



India's Foreign Policy

This editorial is based on [“It can address this challenge by reclaiming its moral leadership in the region as well as the world at large”](#) which was published in Livemint on 18/08/2022. It talks about India's foreign policy driven by active national interest and necessity of morality in International Relations.

For Prelims: India's Foreign Policy, Raisina Dialogue, Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, BRICS, Panchsheel, Vaccine Diplomacy, Sustainable Development Goals, Foreign Direct Investments, Belt and Road Initiative

For Mains: National Interest and Moral Aspects in India's Foreign Policy, Inclusive Development, Current Challenges to India's Foreign Policy

At 75, **India- a younger state and an older nation** stands at a critical juncture in its relationship with the world.

Since **India gained [independence in 1947](#)**, the world has changed beyond recognition. From the **bipolar world of the U.S. and Soviet Union** to a brief **unipolar period when [American hegemony](#) reigned**, to one where **China and the United States are moving toward another bipolar competition**, distracted by multipolar illusions.

In today's chaotic world, India faces the challenge of defining its unique [foreign policy](#) identity, and shaping the **contours of its engagement to balance the national interest with moral values**.

What is the Difference Between State and Nation?

- A **State** consists of four elements - **population, territory, government, and sovereignty**.
 - While a **Nation is a community** based on **shared ethnicity, history, traditions, and aspirations**.
- As a **legal entity**, the **State** is responsible for the security and **welfare of its people**, and it is concerned with external human actions.
 - Whereas Nations are a unit of people who are united **emotionally, spiritually, and psychologically**.
- The **territory is also an essential part of the State**, because it is the physical substance of the State.
 - But for a nation, the territory is not an essential part of the nation. A **nation can survive without a fixed territory**.
- In some countries, such as **America, Australia and Canada**, the state comprises many nations, and they are '**multinational societies**'.

How does India's Foreign Policy Reflect Its Active National Interest?

- **India First Policy:** With 75 years of independence, the country has a greater sense of confidence and optimism in articulating an **"India First" foreign policy**. India decides for itself, and its independent foreign policy cannot be subject to intimidations.
 - **With one-fifth of the world's population**, India has the right to have its own side and to **weigh its own interests**.
 - It is certainly a basic tenet of international relations that **national interests are paramount**, and India too, like other nations, has pursued its interests when it comes to foreign and **national security** policies.
- **Realistic Diplomacy: Today's self-confident India** has a new voice in the global firmament, rooted in its **domestic realities** and civilizational ethos, as well as firm in the pursuit of its vital interests.
 - As the Indian Foreign Minister remarked at **Raisina Dialogue**, **"It is better to engage with the world on the basis of "who we are" rather than try and please the world. India is confident about its identity and priorities, the world will engage with India on its terms.**
- **Maintaining Balance of Power to its Advantage:** From being the **only global power to challenge China's Belt and Road Initiative** as far back as 2014 to **responding to Chinese military aggression with a strong military pushback**.
 - On the other hand, **working with the US without entering the full embrace of a formal alliance** and **engaging the West to build domestic capacities**.
 - India has been pragmatic to the core and **willing to use the extant balance of power to its advantage**.
- **Growing Economic Ties:** Since India's **economic interdependence** with the rest of the world deepens, it has become more observant of markets for its products, **sources of raw materials**, and potential recipients of its expanding foreign aid.
- **Multi Aligned Approach:** From the **Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (the Quad)** to the **BRICS**, there is a long list of memberships that India holds.
 - Often this is seen as old-style meandering. India, however, is increasingly articulating and promoting its priorities in a much more direct manner.
- **Intervention over Interference: India does not believe in interference in the internal affairs of other countries.**
 - However, if an act - innocent or deliberate - by any country has the potential of impinging upon India's national interests, **India does not hesitate in quick and timely intervention**.

What are the Moral Aspects of India's Foreign Policy?

- **Panchsheel (Five Virtues):** They were formally **enunciated in the Agreement on Trade between the Tibet region of China and India signed on April 29, 1954** and later evolved to act as the basis of conduct of international relations globally.
 - These **Five Principles** are:
 - Mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty
 - Mutual non-aggression
 - Mutual non-interference
 - Equality and mutual benefit
 - Peaceful co-existence
- **Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (The World is One Family):** It is based on the concept of **Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas**.
 - In other words, India views the entire world community as a single large global family, where members live in harmony, work and grow together, and have trust in one another.
- **Proactive and Impartial Assistance:** India does not hesitate in promoting democracy wherever potential exists.
 - This is done by proactively providing assistance in **capacity building** and strengthening the institutions of democracy, albeit with the explicit consent of the concerned Government. (Ex. **Afghanistan**).
- **Global Problem Solving Approach:** India advocates a global debate and global consensus on issues of global dimensions such as world trade regime, climate change, terrorism, intellectual

property rights, global governance, health hazards.

