, and security environment. In the early years after independence, India viewed nuclear energy primarily as a tool for peaceful development and scientific progress. However, changing regional and global conditions increasingly forced Indian policymakers to confront the strategic dimensions of nuclear technology.

India's refusal to join major nuclear treaties such as the NPT and CTBT, its emphasis on nuclear disarmament, and its eventual decision to conduct nuclear tests reflect a consistent concern with sovereignty, equality, and security. At the same time, India has projected itself as a responsible nuclear power committed to restraint, civilian control, and global stability. This unit examines the major phases, debates, and policy choices that define India's nuclear trajectory.

Nuclear policy encompasses a country's principles, decisions, and strategies on managing nuclear technology and weapons. It explains why it seeks nuclear capabilities, how it plans to use or restrain them, and the conditions for nuclear weapons use. It covers civilian aspects, such as nuclear energy for power and

❑ Nuclear Policy-Features & Relevance



❑ Evolution of India's Nuclear Policy

research, and military aspects, such as weapons, deterrence, command, and doctrines such as No First Use. It also includes stances on treaties, arms control, and non-proliferation. Key aspects of a nuclear policy would include a long-term focus on national security, diplomacy, and global stability; centralised political authority and strict political oversight; emphasis on deterrence; involvement in legal and normative frameworks; and ambiguity and restraint. It is well understood that nuclear policy is vital for a country's national security, foreign relations, economic growth, technological progress, and ethical considerations.

❑ Phases in India's nuclear policy

4.2.2 Various Phases of India's Nuclear Policy Doctrine

India's nuclear policy has evolved through distinct historical phases, shaped by changing security concerns, foreign policy principles, and global nuclear norms. Unlike many nuclear-armed states, India did not follow a sudden or aggressive path towards nuclear weapons. Instead, its nuclear policy developed gradually, balancing peaceful objectives, moral concerns, and strategic necessity.

a. Phase I: Peaceful Nuclear Vision (1947-1964)

❑ Peaceful nuclear vision of India

In the years immediately after independence, India's nuclear policy was firmly rooted in the peaceful use of nuclear energy. India established key institutions, such as the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) in 1948 and the Department of Atomic Energy in 1954. Led by Dr Homi J. Bhabha (the father of India's nuclear program), India heavily invested in nuclear research, reactors, and scientific training for peaceful purposes such as electricity, medicine, and agriculture. Institutions like Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) (established in 1954 as Atomic Energy Establishment, Trombay and renamed BARC in 1966 in memory of Dr. Homi Jehangir Bhabha) became central to India's nuclear capacity, supporting indigenous expertise and a peaceful nuclear commitment. Another significant step, the Atomic Energy Act of 1962, was enacted to keep atomic energy development and use under strict state control, ensuring national security and public safety. India supported global nuclear disarmament, viewing nuclear weapons as a threat. It adopted a 'dual-track' approach, fostering peaceful research and strategic capability under civilian control, showing its strengths and ambiguities.



b. Phase II: Strategic Awareness & Ambiguity (1964-1974)

❑ Strategic ambiguity and nuclear capability

Major external developments such as India's defeat in the 1962 Sino-Indian War and China's nuclear test in 1964 significantly influenced India's nuclear outlook during this period. These events exposed India's strategic vulnerability and triggered debates about whether moral opposition alone could ensure national security. This period is often described as one of strategic ambiguity, where India neither confirmed nor denied its ability to develop nuclear weapons. The phase culminated in India's first nuclear test in 1974 (code-named 'Operation Smiling Buddha' to signify a peaceful intent and exploit the date's significance), described officially as a "Peaceful Nuclear Explosion" (PNE). India argued that the test was not intended for weaponisation but rather to demonstrate technological capability. However, the test marked a clear shift from purely peaceful nuclear policy to strategic capability.

c. Phase III: Restraint under Pressure (1974-1998)

❑ Nuclear restraint

After the 1974 test, India faced international sanctions and restrictions from nuclear nations. Global regimes aimed to prevent proliferation, but India saw these as discriminatory. It refused to join the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and later the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), arguing they divided the world into nuclear "haves" and "have-nots." Still, India pushed for universal, non-discriminatory disarmament. It maintained nuclear restraint, avoiding further tests or declarations as a nuclear state, balancing strategic aims with diplomatic caution.

d. Overt Nuclearisation (1998)

❑ Declaration of India as a nuclear weapon state

A major turning point came in 1998, when India conducted a series of five nuclear tests at Pokhran under the codename Pokhran-II (Operation Shakti), marking its emergence as a declared nuclear weapons state. With these tests, India openly declared itself a nuclear-weapon state. The government justified the decision by citing regional security threats, particularly from nuclear-armed neighbours, and the failure of global disarmament efforts. Following the tests, India announced a set of principles to guide its nuclear behaviour, including credible minimum deterrence and No First Use (NFU). These principles were intended to signal restraint and responsibility rather than aggressive intent. Although the tests initially led to sanctions, they also forced the international community to engage with India as a de facto nuclear power.

