



## Modi's Foreign Policy Doctrine: Strategic Autonomy, Global Ambitions, and Regional Leadership

**Babita Roy**

Department of Political Science,  
DAV College, Kanpur, UP

---

---

### ARTICLE DETAILS

**Research Paper**

---

#### Keywords:

*Modi, foreign policy, strategic autonomy, global ambitions, regional leadership, Quad, BRICS, Neighborhood First, Indo-Pacific, defence diplomacy.*

---

#### DOI:

**10.5281/zenodo.14104759**

---

---

### ABSTRACT

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's foreign policy has redefined India's position on the global stage, blending strategic autonomy with global ambitions and regional leadership. Modi's approach is characterized by a pragmatic balance between traditional Indian foreign policy principles, such as non-alignment, and a more assertive stance in global affairs. At the heart of this doctrine is **strategic autonomy**, wherein India seeks to maintain independent decision-making while fostering relations with diverse global powers, including the U.S., Russia, and China. This balanced engagement is evident in India's active participation in multilateral forums like the **Quad**, **BRICS**, and the **G20**, while also asserting its unique position on issues such as the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Modi's **global ambitions** reflect India's desire to become a significant global power, evident in initiatives like the **International Solar Alliance**, **vaccine diplomacy**, and the push for digital transformation. These efforts aim to strengthen India's role in global governance, technological leadership, and economic growth. Additionally, India's proactive approach to climate change and sustainable development has further cemented its global influence. Regionally, Modi's **Neighbourhood First** policy emphasizes India's leadership in **South Asia** and the **Indian Ocean**. However, challenges remain, particularly in managing relations with Pakistan, countering

China's growing influence, and addressing regional instability. Through **defence diplomacy** and partnerships in the **Indo-Pacific**, Modi's foreign policy also underscores India's commitment to enhancing maritime security and fostering strategic partnerships. Despite these strides, Modi's foreign policy faces internal and external challenges, including border tensions, economic constraints, and criticisms of India's global aspirations. Nonetheless, India's strategic autonomy and pursuit of leadership in both regional and global arenas signal its transformation into a key player in an increasingly multipolar world.

## INTRODUCTION:



[https://imagevars.gulfnews.com/2023/07/12/OPN-Modi\\_1894a476fab\\_large.jpg](https://imagevars.gulfnews.com/2023/07/12/OPN-Modi_1894a476fab_large.jpg)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's foreign policy doctrine is a blend of traditional Indian diplomatic principles and a bold, assertive approach to global affairs. Since his election in 2014, Modi has pursued a dynamic foreign policy that seeks to position India as a leading power on the global stage while maintaining strategic autonomy. His administration has emphasized pragmatism, economic diplomacy,

Babita Roy

security partnerships, and active participation in international organizations, all of which reflect a significant shift in India's global posture. While rooted in the country's historical commitment to non-alignment and peaceful coexistence, Modi's foreign policy has recalibrated these principles to suit the complexities of a multipolar world.

### **Strategic Autonomy: A Contemporary Interpretation of Non-Alignment**

One of the core tenets of Modi's foreign policy is strategic autonomy, a concept derived from India's historical policy of non-alignment. The principle of non-alignment, famously championed by India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, aimed to keep India independent of the rivalries between the U.S. and the Soviet Union during the Cold War. Modi's version of strategic autonomy, however, is not about distancing India from global powers but engaging with all of them on equal terms. Under Modi, India has built strong ties with both the United States and Russia, while maintaining relationships with China and the European Union, illustrating the balancing act that defines India's contemporary foreign policy.

India's role in the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) with the U.S., Japan, and Australia is a prime example of how Modi navigates global power dynamics. While India enhances its security cooperation with the U.S. and its allies to counterbalance China's growing influence in the Indo-Pacific, it simultaneously continues to engage with Russia through BRICS and other platforms. This dual approach underscores Modi's commitment to preserving India's strategic independence while capitalizing on its growing global influence.

