



**INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF NOVEL RESEARCH
AND DEVELOPMENT (IJNRD) | IJNRD.ORG**
An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

MANAGEMENT OF INDIA'S RISE AS A GLOBAL POWER

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Abstract:

The Republic of India is a seventy-seven-year-old nation born out of colonial adversity that stands tall today as an example of perseverance, strength and resilience, with the ability to chart a bright future for the country and its people regardless of the burdens of the past. Bolstered by impressive economic growth as well as absorption of democratic values and principles, India has proved to be a responsible nation, willing to extend the hand of friendship to all others, while also showing itself as being capable of defending itself against any aggression against its sovereignty and integrity. While the nation has had to deal with conflictual situations with two of its immediate neighbours, it has also made many reliable partners and friends among the global community of nations, based on mutual respect and trust. It is the belief of many today, both within India and outside, that India's time has come and that it should reach out for the mantle of leadership in a multi-polar world of the future. However, when one looks at the future, it is also equally clear that there would be many challenges which India as a rising power would need to overcome if it is to claim its rightful place as a leader at the regional and global level. However, while some of these challenges, are formidable and appear to have no short-term solutions, undoubtedly, these will have to be overcome with the sheer grit and resilience of the Indian people and governments, who would need to plan together strategically and coming together potentially to achieve related goals and targets, to ensure the nation is able to become a shining example of inclusive development and democratic values which serves as a beacon of stability and prosperity for the rest of the world. This paper intends to will delve into the challenges, while primarily focusing on the solutions which need to be undertaken in the short- and long-term to properly manage and guide India's rise to a global power.

Keywords: Management, Global Power, Community, Challenges

Introduction:

India is largely perceived and described as an emerging power and a potential leader of the global South in the context of a future multi-polar world. Last year, India was holding the rotating Presidency of the G-20 group of nations – a group consisting of the world’s largest economies - at a time that the global security and economic situation was in an unpredictable flux, largely on account of the continuing Russia-Ukraine war, a conflict which is still continuing and has also crystallised the onset of a new Cold War. India’s current global standing is supported by its status as the world’s fifth largest economy, in terms of annual GDP, as well as its formidable military, ranked as the world’s fourth most powerful, its talented human resource pool, which contributes the largest number of CEOs of tech-companies in the United States and its recognition as the world’s largest democracy, which conducts complex elections periodically in an efficient manner. Moreover, India’s geo-strategic location dominating the Indian Ocean Region, combined with the growing strength of its Navy, provides it heft in the maritime dimension too. Coincidentally, last year, India was also, concurrently, holding the rotating presidency of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, a regional grouping of Central Asian and Eurasian countries led by China and Russia, which is largely perceived as counter-West in its strategic orientation. Many political commentators are describing this point of time as ‘India’s moment’ (Jacob, 2023) - a historic opportunity to make significant impact globally and climb up the ladder politically. For some in India, as also in the global community, the country appears to be finally standing at the cusp of making a more substantive impact in international affairs, both at the regional and global level.

Where Does India Stand In The World?

The issue of India’s rise has to be seen in the context that, for too long has India’s global importance stemmed only from its being a ‘swing state’ in global power equations (Cohen, 2023), also providing one of the largest markets for manufactured goods. Thus, it has largely remained on the global side-lines, holding on to its benign reputation as a disciplined ‘rule follower’, rather than a determined ‘rule maker’ in global affairs. Indians generally are of the opinion that such a situation would need to change at some point, and relatedly, feel that the desired moment of change – resulting in an important shift in global power equations in India’s favour - could well be starting now. On the other hand, sceptics allude to the fact that India’s low *per capita* GDP, at \$2,280, as also its Human Development Index (HDI) score, at .633, is the lowest within the G-20, whereas its deficit as a percentage of GDP, at 12.76%, is the highest. There are also independent voices being raised that India’s economic growth in recent years is ostensibly weighted in favour of the rich (Kamdar, 2020), while the country also appears to be straying away from its traditional core values like democracy, freedom and pluralism, as illustrated by its falling global rankings in various attributes of democratic and liberal values.

