

## **Diplomatic Complexity: A Multifaceted Analysis of India's Dynamic Foreign Policy Evolution under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Leadership**

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### **Abstract**

*This research paper meticulously scrutinizes the intricate foreign policy trajectory of India under the astute leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who assumed office in 2014 amidst high expectations and a shifting global landscape. Employing a sophisticated analytical lens grounded in International Relations theories such as realism, liberalism, and constructivism, the paper meticulously examines the subtle yet profound shifts, continuities, and strategic recalibrations in India's engagements with the global community under Modi's stewardship. Beginning with a comprehensive elucidation of the foundational concepts of international relations, the paper underscores the pivotal role of theoretical frameworks in dissecting and comprehending state behaviour within the multifaceted international arena. Delving deeper, the paper provides a nuanced exploration of India's foreign policy evolution, meticulously delineating Modi's administration's strategic recalibrations, diplomatic initiatives, and geopolitical manoeuvres. From forging new alliances to revitalizing existing partnerships, Modi's tenure has been marked by a proactive and dynamic approach to diplomacy, aiming to position India as a key player on the global stage. Through a synthesis of empirical evidence, policy pronouncements, and scholarly analyses, this paper sheds light on the intricate navigations undertaken by Modi's administration amidst the dynamic interplay of evolving global dynamics, regional complexities, and domestic imperatives. Furthermore, the paper meticulously examines the ramifications of these foreign policy choices on India's global stature, regional influence, and strategic partnerships. From bolstering economic ties to addressing security challenges, Modi's foreign policy calculus has sought to safeguard India's interests while simultaneously projecting its soft power and cultural diplomacy on the international arena. Ultimately, this paper furnishes invaluable insights into the complexities and nuances characterizing contemporary Indian foreign policy, thereby enriching our understanding of state behaviour in the intricate milieu of the 21st-century international system.*

**Key Words-** Modi administration, diplomatic engagements, Act East Policy, Neighbourhood First approach, economic diplomacy, strategic autonomy, bilateral relations, multilateral forums, security challenges, geopolitical dynamics

### **Introduction**

In the dynamic landscape of international relations, the trajectory of a nation's foreign policy is not merely a reflection of its geopolitical standing, but also a testament to the leadership at its helm. Since assuming office in 2014, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has steered India's foreign policy towards new frontiers, ushering in a paradigm shift in its approach to global affairs. Against the backdrop of a rapidly changing world order marked by geopolitical tensions, economic interdependence, and

emerging challenges, Modi's tenure has witnessed a strategic recalibration of India's foreign policy priorities.

The ascendancy of Narendra Modi to the helm of Indian politics in 2014 heralded a transformative phase in the nation's foreign policy trajectory. Against the backdrop of a rapidly evolving global landscape characterized by geopolitical rivalries, economic interdependencies, and emergent transnational threats, Modi's stewardship has witnessed a recalibration of India's diplomatic compass, steering it towards new horizons while navigating the complexities of an interconnected world. Central to Modi's foreign policy vision has been a concerted effort to bolster India's strategic autonomy and assert its position as a major regional and global player. This has been exemplified through initiatives such as the "Act East Policy," which seeks to reinvigorate ties with East and Southeast Asian nations, and the "Neighbourhood First" approach, aimed at fostering closer cooperation with neighbouring countries.

Moreover, Modi's emphasis on leveraging India's economic potential through initiatives like "Make in India" underscores a proactive strategy to harness the country's demographic dividend and enhance its economic prowess on the global stage.

Modi's personal diplomacy has also been a defining feature of India's foreign policy under his tenure, with the Prime Minister undertaking an unprecedented number of international visits and engaging in high-level summits with world leaders. These diplomatic engagements have not only deepened bilateral ties but also enabled India to play a more assertive role in multilateral forums such as the United Nations and G20, amplifying its voice on issues ranging from climate change to global security. However, amidst these diplomatic triumphs lie intricate challenges that continue to shape India's foreign policy calculus. The persistent threat of cross-border terrorism, unresolved territorial disputes, and shifting geopolitical dynamics in South Asia and beyond present formidable hurdles to India's pursuit of its strategic objectives.

Moreover, the resurgence of great power competition, exemplified by the strategic rivalry between China and the United States, necessitates a delicate balancing act for India as it seeks to safeguard its national interests while navigating complex geopolitical fault lines.

What is Foreign Policy?

Foreign policy, entrenched within the intricate fabric of international relations, assumes a pivotal role as states navigate the complexities of our increasingly interconnected global landscape. It serves not merely as a bureaucratic function but as the very heartbeat of a nation's engagement with the wider world, shaping its identity, aspirations, and strategic imperatives. At its essence, foreign policy represents the distilled wisdom of a state's collective consciousness, encapsulating a multitude of elements ranging from overarching principles to granular tactics. Within this multifaceted tapestry lie the bedrock objectives that guide a nation's interactions on the global stage, each objective a reflection of its core national interests and ambitions. Security, both physical and economic, emerges as a paramount concern driving the formulation and execution of foreign policy strategies. Nations strive to safeguard their territorial integrity, protect their citizens, and mitigate external threats to their sovereignty. Economic prosperity, intertwined with security, serves as another cornerstone, propelling states to seek avenues for trade, investment, and technological advancement in the global marketplace. Yet, beyond mere survival and prosperity, nations aspire to wield influence and project power, augmenting their stature in the international arena and safeguarding their prestige.

These objectives, born from the crucible of national interest, serve as the guiding stars illuminating a nation's path amidst the tumultuous seas of global politics. Yet, their pursuit demands more than mere rhetoric; it necessitates a readiness to make sacrifices, shoulder risks, and embrace the complexities

of realpolitik. Rooted in historical experiences, cultural norms, and societal values, foreign policy reflects the unique identity of each nation, guiding its interactions with other states and shaping its place in the world. However, the formulation of foreign policy is not a solitary endeavour; it is a dynamic process shaped by a myriad of internal and external factors. Internally, a nation's geography, history, and socio-economic dynamics exert profound influence, shaping its strategic outlook and foreign policy priorities. Geography, with its immutable contours, dictates a nation's vulnerabilities and opportunities, while history imbues its actions with context and legacy. National capacity, encompassing military prowess, economic strength, and technological innovation, serves as both a shield and a sword, enabling nations to pursue their objectives with confidence.

Externally, the currents of geopolitics, international norms, and the actions of other states converge to shape a nation's foreign policy calculus. Geopolitical considerations, ranging from regional alliances to transnational threats, compel nations to navigate a complex web of alliances, rivalries, and power dynamics.

