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An analysis of the genesis of ‘multi-alignment’ principle in contemporary Indian foreign policy

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Abstract

India’s foreign policy has undergone profound transformations, evolving from ‘non-alignment’ policy to ‘multi-alignment’ principle, which began to take shape in the early 21st century. Multi-alignment seeks to broaden India’s network of international partnerships, thereby safeguarding national interests and enabling the country to respond more effectively to global challenges. This article employs three major theoretical approaches in international relations, i.e. realism, liberalism, and constructivism, to analyze the context in which the multi-alignment principle has emerged in India’s contemporary foreign policy, particularly under Prime Minister Modi’s leadership. The findings indicate that this principle is shaped by three key contexts: (1) international environment, (2) regional environment, and (3) India’s domestic conditions. Furthermore, the article argues that this principle is not only well aligned with current realities but also has the potential to position India as a leading advocate of the multi-alignment movement, echoing the role it played during the Cold War era.

Keywords: Foreign policy, India, multi-alignment, Narendra Modi

Introduction

Since the beginning of the 21st century, India’s foreign policy has experienced a significant transformation, driven both by turbulence in the international system and by India’s own rapid rise (Khanna & Kumar, 2023, p. 325) ^[18]. According to Hall (2016) ^[12] and Verma (2024) ^[38], since the mid-2000s, New Delhi has pursued a multi-alignment strategy as a flexible approach to maximizing national interests, achieving core strategic objectives, and maintaining strategic autonomy amid an increasingly complex global environment. Under Prime Minister Modi, this policy has been further strengthened through the expansion of a diverse network of global partnerships, deepening cooperation while avoiding dependence on any particular major power or bloc (Verma, 2024) ^[38]. Multi-alignment simultaneously enables India to maintain a balanced posture in its relations with major powers (the United States, Russia, China, etc.), with developing countries of the Global South (including South Asian neighbors, Southeast Asian states, African nations, and others), and to participate in Western-led international groupings such as the QUAD, as well as multilateral mechanisms that seek to balance Western influence, including BRICS and the SCO.

According to India’s External Affairs Minister Jaishankar (2015) ^[16]:

“We, therefore, want to build our bilateral relationships with all major players, confident that progress in one account opens up possibilities in others...It [India] seeks resources, technology and best practices from international partners. That is very much at the heart of our diplomatic engagement. Both the US and China – and indeed the ASEAN, Japan, RoK and Europe – can contribute to this transformation. The centrality of this commitment ensures that India will set a positive and inter-active agenda with other major powers and groupings.”

Cogo Morales (2025) ^[6] contends that this approach enables New Delhi to harmonize its multifaceted interests and adapt flexibly to a volatile international environment, thereby strengthening security, promoting development, and enhancing India’s standing on the global stage. The article contends that this orientation aligns with contemporary international realities and is shaped by three main groups of factors: (1) the international environment, (2) the regional environment, and (3) India’s domestic conditions.

Materials and methods

The article employs three principal theories in international relations: realism, which emphasizes power relations among actors; liberalism, which highlights mutual interdependence between international agents; and constructivism, which focuses on ideational and perceptual factors to explain phenomena in international relations. In addition, the study integrates both primary sources (such as speeches by Indian leaders and official press releases from the Government of India) and secondary sources (including scholarly works, articles, and books by reputable academics) to ensure the objectivity, comprehensiveness, and reliability of the arguments and evidence presented.

Results and discussions

The international environment

According to Khanna and Kumar (2023, p. 325) ^[18], the bipolar world order that shaped international relations during the latter half of the 20th century came to an abrupt end after the Cold War, marking a major turning point for India. As the U.S.-led unipolar system emerged and subsequently gave way to a ‘multiplex world’ characterized by competition and confrontation among both regional and global powers (Mishra, 2023) ^[21], India’s foreign policy had to be reconstituted on new foundations. In an era of globalization, rising interdependence, and the growing prevalence of transnational challenges (Jain, 2014) ^[15], Indian diplomacy has been required to adapt with unprecedented flexibility. Today, New Delhi confronts a wide spectrum of challenges – from an increasingly unpredictable U.S. administration and a more assertive China to a volatile and rapidly changing international environment (Pande, 2025) ^[26] and a multipolar system in which major-power influence is ever more pronounced (Dang Dinh Tien & Nguyen Thi Thuy, 2020) ^[9].

