India's New Role As World's Mediator

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1. Abstract

Rising from the Global South, India has grown as a global power while becoming a predominant figure in international mediation. Increasingly, drawing on its historical policy of non-alignment and relatively robust democratic institutions as well as growing economic power, India has become a self-styled neutral player in various international conflicts and discussions. By taking advantage of its neutrality and extensive diplomatic relations, India has established itself as a major player in advancing peace and stability across different regions. But this comes with innumerable challenges, be it internal or external which might hinder India's image while striving on this path. This paper provides an insight into India's New role as the world's mediator, a historical overview, and the recent attempts at mediation by India as a predominant voice of World Peace.

Keywords: India, Mediation, Global south, World peace

2. Introduction

"Mediation is a process whereby a third party assists two or more parties, with their consent, to prevent, manage, or resolve a conflict by helping them to develop mutually acceptable agreements". It is one of the most important medium for resolving various conflicts in an increasingly interconnected world. India's willingness to take on the new role as a global mediator is noteworthy given its rising geopolitical influence and its history of non-alignment. Even during the Cold War when the world was divided into blocks India never aligned with either the US or USSR. After 1990 when India opened its economy through LPG reforms its worldwide influence increased and new alliances were formed with powerful nations which is an added advantage to India to have a say in international politics diplomatically without taking any sides.

India's recent humanitarian efforts, be it supplying medical essentials to different countries in times of need or its stand in the Russia-Ukraine conflict and the Israel-Palestine conflict display its commitment towards peace outside its immediate area. This initiative demonstrates India's commitment to multilateralism and increasing diplomatic clout. India's rise as a global mediator is effective for the overall stability of the world as it promotes regional stability and promotes a peaceful and cooperative global order. However, Its internal and external problems as well as doubts regarding its impartiality in the minds of global citizens can be a hindrance for India to take on this new role.

¹ UN Guidance for effective measures.

3. International Mediation and Conflict Resolution

A. What is International Mediation?

As mentioned above "Mediation is a process whereby a third party assists two or more parties, with their consent, to prevent, manage, or resolve a conflict by helping them to develop mutually acceptable agreements". Now the question arises, What is a conflict? According to Dr. Kenneth Cloke, "Conflict is the sound made by cracks in a system". wherein a system can be organizational, material, or political. So mediation is nothing but repairing this crack and finding a solution to restore the system wherein all the parties are considered. A mediator, on the other hand, is a third party that assists or tries to assist the other two parties in coming to a consensus.

When we talk of international conflict resolution, there are various ways an international conflict can be resolved. The First can be a One-dimensional approach, wherein one party dominates the other party and comes to a solution per one's own will without considering the other party's demands. This approach is dictatorial. The Second approach can be called a Two-dimensional approach, wherein both parties have a say in the problem but ultimately one has to make a compromise to achieve peace. It is more of a debate, where one overpowers the other and ultimately wins. The third can be called a multidimensional problem-solving approach, where all parties know what they want and are ready to negotiate. It is a form of a dialogue between parties where each party has their say and they try to create a win-win situation. It is in this case that the role of mediator comes into play.

B. History of International Mediation and Instances of Successful Conflict Resolution.

Mediation as a concept has existed since ancient times. It is said that the first instances of mediation date back to Mesopotamia approx 4 to 5 thousand years ago. The modern concept of mediation came into the picture when the idea of a Nation-state emerged after the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648. The European system of States laid the foundation of Modern International Mediation. An example of one such successful mediation effort is between Portugal and Brazil in 1825 when Great Britain acted as a mediator. Another example of successful International mediation is the Treaty of Portsmouth³ (1905) signed between Russia and Japan which US President Theodore Roosevelt mediated or Camp

² <u>Iourney into the heart of conflict</u>

³ Treaty of portsmouth

David Accord of 1978⁴ can be considered a few examples of successful mediation on the international stage. In the Indian context, the Tashkent Declaration⁵ signed between India and Pakistan on January 10, 1966, mediated by both the USSR and the USA can be an example of mediation at the International Stage.

