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Content

S.No.	Title	Page No.
	Editorial Perspective	1
1	Emerging Echoes: Unveiling India's Soft Power Ascendancy – <i>Ifrah</i>	3
2	Navigating Challenges: India-Bangladesh Bilateral Relations Amidst Political Transition and Minority Concerns - <i>Neeharika jha</i>	10
3	From Non-Alignment to Global Peacemaker: How Modi's India can influence the Russia-Ukraine Conflict Resolution – <i>Adarsh</i>	23
4	Liberation Movements in Pakistan's Major Provinces: A Historical Overview - <i>Rahul Tiwari</i>	29
5.	Bharat's Cultural Diplomacy: A Catalyst for Indo- Pacific Cooperation- <i>Aayush Kumar Mishra</i>	38
6.	India's Geopolitical Role in Red Sea Conflicts – <i>Ifrah</i>	47

EDITORIAL PERSPECTIVE:

There is a tectonic shift in world politics. The Trump administration will change many things which will have a huge impact on the world. China is moving with the same pace, weaving carefully to launch offensive moves in Taiwan. India along with the global south is trying to create a new route that is a cultural route in world politics. Fundamentally there are three opposite routes in world politics. Geo-political, Geo-economics and Geo-cultural. First and second are based on aggression and flavour of coercive powers. There are traces of naked power during the Cold war and post cold war could be seen. Major players were America, Russia, China and other European countries. India started a new route, with the beginning of Yoga, and Kumbh and Maha Kumbh. The strong display of cultural imprint was shown during the G-20 meeting held in India in 2023. There are more countries which are aligned with India. Therefore, most of the articles by the author focused on the cultural epithet. The first article explains the historical importance of cultural diplomacy. Historically, Bharat's influence in cultural diplomacy can be traced back to ancient times, exemplified by institutions like Nalanda University, which attracted scholars from around the world. This tradition of knowledge exchange laid the foundation for Bharat's ongoing commitment to fostering international ties through culture. Concepts like "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" meaning "the world is one family," reflect Bharat's age-old ethos of inclusivity and cooperation.

The second article is on Bangladesh. There are many angles to see the ensuing issue in Bangladesh. The external forces have created an anti India wave. The Indian subcontinent is attached with an umbilical cord. Long-standing historical, geographical, cultural, social, and economic ties, as well as India's crucial role in Bangladesh's formation, have all shaped the relationship between Bangladesh and India. During Sheikh Hasina's leadership, India became Bangladesh's main partner in development, with a portfolio worth US\$ 8 billion, creating crucial connections for bilateral and regional connectivity to help Bangladesh reach its economic growth goals. Hasina's abrupt exit from Bangladesh on August 5 resulted in the country coming to a standstill. Questions are being raised about the future of bilateral connectivity projects as the interim government in Dhaka, led by Mohammad Yunus, works to restore normalcy and rebuild institutions

India is home to one of the world's oldest civilizations and has influenced Asia for thousands of years. Despite many challenges, it has successfully upheld a working democracy for the past 78 years. But India also shares a historical tie with Russia which is still as relevant as it was in the 1970s when eastern Pakistan was liberated from Pakistan and made a separate country "Bangladesh". When it comes to defence and energy, India also shares a very common interest with Russia. India is not fully agreeing with the West when they try to punish Russia. This way, India can talk to both sides and do what's best to resolve the conflict.

India's soft power rests on a foundation of rich cultural heritage, historical influence, and democratic values that resonate globally. Its commitment to strategic autonomy in foreign policy enables it to navigate complex

international issues with a distinct voice, often standing apart from Western democracies to uphold its interests. Culturally, India wields a powerful influence through its ancient wisdom of yoga and Ayurveda, Bollywood's global appeal, and renowned culinary heritage. These cultural elements, alongside democratic principles, secularism, and values of non-violence, strengthen India's image and foster admiration on the global stage.

All six articles have a meeting point. The cultural landscape provides space for economics and peaceful bilateral and multilateral politics. It looks into major disputes to resolve peacefully.

Prof. (Dr.) Satish Kumar

(Editor)

Emerging Echoes: Unveiling India's Soft Power Ascendancy

Ifrah*

India's rise as a global power increasingly hinges on its adept use of soft power, leveraging cultural, diplomatic, and economic strengths to foster international influence. This paper explores India's multifaceted soft power strategy, examining the cultural, historical, and economic assets that bolster its global image. From cultural diplomacy and global leadership in digital public infrastructure to the influence of Bollywood, yoga, and the Indian diaspora, India's soft power assets have shaped positive perceptions worldwide. However, the nation faces socio-economic challenges, including poverty, healthcare access, and education reform, that could impact its soft power journey. Addressing these issues domestically will be essential as India seeks a balanced path to global eminence, positioning itself as a model for inclusive and sustainable development. By focusing on responsible governance, India can continue to inspire developing nations and assert its role as a global soft power leader.

Keywords: India, soft power, cultural diplomacy, global influence, socio-economic development

Introduction

Soft power, defined as the capacity to influence others through attraction rather than coercion, plays a critical role in global politics and international relations. India, with its rich culture, democratic principles, and historical legacies has excelled in wielding soft power, using it to carve a significant space for itself on the international stage. As the world becomes increasingly interconnected through globalization, the importance of soft power—constituted by elements such as culture, political values, and diplomacy—grows, making India's diverse soft power tools, from its contributions to literature and arts to its advancements in digital diplomacy and space technology, crucial to its strategy in fostering goodwill and influencing global culture.

The journey of India's ascendancy in soft power involves a multifaceted approach, from its strategic diplomacy on international platforms like the G20, to its cultural diplomacy aimed at spreading Indian traditions worldwide. Despite facing challenges such as infrastructure and healthcare under-investment, India's ongoing political efforts, including improving its ease of doing business, promoting tourism, and leveraging its cultural assets like yoga, aim at gradually augmenting its soft power. This article will delve into India's soft power strategy, exploring how its rich culture, history, and political initiatives contribute to its global influence and national interests

India's Cultural and Historical Soft Power Assets: India's soft power rests on a foundation of rich cultural heritage, historical influence, and democratic values that resonate globally. Its commitment to strategic autonomy in foreign policy enables it to navigate complex international issues with a distinct voice, often standing apart from Western democracies to uphold its interests. Culturally, India wields a powerful influence through its ancient wisdom of yoga and Ayurveda, Bollywood's global appeal, and renowned culinary heritage. These cultural elements, alongside democratic principles, secularism, and values of non-violence, strengthen India's image and foster admiration on the global stage. Historical figures like Ashoka and Buddha, known for their messages of peace, remain influential symbols of India's cultural heritage. India's "unity in diversity" philosophy and its inclusive governance serve as models for liberal democracies, while the global popularity of Indian movies, music, dance, and cuisine establishes the nation as a vibrant cultural hub. Furthermore, India's technological achievements in space, IT, and innovation showcase its contributions to global progress, and the Indian diaspora—particularly influential in the U.S.—plays a critical role in fostering positive perceptions and diplomatic ties. However, India faces challenges such as corruption, poverty, and social inequality that can occasionally impact its international reputation.

India's Strategic Diplomacy and Economic Soft Power: India's diplomatic and economic initiatives further amplify its global influence, showcasing its role as a bridge between various geopolitical interests. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has positioned himself as a unifying figure in global discussions, actively shaping forums like the G20, where India has transitioned from passive participation to proactive leadership, particularly with initiatives like its Digital Public Infrastructure for financial inclusion. India balances its relationships with major powers to counter regional competitors, such as leveraging ties with Russia while addressing China's regional expansion. Key strategic partnerships with the U.S. and France cover defense, climate, health, and technology, emphasizing India's commitment to regional stability. In the Quad, India collaborates with the U.S., Japan, and Australia to support regional security and cooperative problem-solving. Within the G20 and other global forums, India has also led efforts on climate finance, energy security, and sustainable development. Hosting the G20 summit with the theme "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" – "One Earth, One Family, One Future"

India highlighted its vision for a united global community. Domestically, economic growth driven by digital advancements, financial reforms, and renewable energy initiatives have bolstered India's reputation as an economic powerhouse. Its leadership in renewable energy and projects like the International Solar Alliance underscore its role in sustainable development. Through cultural diplomacy, economic reforms, digital expansion, and diplomatic strategy, India demonstrates a multifaceted approach to soft power that strengthens international cooperation, promotes cultural exchange, and contributes to a more interconnected world.

India's soft power capabilities also have significantly enhanced its influence on the global stage, enabling it to build strong relationships, foster cultural connections, and gain strategic advantages without relying solely on military or economic strength. A key element of India's soft power lies in its rich cultural heritage. Bollywood, India's film industry, enjoys immense popularity across Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and beyond, connecting global audiences to Indian values, stories, and traditions. Indian cuisine, beloved worldwide, has become a global staple, bringing the flavors and essence of India to countless international cities. Additionally, India's global contributions through yoga and Ayurveda have resonated deeply with wellness movements worldwide, particularly after the United Nations declared June 21 as International Yoga Day, which highlighted India's role in promoting holistic health practices.

India's historical and religious ties further bolster its soft power. As the birthplace of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism, India shares profound spiritual and cultural bonds with countries like Thailand, Nepal, Japan, and Sri Lanka. These connections foster mutual respect and cultural cooperation, enhancing India's influence in these regions. India's identity as the world's largest democracy, committed to pluralism and inclusivity, also aligns it with nations supporting democratic governance. Its leadership in the Non-Aligned Movement during the Cold War cemented its legacy as a champion of independent foreign policy, which remains influential as the world shifts towards multipolarity.

A major factor amplifying India's soft power is its expansive and influential diaspora. With millions of Indians residing abroad, particularly in the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, the Middle East, and Africa, these communities contribute to cultural and economic exchanges and act as bridges between India and their host countries. Prominent members of the diaspora, including CEOs, politicians, and academics, enhance India's global reputation and foster connections across political, economic, and social spheres.

India's technological and scientific expertise further adds to its soft power appeal. Its achievements in information technology, space research, and pharmaceuticals have earned it global recognition. Notable missions such as the Mars Orbiter Mission and Chandrayaan moon missions showcase India's advancements in space, bolstering its image as a leader in science and innovation. India's reputation as the "pharmacy of the world" has also grown, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic when it supplied vaccines and essential medicines to various countries, emphasizing its role as a responsible global health partner.

The Indian education system, which attracts students from across Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, further strengthens its soft power. High-quality, affordable education in India has positioned it as an educational hub, drawing students who often return to their home countries with favorable impressions of Indian society and culture. Indian intellectuals, academics, and authors also contribute significantly to global discourse on subjects

like philosophy, economics, and international relations, reinforcing India's intellectual influence in shaping global narratives.

India actively promotes its culture abroad through various means, such as hosting festivals, exhibitions, and establishing India Cultural Centers. This cultural diplomacy allows India to share its heritage and values with a global audience. Additionally, India's active participation in international organizations like the UN, BRICS, G20, and the Commonwealth enables it to leverage cultural diplomacy to showcase its leadership and dedication to addressing global challenges. These diverse soft power channels have successfully strengthened India's global image, enabling it to build alliances, foster goodwill, and enhance its strategic standing on international forums.

India's journey toward global eminence is defined by a blend of historical depth, cultural diversity, and an emerging presence on the world stage. However, despite its considerable strengths, India faces substantial internal challenges that, if unaddressed, may impede its rise as a soft power superpower. These challenges are not simply hurdles but also opportunities to showcase India's commitment to both domestic advancement and global engagement.

Socio-Economic Development Needs: To sustain its growth and capitalize on its youthful demographics, India must address key areas in employment, education, health care, and infrastructure. The nation's population, which will soon be the world's largest, poses a significant opportunity for economic growth—but only if India can create sufficient employment. A 2021 World Bank report indicated that India needs to generate 8 million new jobs annually to absorb new labor market entrants and reduce underemployment, particularly in rural areas, where about 65% of its population resides. Economic policies, therefore, must focus on bolstering small and medium enterprises (SMEs), which make up 30% of India's GDP and employ nearly half of the country's non-agricultural labor force, to drive employment opportunities in a sustainable way.

India's education system also faces the challenge of quality and accessibility. According to UNESCO, while the literacy rate has steadily increased to over 75%, the quality of education remains a concern, especially in rural regions. National initiatives like the New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 aim to address these issues by introducing curriculum reforms, digital learning, and skill-based education. However, widespread implementation remains complex and requires significant investment. Enhancing the education system is not merely about literacy; it's about creating a workforce capable of innovating and competing on the global stage.