In the meanwhile, the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war is proving to be a major game-changer in global affairs, especially at the strategic level. On the one hand, the war has demonstrated a possible return of Russia’s imperialistic ambitions (Wang, 2022), while on the other, it has also shown its protagonists, the Western countries in particular, in unfavourable light (Askew, 2023). In fact, the Western nations, which are supporting

Ukraine quite vigorously, are largely being perceived as war-mongers, supporting the interests of their ‘military-industrial complex’, while mouthing platitudes about peace and a just world order. Also, the war has resulted in a tightening strategic embrace between China and Russia, with adverse repercussions for the rules based global order. Further, the ‘global South’ – the countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America – largely appear unimpressed by the Western nations alluding to Russia’s and China’s recent actions as grossly violating and challenging the ‘rules-based world order. Thus, many countries are not readily responding to related Western diktats seeking implementation of economic sanctions and unequivocal condemnation of the Russian invasion (Adler, 2022), violently manifesting in the form of the unrelenting missile attacks on Ukrainian cities and civilian infrastructure, which are leading to death and misery among the Ukrainian people. On the other hand, not only China’s economic and political standing continues to rise overall, more so in the Middle East, where it has gained in influence and has successfully negotiated a peace deal last year between Iran and Saudi Arabia (Gallagher et al., 2023).

On the Russia-Ukraine War, India has tried to walk a middle path till now, leaning somewhat in favour of the Western bloc, while making some carefully crafted entreaties to Russia to bring about cessation of its attacks on Ukraine and respect its territorial sovereignty (ET Online, 2022). Significantly, some commentators attribute India’s current importance at the global level purely as an outcome of economic and political opportunities provided by the Russia-Ukraine war – a war which appears to be gradually disrupting the erstwhile West-dominated global order, thus providing opportunities to ‘neutral’ countries like India to make a substantive impact in global affairs. Significantly, in a world divided by ideology, India’s charting of an independent middle path is no longer seen as a weakness, but instead, is adding to its stature globally (Jagtiani and Wellek, 2022). Further, increasing belligerence by the Chinese Army recently on India’s disputed borders have contributed to enhanced clarity in India making its strategic choices - in terms of putting aside its efforts towards seeking mutual peace and reconciliation with China, and instead, adopting a hard line towards this belligerent neighbour, both politically and militarily. Consequently, India is seen by the US and its partners as a potential Western ally against China (White, 2021 Paul, 2019), but one which also needs to be weaned away from Russian influence.

Does India Have What It Takes to be a Global Leader?

Consequently, it can be said that India’s importance at the regional and global level is not only due to issues thrown up by the Russia-Ukraine War but is a cumulative result of its concerted efforts and proud accomplishments in various fields like economy, science and technology, as well as positive non-interventionist image, achieved over the last many decades, in fact, from even before its independence from British colonial rule. Gaining independence through a non-violent campaign was followed up by a principled effort at nation-building, under the visionary focus of India’s post-independence leadership and the concerted efforts of the Indian people. The first four decades as an independent nation state were largely characterised by slow economic growth and gradual social progress, but this period was also interspersed with wars instigated by our adversarial neighbours, due to which, India had to divert considerable resources towards developing and maintaining a sizeable military. The change of market-oriented policies, starting 1991, led to conditions of

faster economic growth over the next three decades, which has brought higher levels of human development and economic prosperity to the country and its people. All this, while efforts to lift people from poverty have continued unabated. It is definitely to India's credit that, despite being largely poor at the time of its independence in 1947, and having had to deal with many economic challenges in the initial period, India refused to join either power-bloc, and instead, charted an independent course in global affairs while calling for peaceful co-existence among the rival blocs that had come into being at the end of the second world war.