4. Development of India's foreign policy from PM Nehru to PM Modi

A. PM Nebru and his Policy of Non-Alignment

After the end of the Second World War in 1945, The world became bipolar with the USA and USSR as two of the poles. Countries that sided with the USA came to be known as First World Countries⁶. Countries that sided with the USSR came to be known as Second World countries⁷. Apart from these two, some countries didn't side with any block known as the Third World countries or Non-Aligned countries. PM Jawaharlal Nehru was one of the founding fathers of this movement along with personalities like Dr Sukarno of Indonesia, President Tito of Yugoslavia, President Naser of Egypt, and a few more. Initially, 25 countries were part of the Non-aligned movement.

The initial days of India's Foreign Policy were driven by Nehruvian idealism which had too much faith and innocent belief in Global institutions.PM Nehru wanted India to be a regional power and also wanted to represent India as the leader of Asia for other countries⁹. The focus was more on the morality and immorality of persistent problems rather than stringent realism. This morality dilemma cost us when Pakistan sent its tribals to annex Kashmir and Nehru instead of using full military force resorted to the United Nations to find the solution to the Kashmir problem. Not only that but to have healthy relations with Pakistan, Nehru Signed three treaties viz Liaquat Nehru Pact¹⁰, Nehru Noon Agreement¹¹, and Indus Water Treaty¹² over 13 years. Apart from Pakistan, Nehru was the first to recognize the People's Republic of China, and in 1954 also signed a Panchsheel agreement¹³ with China ignoring its Five Finger strategy¹⁴, which was a direct threat to

⁴ Camp david accord

⁵ Tashkent decleration

⁶ First world countries

⁷ Second World countries

⁸ Third World countries

⁹ Nehru's global ambitions

¹⁰ Liyagat Nehru Pact

¹¹ Nehru Noon Agreement

¹² Indus water treaty

¹³ Panchsheel Agreement

¹⁴ China's Five Finger Strategy

India's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Nehru's affair with China was such that he refused to accept the deal which unofficially offered Veto Power to India¹⁵ in the security council, by the USA in 1950 and then by the USSR in 1955 which is mentioned in a letter to PM Nehru by Vijayalakshmi Pandit the then ambassador to the United States of America. Nehru's China dilemma was broken in 1962 when China Attacked India annexing 38000 sq. km ¹⁶ of territory from India. This incident marked a sudden shift from Nehruvian Idealism to Strategic realism while following socialist principles.

B. Transition from Idealism to Pragmatic Realism to a period of diplomatic standstill.

Shri Lal Bahadur Shashtri Ji replaced PM Nehru as the second Prime Minister of India in 1964. Indian foreign policy in the period of PM Shashtri became more realistic. He laid greater stress on having good relations with his nearby neighbours only. He made The Shimla Agreement with Pakistan in 1964 and also voiced Indian Tamil issues with Srilanka. After the war of Indo-Pak 1965, he signed the Tashkent Declaration ¹⁷to look forward to basic stability in South Asia. It is in this aspect that he seems tactful to solve a conflict without the use of force. PM Indira Gandhi who succeeded PM Shastri after he died in 1966, continued to pursue India's position as a regional power. In 1971 she signed the historic Peace and Friendship Treaty¹⁸ with the USSR and thus India moved away from its policy of neutrality to tilt towards the Soviet Union. This was useful during our active participation in the Bangladesh Liberation War (1971) which served to enhance its regional status. During this period the Indira doctrine which stated that India's security depended on the South Asian state's stability was also developed. Shri Rajiv Gandhi ji, the son of PM Indira Gandhi succeeded him as the Prime Minister of India in 1984. While he was in power, it can be said for the very first time an interventionist approach was carried out towards India's foreign policy. He deployed the Indian peacekeeping forces to Sri Lanka by launching Operation Pawan¹⁹ and also sent the army and helped President Gayoon of Maldives. Thus this interventionist approach further boosted India's hegemonic influence within the South Asian region. In addition, they were perceived rather as measures of expansionism but as attempts to bring stability to given regions. He also contributed to the formulation of the SAARC which was established in 1985 to promote regional peace and cooperation. When the dynamic young PM Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated in 1991, the unknown PV Narasimha Rao became the PM of India who initiated the much-needed

¹⁵ Nehru, China and the security council seat.