Health care is another pressing concern, especially given India's challenges with equitable access. India's spending on health care is around 3.5% of its GDP, which remains lower than the global average, and many

rural and underserved areas lack access to adequate medical facilities. The government's Ayushman Bharat program, which provides health coverage to over 100 million low-income households, represents a major step forward, but scaling and sustaining such programs require infrastructural upgrades and trained professionals. Access to healthcare, therefore, remains a critical metric of India's ability to improve its citizens' quality of life and to project a positive image of social inclusiveness.

Poverty Alleviation: Although India has made strides in reducing poverty, with the poverty rate declining from 21.9% in 2011 to an estimated 10% in recent years, over 130 million Indians still live below the poverty line. Programs such as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) and the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana have been instrumental in reducing poverty and improving living conditions, but poverty alleviation efforts must evolve to address the root causes, such as education deficits, rural development, and access to financial resources. The country's focus on inclusive growth through policies aimed at financial inclusion, like the Jan Dhan Yojana, which brought over 400 million people into the formal banking system, showcases India's commitment to addressing poverty through systemic reform.

The integration of technology in financial inclusion also serves as a soft power asset, demonstrating India's ability to innovate in solving domestic issues. India's pioneering approach to digital public goods, particularly through the Unified Payments Interface (UPI), highlights the country's advancement in accessible digital infrastructure. UPI, with over 83 billion transactions in 2022 alone, underscores India's ability to provide scalable solutions that can also serve as models for other developing countries.

Global Aspirations and the Path Forward: As India pursues its ambitions on the global stage, its actions at home will be closely scrutinized. Achieving a balance between addressing domestic challenges and positioning itself as a soft power leader will require India to adopt a multifaceted strategy. International forums like the G20 provide India with platforms to showcase its progress and share its model of democratic development. The 2023 G20 summit, hosted in New Delhi, focused on the theme "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" (One Earth, One Family, One Future), emphasizing India's commitment to sustainable and inclusive growth. This gathering underscored India's ability to lead dialogues on pressing global issues such as climate change, financial inclusion, and public health—areas where India's domestic successes and challenges alike offer valuable insights for global solutions.

India's potential as a soft power lies not only in its cultural assets, such as Bollywood, yoga, and cuisine, but in its example as a democracy addressing diverse and complex challenges. India's ability to lead by example in addressing socio-economic issues will bolster its soft power, offering a model that combines cultural richness with a commitment to social welfare, inclusivity, and innovation. The path to global eminence is not without obstacles, but by focusing on transformative policies and programs, India can continue to rise as a respected

voice for the developing world while strengthening its internal resilience. As India navigates this journey, it has the potential to inspire other nations by demonstrating that true global influence begins with responsible and inclusive governance at home.

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Navigating Challenges: India-Bangladesh Bilateral Relations Amidst Political Transition and Minority Concerns

Neeharika jha*

Abstract

This article investigates the changing dynamics of bilateral ties between Bangladesh and India in the light of political transitions and minority concerns. Bangladesh was formerly a part of India, so it has historical, cultural, and linguistic ties to that country. A long-standing relationship based on mutual interests in trade, water sharing, and security cooperation unites the two South Asian countries. Both the countries have always made the transitional framework to safeguard the diplomatic channel for cooperation yet so many irregularities and proxy wars have made this phenomena to be diluted to the extent that a new experiment in the regime change sidelined the prosperities of Bangladeshi people especially Hindu minority. There is a broad discussion in this article about the relationship between the two countries in a way that a complete overview of the developments over the years can be summarized, a separate insight has been provided towards the plight of Hindus in Bangladesh in detail and their subjugation year by year.

Background

India and Bangladesh, and their relationship that has changed dramatically over the years due to historical links, shared interests in the economy, and forces around regional security as well as cultural ties. The current status of bilateral ties assumes new dimensions as Bangladesh navigates a recent political upheaval marked by the installation of an interim government. Particular concern is the Hindu minority group in Bangladesh. In light of these difficulties, this article examines the intricacies of relations between Bangladesh and India, emphasizing the vital importance of communication, cooperation, and the protection of minority rights.

With the swearing-in of Prime Minister Narendra Modi for a third term, focus has refocused on India's foreign policy and how it would evolve over the coming years. For small economies like Bangladesh, India and its "neighborhood first" strategy take on importance because it is linked to India's ethnic and cultural links, in addition to being woven from the same fabric as Akhand Bharat in the past. In order to understand India-Bangladesh relations it becomes necessary to understand the past and how the idea of Bangladesh came into light.

In order to understand the historical perspective it is important to highlight the time when Bangladesh was not born and was part of British India. In 1757, the East India Company emerged as the primary political force in Suba Bangalah following a battle in Plassey between the Mughal nawab (viceroy), Sirāj-ud-Dawlah, and British soldier Robert Clive's army. Under Governor-General Charles Cornwallis, a permanent settlement system was established in the area known as the Bengal Presidency (1786–1793), granting local zamindars (landlords) perpetual property rights. This property policy helped the newly landed middle class to emerge, particularly in Calcutta. Hindus were dominant at first, but towards the end of the 1800s, Muslims started to become more prevalent. A Bengali politician and lawyer from East Bengal named Abul Kasem Fazlul later delivered the Lahore Resolution presentation, which sought to create an independent Pakistan, during the freedom movement for India's independence. During the annual meeting of the Muslim League in Lahore in 1940, Fazl ul-Haq introduced the "Pakistan Resolution," which called for the creation of autonomous states for Muslims. The institutionalized patronage to marginalize Hindus in their own backyard was started with the proposal of partition of Bengal into two states East Bengal and West Bengal. According to the demography and the extremist thought that was propounded by Muslim league throughout the India gave birth to Idea of secession of India which means creating a separate state for Muslims and Britishers were aligned with that idea, and Idea that complimented the thought of partition of India that was eventually executed in 1947 along with the monstrous and violent ouster of Hindus from west Punjab and East Bengal that had subsequently become Pakistan as envisaged by Iqbal but the amalgamation of two distinct cultures and languages posed a existential outburst and imposition and abduction of culture never bear any fruit and that reflected in the violent relationship between the then west Pakistan and East Pakistan between 1947-1971 and the tyrannies by the Pakistani army throughout the East Pakistan promulgated into a freedom movement and Awami league had the total support of people throughout the Bangladesh except the likes of Jamaat-e-Islami which had their loyalties elsewhere and this radical thought led to assassination of Mujibur Rahman and recently removing the Sheikh Hasina from her position and made her to run for life despite the challenges and geopolitical binaries. India came to the rescue and facilitated the exile of Sheikh Hasina from her official residence to protect the human side of harmonious relations that predicate the natural amity and peace.

The Partition of India in 1947 resulted in the creation of West and East Pakistan, two separate regions with a common Islamic religion but distinct differences in language, ethnicity, and culture. During the 1970 parliamentary elections, a large majority of East Pakistanis supported a party that promoted independence for the region, but the military and the then Pakistani government prevented it from taking power, resulting in the imprisonment of its leader. The Pakistani Army harshly cracked down on the mass protests in the East, leading to a large influx of refugees into India. Guerrilla forces from East Pakistan, backed by India, engaged in combat with the Pakistani Army in the late fall of 1971. West Pakistan retaliated by conducting air strikes on India, leading to the outbreak of a full-scale war between the two nations.

The United States encountered numerous quandaries in determining how to address the crisis. The complexity of the regional situation had already been established. In August 1971, India entered into a mutual assistance agreement with the Soviet Union, while the People's Republic of China was supportive of Pakistan and had engaged in a conflict with India in 1962. Nevertheless, Pakistan played a crucial role as a diplomatic ally, aiding the United States in establishing better relations with People's Republic of China in the 1970s. Following President Richard Nixon's trip in 1969, the U.S. Government recommended selling military equipment to Pakistan, which had been interrupted after the 1965 India-Pakistan War. Washington wanted to prevent another conflict between Pakistan and India, yet also worried about the consequences of losing East Pakistan, so it initially backed Pakistan. Nevertheless, the crackdown on the large demonstrations in East Pakistan received a lot of media attention and criticism, which restricted the level of support the U.S. Government was willing to provide. China was deterred from inciting another battle along India's northern border by the Soviet Union's alliance with India, which also prohibited interference from the UN. Pakistan was forced to concede that Bangladesh will become an independent nation rather than East Pakistan as a result of losses on both fronts. In 1974, Bangladesh joined the United Nations.

The United States' influence in South Asia decreased as a result of these developments, and India emerged as the main power on the subcontinent. The United States' reputation suffered in Pakistan due to its lack of assistance in the split of East Pakistan and in India due to its endorsement of the cruel actions of the Pakistani state in Bangladesh. However, the Soviet Union's ties with India strengthened, which was a development that gained significance as India gained power in the area. Over time, the 1971 war intensified the rivalry between Pakistan and India, which made it necessary for the US to focus on regional affairs.

Long-standing historical, geographical, cultural, social, and economic ties, as well as India's crucial role in Bangladesh's formation, have all shaped the relationship between Bangladesh and India. The current state of affairs between two neighboring countries can be broadly classified into three categories: military, economic, and geostrategic. These categories include problems, challenges, collaboration, and advancements.

The economic aspect between India and Bangladesh Trade and industry linkages exist between the two bordering countries through bilateral relations. With the construction of manufacturing facilities in Sonargaon, Dhaka, prominent Indian business magnates like the Tatas and Adanis have made a name for themselves in Bangladesh. With a potential of USD 16.4 billion in bilateral trade, there are unrealized trade prospects in bilateral economic connections. Bangladesh is India's second-biggest trading relationship in South Asia, and India is Bangladesh's major trading partner.

Bangladesh is currently experiencing an unique political transition, causing uncertainty about its future development path. During Sheikh Hasina's 15-year tenure as Prime Minister, the country experienced a period

of stability which led to an increase in foreign investments in the development of transport, energy, and digital infrastructure. During this time, project aid became the preferred method for Bangladesh's development partners, making up the majority of all foreign assistance. During Sheikh Hasina's leadership, India became Bangladesh's main partner in development, with a portfolio worth US\$ 8 billion, creating crucial connections for bilateral and regional connectivity to help Bangladesh reach its economic growth goals. Hasina's abrupt exit from Bangladesh on August 5 resulted in the country coming to a standstill. Questions are being raised about the future of bilateral connectivity projects as the interim government in Dhaka, led by Mohammad Yunus, works to restore normalcy and rebuild institutions

Bangladesh: A timeline of experiments with Power seekers

- After Mujibur Rahman was killed in a military coup in 1975, the new military dictators severed ties between the nation and India to the point where the government started viewing criticism of India as an expression of patriotism. To stop foreign powers from interfering, the military dictator Gen. Ziaur Rahman called for national unity. During his remarks, analysts were certain he was discussing India. In November 1977, a deal to share Ganges water during dry seasons for a mere five years was concluded, despite acrimony. A period of political unrest followed the assassination of Ziaur Rahman in a military coup in 1981. Dec. 1981 saw Justice Abdus Sattar, who had served as Ziaur Rahman's vice president, take office as president of Bangladesh. However his administration was swiftly toppled in 1982 by Army Chief General Hussain Muhammad Ershad. There were no tangible outcomes from H.M. Ershad's two trips to India in October 1982 and July 1986, both in reaction to the flood victims of Urir Char, Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's two reciprocal visits, or the first SAARC conference in Dhaka.
- In 1990, a massive democratic movement led by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and the Awami League brought an end to the Ershad government. Bangladesh ushered in democracy in 1991. Though there was some hope for better ties, the BNP under Begum Khaleda Zia was victorious in 1991 and gained recognition for its concerns about India. India was undoubtedly a major player in the election campaign. The BNP took a stance against India because they thought that the Awami League and India had good connections. During Khaleda Zia's visit to India in May 1992, both countries discussed important issues, including India giving Bangladesh access to the Tin Bigha Corridor. In addition to fortifying ties with Pakistan, the Khaleda Zia administration took an antagonistic stance towards India. Bangladesh was an avenue for Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence, which incited disruptive operations in India during Begum Zia's rule (1991–1996).
- The victory of the Awami League in 1996 marked a significant improvement in the relationship between Bangladesh and India. The daughter of Mujibur Rahman, Sheikh Hasina, the prime minister, declared that she would not put up with any anti-Indian activity in her nation. Bangladesh's generosity was returned by many Indian politicians, among them I.K. Gujral, whose strategy of addressing neighbors'

demands without asking anything in return resulted in the historic 30-year-long Ganges Water Treaty. With the introduction of a bus service between Dhaka and Kolkata on June 19, 1999, the two countries' improved connectivity and favorable trend in bilateral relations were sustained. Additionally, India promised to allow some commodities from Bangladesh to enter the country duty-free and extended a credit line of INR 200 crore, or about US\$28 million, to Bangladesh so that it could buy transportation equipment from India.

