

India's Multi-Alignment Approach and the Pursuit of National Interest in a Turbulent World Order

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Abstract: The contemporary international order is experiencing dramatic geopolitical turbulence characterized by super-power rivalry, regional conflicts, economic uncertainty, Technological dominance and the gradual transition towards a multipolar world order. Unfolding events such as the Russia–Ukraine war, the U.S.–Iran confrontation, tensions in West Asia, and the intensifying competition between the United States and China have resulted a complex and fragmented global order. In this context, India has adopted a unique foreign policy approach known as multi-alignment, which seeks to maintain constructive relations with multiple centers of power while preserving strategic autonomy and advancing national interests. This paper examines India's evolving strategy of multi-alignment and its significance in an era of geopolitical uncertainty. from the theoretical perspectives of Realism, Constructivism, Power Transition Theory, and Civilizational State Theory, the paper attempt to analyses how India simultaneously engages with the United States, Russia, Iran, Israel, the Gulf states, BRICS, the Quad, and other key players in the global system. Using a qualitative methodology based on content analysis, historical analysis, and selected case studies, the paper explores India's responses to major geopolitical developments, including the Russia–Ukraine conflict, the U.S.–Iran confrontation, and Israel–Iran tensions. The study finds that India's multi-alignment strategy has strengthened strategic autonomy, enhanced energy security, diversified defence partnerships, expanded economic opportunities, and increased India's diplomatic influence in global affairs. It argues that India's ability to engage competing powers simultaneously reflects both pragmatic statecraft and a long-standing tradition of strategic flexibility. The paper concludes that multi-alignment represents an effective adaptation to contemporary geopolitical realities and positions India as an influential balancing power in the emerging multipolar order.

Keywords: India, Multi-Alignment, Strategic Autonomy, Multipolarity, National Interest, Geopolitics, BRICS, Quad.

Objectives:

1. To examine the evolution of India's multi-alignment strategy in the context of contemporary geopolitical turbulence.
2. To analyze India's balancing of relations with the United States, Russia, Iran, and other major powers.
3. To evaluate the role of strategic autonomy and national interest in shaping India's foreign policy.
4. To assess the political, economic, energy, and diplomatic gains arising from multi-alignment.

5. To examine India's role in the emerging multipolar world order

1. Introduction: The contemporary world is witnessing growing geopolitical uncertainty driven by major power rivalries, regional conflicts, economic disruptions, and the gradual transition from a unipolar to a multipolar international order. Developments such as the Russia–Ukraine war, the U.S.–Iran confrontation, tensions in West Asia, and the intensifying competition between the United States and China have significantly reshaped global politics. In this changing environment, states increasingly face the challenge of balancing competing interests while safeguarding their national priorities.

India's rise as a major economic and strategic power has coincided with these transformations. As the world's most populous country and one of the fastest-growing major economies, India occupies a unique position in contemporary international relations. Unlike many states that are closely aligned with particular geopolitical blocs, India has adopted a strategy of multi-alignment, maintaining productive relations with diverse and often competing powers. India today enjoys strong ties with the United States, continues defence and energy cooperation with Russia, preserves strategic interests in Iran, strengthens partnerships with Israel and the Gulf states, and actively participates in institutions such as BRICS, the Quad, the G20, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. The practical significance of this approach became evident during recent geopolitical crises. India's response to the Russia–Ukraine conflict and the U.S.–Iran confrontation reflected a policy guided by strategic autonomy and national interest rather than ideological alignment. By engaging multiple actors simultaneously, India has sought to protect its energy security, economic interests, connectivity initiatives, and diplomatic flexibility.

This paper examines India's multi-alignment strategy in the context of contemporary geopolitical turbulence. It argues that India's foreign policy represents a pragmatic adaptation to an increasingly fragmented world order, where strategic flexibility and national interest have become central to effective diplomacy.

Research Methodology: This study adopts a qualitative and analytical research design to examine India's multi-alignment strategy in the context of contemporary geopolitical turbulence.

Sources of Data: The study is based fully on secondary sources such as Government official statements, Ministry of External Affairs publications and papers, BRICS declarations, Quad statements, G20 documents, and reports from policy and international think tanks.

Scope and Limitations: The study primarily focuses on events between 2014 and 2026 and relies mainly on secondary data. Given the evolving nature of international politics, geopolitical developments may continue to change after the completion of the research paper.