¹⁶ 38000sq.km land captured

¹⁷ Tashkent Decleration

¹⁸ Peace and Friendship treaty

¹⁹ Operation Pawan

LPG or Liberalisation, Privatisation Globalisation reforms converting the Indian economy's portal for foreign direct investment. He also rationalised the Look East Policy²⁰ which aimed to enhance diplomatic relations of the country with ASEAN nations. The emergence of this program signified an important paradigm that aimed at underlining the economic, diplomatic, and political bilateral relations outside our region.

The prime ministership was then handed over to Shri IK Gujral Ji, who also followed similar policies as PM Rao but also came up with the Gujral doctrine which made it India's primary responsibility to support its South Asian neighbours. This doctrine emphasized a dependent role without the need to receive anything in return. After Rao Atal Bihari Vajpayee came to power who adopted a more proactive stance. He carried out successful nuclear tests in 1998, which led to various sanctions and restrictions, but it also elevated India's status as a nuclear power. To bring regional stability and peace PM Vajpayee also tried to negotiate with Pakistan but his efforts failed which eventually led to the Kargil War in 1999. The major weakness that can be noted is that India's foreign policy lacked activity from 2004 to 2024 under PM Manmohan Singh. This period can also be called as a period of diplomatic standstill. In this decade India was faced with several issues in the form of terrorism and that is why the focus of its foreign policy was laid mostly on peace and security. Overall we can say that India's foreign policy has evolved from idealism to a more pragmatic realism with instances of regional intervention and building new alliances according to changing geopolitical conditions.

C. PM Modi and his Policy of Multi-Alignment

On 26 May 2014, Shri Narendra Modi Ji started his first tenure of Prime Ministership and India's foreign policy took a complete turn with its ultra-realistic, Nation-centric approach. During his Oath ceremony, PM Modi invited all the leaders of neighboring nations to strengthen ties of peace and cooperation with them and to prioritize Neighbourhood First Policy. PM Modi visited Foreign countries to develop strong, friendly, and strategic relations with them. The Look East policy of PM Narasimha Rao was turned into the Act East policy By PM Narendra Modi. India developed its image as a First responder in case of any Humanitarian Crisis. India's relationship with the US was reviewed by Modi, who elevated it. Also, India signed various agreements with the USA like BECA, LEMOA, and COMCASA²¹ which proved to be strategically important. India under Modi efficiently managed its relationship with Russia by signing deals like the acquisition of the S400 missile system and a Joint venture to develop BRAHMOS cruise missiles and AK 203 under the Make in India initiative, without fearing probable sanctions from the West.

²¹ Beca, Lemoa and Comcasa

²⁰ Look East Policy

PM Modi also signed the Rafale deal with France and other defense deals with Israel, and India continues to see them as emerging partners. India also linked its flagship schemes with its diplomatic relationship for example giving contracts to develop the Infrastructure of Northeast India to Japan to balance China strategically. As far as Pakistan is concerned, India took a clear stand that Terrorism and Diplomatic talks can't go hand in hand. India continues to be active in regional and Multilateral organizations like QUAD, BRICS, I2U2, SCO, G20, and many others.

When Covid 19 started in December 2019, the whole world was going through a very chaotic phase. During this phase, India started supplying medicines and essential supplies to other countries. When India developed its Indigenous vaccine it was sent to countries devastated by the effects of the pandemic. India's foreign policy under PM Modi peaked when 100 % consensus was achieved on all developmental and geopolitical issues²² and the African Union was made a permanent member of the G20. This reflects the increasing status of India and it also reflects India's independent foreign policy without any external influence.

5. Case Studies

A. India and the Russia - Ukraine War

On 24th February 2022, Russia invaded the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of eastern Ukraine, marking the beginning of the Russia-Ukraine war. India, which has a special relationship with Russia and considers Ukraine as its important partner, took a neutral stance in this conflict. Prime Minister Modi urged both the parties to resort to peaceful and diplomatic means to end the conflict stating that "This is not an era of war. But it is one of Dialogue and Diplomacy"²³. Ever since the war started India took a crucial stance of prioritising its national interests first and foremost.