### **Economic Diplomacy and Global Ambitions**

Modi's foreign policy also emphasizes economic diplomacy, aimed at boosting India's stature in global markets and enhancing its soft power. India's global ambitions, particularly under Modi's leadership, have been tied to its economic growth. Initiatives such as "Make in India," "Digital India," and the push for infrastructure development have been central to Modi's outreach to foreign investors and multinational corporations. His government has actively pursued trade deals and investment partnerships that align with India's broader goal of becoming a \$5 trillion economy by the end of the decade.

India's participation in global initiatives like the International Solar Alliance and its leadership in addressing climate change highlight Modi's broader global ambitions. By positioning India as a leader

in renewable energy and sustainable development, Modi aims to shape global governance on climate action, a critical issue in 21st-century international relations. This ambition reflects India's growing role in multilateral institutions such as the G20 and BRICS, where it advocates for reform of global governance structures to better represent the interests of developing countries.

### **Regional Leadership and Neighbourhood First**

At the regional level, Modi's "Neighborhood First" policy has become a cornerstone of his foreign policy doctrine. Recognizing that India's security and prosperity are intrinsically linked to its regional environment, Modi has made efforts to improve relations with South Asian countries and assume a leadership role in regional organizations like SAARC and BIMSTEC. This policy aims to counterbalance China's influence in South Asia while fostering closer ties with countries like Bangladesh, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, and Nepal.

However, Modi's regional strategy has not been without challenges. Relations with Pakistan remain fraught due to long-standing issues over Kashmir, and China's Belt and Road Initiative has made inroads into India's immediate neighbourhood. Despite these challenges, India under Modi has positioned itself as a key player in the Indian Ocean region, expanding its maritime presence and security partnerships with countries like the Maldives and Seychelles.

Modi's foreign policy is a dynamic mix of old and new. While it is rooted in India's traditional diplomatic principles of non-alignment, peaceful coexistence, and regional leadership, it is increasingly characterized by assertiveness on the global stage. Through strategic autonomy, economic diplomacy, and a focus on regional leadership, Modi seeks to elevate India's status as a global power. His foreign policy doctrine reflects a careful balancing act between engaging global powers and asserting India's independence in a rapidly shifting international landscape.

### **STRATEGIC AUTONOMY: BALANCING RELATIONS WITH GLOBAL POWERS:**

Strategic autonomy has been a cornerstone of India's foreign policy, and under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, this concept has evolved to meet the demands of a complex and increasingly multipolar world. The principle of strategic autonomy is rooted in India's traditional policy of non-alignment, a doctrine that guided Indian diplomacy during the Cold War. Today, however, Modi's interpretation of strategic autonomy goes beyond simply avoiding alignment with any one global power; it is about engaging with

multiple power centers while preserving India's independence in decision-making. This policy enables India to balance its relations with major global powers such as the United States, Russia, China, and the European Union, ensuring that it can maximize its strategic and economic interests without being drawn into alliances that limit its options.

### **Strategic Autonomy in the Context of U.S.-India Relations**

One of the most notable aspects of India's strategic autonomy under Modi is its deepening relationship with the United States. Over the past decade, U.S.-India ties have grown significantly, especially in the areas of defense, technology, and security. The signing of foundational defense agreements, such as the Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA) and the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA), illustrates the strengthening military cooperation between the two countries. The U.S. has also become one of India's largest arms suppliers, and both nations regularly conduct joint military exercises.

However, despite these growing ties, India has carefully avoided becoming a formal ally of the U.S. Unlike traditional American allies such as Japan or Australia, India has not entered into any binding security treaties with the U.S. Modi's government has consistently emphasized that while India welcomes closer relations with Washington, it will not compromise its independent foreign policy to align exclusively with American interests. This is most evident in India's approach to multilateral forums such as the **Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad)**, which includes the U.S., Japan, and Australia. India sees the Quad as a platform for cooperation, particularly in the Indo-Pacific, but not as an alliance against China.

### **Maintaining Historic Ties with Russia**

India's relationship with Russia is another critical element of its strategic autonomy. Historically, Russia (and previously the Soviet Union) has been a reliable defense partner for India. Despite India's closer ties with the U.S. in recent years, Modi has made efforts to preserve and strengthen India's relationship with Moscow. Russia remains a major supplier of military hardware to India, with high-profile deals such as the purchase of the S-400 missile defense system, despite U.S. objections under the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA).

