



# Pm Modi 3.O: Enhancing India's Global Influence And Leadership

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## INTRODUCTION

During the recent cycle of 18th general elections, the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) at its helm, emerged victorious. The central government is witnessing a coalition where the leading party depends on its allies to maintain a majority. As a result, Narendra Modi got the nod to serve as India's Prime Minister for his third straight term. In his post-victory speech, Modi pledged major changes and a fresh start for the nation, with a key focus on India's foreign policy. Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar will continue at his position for the second year in a row.

For the past several years, one of the major objectives for the current BJP government is to position India as the world's third-largest economy by 2027. Many economic changes have been introduced to reach this goal. PM Modi and S. Jaishankar are working together to strengthen India's standing as a global leader and voice for the Global South.

Over the last decade, many important global events have either been hosted in India or have seen immense participation from India. Pushing for changes in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has been a key part of India's foreign policy.

India has also put effort into building strong strategic partnerships while keeping its own ideas and plans. Hostile neighbors have threatened the country's borders, and India has tried to improve these relationships. India will build on what it has already achieved and accomplished. This article will discuss the foreign policy of India, as well as what will Narendra Modi's third consecutive term mean for it.

## FOREIGN POLICY DURING PM MODI 1.0 AND PM MODI 2.0

An internal change that has occurred with respect to elections is the interest of the general public in foreign policy. Foreign policy is not a major part of India's electoral debates, but Modi has been an exception. To refer to India, Modi has several times in the past adopted the term 'vishwaguru' which is usually translated as 'World Leader,' and it is what he usually uses as part of his campaign to show India's morphing foreign policy. India hosted the G20 in 2023 and made this position visible for the first time. One of the areas that Modi has been most successful in popularizing foreign policy on the public domain in India is the energetic popularization of foreign policy in the public domain of India, an area that has been hitherto not popular.

Thus, the increased role of the public in foreign policy formation is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it can lead to greater transparency, accountability and informed debate – all of which will only add to academic discourse.

On the other hand, given the rise of polarization and suppression of freedom of expression, public input in foreign policy may only worsen the inter-country relations. There are numerous sources which state that India has become more aggressive in its foreign policy while other sources have pointed out that Narendra Modi has rewritten India's role in the global system as a Hindu nation instead of a secular nation.

Modi has kept both his detractors and supporters on their toes by following a pragmatic foreign policy with the 'India first' refrain at its core. The international order has gone through multiple changes. In the current global discourse, India is the centrepiece. Many countries are finding value in being friends with India. India is one of the fastest growing economies in the world and the shift in the West's approach towards China has put the spotlight on India. India's demography, its being an alternative to China and its centrality in the Indo-Pacific geography have all combined to make this India's moment.

India's foreign policy was defined by non-alignment and neutrality for the longest time. This drew criticism from the major powers as India wouldn't take a position on many international issues. This has changed since Modi came to power and has been so since S Jaishankar took over. The Indian Navy's rescue of a commercial ship hijacked by pirates off Somalia's coast is an indication that Indian policymakers are now willing to take operational risks to ensure safety of shipping and freedom of navigation in vital waterways.

Economic growth and domestic transformation have been Modi's agenda and this has been reflected in his foreign policy. India's interests and needs will determine the future course. The Modi government's regional outlook under the 'Neighbourhood First' approach has sought to promote regional stability and prosperity, recognising a secure and cooperative neighbourhood is essential for India's overall development and security. South and Southeast Asia are connected through the Bay of Bengal which is a zone of maritime connectivity. This new focus has also given India a chance to address a security challenge that was previously invisible: China. One of the first times India challenged a global initiative and did it alone was in 2014 when India challenged the Belt and Road Initiative.

In a few years, India responded with military muscle to China's military aggression. India also managed to play the Russia-USA great game and worked well with the USA without entering into a formal alliance. The world was used to pontificating about India and today it hears an Indian voice on the global stage that can tell a story of a responsible stakeholder that is rooted in its own culture but not shy of global obligations. As a fast-growing country that is a fulcrum for the powers in their anti-China alignment, India also wants to speak for the Global South. Global South as a region is composed of Third World and developing nations as victims of an unbalanced international order domain systematically including global law and mechanisms of international governmental organizations. India has called for change concerning international bodies and aims to represent the global south.

### **FOREIGN POLICY PRIORITIES UNDER MODI 3.0**

Narendra Modi has been focusing on Southeast Asian nations for a long time now. This will continue in future. Many leaders of Southeast Asian nations were present during Modi's oath taking ceremony. Efforts like these and more reflect the government's 'Neighbourhood First' approach. In 2014, Act East Policy replaced Look East Policy and it completes a decade in 2024. Renewed partnerships with ASEAN, our land and maritime neighbour and also with Japan, Korea and Australia will give long term strength to our strategic leadership.