❑ Consolidation of India's nuclear policy

e. Phase V: Doctrinal Consolidation & Responsible Nuclear Power (Post-1998)

After 1998, India focused on consolidating its nuclear policy through clear doctrine, command structures, and international engagement. India emphasised that its nuclear weapons were meant solely for deterrence, not war-fighting. Over time, India sought integration into the global nuclear order without compromising strategic autonomy. This effort culminated in agreements such as the India–United States Civil Nuclear Deal, which recognised India's nuclear status while allowing access to civilian nuclear cooperation. Also, the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act (CLND), 2010, addresses liability and compensation for nuclear accidents. It primarily holds the government-owned nuclear operator responsible. This phase reflects India's effort to combine strategic credibility with normative responsibility.

4.2.3 India & Nuclear Pragmatism: NPT, CTBT & the IAEA

India's approach to nuclear weapons has been deeply shaped by the core principles of its foreign policy, especially non-alignment, strategic autonomy, and moral restraint. From independence, Indian leaders believed that security should be pursued through diplomacy, international cooperation, and ethical leadership rather than military alliances. Jawaharlal Nehru strongly opposed nuclear weapons and consistently called for universal nuclear disarmament. This moral position explains why India delayed acquiring nuclear weapons for decades and viewed nuclear technology primarily as a tool for peaceful development. At the same time, India's commitment to strategic autonomy meant that it rejected reliance on nuclear protection from major powers and insisted on retaining independent decision-making in security matters. Over time, changing regional security conditions forced India to reassess the limits of moral idealism. The presence of nuclear-armed neighbours and the failure of global disarmament efforts led Indian policymakers to view the nuclear option as a necessary means of deterrence rather than a symbol of power or prestige. India's foreign policy, which emphasises sovereignty and equality, also shaped its rejection of discriminatory global nuclear regimes such as the NPT and CTBT. Even after declaring itself a nuclear weapons state, India continued to emphasise restraint, civilian control, and doctrines such as credible minimum deterrence and No First Use. Thus, India's nuclear policy represents an adaptation of its foreign policy principles to security realities, not a departure from them.



❑ India and the IAEA

India maintains a long-standing, constructive relationship with the IAEA, unlike its rejection of the NPT and CTBT. As a founding member since 1957, India supports its role in promoting peaceful nuclear use and safety. It signed its Safeguards Agreement in 2009 after separating civilian and

❑ India's nuclear pragmatism

military nuclear programs. Through the IAEA, India commits to nuclear safety standards, technical cooperation, and peaceful research, believing that international institutions should foster cooperation and safety without infringing sovereignty. This partnership also bolstered India's image as a responsible nuclear power, especially after 1998.

India's positions on the NPT, CTBT, and IAEA together reveal a consistent pattern. India rejects unequal and discriminatory treaties, supports peaceful nuclear cooperation, and engages constructively with institutions that respect sovereignty and fairness. India's positions on the NPT, CTBT, and IAEA together reveal a consistent pattern. India rejects unequal and discriminatory treaties, supports peaceful nuclear cooperation, and engages constructively with institutions that respect sovereignty and fairness.

4.2.4 The Indo - US Civil Nuclear Deal

The India–United States Civil Nuclear Deal marked a key turning point in India's nuclear policy, transforming its global nuclear engagement. Since its 1974 nuclear test, India has been mostly excluded from international nuclear cooperation and faced restrictions on technology and fuel access. The deal changed this by recognising India as a responsible nuclear power, despite not signing the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Signed in 2005 and followed by legal and diplomatic steps, it enabled India to collaborate on civil nuclear projects while maintaining full control over its strategic nuclear arsenal. This was achieved by separating civilian and military nuclear facilities and placing civilian sites under IAEA safeguards. A key part of the deal was the civil–military separation plan, where India voluntarily placed civilian nuclear facilities under international safeguards, keeping military sites outside inspection. The deal respected India's sovereignty and addressed non-proliferation concerns without dismantling nuclear weapons, abandoning doctrines, or signing treaties like the NPT or CTBT. It boosted India's energy security by providing access to international nuclear fuel and technology, expanding civilian nuclear energy, and reducing fossil fuel dependence. The agreement enhanced India's global standing, integrating it into the global nuclear economy. While critics argued it weakened non-proliferation and limited strategic freedom, for Indian policymakers, it was a diplomatic success, maintaining nuclear autonomy while gaining cooperation and legitimacy.