India's decision to move forward with the S-400 deal, despite the risk of U.S. sanctions, underscores its commitment to strategic autonomy. India's defense procurement policy remains diversified, and its relationship with Russia serves as a hedge against over-reliance on Western defense suppliers. Furthermore, Russia is a key partner for India in multilateral groups like **BRICS** and the **Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)**, where both nations work together on issues ranging from counterterrorism to trade.

### **Navigating Relations with China**

India's strategic autonomy is also evident in its complex relationship with China. While India and China share a long-standing rivalry, particularly over border disputes, India has sought to balance competition with cooperation. The two nations are major trading partners, and both are members of several international forums, including the BRICS group. However, the border clashes in Ladakh in 2020 brought India-China relations to a low point, leading India to strengthen its partnerships with countries like the U.S. and Japan through the Quad.

Despite these tensions, Modi's government has avoided taking a completely adversarial stance against China. India continues to engage with China diplomatically, emphasizing the need for peaceful coexistence and cooperation in areas such as climate change and global governance. This delicate balancing act allows India to assert its strategic autonomy while managing the risks posed by its northern neighbor.

Strategic autonomy under Modi has enabled India to balance its relationships with global powers in a manner that serves its national interests. By engaging both the Western and Eastern blocs, India has avoided becoming overly dependent on any one power, while maximizing the benefits of its partnerships. This approach ensures that India remains an independent player on the global stage, free to pursue its own interests in a rapidly shifting geopolitical landscape.

### **GLOBAL AMBITIONS: INDIA'S ASPIRATIONS UNDER MODI'S LEADERSHIP:**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's foreign policy is characterized by India's aspirations to emerge as a global leader. Since taking office in 2014, Modi has steered India's international diplomacy towards a more assertive role in global governance, particularly in multilateral forums, climate change negotiations, and technological and economic development. India's global ambitions under Modi are



driven by the vision of making India not only a regional power but a key player in shaping global economic, environmental, and technological trends.

### **India's Leadership in Multilateral Forums**

A central pillar of Modi's foreign policy is enhancing India's influence in multilateral forums. India has increasingly taken leadership roles in organizations like the **United Nations**, **G20**, **BRICS**, and the **Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)**. Modi's push for reforms in global institutions, especially the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), underscores India's desire to have a seat at the table where key decisions impacting the world are made. India's longstanding demand for permanent membership in the UNSC, supported by many nations, reflects its ambition to shape global governance structures that align with its status as a rising power.

Modi has actively engaged with global leaders in these forums to advocate for more equitable global governance. India's presidency of the G20 in 2023, for instance, was an opportunity for Modi to position the country as a voice for the Global South, focusing on issues like sustainable development, debt restructuring for developing nations, and global health governance. His participation in **BRICS** meetings also highlights India's role in promoting alternative multilateral cooperation frameworks, especially among emerging economies.

### **Climate Change and Global Environmental Leadership**

Another crucial aspect of Modi's global ambitions is India's leadership in the fight against climate change. Under Modi's administration, India has taken significant steps to present itself as a global environmental leader, balancing its development needs with global climate responsibilities. Modi's flagship initiative, the **International Solar Alliance (ISA)**, launched in 2015, aims to promote the use of solar energy and facilitate cooperation among countries in harnessing renewable energy. The ISA is one of the largest international initiatives led by a developing country and reflects India's commitment to addressing climate change.

India's active participation in the Paris Climate Agreement and its pledges to reduce carbon emissions demonstrate Modi's approach to climate diplomacy. The ambitious goals set by India, such as achieving 450 gigawatts of renewable energy capacity by 2030, showcase the country's focus on renewable energy transition. At the **COP26** summit, Modi's "Panchamrit" strategy included commitments to achieve net-

zero emissions by 2070, reflecting India's balancing act between economic growth and environmental sustainability. India's role as a bridge between the developed and developing worlds in climate negotiations bolsters its global standing.