Secondly, another area of cooperation for the world is the Indo-Pacific region. The region has gained a lot of attention in the last year due to China's aggression. USA wants to have a stake in the region and India is one of the major players with whom alliances are beneficial. USA, Japan, Australia and India are also part of QUAD, an informal strategic forum. Indo-Pacific region is very dynamic and new relationships are being forged every day. Since India is geographically located in the region, it is a key player. India's IPOI (Indo-Pacific Ocean Initiative) will get more attention as there are more than 12 partners in the same. If India's vision of Indo-Pacific is to succeed, IPOI has to gain some credible momentum. India will continue to be actively part of IPEF and US-led Indo-Pacific programmes and keep ASEAN centrality intact.

Thirdly, India-US partnership has worked well in the past without India formally being an ally. International importance of both the countries is increasing every year. Under Modi 3.0 this partnership will see new phases. India has very high economic and trade ambitions and an economic agreement with USA will also help India in that. To achieve the aim of independence in semiconductor industry, inviting higher investment and technology is a top priority for India.

Another area where India's foreign policy will see changes is Free Trade Agreements (FTAs). FTAs help India increase exports, attract FDI and get valuable technologies. Ongoing FTAs with Japan, Singapore, Australia etc., have been very beneficial. Some FTAs like with UK, EU and ASEAN will be reviewed.

Countries are more interested in trade agreements in digital economy and e-commerce. Fifthly, regional organisations especially those in Indo-Pacific region like BIMSTEC will see a changed dynamic and more importance. In September 2024, sixth BIMSTEC summit will take place in Bangkok. BIMSTEC is expected to accept three new associate members in the near future (Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore). SAARC should be reactivated.

This will require better relationship between India-Pakistan. Currently the organization is not utilizing its potential because of internal conflicts among member nations. Bilateral with Australia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brazil, Indonesia, Japan, Kenya, Korea, Mauritius, Oman, Tanzania, Singapore, Sri Lanka etc will continue to flourish in PM Modi's third term.

Middle East is a priority for Narendra Modi. Region is in turmoil with geopolitical tensions and dynamics are changing every day. India has been advocating for peace and prosperity in Middle East. Stability in the region means more geopolitical and economic gains for India. Region is also a maritime zone and trade route and any hurdle like blocking of Suez Canal can impact India's trade. India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) is a solution to avoid Bab El-Mandeb strait which is a major chokepoint for maritime traffic. Under Modi 3.0 IMEC will develop fast. Bilateral FTAs like India-UAE CEPA and initiatives like I2U2 or IMEC will play bigger role in securing India's western front.

In uncertain global landscape India's voice has been welcome by multiple partners. But issues like climate change, reform of multilateral organizations, energy and food security, taming inflation etc requires very careful thought. To represent Global South on global stage India has been leading multiple interests of developing countries through international forums like BRICS and IBSA. Under Modi 3.0 one of the big achievements of India will be UNSC reform.

Under Modi 3.0 India has seen a huge rise in soft power. A lot of India's power lies in its culture, people and geography. Indian diaspora is spread all over the world and with-it Indian culture. White House of USA wished people across the globe "Happy Diwali".

Indian restaurants are present in almost all major cities of the world and people from different ethnicities and cultures have experienced Indian culture to some extent. India has some of the most beautiful locations in the world and tourist inflow is quite high. Diplomacy will pay long lasting dividends only when it is backed by its national culture and interests.

### **Challenges for foreign policy under Modi 3.0**

With increased popularity and bets, an important challenge for India would be to balance major global powers, mainly USA, Russia and China. India will have to carefully discuss its priorities and manage their ties diplomatically with these three countries, which depends on all of them, considering India. The United States and China are the current global orders and Russia is brunt of heavy sanctions by West.

India will have to take a stand for its needs and ideologies without compromising its identity and freedom. It will be important to ensure economic stability and development for Modi's international ambitions. It would be necessary for India's economic flexibility to attract foreign investment, promote export and promote innovation. The management of internal challenges such as unemployment, infrastructure deficiency and regulatory obstacles will be direct implications on India's global economic hustle and bustle.

The geo-political landscape is marked by instability with instability, transformed business wars and coalitions with instability. Modi's government will have to be agile in responding to these changes, ensuring that the strategic interests of India are protected.

### **CONCLUSION**

Modi 3.0 is set to prioritize improving border infrastructure, boosting defence capabilities, and reinforcing “Mini lateral” strategic partnerships with countries that share similar values, all in the name of ensuring peace in the Indo-Pacific region, including the Taiwan Strait. India made a significant statement in its pursuit of global leadership by hosting the G-20 Summit in Delhi in September 2023. Now, it's looking to carve out a credible leadership role in the Global South, as shown by its notable strides in engaging with Africa, Latin America, and Southeast Asia.

India has earned recognition as a powerful and vital voice for the Global South. This status was solidified by India's push for the African Union to be included in the G20. India is on a mission to find its unique place in the world, where it feels more embraced. This strategic move not only boosts India's diplomatic clout but also strengthens its economic and political relationships with emerging economies.

As Modi embarks on his third term, he's ready to keep the momentum going, drive through foreign policy reforms, strengthen strategic alliances, and reinforce India's leadership role in the Global South. By enhancing regional security, pursuing a seat on the UNSC, and building global partnerships, India is aiming to position itself as a key player on the international stage.

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