

SUMMARY of the Article “Indian foreign policy,” Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry, Dawn, August 18th, 2024

The article by Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry explores the evolution of India’s foreign policy since its independence in 1947, highlighting significant shifts and enduring characteristics. Initially, India adopted a non-aligned stance during the Cold War, leaning towards the Soviet Union while maintaining cool relations with the United States. The Panchsheel principles guided its friendly approach towards China, and it viewed itself as part of the developing world. However, in recent decades, particularly with the onset of the 21st century, India’s foreign policy has undergone a paradigm shift. Aligning itself with the US Indo-Pacific Strategy, India is now seen as a key player in America’s efforts to contain China’s influence in the region. Despite ongoing tensions with China, India maintains robust economic ties with its neighbor. Concurrently, India continues to nurture its close relationship with Russia, even as the US and Russia face off over Ukraine’s potential NATO membership. India’s current foreign policy, described as ‘strategic autonomy,’ involves balancing relations with major global powers while simultaneously engaging in multiple alignments like BRICS, SCO, and QUAD, despite the seeming contradictions among them. Its growing economy, democratic stability, and strategic partnerships have bolstered India’s global standing. However, its foreign policy towards South Asian neighbors remains unchanged, characterized by hostility towards Pakistan, rivalry with China, and a dominant stance towards smaller regional states like Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh. India’s reluctance to recognize the independent foreign policy choices of its neighbors, especially in relation to China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), undermines its ‘Neighbourhood First’ policy and its broader global aspirations. The article concludes that for India to enhance its global profile, it must abandon its overbearing approach in South Asia and allow its neighbors the same strategic autonomy it seeks in its relations with global powers.

Easy/Short SUMMARY:

The article discusses how India's foreign policy has changed over the years. Initially, India was non-aligned during the Cold War, leaning towards the Soviet Union and staying neutral. In recent times, India has aligned more with the US to counter China's influence in Asia. Although India has strong economic ties with China, there are still tensions. India maintains close ties with Russia despite global conflicts. The article also highlights that India's attitude towards its South Asian neighbors, like Pakistan, Nepal, and Sri Lanka, has remained hostile and dominant. The writer suggests that India should allow its neighbors more freedom in their foreign policies to improve its own global image.

SOLUTIONS of The Problem:

Promote Regional Cooperation

India should foster regional cooperation by engaging in open dialogues with its South Asian neighbors to address mutual concerns and promote peace and stability.

Respect Neighboring Countries' Sovereignty

India needs to respect the sovereignty and independent foreign policy decisions of its South Asian neighbors, allowing them to engage in beneficial partnerships, including with China.

Revisit the Neighbourhood First Policy

India should reassess its 'Neighbourhood First' policy to ensure it genuinely prioritizes regional relationships over global ambitions, focusing on mutual benefits rather than dominance.

Enhance Economic Collaboration

Strengthening economic ties with South Asian countries through joint ventures and trade agreements can help build trust and reduce tensions in the region.

Engage in Confidence-Building Measures

India should implement confidence-building measures with Pakistan and other neighboring countries to reduce hostilities and pave the way for resolving longstanding disputes like Kashmir.

Support Multilateral Initiatives

India should support multilateral initiatives that include its neighbors, such as regional security frameworks, to create a more balanced and cooperative environment in South Asia.

Leverage Soft Power Diplomacy

India can use soft power, such as cultural exchanges, education, and media, to build a positive image and stronger relationships with its neighbors, moving away from a purely strategic approach.

Facilitate People-to-People Contact

Encouraging people-to-people contact through tourism, cultural exchanges, and student programs can help bridge gaps between India and its South Asian neighbors.

Encourage Joint Infrastructure Projects

Collaborating on regional infrastructure projects, such as transportation and energy networks, can bring economic benefits and foster interdependence among South Asian countries.

Adopt a Balanced Approach towards China

India should adopt a more balanced approach towards China, acknowledging the legitimate economic interests of its neighbors in engaging with China's BRI projects.

IMPORTANT Facts and Figures Given in the article:

- India was non-aligned during the Cold War, leaning towards the Soviet Union.
- The Panchsheel principles guided India's early foreign relations with China.
- India's foreign policy has shifted towards alignment with the US Indo-Pacific Strategy.
- India maintains economic ties with China despite tensions.
- India is involved in multiple alignments like BRICS, SCO, and QUAD.
- India's economy is the fifth largest in the world.
- India has a hostile posture towards Pakistan and a dominant stance towards other South Asian neighbors.
- India's 'Neighbourhood First' policy is faltering due to its overbearing attitude.

MCQs from the Article:

1. Which country did India lean towards during the Cold War?

- A. United States
- B. Soviet Union
- C. China
- D. France

2. What principles guided India's early relations with China?

- A. Panchsheel
- B. Monroe Doctrine
- C. Truman Doctrine
- D. Warsaw Pact

3. What is India's current foreign policy described as?

- A. Non-Aligned Movement
- B. Pro-Western Alignment



- C. Strategic Autonomy
- D. Isolationism

4. Which regional alliance is India a part of?

- A. NATO
- B. ASEAN
- C. OPEC
- D. BRICS

5. Which policy of India is described as being in the doldrums?

- A. Make in India
- B. Neighbourhood First
- C. Look East Policy
- D. Green Revolution

VOCABULARY:

1. *Non-aligned* (adjective) (□□□□□□ □□□): Not allied with any side in a conflict or political situation.
2. *Paradigm* (noun) (□□□□□): A typical example or pattern of something; a model.
3. *Pivot* (noun) (□□□□): The central point, pin, or shaft on which a mechanism turns or oscillates.
4. *Flourishing* (adjective) (□□□□□ □□□□): Developing rapidly and successfully; thriving.
5. *Balancing Act* (noun) (□□□ □□ □□□□□): An action or strategy requiring careful management of different factors.
6. *Multilateralism* (noun) (□□□□□□□□□□□): The principle of participation by three or more parties, especially by the governments of different countries.
7. *Incompatible* (adjective) (□□□□ □□□): So different in nature as to be incapable of coexisting.
8. *Hegemony* (noun) (□□□□): Leadership or dominance, especially by one country or social group over others.
9. *Sovereignty* (noun) (□□□□□□□□□□): Supreme power or authority.
10. *Embargo* (noun) (□□□□□□): An official ban on trade or other commercial



activity with a particular country.