### **Technological and Economic Prowess**

Modi's global ambitions are also intertwined with his vision for India's technological and economic advancement. Programs like **Digital India**, **Make in India**, and **Start-up India** have not only been aimed at transforming India's domestic landscape but also at positioning India as a hub for innovation and technology on the global stage. India's space achievements, including the successful missions of **Chandrayaan-2** and the Mars Orbiter Mission, have demonstrated the country's growing capabilities in space exploration, further enhancing its global profile.

India's tech sector, particularly its information technology (IT) services, has become a global leader. By leveraging its expertise in software and digital services, India has positioned itself as a key player in the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Modi's government has actively sought to attract foreign investment and promote India as a global manufacturing hub, particularly through the **Make in India** initiative. This initiative aims to boost India's manufacturing sector and enhance its participation in global supply chains, positioning the country as a major economic power.

Modi's foreign policy is driven by India's ambition to become a global leader, focusing on multilateral diplomacy, climate change leadership, and technological and economic advancement. By taking proactive roles in global institutions, promoting environmental sustainability, and leveraging technological growth, Modi has positioned India as a key player in shaping the global future. These efforts reflect India's rising global profile and its aspiration to be recognized as a leading power in the 21st century.

### **REGIONAL LEADERSHIP: MODI'S "NEIGHBOURHOOD FIRST" POLICY:**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's foreign policy is deeply rooted in the idea of India as a regional leader, particularly in South Asia. His "Neighbourhood First" policy, a cornerstone of India's regional diplomacy, aims to strengthen relationships with India's immediate neighbors, fostering economic and security cooperation while positioning India as the dominant power in the region. Modi's approach is a blend of economic assistance, strategic partnerships, and proactive engagement with regional



organizations like the **South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)** and the **Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC)**. Despite challenges, Modi's vision for regional leadership has sought to counterbalance external influences, such as China, and maintain India's prominence in its neighborhood.

### **The Neighbourhood First Policy**

Modi's "Neighbourhood First" policy emphasizes the significance of India's immediate neighbors in South Asia for its security, stability, and economic prosperity. The policy's primary goal is to improve relations with countries like Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives, fostering deeper integration through trade, infrastructure development, and people-to-people exchanges. It also aims to counter external influences, particularly China's growing presence through its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which has led several South Asian countries to rely on Chinese investments.

From the outset, Modi signaled his intent to prioritize regional relations by inviting leaders of South Asian countries to his swearing-in ceremony in 2014. This gesture was not only symbolic but also laid the foundation for a series of high-level engagements. Modi's government has worked to resolve long-standing disputes and build partnerships based on mutual development. One significant achievement of this policy was the 2015 ratification of the **India-Bangladesh Land Boundary Agreement**, which resolved a decades-old border dispute, improving relations between the two countries and enhancing regional stability.

### **India's Role in SAARC**

India has traditionally played a leading role in SAARC, the primary regional organization of South Asia. However, SAARC has been weakened by internal conflicts, particularly between India and Pakistan, limiting its effectiveness in fostering regional cooperation. Modi has expressed frustration with SAARC's inability to function effectively due to Pakistan's stance on cross-border terrorism and other issues. In 2016, India boycotted the SAARC summit in Islamabad, citing Pakistan's support for terrorism, and several other member states followed suit, leading to the summit's cancellation.

Despite the challenges within SAARC, Modi's government has not abandoned the organization but has sought alternative platforms to promote regional cooperation. Modi has repeatedly called for SAARC to

focus on issues of economic development, connectivity, and counterterrorism, but the ongoing India-Pakistan tensions have made substantial progress difficult within the SAARC framework.

### **BIMSTEC and Expanding Regional Influence**



<https://carnegieproductionassets.s3.amazonaws.com/static/media/images/BIMSTEC-IndianMinistryExternalAffairs.jpg>

To overcome the limitations of SAARC, Modi's foreign policy has placed greater emphasis on **BIMSTEC**, a regional grouping that connects South Asia with Southeast Asia. BIMSTEC includes five South Asian countries (India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, and Sri Lanka) and two Southeast Asian nations (Thailand and Myanmar), providing India with a broader platform to engage with its neighborhood. Unlike SAARC, BIMSTEC does not include Pakistan, allowing India to focus on regional cooperation without the disruptions caused by India-Pakistan tensions.