International norms and institutions, though often intangible, exert tangible influence, shaping the conduct of states and constraining their actions within accepted boundaries. Meanwhile, the behaviour of other states, whether cooperative or confrontational, serves as both a catalyst and a constraint, influencing a nation's perceptions and strategic choices. In navigating this intricate landscape, foreign policy emerges as a delicate balancing act, requiring astute diplomacy, strategic foresight, and the agility to adapt to changing circumstances. Through dialogue, negotiation, and cooperation, nations seek to advance their interests, foster stability, and promote

prosperity in an ever-evolving global order. Yet, amidst the flux of geopolitics and the cacophony of competing interests, the guiding principles of foreign policy remain constant, anchoring nations in their pursuit of security, prosperity, and dignity on the world stage.

Various prominent thinkers have defined foreign policy in nuanced ways, reflecting different perspectives and approaches to understanding international relations. One common theme among these definitions is the recognition of foreign policy as a nation's strategic framework for engaging with other states and pursuing its interests on the global stage. For instance, Hans Morgenthau, a prominent realist thinker, defined foreign policy as the pursuit of national interests using power. According to Morgenthau, states operate in a competitive international environment where power dynamics shape their interactions, and foreign policy serves as a tool to advance their interests within this context. On the other hand, Joseph Nye, known for his work on soft power and globalization, emphasizes the importance of persuasion and attraction in foreign policy. Nye defines foreign policy as the ability to achieve desired outcomes using both hard power and soft power. Similarly, Kenneth Waltz, another prominent realist thinker, views foreign policy as a response to the anarchic structure of the international system. Waltz argues that states must balance internal and external considerations in crafting their foreign policies, considering both systemic pressures and domestic constraints. Meanwhile, scholars like Alexander Wendt advocate for a constructivist approach to foreign policy analysis, emphasizing the role of ideas, identities, and social norms in shaping state behaviour. Wendt views foreign policy as a product of intersubjective understandings and shared meanings among states, which can evolve over time through processes of socialization and interaction. Overall, while there are variations in how prominent thinkers define foreign policy, common themes include its role in advancing national interests, navigating power dynamics, and responding to the complexities of the international system. Each perspective offers valuable insights into the dynamics of international relations and the ways in which states interact with one another on the world stage.

### What are the various theories of International Relations?

Theoretical perspectives in international relations encompass a spectrum of ideologies and methodologies, each offering unique insights into the dynamics of global politics (*Smith, Baylis & Owens, 2008*). In the study of international relations, various theories provide frameworks for understanding and analysing the complexities of global politics. These theories offer different perspectives on the behaviour of states and the dynamics of the international system. Among the prominent theories are Classical Realism, Neo-realism, Liberalism, Marxist, and Feminist approach.

**Classical Realism:** Classical realism, deeply rooted in the historical narratives of ancient scholars like Thucydides, Sun Tzu, and Machiavelli, offers a pragmatic interpretation of international relations dynamics (*Smith, Baylis & Owens, 2008*). It posits that states prioritize their own survival and security in an anarchic international system, where the absence of a central authority necessitates a relentless pursuit of power (*Morgenthau, 1948*). According to classical realists, the state is the primary actor in this system, driven by self-interest and the quest for dominance (*Carr, 1939*).

*Contributions of E.H. Carr:* The British historian and journalist E.H. Carr distinguished between realism and utopianism in his seminal work, *The Twenty Years' Crisis* (1939). Carr's foundational insights into realism underscored the inevitability of existing forces and the primacy of politics over idealism (*Carr, 1939*). Rejecting the utopian vision of a harmonious international order, Carr emphasized the role of power and national interest in shaping state behaviour (*Carr, 1939*). He critiqued the League of Nations' failure to prevent conflicts and highlighted the limitations of idealistic approaches to international relations (*Carr, 1939*).

*Contributions of Hans J. Morgenthau:* Hans J. Morgenthau's classic text, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* (1948), further solidified the foundations of classical realism. Morgenthau's work provided a systematic framework for understanding international politics, emphasizing the role of power and the balance of power (*Morgenthau, 1948*). He rejected idealistic notions of collective security in favour of a more pragmatic approach grounded in the pursuit of national interest (*Morgenthau, 1948*). Morgenthau's six principles of realism outlined the enduring relevance of power politics and the autonomy of the political sphere (*Morgenthau, 1948*).

**Neo-Realism/Structural Realism:** Neo-realism, also known as structural realism, emerged as a response to the criticisms of classical realism, offering a more systemic perspective on international relations (*Waltz, 1979*). Kenneth Waltz, a key proponent of neo-realism, argued that the international system is anarchic, with states striving to maximize their security amidst the absence of a central authority (*Waltz, 1979*).

Unlike classical realists, neo-realists emphasize the structural constraints of the international system, particularly the distribution of power among states (*Waltz, 1979*). States, according to neo-realism, seek to balance power to ensure their survival in a competitive world (*Mearsheimer, 2001*).

These two theories, while sharing some commonalities, offer distinct perspectives on the behaviour of states and the dynamics of the international system. Classical realism emphasizes the role of individual states and the pursuit of power, while neo-realism focuses on the systemic constraints of the international system and the distribution of power among states.

**Liberalism-** The liberal theory of international relations places a strong emphasis on the role of

individual liberty, rationality, and cooperation in shaping the behaviour of states on the global stage (Doyle, 1983). At its core, liberalism asserts that states, like individuals, are rational actors capable of pursuing their self-interests while also recognizing the benefits of cooperation with other states (Moravcsik, 1997).

One of the key tenets of liberal international relations theory is the democratic peace theory, which posits that liberal democratic states are less likely to go to war with one another (Moravcsik, 1997). The rationale behind this is that democratic governments are accountable to their citizens, who generally prefer peace over war due to the high costs and risks involved (Doyle, 1983). Additionally, democratic institutions often promote transparency, dialogue, and conflict resolution mechanisms, reducing the likelihood of resorting to violence to settle disputes (Moravcsik, 1997).

Liberalism also highlights the importance of international institutions and organizations in fostering cooperation and maintaining peace among states (Keohane, 1989). Institutions such as the United Nations, World Trade Organization, and International Monetary Fund are seen as essential in facilitating diplomatic negotiations, promoting economic interdependence, and providing forums for conflict resolution (Keohane, 1989). Liberals argue that these institutions help to create a rules-based international order that encourages states to resolve disputes peacefully and adhere to agreed-upon norms and principles (Moravcsik, 1997).

Furthermore, liberals emphasize the interconnectedness of domestic and international politics (Doyle, 1983). They argue that actions taken by states in the international arena can have significant repercussions for individual liberties and rights within their own borders (Doyle, 1983). For example, militarization and securitization policies pursued by states abroad may lead to increased government surveillance and restrictions on civil liberties at home (Moravcsik, 1997). Liberals advocate for policies that promote civilian control over the military and prioritize human rights and individual freedoms in both domestic and international affairs (Moravcsik, 1997).