To safeguard the interests of all Indian nationals, mainly students living in Ukraine, India launched Operation Ganga which aimed at evacuating and bringing all the stranded Nationals back to India. During this mission, approximately 20000 Indian nationals were brought back from Ukraine. In the UN Security Council, India has likewise refrained from voting against Russia or Ukraine. India has supplied humanitarian aid to Ukraine to relieve the devastating aftermath of the conflict. India began purchasing Russian crude oil at a lower price, disregarding the likelihood of Western sanctions. In July 2024, PM Modi

²² 100% concensus in G20 submit, 2023

²³PM Modi's remarks on Russia Ukraine conflict.

visited Russia and urged Putin to resort to diplomacy, stating that this is not the time of war and that it hurts to see Innocent children suffer. Similarly, during PM Modi's visit to Poland and Ukraine in August 2024, He again emphasized the Importance of peace and the use of Diplomatic means to solve the conflict peacefully. He also stated that India stands with Ukraine in times of need and will always be willing to send humanitarian supplies as a gesture of goodwill in the time of need.

On the other hand, India also condemned Russia where it was due and asked Russia to reconsider its war strategy. Looking at India's strategic autonomy and stance in the Russia-Ukraine conflict, various world leaders urged PM Modi to negotiate between Russia and Ukraine to achieve global peace. The PM of Mexico suggested that Modi and Pope should be peace brokers in this Russia-Ukraine conflict and urged them to form a committee to accomplish this goal. Seeing India's stance in the Russia-Ukraine conflict it will not be hard to say that India has positioned itself to mediate between the two countries.

B. India and the Israel - Palestine War

On 7th Oct 2023, Hamas executed one of the deadliest terror attacks on the soil of Israel, on the eve of 50 years of the Yom Kippur war. After this attack, Israel retaliated with total military action which marked the beginning of the Israel-Palestine war. India took a neutral stance in this conflict urging both the parties for a two-state solution. India and Israel share solid diplomatic relations. India gave full recognition to Israel in 1992 and it proved to be handy during the Kargil War, when Israel supported India by providing arms and ammunition. India and Israel also have excellent people-to-people connections due to their common history against terrorism and India's sympathy towards the Jews. Israel and India have signed various treaties in areas like Agriculture, defense, Science and technology, and much more.

As far as India's position is considered, India has always supported the notion of 2 two-state solutions, recognizing Palestine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. India had also sent humanitarian aid to Gaza as a gesture of Goodwill. Like the Russia-Ukraine war, India abstained from voting in the UN Security Council while urging both parties to seek peace. India has also condemned Israel's invasion and airstrikes in Gaza which killed hundreds of civilians. Thus India has created a balanced position in this conflict and can be a worthy contender for undertaking peace negotiations between the countries.

6. Why is India the best choice for this role?

"Peace is not the absence of conflict, but the ability to cope with conflict by peaceful means." And who better to act on these lines than India, whose culture imitates both external peace as well as inner peace? A country whose culture, right from its ancient age was all accepting, all-encompassing not just in material terms but in spiritual terms as well. A country that has received all kinds of invading and non-invading forces from Shakas (200 BCE) and Hunas (4-5 CE) and given asylum to Zoroastrians and Jews in times of need. A country whose philosophical traditions of Debates and Discussions, imbibed acceptability in future generations. A country where the ideals of Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo, and Mahatma Gandhi met. A country which right from its initial days of independence, distanced itself from joining any block. A country that sought strategic autonomy, a country that always kept its national interests intact, a country that never let herself get influenced by other dominant nations. Who better to take on this new role?

India with its independent foreign policy and diverse partnerships with minimal outside interference has positioned itself well with the changing geopolitical circumstances. India's top priority is its national interest which secludes her from any external biases or prejudices when mediating between two parties. Its flexible approach to international politics, economy, diplomacy, and balance in multilateral forums are some of the positives for taking on the new role of world mediator. Time and again India has come forward to help the global community in times of need be it due to COVID-19 or be it during any conflict showing its commitment to achieving unwavering international peace and strengthening international order. This also shows that India is a rising global power that cares about global citizens and if not India then who better to take on this new role?