BIMSTEC has become a critical platform for Modi's government to promote connectivity, trade, and security cooperation in the Bay of Bengal region. At the **BIMSTEC Summit** in 2018, Modi outlined India's vision for the organization, emphasizing the need for stronger economic integration, joint efforts to combat terrorism, and the development of infrastructure projects to improve connectivity.

BIMSTEC's focus on economic cooperation and security aligns with India's strategic goals in the region, and it has been an effective alternative to the stalled SAARC process.

### **Challenges and the Way Forward**

Despite Modi's proactive efforts in regional diplomacy, challenges remain. India's relations with Pakistan are at a historic low, marked by military skirmishes and diplomatic stalemates. China's growing influence in the region, particularly through its investments in infrastructure projects in countries like Sri Lanka, Nepal, and the Maldives, presents a significant challenge to India's regional leadership. China's BRI has led to concerns about debt dependency and the erosion of India's traditional influence in these countries.

Nevertheless, Modi's "Neighbourhood First" policy remains central to his foreign policy agenda. India continues to support economic development projects in its neighborhood, including infrastructure, health, and education, aimed at countering China's influence and maintaining regional stability. India's investment in regional connectivity through initiatives like the **India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway** and partnerships in maritime security further highlights its strategic focus on South Asia and beyond.

Modi's "Neighbourhood First" policy underscores India's aspiration to maintain its leadership role in South Asia. By focusing on economic cooperation, connectivity, and security, Modi has positioned India as a key player in the region, while simultaneously addressing the challenges posed by China's growing presence. Despite the hurdles, India's active role in regional organizations like BIMSTEC and efforts to engage with neighboring countries through diplomacy and development assistance reflect Modi's commitment to strengthening India's influence in its immediate neighborhood.

### **SECURITY AND DEFENCE DIPLOMACY: INDIA'S MILITARY PARTNERSHIPS AND LEADERSHIP IN THE INDO-PACIFIC**

India's security and defense diplomacy under Prime Minister Narendra Modi has witnessed a significant transformation, characterized by a focus on expanding military partnerships, defense modernization, and maritime security, particularly in the strategically important Indo-Pacific region. Modi's approach to defense diplomacy aligns with India's broader foreign policy objectives of strategic autonomy, regional leadership, and emerging global influence. Through enhanced military cooperation, modernization of

defense infrastructure, and proactive engagement in maritime security, India has sought to bolster its role as a key player in global security architecture.

### **Growing Military Partnerships**

India's defense diplomacy has evolved from a traditionally non-aligned stance to one that seeks active partnerships with global powers, regional allies, and smaller nations in its neighborhood. Under Modi, India has deepened defense ties with countries like the **United States, France, Israel, Japan, and Australia**. The U.S.-India defense relationship has been one of the most significant developments in India's security landscape, with the signing of foundational agreements such as the **Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA), Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA), and the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA)**. These agreements have enabled greater interoperability between the two nations' armed forces, enhancing joint operations and information sharing.

Furthermore, India has signed important defense agreements with France, such as the acquisition of **Rafale fighter jets**, which has boosted India's air capabilities. Similarly, defense ties with Israel have flourished, particularly in the areas of missile defense systems, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), and intelligence sharing. These partnerships are not only focused on procurement but also involve joint training exercises, defense technology cooperation, and capacity building.

One of the most significant platforms for India's defense diplomacy has been joint military exercises. India conducts bilateral and multilateral military exercises such as **Malabar (with the U.S., Japan, and Australia), Varuna (with France), and Indra (with Russia)**. These exercises enhance India's operational readiness and strengthen its defense ties with key strategic partners, particularly in the Indo-Pacific, where India has been increasingly active in ensuring regional security.

### **Defense Modernization Efforts**

Modi's government has prioritized the modernization of India's defense infrastructure to make the country more self-reliant and capable of addressing emerging security challenges. The **Make in India** initiative, extended to the defense sector, aims to boost indigenous defense production and reduce India's dependence on foreign arms suppliers. Through the **Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP)**

2020, the government has introduced reforms to streamline defense procurement, encourage domestic production, and promote public-private partnerships in defense manufacturing.