In terms of economic relations, liberalism promotes free trade and economic interdependence as a means of fostering cooperation and reducing the likelihood of conflict between states (Keohane, 1989). Liberal economists argue that free trade allows for the efficient allocation of resources, increases economic prosperity, and promotes peace by creating mutual interests and dependencies among states (Keohane, 1989). They advocate for policies that reduce barriers to trade and investment, such as tariffs and protectionist measures, to maximize the benefits of economic globalization (Moravcsik, 1997).

**Marxist Approach-** The Marxist approach to international relations offers a comprehensive framework for analysing global dynamics through a critical lens. Unlike conventional theories like liberalism and realism, Marxism delves into the structural inequalities and power dynamics inherent in the international system. At its core, Marxism emphasizes the role of socioeconomic class in shaping international relations, particularly the antagonistic relationship between the bourgeoisie, or the economic elites, and the proletariat, or the working class.

One of the central tenets of Marxist international relations theory is the critique of imperialism and colonialism. Marxism views these phenomena not just as historical events, but as ongoing processes that perpetuate exploitation and inequality on a global scale. Imperialism, according to Marxism, serves the interests of the capitalist class by extracting resources and cheap labour from colonized



regions to fuel

capitalist expansion. Furthermore, Marxism critiques the role of the state in international relations, arguing that it primarily serves as an instrument of class domination. States, in Marxist analysis, act to protect the interests of the ruling bourgeoisie, perpetuating systems of exploitation both domestically and abroad. This perspective challenges traditional notions of state sovereignty and emphasizes the class-based nature of state behaviour in the international arena.

Marxist scholars also scrutinize international financial institutions like the World Trade Organization (WTO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Bank, which they see as promoting neoliberal policies that prioritize profit over people. These institutions, according to Marxism, facilitate the exploitation of workers and the perpetuation of global inequalities by imposing austerity measures and deregulation in the name of economic development.

**Feminist Approach** - The feminist perspective of international relations challenges traditional theories by highlighting the gendered nature of global politics and advocating for the inclusion of women's experiences and perspectives. Feminist scholars argue that mainstream IR theories, such as Realism and Liberalism, fail to account for the lived experiences of women and perpetuate male-centric views of power, security, and conflict. Feminist IR scholars like Jean Bethke Elshtain, Cynthia Enloe, and J. Ann Tickner have pioneered the integration of gender analysis into the study of international relations. Elshtain's work, particularly in "Women and War," exposes how traditional notions of femininity and masculinity inform the discourse on war, perpetuating gendered power dynamics. Enloe's "Bananas, Beaches, and Bases" highlights the invisible roles of women in international politics, such as diplomats' wives or domestic workers, and how these roles shape global relations. Tickner's critique of realism emphasizes the gender biases inherent in traditional IR theories and calls for a more inclusive approach.

Critics argue that feminist IR scholarship focuses too narrowly on women and fails to adequately address men's experiences or construct a unified theory of international relations. However, feminists counter that their focus on women is necessary to rectify historical neglect and challenge prevailing power structures.

### **A Closer Look at Modi's Foreign Policy Interactions**

Within the broader framework of Modi's tenure, this section will dissect the intricacies of India's foreign policy engagements with key geopolitical blocs and regions, spanning Central Asia, the Middle East, Europe, and beyond. Through a detailed examination of India's strategic interactions within each bloc, this subtopic aims to unravel the underlying principles, priorities, and challenges that have defined India's external relations on a global scale under Modi's leadership.

### **India's relation with United States of America since 2014**

Under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the bilateral relations between India and the United States have undergone a profound evolution, marked by intricate advancements across various strategic domains. Recognized as

one of the paramount partnerships of the 21st century, this relationship embodies a convergence of shared interests, values, and geopolitical imperatives, underpinned by a mutual commitment to fostering regional stability, economic prosperity, and global security.

**Defence and Security Cooperation:** A cornerstone of the India-US relationship under Prime Minister Modi's leadership lies in the realm of defence and security cooperation. Through intricate defence

industrial collaboration, both nations have embarked on a journey of technological convergence, exploring avenues for co- development and co-production of cutting-edge military capabilities. The institutionalization of mechanisms such as the 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue and the U.S.- India Counterterrorism Joint Working Group underscores a nuanced approach towards addressing shared security challenges, encompassing counterterrorism, maritime security, and defence technology partnerships. Furthermore, defence procurements from the US, amounting to almost US\$20 billion, highlight the depth and breadth of the defence partnership, with major US-origin platforms being integrated into India's defence arsenal.

*Clean Energy Collaboration:* In the pursuit of sustainable development and climate resilience, India and the US have forged a robust partnership in the realm of clean energy. Driven by a shared commitment to combat climate change and advance renewable energy technologies, both countries have articulated ambitious 2030 targets for clean energy deployment. The establishment of platforms such as the India-United States New and Emerging Renewable Energy Technologies Action Platform (RE- TAP) exemplifies a strategic convergence in harnessing innovation and research to accelerate the transition towards a low-carbon future. Additionally, bilateral collaborations in areas such as hydrocarbons trade, with US becoming India's 4th largest crude oil and 2nd largest LNG supplier, signify a comprehensive approach towards energy security and sustainability.

*Space Exploration:* Space exploration has emerged as a frontier of cooperation between India and the US, symbolizing a convergence of scientific prowess and technological innovation. Through collaborative endeavours such as India's participation in the Artemis Accords and joint missions to the International Space Station, both nations have embarked on a trajectory of shared exploration and discovery. The institutionalization of mechanisms such as the Civil Space Joint Working Group and the Quad Space Working Group serves as conduits for facilitating collaborative research, technology sharing, and space exploration initiatives. Recent initiatives like the India-US Defence Industrial Cooperation Roadmap and the launch of the India-US Defence Acceleration Ecosystem (INDUS X) further underscore a concerted effort towards fast-tracking technology cooperation and co-production in areas of mutual interest, fostering innovation and resilience in the space domain.

*Trade and Economic Relations:* The economic dimension of the India-US relationship has flourished under Prime Minister Modi's stewardship, with bilateral trade in goods and services exceeding US\$ 191 billion in 2022. Leveraging platforms such as the India-U.S. Trade Policy Forum, Commercial Dialogue, CEO Forum, and Economic and Financial Partnership Dialogue, both nations have fostered an environment conducive to enhancing market access, promoting ease of doing business, and facilitating commercial collaborations. Furthermore, initiatives like the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework and the Strategic Energy Partnership reflect a shared commitment towards harnessing economic opportunities and fostering sustainable growth in the region. Additionally, high-level visits and parliamentary exchanges between the two countries have provided impetus to bilateral trade relations, fostering mutual understanding and trust.

