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TOPIC

**‘GRAND STRATEGY’ FOR INDIA’S
FOREIGN POLICY IN THE 21ST
CENTURY**

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'GRAND STRATEGY' FOR INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Context

- India's quest for a grand strategy in foreign policy is a complex and evolving journey, reflecting its aspirations to become a leading global power.

Historical Context and Strategic Wisdom

- For centuries, thinkers like **Chanakya, Sun Tzu, and Clausewitz** have influenced strategic thought with their **writings on war and diplomacy**.
 - In the modern context, these ancient principles are being reinterpreted to address contemporary geopolitical challenges.
- India's foreign policy** is a reflection of its sovereignty and national interests. It is designed to safeguard and promote India's interests in the global arena.

Evolution of India's Foreign Policy

- Early Years: Non-Alignment and Cold War Dynamics** The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), co-founded by India, aimed to maintain sovereignty and avoid entanglement in the ideological conflicts between the US and the Soviet Union.
 - It became a cornerstone of its foreign policy, emphasizing peaceful coexistence, anti-colonialism, and mutual respect among nations.
- Post-Cold War Adjustments:** India faced economic challenges and initiated **liberalization reforms** under Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao.
 - It saw a shift towards pragmatic diplomacy, focusing on economic growth and integration into the global economy.
 - Relations with the US improved, and India began to engage more actively with regional and global institutions.
- Strategic Partnerships and Regional Focus:** The late 1990s and early 2000s witnessed the emergence of strategic partnerships.
 - In 1998, India conducted nuclear tests in 1998, asserting its strategic autonomy.
 - Despite initial international sanctions, India managed to secure a landmark **civil nuclear agreement with the US in 2008** which marked a significant milestone in bilateral relations.
- Contemporary Era: Multi-Alignment and Global Ambitions:** It seeks to build strong bilateral relationships with major powers while maintaining strategic autonomy.
 - India's foreign policy also addresses global challenges such as climate change, terrorism, and cybersecurity.

Major Relationships

- United States:** The India-U.S. relationship has strengthened significantly, characterized by cooperation in defense, trade, and technology.
 - The Quad alliance, involving the U.S., Japan, and Australia, underscores India's strategic pivot towards the Indo-Pacific.
- China:** Relations with China are complex, marked by **both cooperation and competition, as highlighted in the Wuhan Summit of 2018**.
 - Border disputes and strategic rivalry in the region pose challenges, but economic ties remain significant.
- Russia:** Historically a key ally, Russia continues to be an important partner, especially in defense. However, India's growing ties with the U.S. and other Western countries have introduced new dynamics into this relationship.
- European Union:** India and the EU share strong economic and strategic interests. Recent agreements, such as the India-European Free Trade Association agreement, highlight the deepening of this partnership.

Key Pillars: India's Strategy For Foreign Policy

- **Bilateral Over Multilateral Approaches:** India is advised to prioritize bilateral relationships over multilateral frameworks.
 - ♦ It allows for more tailored and effective partnerships, crucial for advancing India's strategic interests.
 - ♦ India's immediate **neighborhood remains a priority**. Strengthening ties with South Asian countries through initiatives like **SAARC and BIMSTEC** and engagements with **ASEAN, the Look East Policy (later Act East Policy)** can foster regional stability and economic integration.
- **Strategic Autonomy:** Maintaining strategic autonomy is central to India's foreign policy.
 - ♦ It enables India to act as a counterbalance to Chinese dominance in the region, particularly in the Indo-Pacific.
- **Balancing Major Power Relations:** Managing relations with major powers such as the United States, China, and Russia is crucial.
 - ♦ India must continue its strategic partnerships with the U.S. while maintaining a balanced approach towards China and Russia. It includes engaging in dialogues, participating in multilateral forums, and leveraging its strategic autonomy.
- **Deterrence Against Chinese Hegemony:** Strengthening partnerships with countries like Japan, Australia, the U.S., and France is essential for countering China's growing influence.
 - ♦ These nations support India's strategic independence and share common interests in regional stability.
- **Multilateral Engagement:** Active participation in multilateral organizations such as the **United Nations, World Trade Organization, and BRICS** can amplify India's voice on global issues.
 - ♦ Advocating for reforms in these institutions to reflect contemporary realities can also be a strategic priority.
- **Diaspora Engagement:** The Indian diaspora, spread across the globe, can act as ambassadors of India's interests and contribute to its economic and cultural outreach.

Other Key Strategies for India's Foreign Policy for the Future

- **Economic Diplomacy:** With the goal of becoming a developed nation by 2047, India is leveraging its economic growth to enhance its international profile.
 - ♦ It includes initiatives like *promoting trade, attracting foreign investment, and participating in global economic forums* like the G20 can boost India's economic growth.
- **Technological and Digital Diplomacy:** Collaborating on cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, and digital infrastructure with global partners can enhance India's technological capabilities and secure its digital borders.
- **Climate Change and Sustainable Development:** Active participation in international climate agreements and initiatives like the **Paris Agreement** can enhance India's global image as a responsible power.
 - ♦ Additionally, leveraging initiatives like the **International Solar Alliance (ISA)** can position India as a leader in sustainable development.
- **Cultural and Soft Power Diplomacy:** Leveraging India's rich cultural heritage and soft power can enhance its global influence.
 - ♦ Promoting cultural exchanges, educational collaborations, and tourism can build positive perceptions and strengthen diplomatic ties.
- **Humanitarian and Development Assistance:** Providing humanitarian aid and development assistance to countries in need can enhance India's global standing.
 - ♦ It includes disaster relief, healthcare support, and capacity-building initiatives.

Challenges and Complexities

- **Strategic Autonomy vs. Alliances Building:** India aims to maintain its strategic autonomy while building strong bilateral relationships.
 - ♦ This balancing act is crucial as India seeks to counter Chinese influence while managing its ties with the U.S., Russia, and other major powers.
- **Regional Dynamics:** India's relationships with its South Asian neighbours remain complex and are not always aligned with its global ambitions.

- ◆ Challenges like recent political changes in Bangladesh, Myanmar, Maldives and ongoing tensions with China.
- ◆ India's efforts to rebuild trust with China and manage its relations with Pakistan and other South Asian countries are critical.
- **Security Concerns:** Addressing security challenges, including cybersecurity threats and maritime security, is a priority.
 - ◆ India's defense cooperation with key partners and its role in regional security frameworks are crucial aspects of its foreign policy.
- **U.S. Relations:** While the U.S. is a key partner, its expectations for allies to take sides in conflicts can challenge India's independent stance.
- **Russia's Role:** Russia's efforts to bring India and China closer complicate India's desire for balanced relations with both nations.

Conclusion

- Formulating a grand strategy for India's foreign policy in the 21st century involves navigating a complex landscape of historical wisdom, strategic autonomy, and evolving geopolitical dynamics.
- By prioritizing bilateral relationships, maintaining strategic independence, and countering regional hegemony, India can chart a path towards becoming a leading global power.

Source: TH



Mains Practice Question

Discuss the key elements that should constitute India's foreign policy for the 21st century, considering the evolving geopolitical landscape, economic realities, and India's own national interests.