- When the BNP won the 2001 election, the unity between India and Bangladesh was shattered. The BNP, led by Khaleda Zia, formed the government with the conservative religious party Jamaat-e-Islami as a coalition partner. Bangladesh's anti-Indian actions escalated, and in spite of India's entreaties, Bangladesh failed to act against the rebels. Even Khaleda Zia, the prime minister, referred to them as "freedom fighters." Furthermore, Bangladesh's Foreign Minister Morshed Khan held India responsible for the 2005 bombings and accused it of providing sanctuary to extremists who are hostile to Bangladesh. The development of regional projects was hampered by the Khaleda Zia government's antagonistic relationship with India. The development of regional projects was hampered by the Khaleda Zia government's antagonistic relationship with India. For instance, because the Trans-Asian Highway Project would pass through India and may provide India access to its northeastern regions through Bangladesh, her administration declined to take part in the project, which was put out by the Asian Development Bank (ADB). The trilateral gas pipeline connecting Bangladesh, India, and Myanmar (IMB) was also put on hold. The problem of energy scarcity in both countries may have been resolved by the pipeline.
- When the Awami League declined to participate in the 2006 parliamentary election, citing concerns about the impartiality of the caretaker administration, Khaleda Zia's term in office came to an end amid a political deadlock. This resulted in violent altercations and the caretaker government's departure, creating a constitutional deadlock. To break the impasse, a state of emergency was declared, and a military-backed interim administration was installed. From January 2007 to December 2008, the interim government, backed by the military, was in power. The bilateral relationship improved during this period, particularly with the resurgence of military cooperation and the 2008 visitation exchange of army chiefs, which had not occurred in nearly a decade. After being discontinued in 1965, train service between Dhaka and Kolkata was resumed. Two million garments from Bangladesh were granted duty-free entry by India in an act of kindness that was widely applauded in Bangladesh.
- The relationship was strengthened even more in December 2008 with the victory of Sheikh Hasina's Awami League. Sheikh Hasina declared that strengthening her relationship with India was her top priority and she pledged to stop any anti-Indian organizations from functioning in her nation. As such, Bangladeshi security forces launched operations against these groups and helped capture leaders of various rebel groups in northeast India, such as Arabinda Rajkhowa, the leader of the ULFA (United

Liberation Front of Assam), and Ranjan Daimary, the head of the NDFB (National Democratic Front of Bodoland).

- Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's victories in back-to-back parliamentary elections in 2014 and 2018 enhanced India's relations with Bangladesh. It has helped to keep the partnership steady and expand collaboration in a number of areas, including energy, space, connectivity, and climate action. Between India and Bangladesh, almost fifty institutional structures have been established in a variety of areas, including trade, power and energy, science and technology, security, river management, and maritime affairs. The biennial discussions between Bangladesh and India's foreign ministers to assess their bilateral relations have shown promise. One accomplishment of this era is the land-sea boundary dispute's successful resolution.
- Bangladesh has been clearing out the remnants of its fifteen-year-old administration in preparation for a new beginning. Currently, a provisional government headed by Nobel Prize winner Muhammad Yunus is in charge of bringing peace to a country beset by instability and discord. The eminent economist, selected by students to serve as the interim government's Chief Adviser, has assembled an advisory group including sixteen individuals from diverse backgrounds. Examining the new cabinet's significance is crucial as Yunus calls for Bangladesh to "rise again" in order to understand the path that this South Asian nation would be taken in the near future. Yunus, who has a background in finance, is one of the three members of the most recent cabinet, which places an emphasis on economic objectives. The others include a former managing director of the Grameen Bank and a former governor of the Bangladesh Bank who concentrated on modernizing the bank's operations, despite the Nobel laureate being well known for creating the institution and setting the standard in microfinance and microcredit. Bangladesh faces a lot of difficulties in this sector. Inflation reached a ten-year high of 7% annually in April 2024, and by March 2023, it had consistently been above 9% for thirteen consecutive months. Bangladesh's debt load has increased recently; over the previous five years, the percentage of external debt to GDP has gone from 10% to 15%. The country's foreign exchange reserves are still being strained, and real GDP growth has dropped to 4.8 percent. In addition, there is an imbalance in the budget, a devaluing currency, a declining remittance rate, an imbalance in the supply and demand of energy, and an imbalance in the balance of payments.
- The temporary government's composition attempts to address the primary problems in Bangladesh that led to widespread discontent with the previous administration. One is the worsening economic conditions; the other is the violation of human rights and the erosion of democratic values. The democratic inconsistencies were one of the key critiques leveled by Western countries at the Hasina government. The level of accusations peaked during the 12th general election in Bangladesh early in January. Some 25,000 opposition figures and supporters were reportedly arrested before the polls, according to media accounts, and 56 people died in election-related violence. Additionally, there have

been reports of claimed torture, deliberate denial of medical care to political detainees, and overuse of force by government officials. The Hasina government was able to win by a wide margin despite a historically low voter turnout of barely 40% since the opposition chose not to run in the election. This cast doubt on the outcome, just like it did following the 2018 election when Hasina secured her third term via boycotting the voting process. International human rights organizations such as Amnesty International and the United Nations have denounced Bangladesh for its violations. A women's rights champion, a human rights activist, a psychology specialist striving to improve mental well-being, and an expert in human rights and democracy make up the council of the interim administration. The Hasina government was able to win by a wide margin despite a historically low voter turnout of barely 40% since the opposition chose not to run in the election. This cast doubt on the outcome, just like it did following the 2018 election when Hasina secured her third term via boycotting the voting process. International human rights organizations such as Amnesty International and the United Nations have denounced Bangladesh for its violations. A women's rights champion, a human rights activist, a psychology specialist striving to improve mental well-being, and an expert in human rights and democracy make up the council of the interim administration.

- There are obvious efforts to enhance Bangladesh evident in the composition of the Dhaka provisional government. It would be a noteworthy achievement if Mohammad Yunus and his Cabinet could successfully supervise free and fair elections in Dhaka. An interim government's primary responsibilities are to oversee daily operations and ensure that a free election is held within three months. Nevertheless, there is currently a lack of clarity regarding the parties that will participate in the election. Even while the Bangladesh Nationalist Party—which has long served as the nation's main opposition—is anticipated to run in the election, it still lacks the charismatic leadership that is required to win over voters. Since the ban was lifted last year, the Jamaat-e-Islami, which the previous Hasina administration had designated as a terrorist organization, has emerged as a formidable rival for political clout. Even if the future leadership of the party is still up in the air, the Awami League is probably going to be involved as well. In the current circumstances, it's possible that new student parties will appear. It is premature to announce elections while the interim government is focused on strengthening institutions. Bangladesh's pressing requirements must be prioritized and met, regardless of who becomes the next leader, as demonstrated by the selection of council advisers.

Hindu marginalization/dehumanization at the core:

After Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was removed on August 5, there have been more than 200 attacks on religious minorities in 52 districts. In the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics' most recent census, which took place in 2022, 91.04% of the population identified as Muslims and 7.95% as Hindus. Other religious minorities make

up 0.12% of the population, followed by Christians (0.30%), Buddhists (0.61%), and other denominations. Minority-targeting violence is not a recent development in Bangladesh. They have known periods of political upheaval to be filled with fear and uncertainty. It is impossible to overstate the gravity of this horror. Many people have experienced traumatic memories of Bangladesh's 1971 War of Independence against Pakistan as a result of the recent violence in the country. There have been incidents of violence against the Hindu community in recent years, especially in 1992, 2001, 2013, and 2022. In 1992, in reaction to the devastation of the Babri Masjid in India, more than 300 Hindu temples were set on fire in Bangladesh. Furthermore, minority families were targeted in incidents of rape and robbery. Hindus living in countries like Bangladesh and Pakistan have always faced an agonizing behavior from the majority Muslim population as if the geopolitical scores would be settled through them by inflicting atrocities on them, the rising sun of Bharata cannot be a soothing sight for them and there comes the biggest of all the proxy master who is the certified at "restoring democracy" in the regimes where indigenous and autonomous decision is taken and that phenomena is United States Of America. The conspiracies will always find a place in the diplomacy of interests, Bharat's interests lie majorly in the developing Bangladesh, a prosperous Bangladesh but the religious dogmatism will definitely take it back to the enigma of puppet government and the west's validation through the multilateral institution like Nobel prize institutions. A self respecting Bangladesh will never be in the interest of Pakistan, China and the United States along with other proletariat seeking communist elites in the guise of capitalism.

Violence was directed towards the minority community in 2001 during the national elections. There were nearly 18,000 recorded incidents of violence during that time, including numerous cases of rape, forced conversion, extortion, rape, genocide, and property grabs. Unexpectedly, 200 Hindu women in Bhola's Char Fashion were raped in a gang in a single night. During the 2001 national elections, Purnima Rani, a polling agent for the Awami League candidate, was sexually attacked by members of the opposition party. The entire country was shook by this horrific incident, which made both minority groups feel terrified. Throughout the past ten years, false news has presented a serious threat to the nation. In 2013, 50 Hindu homes and temples were attacked, set on fire, and damaged in the Sathia upazila of the Pabna district in the western portion of the country. The false allegations of disrespect for religion served as the impetus for the attacks. Amnesty International claimed once more in 2021 that social media claims of religious contempt in Comilla sparked violence against minorities in Bangladesh, resulting in seven fatalities and hundreds of injuries. At least twenty-five Hindu homes and businesses in Rangpur were set on fire. Studies from Bangladeshi human rights organization Ain o Salish Kendra, which document at least 3,679 incidents affecting the Hindu population between January 2013 and September 2021—including devastation, fires, and intentional attacks—are used to quantify the issue in the country. According to the Bangladesh National Hindu Grand Alliance, there have been 39 incidences of women being raped and 154 fatalities of members of minority communities in 2022, indicating that violence has continued. In addition to the violence, at least 89,990 acres of land belonging to minority populations were encroached upon, forcing 445 households to migrate and 572 families to be driven off of their plots. Hindus

RAKSHAAM, VOLUME-1, ISSUE-2

have not been the only victims of violent attacks. At least ten Buddhist temples and two hundred homes were set on fire by hundreds of demonstrators in the southern region of Bangladesh in September 2012, according to official reports. The Bangladesh Nationalist Party, Jamaat, and Awami League were accused of taking part in the destruction of Buddhist temples at Ramur. The political parties in independent Bangladesh must accept accountability for the continued mistreatment of minorities. It is the duty of the government to ensure everyone's safety in a free country. In fact, persecution has been sponsored by the Bangladesh National Party and Jamaat, which have never included any policies in their party programs that are sensitive to the needs of minorities. Similarly, Sheikh Hasina's government has been commended for its attempts to safeguard minorities, although it has failed to successfully prosecute those responsible for crimes committed during the previous 17 years. This blow serves as compelling evidence that the minority group did not feel safe choosing the Awami League. To end these oppressive practices and establish a Bangladesh that is nonsectarian, happy, rich, and developed, the government must act quickly to overhaul the system. Every incident needs to be looked upon right away and prosecuted. Laws protecting minority rights, national recognition of minority groups, and reinforcement of security measures in certain areas should be implemented since a culture that does not enforce consequences fosters criminal activity. Actions for minorities should be taken in all domains, including bringing about reforms in the educational system. Children must be taught to behave in a tolerant, inclusive, and non-discriminatory manner toward people from other backgrounds, including different religions, castes, genders, and sexual orientations, beginning with early schooling and continuing throughout their education.

On the day that the Awami League Government led by Hasina, which had ruled Bangladesh for fifteen years, was overthrown, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi made a forceful statement on minority groups in Bangladesh in response to reports of their persecution.

After Mr. Modi took over as the new official on August 7, 2024, Professor Yunus thanked him for his message. The press office of the Chief Advisor reported that Mr. Modi stated that he was willing to work with others to improve the lives of Bangladeshi citizens.

