

Study Material

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Topic: Determinants of Indian Foreign Policy.

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India's foreign policy is shaped by several key determinants that influence its diplomatic strategies, international relations, and national interests. Here are the primary determinants of India's foreign policy:

1. Geopolitical Location

India's geographical location in South Asia, bordered by major players like China, Pakistan, and key sea routes in the Indian Ocean, significantly impacts its foreign policy. Its strategic position influences its security concerns, trade routes, and regional leadership ambitions. India's foreign policy emphasizes maintaining regional stability and securing its borders.

2. Security Concerns

India's national security is a core determinant of its foreign policy. The nation has ongoing territorial disputes with Pakistan and China, which affect its foreign relations. India has focused on military modernization, strategic alliances, and defence cooperation to address these security concerns. The issue of terrorism, particularly from Pakistan-based groups, and regional instability further guide India's foreign policy choices.

3. Economic Interests

Economic growth is a driving force in India's foreign policy. The country seeks to expand its trade, attract foreign investment, and integrate more into the global economy. This is reflected in its active participation in international forums like the World Trade Organization (WTO), BRICS, and initiatives like the "Act East" policy to improve relations with Southeast Asian nations. Access to energy resources, particularly oil and gas, is also a significant concern, influencing India's ties with oil-rich countries in the Middle East and Africa.

4. Domestic Political Considerations

Domestic political considerations, including the influence of political parties, public opinion, and regional aspirations, shape India's foreign policy. Political leadership, with a focus on national pride, can steer foreign policy decisions in line with national identity and national interest. For instance, under different governments, the emphasis on relations with the West, Russia, or neighbouring countries can shift based on political ideologies.

5. Historical Legacy

India's colonial history and its experience as a post-colonial state significantly impact its foreign policy. The country's struggle for independence, its non-alignment movement during the Cold War, and its leadership role in international platforms like the United Nations (UN) shape its approach to global issues. India's non-alignment movement emphasized maintaining independence from the influence of both the US and the Soviet Union during the Cold War and continues to play a role in shaping its international stance.

6. Global Power Dynamics

India's foreign policy is also influenced by the changing global power structure. As the world transitions from unipolarity (dominated by the United States) to multipolarity, India positions itself as a rising global power. It seeks to play a key role in institutions like the United Nations, G20, and International Monetary Fund (IMF), balancing relationships with major powers like the US, Russia, and China. India's foreign policy is also shaped by the need to maintain strategic partnerships with both Western countries and emerging economies.

7. Regional Relationships

India's foreign policy is heavily influenced by its relationships with neighbouring countries, particularly in South Asia. The country aims to maintain peace and stability in the region while asserting its influence. Relations with Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, and the Maldives often influence India's policy, focusing on economic cooperation, security concerns, and strategic influence.

8. Cultural and Civilizational Factors

India's cultural and civilizational ties, especially its historical influence on Asia, Africa, and the Indian Ocean region, play a role in shaping its foreign policy. India leverages its cultural diplomacy to enhance its soft power. Promoting shared values of democracy, pluralism, and inclusivity aligns with India's vision of being a global leader that emphasizes the importance of peace, development, and multilateralism.

9. International Organizations

India's commitment to multilateralism drives its involvement in various international organizations. India's foreign policy prioritizes active engagement with the United Nations, G77, BRICS, World Trade Organization, and other forums to advance its interests on issues such as climate change, disarmament,

global governance reforms, and peacekeeping. India has called for reforms in the UN Security Council to better reflect the contemporary global balance of power.

10. Energy and Environmental Concerns

India is a growing energy consumer, and securing energy supplies is central to its foreign policy. India has sought to diversify its energy sources and strengthen ties with energy-rich nations. Environmental concerns, including climate change, also influence India's foreign policy. While India seeks to balance its development needs with environmental protection, it is also involved in global environmental governance and climate change negotiations.

11. Diaspora Influence

The Indian diaspora, which is one of the largest and most influential in the world, plays a significant role in shaping India's foreign policy. The diaspora's economic, political, and cultural ties with their host countries influence bilateral relations. India's diplomatic initiatives, such as improving ties with countries like the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, and the Middle East, are also driven by the needs and aspirations of the Indian diaspora.

12. Technological and Scientific Advancements

India's growing technological and scientific capabilities, particularly in areas like space, information technology, and defence, influence its foreign policy. India seeks to assert itself as a global player in technology, including participation in space exploration, artificial intelligence, and cybersecurity. This drives India to form partnerships with other technologically advanced nations to share knowledge and promote innovation.

Conclusion

India's foreign policy is a complex and dynamic set of responses to an ever-changing global landscape. While it is rooted in historical principles of non-alignment and strategic autonomy, it also evolves to address new challenges and opportunities presented by regional and global developments. The interplay of security concerns, economic interests, geopolitical considerations, and domestic factors makes India's foreign policy an intricate balancing act on the global stage.

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