India's defense modernization has also focused on upgrading its naval and air capabilities, essential for safeguarding its maritime and aerial domains. The procurement of advanced weapon systems like the **Rafale fighter jets**, **Apache attack helicopters**, **S-400 missile defense systems** from Russia, and the commissioning of new submarines, frigates, and destroyers have enhanced India's deterrence and defense posture. The **Atmanirbhar Bharat (Self-Reliant India)** campaign further emphasizes the development of indigenous defense technologies, such as **Tejas light combat aircraft**, **Arjun main battle tanks**, and **BrahMos supersonic missiles**.

### **Leadership in Maritime Security and the Indo-Pacific**

Maritime security has emerged as a critical element of India's defense diplomacy, especially with the growing significance of the Indo-Pacific region. India views the Indo-Pacific as a crucial area for maintaining regional stability, promoting economic connectivity, and ensuring the free passage of goods, energy, and trade. As a maritime power, India's strategic interest lies in securing sea lanes of communication (SLOCs) and countering the growing influence of China in the region.

India has taken a leadership role in promoting maritime security by actively engaging in the **Quad** (Quadrilateral Security Dialogue), which includes the U.S., Japan, and Australia. The Quad focuses on maintaining a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific, countering China's assertiveness, and addressing security concerns related to the South China Sea. India's participation in the **Malabar naval exercises**, conducted annually with the Quad nations, has been a clear demonstration of its commitment to enhancing maritime security cooperation in the Indo-Pacific.

India has also expanded its defense and security cooperation with littoral states in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), including **Mauritius**, **Seychelles**, **Sri Lanka**, and the **Maldives**. By providing these nations with patrol vessels, radar systems, and training programs, India enhances their maritime domain awareness and strengthens collective security in the IOR. Additionally, India's participation in multilateral naval exercises like **Milan** and its establishment of the **Information Fusion Centre for the Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR)** have reinforced India's position as a key player in regional maritime security.

India's security and defense diplomacy under Modi has grown in scale and complexity, reflecting the country's global and regional aspirations. By expanding military partnerships with key global powers, modernizing its defense forces, and taking a leadership role in maritime security in the Indo-Pacific, India is asserting itself as a responsible and proactive player in the international security architecture. These efforts not only enhance India's strategic autonomy but also position the country as a pivotal power in ensuring peace and stability in a rapidly changing geopolitical environment.

### **CHALLENGES AND CRITICISMS: LIMITATIONS OF MODI'S FOREIGN POLICY:**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's foreign policy, while ambitious and transformative, has faced several challenges and criticisms that highlight its limitations and the complexities of Indian diplomacy. From regional tensions, particularly with neighboring countries, to internal political opposition, Modi's approach has encountered hurdles that have raised questions about the effectiveness and sustainability of his foreign policy initiatives.

#### **Regional Tensions and Strategic Rivalries**

One of the most significant challenges to Modi's foreign policy is the persistent tension with Pakistan, which has historically hindered India's ability to pursue a cohesive regional strategy. The Kashmir issue remains a flashpoint, exacerbated by incidents of cross-border terrorism and military skirmishes. Despite Modi's initial overtures toward dialogue, including an invitation to Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif for his inauguration in 2014, the relationship has deteriorated, particularly following the 2016 Uri attack and the 2019 Pulwama attack, both of which were attributed to Pakistan-based militant groups. The ensuing Indian military responses, including the Balakot airstrike, showcased a shift towards a more aggressive stance but failed to create a long-term resolution to the conflict.

These tensions have broader implications for India's regional diplomacy, especially within the **South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)** framework, where India's leadership is often undermined by Pakistan's refusal to engage meaningfully in dialogue. The cancellation of the SAARC summit in 2016, primarily due to India's boycott, highlighted the organization's limitations in addressing regional issues, thereby complicating Modi's vision for enhanced regional cooperation.