3. Theoretical Framework: The study deploys an interdisciplinary theoretical framework combining Realism, Constructivism, Power Transition Theory, and Civilizational State Theory. Together, these approaches provide a comprehensive understanding of India's multi-alignment strategy in an increasingly fragmented global order.

3.1 Realism: National Interest and Strategic Autonomy: Realism remains one of the highly influential theories in International Relations. Realist scholars such as Hans Morgenthau and Kenneth Waltz argue that states operate in an anarchic international system where survival, security, and national interests constitute the primary objectives of foreign policy.

India's contemporary foreign policy indicates many realist assumptions. Rather than aligning only with a single geopolitical bloc, India affirms to maximize its strategic advantage by maintaining relations with multiple centres of power.

The Russia–Ukraine conflict proves a point of example. Despite restrictions from Western countries, India continued to purchase Russian crude oil to protect its energy security and needs. Russia accounted for approximately 36 percent of India's crude oil imports in 2024–25, making it India's largest oil supplier. The import of discounted Russian oil helped India reduce energy costs and protect domestic

economic stability. Similarly, India has expanded defence cooperation with the United States while retaining longstanding military ties with Russia. As per the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), Russia remained India's largest defence supplier during the last decade, although India's procurement sources have diversified greatly.

India's engagement with Iran through the Chabahar Port project also reflects realist perspective. The project provides strategic access to Afghanistan and Central Asia while reducing dependence on routes passing through Pakistan. From a realist perspective, India's multi-alignment strategy is fundamentally driven by national interest, strategic advantage, energy security and supply, defence preparedness, and economic viability.

3.2 Constructivism: Identity, Norms, and Historical Experience: Constructivism challenges the idea that state behavior is guided exclusively by material interests. Scholars such as Alexander Wendt argue that identities, norms, historical experiences, and shared meanings influence international relations. India's foreign policy cannot be solely understood through material considerations alone. Historical experiences, particularly colonial rule, the freedom struggle, and the Non-Aligned Movement, continue to impact India's diplomatic outlook. India consistently emphasizes:

- Strategic autonomy
- Sovereign decision-making
- Peaceful coexistence
- Dialogue and diplomacy
- Reform of global governance institutions

These preferences are rooted in India's historical experiences and normative commitments. India's refusal to become part of exclusive military alliances reflects this constructivist dimension. Even while participating in the Quad alongside the United States, Japan, and Australia, India has repeatedly clarified that the grouping is not a military alliance but a platform for cooperation. India's role as a voice of the Global South further illustrates how identity influences foreign policy. During recent international forums, India emphasized concerns relating to development, climate justice, food security, and equitable global governance rather than merely advancing narrow strategic interests. Constructivism therefore explains how India's historical experiences and self-identity shape its diplomatic choices.

3.3 Power Transition Theory: India's Rise in a Multi-Polar World: Power Transition Theory, developed by A. F. K. Organski, argues that international instability often emerges when power shifts occur between established and rising states. The theory is particularly relevant in understanding contemporary transformations in the global order. The twenty-first century has witnessed a gradual shift from unipolarity toward multipolarity. The relative decline of Western dominance and the rise of emerging economies have altered the distribution of global power.

The country's increasing influence within the G20, BRICS, and other multilateral forums reflects its growing global significance. Power Transition Theory helps explain why India has become a pivotal actor in contemporary international politics. As power becomes more distributed, India occupies an increasingly important position between established and emerging centres of influence.

3.4 Civilizational State Theory: Historical Continuity and Global Identity: Civilizational State Theory argues that some contemporary states derive their political identity not merely from modern nation-state structures but from long-standing civilizational traditions. Scholars such as Christopher Coker emphasize the growing relevance of civilizational narratives in global politics. India presents one of the most significant examples of civilizational continuity. Unlike many modern states whose identities emerged primarily in the nineteenth or twentieth centuries, India's civilizational heritage extends over several millennia. Several features support this perspective:

- The continuity of cultural traditions from ancient to modern periods.
- The enduring influence of philosophical concepts such as Dharma.
- The coexistence of multiple religions, languages, and cultural traditions.

- The historical capacity to absorb external influences while maintaining a distinct identity.

India is home to over 1.4 billion people, more than twenty-two constitutionally recognized languages, and multiple major religious traditions. Despite this diversity, a broader civilizational consciousness has persisted across centuries. This civilizational dimension contributes to India's preference for pluralism, coexistence, and engagement with diverse actors. It also explains India's ability to maintain productive relations with countries representing different political systems, cultures, and ideological orientations.

