

India's Foreign Policy under the Vision of Viksit Bharat 2047: The Quest for Global Leadership

1. Navneet

Research Scholar, Department of Political Science, Chaudhary Charan Singh University Meerut

2. Vitika Gehlout

Research Scholar, Department of Political Science, Chaudhary Charan Singh University Meerut

3. Virendra Sharma

Research Scholar, Department of Political Science, Chaudhary Charan Singh University Meerut

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Abstract

The vision of Viksit Bharat 2047 seeks to transform India into a developed nation by the centenary of its independence. While the discourse surrounding this vision has largely focused on domestic economic growth, governance reforms, technological innovation, and social development, its external dimension remains equally significant. This paper examines the evolving nature of India's foreign policy in the context of Viksit Bharat 2047 and argues that India's diplomatic strategy is increasingly becoming development-oriented, integrating economic growth, technological advancement, strategic security, and global influence within a coherent framework of national transformation. Drawing upon theories of strategic autonomy, developmental statecraft, and emerging power diplomacy, the study analyzes India's engagement with major powers, the Global South, multilateral institutions, and regional organizations. It argues that contemporary Indian foreign policy represents a transition from a reactive and security-centric approach toward a multidimensional model of developmental diplomacy aimed at creating favorable international conditions for domestic modernization.

The paper further contends that India's aspiration to become a developed country by 2047 is inseparable from its ambition to emerge as a leading power in the evolving multipolar international order. However, challenges such as geopolitical rivalries, technological dependence, climate vulnerabilities, regional instability, and institutional constraints continue to shape India's strategic choices. Through qualitative analysis of policy documents, academic literature, and contemporary developments, the study concludes that the success of Viksit Bharat 2047 depends upon India's ability to effectively integrate domestic developmental priorities with a flexible, adaptive, and forward-looking foreign policy. Such a strategy has the potential not only to enhance India's national capabilities but also to position it as a key architect of the twenty-first-century international order.

Keywords: Viksit Bharat 2047, Indian Foreign Policy, Strategic Autonomy, Developmental Diplomacy, Global South, Indo-Pacific, Emerging Powers.

Introduction

The emergence of India as one of the world's fastest-growing major economies has generated renewed interest in the relationship between domestic development and foreign policy. The announcement of the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047 represents perhaps the most ambitious articulation of India's long-term developmental aspirations since independence. The objective is not merely to increase economic output but to transform India into a developed nation characterized by technological sophistication, institutional effectiveness, social inclusion, environmental sustainability, and global influence.

Such a transformation cannot be achieved solely through domestic reforms. Contemporary globalization has significantly increased the interconnectedness between domestic and international processes. Economic growth depends upon access to global markets, investments, technologies, energy resources, and secure supply chains. Similarly, national security increasingly encompasses non-traditional dimensions such as cybersecurity, climate resilience, technological competitiveness, and health security. Consequently, foreign policy has become an integral component of national development strategy.

The central argument of this paper is that India's foreign policy under the framework of *Viksit Bharat 2047* reflects the emergence of what may be termed developmental diplomacy—a strategic approach that seeks to align external engagements with domestic developmental objectives while simultaneously enhancing India's global influence. Unlike earlier phases of Indian foreign policy that prioritized either ideological commitments or traditional security concerns, contemporary diplomacy increasingly focuses on creating external conditions conducive to economic modernization, technological advancement, and comprehensive national power.

This paper seeks to answer three interrelated questions: How is the vision of *Viksit Bharat 2047* reshaping India's foreign policy priorities? What are the principal strategic instruments through which foreign policy contributes to developmental objectives? What challenges and opportunities are likely to influence India's quest for global leadership by 2047?

Literature Review

The scholarly literature on Indian foreign policy has evolved significantly over the past three decades. Early analyses focused primarily on India's commitment to non-alignment and its normative role in international politics (Appadorai, 1981; Brecher, 1961). These studies emphasized India's efforts to preserve strategic autonomy during the Cold War and its leadership within the developing world.