Clearly, India has always had a legitimate claim to playing an influential role beyond its shores (Barua, 2020; Brewster, 2014). Its civilisational history, formidable size, its fast growing economy, which is valued annually at three and a half trillion dollars at this point, its democratic credentials, its youthful demographic profile, its achievements in space, cyber and nuclear technology, its 500 million strong work force, its 32 million diaspora, its globalised industries like software and pharmaceuticals, its strong and modern military, its geo-strategically important location as a land bridge between East and West Asia, which dominates the global trade routes through the northern Indian Ocean Region, are all attributes which provide it the necessary credentials, legitimacy and heft for claiming a leadership role for itself in the region and the world. The fact that India is the world's largest democracy, which has always cherished principles of freedom, pluralism and multi-culturalism, has been a major feather in its cap (Reetz, 2018), which has generally defined characterisation of India as a country of enterprising, intelligent, hard-working and peace-loving people. It is predicted that India's economy is set to grow even further in the future, with concomitant improvement in human development indices among the masses. Along the way, India has also learnt how to manage its own security needs – without being dependant on others, except in a collaborative manner.

An important feature of India's external policies is that India has never had any extra-territorial ambitions related to its South Asian neighbours, and strongly supports the principles of national sovereignty and territorial integrity. In the external security realm, India has faced threats from its two hostile neighbours for most of the period of its independent history and resultantly, has fought a number of wars with them. More recently, a politico-military nexus has built-up between these two adversaries (Pathak, 2021), a development which keep throwing up challenges for India's leadership and security forces. At every opportunity, India has held out a hand of friendship to its neighbours, even the unfriendly ones (Waldman, 2003), though unfortunately, these efforts aimed at the latter have not always drawn genuine and positive response. Whenever feasible, India has provided economic and disaster-related assistance to other countries, not only in the Asian region but even in other parts of the world (Express Web Desk, 2023; Al Jazeera, 2023). India's military peacekeepers, operating under the UN flag, have earned laurels while supporting international peace efforts and providing succour to communities under threat (United Nations Peacekeeping, 2022). We have also learnt some important lessons along the way in our journey as a sovereign nation – that there are no permanent friends or enemies – only permanent interests, which we have to pursue relentlessly towards achieving peace, happiness and prosperity for the Indian people, without compromising on our core values which define us as a country and people.

With regard to the leadership role that India can play in the region and the world, there has never been any doubt in the minds of successive leaderships in India that the country must stand up for universal values and principles like democracy, equality and human rights. Also, towards that end, India has made efforts to utilize all elements of its comprehensive national power - political, diplomatic, economic and military - to project, claim and achieve its rightful place as a major player among the comity of nations. Strong and mutually beneficial relationships/ strategic partnerships have been established with other countries, as well as with regional and international organisations, including the United Nations. It is through such interactions that India is trying to make a difference and contribute towards peace, stability and the collective well-being of the global community. India is well aware that, to don a leadership mantle, it has also to make notable contribution to gain recognition as a global player, by addressing issues of common concern – such as human development, war prevention, establishment of peace between warring nations and communities, disaster management, pandemic security, climate change issues, global warming, energy security, food & water security, security of the global commons, human rights, and many more.

The Path Forward:

With the above backdrop, there is a need to identify the actions that India needs to undertake as part of its quest to become a major power, i.e., to make its ‘G-20 moment’ more meaningful and long-lasting. Ten such actions have been discussed as follows:

First, India needs to lay down high economic growth targets and achieve them in a planned and concerted manner. We need to ensure real economic growth rates of 8 to 10 % over the next few decades to actualize estimations that we can become the world’s third largest economy by 2030, and the world’s second largest economy by 2047 (Mishra, 2022). For a start, we need to achieve a *per capita* GDP of US \$ 3000 at the earliest. For the future, the government must implement the overdue structural changes that have historically hampered India’s economic growth. India will need to step up planning, financing and execution of infrastructural projects, create employment for India’s growing working age population, liberalise policy to attract domestic capital investment, foreign direct investment (FDI) and institutional capital, change rules and procedures to improve India’s ranking in World Bank’s Ease of Doing Business Index, enhance India’s tax base well beyond the 1% who are currently paying direct taxes, wean the country away from the subsidy culture and make it more market oriented. It should also leverage the country’s prowess in science and technology in its business and functional practices through ‘Innovation,’ ‘Digitisation’ and ‘Customisation’, including but not limited to the production of emerging digital technologies. And, most importantly, India should ensure peace and stability on its borders and within the country, with a view to ensure that it does not get diverted from achievement of its economic and developmental goals.