4.2.5 The SHANTI Bill 2025

The SHANTI Bill 2025 (Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India) is a landmark Indian legislation introduced as part of the Nuclear Energy Mission, which was launched in the 2025-'26 budget as part of the 'Viksit Bharat' vision. The bill proposed to modernise the nuclear framework, opening India's nuclear sector to private and foreign investment for the construction and operation of power plants, while consolidating laws such as the Atomic Energy Act, 1962, and the CLND Act, 2010. The bill received Presidential assent in December 2025. It grants statutory status to the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB) for stronger oversight. It introduces a revised liability regime, paving the way for significant expansion of nuclear energy capacity to meet clean energy goals. Proposed key changes include allowing private entities to obtain licenses for nuclear plant construction and operation, shifting from state control. The AERB's independence and authority are strengthened, while operator liability is revised, but supplier defect liability is removed. Private players can handle plant operations, power generation, and equipment manufacturing, while strategic activities such as enrichment remain state-controlled. The new legislation aims to support India's clean energy transition and 100 GW nuclear target by 2047. It leverages private capital for capacity expansion, freeing state resources for fuel-cycle development.

Summarised Overview

India's nuclear policy evolved gradually, influenced by domestic priorities, regional security concerns, and the global nuclear order. After independence, India opposed nuclear weapons on moral and political grounds while investing in nuclear science for peaceful uses. Institutions like the Atomic Energy Commission supported development, self-reliance, and civilian research. During this phase, India promoted universal disarmament and saw nuclear weapons as a threat. The 1998 nuclear tests marked India's declaration as a nuclear-weapon state. In 2003, India outlined a doctrine emphasizing credible minimum deterrence, No First Use, retaliation, and civilian control, showing restraint rather than aggression. India reinforced nuclear laws through the Atomic Energy Act, 1962, and the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act, 2010. The India–United States Civil Nuclear Deal further transformed India's nuclear position by enabling civil nuclear cooperation without requiring India to join the NPT or abandon its nuclear weapons. Overall, India's nuclear policy reflects a balance between ethical concerns, strategic necessity, sovereignty, and engagement with the global nuclear order.

Self-Assessment Questions

1. What is nuclear policy?
2. Trace the evolution of India's nuclear policy from independence to the present.
3. Explain the relationship between India's foreign policy principles and the nuclear option.
4. Critically examine India's position on the NPT and CTBT.
5. Analyse the significance of the India–United States Civil Nuclear Deal for India's nuclear policy.

Assignment

1. Trace the historical evolution of India's nuclear doctrine from the Pokhran-I test (1974) to the 1998 tests and the subsequent articulation of 'No First Use' (NFU). How has the doctrine evolved in response to strategic pressures from Pakistan and China?
2. Critically examine the institutional and strategic framework governing India's nuclear programme, including the role of the Atomic Energy Commission, the Strategic Forces Command, and the National Security Advisory Board.
3. Analyze the India–US Civil Nuclear Agreement (2008) and its implications for India's integration into the global nuclear order. Did the deal represent a strategic gain or a compromise of India's autonomy?
4. Assess India's engagement with global nuclear arms control and non-proliferation regimes. How does India reconcile its status as a de facto nuclear weapons state with its commitment to global nuclear disarmament?

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Soft Power

4.3.1 Introduction

This unit aims to explain the concept of soft power, examine how it operates in international relations, and analyse India's role as a soft power. Since soft power is a conceptual tool for understanding influence without force, it is important to first clarify its meaning, sources, and instruments. Only after this conceptual foundation is established can we meaningfully assess India's soft power potential and practice.

Joseph S. Nye introduced the concept of soft power in the late twentieth century, emphasizing that power isn't just military or economic pressure but also shaping preferences through attraction. Soft power enables countries to influence others without the use of force, through culture, political values, and foreign policy. When a country's culture is admired, its values are respected, and its policies are seen as legitimate, it becomes attractive, influencing opinion and easing cooperation. Unlike hard power, soft power develops slowly and relies on credibility and consistency. Today, it is vital in international relations, as issues like climate change, pandemics, migration, and terrorism require trust and cooperation. Soft power complements hard power, helping countries gain influence without domination.