INDIA-BANGLADESH Developments;

India and Bangladesh have a broad definition of connectivity that encompasses more than just physical connections, but also incorporates energy and digital linkages. This was stated in the joint statement released by the two nations when Hasina visited India as Bangladesh's Prime Minister in June 2024. The statement listed multiple collaborative efforts carried out in these three areas. Given the uncertainty of the current political situation, it is crucial to reassess these projects and evaluate their worth and current status.

Table : Status of India's connectivity projects with Bangladesh

Subsector	Project	Year of Completion	Status
Energy	SASEC 1000MW-HVDC Bangladesh India Electrical Grid Interconnection Project I	2016	Completed
Transport	Restoration of the Radhikapur-Birol rail link	2017	Completed
Energy	SASEC 500MW-HVDC Bangladesh India Electrical Grid Interconnection Project II	2017	Completed
Transport	Restoration of the Haldibari – Chilahati rail link	2020	Completed
Transport	Restoration of the Gede-Darshana rail link	2021	Completed
Transport	Restoration of the Petrapole-Benapole rail link	2022	Completed
Transport	Akhaura-Agartala rail link I	2023	Completed*
Transport	Khulna-Mongla Port Rail	2023	Completed
Energy	Maitree Thermal Power Plant I, II	2023	Completed*
Energy	India-Bangladesh Friendship Pipeline	2023	Completed
Energy	Rooppur Nuclear Plant I	2024	Under Construction
Energy	Katihar-Parbatipur-Bornagar 765 kV electricity transmission line	2025	Under Construction
Energy	Rooppur Nuclear Plant II	2027	Under Construction

Digital	ISRO-Bangladesh satellite launch	N/A	MoU signed
Digital	4G/5G connectivity projects by Indian companies	N/A	MoU signed
Total number of sectors covered: 3	Total projects: 16		

Source: MEA Dashboard, Ministry of External Affairs, India, (**only parts/phases of these projects have been completed*).

India and Bangladesh aim to use their extensive bilateral cooperation as a foundation for regional and sub-regional integration in the Global South, through joint initiatives like Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), and Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA). With this goal in mind, the two nations had placed importance on promptly implementing the Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal (BBIN) Motor Vehicle Agreement to enhance sub-regional connectivity. Improving road and highway links is crucial to support the growing trade between India and Bangladesh, which has doubled from 2014 to 2024. An agreement on Railway Connectivity was made in the railway industry to start cargo-train operations from Gede (India) to Darshana (Bangladesh) via Chilahati (Bangladesh), Haldibari (India), and Dalgaon (Assam, India) leading up to Hasimara (Indian border town close to Bhutan). Utilizing the Gede-Darshana and Chilahati-Haldibari rail connections to the Bhutan border would help India enhance trade between Bhutan and Bangladesh and take advantage of transit trade opportunities.

Following the Bangladeshi coup, India closed six main land ports along the India-Bangladesh border, increased security along the borders, and halted rail connections indefinitely. Nevertheless, several weeks later, the biggest land port linking Petrapole (India) and Benapole (Bangladesh) was reopened in order to standardize trade. Economic interdependence and various connections played a role in this swift return to normality. This event represents a much-needed triumph for New Delhi in South Asia, showcasing the culmination of its endeavors to promote economic connections and physical infrastructure in the area for enhanced regional stability and security. Although economic and infrastructure connectedness was not the sole reason for rapid normalization, it played a considerable role. India's quick and decisive effort to resume bilateral trade with Bangladesh highlights the priority the country places on its neighboring relationships. Extensive connectivity projects across the region have played a significant role in cultivating India's contribution to economic development and

regional growth. Although national parties in other countries may use anti-India rhetoric for political gain, they acknowledge the significance of New Delhi's economic and physical connections in regional progress. This is especially accurate for Bangladesh, a nation aiming to attain the status of a developing country in the UN by 2026 and requiring several development partnerships to accomplish this goal. Governments in New Delhi and Dhaka must maintain ongoing bilateral cooperation to promote economic development and stabilize the turbulent geopolitical environment in South Asia. Constant effort is required for New Delhi to maintain its position in the region. The development of the region and India's impact rely on how actively it engages with neighboring countries. The mostly unused credit available to Bangladesh offers both difficulties and chances. Bangladesh may suffer in its future development path due to the interim government's careful utilization of India's credit lines. Engaging with Bangladesh's interim government requires both continuing current projects and seeking out new areas for collaboration. Industries such as renewable energy, digital infrastructure, and climate resilience show potential for working together. India's future relationships with other countries depend on its capacity to adjust and uphold its position in advancing regional development.

Challenges Ahead:

Three major periods may be distinguished in the history of ties between Bangladesh and India, beginning with the first phase during Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib's first civilian administration. (1972-1975), followed by military dictatorships (1975-1990), and then the period post-1990 till present. A fresh changes have been brought in 2024 by the extremist puppets installed by their handlers to test the waters of geopolitics in a manner that India is made to suffer the sustaining proxies to sabotage the indigenous and cultural harmony that was starting to bear the fruits of the policies like Neighborhood first and act east policy, however Dhaka has to come out of its dilemma of injustices that are meted out to the minorities especially Hindu in particular all across the country , a video clipping was making rounds on social media in which a hindu teacher was being forcefully evicted out from his job of teaching. These acts are the modus operandi of Jammāt-e-Islami a terrorist organization which amounts to Ghazwa-e-hind as its final target to achieve and it has been continuously active even before the partition and that is very dangerous as far as the security establishment are concerned. The saying "you can't pick your neighbor" is just as relevant for India as it is for Bangladesh. The interim regime led by Yunus should avoid seeing India with suspicion and mistrust. Most importantly, both parties need to rely on their citizens to rekindle the warmth and trust that was present several years ago. Constructing bridges is a challenging task, yet definitely feasible. Bridging the networks of extremists and terrorist organizations and releasing terrorists on priority basis must never be a state approved decision and the validation is done through the atrocities against Hindus. Sadly and most importantly this all is continuously happening since the interim government has set in following the ouster of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. During the events unfolding she had to be evicted out from her residence by the Indian government to escape the motivated protesters to assassinate her. Visuals from the Prime Minister house were featured in the news channels and social media in

which protesters were seen taking out the belongings from the PM house and so many unwanted gestures were made throughout the social media. This is very disheartening to see that a state machinery and its institutions were made to fall, thus the vested interests of big strategic powers and their geopolitical advantages were put to spread anarchy, dogmatism and existential threat to minorities. There is news going around that Hindu festivities are around the corner and subjugation of Hindus has already started by the neo extremist associates in the form of programmed revolutionaries propagated as the new realists. Indian government is making sound efforts to resume the bilateral relations with the new interim government and its advisors and this will be the testing water as far as the South Asian regional political developments are concerned. There is a gripping apprehension regarding the already established projects and their continuity to prosper the ongoing relation to merge the instability posing a threat to geopolitics.

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From Non-Alignment to Global Peacemaker: How Modi's India can influence the Russia-Ukraine Conflict Resolution

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Abstract

Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's direction, India has seen a dramatic change in its foreign policy, moving from a non-aligned state to a growing global mediator. India is in a unique position regarding the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine since it has maintained solid diplomatic contacts with both countries. The paper examines how India may have an impact on efforts to resolve conflicts in Eastern Europe because of its historical non-alignment and present foreign policy of strategic autonomy. India's historical neutrality served as a buffer against tensions during the Cold War, but the current state of the world necessitates a more proactive and moderating position. India is becoming increasingly prepared to handle complicated international conflicts, as evidenced by Modi's foreign policy, which is marked by active participation in international institutions like the UN and G20. This study assesses India's ability to serve as an impartial mediator in the Russia-Ukraine crisis by examining its diplomatic relations. India's ability to play a geopolitical balancing act between Russia and the West provides a means of advancing negotiations. The study concludes that, although India's position as a world peacemaker is still developing, its strategic diplomacy can greatly influence how this conflict develops and even help defuse and end hostilities in Eastern Europe.

Key Words: - Russia, Ukraine, Narendra Modi, Geo-politics, Foreign Policy, Conflict, Peace

In March 2013, after students and professors raised concerns, the University of Pennsylvania cancelled a lecture by Narendra Modi, who was then the chief minister of Gujarat, India. He was supposed to speak via videoconference, but many people were still accusing him of not doing enough to stop anti-Muslim riots in Gujarat in 2002, where over a thousand people were killed. Due to these allegations, Modi had been banned from traveling to Western countries. In 2005, the U.S. denied him a visa under a law that blocks foreign officials accused of serious violations of religious freedom, and the European Union also refused to let him visit. But time changes for everyone, whether it is good or bad. Just as night comes after day and then morning again, similarly difficult times in life also pass. After every problem there is a new beginning. This is the beauty of time, it never remains constant, and change is the inevitable truth of life. Since Modi became prime minister in 2014, his rise has been nothing short of remarkable. It's not just about how he transformed his own image as a politician, but also how India's story has evolved. India's foreign policy has become more centered around Modi himself, as he travels the world and actively seeks the spotlight on the global stage.

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RAKSHAAM, VOLUME-1, ISSUE-2

Modi has presented himself as a leader who is determined to bring positive changes both at home and abroad. His foreign policy reflects this attitude—not only in his success in making major international deals but also in his boldness and willingness to take more risks compared to previous leaders. Under Modi, India’s foreign policy has become more ambitious, exploring new directions. This is clearly shown through three of his key approaches: building stronger ties with East Asian countries, standing firm against Pakistan, and deepening defence partnerships with the U.S. and its allies, while still maintaining close relations with Russia.¹

Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India has experienced political stability, impressive economic growth, and significant military modernization. India’s international standing and geopolitical influence are on the rise, partly due to the slowing of China’s economic boom, which has highlighted the ascent of India—Asia’s other demographic giant—as a critical geopolitical and financial power. Strategically situated at the Persian Gulf, Central Asia, and Southeast Asia crossroads, India holds a unique and influential position in global affairs. India is the fastest-growing major economy in the world, with an annual growth rate of approximately seven per cent, and it plays a critical role in the global economy. Over recent years, India has contributed around 15 per cent of global economic growth, cementing its position as a vital player in shaping international economic trends. The country also boasts a rapidly expanding middle class, with approximately 300 million individuals identified as middle-class consumers. This number is projected to double by 2030, reaching 600 million. As India’s middle class grows, it is becoming increasingly influential in shaping global consumption patterns, positioning Indian consumers as a crucial market for a wide range of products and services.²

¹ *Modi’s bold new world.* (2017, June 29). The Cairo Review of Global Affairs.

<https://www.thecaireview.com/essays/modis-bold-new-world/>

² *India’s Role in the World Today: A Look at its Influence Across Continents.* (2022, June 7). Unacademy.

<https://unacademy.com/content/nda/study-material/indian-history/indias-role-in-the-world-today-a-look-at-its-influence-across-continents/>



Russian President Vladimir Putin and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi Walk together during an unofficial meet at the Novo-Ogaryovo home outside of Moscow, Russia (Monday, July 8, 2024)³

With a strong emphasis on pro-growth and pro-market reforms, Prime Minister Narendra Modi seeks to position India as a global manufacturing hub, particularly at a time when many Western corporations are looking to diversify production away from China. However, India's vast size and diversity present substantial challenges. As the most populous country in the world, India is characterized by significant demographic and cultural heterogeneity. Despite this complexity, India's democratic framework continues to serve as a cornerstone of inclusivity, stability, and resilience. Through participatory governance and open dialogue, the Indian political system has fostered the empowerment of individuals at the grassroots level, enabling historically marginalized classes and castes to gradually rise to positions of influence within politics and the bureaucracy. This inclusive approach has strengthened India's democratic institutions and contributed to social and political cohesion. As Jawaharlal Nehru, in a speech to the Constituent Assembly of India on March 8, 1948 said "External affairs will follow internal affairs. Indeed, there is no basis for external affairs if internal affairs go wrong."⁴

³ Anand, N. (2024, July 9). "No solution on battlefield": India on Ukraine war amid Modi-Putin meet. [www.business-standard.com. https://www.business-standard.com/india-news/no-solution-on-battlefield-india-on-ukraine-war-amid-modi-putin-meet-124070900343_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/india-news/no-solution-on-battlefield-india-on-ukraine-war-amid-modi-putin-meet-124070900343_1.html)

⁴ Appadorai A., *Select Documents on India's Foreign Policy and Relations 1947-1972 Volume I* (Oxford University Press, 1982), xxx.