Uncertainty and Unpredictability

In recent years, the world has witnessed rapid, complex, and unpredictable developments (Centre for Indian Studies, 2024) ^[4], vividly reflecting the growing uncertainty within the international order. Mishra (2023) ^[21] and Pande (2025) ^[26] share the view that the relative decline of the United States, coupled with its retreat from the role of ‘global policeman’, has shaken the foundations of the liberal international order once led by Washington. Under President Donald Trump, U.S. foreign policy became increasingly erratic, marked by populist and right-leaning tendencies, as demonstrated by unilateral decisions that ran counter to long-standing norms – such as withdrawing from the Paris Agreement on climate change and the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), as well as imposing tariffs on goods from most countries, including close allies and partners such as Canada and India. Tharoor (2025) ^[34] states that President Trump’s decision to impose a 50% tariff on certain Indian imports will have significant economic repercussions, given that in 2024 the U.S. market accounted for 18% of India’s total exports; more importantly, it serves as a stark reminder that “*even the most robust partnerships are vulnerable to a populist leader’s whims*”. These erratic and indiscriminate policies – targeting both friends and rivals – have undermined Washington’s image, credibility, and trustworthiness on the global stage, leaving allies and partners perplexed and raising doubts about the United States’ capacity to sustain its commitments to regional and

global issues. In this context, middle powers and rising states, including India, increasingly recognize that they cannot rely entirely on the United States for security and strategic matters, and are therefore compelled to seek more flexible options to safeguard their national interests.

Realism and pragmatism

Whereas international politics in the 20th century placed heavy emphasis on ideology and was profoundly shaped by confrontation between opposing ideological blocs, the 21st century no longer appears to operate under the same logic of ideological polarization characteristic of the Cold War era. Instead, most states now prioritize the pursuit of national interests in a more pragmatic manner, treating these interests as the principal basis for strategic planning and foreign policy. This shift in thinking has reduced states’ dependence on rigid ideological commitments, prompting them to seek flexible spaces for cooperation that align with their own developmental and security needs. Amid an increasingly complex and unpredictable geopolitical landscape – characterized by strategic competition among major powers, the emergence of new centres of influence, and the proliferation of non-traditional security challenges – India is required to maintain a flexible mindset, act proactively, and diversify its strategic options. This approach not only aims to optimize national interests at any given moment, but also equips New Delhi to adjust swiftly to unforeseen shifts in the international environment. For these reasons, Malhotra (2019) ^[20] opines that India’s foreign policy in the 21st century has been shaped in an increasingly proactive, flexible, and pragmatic direction, enabling rapid adjustments in response to evolving circumstances. India is willing to expand relations with a wide array of partners, including those with differing ideological orientations or with whom it had limited engagement in the past. This approach allows India to make timely strategic recalibrations, ensuring that it sustains equilibrium and strengthens its position within a rapidly changing international order.

Complex and multidimensional global challenges

Recently, the world has been confronted with a host of complex and multidimensional challenges. The Russia-Ukraine conflict, the Israel-Hamas crisis, instability in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Syria, along with the nuclear issues in Iran and North Korea, illustrate the increasingly intricate and intertwined nature of global security dynamics. At the same time, climate change, economic downturns, and the persistent threat of international terrorism continue to endanger regional and global stability. Humanity also faces a range of trans-border problems, including shortages of food, water, energy, and raw materials, as well as challenges related to trade, international migration, and inequalities generated by globalization. Against the backdrop of heightened tensions between Russia and the West and intensifying U.S.-China strategic competition, no single country, regardless of its power, can effectively address these issues on its own. Pursuing shared goals of development and prosperity thus requires cooperation and burden-sharing among states within the international community. This context can be seen as both a major challenge and an important opportunity for India to assert leadership and help mobilize collective efforts in responding to these existential threats.