The post-Cold War period witnessed a shift in academic attention toward economic liberalization and strategic realignment. Scholars such as Cohen (2001) and Mohan (2003) argued that India's integration into the global economy fundamentally transformed its foreign policy priorities. Economic growth increasingly became a central determinant of diplomatic engagement.

More recent studies have examined India's rise as an emerging power. Jaishankar (2020) argues that India's contemporary foreign policy is characterized by strategic flexibility and issue-based partnerships rather than rigid alliance commitments. Pant (2019) similarly emphasizes the growing importance of pragmatic statecraft in India's external relations.

The concept of strategic autonomy remains a dominant theme in contemporary scholarship. While some scholars view strategic autonomy as a continuation of non-alignment, others argue that it represents a more sophisticated framework adapted to multipolarity. Simultaneously, growing attention has been devoted to India's leadership aspirations within the Global South, its Indo-Pacific strategy, and its participation in multilateral institutions.

Despite this expanding literature, limited scholarly attention has been devoted specifically to examining foreign policy through the lens of *Viksit Bharat 2047*. Existing studies often discuss foreign policy and development separately, creating a gap in understanding how diplomatic strategies contribute to long-term developmental objectives. This paper seeks to address that gap by conceptualizing foreign policy as an integral component of India's developmental transformation.

Theoretical Framework: Developmental Diplomacy and Strategic Autonomy

This study employs a synthesis of realism, liberal institutionalism, and developmental state theory to analyze India's foreign policy. Realism remains relevant because concerns related to security, power, and strategic competition continue to shape state behavior. However, realist explanations alone are insufficient for understanding contemporary foreign policy, which increasingly incorporates economic, technological, and environmental dimensions.

The concept of developmental diplomacy provides a useful analytical framework. Developmental diplomacy refers to the strategic use of foreign policy instruments to promote economic growth, technological innovation, and national modernization. It assumes that international engagement is not merely a means of protecting sovereignty but also a mechanism for facilitating development.

Within this framework, strategic autonomy functions as the guiding principle that enables India to pursue developmental objectives while maintaining policy independence. Rather than choosing between competing geopolitical blocs, India seeks to maximize opportunities across multiple partnerships. This approach reflects a recognition that development and security are mutually reinforcing dimensions of national power.

Foreign Policy and the Transformation of National Power

The vision of Viksit Bharat 2047 reflects a broader understanding of national power that extends beyond military capabilities. Contemporary power increasingly derives from economic productivity, technological innovation, institutional effectiveness, demographic advantages, and cultural influence. India's foreign policy therefore seeks to strengthen multiple dimensions of national capability simultaneously.

Economic diplomacy has emerged as a particularly important instrument in this regard. The expansion of trade relationships, attraction of foreign investments, and integration into global value chains are viewed as essential prerequisites for sustained economic growth. India's engagement with advanced economies seeks not only market access but also technological cooperation and industrial modernization.

The increasing emphasis on critical technologies such as artificial intelligence, semiconductors, quantum computing, and digital infrastructure reflects the recognition that technological competitiveness will determine future economic and strategic influence. Foreign policy is consequently being utilized to secure partnerships that enhance India's technological capabilities while reducing dependence on external actors.

India and the Emerging Multipolar Order

One of the most significant developments shaping contemporary international politics is the gradual transition from a predominantly unipolar world order to an increasingly multipolar international system. The post-Cold War period witnessed the unprecedented dominance of the United States in global political, economic, and security affairs. However, the rise of emerging powers such as China, India, Brazil, and regional middle powers, coupled with the resurgence of Russia and the growing strategic autonomy of countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, has contributed to a redistribution of global power. This transformation has created a more complex international environment characterized by multiple centers of influence, competing interests, and flexible partnerships. For India, the emergence of multipolarity presents both opportunities and challenges and occupies a central place in the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047.

The growing strategic competition between the United States and China has become one of the defining features of contemporary geopolitics. The rivalry extends across trade, technology, military capabilities, maritime influence, and global governance institutions. India finds itself in a unique position within this evolving landscape. While maintaining strong strategic and economic relations with the United States, India has also preserved its traditional partnership with Russia and continued engagement with China through multilateral platforms such as BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). This approach reflects India's preference for strategic flexibility rather than alliance-based politics.

