



IJMRRS

**International Journal for Multidisciplinary
Research, Review and Studies**

ISSN: 3049-124X (Online)

Volume 1 - Issue 3

2024

© 2024 International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research Review and Studies

Article on Role of Political Parties in Shaping India's Foreign Policy

Vivshvender Dagar

Student

Amity University Noida, Uttar Pradesh

Table of Contents

1. Abstract
2. Introduction
3. Understanding the Framework of India's Foreign Policy
4. Political Parties and Foreign Policy: A Conceptual Overview
5. Evolution of Foreign Policy Across Political Regimes
6. Ideological Influences and Strategic Priorities
7. Domestic Politics and Foreign Policy Alignment
8. Consensus and Continuity in Indian Foreign Policy
9. Foreign Policy Decision-Making: Institutions and Party Dynamics
- 10.Challenges in Balancing Political Interests and Diplomatic Goals
- 11.Impact on Regional and Global Engagements
- 12.Recommendations for Harmonizing Party Politics with National Interests
- 13.Conclusion
- 14.References

Abstract

India's foreign policy has traditionally been guided by long-term national interests. However, political parties play a crucial role in shaping these directions based on their ideological beliefs, electoral mandates, and strategic priorities. This article explores how different political ideologies, leadership styles, and party agendas influence India's engagement with the world. It highlights the dynamic relationship between domestic politics and foreign diplomacy, showing that while the broad contours of India's foreign policy often remain consistent, its tone, focus, and strategic choices evolve with changing political leadership.

Keywords: Foreign Policy, Political Parties, India, Ideology, International Relations, Diplomacy, National Interest

Introduction

Foreign policy reflects a nation's identity, aspirations, and strategic interests in the global arena. In India, this policy is shaped not only by bureaucratic expertise and institutional frameworks but also by the ideologies, priorities, and positions of political parties. While India's foreign policy often appears consistent and stable, especially on major issues like national security and regional diplomacy, the role of political parties in influencing its direction cannot be overlooked.

This article explores how political parties, through governance, public messaging, and ideological positioning, shape India's foreign policy decisions. It examines the evolution of foreign policy across different governments, the role of domestic politics in influencing global strategies, and the extent to which party politics align with long-term national interests. In doing so, it highlights the complex but crucial relationship between internal democratic processes and India's external engagements.

Foreign Policy and Political Ideology

Different political parties in India bring distinct ideologies to foreign policy-making. Some focus on non-alignment and South-South cooperation, others prioritize economic globalization or strategic alignments with global powers. These ideological underpinnings influence:

- **Multilateralism vs. Strategic Alliances:** Some parties prefer strong multilateral engagements through the UN, NAM, and G77, while others push for strategic partnerships with nations like the U.S., Japan, or Israel.
- **Global South Solidarity vs. Realpolitik:** While earlier governments highlighted solidarity with developing nations, recent trends show a shift toward pragmatic geopolitics, driven by security and trade interests.

Though core interests such as national security, economic growth, and regional stability remain consistent, the paths taken to achieve them vary across political regimes.

Leadership and Diplomatic Style

The personality and leadership style of a party leader, especially the Prime Minister, greatly influences foreign policy. Some leaders prefer quieter diplomacy, while others emphasize high-profile visits, summits, and global visibility.

- **High-level Engagements:** Certain governments have focused on building strong personal rapport with world leaders to promote trade and diplomacy.
- **Diaspora Diplomacy:** In recent years, parties in power have actively engaged the Indian diaspora as a tool of soft power and economic collaboration.

Leadership plays a central role in crisis response too—how India reacts to border tensions, cross-border terrorism, or international sanctions often depends on the governing party's approach.

Parliamentary Oversight and Opposition's Role

Though foreign policy decisions are largely made by the executive, political debate and opposition viewpoints in Parliament do shape public perception and policy framing.

- Parliamentary Committees sometimes review foreign policy issues, though their influence is limited.
- Opposition Pressure can prompt shifts or course corrections, especially on sensitive issues like border disputes, trade deals, or defense agreements.

Opposition parties may also use foreign policy issues to critique ruling governments, especially when decisions have domestic implications—like migration, international pricing, or defense imports.

Domestic Politics and Global Choices

India's foreign policy is not made in a vacuum—it is increasingly influenced by domestic political narratives, public opinion, and electoral calculations.