❑ Meaning of soft power

❑ Core idea of soft power

❑ Bases of soft power

- **Definition of soft power:** Soft power is a country's ability to influence others through attraction, not force. Defined by Joseph S. Nye, it involves making culture, values, and policies more appealing rather than relying on threats or payments. Soft power relies on others wanting to follow, not obey, and comes from culture, political values, and credible foreign policy. Unlike military or economic power, it is indirect, long-term, and builds trust, legitimacy, and influence in international relations.
- **Sources of soft power:** Soft power comes from sources making a country attractive, mainly culture—language, traditions, arts, food, films, lifestyles—which, when globally embraced, boost influence. Political values such as democracy, pluralism, the rule of law, and human rights, when practised domestically, enhance credibility abroad. A responsible, cooperative foreign policy adds moral legitimacy, while aggressive policies can undermine soft power despite noble claims.



❑ Soft power in India's foreign policy

- **Instruments of soft power:** Sources such as culture, values, and foreign policy behaviour create a sense of attraction or appeal, while soft power instruments project this attraction through public diplomacy, cultural exchanges, educational programmes, broadcasting, aid, and engagement. Universities, cultural centres, scholarships, events, and diaspora communities serve as carriers and bridges of soft power, shaping perceptions via interaction, success, and engagement. Recently, digital platforms and social media have become potent tools for spreading ideas, narratives, and culture globally.
- **Soft power v. Hard power:** Soft power differs from hard power, which relies on coercion through military force, sanctions, or threats. Soft power depends on persuasion and attraction, working slowly but fostering long-term cooperation. Most countries use both, but soft power is especially valuable when military action is costly or ineffective. Today, influence depends more on legitimacy, credibility, and shared values, making soft power vital in foreign policy.

India is often seen as having strong soft power due to its history, culture, democracy, and global influence. Unlike hard power, India's impact has mainly been through ideas, values, and moral authority rather than military force. Even before independence, its civilisational heritage and non-violent freedom movement drew global attention. These qualities have continued to define India's international image after independence.

India's soft power is not only a passive outcome of culture and values; it has increasingly become a deliberate instrument of foreign policy. Soft power enables India to influence international opinion, build partnerships, and enhance cooperation without resorting to coercion or military pressure. This is particularly important for India, as it seeks influence while maintaining strategic autonomy and avoiding confrontation. Soft power tools help India build trust in regions where hard power projection is either undesirable or impractical. Cultural exchanges, development assistance, humanitarian aid, and educational cooperation are used to strengthen relationships, especially with developing countries. Through these instruments, India projects itself as a benign, cooperative, and responsible power.

4.3.2 Key Sources of India's Soft Power

Key sources of India's soft power are:

☐ Cultural sources of soft power

a. Civilisational and cultural sources of India's soft power: India's ancient civilisation is a key source of its soft power. Its philosophy, spirituality, languages, literature, and art have travelled globally for centuries. Practices like yoga, meditation, Ayurveda, and classical music are popular worldwide, symbolising balance, peace, and well-being. Indian festivals, cuisine, films, and fashion enhance its cultural image abroad. Bollywood, in particular, has shaped perceptions across Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and the West's diaspora, humanising India and forging emotional bonds beyond formal diplomacy.

☐ Democracy and moral authority of soft power

b. Democracy, values, and moral authority: India's status as the largest democracy boosts its soft power. Its commitment to democracy, constitutionalism, pluralism, and peaceful power transfer gives it moral credibility, especially among developing nations. Managing religious, linguistic, and cultural diversity has made India a model of governance. Its role in promoting non-alignment, peaceful coexistence, and disarmament bolsters its moral standing. Even when disagreeing with major powers, India's principled stance fostered respect. This moral authority increased its influence in global forums, notably during the Cold War.

☐ Diaspora as a source of soft power

c. Diaspora: India's influential diaspora is a major source of soft power, contributing to societies in education, technology, medicine, business, and culture. Their success reflects positively on India and fosters goodwill. Diaspora networks serve as cultural bridges, promoting traditions and strengthening economic, educational, and political ties. In many areas, they help shape public opinion and enhance India's image.

