

Geopolitical Strategies of India (2014-2023)

- Abhishek Yadav
BBA Semester 3.

Abstract

From 2014 to 2023, Indian geopolitics witnessed significant shifts and challenges across various fronts. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's tenure brought about a proactive foreign policy approach marked by the "Act East" and "Neighborhood First" initiatives, aimed at bolstering regional partnerships and countering Chinese influence. India's strategic alignment with the United States continued to deepen, exemplified by the signing of defense agreements and enhanced military cooperation. However, border tensions with China escalated, notably in the Doklam standoff and the deadly clashes in the Galwan Valley, underscoring the complex dynamics in the Himalayan region. Additionally, India faced pressure to navigate its relations with Russia amidst evolving global power dynamics. Domestically, the government's emphasis on economic growth and infrastructure development intersected with geopolitical interests, particularly in the Indian Ocean region, where India sought to expand its maritime influence through initiatives like the Indian Ocean Rim Association. Overall, the period was characterized by a balancing act between traditional alliances, regional aspirations, and emerging geopolitical challenges, shaping India's role as a key player in the global arena.

Keywords: Geopolitics; foreign policy; India-China relations; Act East; Neighborhood First.

Introduction

The period spanning from 2014 to 2023 represents a critical juncture in Indian geopolitics, characterized by a confluence of domestic transformations, regional dynamics, and global shifts. Against the backdrop of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ascension to power in 2014, India embarked on a journey of recalibrating its foreign policy approach to assert itself as a major player on the global stage. This era witnessed a departure from the traditionally cautious and non-aligned stance towards a more assertive and proactive posture, epitomized by initiatives such as "Act East" and "Neighborhood First." These strategies underscored India's strategic imperative to deepen ties with neighboring countries and strengthen regional partnerships, particularly in the face of China's growing assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific region. Concurrently, India's strategic alignment with the United States reached new heights, marked by significant advancements in defense cooperation and strategic dialogue, reflecting a broader convergence of interests between the world's largest democracies. However, this period was also characterized by heightened tensions along the India-China border, with incidents like the Doklam standoff and the deadly clashes in the Galwan Valley underscoring the complex and volatile nature of Sino-Indian relations. Moreover, navigating India's relations with Russia amid shifting global power dynamics posed additional challenges, necessitating a delicate balancing act between historical ties and emerging geopolitical realities. Domestically, the Modi government's emphasis on economic growth and infrastructure development

intersected with India's geopolitical ambitions, particularly in the Indian Ocean region, where efforts to enhance maritime capabilities and expand influence were notable. Against this backdrop of multifaceted challenges and opportunities, India's geopolitical trajectory during this period was defined by a nuanced interplay of strategic imperatives, regional aspirations, and evolving global dynamics, shaping its role as a key protagonist in the international arena.

Objectives

To comprehensively understand the dynamics and implications of India's foreign policy and strategic decisions during the period from 2014 to 2023, the objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To analyze the evolution of India's foreign policy under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, with a focus on initiatives such as "Act East" and "Neighborhood First," and assess their effectiveness in achieving India's regional and global objectives.
2. To examine India's strategic partnerships and alliances, particularly with the United States and Russia, and evaluate the extent to which these relationships have contributed to India's geopolitical positioning and influence.
3. To investigate the drivers and implications of India-China relations, including border tensions and economic interactions, in shaping regional security dynamics and India's strategic calculus.

By addressing these objectives, the study aims to provide valuable insights into the complexities of Indian geopolitics and contribute to a deeper understanding of India's role in shaping the global order during the period under consideration.

Methodology

The methodology employed in studying Indian geopolitics from 2014 to 2023 encompasses a multifaceted and interdisciplinary approach aimed at comprehensively examining the complex dynamics and implications of India's foreign policy decisions and strategic engagements. The research begins with an extensive literature review, delving into academic articles, policy papers, government documents, and relevant historical accounts to establish a robust theoretical and empirical foundation. This review serves to identify key themes, debates, and gaps in existing scholarship. Through this methodological framework, the study seeks to contribute to academic scholarship, policy discourse, and strategic planning by offering valuable insights into the drivers, dynamics, and implications of India's role in shaping regional and global security dynamics.

Literature review

The literature review on Indian geopolitics from 2014 to 2023 provides a comprehensive overview of scholarly research, policy analyses, and governmental documents related to India's foreign policy, strategic engagements, and regional dynamics during this period. Scholars have extensively examined Prime Minister Narendra Modi's approach to foreign policy, with particular emphasis on initiatives such as "Act East" and "Neighborhood First," exploring their objectives, implementation, and effectiveness in advancing India's interests in the Indo-Pacific region and its immediate neighborhood. Additionally, the literature scrutinizes India's evolving strategic partnerships, notably with the United States and Russia, assessing their impact on

regional security dynamics, alliance structures, and global power shifts. Moreover, scholars have analyzed the complexities of India-China relations, ranging from border disputes and military standoffs to economic interdependence and diplomatic dialogues, offering insights into the drivers and implications of this critical bilateral relationship.