4. from Non-Alignment to Multi-Alignment: India's foreign policy has undergone a significant transformation since the Cold War era. During the period of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), India sought to preserve strategic independence by avoiding formal alignment with either the United States-led Western bloc or the Soviet bloc. While non-alignment was largely a strategy of maintaining distance from rival power centres, the post-Cold War international environment, characterized by globalization, economic interdependence, the rise of China, and the emergence of multipolarity, has necessitated a more pragmatic approach. Consequently, India's foreign policy has evolved into a strategy of multi-alignment, which emphasizes active engagement with multiple centres of power simultaneously while preserving strategic autonomy.

Unlike classical non-alignment, multi-alignment enables India to cultivate partnerships with states that may themselves be strategic competitors. This shift reflects India's growing economic and geopolitical stature. As of 2025, India has emerged as the world's fourth-largest economy with a GDP exceeding US\$4 trillion and remains the fastest-growing major economy, recording growth rates of around 6–7 percent annually. With a population exceeding 1.4 billion, India possesses significant demographic, economic, and strategic advantages that have enhanced its influence in global affairs.

India's multi-alignment strategy is most visibly reflected in its simultaneous participation in diverse international institutions and strategic groupings. India is a founding member of BRICS, which collectively represents nearly 45 percent of the world's population and accounts for more than one-third of global GDP in purchasing power parity terms. Through BRICS, India advocates reforms in international financial institutions, greater representation for developing countries, and the creation of a more multipolar international order. At the same time, India remains an active member of the Quad alongside the United States, Japan, and Australia, cooperating on maritime security, critical technologies, cybersecurity, supply-chain resilience, and Indo-Pacific stability.

India's participation in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) further demonstrates its ability to engage with diverse geopolitical actors. The SCO includes China and Russia, countries that occupy positions different from those of India's Quad partners on several international issues. Yet India has successfully utilized the platform to advance regional security cooperation, counter-terrorism efforts, and connectivity initiatives in Eurasia. Similarly, India's prominent role in the G20 highlights its increasing global influence. The G20 economies account for approximately 85 percent of global GDP, 75 percent of international trade, and nearly two-thirds of the world's population. India's leadership within the forum has strengthened its position as a voice of the Global South and an advocate of inclusive global governance.

The practical dimension of multi-alignment is also evident in India's bilateral relationships. India has significantly deepened strategic and economic ties with the United States, which has become one of India's largest trading partners, with bilateral trade exceeding US\$190 billion annually. Simultaneously, India has maintained strong defence and energy relations with Russia despite Western sanctions and geopolitical tensions. Russia supplied approximately 36 percent of India's crude oil imports during 2024–25, helping India secure affordable energy supplies amid global market volatility. India has also preserved strategic engagement with Iran through the Chabahar Port project, which provides crucial access to Afghanistan and Central Asia while reducing dependence on routes through Pakistan.

At the same time, India has strengthened relations with Israel in defence technology, agriculture, and innovation while simultaneously expanding cooperation with Gulf countries such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. The UAE has emerged as one of India's most important economic partners, with bilateral trade exceeding US\$80 billion. Furthermore, more than nine million Indians reside in Gulf countries, making regional stability and constructive diplomatic relations essential to India's economic and strategic interests.

These developments demonstrate that India's objective is not neutrality but strategic flexibility. India's foreign policy seeks to maximize opportunities across multiple partnerships while minimizing dependence on any single power centre. Rather than viewing international politics through the lens of rigid alliances, India has adopted a pragmatic approach that prioritizes national interests, economic development, energy security, technological advancement, and geopolitical stability.

The transition from non-alignment to multi-alignment therefore represents a significant adaptation to the realities of the twenty-first century. In an era characterized by geopolitical turbulence, strategic competition, and economic uncertainty, India's ability to simultaneously engage Washington, Moscow, Tehran, Riyadh, Brussels, Tokyo, and other major capitals reflects a sophisticated diplomatic strategy. This approach has enabled India to emerge as an influential actor in the evolving multipolar order while preserving the strategic autonomy that has historically remained a central pillar of its foreign policy.

5. Navigating Between Washington, Moscow, and Tehran: The most visible manifestation of India's multi-alignment strategy is its ability to maintain relations with states that are themselves engaged in strategic competition. India has expanded cooperation with the United States in technology, defence, and Indo-Pacific security. Simultaneously, Russia remains a critical defence and energy partner. Despite Western sanctions, India has continued to engage with Russia where national interests require cooperation.