Interdependence

In the context of ongoing globalization, states around the world have become increasingly interdependent across multiple domains, particularly in the areas of economics and energy. Major powers such as the United States, China, and India all require vast natural resources and energy supplies to sustain the scale and pace of their economic development. For India, according to Khanna and Kumar (2023, p. 329)^[18], energy security has become a central concern of foreign policy, as the country's rapidly expanding economy will require stable, abundant, and affordable energy supplies for at least the next 25-30 years to combat poverty and improve citizens' living standards. Although India possesses the world's third-largest reserves of rare-earth minerals, it exploits only a small fraction of them and continues to depend heavily on external suppliers, particularly China (Pande, 2025)^[26]. Because much of India's energy demand relies on imports – especially via maritime transport routes in the Indian Ocean – the government has sought to expand diplomatic engagement with a wide range of countries and participate in relevant international institutions to secure reliable energy supplies. This effort is reflected in the signing of the 2008 U.S.-India Civil Nuclear Agreement, India's continued pursuit of membership in the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), and its maintenance of close cooperative ties with Middle East states rich in oil resources (Khanna & Kumar, 2023, p. 329)^[18].

Multipolarity and polycentrism

The contemporary world is gradually shifting toward a multipolar and polycentric configuration in which international power is no longer concentrated in one or two superpowers. Instead, as Cogo Morales (2025)^[6] observes, power is now distributed more broadly and flexibly among numerous states, regions, and institutions. This dispersion of power reflects the relative decline of traditional superpowers in economic, military, and political influence, while simultaneously highlighting the significant rise of new power centers, including emerging economies, middle powers, and regional alliances. This restructuring of global power has been driven by the rapid development of multilateral cooperation mechanisms and by states' growing tendency to seek strategic balance and expand their developmental space. In particular, developing countries of the Global South are assuming an increasingly important role by actively participating in – and in some cases leading – new cooperative frameworks such as BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). Through these mechanisms, they contribute to reshaping the international order in a direction that is more democratic, more diverse, and more reflective of the interests of a broader range of actors.

The regional environment

India has long faced significant challenges in maintaining friendly relations with its South Asian neighbors, in part due to pronounced asymmetries of power within the region. India's sheer size and superior capabilities have led neighboring countries to remain cautious of New Delhi's influence. India's territory is larger than the combined land area of all its neighboring states, and its defense expenditures far exceed those of any other country in the region. Notably, several states – such as Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Nepal – share borders exclusively

with India and have no direct land borders with any other South Asian country, further underscoring India's centrality in the region. Khanna and Kumar (2023, p. 333)^[18] observe that this overwhelming scale and influence lead many regional states to perceive India as a potential threat and to view regional integration efforts with skepticism, fearing that such processes would only deepen New Delhi's dominance. As a result, suspicion and efforts to balance against India have become enduring features of the foreign policies of many South Asian countries.

Moreover, India is situated in an inherently unstable South Asian region, where many countries continue to grapple with serious political and social challenges. Sri Lanka experienced a nearly three-decade-long civil war between the government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) – one of the longest civil conflicts in Asia – which only came to an end in May 2009 with the defeat of the LTTE (Council on Foreign Relations, 2009)^[7]. Nepal has recently undergone a period of crisis and large-scale youth-led protests, while Bangladesh is facing one of the most severe political crises since its independence. Additionally, Bhattacharjee (2018)^[2] notes that both India and Bangladesh are concerned about migration issues, particularly the influx of Rohingya refugees from Myanmar, which has become a significant security challenge. The internal instability of these states further hampers the prospects for sustainable progress in South Asian regional cooperation.