*Multilateral Engagement:* The India-US partnership extends beyond bilateral cooperation to encompass a robust engagement in multilateral fora, where both nations have emerged as key proponents of a free and open Indo-Pacific. Leveraging platforms such as the United Nations, G20, and Quad, India and the US have championed shared values of democracy, rule of law, and inclusive economic growth. India's proactive role during its G20 presidency and contributions towards shaping global agendas highlight a concerted effort towards enhancing regional connectivity, economic

resilience, and strategic stability. Furthermore, strategic dialogues and engagements at various levels, including high-level visits, parliamentary exchanges, and bilateral trade mechanisms, underscore the depth and breadth of the partnership, fostering mutual understanding and trust.

*People-to-People Ties:* At the heart of the India-US relationship lies the vibrant tapestry of people-to-people ties, which serve as a bedrock of cultural exchange, innovation, and economic collaboration. With over 4 million-strong Indian diasporas in the US and a burgeoning community of Indian students in American universities, both nations stand poised to harness the transformative potential of human capital and knowledge exchange. Bilateral initiatives aimed at fostering educational partnerships, cultural exchange programs, and entrepreneurship initiatives underscore a shared commitment towards nurturing the bonds of friendship and understanding between the peoples of India and the United States, fostering a sense of belonging and shared prosperity.

#### India's relation with Russian Federation since 2014

The evolution of India-Russia relations under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership has been marked by a strategic recalibration and a deepening of ties across various domains. Since the signing of the "Declaration on the India-Russia Strategic Partnership" in October 2000, during the visit of President Putin, the bilateral relationship has witnessed significant advancements, culminating in the elevation of the Strategic Partnership to a "Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership" during the visit of the Russian President to India in December 2010.

*Political Relations:* The Annual Summit between the Prime Minister of India and the President of the Russian Federation serves as the pinnacle of institutionalized dialogue, reinforcing the strategic alignment between the two nations. With 21 Annual Summits held alternately in India and Russia, the last Summit in December 2021 saw the signing of 28 MoUs and agreements, underlining the commitment to the "India- Russia Partnership for Peace, Progress, and Prosperity."

*High-Level Engagements:* Regular telephone conversations between the leaders have facilitated swift communication and decision-making, addressing pressing issues such as the evacuation of Indian students from Ukraine. Additionally, meetings between the External Affairs Minister and Foreign Minister Lavrov have reinforced diplomatic ties and explored avenues for further cooperation. The visit of NSA Ajit Doval to Moscow and Minister of Health & Family Welfare and Chemicals & Fertilizers, Mansukh Mandaviya, to St. Petersburg highlight the multifaceted engagement at various levels.

*Defence Cooperation:* The India-Russia Inter-Governmental Commission on Military & Military-Technical Cooperation (IRIGC-M&MTC) has been instrumental in advancing defence collaboration, transitioning from a buyer-seller framework to joint research, development, and production of advanced defence technologies. Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat's visit to Russia and Indian participation in international military exercises underscore the depth of defence engagement. Recent participation in the International Army Games and Exercise Vostok-2022 further exemplify the commitment to bolstering defence cooperation.

*Trade and Economic Cooperation:* The India-Russia Intergovernmental Commission for Trade, Economic, Scientific & Cultural Cooperation (IRIGC-TEC) has played a pivotal role in enhancing bilateral trade and economic relations. Efforts to achieve revised targets of increasing bilateral investment to \$50 billion and bilateral trade to \$30 billion by 2025 reflect the commitment to deepening economic cooperation. Bilateral trade between India and Russia has doubled, reaching almost \$50 billion during January-September, with both countries expressing intentions to further expand economic ties across various sectors.



*Regional Engagements:* Efforts to strengthen ties with regions beyond traditional hubs, including the Russian Far East, demonstrate a proactive approach to broadening cooperation and leveraging regional synergies for mutual benefit. Ambassadorial visits to regions such as Primorsky Krai and Kamchatka Krai highlight India's commitment to expanding cooperation with these regions.

*International/Multilateral Engagements:* Active participation in multilateral forums such as BRICS, SCO, and RIC has amplified India-Russia voices on global issues, contributing to the shaping of a more equitable world order. Engagement in various meetings and summits within these forums has facilitated strategic coordination and collaboration on key regional and global challenges.

*Nuclear Energy and Space Cooperation:* Collaboration in the peaceful use of nuclear energy and space technology exemplifies the convergence of mutual interests and scientific prowess, with landmark projects such as the Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant and cooperation under India's Gaganyaan program. Continued cooperation in these areas underscores the long-term commitment to harnessing scientific and technological advancements for mutual benefit.

*Cultural Cooperation and Covid-19 Response:* Cultural exchanges and cooperation in combating the Covid-19 pandemic have fostered people-to-people engagement and solidarity, reinforcing the enduring bonds of friendship between the two nations.

Recognitions such as the awarding of Russia's highest civilian honour to Prime Minister Modi underscore the significance of bilateral relations. The celebration of the 8th International Day of Yoga in various regions of Russia and the commemoration of the 75th anniversary of India-Russia diplomatic relations through cultural events highlights the vibrant cultural exchanges between the two countries. Additionally, collaboration in vaccine production and timely assistance during the pandemic underscore the resilience and solidarity exhibited by India and Russia in times of crisis.

**India's Pacific Pivot: Strengthening Ties under Narendra Modi's Leadership** India's relations with Pacific islands have witnessed a remarkable evolution under Prime Minister Modi's tenure, marking a departure from historical neglect to proactive engagement. Historically, India's involvement in the Pacific was primarily through the Indo-Fijian diaspora, rooted in the colonial era's indentured labour system. Despite enduring challenges such as ethnic tensions and political restrictions, the Indo-Fijian community flourished, becoming a significant minority in Fiji and enriching the islands' cultural landscape.

However, Modi's proactive diplomacy ushered in a transformative shift in India's approach to the Pacific region. His historic visits to Fiji in 2014, the first prime ministerial visit since 1981, symbolized India's renewed commitment to forging closer ties with Pacific Island nations. During these visits, Modi engaged in bilateral discussions with Pacific Island leaders and championed the establishment of the Forum for India-Pacific Island Cooperation (FIPIC), signifying India's proactive stance in the region.