☐ Education and knowledge based soft power

d. Education, knowledge, and developmental appeal: India's contribution to education, science, and knowledge-sharing boosts its soft power. Its universities, training, and tech cooperation attract students from developing countries. Expertise in IT, healthcare, space science, and digital governance enhances its reputation as a knowledge society. India's development partnerships in South Asia, Africa,



and the Global South are positioned as cooperative, reinforcing its image as a responsible, supportive partner.

4.3.3 Evolution of India's Soft Power

India's soft power has evolved through changing ideas, practices, and institutions. While attraction often flowed naturally from India's values and culture, over the years, it became increasingly organised and institutionalised.

a. Phase I: Moral-Civilisational Soft Power & Early Institutions (1947-1964)

❑ Moral - civilisational phase of India's soft power

In the early years after independence, India's soft power rested mainly on moral authority, civilisational heritage, and anti-colonial legitimacy. India's peaceful independence movement garnered worldwide admiration; leaders like Martin Luther King Jr. acknowledged inspiration from it. Under Jawaharlal Nehru's leadership, India projected itself as a principled actor committed to peaceful coexistence and international cooperation. Institutionally, this phase was marked by the use of diplomatic forums and international organisations rather than specialised cultural bodies. India played an active role in the United Nations and supported decolonisation movements. Although formal cultural diplomacy institutions were limited, Indian embassies, educational exchanges, and intellectual engagement functioned as informal channels of soft power. India hosted international conferences and exchanges, thereby portraying itself as a peace-oriented, culturally rich nation. Its refusal to join Cold War alliances bolstered its image as an independent, principled actor. The foundations for later institutionalisation were laid during this period.

b. Phase II: Non-Aligned Leadership and Developmental Institutions (1964-1991)

❑ Non - aligned and developmental soft power

From the mid-1960s onwards, India's soft power became closely tied to its leadership role in the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and the developing world. India projected itself as a voice of the Global South, advocating peace, economic justice, and sovereign equality. This enhanced India's appeal among newly independent countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. This phase saw the emergence of more structured institutional support. Educational and technical cooperation programmes expanded, allowing students and officials from

developing countries to study and train in India. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) coordinates cultural diplomacy and outreach. The Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) promotes Indian culture abroad via cultural centres, festivals, scholarships, and exchanges. Indian universities attracted large numbers of international students, particularly in medicine, engineering, and humanities. Programmes such as the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) initiative, established in 1964, provide training and capacity-building support to officials and professionals from developing countries. Diplomatic engagement through NAM summits, South–South cooperation initiatives, and multilateral forums became important instruments of India’s soft power. However, cultural outreach remained largely secondary, and economic constraints limited global visibility.

c. Phase III: Cultural, Diaspora, and Knowledge Institutions (1991-2014)

After economic liberalisation in 1991, India’s soft power significantly transformed. Globalisation boosted the international profile of Indian culture, media, and society, with Indian cinema, cuisine, and popular culture gaining recognition. The growing diaspora enhanced India’s image abroad. Cultural and educational institutions expanded, promoting exchange, scholarships, and academic cooperation. The diaspora played a more visible role through networks and community groups. Universities and tech training contributed to India’s reputation as a knowledge-based society. India gained a reputation as a global IT and services hub, shaping its image as a knowledge-driven economy. Scholarships and exchanges increased, drawing students from developing nations to Indian institutions. This phase’s soft power was market-driven and societal, less top-down and more people-to-people.

❑ Cultural and diaspora driven soft power

d. Phase IV: Strategic, Digital, and State-supported Soft Power (2014-present)

India’s soft power has become more strategic and coordinated in the contemporary period. Cultural diplomacy, public diplomacy, and international outreach are integrated into foreign policy. Cultural councils, scholarship programmes, and global events are more prominent. The International Day of Yoga was adopted by the United Nations and has attracted widespread global participation. Digital platforms, broadcasting, and symbolic initiatives help reach foreign publics. Humanitarian

❑ Strategic and digital soft power



❑ Soft power in contemporary India's foreign policy

aid, disaster relief, and development partnerships are key soft power tools, especially in neighbouring regions and the Global South. Coordination among diplomatic missions, institutions, and policy agencies has strengthened. However, credibility remains crucial; institutional growth alone won't sustain soft power if domestic and foreign practices undermine its values.

In recent years, India has made more conscious efforts to use soft power as a foreign policy tool. Cultural diplomacy, international days such as the celebration of yoga, engagement with foreign publics, and digital outreach have become more visible. Soft power is now seen as a complement to India's growing economic and strategic capabilities. However, scholars also note that soft power must be supported by credibility and consistency. Domestic developments and foreign policy behaviour can either strengthen or weaken India's soft power. Attraction cannot be manufactured; it must be sustained through practice.