Modi's leadership has played a pivotal role in crafting a pragmatic and flexible foreign policy for India. Stripped of rigid ideological constraints, this approach prioritizes enhancing the nation's economic and military security while maintaining strategic autonomy, avoiding alignment with any single global power as a dominant partner. India's emergence as a global power is one of the most significant developments in contemporary international relations. However, it often receives less attention in comparison to the focus on China's expanding influence, the United States' efforts to sustain its global leadership, and the ongoing conflicts in Europe and the Middle East that continue to dominate global discourse.⁵

India's foremost foreign policy challenges stem from its complex regional dynamics, particularly the growing strategic alliance between China and Pakistan. Both of these nuclear-armed nations have laid territorial claims on significant portions of Indian land, further complicating the geopolitical landscape. In response to such threats, India has emerged as the third-largest defence spender globally, following only the United States and China.⁶

India is home to one of the world's oldest civilizations and has influenced Asia for thousands of years. Despite many challenges, it has successfully upheld a working democracy for the past 78 years. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been working hard to regain the ancient glory of Bharat which was known as “Golden Bird” in the world before we get colonised by the Western powers. He's travelled to places like Russia to talk to leaders and show that India has not forgotten its old friends like Russia and sent a very strong message to western world. Even though there's a big conflict going on between Russia and Ukraine, India has stayed neutral in the entire conflict since 2022. This means India hasn't picked a side and is instead trying to help both countries find a peaceful solution. India has been talking to the leaders of both countries and asking them to stop the conflict and talk things out. India wants to be a peacemaker, not a fighter. By being neutral and strong, India can help both sides find a way to stop the war. India is trying to get along with both the Western countries and Russia. This is because India has always tried to be independent through its Non-alignment policy and not choose one side over the other. India is doing business and working together with the West on things like trade, defence, and technology. But India also shares a historical tie with Russia which is still as relevant as it was in the 1970s when eastern Pakistan was liberated from Pakistan and made a separate country “Bangladesh”. When it comes to defence and energy, India also shares a very common interest with Russia. India is not fully agreeing with

⁵ Jcookson. (2024, May 1). *Tracking Global India's growing influence*. Atlantic Council.

<https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/content-series/inflection-points/tracking-global-indias-growing-influence/>

⁶ Chellaney. (2024, June 6). *India's global role will grow in Modi's third term*. Stagecraft and Statecraft.

<https://chellaney.net/2024/06/06/indias-global-role-will-grow-in-modis-third-term/>

the West when they try to punish Russia. This way, India can talk to both sides and do what's best to resolve the conflict.



In honouring children's memories, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy visited the "Martyrologist" Exposition in Kyiv, Ukraine (Friday, Aug. 23, 2024)⁷

Narendra Modi's ability to help bring peace to the Russia-Ukraine war depends on India's neutral stance and its reputation as a trusted global player. Modi has personally reached out to both Russian President Putin and Ukrainian President Zelensky, urging them to talk and find a peaceful solution. By staying neutral, Modi positions India as a mediator who can help both sides come to the table for discussions. India's long-standing trust with Russia, along with its growing influence in global politics, makes it a credible voice for peace. Modi's strong relationships with world leaders and his diplomatic skills could help close the communication gaps between Russia and Ukraine, paving the way for peace talks.

India's balanced relationship with both the West and Russia, along with Modi's diplomatic efforts, gives India a chance to act as a peacemaker in the Russia-Ukraine war. If India succeeds in this role, it could improve its global reputation and show the world that it can help bring peace and stability.

⁷ Kumar, A. (2024, August 24). Here are the key highlights from PM Modi's meeting with Zelensky in Ukraine. *www.business-standard.com*. https://www.business-standard.com/india-news/here-are-the-key-highlights-from-pm-modi-s-meeting-with-zelensky-in-ukraine-124082400409_1.html



President Joe Biden talks with India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi as he leaves the Quad leaders' summit at Archmere Academy in Claymont, Del., Saturday (September 21, 2024)⁸

⁸ Pti. (2024, September 22). *Joe Biden hails PM Modi's Ukraine trip, lauds India's global role*. The Hindu. <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/joe-biden-hails-pm-modis-ukraine-trip-lauds-indias-global-role/article68671038.ece>

Liberation Movements in Pakistan's Major Provinces: A Historical Overview

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Abstract

This paper examines the complex historical and political landscape of Pakistan, focusing on separatist movements in major provinces, particularly Balochistan. It explores the roots of these movements, tracing them back to the partition of British India in 1947 and the subsequent challenges faced by the newly formed nation. The study highlights the ongoing struggle for autonomy in Balochistan, detailing human rights violations, enforced disappearances, and extrajudicial killings allegedly perpetrated by state security forces. The paper also touches upon separatist sentiments in other regions such as Sindh, Gilgit-Baltistan, and the issues faced by the Pashtun community in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. It emphasizes the need for a comprehensive, inclusive approach to address these regional conflicts and foster national unity.

Keywords: Separatist movements, Balochistan, Human rights violations, Enforced disappearances, Extrajudicial killings

Introduction

Examining the historical context and the elements that have produced separatist movements in Pakistan is crucial to understanding the motivations behind them. The religious and political differences that arose during British India's 1947 Partition served as the foundation for the creation of Pakistan. Under the direction of Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the Muslim League promoted Pakistan's creation as an autonomous Muslim nation.

The idea of Pakistan did not resonate with all Muslims in India; however, due to the radical approach and inability to counter the influence of the Muslim League, it had a profound impact on the Muslims. During the 1937 general elections, the All-India Muslim League faced rejection from Muslim voters in the majority provinces, which was not enough to counter its influence. Additionally, Bengal, a province with a significant Muslim population, from the concept of Pakistan further complicated the demand for a unified Muslim homeland.

The early years of Pakistan were marred by constitutional crises and debates about the role of Islam, the level of provincial representation, and the distribution of power. These challenges, combined with the refugee crisis resulting from Partition, contributed to the complex socio-political landscape of Pakistan. The influx of refugees from India and Afghanistan significantly altered the demographics and cultural dynamics of the country, particularly in regions like Sindh.

Provincial jealousies and power dynamics have been significant factors that contributed to the start of separatist movements in Pakistan. The dominance of Punjabis from Punjab, the most populous province at the time, has been a point of contention for other provinces, such as Sindh, Balochistan, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The dominance of the Punjabi majority in the benefits of power, profit, and patronage fuelled resentment and demands for greater autonomy.

The One Unit scheme, introduced in 1955, further exacerbated these tensions. While it aimed to create uniformity within Pakistan, it favoured Punjab regarding taxation, salaries, and recruitment. This created a sense of marginalization and inequality among the smaller provinces, leading to a desire for more control over their resources and governance.

Pakistan, a country with a rich and complex history, has witnessed various separatist movements since its inception. These movements have emerged from different regions, each with its unique past and reasons for seeking independence or autonomy. From Balochistan to Sindh and Gilgit-Baltistan, these movements have shaped the political landscape of Pakistan. This article will explore the significant separatist movements in Pakistan, shedding light on their origins, motivations, and the challenges they pose to Pakistan.

Balochistan: The Struggle for Autonomy

One of the most prominent separatist movements in Pakistan is in Balochistan. The struggle for autonomy Independence in Balochistan has deep roots in the pre-independence era. Baloch nationalist leaders campaigned for an independent state, but their declaration was rejected by the Pakistani government, leading to the forcible annexation of the region.

When Pakistan was created as a result of the Partition of British India, Balochistan was not a part of Pakistan. However, in March 1948, the annexation of Kalat by Pakistan forcefully made Balochistan a part of Pakistan. Since then, Baloch nationalists have engaged in conflicts with the state, demanding greater autonomy and control over their resources.

Balochistan has been a victim of human rights violations led by state-sponsored death squads. The Pakistani Army's involvement in Enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings has made matters worse for the Baloch. Various human rights organizations and activists have documented numerous cases of individuals,

RAKSHAAM, VOLUME-1, ISSUE-2

including political activists, journalists, and students, who have disappeared without a trace, allegedly at the hands of state security forces or their proxies.

These disappearances often involve individuals being detained without charges, held incommunicado, and subjected to torture or other forms of ill-treatment. In some cases, the victims are later found dead, their bodies bearing signs of torture or execution-style killings.

One prominent example of enforced disappearances in Balochistan is the case of Zakir Majeed Baloch, a student leader and political activist who disappeared in 2009. Zakir Majeed was the senior vice chairman of the Baloch Student Organization (Azad), a nationalist group advocating for the rights of the Baloch people. Zakir Majeed was reportedly abducted by Pakistani security forces on June 8, 2009, from Mastung, Balochistan. Since then, his whereabouts remain unknown, and his family has been unable to obtain any information about his fate or whereabouts despite years of campaigning and legal efforts.

His case gained international attention, with human rights organizations condemning his disappearance and calling for his immediate release or disclosure of his whereabouts. However, Zakir Majeed remains one of the many unresolved cases of enforced disappearances in Balochistan, highlighting the ongoing human rights challenges faced by the Baloch people in the region.

Another example of enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings-:

Nawaz Atta Baloch: Nawaz Atta Baloch, a Baloch student leader, was abducted by Pakistani security forces in 2009. His body was found dumped in Quetta, Baluchistan, bearing signs of torture.

Zahid Baloch: Zahid Baloch, the chairman of the Baloch Student Organization (Azad), disappeared in 2014 after being allegedly abducted by Pakistani security forces. His whereabouts remain unknown.

Latif Johar: Latif Johar, a Baloch activist and former chairman of the Baloch Student Organization (Azad), disappeared in 2014 and was later released after several months of alleged detention by Pakistani security agencies.

Hameed Baloch: Hameed Baloch, a prominent Baloch political activist, was abducted by Pakistani security forces in 2009. His mutilated body was found dumped near Turbat, Balochistan, in 2011.

Sana Sangat Baloch: Sana Sangat Baloch, a Baloch journalist, went missing in 2010 and was later found dead with signs of torture in Khuzdar, Baluchistan.

In response to these abuses, Baloch nationalist groups and human rights activists have organized protests within Baluchistan and internationally to raise awareness of the issue and demand accountability from the authorities.

These protests often highlight the plight of the families of the disappeared, who endure immense suffering and uncertainty about the fate of their loved ones.

In a powerful display of solidarity and activism, Mahrang Baloch led a march against the Baloch genocide in the heart of Islamabad. The event, which aimed to draw attention to the ongoing human rights violations in Balochistan, was met with a heavy-handed response from state authorities, reflecting the challenges faced by activists advocating for justice and accountability.

The march, organized by Mahrang Baloch and supported by numerous human rights groups, brought together Baloch activists, civil society members, and concerned citizens from across Pakistan. Their unified message demanded an end to the violence and atrocities perpetrated against the Baloch people and called for justice for the victims of enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings, and other forms of state-sponsored oppression.

With banners bearing slogans such as "Stop Baloch Genocide" and "End Enforced Disappearances," the participants marched through the streets of Islamabad, amplifying their voices and demanding that the government take immediate action to address the crisis in Baluchistan. The peaceful demonstration aimed to shed light on the plight of the Baloch people and to mobilize public support for their cause.

However, the peaceful nature of the march was disrupted when state authorities intervened, deploying riot police and resorting to violent tactics to disperse the demonstrators. Reports emerged of arbitrary arrests, tear gas shelling, and baton charges against the protestors, highlighting the government's crackdown on dissent and its unwillingness to address the grievances of the Baloch community.

The heavy-handed response to the march underscores the challenges faced by activists and human rights defenders in Pakistan, where efforts to raise awareness about human rights abuses are often met with repression and censorship. Despite facing intimidation and harassment, Mahrang Baloch and her fellow activists remain undeterred in their quest for justice and accountability.

Sindh: A Quest for Identity

In Sindh, another province of Pakistan, a separatist movement known as Sindhu-Desh exists. This movement seeks greater autonomy and recognition for the Sindhi people, who have a distinct cultural and linguistic identity. The Sindhu-Desh movement argues that the province of Sindh has been marginalized and its resources exploited by the central government.

One of the critical issues driving the separatist sentiment in Sindh is the disparity between different regions within the province. Southern Punjab, for example, experiences higher poverty rates compared to the rest of the province. This economic imbalance has fuelled grievances and contributed to the demand for greater autonomy and control over resources in Sindh.