FIPIC has emerged as a cornerstone of India's engagement with the Pacific islands under Modi's leadership. Its inaugural summit in Suva, Fiji, marked a significant milestone, with Modi meeting 12 Pacific Island leaders to lay the groundwork for collaborative efforts. Subsequently, Modi hosted the second FIPIC summit in Jaipur, India, in 2015, with all 14 Pacific Island leaders in attendance, further solidifying India's commitment to the region.

During these summits, discussions encompassed key themes such as sustainable blue- water economies, renewable energy, climate change adaptation, and resilience for Pacific Island communities. India pledged to double its aid contributions to all Pacific Island nations, reflecting its

dedication to supporting the region's development goals.

Moreover, various joint cooperation projects were proposed, including the establishment of a Pan Pacific islands e-network, Indian navy hydrological surveys, disaster-relief cooperation, and a space technology partnership. These initiatives underscore India's aspiration to contribute positively to the socio-economic development and security of the Pacific islands.

Despite the ambitious agenda set forth by FIPIC, challenges remain in fully realizing proposed ventures, such as delays in organizing conferences on crucial topics like the blue water economy. However, FIPIC continues to serve as a vital mechanism for deepening India's engagement with the Pacific islands.

#### India's relation with ASEAN since 2014

Since Narendra Modi assumed office in 2014, India's engagement with ASEAN has witnessed a significant transformation, driven by the implementation of the "Act East Policy." This policy shift emphasizes the importance of deepening India's strategic and economic ties with Southeast Asia, aligning with ASEAN's vision for regional integration and connectivity.

***Political and Security Cooperation:*** India's engagement with ASEAN in political and security matters has seen significant advancements since 2014. With India's Act East Policy gaining momentum, there has been a notable increase in high-level engagements and participation in regional forums such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and the East Asia Summit (EAS). These platforms have provided India with opportunities to contribute to regional security dialogues and promote its vision for a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific region.

The 2016 ASEAN-India Summit marked a milestone with the adoption of the ASEAN-India Plan of Action (2016-2020), which outlined key areas of cooperation, including maritime security, counterterrorism, and cyber security. This plan has provided a framework for enhancing collaboration between India and ASEAN in addressing shared security challenges.

India's proactive role in strengthening maritime security cooperation with ASEAN member states has been evident through initiatives such as the implementation of the Trilateral Maritime Security Cooperation with Indonesia and Thailand and the conduct of coordinated patrols in the Andaman Sea. These efforts have aimed to enhance maritime domain awareness and promote rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific region.

The signing of the ASEAN-India Joint Declaration for a Drug-Free ASEAN in 2018 underscored India's commitment to combating transnational crime and promoting regional security. This declaration has facilitated closer cooperation between India and ASEAN in addressing the challenges posed by illicit drug trafficking and abuse.

***Economic Cooperation:*** India's economic engagement with ASEAN has continued to deepen post-2014. The implementation of the ASEAN-India Free Trade Agreement in Goods (AIFTA) and the subsequent expansion of trade in sectors such as automobiles, electronics, and pharmaceuticals have contributed to the growth of bilateral trade volumes.

Efforts to enhance connectivity and infrastructure development, including the India- Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway and the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project, have strengthened physical linkages between India and ASEAN member states. These projects aim to facilitate trade and investment flows and promote economic integration in the region.

India's commitment to promoting digital connectivity and innovation through initiatives such as the

ASEAN-India Innovation Platform and the ASEAN-India Hackathon has opened new avenues for collaboration in the digital economy. These efforts aim to harness the potential of technology to drive inclusive growth and foster entrepreneurship in both regions.

The conclusion of negotiations for the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) agreement in 2020, of which India was originally a part before withdrawing, highlighted the continued importance of regional economic integration efforts. While India's decision to withdraw from RCEP raised questions about its commitment to regional economic cooperation, efforts to explore alternative avenues for collaboration, such as bilateral trade agreements and economic partnerships, have remained ongoing.

*Socio-Cultural Cooperation:* India's socio-cultural engagement with ASEAN has witnessed significant expansion in recent years. Initiatives such as the ASEAN-India Cultural Exchange Programme and the ASEAN-India Youth Exchange Programme have promoted greater people-to-people contacts and fostered mutual understanding between diverse cultures.

The launch of the ASEAN-India Science, Technology, and Innovation Cooperation Programme in 2019 has provided a platform for collaborative research and development initiatives in areas such as renewable energy, biotechnology, and space technology. These efforts aim to leverage scientific expertise and promote innovation-driven growth in both regions.

The hosting of cultural festivals, art exhibitions, and film festivals to commemorate important milestones in ASEAN-India relations, such as the 25th anniversary of ASEAN-India Dialogue Partnership in 2017, has showcased the rich cultural heritage and diversity of both regions. These events have served as platforms for cultural exchange and dialogue, strengthening people-to-people ties and promoting cultural diplomacy.

*COVID-19 Response and Recovery:* India's response to the COVID-19 pandemic has underscored its commitment to regional solidarity and cooperation with ASEAN. The provision of medical assistance, including essential supplies and equipment, to ASEAN member states during the early stages of the pandemic highlighted India's support for collective efforts to combat the spread of the virus and mitigate its impact on public health systems.

Efforts to enhance vaccine production capacity and facilitate vaccine distribution in collaboration with ASEAN member states have been a key priority for India. The launch of the ASEAN-India COVID-19 Vaccines Partnership in 2021 aimed to promote equitable access to vaccines and strengthen regional resilience against future health crises.

India's initiatives to promote digital health solutions and telemedicine services in ASEAN member states have facilitated greater access to healthcare services and helped bridge gaps in healthcare delivery systems. These efforts have emphasized the importance of leveraging technology to address health challenges and promote sustainable healthcare solutions in the region.

#### [India's relation with United Kingdom since 2014](#)

India-UK relations have undergone a significant transformation under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. From historical ties dating back centuries to a modern, comprehensive strategic partnership, the trajectory of this bilateral relationship has been dynamic and multi-faceted.

*Political Relations:* Since Prime Minister Narendra Modi assumed office, the institutionalized dialogue between India and the UK has significantly strengthened. Annual Summits held alternately

in India and the UK serve as pivotal platforms for strategic discussions and the signing of bilateral agreements. Notably, the Summit in December 2021 witnessed the signing of 28 MoUs and agreements, underlining the commitment to deepening cooperation across various sectors, including trade, defence, and technology.

*Diplomatic Engagements:* Prime Minister Modi's visits to the UK and his interactions with UK leaders have intensified diplomatic engagements between the two nations.

These high-level engagements have facilitated dialogue on pressing bilateral and global issues, fostering a deeper understanding and alignment of strategic priorities. Additionally, institutional mechanisms such as the India-UK Joint Economic and Trade Committee (JETCO) and the Economic and Finance Dialogue (EFD) have played crucial roles in enhancing economic cooperation and trade relations, providing avenues for sustained dialogue and collaboration.