- Trade Agreements: Political parties may delay or renegotiate free trade agreements if there's fear of backlash from farmers, traders, or workers.
- Defense Partnerships: Strategic collaborations are influenced by national security narratives during elections.
- Neighbourhood Relations: Issues like cross-border tensions are often part of election campaigns, affecting the tone of regional diplomacy.

As a result, foreign policy sometimes mirrors domestic political sentiments, especially during high-stakes elections or nationalistic movements.

Continuity and Change Across Governments

Despite political differences, there is considerable continuity in India's foreign policy. India continues to focus on:

- Peaceful coexistence and non-intervention.

- Strategic autonomy in international affairs.
- A balanced approach between global powers (U.S., Russia, China).
- Pursuing leadership roles in multilateral institutions (UNSC, G20, BRICS).

However, each party in power brings its own emphasis—some governments prioritize defense modernization and strategic alignments, while others focus on regional cooperation or economic diplomacy.

Challenges and the Way Forward

The increasing influence of political parties in foreign policy brings both opportunities and challenges:

- Opportunity: A responsive foreign policy shaped by democratic input and electoral accountability.
- Challenge: Risk of politicization or short-termism, especially when foreign policy is used for electoral gains.

To balance these, India must ensure that foreign policy remains rooted in long-term national interests, guided by expert advice, institutional memory, and bipartisan consensus wherever possible.

Conclusion

India's foreign policy reflects both strategic priorities and political realities. While core goals remain consistent, the direction and tone of India's global engagement are often shaped by the ruling political party's ideology, leadership, and domestic agenda. As India becomes a more influential global actor, the role of political parties in shaping its foreign relations will continue to grow.

Maintaining a balance between democratic accountability and strategic stability will be essential to safeguard India's interests in an increasingly complex international environment

References

1. Bajpai, K. (2003). Indian Foreign Policy: A Framework for Analysis. Foreign Policy Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University.
2. Malone, D. M. (2011). Does the Elephant Dance? Contemporary Indian Foreign Policy. Oxford University Press.
3. Mohan, C. R. (2004). Crossing the Rubicon: The Shaping of India's New Foreign Policy. Viking.
4. Pant, H. V. (Ed.). (2016). Indian Foreign Policy: An Overview. Manchester University Press.
5. Basrur, R. M. (2005). Strategic Stability and Nuclear Deterrence in South Asia. Contemporary South Asia, 14(2), 153–164.
6. Chatterjee-Miller, M., & Sullivan de Estrada, K. (2017). India's Rise in the International Order. Politics, 37(3), 336–350.
7. Muni, S. D. (2009). Foreign Policy in a Changing World: India's South Asia Approach. ISAS Working Paper.
8. Ganguly, S. (2010). India's Foreign Policy: Retrospect and Prospect. Oxford University Press.
9. Jain, R. K. (2014). India's Foreign Policy: Emerging Challenges and Paradigm Shifts. Indian Journal of Political Science, 75(3), 451–468.
10. Rajagopalan, R. P. (2006). Indian Strategic Thinking: An Overview. IPCS Issue Brief.

11. Kapur, S. P. (2008). Ten Years of Instability in South Asia: How India's Foreign Policy Evolved Post-Kargil. *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 31(2), 231–259.
12. Tharoor, S. (2012). *Pax Indica: India and the World of the 21st Century*. Penguin Books India.
13. Tellis, A. J. (2006). India's Emerging Grand Strategy. *The Washington Quarterly*, 32(3), 1–25.
14. Raghavan, S. (2010). *War and Peace in Modern India*. Palgrave Macmillan.
15. Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India. (Various Years). Annual Reports. <https://www.mea.gov.in>
16. Council on Foreign Relations (CFR). (2023). India's Foreign Policy Choices. <https://www.cfr.org>
17. Observer Research Foundation (ORF). (2022). India's Global Strategy in a Multipolar World. <https://www.orfonline.org>
18. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. (2021). India's Strategic Calculus. <https://carnegieindia.org>
19. Brookings Institution. (2022). Domestic Politics and India's Foreign Policy Decisions. <https://www.brookings.edu>
20. United Nations India. (2023). India and Multilateral Diplomacy. <https://india.un.org>