Gilgit-Baltistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Striving for Recognition

In the occupied region of Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B), there is a growing demand for change in its administrative status. G-B has been granted provisional status, but there are calls for its full recognition as a separate province. The people of G-B seek more constitutional rights and representation in decision-making processes. The struggle for recognition in G-B is fuelled by a sense of marginalization and a desire for self-governance. The region, with its unique cultural and geographical characteristics, seeks to assert its identity and gain a voice in Pakistan's political landscape. While progress has been made in addressing these demands, further action is still needed to fully address the aspirations of the people of G-B. The Pashtun population, the largest ethnic group in KP, has long endured systemic discrimination, political marginalization, and violence at the hands of both state and non-state actors. Against this backdrop, there is a growing call for autonomy and justice to address the pressing issues facing Pashtuns in KP.

Human rights violations against Pashtuns in KP are widespread and well documented. Enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings, and arbitrary detentions have become all too common, with many individuals targeted for their perceived association with militant groups or political dissent. The lack of accountability for these abuses perpetuates a cycle of impunity and undermines the rule of law, leaving Pashtun communities feeling vulnerable and marginalized.

Furthermore, the Pashtun population in KP has been disproportionately affected by the ongoing conflict and instability in the region. Civilian casualties, displacement, and the destruction of homes and livelihoods have taken a heavy toll on Pashtun families, exacerbating their already precarious socioeconomic conditions. Despite their resilience and perseverance, Pashtuns face systemic barriers to accessing basic services, education, and economic opportunities.

Political marginalization is another pressing issue confronting Pashtuns in KP. Despite being the largest ethnic group in the province, Pashtuns have often been sidelined in decision-making processes and denied meaningful representation in government institutions. This lack of political empowerment perpetuates feelings of alienation and disenfranchisement among Pashtun communities, fuelling resentment and frustration.

The arbitrary arrest of Manzoor Pashtun, a prominent Pashtun rights activist, along with several other journalists, has once again brought into focus the ongoing crackdown on dissent and freedom of expression in Pakistan. This latest incident underscores the challenges faced by those who dare to speak out against injustices and advocate for the rights of marginalized communities, particularly the Pashtuns.

Manzoor Pashteen rose to prominence as the leader of the Pashtun Tahafuz Movement (PTM), a grassroots movement that emerged in response to the systematic discrimination and human rights abuses faced by the Pashtun community in Pakistan, particularly in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa (KP). PTM gained widespread support for its calls to end enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings, and arbitrary detentions, as well as for greater accountability for state atrocities.

However, Pashteen's activism and outspoken criticism of state policies have made him a target of harassment and intimidation by the Pakistani authorities. On numerous occasions, Pashteen has been arrested and charged with sedition, incitement, and other politically motivated offences. These arrests are widely seen as attempts to silence dissent and suppress peaceful advocacy for human rights and justice.

The recent arrest of Pashteen, along with other journalists reporting on PTM activities, is a troubling escalation of the government's crackdown on dissent. The journalists were reportedly detained while covering a peaceful protest organized by PTM in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Their arrest highlights the dangers. We are faced with media professionals who seek to report on issues of public interest and hold those in power accountable.

Freedom of the press is a fundamental pillar of democracy and a cornerstone of a free and open society. The arbitrary arrest of journalists not only violates their rights but also undermines the principles of transparency, accountability, and democratic governance. The authorities seek to control the narrative and suppress information critical to the government's policies and actions by targeting journalists and media professionals.

Punjab: The Quest for Administrative Restructuring

While Punjab is not traditionally associated with separatist movements, there have been calls for administrative restructuring within the province. These demands stem from the challenges of effective governance in a province with a large and diverse population. The argument is that dividing Punjab into smaller administrative units would allow for more efficient service delivery and better representation of different regions within the province.

The disparities within Punjab, such as varying poverty rates and industrial development, have further fuelled the demand for administrative restructuring. However, it is essential to note that these demands are primarily focused on administrative efficiency rather than seeking independence or autonomy from Pakistan.

Conclusion

In summary, the country's intricate historical, social, and political environment is closely linked to the separatist movements in Pakistan's main provinces, such as Baluchistan, Sindh, and Gilgit-Baltistan, as well as demands for administrative restructuring in Punjab. These movements represent long-standing concerns from underprivileged communities demanding greater autonomy, acknowledgment, and control over their resources; they are not only isolated incidents. The need for fair wealth distribution and self-determination highlights the necessity of rethinking Pakistan's national structure.

A comprehensive and inclusive approach that goes beyond simple political or military containment is needed to address these movements. It entails encouraging communication, advocating for diversity, and recognizing the justifiable worries of these populations. It is imperative to comprehensively address the underlying reasons of these separatist aspirations, which include cultural estrangement, political underrepresentation, and economic marginalization. Pakistan can only hope to defuse these tensions and promote national unity by meaningful involvement, respect for varied viewpoints, and attempts to bridge economic and social inequities.

Pakistan's capacity to resolve these regional conflicts and foster a sense of unity among all of its provinces will determine the country's destiny. A more peaceful and cohesive country must be achieved by an all-encompassing, compassionate strategy that places a high value on communication and inclusive laws. Pakistan may strive towards a stable and prosperous future for all its residents by honouring the distinct historical backgrounds of different regions and pursuing peaceful settlements.

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Bharat's Cultural Diplomacy: A Catalyst for Indo-Pacific Cooperation

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Abstract

In the 21st century, soft diplomacy has become a significant strategy for countries to improve their international relations. Among the various forms of soft diplomacy, cultural diplomacy stands out as one of the most effective and engaging approaches, especially in our increasingly interconnected globe. Bharat, with its diverse and rich cultural heritage spanning thousands of years, is distinctively positioned as a leader in cultural diplomacy. The country not only boasts a vibrant mosaic of traditions, languages, and art forms but also has a historical precedent of engaging with other nations through cultural exchange. Historically, Bharat's influence in cultural diplomacy can be traced back to ancient times, exemplified by institutions like Nalanda University, which attracted scholars from around the world. This tradition of knowledge exchange laid the foundation for Bharat's ongoing commitment to fostering international ties through culture. Concepts like "**Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam**" meaning "the world is one family," reflect Bharat's age-old ethos of inclusivity and cooperation. This principle continues to guide Bharat's diplomatic engagements today, emphasizing shared cultural experiences as a means to build stronger global connections. In recent years, Bharat has intensified its cultural diplomacy efforts, particularly in the context of the Indo-Pacific region through platforms like the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD), Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) etc. The QUAD, which includes Bharat, the United States, Japan, and Australia, represents a significant strategic alliance aimed at promoting stability and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific. Within this framework, Bharat has leveraged its cultural heritage to strengthen ties with its partners, facilitating exchanges that promote mutual understanding and respect. Bharat's cultural diplomacy in the Indo-Pacific encompasses various initiatives, including cultural festivals, academic collaborations, and culinary exchanges, which highlight the country's diversity and innovation. Through these efforts, Bharat aims to present itself not only as a regional power but also as a cultural leader capable of fostering global citizenship. This approach not only enriches Bharat's relationships with QUAD nations but also positions it as a key player in promoting peace and harmony in the region. As Bharat continues to navigate the complexities of global politics, its cultural diplomacy will play an essential role in shaping its identity on the world stage. By prioritizing cultural exchange and mutual respect, Bharat can enhance its soft power and influence, contributing to a more connected and cooperative international community.

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This article will explore the various dimensions of Bharat's cultural diplomacy in the Indo-Pacific, examining its historical roots, contemporary practices, and potential future impact through the QUAD framework. Ultimately, it seeks to illustrate how Bharat's commitment to cultural diplomacy can not only elevate its status as a "Vishwaguru" but also foster a sense of unity and shared purpose among nations in an era of globalization.

Cultural Diplomacy: An Overview

Cultural Diplomacy is a subcategory of Public Diplomacy that consists exchange of ideas, values, traditions, and other cultural aspects as a tool for promoting mutual understanding, building relationships, and fostering dialogue between two or more nations. Cultural Diplomacy is used to strengthen bridges of international ties by leveraging the power of music, art, language, education, food, and heritage. It plays a vital role in dealing with global challenges, paving roads of international relations, and flourishing a nation's soft power.

The concept of Cultural Diplomacy is the product of a wide framework of diplomacy, where apart from traditional diplomacy which focuses on economic, political, and security issues it mainly relies on the exchange of cultural capital of a nation where states and non-state actors engage in negotiations and dialogues through cultural mean to manage their relations. Cultural Diplomacy places emphasis on soft power—coined by political scientist Joseph Nye—as the ability to influence others through attraction and persuasion rather than coercion or force. In contrast to hard power, which relies on military and economic means, soft power utilizes cultural assets to shape preferences, values, and behaviour.

Cultural Diplomacy has not emerged in recent years; it has a deep-rooted historical background from the ages of Roman, Greek, Mesopotamian, and Indus Valley Civilization. The roots of cultural diplomacy can be traced back to ancient times when rulers would exchange gifts, artwork, and scholars to build goodwill and demonstrate the sophistication, urbanity, elegance, and refinement of their civilizations.

In the view of Bharat, cultural diplomacy is rooted in its ancient history, diverse and widespread heritage, and the values of inclusivity and pluralism. Bharat's terrestrial location and multicultural society have contributed to a rich mosaic of artistic, spiritual, and intellectual traditions, which have been promoted and praised by people across the world for centuries. From the span of Bharat's philosophy, art, and spirituality through ancient trade routes, to Bharat's current strategic use of cultural diplomacy through initiatives such as yoga diplomacy, the International Day of Yoga, Cuisine, Sports Exchange, Bollywood cinema, and educational exchanges, cultural diplomacy has been a cornerstone of Bharat's engagement with the world.

Role of Cultural Diplomacy in International Relations

As we have discussed earlier in the overview the modes of cultural diplomacy and their implications were in practice for thousands of years from one civilization to another for the fostering of their cultural wealth one of the biggest examples of cultural diplomacy that is still alive from 8th century BC till today's modern day society is the Olympics which was later modulated, founded and restarted by Baron Pierre de Coubertin as International Olympic Committee (IOC) in 1894, leading to the first modern Games in Athens in the year of 1896. "According to official IOC estimates, the hosting of the Games should inject US\$12.2bn into the French economy, compared to the estimated US\$18.3bn for Los Angeles in 2028 and US\$13.4bn for Brisbane 2032."

Cultural Diplomacy has its own significant economic implications for instance "Korean Wave" or Hallyu is the term for South Korea's cultural diplomacy which boosted the country's economy in a very drastic way through the exchange of culture which firmly includes South Korea's music form majorly known as K-Pop which created and new market of South Korean form of goods used in day-to-day lifestyle. According to a survey "In 2022, Korean content (K-content) exports including K-pop hit \$12.45 billion as of 2021 with the help of the Korean wave. The direct economic effects of K-pop are best represented in three areas: 1) music sales and streaming plat- forms, 2) derivative industries, and 3) advertising and marketing."

In the case of Bharat we can go with an example for a better understanding of utilizing cultural heritage as the tool of soft power in terms of cultural diplomacy is Yoga as we see how Bharat started emphasizing the global introduction of the Philosophy of Yoga to the globe from last one decade and the world is accepting Yoga for the improvement of their lifestyle and scheduling their work out time into Yoga for the peaceful and low budget way of staying healthy and trusted by millions of people from last thousands of years and also scientifically proven by modern day scientists. "In Bharat, as per an estimate, the retail fitness service market in Bharat is around \$2.6 billion and the size of the Yoga industry is around \$80 billion. The market for Yoga related equipment grew by 154 % during Covid-19.

As per an analysis published by Allied Market Research, titled Yoga Market by Type: Global Opportunity Analysis and Industry Forecast 2021-27, the global yoga market size was \$37.5 billion in 2019 and is projected to reach approximately \$66.2 billion by 2027."

In September of 2014, Bharat's Prime Minister Shri. Narendra Modi in his UN address suggested celebrating 21 June as International Yoga Day as 21 June is the longest day of the year in the Northern Hemisphere and also holds many different significances in different parts of the globe. On December 11, 2014, the United Nations General Assembly announced that 21 June would be celebrated as International Yoga Day which led to multiple investments in Bharat such as Yoga Studios to Yoga sites in different parts of countries, Rishikesh is marked as the Yoga Capital of World which boosted the tourism industry in Rishikesh which leads to the economic growth of whole state because of international tourists. In a survey it is found that "Global Yoga

Tourism Market size was valued at USD 164.26 Billion in 2022 and is poised to grow from USD 173.95 Billion in 2023 to USD 275.17 Billion by 2031, at a CAGR of 5.9% during the forecast period (2024-2031)” which is directly profiting Bharat in revenue generation from Yoga Tourism. So, the impact of cultural diplomacy in international relations is impeccable as it directly contributes to the revenue generation of the nation which is the sole goal of all kinds of diplomacy that exist in this world. Cultural Diplomacy is one of the driving forces of soft power diplomacy in the modern-day world which is lasting for thousands of years.