4.3.4 Limitations of Soft Power

Although India possesses rich soft power resources, its ability to convert this potential into sustained global influence faces several limitations. Soft power does not work automatically. It depends on credibility, consistency, and long-term effort. In India's case, gaps often exist between soft power potential and actual outcomes.

❑ Credibility challenges

a. **Credibility Gap between Values and Practice:** A major limitation of India's soft power is the credibility gap between its global values and domestic issues. Soft power relies on attraction, which weakens if internal practices clash with democracy, pluralism, and social harmony. International audiences now judge countries by governance and social conditions, and visible tensions can erode soft power's moral authority. While India has democratic credentials, soft power remains highly perception-sensitive and is not based solely on intent.

❑ Institutional challenges

b. **Fragmented Institutional Coordination:** Institutional fragmentation hampers India's soft power. Efforts across various institutions, ministries, and programmes often lack coordination, leading to parallel functions instead of a unified strategy. This reduces efficiency and impact, as soft power needs sustained narratives and continuity. Frequent policy shifts and limited integration weaken coherence.

☐ Cultural symbolism

☐ Regional limitations

☐ Challenges in measuring soft power

- c. **Overdependence on Cultural Symbolism:** India's soft power often leans on cultural symbols like civilisation, spirituality, and heritage. While these are vital strengths, overreliance on symbolism can lessen appeal to audiences driven by economic prospects, governance, and innovation. Effective soft power pairs culture with education, technology, development aid, and global solutions. Without this combo, it risks being seen as symbolic rather than transformative.
- d. **Limited Reach in Certain Regions:** India's soft power varies by region. While soft power is hard to measure directly, it is often gauged through indicators like cultural visibility (films, cuisine, yoga), diaspora presence, educational exchanges, rankings, and perception surveys. India's soft power is strong in South Asia, parts of Africa, and among diaspora communities in the West, aided by yoga's global spread, Indian cinema's popularity in West Asia and Africa, and the diaspora's influence in the US and UK. Conversely, India's soft power is weaker in East Asia, Latin America, and parts of Europe, due to language barriers, lower media reach, and competition from countries with stronger cultural industries and educational networks. Countries investing more in global media, higher education branding, and cultural exports typically have broader influence.
- e. **Measurement and Impact Challenges:** Soft power is hard to measure because its impact is indirect and long-term, making it difficult for policymakers to assess and justify. As a result, soft power initiatives often receive less attention than hard power achievements and risk being symbolic without clear evaluation mechanisms.

Summarised Overview

Soft power has become a crucial part of modern foreign policy, relying on attraction, legitimacy, and shared values instead of coercion. It enables countries to influence others through culture, values, and credible diplomacy. In a connected world, soft power complements hard power by fostering trust and cooperation. India's soft power stems from its ancient history, cultural diversity, democratic traditions, and global diaspora. It evolved from moral authority and anti-colonial leadership post-independence, to advocating global justice during the Cold War, and expanding through cultural industries and the diaspora after liberalisation. Recently, it has used cultural diplomacy, digital outreach, humanitarian aid, and development projects. However, India faces limitations,



including gaps between its values and practices, weak institutional coordination, over-reliance on symbolism, uneven regional influence, and challenges in measuring impact. Soft power requires credibility, consistency, and long-term effort. When combined with economic and strategic strength, it can boost India's global standing.

Self-Assessment Questions

1. Explain the concept of soft power and its relevance in contemporary international relations.
2. Trace the evolution of India's soft power across different historical phases.
3. Examine the main sources and instruments of India's soft power.
4. Discuss the role of institutions in promoting India's soft power.
5. Analyse the limitations and challenges of India's soft power.

Assignment

1. Critically evaluate the concept of soft power as developed by Joseph Nye and assess its applicability to India's foreign policy. What are India's primary sources of soft power, and how effectively has it leveraged them in its diplomacy?
2. Analyze India's cultural diplomacy through the activities of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), Yoga diplomacy, and the global celebration of events like the International Day of Yoga. How effective are these tools in advancing India's foreign policy objectives?
3. Examine the role of the Indian diaspora as a foreign policy resource. How has India engaged with diaspora communities in the United States, the United Kingdom, and the Gulf states to advance diplomatic and economic interests?
4. Assess India's use of development partnerships, media outreach, and educational exchanges as instruments of soft power. How do these tools compare to China's soft power strategy through the Belt and Road Initiative and Confucius Institutes?