## Challenges in the Indo-Pacific Region

In the Indo-Pacific, while Modi has made significant strides in enhancing India's security partnerships, challenges persist, particularly related to China. China's assertiveness in the South China Sea and its strategic partnerships with countries in India's vicinity, such as Sri Lanka and the Maldives, have raised alarms in New Delhi. Modi's government has struggled to effectively counter China's influence despite participating in initiatives like the **Quad** and engaging with regional allies.

India's relations with China have been particularly strained since the 2020 Galwan Valley clash, which resulted in casualties on both sides. The border dispute has complicated India's diplomatic engagement with China, leading to a more cautious approach in bilateral relations. This situation has also highlighted the limitations of Modi's diplomatic efforts to manage relations with Beijing, especially as India seeks to maintain a balance between cooperation and competition.

## Internal Political Opposition and Criticism

Modi's foreign policy has not only faced external challenges but has also been met with criticism domestically. The opposition parties have raised concerns regarding the effectiveness of his foreign policy initiatives and the potential erosion of India's strategic autonomy. Critics argue that Modi's close alignment with the United States may compromise India's long-standing non-aligned stance, thus jeopardizing India's ability to act independently on the global stage.

Furthermore, the government's emphasis on a militarized foreign policy approach has been critiqued for prioritizing security over diplomacy. Opposition leaders and analysts argue that this aggressive posture may alienate potential partners and create unnecessary tensions. For instance, Modi's handling of the crisis in Afghanistan following the U.S. withdrawal raised concerns among political opponents about India's regional standing and the implications for security in the region. Critics highlighted that India's lack of engagement with the Taliban during the peace process may have left it sidelined in a post-U.S. withdrawal Afghanistan, potentially compromising India's interests in a strategically important neighboring country.

## Human Rights Concerns and Global Image

Another critical aspect of the challenges facing Modi's foreign policy is the issue of human rights and democratic values, which have garnered international scrutiny. Reports of human rights violations in Kashmir, restrictions on civil liberties, and the treatment of minority communities in India have led to criticisms from various quarters, including Western nations. These concerns have the potential to impact India's international relationships, particularly as it seeks to position itself as a responsible global player. Modi's government faces the challenge of reconciling its domestic policies with its ambitions on the global stage, especially as it seeks to enhance its image as a leading democracy.

Modi's foreign policy has undoubtedly transformed India's approach to international relations, emphasizing a more proactive and assertive stance. However, the challenges of regional tensions, particularly with Pakistan and China, coupled with internal political opposition and criticisms regarding human rights, highlight the complexities and limitations of this ambitious agenda. As India navigates these challenges, it will need to strike a balance between asserting its influence and maintaining diplomatic flexibility to address the multifaceted realities of global politics.

### CONCLUSION:

As India moves forward in an increasingly complex and interconnected global landscape, its ambitions on the world stage are becoming more pronounced. The Modi government has articulated a vision of India as a key player in a multipolar world, where power is distributed among several nations rather than dominated by a single superpower. This shift represents not only a departure from historical paradigms but also an acknowledgment of India's growing influence and responsibilities in global affairs.

The idea of a multipolar world presents India with significant opportunities. As one of the largest democracies and fastest-growing economies, India possesses the potential to shape global governance and advocate for the interests of developing nations. By participating actively in international organizations such as the United Nations, the G20, and BRICS, India aims to elevate its standing and contribute to global discussions on issues like climate change, trade, and security. Initiatives like the International Solar Alliance illustrate India's commitment to addressing urgent global challenges while promoting sustainable development, aligning with its aspirations for leadership in the international community.

India's strategic partnerships play a crucial role in its global ambitions. The strengthening of ties with major powers, particularly the United States, Japan, and Australia, through platforms like the Quad, underscores India's intention to foster a cooperative security environment in the Indo-Pacific region. However, these partnerships must be carefully managed to ensure that India retains its strategic autonomy and does not become overly reliant on any single country. The balancing act between cooperation and independence will be vital as India navigates the complexities of international relations.

Nevertheless, India's path toward achieving its global ambitions is fraught with challenges that must be addressed. Regional tensions, particularly with neighboring countries such as Pakistan and China, pose significant hurdles. The ongoing Kashmir conflict and border disputes necessitate a dual approach of military preparedness and diplomatic engagement. While India seeks to assert its influence, it must also work toward de-escalating tensions to prevent conflicts that could undermine its aspirations.