7. Challenges

India faces two major challenges hindering its new role as the world's mediator, one Internal and the other external. Internally India has not been able to solve its long-ranging problem of naxalites and internal terrorism be it in Kashmir or the Northeast. Furthermore, since 2014, opposition parties have resorted to the lowest means to downgrade India's image at home or on the international stage, directly or indirectly. These can be seen in the speeches of Rahul Gandhi (currently the leader of the opposition) who constantly tries to malign India's image and also tries to compromise it on foreign soil. Instances of this were seen in February 2024 when he was on a five-day visit to the UK while delivering a lecture at Cambridge University constantly attacked PM Modi or in May 2024, when he was on a six-day visit to America and while addressing the Indian diaspora mentioned India not as a

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²⁴ President Ronald Regan on Peace.

nation but as a Union of states, constantly targeting the image of PM Narendra Modi, forgetting his responsibility of enhancing India's image then as a member of parliament and now as the leader of the opposition. Apart from these India faces a serious challenge of demographic imbalance in several parts of the country resulting in communalism which ultimately leads to riots. These domestic issues seriously affect India's image at the International level.

Besides these internal issues, India poses serious challenges from its neighbors like China and Pakistan. India shares a long history of conflict with Pakistan and has fought four wars in 1947, 1965, 1971, and 1999. Apart from this India and Pakistan share a long history of Kashmir conflict which even the United Nations is not able to solve. In the backdrop of these conflicts, India faces a serious threat of terrorism arising out of Pakistan. Although India has adopted a series of measures to curb terrorism be it in the form Counter Terrorism or Counter Insurgency operations or the abrogation of Article 370 of the Indian constitution, they are not sufficient. The Second threat arising out of India's immediate neighborhood is China's. Although we have more than 100 billion dollars in trade, most is due to India's exports and dependence on Chinese goods. We have also engaged with China in a few armed conflicts, be it in 1962 or in areas like Nathula Pass or Doklam. China claims Ladakh and Arunachal as its territories, thus posing a serious threat to India's sovereignty and territorial integrity. India has in the past undertaken a series of Diplomatic negotiations with China and Pakistan but it didn't prove to be of any use.

8. Recommendations

1. Effective Use of India's Entertainment Industry

Under cultural diplomacy, India should market its Bollywood, Tollywood, and other film industries to the rest of the world as entertainment industries. One of the examples of such cultural sharing is the MoU²⁵ that was signed in 2022 between the Republics of India and Australia to promote cooperation in the film industry. This is an agreement to help Indian and Australian filmmakers develop more coproductions and promote the Indian movie industry in Australia and the Australian cinema in India. Moreover, the presence of foreign directors and different perspectives in the storyline makes it easier for the international audience to understand the films and establish India as an intermediary cultural power.

2. Utilization of digital platforms

India must utilize digital media and digital platforms to connect with people globally. This can be done by promoting Indian ideas, customs, language, architecture, etc in a way that

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²⁵ MOU between India and Australia . 2022

would seem interesting to the rest of the world. This can be done by organising #hashtags on Twitter or it can be done by organising different events on YouTube or Instagram. It can also be done by collaborating with global influencers to target their respective audience. The government can also collaborate with various International cultural organisations like the International Fund for Cultural Diversity²⁶ (IFCD) or International Music Council²⁷ (IMC) which can enhance India's global image. Such collaboration may include Virtual museum tours, online festivals and shows, and storytelling competitions and quizzes, etc.

3. Establishing Digital Infrastructure

India should prioritize developing digital infrastructure that is essential to engage in the contemporary game of Information Warfare. This can be done by creating new think tanks, NGOs, and international civil society organizations and supporting those that are already in existence such as the Observer Research Foundation (ORF)²⁸ or Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (MP-IDSA)²⁹. These should be led by relevant organizations such as the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA)³⁰ and the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)³¹. MeitY can also formulate and share initiatives on digital policymaking and cybersecurity. These would enable India to stake a stand on global issues, reply to distorted impressions, and promote a balanced image on the international stage.