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Suggested Reading

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2. Hall, I., & Smith, F. (2013). The struggle for soft power in Asia: Public diplomacy and regional competition. *Asian Security*, 9(1), 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14799855.2013.760926>
3. Kurlantzick, J. (2007). *Charm offensive: How China's soft power is transforming the world*. Yale University Press.
4. Ogden, C. (2011). A normalized exception: The evolution of state identity in India. *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 40(1), 189–209. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0305829811413904>
5. Rawnsley, G. D. (Ed.). (2015). *Routledge handbook of public diplomacy*. Routledge.



Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

SGOU

Model Question Paper Sets





SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

MODEL QUESTION PAPER - SET 1

QP CODE:

Reg. No:

Name:

FOURTH SEMESTER MA POLITICAL SCIENCE EXAMINATION

DISCIPLINE SPECIFIC ELECTIVE COURSE

M23PS05DE – FOREIGN POLICY OF INDIA

Time: 3 Hours

Max Marks: 70

SECTION A

*Answer any **ten** questions in a word or a sentence. Each question carries **one** mark.*

(10X1 = 10 Marks)

1. What is foreign policy?
2. Name the doctrine that forms the ideological basis of India's non-alignment.
3. What does 'Panchsheel' mean?
4. Who is considered the principal architect of India's foreign policy in the Nehruvian era?
5. What does PMO stand for in the context of India's foreign policy-making?
6. Name the ministry primarily responsible for managing India's external relations.
7. What is Track II diplomacy?
8. Define 'strategic autonomy' in foreign policy.
9. What is the Indo-Pacific as a strategic construct?
10. Name the founding members of BRICS.
11. What is India's declared nuclear doctrine known as?
12. Define 'soft power' in international relations.
13. What is the role of the National Security Council (NSC) in India?
14. Name one multilateral forum in which India plays a significant role.
15. What does diaspora diplomacy mean?



SECTION B

*Answer any **five** questions in two or three sentences. Each question carries **two** marks.*

(5X2 = 10 Marks)

16. What are the key features of the Nehruvian approach to foreign policy?
17. Briefly explain the concept of non-alignment as strategic autonomy.
18. What is the role of Parliament in shaping India's foreign policy?
19. Describe the significance of the Indo-Pacific for India's strategic interests.
20. What is India's position within BRICS and why does it matter?
21. How does India use cultural diplomacy as an instrument of soft power?
22. What are the main functions of the Ministry of External Affairs?
23. Briefly explain India's nuclear doctrine of 'No First Use'.
24. What does post-liberalization realignment mean in Indian foreign policy?
25. How do think tanks contribute to India's foreign policy thinking?

SECTION C

*Answer any **five** questions in one paragraph. Each question carries **four** marks.*

(5X4 = 20 Marks)

26. Examine the anti-colonial legacy and its influence on India's foreign policy orientation.
27. Discuss how India's foreign policy shifted from Nehruvian idealism to post-liberalization pragmatism.
28. Analyse the role of the Prime Minister's Office in centralizing India's foreign policy decisions.
29. Examine India's strategic position in Asia and its implications for regional diplomacy.
30. Discuss India's engagement with the Indo-Pacific and the partnerships it has cultivated.
31. Evaluate India's role and strategic interests within the BRICS grouping.
32. Examine the significance of maritime security for India and its doctrinal approach.
33. How has India's diaspora been leveraged as a tool of public and cultural diplomacy?



SECTION D

*Answer any **three** questions in two pages. Each question carries **ten** marks.*

(3X10 = 30 Marks)

34. Trace the historical and ideological determinants of India's foreign policy from independence to the present. How have anti-colonialism, non-alignment, and Panchsheel shaped India's approach to international relations?
35. Critically examine the foreign policy-making process in India. What are the roles of the PMO, the Ministry of External Affairs, the National Security Council, and Parliament? How does the interplay among these institutions shape India's foreign policy outcomes?
36. Analyse India's evolution as a regional power in Asia. How has India managed its bilateral and multilateral engagements in the region, and what are the key challenges and opportunities in the Indo-Pacific?
37. Examine India's nuclear policy in historical and strategic context. How has India's nuclear doctrine evolved, and what is India's role in the global nuclear order?
38. Evaluate India's use of soft power as an instrument of foreign policy. Discuss the role of cultural diplomacy, diaspora engagement, and development partnerships in projecting India's influence globally.
39. Assess India's engagement with BRICS and other multilateral forums. What are India's strategic calculations and what challenges does it face in shaping a new global order through these platforms?



SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

MODEL QUESTION PAPER - SET 2

QP CODE:

Reg. No:

Name:

FOURTH SEMESTER MA POLITICAL SCIENCE EXAMINATION

DISCIPLINE SPECIFIC ELECTIVE COURSE

M23PS05DE – FOREIGN POLICY OF INDIA

Time: 3 Hours

Max Marks: 70

SECTION A

*Answer any **ten** questions in a word or a sentence. Each question carries **one** mark.*

(10X1 = 10 Marks)

1. What is meant by 'national interest' in foreign policy?
2. Name the five principles that constitute Panchsheel.
3. Which Indian Prime Minister introduced the 'Gujral Doctrine'?
4. What is the full form of MEA?
5. Define 'coercive diplomacy'.
6. What does 'Look East Policy' (now Act East Policy) refer to?
7. Name the Indian institution responsible for strategic and nuclear planning.
8. What is 'public diplomacy'?
9. Define the term 'multilateralism' in international relations.
10. What is India's stand on nuclear non-proliferation?
11. Name one strategic partner of India in the Indo-Pacific region.
12. What does 'maritime domain awareness' mean?
13. Define 'economic diplomacy'.
14. What is the significance of the Quad (Quadrilateral Security Dialogue) for India?
15. Name one think tank that influences India's foreign policy debate.



SECTION B

Answer any **five** questions in two or three sentences. Each question carries **two** marks.

(5X2 = 10 Marks)

16. What are the domestic determinants of India's foreign policy?
17. Briefly describe the shift in India's foreign policy during the Cold War's later years (1970s–1980s).
18. What is the role of Indian diplomats in advancing the country's foreign policy interests?
19. How has India's 'Act East Policy' shaped its engagement with Southeast and East Asia?
20. What are the strategic and economic dimensions of India's participation in BRICS?
21. Briefly explain the concept of normative diplomacy as practised by India.
22. What are the key challenges India faces as a rising power in global politics?
23. Describe the significance of India's maritime doctrine for its Indo-Pacific strategy.
24. What is the role of the National Security Council in India's strategic planning?
25. How does India balance its relationships with competing major powers like the US, Russia, and China?

SECTION C

Answer any **five** questions in one paragraph. Each question carries **four** marks.

(5X4 = 20 Marks)

26. Examine the evolution of India's non-alignment from Nehru's era to the contemporary period of strategic autonomy.
27. Analyse the role of Parliament in deliberating and influencing India's foreign policy decisions.
28. Discuss the strategic importance of the Indo-Pacific region for India's security and economic interests.
29. Examine the origins and evolution of BRICS and evaluate India's strategic role within the grouping.
30. Discuss India's nuclear doctrine and its implications for regional stability in South Asia.
31. How has India's liberalization-driven foreign policy realignment changed its bilateral and multilateral engagements?
32. Examine the role of think tanks and the strategic community in shaping India's foreign policy discourse.



33. Analyse India's maritime policy and its significance for securing India's strategic interests in the Indian Ocean Region.

SECTION D

*Answer any **three** questions in two pages. Each question carries **ten** marks.*

(3X10 = 30 Marks)

34. Critically examine the Nehruvian era in Indian foreign policy. What were its defining ideological principles, and how did they influence India's position in the Cold War international order? Assess the continuities and changes in the post-Nehruvian phases.
35. Analyse the role of institutional actors in India's foreign policy-making process. Discuss how the PMO, MEA, NSC, and diplomats interact, and evaluate whether India's foreign policy-making has become overly centralized.
36. Examine India's aspirations as a global power. Discuss India's engagement with multilateral forums such as BRICS, the G20, and the UN, and assess the opportunities and constraints India faces in reshaping the global order.
37. Critically evaluate India's soft power strategy. How effective has India been in deploying cultural diplomacy, diaspora networks, media, and development partnerships to enhance its global standing?
38. Analyse the evolution of India's maritime policy and its importance for India's strategic interests in the Indo-Pacific. How does India's maritime doctrine address both security and economic dimensions?
39. Discuss the challenges and opportunities India faces in its nuclear diplomacy. How has India navigated its nuclear status within the international non-proliferation regime, and what role does nuclear policy play in its broader strategic ambitions?



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