

# **“Bridging Divides: India’s Strategic Role in the East-West Geopolitical, Security, and Trade Wars”**

REET HARDIK DESAI

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## **Abstract**

*A dynamic and intricate contest for influence between the Eastern and Western blocs—mainly represented by China and the United States, respectively—is rapidly redefining the geopolitical landscape of the twenty-first century. This article examines India's crucial role in this struggle for global dominance, looking at the diplomatic, economic, and strategic moves that put it in a position to preserve the balance of power. India's reaction to the growing security threats and commercial conflicts that characterize modern East-West relations is given particular attention.*

*The research article examines how India's distinct geographic location, expanding economic heft, and diverse foreign policy allow it to operate as a mediator and stabilizer in the East-West dichotomy, drawing on historical context, current policies, and future forecasts. The study explores India's security policies, which include defense alliances and modernization initiatives for the armed forces to secure national sovereignty and offset regional threats. The article also looks at India's economic alliances and trade policies that help it negotiate the difficulties of international trade conflicts, emphasizing its initiatives to diversify its markets and strengthen its economy.*

*Furthermore, the article also highlights India's ability to shape the course of world affairs by discussing its alliances, commercial connections, and defense plans. Amid the current East-West conflict, India serves to both safeguard its national interests and promote global stability by projecting an image of being an active, impartial player. With a focus on India's critical position in the interwoven domains of geopolitics, security, and commerce, this research attempts to give a thorough knowledge of India's strategic imperatives and its influence on the changing global order.*

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## **I. Introduction**

The Cold War era's power struggles and ideologies served as the historical foundation for the geopolitical conflict between East and West. The conflict between the Soviet Union, which stood in for the communist East, and the United States, which represented the capitalist West, shaped this era. This bipolar world system appeared to come to an end with the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991. But in the twenty-first century, new geopolitical conflicts have surfaced, chiefly between China and the United States. China hopes to change the global order to suit its own strategic goals, whereas the United States, the world's leading superpower, wants to hold onto its hegemony. China's goal is to increase its influence and prosper economically.

These tensions have shown themselves in numerous ways in recent years, such as trade disputes, technology rivalry, and military posture in areas like the South China Sea. Today, the East-West split encompasses more than just military might; it also includes contrasts in ideology, economic policies, and technical breakthroughs.

India is located geographically between China and the larger Western alliance led by the United States, giving it a unique and crucial geopolitical position. Historically, India avoided formal ties with either bloc during the Cold War by pursuing a policy of non-alignment. By taking this stand, India was able to keep its strategic independence and interact with the West and East according to its own rules. India's place in the current geopolitical landscape has changed dramatically. India is becoming more and more recognized as a key state in the East-West dynamic as it emerges as a significant economic force and participant in regional politics.

India has considerable strategic advantages due to its geographic position. It acts as a link between the rapidly expanding Southeast Asian markets and the energy-rich Middle East. Furthermore, India is an important participant in marine security and trade routes that are essential for international trade due to its extensive coastline along the Indian Ocean. The nation's strategic alliances with powerful states like the United States, Russia, and other European countries emphasize its significance in world geopolitics even more.

**Key Points or Words:**

- Geopolitics
- Diplomacy
- Security
- Economic
- Stability

## **II. Research Objective:**

This study's main goal is to assess and clarify India's strategic position in the current trade, security, and geopolitical conflicts between the West and East. This research attempts to offer a thorough knowledge of how India manages its complicated connections with both the East and the West by looking at both historical and modern policy. Furthermore, the study aims to determine India's strategic goals within the current geopolitical context and evaluate the possible effects of India's actions on international politics.

### **Scope and Significance:**

Considering East-West tensions, this paper examines India's geopolitical tactics, security issues, and economic policies. Through an examination of India's past, present, and potential, the study offers a comprehensive perspective on the country's place in international affairs. The study's value stems from its capacity to educate foreign observers, researchers, and policymakers on India's strategic importance and how it affects the dynamics of global power. Comprehending India's stance might provide valuable perspectives on the wider consequences of East-West confrontations and the evolving power dynamics of the 21st century.