Similarly, India has preserved strategic engagement with Iran, particularly through the Chabahar Port project and connectivity initiatives linking India to Central Asia. While facing diplomatic pressure from competing actors, India has sought to maintain a balance between strategic partnerships and national priorities. This diplomatic balancing act illustrates a fundamental principle of Indian foreign policy: national interest takes precedence over bloc politics. Rather than accepting externally imposed choices, India seeks to maximize strategic options while preserving policy independence.

6. The U.S.–Iran Conflict and India's Strategic Response: The U.S.–Iran confrontation presented one of the most significant tests of India's multi-alignment strategy and highlighted the complexities of balancing relations with competing powers while safeguarding national interests. India's stakes in West Asia are substantial and multidimensional, encompassing energy security, trade, connectivity, maritime commerce, and the welfare of a large overseas population.

West Asia remains one of India's most important strategic regions. Nearly 60 percent of India's crude oil imports and a significant proportion of its natural gas requirements originate from the Gulf region. The Strait of Hormuz, located between Iran and Oman, serves as a critical maritime chokepoint through which approximately one-fifth of the world's oil trade passes. For India, any disruption in this route directly affects energy prices, inflation, industrial production, and economic growth. During periods of heightened U.S.–Iran tensions, concerns over potential disruptions to shipping lanes and energy supplies generated significant economic uncertainty for major energy-importing countries, including India.

The region is equally important from a human security perspective. More than 9 million Indians reside and work in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, including Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, and Oman. These expatriate communities contribute substantially to India's economy through remittances. India received approximately US\$118.7 billion in remittances during 2023–24, the highest in the world, with a significant share originating from the Gulf region.

Consequently, any military escalation in West Asia has direct implications for the safety of Indian citizens abroad and for India's economic stability. India also possesses significant strategic interests in Iran. The Chabahar Port project, developed with Indian participation, provides a vital gateway to Afghanistan and Central Asia, enabling India to bypass Pakistan in accessing regional markets. The project is widely regarded as a cornerstone of India's connectivity strategy and a critical component of its broader Eurasian engagement. Therefore, maintaining constructive relations with Tehran remains an important strategic objective. Simultaneously, India has developed a robust strategic partnership with the United States. Bilateral trade between the two countries exceeds US\$190 billion annually, while cooperation has expanded across defence, technology, cybersecurity, space, and Indo-Pacific security. The United States has emerged as one of India's most important economic and strategic partners. Consequently, the U.S.–Iran confrontation placed India in a complex diplomatic position where both sides were important to its national interests.

More importantly, the episode illustrated the practical utility of multi-alignment in an era of geopolitical uncertainty. Rather than viewing international politics through binary choices, India adopted a flexible and interest-driven approach that prioritized national security, economic stability, and regional peace. The U.S.–Iran confrontation thus serves as a compelling example of how India's multi-alignment strategy functions in practice, enabling New Delhi to navigate complex geopolitical crises while preserving strategic autonomy and maximizing national interests.

7. India's Multi-Alignment in Practice: India's contemporary foreign policy is increasingly characterized by what may be termed "strategic multi-alignment." Unlike the Cold War doctrine of non-alignment, which emphasized distance from competing blocs, multi-alignment seeks active engagement with multiple centres of power simultaneously. The underlying objective is not neutrality but the preservation of strategic autonomy and the advancement of national interests. The practical manifestation of this approach can be observed in India's responses to major geopolitical crises and international alignments.

7.1 Russia–Ukraine War: The Russia–Ukraine conflict has represented one of the most significant tests of India's foreign policy since the end of the Cold War. Western powers expected democratic states, including India, to unequivocally condemn Russia's actions. However, India adopted a nuanced position. India consistently called for dialogue, diplomacy, and respect for sovereignty while avoiding direct condemnation of Russia in several international forums. Simultaneously, India maintained strong relations with the United States and European countries while continuing defence cooperation and energy imports from Russia. This position was shaped by several strategic considerations:

- Russia remains a critical defence partner.
- Moscow has historically supported India on several strategic issues.
- Affordable Russian energy contributed to India's energy security.
- India sought to avoid becoming part of a new Cold War-style geopolitical divide.

India's approach demonstrated that strategic autonomy allows engagement with competing actors without becoming captive to any single bloc.