The concept of multi-alignment has therefore emerged as a defining characteristic of India's contemporary foreign policy. Unlike the Cold War-era policy of non-alignment, multi-alignment involves engaging simultaneously with multiple power centers to advance national interests. India's

participation in diverse international groupings illustrates this approach. It is an active member of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) alongside the United States, Japan, and Australia, while simultaneously playing a significant role within BRICS, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, the G20, and various United Nations bodies. Such diversified engagement enables India to derive economic, technological, and strategic benefits from different partnerships while avoiding excessive dependence on any single bloc.

Recent developments further highlight India's growing role within the emerging multipolar order. The expansion of BRICS in 2024 and 2025, with the inclusion of countries such as Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, the United Arab Emirates, and Indonesia, has enhanced the organization's significance as a platform representing the interests of emerging economies and the Global South. India has actively supported the strengthening of BRICS as a mechanism for promoting multipolarity, reforming international financial institutions, and increasing the voice of developing countries in global governance. The growing importance of the New Development Bank (NDB), established by BRICS countries, reflects efforts to create alternative sources of development finance outside traditional Western-dominated institutions.

India's leadership role in the G20 has also demonstrated its ability to act as a bridge between developed and developing countries. During and after its presidency, India emphasized inclusive growth, sustainable development, digital public infrastructure, and reform of multilateral institutions. The successful inclusion of the African Union as a permanent member of the G20 marked an important milestone in enhancing the representation of developing countries within global economic governance structures. This initiative reinforced India's image as a champion of a more inclusive and representative international order.

The ongoing conflicts in Ukraine and West Asia (Middle East) have further underscored the relevance of India's multipolar diplomacy. Throughout the Russia-Ukraine conflict, India adopted a carefully calibrated position that balanced its strategic partnership with Russia, growing ties with Western countries, and commitment to international law and diplomacy. Similarly, India's response to instability in West Asia has emphasized dialogue, de-escalation, humanitarian assistance, and the protection of its economic and energy interests. Such positions reflect India's preference for pragmatic diplomacy based on national interests rather than ideological alignments.

Another important dimension of India's engagement with multipolarity is its advocacy for reform of international institutions.

From an economic perspective, multipolarity offers India significant opportunities to diversify trade relationships, attract investments, secure technological partnerships, and reduce vulnerabilities arising from overdependence on any particular region or country. India's growing partnerships with the European Union, the Gulf countries, ASEAN, Africa, and Latin America reflect an effort to expand its economic footprint across multiple regions. The development of initiatives such as the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) further illustrates India's ambition to become a key node in emerging global connectivity networks.

Within the framework of *Viksit Bharat 2047*, the emergence of a multipolar world order provides a favorable strategic environment for India's rise. Multipolarity enables India to exercise greater influence in international affairs, expand its diplomatic options, and pursue developmental objectives through diversified partnerships. However, it also requires sophisticated diplomacy capable of managing complex relationships amid intensifying geopolitical competition. As India continues its journey toward becoming a developed nation, its ability to navigate and shape the emerging multipolar order will remain one of the most important determinants of its future global standing. Far from being a passive observer of international transformation, India increasingly seeks to position itself as one of the principal architects of a more balanced, inclusive, and representative world order in the twenty-first century.

Global South Leadership and Normative Influence

A distinctive feature of contemporary Indian foreign policy is its attempt to combine material capabilities with normative leadership. Unlike traditional great-power politics, which primarily relies on military and economic strength, India seeks to project influence through ideas, values, developmental partnerships, and representation of the concerns of developing countries. This approach draws upon India's historical experience as a colonized nation, its leadership in the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), and its longstanding commitment to principles such as sovereign equality, peaceful coexistence, South-South cooperation, and inclusive development. In the context of Viksit Bharat 2047, India's aspiration to become a developed nation is closely linked with its ambition to emerge as a responsible global leader capable of shaping international norms and institutions.