### **Thesis Statement**

India is a key player in the geopolitical, security, and commercial conflicts between the East and the West. It deliberately manages its ties with major international powers to protect its interests and advance regional stability. India emerges as a major power with the ability to affect world order and resolve disputes by utilizing its distinct geographic location, long-standing non-alignment policy, and developing strategic alliances. This thesis examines India's policies and tactics, emphasizing their importance in the current global environment as well as the wider ramifications for international relations.

## **III. Methodology**

The study utilizes a mixed-methods approach, integrating both qualitative and quantitative studies to comprehend India's geopolitical significance in the East-West relationship. An extensive analysis of the literature places India's tactics in the historical and modern contexts. Expert interviews, case studies of significant events, and content analysis of policy papers are all examples of qualitative analysis. The quantitative study looks at imports of energy, defense spending, and trade statistics. India's strategies are compared with those of other key players through comparative analysis. Impacts of policies are evaluated using theoretical frameworks such as strategic autonomy and balance of power. Forecasting and scenario analysis project future changes in India's foreign policy and global impact.

## **IV. Discussion:**

### **Historical Context and Theoretical Framework**

The East and West relations have dramatically changed over the twentieth century with the foundation set by the Cold War ideologies. There was a clear bifurcation of the capitalist world, dominated by the United States on one side and the communists headed by the Soviet Union on the other side. This was evidenced largely in the systematic display of military buildup, proxy wars, as well as the formation of military alliance systems that were opposed, such as NATO and the Warsaw Pact. It, therefore, ended with the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991, signaling a unipolar world headed by the United States of America. However, through the new millennium, the United States got a worthy competitor in the form of China, which became a rising world power, forming new tensions between the East and the West. This new phase of geopolitical struggle relates to the economic war, trade wars, and military buildup, mostly in the Indo-Pacific region. Real-world occurrences such as the trans-Pacific trade conflict between the United States and China, China's debt-funded international investment campaign

known as the Belt and Road Initiative, as well as China’s building up of the militarized South China Sea, consequently depict this modern-day confrontation between the two mighty powerhouses.

The dynamics play a profound impact in influencing the geopolitical structure of India as it forms a part of the geopolitical region of South Asia and shares historical relations with the East and Western world. The structure of world power has changed, and the international systems, in their contemporary forms, created a new paradigm for India’s foreign policy to defend its interests while engaging with other superpowers. India’s foreign policy is based on the balance of power idea and seeks to prevent any one country from dominating the world by interacting with numerous global powers.

Strategic Autonomy is a concept that means the capability of a state to successfully implement its interests & strategic objectives all on its own. This has meant that India has had to ensure that it retains its autonomy in terms of its foreign policy and thus does not get deeply vested in global relations at the expense of a particular country. [VK1] The prevalence of European (or Western) viewpoints in international relations (IR) theory, known as Eurocentrism, is still a major problem. This prejudice frequently ignores the distinctive historical, cultural, and geopolitical settings of non-Western nations and marginalizes non-Western points of view. Dominant IR theories like liberalism and realism often overlook the experiences and strategies of nations like India. The prevalence of European (or Western) viewpoints in international relations (IR) theory, known as Eurocentrism, is still a major problem. This prejudice frequently ignores the distinctive historical, cultural, and geopolitical settings of non-Western nations and marginalizes non-Western points of view. This research attempts to give a more complete and nuanced understanding of India’s strategic position in the East-West geopolitical environment by acknowledging and resolving the shortcomings of Eurocentric views.