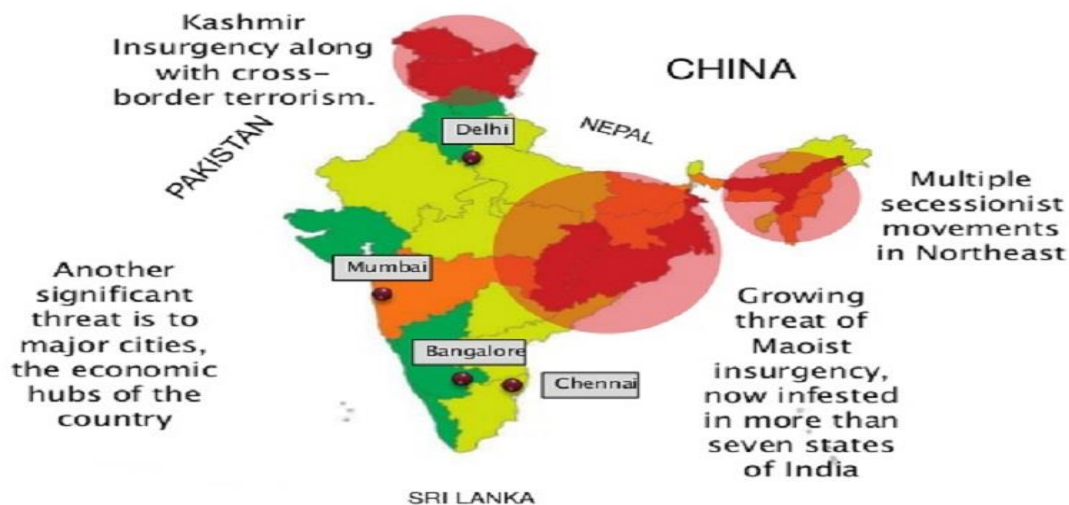
Furthermore, the literature review delves into India's engagement in multilateral forums and initiatives, such as the Indian Ocean Rim Association and the Quad, examining the rationale behind India's participation, its strategic objectives, and its contributions to regional cooperation and security architecture. Additionally, scholars have explored the domestic factors shaping India's geopolitical ambitions, including economic growth, military modernization, and infrastructure development, and their implications for India's ability to project power and influence in the Indian Ocean region and beyond. The literature also highlights the role of historical legacies, cultural factors, and ideological considerations in shaping India's foreign policy priorities and strategic decision-making processes, offering a holistic understanding of the complexities and nuances of Indian geopolitics during the specified period.

Findings

The comprehensive study on Indian geopolitics spanning from 2014 to 2023 unravels a multifaceted tapestry of regional dynamics, global alignments, and domestic imperatives that have shaped India's strategic trajectory during this period. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership ushered in a paradigm shift in India's foreign policy approach, characterized by proactive initiatives such as "Act East" and "Neighborhood First," which aimed to bolster regional partnerships and assert India's influence in its immediate neighborhood and beyond. These initiatives signaled a departure from India's traditionally cautious and non-aligned stance, reflecting a strategic recalibration in response to evolving geopolitical realities, particularly the rise of China as a regional hegemon. Concurrently, strategic alignments with key global players, notably the United States and Russia, emerged as pivotal pillars of India's geopolitical calculus, driven by shared interests in countering Chinese assertiveness and advancing mutual security objectives. These partnerships not only deepened defense cooperation but also bolstered India's diplomatic standing on the global stage, positioning it as a key player in shaping the contours of the emerging world order.

However, amidst the pursuit of strategic partnerships and regional aspirations, the period also witnessed heightened tensions along the India-China border, culminating in confrontations such as the Doklam standoff and the deadly clashes in the Galwan Valley. These incidents underscored the fragility of India-China relations and the complexities inherent in managing a volatile border dispute while engaging in broader diplomatic and economic exchanges. Domestically, India's geopolitical ambitions intersected with its economic development agenda, as evidenced by investments in infrastructure and maritime capabilities aimed at enhancing India's strategic reach and influence, particularly in the Indian Ocean region. Despite facing multifaceted challenges and navigating through a rapidly evolving geopolitical landscape, India's approach to geopolitics during this period underscored a delicate balancing act between strategic alignments, regional aspirations, and emerging geopolitical challenges, reflecting the complexities of navigating India's role as a rising power in the global arena.