11. *Manifold* (adjective) (बहुविध): Many and various.
12. *Diaspora* (noun) (व्यवस्थापन): The dispersion of any people from their original homeland.
13. *Demonisation* (noun) (दुष्प्रचार): Portrayal of something as wicked or evil.
14. *Rivalry* (noun) (स्पर्धा): Competition for the same objective or for superiority in the same field.
15. *Doldrums* (noun) (असहज): A state or period of inactivity, stagnation, or depression.
16. *Lucrative* (adjective) (लाभकारी): Producing a great deal of profit.
17. *Autonomy* (noun) (स्वशासन): The right or condition of self-government.
18. *Narrative* (noun) (कथा): A spoken or written account of connected events; a story.
19. *Harboring* (verb) (आश्रय देना): Give a home or shelter to.
20. *Strategic* (adjective) (रणनीतिक): Relating to the identification of long-term or overall aims and interests and the means of achieving them.

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Indian foreign policy **Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry**

WHEN it started its life as an independent country in 1947, India chose a foreign policy that would keep it 'non-aligned' in the polarised environment created by the US-USSR Cold War. India leaned towards the Soviet Union, maintained rather cold relations with the US, sought friendly ties with China premised on the Panchsheel (the five principles of peaceful coexistence), and saw itself as a member of the developing world. In South Asia, it embarked on a hostile relationship with Pakistan for separating from so-called 'Mother India'.

Decades later, India's foreign policy has undergone a paradigm shift, particularly since the dawn of the 21st century. With the US pivot to Asia, India has become the partner of choice for America's Indo-Pacific Strategy that seeks to contain the further rise of China. India's relations with China remain tension-ridden, even though both countries have flourishing economic and commercial ties. With Russia, India maintains a close relationship, notwithstanding the fact that the US-led West and Russia are at daggers drawn over the prospect of Ukraine joining Nato. India is, thus, playing a tight balancing act in its relations with the major powers. It describes its present foreign policy as the pursuit of national interests through 'strategic autonomy'.

With UN-led universal multilateralism on the retreat, India has entered into several mutually incompatible multi-alignments, such as BRICS, SCO, and QUAD. It considers itself a leader of the Global South, and has deepened its ties with East Asia and Africa.

What has helped India maintain largely positive relations with all major powers is its growing economy and stable democracy. As the world's fifth largest economy, it has sufficient buying power to purchase expensive military hardware from diverse sources, attract foreign investments for its growing economy, particularly its road and rail infrastructure, and enhance manifold its trade with the rest of the world. The Indian diaspora has been mobilised to project a positive image of the country. At the same time, however, divisive Hindutva nationalism, demonisation of minorities, and massive unemployment and high inflation have

tarnished its stature.

India's attitude towards South Asian states has not changed.

While a lot has changed in India's global profile, what has not is its foreign policy towards its South Asian neighbours. India continues with its hostile posture towards Pakistan, and pursues a competitive, even rival relationship with China. Its policy to engage only with non-Taliban Afghan groups has failed. It has also bullied Nepal through economic embargos and the occupation of part of its territory. In the south, Sri Lanka often faces tough choices in its relations with both India and China. Bangladesh, surrounded on three sides by India, has experienced suffocating Indian dominance, particularly under Sheikh Hasina Wajed who recently fled to India. The Maldives has often demonstrated its discontent with Indian interference. Consequently, India's 'Neighbourhood First' policy is in the doldrums, undermining its global ambitions.

Central to India's overbearing attitude towards its South Asian neighbours is the China factor. India is unhappy with China's close ties with Pakistan and Chinese attempts to enter into cooperative relations with Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, the Maldives, and even Bhutan whose foreign policy is controlled by India. These countries find China's BRI projects a lucrative option and wish to exercise their own 'strategic autonomy' to benefit from the investments regardless of the Sino-India competition. India needs to recognise the legitimate right of its neighbours to benefit from the investment opportunities that accompany cooperative engagement with China.

Pakistan is one country that has never accepted Indian hegemony in South Asia. This has been reason enough for India to make every effort to isolate it. The Kashmir dispute is unresolved because of India's refusal to let Kashmiris exercise their right to self-determination. India has suspended all contact with Pakistan, especially since 2016, and chosen to demonise the country by harping on the mantra of cross-border terrorism. In fact, it is Pakistan which now faces India-sponsored terrorism. However, since India's economy has done well and is a large market, in contrast with Pakistan's, the world tends to lend a more sympathetic ear to Indian narratives.

For South Asia, India is the elephant in the room. The entire region would benefit if India gave up its dominating posture, and let other South Asian countries



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exercise the same strategic autonomy vis-à-vis India that the latter wishes to have vis-à-vis the US, China, and Russia. Taking the region along would help India build up its global profile that it cherishes.

The writer is a former foreign secretary and chairman of Sanober Institute Islamabad.

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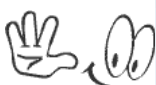
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