India's emphasis on Global South leadership has gained renewed significance in an international system characterized by widening inequalities between developed and developing countries. Many countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Pacific continue to face challenges related to poverty, debt burdens, climate vulnerability, food insecurity, technological exclusion, and inadequate representation in global decision-making processes. India has consistently advocated for a more equitable international order that reflects contemporary realities rather than the power distribution that emerged after the Second World War. By positioning itself as a bridge between developed and developing countries, India seeks to enhance both its diplomatic influence and its moral legitimacy on the global stage.

India's active engagement with international organizations and multilateral forums forms a crucial component of this strategy. Within the United Nations (UN), India has consistently advocated comprehensive reforms, particularly concerning the expansion of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). India argues that the existing structure of the Security Council does not adequately represent the demographic, economic, and political realities of the twenty-first century. As the world's largest democracy and one of the fastest-growing major economies, India has sought permanent membership in a reformed Security Council while simultaneously advocating greater representation for developing countries from Africa, Latin America, and Asia. This position reflects India's broader commitment to democratizing global governance institutions.

Similarly, India's participation in the Group of Twenty (G20) has provided an important platform for articulating the concerns of developing countries. During its G20 Presidency in 2023, India emphasized the theme of "One Earth, One Family, One Future," highlighting issues such as sustainable development, digital inclusion, climate finance, food security, and resilient supply chains. India's efforts contributed significantly to securing the admission of the African Union as a permanent member of the G20, a move widely regarded as an important step toward enhancing the representation of the Global South in global economic governance. Such initiatives reinforce India's image as a champion of inclusivity and equitable international cooperation.

India's engagement with BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) further demonstrates its commitment to reforming the global economic order. BRICS has emerged as an important platform through which emerging economies seek greater influence in international financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. India views BRICS as a mechanism for promoting multipolarity, reducing excessive dependence on traditional Western-dominated institutions, and expanding developmental cooperation among emerging economies. The expansion of BRICS membership in recent years has further strengthened its significance as a voice for the Global South.

India has also played an important role in the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI), which focuses on strengthening infrastructure resilience against climate-related disasters. Given that many developing countries are disproportionately affected by natural disasters and climate change,

initiatives such as the CDRI contribute to India's broader strategy of providing practical solutions to global challenges. Such efforts reinforce India's image as a provider of public goods rather than merely a beneficiary of international assistance.

The country's developmental partnerships in Africa, Southeast Asia, and the Indian Ocean Region further illustrate its normative approach. Unlike some major powers whose engagement is often perceived through the lens of strategic competition, India's development cooperation emphasizes capacity building, technical assistance, educational exchanges, healthcare support, digital public infrastructure, and human resource development. Programs administered through the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) initiative have trained thousands of professionals from developing countries, thereby strengthening India's soft power and fostering long-term partnerships.

India's advocacy for climate justice constitutes another important aspect of its normative influence. In international climate negotiations, India has consistently argued that developed countries bear greater historical responsibility for greenhouse gas emissions and should therefore provide financial and technological support to developing nations.

The emergence of digital governance as a key area of international cooperation has further expanded India's normative influence. India's experience in developing large-scale digital public infrastructure, including digital identity systems, payment platforms, and public service delivery mechanisms, has attracted international attention. Many developing countries view India's model as an alternative pathway to digital transformation that combines technological innovation with social inclusion. Consequently, India increasingly promotes digital cooperation as part of its broader Global South agenda.

From the perspective of *Viksit Bharat 2047*, leadership of the Global South serves both normative and strategic objectives. Normatively, it reflects India's commitment to a more equitable and inclusive international order. Strategically, it enhances India's diplomatic influence, strengthens partnerships across the developing world, and reinforces its claim to a greater role in global governance. As India's economic and technological capabilities continue to expand, its ability to shape international norms, represent developing-country interests, and contribute to global problem-solving is likely to become an increasingly significant source of national power. In this sense, Global South leadership is not merely a diplomatic aspiration but a critical pillar of India's broader quest for global leadership and developed-nation status by 2047.