Second, India needs to build comprehensive economic wealth for India. For this, India has to continuously add value to its existing capital in three fields, i.e., manufactured capital (PIB, 2023) (infrastructure, buildings, machinery, and so on), human capital (Parika and Singh, 2020) (the population, in

relation to their numbers, age profile, education, qualifications, skills, scientific temper and law-abiding orientation) and natural capital (including lands, forests, fossil fuels and minerals). As per 2017 estimations of comprehensive wealth, computed by New World Wealth, India stood at 6th position with \$ 8.2 trillion wealth, well behind the top three, i.e., the US with \$ 64.6, China with \$ 24.8 trillion and Japan with \$ 19.5 trillion.

Third, India should transform its armed forces into a strong and modern military, which is not only capable of defending the country from external threats but is also capable of projecting power beyond its shores - to protect the nation's strategic interests (Vaid, 2022; Gilboy and Heginbotham, 2012). However, keeping in view India's benign and cooperative approach, rather than a hegemonic one, India must take care to ensure that its military power is seen as an asset, and not as a threat, by other countries of the region. Timely military modernization must be implemented as a priority, backed by highest levels of collaborative foreign technology and indigenous manufacturing capabilities, which must be also set up in the private sector (Singh, 2023). Relatedly, we should strive to ensure internal peace and harmony so that our military does not have to be employed on internal security duties. Instead, the nation's armed forces should be able to focus entirely on dealing with our external threats and challenges in the military realm.

Fourth, India should transform its youth as a 'demographic dividend' for the country by positively empowering and leveraging India's potential 'youthful work force' of the future (Shyamsukha,²⁰²³). It should be noted that India's current youthful age profile will start changing after a few years. Youth of 25 years of age, currently estimated at 50% of the population is likely to fall to 34% by 2036 (Haridass and Sarwal, 2022). The youth must therefore be empowered through quality education, job-oriented skilling and suitable employment opportunities to transform it as a demographic dividend. Towards that end, creating a network of high quality educational and skilling institutions, backed by requisite teaching faculty, is the priority need of the hour. It is also important that the Indian youth are empowered by liberal and pluralistic ideas so that they contribute positively to society, in India and abroad, and are not swayed easily by radical thoughts and ideologies. The urban youth in India needs to be encouraged to participate in activities which promote social responsibility and accountability in a positive manner.

Fifth, India must promote and support value based universal principles of global governance and functioning like democracy, freedom, human rights, social equality and gender equality (ORF, 2019). While maintaining 'realism' in protecting its national interests, India must develop a sound moral position on all important global issues - supporting universal principles and values like democracy, human rights, religious freedom, social and gender equality. India's own record on policies and actions on such value-based practices must be impeccable. At the same time, India must work concerted towards improvement of our ranking on value based global indices (Singh, 2018).

Sixth, India must assume a non-hegemonic leadership role in Asia and the Indian Ocean Region with a view to support pan Asian interests and play a more influential role in global affairs. India must employ its relative advantages like its geostrategic-location, domination of IOR trade routes, possession of a strong and modern military (Pant, 2022), spread of enterprising diaspora as well as its non-hegemonic approach, soft

power, cultural commonalities with other Asian nations, historically validated peaceful intent, democratic credentials, linguistic advantage (Bunthorn, 2023) and strengths in science & technology. India must improve connectivity and leverage its traditional and historic relations with various nations, like Japan, Australia, Indonesia, Bangladesh and South Korea as well as sub-regions of Asia like West Asia, South Asia, Central Asia, South East Asia and the IOR all of which have their specific attributes and strengths, in pursuit of this quest. India must develop security partnerships with support (Jaishankar, 2019, pgs 15 – 19), both bilaterally from individual countries as well as multilateral organizations such as the QUAD, the UN, IORA, SAARC, ARF, SCO, AUKUS as well as extra-regional powers like the US, UK, France, Germany and Russia.