- Under the [Vaccine diplomacy initiative](#), India exported 60 million doses, half on commercial terms and 10 million as grants.

What are the Current Challenges to India's Foreign Policy?

- **Russia Ukraine Issue:** It is certainly a complex international political issue when countries like India find it difficult to choose between politics and moral imperative.
 - **Russia is a trade partner**, and it has leverage in the Eurasian region, and by going directly against Russia, India will jeopardise its interests in the region.
 - As realist prudence demands, India cannot simply **undertake a moralist standpoint on [Russia-Ukraine Conflict](#) and ignore the dictates of politics.**
- **Internal Challenges:** A country cannot be powerful abroad if it is weak at home.
 - India's soft power assets make sense when they are supported by its hard power.
 - Former **President of India, A. P. J. Abdul Kalam** repeatedly made the case that **India can play an effective role on the world stage when it is strong internally as well as externally.**
- **Refugee Crisis:** In spite of not being a party to the [1951 Refugee Convention](#) and its **1967 Protocol**, India has been one of the largest recipients of refugees in the world.
 - The challenge here is to balance protection of human rights and national interest. As the Rohingya crisis unfolds, there is still a lot that India can do to facilitate the finding of long-term solutions.
 - These actions will be key in determining **India's regional and global standing on human rights.**

What Should the Way Forward?

- **Collective Approach to Tackle Environmental Issues:** India has the potential to take the **lead in tackling global environmental challenges** reflected in its **goal of [reaching net zero by 2070](#) ([26th United Nations Conference on Climate Change in 2021](#))**
 - Environmental problems are intertwined with social processes. There is a need for achieving **sustainability at social, economic as well as ecological level** as highlighted in [Sustainable Development Goals](#).
- **Balancing Internal and External Development:** India should look forward to creating an external environment which is conducive for an [inclusive development](#) of India so that the benefits of growth can reach the poorest of the poor in the country.
 - And ensure that India's voice is heard on global forums and that India is able to influence world opinion on issues of global dimensions such as [terrorism](#), [climate change](#), **disarmament, reforms of institutions of global governance.**
- **Pouring Ethical Values in Foreign Policy:** As rightly said by **Mahatma Gandhi**, **politics without principles and ethics would be disastrous**. India should move towards **collective development with an ethical persuasion** reclaiming its moral leadership in the world at large.
- **Policy Evolution Along with Maintaining Basic Principles:** We are living in a dynamic world. India's foreign policy is therefore geared up to be proactive, flexible as well as pragmatic so as to make quick adjustments to respond to evolving situations.
 - In the **implementation of its foreign policy India**, however, invariably adheres to a set of basic principles on which no compromise is made securing:
 - **National Beliefs & Values**
 - **National Interests**
 - **National Strategy**
- **Shaping the Global Agenda:** It is important for India to trace the role of a "leading power" in the international system, **one that shapes global norms and institutional architecture, rather than these being shaped by others.**
 - To this is linked the aspiration to be a **Permanent Member of the expanded [UN Security Council](#)** for which a large number of countries have already pledged support.
- **Diplomacy for Development:** In order to sustain its growth trajectory, India needs substantial external inputs.
 - To succeed, our on-going programmes such as [Make in India](#), [Skill India](#), **Smart Cities**, **infrastructure development**, [Digital India](#), [Clean India](#) etc. need foreign partners

, **Foreign Direct Investments**, financial assistance and transfer of technology.

- India's foreign policy should add focus on this aspect of **Diplomacy For Development by integrating economic diplomacy with political diplomacy.**

Drishti Mains Question

India should shape the contours of its international engagement to balance the national interest with moral values. Comment.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQ)

Mains

Q. "The long sustained image of India as a leader of the oppressed and marginalised nations has disappeared on account of its newfound role in the emerging global order.' Elaborate. **(2019)**

Q. Evaluate the economic and strategic dimensions of India's Look East Policy in the context of the post-Cold War international scenario. **(2016)**

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