Furthermore, India maintains complex and often strained relationships with several of its neighboring states, most notably the long-standing hostility between India and Pakistan, the two nuclear-armed countries of the region. Both states gained independence in 1947 following the partition of British India, yet their bilateral relations have since been overshadowed by deep mistrust and persistent confrontation. India views Pakistan as a perennial adversary and a direct threat to its national security and territorial integrity, while Pakistan has, for most of its existence, maintained a hostile posture toward New Delhi (Khanna & Kumar, 2023, p. 330; Verma, 2024)^[18, 38]. The two countries have fought four wars (in 1947-48, 1965, 1971, and 1999) and continue to experience frequent border skirmishes and attacks. Both sides repeatedly accuse each other of supporting separatism, sabotage, and terrorism. This adversarial relationship also hinders India's efforts to advance cooperative regional policies in South Asia, particularly within the framework of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), where Pakistan's presence often obstructs New Delhi's initiatives. Beyond the South Asian region, India must also contend with a far more formidable and complex rival – China. After India and China achieved independence in 1947 and 1949 respectively, the two countries initially maintained friendly relations. According to Bajpai (2023, p. 2)^[1], India was among the first states to recognize the People's Republic of China and supported its entry into the United Nations. However, in 1962 the two countries fought a border war, in which China emerged victorious. This conflict left a deep scar on bilateral relations and planted the seeds of enduring hostility between the two Asian powers. Since then, the relationship has become strained, marked by mutual suspicion and strategic competition. In recent decades, China's dramatic rise in economic, military, and technological capabilities has further tilted the regional

balance of power in Beijing's favor, creating significant challenges and pressure for New Delhi. For example, while the GDP gap between the two countries was just USD 50 million in 1989, by 2012 China's GDP was already six times larger than India's, and its defense budget was three times as high (Pande, 2025) ^[26]. Although China is currently one of India's largest trading partners, the bilateral relationship is characterized by intense competition across multiple dimensions.

The strategic rivalry between India and China partly stems from their divergent perceptions of each other and of their respective places in the international system. Krishnan (2022, p. 158) ^[19] argues that while India views China as a peer competitor, Chinese strategic thinkers are uncomfortable with this notion and tend to regard India as a weaker power – colonized in the past and lacking the capacity to be on equal footing. Moreover, China aspires to shape a multipolar world order in which it occupies a leading position, whereas India seeks a multipolar Asia and a multipolar world in which New Delhi constitutes one of the principal poles of power (Verma, 2024) ^[38]. Border disputes remain a major source of tension between the two countries. Tharoor (2025) ^[34] notes that the violent clash in the Galwan Valley in 2020, which resulted in the deaths of 20 Indian soldiers, reopened painful memories of the 1962 war. At present, India *“views China as its primary adversary, Pakistan more an ancillary security problem”* (The Economic Times, 2025) ^[35].

The competition between India and China is not confined to their bilateral relationship; rather, it has increasingly expanded in scope as both countries seek to enhance their influence within each other's traditional strategic spaces. Beijing has been steadily consolidating its position in South Asia and the Indian Ocean – regions traditionally within New Delhi's sphere of influence – by strengthening ties with South Asian neighbours such as Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Nepal, most notably through its deep strategic partnership with Pakistan. This growing engagement has heightened India's concerns about the possibility of encirclement and strategic containment within its own geopolitical space. Through its 'String of Pearls' strategy and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), China has expanded its influence across the Indo-Pacific by building a network of partnerships with strategically located countries, thereby gradually establishing an encirclement posture vis-à-vis India. The rivalry between the two countries also manifests in global institutions, as China has blocked India's bid to become a permanent member of the UN Security Council and to join the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) (India Today, 2021; Centre for Indian Studies, 2022) ^[14, 3]. In response, India has improved its relations with the United States and with countries that share similar concerns about China's rise, including Japan, Australia, and ASEAN member states (Kailas Nath, 2025) ^[17], thereby seeking to build strategic balance within the emerging power configuration of the Indo-Pacific region.

Particularly concerning for India is the close and deepening relationship between China and Pakistan, which originated after the 1962 Sino-Indian War and flourished from the mid-2000s as a result of warming U.S.-India ties and Beijing's growing global ambitions (Council on Foreign Relations, 2022) ^[8]. Former Pakistani Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani famously praised China by declaring that the friendship between the two countries is *“higher than*

mountains, deeper than oceans, stronger than steel and sweeter than honey” (India Today, 2011) ^[13]. The China-Pakistan relationship has since been elevated to an 'all-weather strategic cooperative partnership' (Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of India, 2024) ^[10], widely viewed as aimed at balancing and constraining India's influence in the region. According to Tharoor (2025) ^[34], China is also the largest supplier of military equipment to Pakistan, including weapons that Islamabad has used in its conflicts with India. This support poses a serious threat to India's security – most notably during Operation Sindoor, when China provided real-time military and diplomatic assistance to Pakistan. Earlier, in April 2015, the two countries launched the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a flagship project of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) with significant geopolitical, geoeconomic, and geostrategic implications for China. CPEC has further strengthened the strategic partnership between Beijing and Islamabad.