7.2 U.S.–Iran Conflict: The escalation of tensions between the United States and Iran posed another significant challenge for India. India maintains close strategic relations with the United States while simultaneously recognizing Iran's importance for energy security, regional stability, and connectivity projects such as Chabahar Port. The conflict directly affected India's interests because a large proportion of India's energy imports and maritime trade routes pass through the Gulf region and the Strait of Hormuz. Rather than aligning with either Washington or Tehran, India advocated de-escalation, diplomatic dialogue, and freedom of navigation. The primary objective was to safeguard Indian citizens, protect energy supplies, and maintain regional stability. Recent disruptions in the Gulf region

highlighted the vulnerability of India's economic interests to regional conflict. The U.S.–Iran crisis illustrated India's preference for pragmatic engagement rather than ideological positioning.

7.3 Israel–Iran Tensions: India's position regarding Israel and Iran presents perhaps the most complex example of multi-alignment. Over the last three decades, India has developed a strong strategic partnership with Israel in areas such as Defence technology, Intelligence cooperation, Agriculture and Innovation at the same time, India has preserved longstanding cultural, economic, and strategic relations with Iran. Unlike many states that openly align with one side in the regional rivalry, India has maintained relations with both actors. New Delhi has consistently emphasized restraint, dialogue, and regional stability rather than participation in regional rivalries. This balancing act reflects India's broader objective of maintaining strategic flexibility in West Asia. India's ability to engage both Israel and Iran simultaneously represents a unique diplomatic achievement and demonstrates the practical application of multi-alignment.

7.4 U.S.–China Rivalry: The intensifying rivalry between the United States and China constitutes the defining geopolitical competition of the twenty-first century. India's relationship with China is characterized by both cooperation and competition. Economic engagement continues despite unresolved border disputes and strategic competition in the Indo-Pacific. Simultaneously, India has deepened cooperation with the United States through defence agreements, technological partnerships, and Indo-Pacific initiatives. However, India has avoided becoming a formal ally of the United States against China. Instead, it seeks to balance deterrence with engagement. This approach reflects a realist understanding that India's rise requires both security cooperation with like-minded partners and the management of relations with neighbouring powers.

7.5 BRICS and Quad: The Institutional Expression of Multi-Alignment: India's simultaneous participation in BRICS and the Quad provides the clearest institutional evidence of multi-alignment.

BRICS: BRICS represents: South-South cooperation, Reform of global governance institutions, Multipolarity, Greater representation for emerging economies

Within BRICS, India works alongside Russia and China despite significant bilateral differences. India has also used BRICS platforms to advance the interests of the Global South.

Quad: The Quad consists of India, the United States, Japan, and Australia. It focuses on: Maritime security, Supply-chain resilience, Critical technologies, Indo-Pacific stability

India's participation in the Quad demonstrates its willingness to cooperate with democratic maritime powers without entering a formal military alliance.

Strategic Significance: Many observers initially viewed BRICS and the Quad as contradictory platforms. However, from India's perspective, participation in both reflects strategic autonomy rather than inconsistency. BRICS advances India's objective of promoting multipolarity and Global South cooperation, whereas the Quad strengthens India's security and technological partnerships in the Indo-Pacific. Thus, India engages with both institutions because each serves distinct national interests.

8. Strategic Gains from India's Multi-Alignment Policy: India's multi-alignment strategy has generated significant political, economic, diplomatic, and strategic benefits. By maintaining productive relations with competing powers rather than joining exclusive blocs, India has expanded its strategic options and enhanced its international influence. The gains are visible across several dimensions.

8.1 Strategic Autonomy and Diplomatic Flexibility: The foremost gain has been the preservation of strategic autonomy. Unlike treaty allies that are often constrained by alliance commitments, India retains the ability to formulate independent positions on major international issues. This flexibility was evident during the Russia–Ukraine conflict, where India maintained relations with both Russia and Western countries, and during the U.S.–Iran confrontation, where India emphasized diplomacy and de-escalation while protecting its own interests. India's simultaneous participation in BRICS, the Quad, the G20, and

the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation demonstrates its ability to engage diverse geopolitical groupings without being confined to a single bloc.

8.2 Energy Security and Economic Resilience: Energy security has emerged as one of the most tangible benefits of multi-alignment. Russia has become India's largest crude oil supplier. During FY 2024–25, Russian crude accounted for approximately 36 percent of India's total crude oil imports, averaging about 1.76 million barrels per day. This helped India secure discounted energy supplies at a time of global price volatility.

Even amid sanctions and geopolitical tensions, India continued purchasing Russian oil while simultaneously expanding energy cooperation with Gulf countries and other suppliers. During the recent Iran-related disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz, Indian refiners diversified sourcing from the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Africa, and Latin America to ensure uninterrupted supplies. The result has been enhanced energy resilience and reduced vulnerability to external shocks.