4. Creating International Media Outlets

The idea of a country with a population of 1.4 billion³² not having its own International media outlet sounds absurd in the age of Information and technology. India needs to set up a new global media house or upgrade its existing media houses like the sansad TV and Doordarshan to make it accessible to a global audience. This can promote India's soft power worldwide and also influence global opinions. It can also be used to counter the propaganda of various media outlets be it BBC, CNN, or Al-Jazeera against India.

5. Showcasing India as a hub for startups and Innovations

With over 1.28 lakh startups in April 2024³³ compared to just 450 in 2016, India is projecting itself as a hub for rising startups and innovation. This increase can go a long way in improving India's standing in the global community and more so as a player in the global

²⁶ International Fund for Cultural Diversity

²⁷ International Music Council

^{28 &}lt;u>ORF</u>

²⁹ MP-IDSA

^{30 &}lt;u>MEA</u>

³¹ MeitY

³² India's population

³³ A decade of growth in India's Startup ecosystem

economy. These startups grow bigger and when they go international they bring Indian culture, Indian ethos, and Indian business practices, and in a way, they are promoting the soft power of India. With the projection of India as a global hub of innovation foreign investment can be attracted thus paving the way to a more global and inclusive society.

6. Voluntarily stepping up to conduct peaceful negotiations

India should voluntarily step up to m mediate Various international conflicts such as that concerning Afghanistan and Iraq due the to positive connections that India enjoys with both countries. If such negotiations succeed India will better position itself as the world's mediator who strives to achieve global peace. By this means, India will emerge as a powerful negotiator upon whom countries can rely in times of need. Though this process is not simple and can take more time than anticipated India must show its intent to negotiate various conflicts to achieve global peace.

7. Investment in the Training of Diplomats and Active participation in global forums.

Investments in the training of Indian diplomats to develop and enhance their skills to carry out conflict negotiations are very important. India needs to actively set up various programs and courses from time to time for upskilling its diplomats. But India needs to expand its diplomatic representation globally and to do this it has to expand the size of the diplomatic corps. Apart from this, one must take an active interest in Global forums as well as International conferences. This will assist in profiling international policies and decisions that are in line with the Indian national interest.

8. Climate Change and Environmental Leadership:

Climate change is one of the major problems of the 21st century affecting nearly everyone globally. This presents India with a unique problem as well as an opportunity to come up with solutions to solve global climate and environmental problems. If India capitalises on this problem effectively its status may rise significantly as a global leader who cares about global citizens. India has the potential to enhance its capacity as an intermediary in international climate change discussions by promoting global environmental goals and sharing its own experience in the sustainability field. India is already a leading player in sustainable development with our presence in initiatives like the International Solar Alliance and also because of our ambition to use clean energy for day-to-day activities.

9. Supplying humanitarian aid during Global Crises:

During COVID-19, the world saw India's increasing influence and popularity among various countries due to its humanitarian interventions and vaccine diplomacy which

supplied critical medicines and vaccines in times of need. This Soft Image of India can be very critical in positioning itself as a major global soft power and an actual mediator in a time of need. If India continues with its humanitarian policies soon it will have the ability to influence global discussions to its advantage.

9. Conclusion

India's transformation into a global intermediary is a radical departure from hitherto foreign policy, reflecting its accelerated economic rise, mature diplomacy, and dedication to multilateralism. Historically tied to the non-alignment policy, India's role as a mediator is an extended evolution of its diplomacy adapting to a world where effective conflict resolution and negotiation are essential for international stability. India's rising influence globally is built on its massive economic growth and strategic partnerships with key world powers. In terms of economy and diplomacy, this has given India the impetus to become more proactive in mediating internationally, fostering dialogue during intricate conflicts such as those occurring in Europe or the Middle East. India should take advantage of its neutrality and extensive diplomatic relations and should establish itself as a major player in promoting peace and stability across multiple regions.

India also faces a few major challenges in its mediation efforts concerning domestic political dynamics and doubts raised by the international community on impartiality and effectiveness as a mediator in India. Addressing these challenges becomes very important for India to secure and enhance its role as a global mediator. Therefore, a striking balance between its domestic and external affairs needs to be maintained to improve India's credibility.

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