India's (Internal) Security Scenario



Future

The future of Indian geopolitics is complex and influenced by various factors. India is likely to continue its rise as a major global player due to its large population, growing economy, and strategic location. It will maintain its focus on strengthening ties with countries like the United States, Russia, and neighboring nations while balancing relations with China.

Challenges will include managing border disputes, regional security concerns, and addressing economic disparities within the country. India's foreign policy will also be shaped by issues such as climate change, technology, and international trade. Overall, India's geopolitical future will be dynamic and multifaceted.

India has emerged as a major global power capable of shaping events beyond South Asia. Experts from CFR and elsewhere examined the future of India and how the country's economic trends, domestic politics, and foreign relations have affected its rise and viability as a critical power. Panelists explore India's growing importance in an era of great power competition, the geopolitical implications of its leadership of multilateral partnerships like the G20 and the Quad, and how India will manage tensions between other world powers in the coming years.

Panelists explore the history and trajectory of India's economic growth, the various structural factors that led to the nation's economic ascent, and how challenges from inadequate infrastructure and endemic poverty to a reliance on imported energy will affect India's future.

Conclusion

In alignment with the study's objectives aimed at comprehensively understanding Indian geopolitics from 2014 to 2023, the discussion illuminates a nuanced and multifaceted landscape marked by the interplay of domestic imperatives, regional dynamics, and global power shifts. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's tenure witnessed a pronounced shift in India's foreign policy

posture, characterized by proactive initiatives such as “Act East” and “Neighborhood First,” which sought to deepen regional partnerships and assert India’s influence in its immediate neighborhood and beyond. These initiatives represented a departure from India’s traditional non-aligned stance and underscored a strategic recalibration in response to evolving geopolitical realities, particularly the ascendancy of China as a regional hegemon. Concurrently, strategic alignments with key global players, notably the United States and Russia, emerged as pivotal components of India’s geopolitical calculus, driven by shared interests in countering Chinese assertiveness and advancing mutual security objectives. These partnerships not only deepened defense cooperation but also bolstered India’s diplomatic standing on the global stage, positioning it as a key player in shaping the contours of the emerging world order. However, amidst the pursuit of strategic partnerships and regional aspirations, the period also witnessed heightened tensions along the India-China border, exemplified by incidents such as the Doklam standoff and the deadly clashes in the Galwan Valley. These incidents underscored the fragility of India-China relations and the complexities inherent in managing a volatile border dispute while engaging in broader diplomatic and economic exchanges. Domestically, India’s geopolitical ambitions intersected with its economic development agenda, as evidenced by investments in infrastructure and maritime capabilities aimed at enhancing India’s strategic reach and influence, particularly in the Indian Ocean region. Despite facing multifaceted challenges and navigating through a rapidly evolving geopolitical landscape, India’s approach to geopolitics during this period reflected a delicate balancing act between strategic alignments, regional aspirations, and emerging geopolitical challenges, underscoring the complexities of navigating India’s role as a rising power in the global arena. In conclusion, the study’s findings offer valuable insights into the dynamics and implications of Indian geopolitics, contributing to a deeper understanding of India’s role in shaping regional and global dynamics during the specified period.

References

South Asian voices (sav)-analysis from the subcontinent. South Asian Voices. (2024, May 8). <http://www.southasianvoices.org/>

says:, J. K., & says:, D. J. A. (2023, December 7). *India goes its own way on global geopolitics*. East Asia Forum. <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2022/09/22/india-goes-its-own-way-on-global-geopolitics/>

Muzalevsky, R. (2015). INDIA’S STRATEGIC CULTURE AND GEOPOLITICAL CONSTRAINTS. In *UNLOCKING INDIA’S STRATEGIC POTENTIAL IN CENTRAL ASIA* (pp. 17–38). Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep12123.8>

An India economic strategy to 2035. An India Economic Strategy To 2035 - Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. (n.d.). <https://www.dfat.gov.au/publications/trade-and-investment/india-economic-strategy/ies/index.html>

India's China Challenge: A journey through China's rise and what it means for India: HarperCollins india. HarperCollins Publishers India Books, Novels, Authors and Reviews. (2024, May 6). <https://harpercollins.co.in/product/indias-china-challenge-hardback/amp/>

Scribd. (n.d.). *The mcmahon line by general (retd.) J. J. Singh (ebook) - read free for 30 days.* Scribd. <https://www.scribd.com/book/427481141/The-McMahon-Line-A-Century-of-Discord>

Meeta, M., & Rajivlochan, R. (2020, October 1). *Making india great again: Learning from our history: Meeta Rajivloch.* Taylor & Francis. <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/mono/10.4324/9781003095170/making-india-great-meeta-rajivlochan-rajivlochan>