One of India’s greatest strategic advantages is its geographic position. India, a country in South Asia, has a significant marine advantage due to its southern flanking by the Indian Ocean. As a marine route that links Southeast Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, the Indian Ocean is essential to international trade. India can project power and safeguard its commercial interests due to its long coastline and important ports such as Mumbai, Chennai, and Kochi, which increase its control over these vital marine routes. India borders Bangladesh and Myanmar to the east, Pakistan and Afghanistan to the west, and China, Nepal, and Bhutan to the north. India can play a significant role in regional politics and security because of its central location within the South Asian peninsula. It facilitates commerce and energy movements by acting as a land bridge between the vibrant marketplaces of Southeast Asia and the energy-rich Middle East and Central Asia.

### **Historical Non-Alignment and Current Shifts**

From its original position of non-alignment during the Cold War to its present strategic engagements, India’s foreign policy has seen substantial changes. Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru promoted the policy of non-alignment, which was intended to keep India out of the two-sided battle between the United States and the Soviet Union. This would have allowed India to retain its strategic independence and pursue its development objectives unhindered by outside forces. India’s foreign policy has changed in the post-Cold War era to reflect the shifting international landscape. India’s strategic aims have to be re-evaluated in light of the growth of China as a global force and the fall of the Soviet Union. India now follows a multi-alignment policy, keeping its sovereignty while forming strategic alliances with other world powers.

With accords like COMCASA and LEMOA as examples, India’s relationship with the United States has become more intimate and is marked by increased commerce, technological collaboration, and defense cooperation. India’s determination to balance off China’s dominance in the Indo-Pacific is further demonstrated by its participation in the Quad alliance with the United States, Japan, and Australia.

Simultaneously, India continues to conduct joint military drills and defense purchases with Russia, its longstanding defense procurements. Strong historical links and shared strategic objectives, notably regarding combating terrorism and maintaining regional stability, support the India-Russian partnership.

On the other hand, there is a good deal of collaboration as well as conflict in India-China ties. Despite their substantial commerce, tensions arise from border conflicts and geopolitical rivalry in South Asia and the Indian Ocean. India’s approach is to maintain its competition with China while avoiding direct conflict by doing a careful balancing act.

India is confronted with an array of security risks, such as transnational terrorism, radicalization, unauthorized immigration, drug and weapon smuggling, cyber threats via the dark web, illicit marine operations,

and instability in the area. Strong political will, well-thought-out legislative frameworks, tactical strategies, and efficient institutions are all necessary to meet these problems. Measures like responding strongly to anti-CAA protesters, removing Article 370, and outlawing the Popular Front of India (PFI) demonstrate the present government's hard attitude toward security problems. The Ministry of Home Affairs, which has several divisions and a sizable budget for managing internal security, and the Intelligence Bureau (IB), which collects intelligence on internal security, are two important organizations engaged. Handling external intelligence, the Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW) collaborates closely with the IB and other agencies. In addition, vital technological intelligence is provided by the National Technological Research Organization (NTRO). Together, these organizations provide a comprehensive and well-coordinated response to India's security issues.

India is confronted with an intricate range of security risks encompassing both regional and global aspects. China and Pakistan are parties to continuous territorial conflicts with India. There are regular military standoffs and skirmishes along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China and the Line of Control (LoC) with Pakistan. The conflict with China in 2020 in the Galwan Valley is a prime example of how unstable these boundaries are. Furthermore, the Kashmir area continues to be a point of contention with Pakistan, resulting in sporadic flare-ups and cross-border gunfire.

Both local and international terrorism pose serious challenges to India. Terrorist organizations based in Pakistan, such as Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), have carried out several assaults in India, including well-known events like the Pulwama bombing in 2019 and the Mumbai bombings in 2008. National security is seriously threatened internally by the Maoist (Naxalite) insurgency in central and eastern India, as well as insurgencies in areas like Jammu and Kashmir.