8.3 Defence Modernization Through Diversified Partnerships: India's multi-alignment policy has enabled access to defence technology from multiple sources. Russia remains a major defence supplier, while India has simultaneously expanded defence cooperation with the United States, France, and Israel. This diversification reduces overdependence on a single supplier and enhances operational flexibility. The policy also supports India's broader objective of military modernization while maintaining strategic independence in procurement decisions.

8.4 Connectivity and Goeconomic Advantages: India's engagement with Iran has strategic significance beyond energy. The Chabahar Port project provides India with access to Afghanistan and Central Asia while reducing dependence on routes controlled by Pakistan. Simultaneously, India's strong relations with Gulf countries support trade, investment, logistics, and maritime connectivity. Multi-alignment has therefore enhanced India's role as a key goeconomic actor linking South Asia, West Asia, Central Asia, and the Indo-Pacific.

8.5 Protection of the Indian Diaspora and Remittance Flows: India's balanced relations with West Asian countries are closely linked to the welfare of its overseas citizens. More than nine million Indians reside in Gulf Cooperation Council countries, while recent official estimates indicate that over ten million Indians are working across Gulf states. These communities constitute one of the largest overseas Indian populations in the world.

The economic significance is equally substantial. Gulf countries contribute a major share of India's remittances, with estimates suggesting that more than one-third of India's remittance inflows originate from the Gulf region. India's total remittance inflows reached approximately US\$118.7 billion in 2023–24, the highest in the world. Consequently, maintaining cordial relations with Iran, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar, and other Gulf states is not merely a diplomatic objective but an economic necessity.

8.6 Enhanced Global Influence: Multi-alignment has elevated India's diplomatic profile. India's ability to maintain relations with the United States, Russia, Iran, Israel, Gulf monarchies, Europe, and the Global South has increased its credibility as an independent actor. This was reflected in India's leadership role during the G20 process, its growing influence within BRICS, and its advocacy for the interests of developing countries. Unlike states perceived as belonging to a particular bloc, India increasingly occupies the position of a bridge between competing centres of power.

8.7 Civilizational and Soft Power Gains: India's foreign policy benefits from a civilizational identity that emphasizes pluralism, coexistence, and dialogue. This identity enhances India's acceptability across different political systems and cultural regions. India's ability to engage simultaneously with democratic states, authoritarian regimes, Islamic countries, and emerging powers reflects a level of diplomatic flexibility rarely enjoyed by major powers. Civilizational continuity therefore functions as a form of strategic soft power, complementing material capabilities.

9. Civilizational Identity and Strategic Autonomy: India's foreign policy is not solely shaped by material considerations. It is also influenced by a civilizational consciousness rooted in historical continuity and cultural diversity. Jawaharlal Nehru described India as an ancient civilization capable of adapting to changing circumstances while preserving its core identity. Contemporary scholars similarly argue that India's civilizational experience contributes to its preference for pluralism, coexistence, and dialogue. This civilizational outlook complements strategic autonomy. Rather than viewing international politics through rigid ideological categories, India seeks engagement with diverse actors and emphasizes peaceful coexistence.

10. India and the Emerging Multipolar Order: The transition toward multipolarity has expanded India's strategic space. India's economic growth, demographic advantages, technological capabilities, and diplomatic outreach have enhanced its global influence. However, India's significance derives not only from material power but also from its ability to maintain productive relations with competing actors. On the other hand, its engagement with Washington, Moscow, Tehran, Tel Aviv, Riyadh, and other global centers of power demonstrates a new model of diplomacy suited to a fragmented world.

11. Conclusion: In an increasingly uncertain and fragmented world, India has adopted a foreign policy that emphasizes flexibility, engagement, and the pursuit of national interest. Rather than aligning itself exclusively with any single power bloc, India has successfully maintained relations with diverse actors, including the United States, Russia, Iran, Israel, and the Gulf states. This strategy of multi-alignment has enabled India to protect its energy security, strengthen economic and defence partnerships, and enhance its role in global affairs.

The study shows that India's approach is not one of neutrality but of strategic autonomy—engaging with multiple partners while retaining the freedom to make independent decisions. Rooted in both pragmatic statecraft and a long tradition of pluralism and strategic flexibility, multi-alignment has helped India navigate contemporary geopolitical challenges effectively. As the world continues to move towards a multipolar order, India's experience demonstrates how a rising power can balance competing interests while safeguarding its national priorities and contributing to international stability.

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