Challenges and Future Prospects

The realization of *Viksit Bharat 2047* as a comprehensive vision of national transformation and global leadership is contingent upon India's ability to navigate an increasingly volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) international environment. While India's foreign policy has evolved from strategic autonomy to multidimensional engagement, the external environment over the coming decades is expected to become significantly more competitive and fragmented. The success of India's long-term developmental aspirations will therefore depend not only on sustained domestic reforms but also on the country's capacity to manage geopolitical risks, technological transitions, economic uncertainties, climate-related challenges, and institutional transformations at both regional and global levels.

One of the foremost challenges arises from the intensification of geopolitical rivalry among major powers, particularly between the United States and China. The Indo-Pacific has emerged as the principal theatre of strategic competition, with increasing militarization, naval expansion, and competing economic initiatives reshaping the regional security architecture. India's geographical location places it at the centre of this evolving geopolitical landscape. Although India has strengthened strategic partnerships through platforms such as the Quad, I2U2, BRICS, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), and the G20, balancing these relationships without compromising its strategic autonomy will

remain a delicate task. Escalating tensions in the Taiwan Strait, the South China Sea, or along India's disputed border with China could disrupt regional stability, divert developmental resources towards defence expenditure, and constrain India's economic growth. Consequently, India's future foreign policy must continue pursuing a calibrated strategy of multi-alignment, strengthening deterrence while simultaneously preserving diplomatic flexibility and dialogue with all major powers.

The unresolved boundary dispute with China and the continuing strategic partnership between China and Pakistan constitute another persistent challenge. China's expanding influence through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), increasing military modernization, and growing presence in the Indian Ocean Region create complex security dilemmas for India. Cross-border terrorism, hybrid warfare, cyber espionage, and misinformation campaigns are likely to evolve into more sophisticated forms of non-traditional security threats. To mitigate these risks, India must continue strengthening border infrastructure, intelligence-sharing mechanisms, cyber security capabilities, indigenous defence production under the Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative, and maritime partnerships with like-minded countries while maintaining diplomatic engagement to prevent escalation.

Technological competition is emerging as perhaps the defining feature of twenty-first-century international politics. Future global power will increasingly be determined by leadership in artificial intelligence, quantum computing, semiconductor manufacturing, biotechnology, space technology, cyber capabilities, and advanced telecommunications. However, growing technological nationalism and export control regimes imposed by advanced economies may restrict India's access to critical technologies.

Economic fragmentation represents another significant challenge. The global economy is increasingly witnessing protectionist policies, supply-chain restructuring, trade wars, sanctions, weaponization of economic interdependence, and the formation of competing economic blocs. Such developments may adversely affect India's export competitiveness, foreign direct investment inflows, manufacturing ambitions, and integration into global value chains.

Climate change constitutes perhaps the most comprehensive long-term challenge to the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047. Rising temperatures, unpredictable monsoon patterns, glacier retreat in the Himalayas, water scarcity, biodiversity loss, coastal erosion, and increasing frequency of extreme weather events threaten agriculture, food security, public health, urban infrastructure, and overall economic productivity. Climate-induced migration may also generate social and economic pressures within the country. Simultaneously, international climate negotiations may impose stricter environmental standards affecting industrial competitiveness and export markets. India must therefore integrate climate resilience into national development planning by accelerating renewable energy deployment, promoting green hydrogen, strengthening disaster preparedness mechanisms, encouraging sustainable agriculture, improving water resource management, investing in climate-resilient infrastructure, and actively shaping global climate governance based on the principles of climate justice and common but differentiated responsibilities.

Energy security will remain closely linked to India's economic growth and strategic autonomy. Despite significant progress in renewable energy, India continues to rely heavily on imported crude oil and natural gas. Geopolitical instability in West Asia, disruptions in maritime trade routes such as the Strait of Hormuz and the Red Sea, and fluctuations in global energy prices can directly affect inflation, industrial production, and fiscal stability. To address these vulnerabilities, India must diversify energy import sources, strengthen strategic petroleum reserves, expand nuclear and renewable energy capacity, invest in green hydrogen technologies, and deepen international cooperation in clean energy transitions.