Bharat’s Cultural Diplomacy

QUAD stands for the QUADRILATERAL SECURITY DIALOGUE the group of Bharat, Japan, the United States of America, and Australia which was initiated by Japanese Prime Minister Mr. Shinzo Abe in 2007 with supporting idea of Australian Prime Minister Mr. John Howard and later got extended support of Vice President of United States of America Mr. Dick Cheney and Bharat’s Prime Minister Shri. Manmohan Singh added Bharat as a member nation of this group which secures security and social order in the Indo-Pacific region from different modes of counterbalance which are being created by China for their border expansion as a milestone of their expansionist theory of state.

From Bharat’s point of view QUAD is not only a security alliance of nations, it is a group of nations that acts as observers of the Indo-Pacific region for the hassle-free trade and movement of shipments which lies under the umbrella of maritime democracy. In reply to a question raised in the parliament of Bharat for the agenda of upcoming QUAD, the Ministry of External Affairs answered that “Quad is a plurilateral framework comprising Bharat, Australia, Japan, and the USA, with a shared commitment to upholding a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific”. To match the commitment to upholding above mentioned terms the cornerstone will be the soft power for this greater goal, Bharat should have to not only work on collective security exercises but also on the creation of good international relations with member nations, and here comes the role of cultural diplomacy in smoothing, strengthening, bridging, and organizing the nation to nation connect by enhancing people to people connect.

Tools for accessing this diplomatic ideas are many and Bharat is already working on many of them such as promoting Yoga, working on Buddhist circuit, making path for education exchange through Bharat’s Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) fellowships and research collaborations, sports diplomacy with Australia by organizing multiple cricket matches at different time period, developing QUAD Cultural heritage sites, QUAD business forums, more diaspora led cultural festivals, exchange of cultural democratic and governance ideas through civic exchange programs etc. Cultural diplomacy directly impacts on multiple fronts and projects of QUAD such as enduring partners for INDO-PACIFIC, global health and security, Quad Cancer Moonshot, RAKSHAAM, VOLUME-1, ISSUE-2

Pandemic Preparedness, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR), maritime security, Coast Guard Cooperation, Indo-Pacific Logistics Network, Quad Ports of the Future Partnership, Quad Infrastructure Fellows, Undersea Cables and Digital Connectivity, critical and emerging technology, Open Radio Access Network (RAN) and 5G, Artificial Intelligence (AI), Biotechnology, Semiconductors, climate and clean energy and many more.

The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) was established with the signing of the SAARC Charter in Dhaka on 8 December 1985. SAARC comprises eight Member States: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The Secretariat of the Association was set up in Kathmandu on 17 January 1987.

According to the official website of SAARC “The objectives of the Association as outlined in the SAARC Charter are: to promote the welfare of the peoples of South Asia and to improve their quality of life; to accelerate economic growth, social progress and cultural development in the region and to provide all individuals the opportunity to live in dignity and to realize their full potentials; to promote and strengthen collective self-reliance among the countries of South Asia; to contribute to mutual trust, understanding and appreciation of one another's problems; to promote active collaboration and mutual assistance in the economic, social, cultural, technical and scientific fields; to strengthen cooperation with other developing countries; to strengthen cooperation among themselves in international forums on matters of common interests; and to cooperate with international and regional organizations with similar aims and purposes.”

Challenges for Cultural Diplomacy

As the old saying goes, “There are two sides to every coin.” Cultural diplomacy has its own criticism and challenges as it only gives qualitative reforms not quantitative which is the biggest disadvantage in this data-based globe. “Cultural diplomacy presents a number of unique challenges to any government attempting to carry out cultural diplomacy programs. Most ideas that a foreign population observes are not in the government's control. The government does not usually produce books, music, films, TV programs, consumer products, etc.” Cultural diplomacy is mainly criticized for its instrumentalization of culture for extending their political agendas rather than genuine cultural exchange. A major criticism of cultural diplomacy is the politicization of the culture of the source country by the political ideology according to their vote bank politics which portrays the unreal cultural image to the world and is often misused to curtain the on-ground situation of that particular land. Another criticism of cultural diplomacy is the presence of elitism in cultural exchange which led it to cultural imperialism which reflects the neo-colonial agendas hidden behind the propagation of public diplomacy. “One

RAKSHAAM, VOLUME-1, ISSUE-2

of the most important criticisms of traditional CDs was its focus on high arts as opposed to popular culture, significantly limiting the scope and diversity of audiences that can be targeted by these activities”.

So as mentioned in the first line of this segment “There are two sides to every coin” is the true reality of society and the good part is that we are still figuring out how to counter these.

Conclusion

In conclusion Bharat has skilfully leveraged its rich cultural heritage to enhance its international influence, particularly in the strategically important Indo-Pacific region. Through platforms like the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) SAAR and SCO, Bharat has integrated cultural diplomacy into its broader foreign policy objectives. By promoting shared cultural values such as yoga, cuisine, art, and education exchanges, Bharat seeks to strengthen international ties and address security concerns.

Bharat's approach to cultural diplomacy is deeply rooted in its historical legacy of knowledge exchange and cultural inclusivity. The ancient university of Nalanda and the enduring concept of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* (the world is one family) reflect Bharat's commitment to openness, inclusivity and cooperation. This principle remains central to Bharat's modern diplomatic strategies, especially in the Indo-Pacific, where cultural diplomacy is increasingly seen as a bridge-building tool amidst rising geopolitical tensions.

One of the most prominent examples of Bharat's cultural diplomacy is its promotion of yoga. Since the establishment of the International Day of Yoga by the United Nations in 2014, Bharat has been at the forefront of spreading this ancient practice globally. The global acceptance of yoga has not only enhanced Bharat's image as a cultural leader but also contributed to its economic growth through yoga tourism and related industries.

Bharat's culinary diplomacy also plays a significant role in fostering people-to-people connections. By promoting Bharat's cuisine worldwide, Bharat has created cultural touchpoints that resonate across borders. Bharat's festivals, art, and cinema, especially Bollywood, have further expanded Bharat's influence, helping to create a narrative of a vibrant, diverse, and inclusive nation. These cultural exports are part of Bharat's broader effort to engage its QUAD partners and foster mutual respect and understanding.

While Bharat has successfully employed cultural diplomacy as a tool for soft power, there are criticisms and challenges that must be acknowledged. One of the primary concerns is the instrumentalization of culture for political purposes. Critics argue that cultural diplomacy can be reduced to a mere tool for advancing national interests, undermining its authenticity and impact. For instance, some view the global promotion of yoga as a soft power strategy to enhance Bharat's international standing, potentially overshadowing the cultural and philosophical essence of the practice.

Another challenge lies in the perception of elitism within cultural diplomacy. Initiatives often focus on high culture, such as classical arts or fine dining, which may alienate broader audiences. This limited scope can reinforce cultural imperialism. Bharat must navigate this issue carefully, ensuring that its cultural diplomacy efforts are inclusive and representative of its diverse cultural heritage.

Measuring the actual impact of cultural diplomacy presents a significant challenge. Unlike economic or military initiatives, the outcomes of cultural diplomacy are often intangible and difficult to quantify. The influence of a cultural exchange program or a cultural festival on international relations or public opinion cannot be easily measured, making it challenging for policymakers to assess the long-term effectiveness of such initiatives. Bharat's efforts in the QUAD, SAARC and SCO framework, while fostering goodwill and cultural connections, must address this challenge by developing metrics that can better capture the impact of cultural diplomacy on its international standing.

Despite these criticisms, Bharat's strategic engagement in cultural diplomacy within the QUAD framework demonstrates the potential for culture to serve as a unifying force in navigating the complexities of global geopolitics. By blending cultural diplomacy with efforts in global health, maritime security, and technological advancements, Bharat has positioned itself as a key player in promoting peace, stability, and collaboration in the Indo-Pacific. The QUAD's cultural diplomacy initiatives, which include academic collaborations, exchange programs, and festivals, highlight the potential of soft power to contribute meaningfully to broader objectives.

As Bharat continues its journey of positioning itself as a global cultural leader and "Vishwaguru," the role of cultural diplomacy will remain crucial. By addressing the challenges of instrumentalization, elitism, and measurement, and focusing on genuine cultural exchanges that emphasize mutual respect and understanding, Bharat can further enhance its soft power. Cultural diplomacy, when employed effectively, has the potential to build a more interconnected and harmonious Indo-Pacific region and beyond, contributing to global peace and understanding. Through its efforts in the QUAD, Bharat is not only strengthening its diplomatic ties but also shaping a future where culture becomes a cornerstone of international relations.

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India's Geopolitical Role in Red Sea Conflict

Ifrah*

Abstract:

This paper examines the escalating Red Sea crisis that began in mid-November 2023, focusing on its geopolitical implications and India's strategic role in the region. The crisis, triggered by Houthi rebels' attacks on merchant shipping, has disrupted global maritime trade and heightened tensions in an already volatile area. The study analyzes the historical context of conflicts in the Red Sea, the current power dynamics involving major global players, and the economic stakes for countries dependent on this crucial maritime route. The paper highlights India's multifaceted approach to the crisis, balancing diplomatic, military, and economic interests. It explores India's strategic neutrality, its participation in regional security initiatives, and the challenges it faces in maintaining influence amidst great power competition. The research also addresses the economic impact of the crisis on India, particularly concerning trade routes and energy security.

Keywords: Red Sea crisis, Maritime security, Naval diplomacy, Energy security, Indian Ocean Region

Introduction

The Red Sea crisis, igniting in mid-November 2023 due to the Houthi rebels' aggressive actions against merchant shipping in the Gulf of Aden and the broader Western Indian Ocean, has dramatically escalated tensions in a region crucial for global maritime security. The Houthis, backed by Iran, have employed sophisticated weaponry such as drones and anti-ship missiles, targeting vessels linked to Israel or its allies, aiming to exert pressure in a region already destabilized by the Yemeni Civil War.

These attacks have indiscriminately endangered not only Israeli-affiliated vessels but also neutral container and cargo ships, threatening the free flow of goods through this maritime corridor. The volatility of the Red Sea is not a new phenomenon, but the heightened levels of militancy and piracy underscore the strategic importance of the region, particularly as it serves as a critical junction for Europe-Asia trade via the Suez Canal, through which about 12% of global trade passes. The ongoing hostilities have disrupted international trade channels and have notably impacted the operations of the Suez Canal, compounding economic pressure on countries dependent on these routes.

Methodological Framework for Analyzing Geopolitics in the Red Sea

Before delving into the specifics of India's role, it's essential to outline the geopolitical framework guiding this analysis. The Red Sea, positioned at the intersection of major global trade routes, has long been a site of strategic interest for regional powers like Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Israel, as well as global powers such as the United States, China, and Russia. The region's instability stems from multiple sources: geopolitical competition, piracy, the civil war in Yemen, and the struggle for influence between Sunni and Shia factions across the Middle East.

This paper adopts a geopolitical lens that considers the interplay of regional conflicts, maritime security, and international diplomacy. India's strategic and diplomatic engagements will be critically assessed through this framework, focusing on how its actions in the Red Sea align with its broader maritime and security interests in the Indian Ocean region.

Historical Context of the Red Sea Conflicts

The Red Sea has been a strategically vital waterway for centuries, serving as a key route for trade between the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean, and more recently, between Europe and Asia. Its significance has only increased since the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, which turned the Red Sea into one of the most crucial maritime routes in global trade. As trade through the canal expanded, so did international competition to control this region.

Historically, colonial powers like the British and French maintained a presence in the Red Sea to secure their interests in Asia and Africa. After the decolonization period, regional actors such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Israel emerged as key stakeholders. However, the region has been plagued by conflict since the mid-20th century, most notably the Suez Crisis in 1956 and the Arab-Israeli conflicts that followed.