*Defence and Security Cooperation:* Under Prime Minister Modi's leadership, India and the UK have expanded their defence and security cooperation significantly. Joint military exercises such as 'Ajeya Warrior' and 'Ex Cobra Warrior' have not only enhanced interoperability but also facilitated the sharing of best practices in defence operations. Moreover, bilateral defence trade has seen a notable uptick, with both countries exploring opportunities for collaboration in defence technology transfer and joint production ventures. These efforts have bolstered mutual trust and reinforced the strategic partnership between India and the UK in the realm of defence and security.

*Economic and Trade Relations:* Bilateral trade between India and the UK has witnessed robust growth since Prime Minister Modi came to power. The trade volume reached £36.3 billion during the fiscal year 2022/23, marking a substantial increase of 34.2% from the previous year. This growth underscores the expanding economic ties between the two nations, with trade in goods and services showing consistent upward trajectories. Both countries have also made concerted efforts to address trade barriers and promote investments, fostering a conducive environment for bilateral economic cooperation and partnership.

*Cultural and People-to-People Exchanges:* The Indian diaspora in the UK, numbering 1.864 million as per the 2021 Census, plays a vital role in fostering cultural and people-to-people exchanges between the two nations. Prime Minister Modi's emphasis on strengthening ties with the diaspora has led to various initiatives aimed at enhancing cultural exchanges and promoting greater engagement. Furthermore, educational collaboration between India and the UK has expanded significantly, with the number of Indian students in the UK steadily increasing since Prime Minister Modi came to power. This trend underscores the growing interest in educational opportunities and academic partnerships between the two countries.

*Healthcare Cooperation and Pandemic Response:* Collaboration between India and the UK in healthcare, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, has been notable. The two countries collaborated in vaccine production under a licensing agreement between UK-based AstraZeneca and the Serum Institute of India, contributing significantly to global vaccination efforts. Additionally, a framework agreement for collaboration on healthcare workforce objectives was signed between the UK and India, aiming to enhance bilateral cooperation in capacity building and exchange of expertise in healthcare. This collaboration underscores the shared commitment to addressing public health challenges and strengthening healthcare systems for the benefit of both nations.

#### India's relation with Africa since 2014

Since Prime Minister Modi assumed office, India's engagement with Africa has undergone significant transformation, marked by strategic initiatives and increased collaboration. Modi has consistently emphasized Africa's importance in India's foreign policy, recognizing it as a key partner in shaping global affairs.

Under India's G20 presidency in 2023, significant strides were made in enhancing Africa's representation on the global stage. India successfully advocated for the permanent membership of the African Union (AU) in the G20, thereby granting Africa a more prominent voice in international economic discussions. This move underscores India's commitment to strengthening South-South cooperation and recognizing Africa as a vital player in the global economy. India's trade with Africa has witnessed steady growth, reflecting the deepening economic ties between the two regions. From US\$ 68.5 billion in 2011-12, bilateral trade surged to US\$ 90.5 billion in 2022-23. Indian investments in Africa have also expanded significantly, totalling US\$ 73.9 billion between 1996 and 2022. India's investment in Africa spans diverse sectors, including telecommunications, infrastructure, healthcare, and agriculture, contributing to job creation and economic development across the continent.

In addition to economic cooperation, India and Africa have collaborated closely on various international platforms to advance shared interests. At the World Trade Organization (WTO), India and Africa have jointly advocated for policies that promote the development aspirations of developing countries. Initiatives such as the Agriculture Framework Proposal and the proposal for a waiver on intellectual property rights for COVID-19 vaccines underscore the solidarity between India and Africa in addressing global challenges.

Despite the significant progress in India-Africa relations, challenges persist, including the delay in convening the fourth India-Africa Forum Summit. While the COVID-19 pandemic has been cited as a contributing factor, other regional summits involving African nations have been held, highlighting the importance of prioritizing the India-Africa partnership. It is imperative for India to actively engage with the AU to expedite the convening of the summit and reaffirm its commitment to strengthening bilateral ties.

The socio-economic landscape in Africa presents both opportunities and challenges for India-Africa cooperation. The COVID-19 pandemic and the Ukraine-Russia conflict have exacerbated existing vulnerabilities, leading to rising debt distress and food insecurity across the continent. According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), more than half of the Sub-Saharan African countries with Debt Sustainability Framework (DSF) ratings are at high risk of debt distress or already under debt distress. Additionally, the number of undernourished people in Africa has increased, with approximately 282 million people facing food insecurity in 2022.

#### India's relation with Latin America since 2014

Under the dynamic leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the bilateral relations between India and Latin America have experienced a significant transformation, characterized by a surge in economic collaboration, intensified political engagement, and flourishing cultural exchanges.

**Economic Collaboration Surges:** Since Narendra Modi took office as Prime Minister of India in 2014, bilateral trade between India and Latin America has experienced a remarkable surge, reaching an all-time high of US\$50 billion in 2022. This surge represents a substantial increase from previous years, highlighting the growing economic relevance of the relationship. Trade between India and Brazil, one



of the key players in Latin America, peaked at US\$16.4 billion in 2022, driven by sectors such as oil, automobiles, pharmaceuticals, and agrochemicals. Notably, India's exports to Brazil surpassed those to major economies like Germany, Australia, and South Korea, indicating the increasing importance of Latin America in India's global trade strategy.

*Political Engagement Intensifies:* The Modi administration has demonstrated a clear commitment to strengthening diplomatic ties with Latin America through intensified political engagement. Indian Foreign Minister S Jaishankar's visits to various Latin American countries, including Brazil, Argentina, and Mexico, have underscored India's proactive approach to deepening political and strategic relations with the region. These visits have facilitated dialogue and cooperation on a wide range of issues, including trade, investment, technology transfer, and strategic partnerships.

Furthermore, India's active participation in multilateral forums such as BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) and the G20 has provided additional platforms for engagement and collaboration with Latin American nations.

*Perception Shifts and Strategic Realizations:* Over the past decade, there has been a noticeable shift in how India and Latin America perceive each other, leading to strategic realizations on both sides. India has recognized Latin America's economic potential as a significant market and a source of abundant resources, prompting increased interest and investment from Indian businesses and industries. Similarly, Latin American countries view India as a strategic partner with whom they can foster mutual economic growth and cooperation. This strategic realization has prompted both sides to re-evaluate their bilateral relations and explore new opportunities for collaboration across various sectors, including trade, investment, technology, and innovation.