Another emerging challenge concerns the governance of cyberspace, artificial intelligence, digital sovereignty, and data security. The future international order will increasingly be shaped by competition over digital infrastructure, cross-border data flows, cybersecurity norms, and regulation of emerging technologies. India may face growing cyberattacks targeting financial institutions, critical infrastructure, electoral systems, and defence networks. Simultaneously, artificial intelligence presents challenges related to employment, misinformation, algorithmic governance, and ethical regulation. Building robust digital infrastructure, developing indigenous AI capabilities, establishing comprehensive cyber governance frameworks, enhancing digital literacy, and actively participating in global technology governance institutions will be essential components of India's foreign and security policy.

Demographic dynamics also present a dual challenge. India's demographic dividend provides an enormous opportunity to become the world's leading workforce and innovation hub. However, this advantage could transform into a demographic burden if employment generation, skill development, education quality, healthcare accessibility, and social inclusion fail to keep pace with population growth. The future success of Viksit Bharat 2047 will therefore depend on creating high-productivity employment, strengthening higher education institutions, promoting vocational training, encouraging women's workforce participation, and investing in human capital development.

Reforming global governance institutions represents another important future challenge. Institutions such as the United Nations Security Council, World Trade Organization, International Monetary Fund, and World Bank increasingly face questions regarding representativeness, legitimacy, and effectiveness. India's demand for permanent membership in the UN Security Council reflects broader aspirations for a more equitable international order. Nevertheless, resistance from existing powers and institutional inertia may continue delaying reforms. India must therefore continue building broad international coalitions, leveraging its G20 legacy, strengthening partnerships across Africa, Latin America, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific, and consistently advocating rules-based multilateralism that reflects contemporary geopolitical realities.

Looking ahead, the future prospects for India's foreign policy remain exceptionally promising. India's rapidly expanding digital economy, strong macroeconomic fundamentals, demographic advantage, growing defence capabilities, scientific achievements, successful space programme, resilient democratic institutions, and increasing diplomatic influence provide a solid foundation for becoming a leading global power by 2047. Initiatives such as Digital India, Make in India, Startup India, Atmanirbhar Bharat, PM Gati Shakti, the National Logistics Policy, the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), and enhanced connectivity projects with ASEAN, Central Asia, and Africa further strengthen India's long-term strategic position. India's leadership during the G20 Presidency demonstrated its capacity to bridge divides between developed and developing countries while advancing consensus on global governance, sustainable development, and digital cooperation.

The successful realization of Viksit Bharat 2047, however, will ultimately depend upon India's ability to integrate domestic development with proactive diplomacy. Economic growth, technological innovation, environmental sustainability, social inclusion, defence modernization, institutional resilience, and international engagement must function as mutually reinforcing pillars of national power. India must preserve strategic autonomy while expanding strategic partnerships, protect national interests while contributing to global public goods, and balance hard power with soft power to strengthen its international standing. If these objectives are pursued through coherent long-term policy planning, institutional coordination, and sustained political commitment, India possesses the potential not only to emerge as the world's third-largest economy but also to become a responsible, influential, and norm-shaping global leader by the centenary of its independence in 2047.

Conclusion

India's foreign policy under the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047 represents a significant evolution in the relationship between diplomacy and development. The emerging framework of developmental diplomacy reflects an understanding that national transformation requires favorable international conditions. Strategic autonomy, economic engagement, technological cooperation, climate leadership, and Global South advocacy collectively constitute the pillars of this approach.

The paper argues that India's rise is not simply a consequence of economic growth but also the result of a deliberate effort to integrate domestic modernization with external engagement. Foreign policy has become an essential instrument of state-building, national development, and global influence. The success of Viksit Bharat 2047 will therefore depend not only on internal reforms but also on India's capacity to navigate an increasingly complex international environment and shape global developments in ways that advance both national and collective interests.

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