In recent decades, piracy originating from Somalia, combined with the civil war in Yemen, has transformed the Red Sea into a dangerous maritime corridor. The conflict in Yemen, involving the Saudi-led coalition and the Houthi rebels backed by Iran, has contributed to the current instability. Houthi control over significant portions of Yemen's coastline along the Red Sea has allowed them to target international shipping, leveraging the strategic Bab al-Mandab Strait—a choke point through which approximately 6.2 million barrels of oil transit daily.

India's Strategic Interests in the Red Sea

Geographical and Economic Significance

For India, the Red Sea is crucial to its energy security and international trade. The Bab al-Mandab Strait and the Suez Canal form vital sea lanes that connect the Indian Ocean to Europe, making the Red Sea a critical artery for India's energy imports. Approximately 40% of India's oil supplies pass through this region, and any disruption could severely impact its economy, which relies on stable and affordable energy supplies.

In 2022, India's maritime trade through the Red Sea accounted for over \$240 billion, underscoring the economic importance of these waterways. The region also serves as a critical link for India's trade with Europe, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, and the broader Middle East. Given that India imports nearly 85% of its crude oil, securing safe passage through the Red Sea is vital for sustaining its economic growth.

Strategic Importance

India's strategic interest in the Red Sea extends beyond economic considerations. The region is an extension of India's maritime domain, where it seeks to project power and safeguard its growing influence in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). India's Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR) initiative emphasizes the importance of maintaining security in maritime zones that connect with the Indian Ocean, including the Red Sea.

Moreover, India's geopolitical rival, China, has made significant inroads into the Red Sea region by establishing its first overseas military base in Djibouti in 2017. This development heightens the need for India to actively engage in the region to counterbalance China's expanding presence. The growing Chinese influence has added complexity to India's strategic calculations, as Beijing also invests heavily in infrastructure and development projects in Africa and the Middle East, including within the Red Sea zone.

India's Diplomatic and Military Engagements

Military Operations

India's military presence in the region is exemplified by Operation Sankalp, launched in 2019 in response to the deteriorating security situation in the Strait of Hormuz and the Red Sea. The Indian Navy has deployed more than 5,000 personnel and 20 ships as part of this operation, which focuses on escorting merchant ships and ensuring their safety amid threats from piracy and militant attacks.

The modernization of India's naval forces plays a crucial role in these efforts. With the deployment of Kolkata-class stealth destroyers and MQ-9B SeaGuardian drones, India has demonstrated its commitment to improving surveillance and counter-piracy operations. Additionally, India's participation in multinational naval exercises like Exercise Milan 2024, involving countries from the IOR and beyond, strengthens its military diplomacy and enhances cooperation on maritime security issues in the Red Sea.

Diplomatic Maneuvering

India's diplomatic strategy in the Red Sea balances relations with major powers like the United States and Iran. The Chabahar port development project in Iran exemplifies India's cooperation with Tehran, while maintaining strong ties with Saudi Arabia and the UAE. This strategic balancing act allows India to secure its interests without becoming embroiled in the regional rivalries that dominate the Red Sea and the broader Middle East.

India's role in forums such as the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) and its participation in the Red Sea Naval Symposium reflect its efforts to promote a collective security framework in the region. By aligning with multilateral security initiatives, India enhances its strategic footprint while advocating for a rules-based order in the maritime domain.

India and Major Powers in the Red Sea

The Red Sea is increasingly becoming a theater for great power competition. The United States maintains a significant military presence through its Fifth Fleet based in Bahrain, while China has positioned itself in Djibouti. Russia has also expressed interest in expanding its influence in the region through arms deals and energy cooperation with Sudan.

India, unlike the great powers, adopts a strategy of strategic neutrality, focusing on securing its own interests while avoiding direct involvement in conflicts. India's diplomatic efforts are aimed at balancing its relationships

with the United States, which provides critical security guarantees, and with Iran, with which India shares economic and strategic interests, particularly in Afghanistan and Central Asia.

Economic Dimensions of India's Role in the Red Sea

The economic stakes for India in the Red Sea are enormous. The Houthi rebels' attacks on shipping have raised concerns in India about the security of its trade routes. Estimates suggest that if hostilities in the region continue to escalate, India could lose up to \$30 billion in exports due to disruptions in shipping and rising insurance premiums for vessels passing through the region.

India's government has been proactive in addressing these concerns by seeking alternative routes and exploring the potential to diversify its energy supply chain. For instance, India is exploring increased imports from the United States and other partners to mitigate risks from the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf.

Challenges and Opportunities for India

Challenges

India faces several challenges in maintaining its presence and influence in the Red Sea. The resurgence of piracy, especially off the coast of Somalia, poses a direct threat to Indian merchant ships. Moreover, the strategic competition between China, the United States, and Iran in the Red Sea creates a complex environment in which India must navigate carefully to avoid being drawn into regional conflicts.

The instability in Yemen, compounded by the humanitarian crisis, makes it difficult for India to engage diplomatically without antagonizing either Saudi Arabia or Iran. Moreover, the ongoing competition for influence in Africa, where the Red Sea forms a critical frontier, presents further diplomatic and economic challenges.

Opportunities

Despite these challenges, India has significant opportunities to enhance its role as a security provider in the IOR. By investing in regional infrastructure projects, such as the Berbera Port in Somaliland, India can expand its economic influence while securing vital trade routes. India's growing partnership with countries like Saudi Arabia and Egypt, through diplomatic and defense ties, also provides avenues for deeper engagement in the region.

Policy Recommendations

1. Enhanced Multinational Cooperation: India should increase its participation in regional security initiatives, such as the Red Sea Naval Symposium, to promote collective maritime security.
2. Strengthening Naval Capabilities: India must continue modernizing its naval forces, particularly with a focus on intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities to counter threats in the Red Sea and beyond

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India can help stop the war between Russia and Ukraine. As a friend to both countries, India can talk to them and try to make them stop fighting. India has been clear that it doesn't want to take sides in the war. This makes him a good person to talk to for both Russia and Ukraine. India is becoming more important in the world. It is part of groups like BRICS and on the other hand, it is also part of I2U2. India can use these groups to help bring Russia and Ukraine together to talk about peace. India's leader, Modi, wants India to be active in the world. India's message of peace and development is important in places like Russia and Ukraine. By helping to stop the war, India can show the world that it is committed to peace.

India can play a key role in the Russia-Ukraine conflict by acting as a mediator in peace talks. Since India hasn't taken sides, it is seen as a trustworthy partner by both Russia and the West. Its long-standing ties with Russia allow open communication, while its good relationships with Western countries make India a strong go-between. India could help start ceasefire discussions, build trust, or host behind-the-scenes talks. By using international groups like the G20 or the UN, India can increase its efforts to bring about a peaceful solution to the conflict.

India's global reputation could greatly improve if it plays a key role in mediating peace in the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Successfully helping to resolve the war would show that India is becoming a major global power and a responsible player in world politics. It would enhance India's image as a country that promotes diplomacy and peaceful solutions, increasing its influence beyond South Asia. Additionally, India's efforts in ending the conflict would boost its standing as a reliable mediator in handling tough international issues. In a world with many global powers, India's ability to help solve such conflicts could strengthen its position in global decision-making and future peace efforts.

India might not be directly involved in the Russia-Ukraine war, but it can still bring peace in the western world. By talking to both sides and working with other countries, India can make people around the world think more about peace. If India does this well, it could become really important in helping to stop the fighting.

The global and geopolitical prominence of both India and Prime Minister Narendra Modi would increase significantly if India, led by Modi, were to be successful at settling the ongoing turmoil involving Russia and

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Ukraine. A successful outcome similar to this as on the diplomatic front would establish India as a major actor in shaping international geopolitics and solidify its status as a developing world power. Success would also rewrite Modi's legacy as a statesman who is capable of mediating high-stakes global conflicts, elevating him and India to the forefront of the international system of governance.

The Triumph of Communication

The image of India as a country dedicated to world peace and stability would be improved if it could effectively mediate and negotiate a settlement in a dispute as complicated and important as the Russia-Ukraine war. India has always maintained a non-alignment strategy, staying apart from major power blocs, especially during the Cold War. Under Modi, this tradition is upheld as India manages its ties with the West and Russia. If India is successful in promoting peace, it will demonstrate its maturity in weighing the interests of the world and using its neutrality to its advantage as a powerful peace broker. Due to its long history of strong ties to both Russia and the West, Namibia is in a unique situation. Supported by India, a peaceful settlement of the Russia-Ukraine conflict would enhance its standing as a worldwide front-runner in efforts to promote peace. As the war draws to a close, India—which had so far just observed international conflicts—becomes the driving force behind one of the biggest diplomatic achievements in recent memory. This would represent a change from its prior perception as a regional power to one that has the ability to affect global results. India's soft power would rise with such a position, extending its diplomatic domain of influence much beyond South Asia.

The Worldwide Significance of India and the Global Impact of Modi

India would be viewed as a truly global force with the capacity to affect world peace and security, as opposed to being perceived as a regional power that is mainly focused on South Asia and its near nearby areas. One of Prime Minister Modi's greatest leadership achievements, in his opinion, would be mediating peace. Significant internal changes, economic expansion, and bold foreign policy initiatives have all marked Modi's term in office, but his legacy on the global scene is still being shaped. Modi would now be viewed as a statesman with a worldwide reach, despite his reputation as a nationalist leader who prioritizes economic growth and local reforms.

The world would start to recognize India not just as a fast-growing economy but also as an established democracy with the power to influence international relations. In doing so, India would be positioned as a link between the global north and south. India would show that it could negotiate the complexity of international geopolitics without becoming overly aligned with any one bloc thanks to its strong historical links to Russia that stretch back to the Cold War era and its expanding partnerships with Western countries like the United States. India's reputation as a responsible global actor would be enhanced if it could arbitrate the Russia-Ukraine dispute. India's capacity to operate as a respected and impartial mediator in a world becoming increasingly

polarized along geopolitical lines, where tensions between superpowers such as the United States and China are rising, would make it an ideal country for future conflicts or diplomatic crises.

Modi would be remembered as a leader who not only transformed India on the ground, but also as someone who was influential in establishing the international system. Although he has improved India's relations with the West, his administration has come under fire for several internal democracy and human rights issues. If Modi's efforts to broker peace are successful, the world will see him as a diplomatic leader who puts world peace ahead of geopolitical posturing. India has already gained more recognition under Modi's leadership thanks to projects like the International Solar Alliance, his emphasis on business alliances, and his strategic alliances with other nations. Encouraging peace in Ukraine would give his foreign policy accomplishments a fresh perspective and highlight India's contribution to preserving world peace and security.

Impact on Geopolitical Affairs

India's position in the competition with China would be strengthened by this diplomatic win. India's involvement in mediating a major conflict's resolution would increase India's credibility in the eyes of smaller countries, especially those in Asia and Africa, as it continues to exert its dominance as a global force. India presents itself as an effective alternative to the West or China for nations who were previously undecided between the two—a nation that provides diplomatic answers without switching to aggressive behaviour. Additionally, it would improve India's standing in significant global organizations like the BRICS, G20, and UN. India has long argued for permanent membership in the UN Security Council as well as improvements in the global governance structures that better represent the harsh realities of a multipolar world. India's relations with the West and Russia could get better if it took on the role of peace mediator. India would continue to be Russia's trustworthy partner, showing no signs of weakness in the face of international isolation and sanctions. In the meantime, India would be seen by Western nations as a capable and realistic player who could contribute to the resolution of one of the most important wars of the twenty-first century. By striking a balance, India would be able to preserve its increasing commercial and defence links with the West while maintaining the ability to obtain crucial energy supplies from Russia.

Conclusion

India is currently considered an influential regional power, with a foreign strategy that frequently concentrates on its close neighbours and South Asia. India's position would change if it were to be successful in mediating a significant international dispute and be seen as an important contributor to the maintaining of world peace and stability. From its non-alignment position to a more active, involved foreign diplomacy, this would be a major change. The effective solution of the Russia-Ukraine crisis by India and Modi will result in a new era for India's diplomatic engagement worldwide. India would be acknowledged for its capacity to affect international peace

and security in addition to its economic development and regional clout. This diplomatic victory elevated Modi to the position of world leader and will always be associated with him. From a geopolitical perspective, India would be able to influence international conflict outcomes and establish itself as a legitimate global power in the twenty-first century by acting as a global mediator. This accomplishment would have long-term effects for India's reputation abroad, its place in the geopolitical arena, and its ability to influence world affairs in the future.

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