*Cultural and Social Exchanges Flourish:* Cultural and social exchanges between India and Latin America have flourished in recent years, contributing to greater mutual understanding and appreciation. Initiatives such as literary exchanges, diplomatic interactions, and increased tourism have facilitated cultural exchange and collaboration between the two regions. Moreover, the presence of Latin American influencers in India's entertainment industry and the popularity of initiatives like the Indian Super League have further strengthened cultural ties and fostered a sense of camaraderie between India and Latin America.

#### [India's relation with West Asia since 2014](#)

India's engagement with West Asia has witnessed a significant transformation under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi. Across various fronts, including strategic convergence, energy security, trade and investments, digital infrastructure, cultural ties, and defence cooperation, India has deepened its relations with countries in the region.

*Strategic Convergence:* India's diplomatic efforts have resulted in strengthened partnerships with Oman, UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt. Notably, strategic partnership agreements signed during Modi's tenure have laid the foundation for enhanced bilateral ties. Moreover, India's proactive role in expanding multilateral engagement, such as including West Asian nations in forums like BRICS and inviting them as special guests during its G-20 presidency, underscores the region's growing importance in India's strategic calculus.

*Energy Security:* India's pursuit of energy security has led to extensive collaboration with key oil-producing nations in West Asia. Through long-term agreements with Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE, India has secured a stable supply of crude oil.

Additionally, significant LNG deals with Qatar and Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) have diversified India's energy sources, ensuring long-term energy security and stability.

*Trade and Investments:* India's economic engagements with West Asian nations have yielded significant dividends. Agreements like the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) and Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT) with the UAE have paved the way for increased trade and investments. The substantial inflow of foreign direct investments (FDI) from UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar highlights the growing economic ties between India and the region.

*Digital Infrastructure and Fintech:* India's focus on digital infrastructure and fintech cooperation has opened new avenues for collaboration with West Asian countries.

Initiatives such as introducing the RuPay card in the UAE and facilitating rupee- dirham settlement have strengthened financial ties. Furthermore, collaboration with Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and Oman in promoting fintech innovation underscores the potential for mutual economic growth and development.

*Cultural and People-to-People Ties:* India has actively promoted cultural exchanges and people-to-people ties with West Asia. Events like Ahlan Modi have provided platforms for engaging the diaspora and fostering cultural understanding.

Additionally, India's investment in establishing educational and religious institutions in the region reflects its commitment to nurturing long-lasting bonds and promoting mutual respect and cooperation.

*Defence and Security Cooperation:* India's defence and security cooperation with West Asian nations have deepened significantly. Joint military exercises and naval cooperation with Oman, UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt have bolstered regional security ties and promoted interoperability between armed forces. Enhanced intelligence sharing, particularly on counterterrorism, underscores the shared commitment to combating common security threats. Moreover, exploration of collaboration in space technology and satellite launches highlights the depth of strategic cooperation between India and West Asia.

#### India's relation with People's Republic of China since 2014

Since Narendra Modi assumed office, India-China relations have undergone significant developments, characterized by a series of high-level engagements, extensive dialogue mechanisms, evolving trade dynamics, and deepening cultural exchanges.

*High-Level Engagements:* High-level engagements between India and China have played a pivotal role in shaping bilateral relations. The first Informal Summit between Prime Minister Modi and President Xi Jinping, convened in Wuhan in April 2018, marked a significant departure from traditional diplomatic protocols. The leaders engaged in candid discussions, away from formal agendas, focusing on overarching issues of bilateral and global importance. This summit laid the groundwork for enhanced mutual understanding and trust between the two countries.

Building on the success of the Wuhan Summit, the Second Informal Summit was convened in Chennai in October 2019. This summit provided an opportunity for Prime Minister Modi and President Xi to deepen their discussions on bilateral relations, emphasizing the importance of managing differences while exploring avenues for cooperation. The informal nature of these summits has fostered a more personal and pragmatic approach to bilateral engagement, facilitating frank exchanges and constructive dialogue.

In addition to the informal summits, various multilateral platforms such as the G20, BRICS, and SCO summits have provided opportunities for bilateral interactions between Indian and Chinese leaders. These engagements have enabled both countries to address common challenges, explore areas of

mutual interest, and strengthen diplomatic ties on the global stage.

*Dialogue Mechanisms:* Dialogue mechanisms have served as important channels for addressing bilateral issues and promoting stability along the India-China border. The Special Representatives mechanism, established in 2003, has facilitated multiple rounds of talks on the India-China Boundary Question. These discussions have sought to explore frameworks for resolving boundary disputes and enhancing border management, contributing to peace and stability in the border regions.

Furthermore, the Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination on India- China Border Affairs (WMCC) has played a crucial role in facilitating communication and coordination between the two countries. Since June 2020, the WMCC has held 29 meetings as of 1 April 2024, focused on disengagement and de-escalation efforts along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), demonstrating a commitment to maintaining peace and tranquillity in the border areas.

*Trade Dynamics:* India-China trade relations have witnessed significant growth in recent years, albeit with certain challenges. Despite robust trade volumes, India faces a considerable trade deficit with China, reaching \$58.04 billion in 2018. Efforts have been made to address this imbalance and diversify trade relations through enhanced market access and increased cooperation in sectors such as technology, pharmaceuticals, and infrastructure.

Chinese investments in India have also seen steady growth, amounting to \$5.08 billion by September 2019. Similarly, Indian investments in China have contributed to economic linkages between the two countries, albeit at a slower pace. Efforts to promote bilateral investment and trade cooperation continue to be a priority for both nations, with a focus on fostering balanced and mutually beneficial economic relations.

*Cultural Exchanges:* Cultural exchanges between India and China have deep historical roots, dating back centuries. Initiatives such as Hindi conferences, educational programs like the Education Exchange Programme (EEP), and memorials commemorating historical connections serve to strengthen cultural understanding and people-to-people ties between the two nations. These exchanges contribute to fostering mutual respect, appreciation, and friendship, laying the foundation for stronger bilateral relations in the years to come.

#### India's relation with Israel since 2014

Since Prime Minister Narendra Modi came to power in 2014, India's relations with Israel have witnessed a significant evolution, marked by warmth and forward-looking cooperation across various sectors.

*Political Relations:* Since Narendra Modi assumed office in 2014, India's relationship with Israel has seen significant growth and warmth. Although the official diplomatic ties were established in 1992, India's recognition of Israel as early as 1950 laid the foundation for future engagement. This recognition was followed by the establishment of diplomatic offices, eventually leading to full diplomatic relations between the two countries in 1992. In recent years, both nations have celebrated milestones in their bilateral ties, marking the 30th anniversary of full diplomatic relations in 2022-23.