The world is anxiously observing the conflict in Ukraine as it develops. One significant foreign player's response has gone unnoticed under the chaos: India's shift to importing Russian oil. The way India has shifted towards importing Russian oil has not received much attention while the war in Ukraine rages. Iraq and Saudi Arabia used to be India's main oil suppliers. However, due to severe price reductions brought about by Western sanctions on Russia, India had to boost its imports of Russian oil by 140% in 2023 to an average of 1.75 million barrels per day. Russia is now India's second-largest oil supplier as a result of this change. Rising energy needs and skyrocketing global oil costs are faced by India, the third-largest oil importer in the world. Because of the sanctions, Russian oil is available at a big discount, which can lower gasoline prices and free up foreign cash reserves for other investments. This financial benefit is not without danger.

The historical alliance between India and Russia is strengthened by the oil pact, which goes beyond energy to include defense and diplomacy. This action balances out China's hegemony in the area, but it also presents a geopolitical risk if Russia grows overly reliant on China and loses its ability to act as a counterbalance. India has to strike a balance between retaining close connections with the US and its allies while reaping the economic gains from Russia.

India can take advantage of the Russian oil agreement while working with the West on economic and regional security matters because of its neutral position. By remaining strategically neutral, India may negotiate better prices with alternative suppliers and lessen its reliance on the Middle East. The viability of this strategy is questionable, though. The ongoing conflict and sanctions against Russia are what determine the lowered costs. India runs the risk of price volatility and supply disruptions if these circumstances alter.

Moreover, India's alliance with Russia may sour ties with other allies since it may be interpreted as tacitly endorsing a country charged with war crimes. However, given the likelihood of protracted sanctions on Russia, India could continue to gain economically shortly. To make sure that this alliance does not jeopardize India's larger strategic objectives, policymakers must continue to exercise caution.

## **V. Findings or Results**

### **India's Potential to Influence Global Order**

In keeping with its stance of strategic autonomy and non-alignment, India advocates for a multipolar global community. India contributes to the balance of international relations by interacting with numerous superpowers, preventing any one country from dominating. Being one of the biggest troop contributors to UN peacekeeping operations, India plays a vital role in maintaining global stability. The fact that Indian troops have been stationed in crisis areas like the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan demonstrates India's dedication to upholding world peace.

India's ability to influence international policies and address issues like terrorism, climate change, and economic instability is made possible by its strategic alliances with major international players like the United States, Russia, and the European Union. This strengthens India's position as a stabilizing force in world politics.

### **Mediator Role in East-West Conflicts**

India has demonstrated its capacity to mediate international disputes via its history and current diplomatic endeavors. India was able to interact with both the East and the West during the Cold War thanks to its non-alignment policy, which laid the groundwork for mediation. One such instance is India's participation in the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War, whereby it supported Bangladesh's independence while maintaining diplomatic ties with the US and the Soviet Union.

India has recently attempted to arbitrate the Israeli-Palestinian dispute by keeping close relations with Israel, endorsing the Palestinian cause, and promoting a two-state solution. The impartial stance adopted by India strengthens its credibility as a mediator.

India's non-alignment and strategic autonomy put it in a good position to play a mediating role in the future. India may be crucial to resolving conflicts in the Indo-Pacific area, where tensions between the United States and China are growing. Additionally, forums for mediation attempts are provided by India's prominence in groups like the BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).

[VK1] Repeated

## **VI. Conclusion**

There is no denying India's strategic significance in the East-West geopolitical context. India has demonstrated skill in navigating complicated international ties to protect its national interests and advance global stability, as seen by its history of non-alignment policy and present multi-alignment strategy. The country's strong defense programs, tactical economic partnerships, and aggressive diplomacy demonstrate its dedication to upholding the balance of power. India can influence world order, as seen by its growing position as a mediator and stabilizer. India is positioned to play a key role in promoting a more stable, multipolar world due to its strategic vision and balanced approach, particularly in light of the globe's evolving power dynamics and growing security challenges. With its distinct geographic advantages, growing economic power, and varied foreign policy, India is well-positioned to significantly impact the direction of international affairs and solidify its position as a major force behind world peace and stability.

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