Moreover, India's internal political landscape presents another layer of complexity. Issues related to human rights, freedom of expression, and the treatment of minority communities have drawn criticism from various international quarters. For India to project itself as a responsible global leader, addressing these domestic concerns is imperative. A robust commitment to democratic principles and human rights not only strengthens India's credibility but also fosters trust among potential allies and partners in the global arena.

Looking ahead, India's global ambitions will be contingent upon its ability to engage in multilateral diplomacy, strengthen its strategic partnerships, and address internal challenges. By diversifying its international relationships and actively participating in global forums, India can amplify its voice and influence on the world stage. Furthermore, enhancing its technological and industrial capabilities will be crucial for maintaining competitiveness in the global economy.

In summary, the future of India's global ambitions in a multipolar world is filled with promise and challenges. As it seeks to carve out a significant role on the global stage, India must navigate regional tensions, strengthen its internal democratic processes, and build robust international partnerships. By balancing its aspirations with the realities of global politics, India can solidify its position as a responsible and influential power in the years to come. Ultimately, India's ability to adapt to changing dynamics while remaining true to its democratic values will shape its legacy as a leading voice in the international community.

**References:**

1. Pant, H. V., & Joshi, Y. (2020). *The Modi Doctrine: New Paradigms in India's Foreign Policy*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
2. Mohan, C. R. (2015). *Modi's World: Expanding India's Sphere of Influence*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Retrieved from <https://carnegieendowment.org>
3. Rajamohan, C. (2014). *Modi, the Assertive Indian*. Foreign Affairs. Retrieved from <https://www.foreignaffairs.com>
4. Pant, H. V., & Joshi, Y. (2020). *The Modi Doctrine: New Paradigms in India's Foreign Policy*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
5. Mohan, C. R. (2021). *Modi's Balancing Act: Navigating Between Washington and Moscow*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Retrieved from <https://carnegieendowment.org>
6. Baru, S. (2018). *India's Strategic Autonomy in a Multipolar World*. The Hindu. Retrieved from <https://www.thehindu.com>
7. Pant, H. V., & Joshi, Y. (2020). *The Modi Doctrine: New Paradigms in India's Foreign Policy*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
8. Saran, S. (2018). *India as a Global Leader in Climate Diplomacy*. Observer Research Foundation. Retrieved from <https://www.orfonline.org>
9. Basrur, R., & Sullivan de Estrada, K. (2017). *Rising India: Status and Power*. International Affairs Journal. Retrieved from <https://academic.oup.com>
10. Pant, H. V., & Joshi, Y. (2020). *The Modi Doctrine: New Paradigms in India's Foreign Policy*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
11. Saran, S. (2017). *India's Neighbourhood First Policy: Regional Challenges and Opportunities*. Observer Research Foundation. Retrieved from <https://www.orfonline.org>
12. Basrur, R. (2018). *The Modi Government's Neighbourhood First Policy: Reaching Out to South Asia*. International Affairs Journal. Retrieved from <https://academic.oup.com>
13. Raja Mohan, C. (2020). *The Quad and India's Strategic Shift in the Indo-Pacific*. Carnegie India. Retrieved from <https://carnegieindia.org>
14. Singh, A. (2021). *India's Defence Diplomacy: Partnerships and Maritime Security*. Observer Research Foundation. Retrieved from <https://www.orfonline.org>
15. Pant, H. V., & Joshi, Y. (2020). *The Modi Doctrine: New Paradigms in India's Foreign Policy*. Bloomsbury Publishing.



16. Mohan, C. R. (2021). *India and the World: The Foreign Policy of the Modi Government*. Routledge.
17. Pant, H. V., & Joshi, Y. (2020). *The Modi Doctrine: New Paradigms in India's Foreign Policy*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
18. Chacko, P. (2019). India's Foreign Policy under Modi: An Assessment. *Asian Security*, 15(3), 231-245. doi:10.1080/14799855.2019.1615690.