*High-level Interactions:* Prime Minister Modi and his Israeli counterpart, Benjamin Netanyahu, have maintained regular communication, reflecting the importance both leaders attach to bilateral relations. Notable interactions include congratulatory calls, discussions on regional issues, and updates on significant events such as space missions and security concerns. These interactions demonstrate the depth and frequency of engagement between the leadership of both countries.

*Economic and Commercial Relations:* Since the establishment of diplomatic relations, bilateral trade

between India and Israel has experienced rapid growth. From modest beginnings in 1992, trade volume surged to around US\$ 10.7 billion in FY 2022-23.

While traditional sectors such as diamonds, petroleum products, and chemicals continue to dominate trade, recent years have witnessed diversification into high-tech

products, machinery, and medical equipment. Both countries have also actively encouraged investment in each other's economies, further enhancing economic cooperation.

**Agricultural Cooperation:** Cooperation in agriculture has been a cornerstone of India- Israel relations, characterized by joint projects and knowledge sharing.

Comprehensive work plans have been signed to facilitate cooperation, leading to the establishment of Agriculture Centres of Excellence across various Indian states. These centres aim to promote best practices, enhance agricultural productivity, and address common challenges faced by both countries.

**Water Management:** Collaboration in water management has emerged as a key area of cooperation between India and Israel. Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) have been signed to formalize cooperation, with initiatives ranging from conservation campaigns to reforms in water utilities. Both countries have exchanged expertise in sustainable water management solutions, recognizing the importance of water security in the face of growing challenges.

**Innovation and Science & Technology:** India and Israel have deepened their collaboration in innovation and science & technology through joint committees and agreements. Initiatives such as the India-Israel Initiative for Industrial R&D and the India-Israel Industrial R&D and Innovation Fund aim to support joint projects in priority sectors such as agriculture, water, energy, healthcare, and ICT. These initiatives reflect the commitment of both countries to harnessing innovation for mutual benefit.

**Defence Cooperation:** Defence cooperation between India and Israel has strengthened significantly in recent years, encompassing areas such as maritime security, counter- terrorism, and defence technology exchange. Regular naval visits, joint exercises, and high-level meetings between defence ministers have facilitated closer ties. Both countries have recognized the strategic importance of defence cooperation in addressing shared security challenges.

**Healthcare Collaboration:** Collaboration in healthcare has become increasingly important, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Bilateral agreements have been signed to deepen cooperation in R&D and pandemic response. Both countries have also agreed to mutually recognize COVID-19 vaccination certificates, reflecting their commitment to supporting each other in times of crisis.

**People-to-People Relations:** The Indian diaspora in Israel has played a crucial role in fostering people-to-people ties between the two countries. Comprising caregivers, professionals, and students, the Indian community in Israel has contributed to the cultural and economic fabric of the country. Regular interactions, cultural exchanges, and community events have further strengthened the bond between India and Israel at the grassroots level.

**Cultural Exchange:** Both India and Israel have renewed their focus on cultural exchange, recognizing the importance of promoting mutual understanding and appreciation of each other's heritage. Initiatives such as yoga programs, cultural events, and the establishment of cultural centres have been instrumental in promoting cultural ties and fostering a sense of shared identity.

#### [India's relation with South Asia since 2014](#)

Since assuming office in 2014, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has pursued a strategic foreign policy approach aimed at redefining India's engagement with its South Asian neighbours. Emphasizing the significance of regional stability, economic prosperity, and security cooperation, Modi's leadership

has ushered in a new era of diplomatic initiatives and bilateral engagements within the South Asian region.

*Neighbourhood First Policy:* Under Modi's leadership, India has articulated and implemented a "Neighbourhood First" policy, which underscores the importance of strengthening ties with neighbouring countries. This policy framework emphasizes mutual respect, shared prosperity, and collective security within the South Asian region. Through proactive diplomacy and bilateral engagements, India has endeavoured to forge closer partnerships with its immediate neighbours, laying the foundation for regional stability and cooperation.

*Bilateral Diplomacy:* India's bilateral engagements with South Asian countries have witnessed notable advancements across various sectors, including trade, connectivity, and security cooperation. Analysing the specific dynamics of India's relations with Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, and the Maldives provides insights into the nuanced strategies employed by India to enhance mutual trust and foster strategic partnerships within the region.

*Regional Initiatives:* India's participation in regional forums such as the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) reflects its commitment to promoting regional integration and collaboration. Assessing the evolution of India's engagement within these frameworks illuminates the opportunities and challenges in advancing shared objectives of economic development, connectivity, and security in South Asia.

*The China Factor:* The strategic dynamics of South Asia are significantly influenced by the growing presence of China in the region. India's responses to China's expanding footprint, particularly in terms of infrastructure development and strategic investments, have shaped its diplomatic calculus with South Asian countries. This section examines the interplay between India-China rivalry and its implications for regional geopolitics and security architecture.

*Security Dynamics:* Security cooperation forms a crucial component of India's engagement with South Asian countries, encompassing counterterrorism efforts, maritime security initiatives, and defence partnerships. By analysing the evolution of security dynamics and joint initiatives undertaken by India and its neighbours, this section sheds light on the collective efforts to address transnational threats and safeguard regional stability.

*Economic Engagement:* India's economic outreach to South Asian countries is characterized by efforts to enhance trade, investment, and infrastructure connectivity. Assessing the progress and challenges in economic engagement provides insights into the potential synergies and constraints in realizing the vision of a prosperous and interconnected South Asia.

*Cultural and Soft Power Initiatives:* Cultural diplomacy and soft power initiatives play a vital role in deepening India's bonds with South Asian countries. This section examines the diverse avenues of cultural exchange, educational cooperation, and people-to-people interactions, highlighting their significance in fostering mutual understanding and strengthening societal linkages within the region.

*Challenges and Opportunities:* Despite the strides made in India's relations with South Asian countries, persistent challenges such as historical animosities, unresolved territorial disputes, and external interference pose formidable obstacles to regional cooperation. However, there exist opportunities for constructive engagement and collaboration in areas of mutual interest, which can contribute to building a more resilient and integrated South Asian community.

## **Conclusion**

Prime Minister Modi's leadership has ushered in a notable evolution in India's foreign policy



landscape. Departing from traditional paradigms, his administration has adopted a proactive stance, leveraging diplomatic engagements to bolster India's standing on the global stage. Modi's emphasis on economic diplomacy has led to increased trade partnerships and investment opportunities, positioning India as a key player in the global economy. Moreover, his pragmatic approach to regional and global affairs has enabled India to navigate complex geopolitical challenges while pursuing its national interests effectively. Overall, under Modi's leadership, India's foreign policy has undergone a transformative shift, reflecting the country's aspirations for greater influence and relevance in the international arena.

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