Seventh, India must build and leverage strategic partnerships with leading global players and other nations of India's global strategic interest, while also developing multi-lateral relationships as part of international organizations and groupings (Tyushka and Czechhowska, 2019). India must build strategic partnerships with leading global players as well as with other major players like Israel, Brazil, Nigeria, South Africa, South Korea, Australia, Saudi Arabia, UAE and Iran (Basrur and Kutty, 2022; Lakshminarayanan, 2021, in pursuit of its national interests. It must also build mutually cooperative multilateral relationships with international and regional groupings worldwide. India must use multilateral forums to promote its views, interests and concerns, including collective security, economic growth, fair trade practices, sound ecological practices and mutual security issues like intelligence sharing on threats like terrorism, cybercrimes, piracy, drug trafficking, counterfeit currency tracking, money laundering and other common threats.

Eighth, India must progressively transform from being only a 'rule follower' to becoming a 'rule-shaper' on the global stage (ORF, 2019). Today, India gives as much aid as it receives, makes more foreign direct investment than it gets and is seen by other countries as a source of assistance, guidance and even security. Consequently, as India is increasingly recognized globally as a more influential economic player (Srivastava, 2021), India should be able to play a more significant role in global affairs, much beyond its enhanced comprehensive national power and status. To become a 'rule shaper', India must seek and bear global responsibilities commensurate with its rising economic and political means. In an enhanced role on the global stage, India would be expected to contribute more towards addressing global concerns such as protection of the global commons, war against global terror, restoration of peace and security in conflict situations, provision of humanitarian assistance and mitigation of effects of climate change and environmental degradation.

Ninth, India must build up its traditional prowess in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), especially information technology and space prowess, and thereafter leverage it to promote technological awareness and progress among the Indian people, build up a scientific temper, leap across technologies, generate employment as well as achieve economic wealth for the country (Chaturvedi and Srinivas, 2015, pgs 90 – 95). Indian scientists and engineers have successfully garnered technology for space research and satellite launch, ballistic and cruise missile systems as well as a host of other military technologies related to weapons, equipment and ammunition. Concurrently, Indian engineers and companies have been at the forefront of research and development in information technology and new fields like nano-technology,

drones, robotics, 3D printing, artificial intelligence and the Internet of Things (IoT) (Nokia, 2022; PTI, 2014). All these need to be leveraged appropriately towards enhancing our economic and scientific prowess.

Tenth, India needs to leverage the knowledge and influence of members of the Indian diaspora to promote India's national interests (Varadharajan, 2015; Sharma, 2013). Concurrently, the government must be able to intercede on their behalf, whenever possible, and support them when they need help and assistance. One of India's major strengths on the global stage is its 32 million strong diaspora, essentially consisting of people of Indian origin (PIOs) and non-resident Indians (NRIs), who have spread out to all parts of the world, over a long period of time, in search of employment and in pursuit of their livelihood and dreams.

And last, but not the least, India needs to identify and thwart the challenges that can negatively impact on India's big power ambitions. Despite India having the potential to transform as a major power within the next two to three decades, a number of challenges (Kumar and Mohan, 2021) can come in the way. These include possibilities like a drop in the economic growth rate (Roubini, 2023), manifestation of external and internal security challenges, lack of improvement in human development/ poverty alleviation index, drop in scientific culture, drop in military power. calamitous disasters – economic, natural or man-made, and lack of cooperative support from influential countries and groupings. This entails monitoring important parameters of India's rise and to take timely corrective actions to thwart counter-currents whenever there is a need.

Conclusion:

As we move confidently into the 78th year of our country's independence, we need to ensure that we use the lessons of the past to guide our path for the future. Undoubtedly, transformation as a global power would enable us to find our rightful place in the global comity of nations. But to achieve that status, as the poet Robert Frost wrote "there are miles to go before we sleep."

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