For these reasons, New Delhi recognizes that India cannot rely solely on its relationships within South Asia; instead, it must actively reach beyond the region to seek potential partners, expand its strategic space, and assert the status of a rising regional power. Moreover, amid intensifying strategic competition with China, expanding its influence beyond South Asia has become a strategic imperative for India, helping the country avoid being constrained or encircled within its immediate neighborhood.

India's domestic conditions

In the first two decades of the 21st century, India has undergone a profound transformation – from a regional power into a global power and a key pole in today's multipolar, polycentric international order (Centre for Indian Studies, 2024) ^[4]. The country plays a pivotal role in the Indo-Pacific region and holds an increasingly prominent position across various domains, including politics, diplomacy, defense, economics, and science-technology, thereby gaining greater influence in addressing global challenges. With these advances, India has emerged as a rising global power, a potential superpower (Sharma & Mehta, 2020) ^[30], and a central actor in the evolving international order (Cogo Morales, 2025) ^[6].

In terms of population, as of 15 November 2025, India has approximately 1.47 billion people (Worldometer, 2025) ^[41]. As noted by Nguyen Xuan Trung and Le Thi Hang Nga ^[25], India proudly stands as the world's largest democracy. This demographic strength provides India with a vast labor force of increasingly improving quality. More than 600 million Indians are of working age (World Bank, 2025) ^[40], serving both as a major driver of the country's development and as a significant potential source of human resources for the global labor market.

India's domestic political situation is currently relatively stable. The 2014 general election marked a significant turning point in Indian politics, as Narendra Modi and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) achieved a sweeping victory, making the BJP the first party since the 1980s to secure an outright majority in a general election (Singh, 2025) ^[32]. On 26 May 2014, Narendra Modi was officially sworn in as Prime Minister, ushering in a period of revived single-party dominance (Singh & Pandey, 2025) ^[31] and signaling profound changes in India's domestic and foreign policies (Singh, 2025) ^[32]. Under his leadership, the BJP continued

to consolidate its position, and together with the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), won another decisive victory in the 2019 general election. By June 2024, the BJP secured a third consecutive term, making Modi the first Indian leader in 60 years to be re-elected for three consecutive terms, following Jawaharlal Nehru (VTV, 2024) ^[39]. This success not only affirms Modi's political standing and the achievements of his government but also provides New Delhi with the conditions necessary to sustain and expand its current foreign policy trajectory. In addition, India has been gradually but steadily developing its military capabilities. In terms of defense expenditure, India ranks 5th in the world, with 86 billion USD (The Times of India, 2025) ^[37]. Regarding military capabilities, the country ranks 4th in the Global Firepower Index (2025) ^[11], reaffirming its position as a major military power in Asia and on the global stage.

Under Prime Minister Modi, India's foreign policy landscape has evolved considerably, characterized by pragmatism, proactiveness, and a clear prioritization of national interests. Modi is regarded as the chief architect and guiding force behind India's foreign policy over the past decade. According to Pant (2024) ^[27], Prime Minister Modi has been directly involved in shaping India's external relations, thereby granting the country a distinctive position in contemporary international affairs. He is known for his exceptional communication skills and a flexible, dynamic diplomatic style on the global stage. Chandra (2014) ^[5] even argues that Modi's outstanding communication abilities have become an indispensable and invaluable part of India's 'diplomatic arsenal'. Prime Minister Modi has personally led and advanced India's role in various international forums through an extensive range of large-scale diplomatic activities, most notably dozens of foreign visits during his first year in office. He has also effectively utilized social media platforms such as Twitter (now X) to project India's message and image and to foster a sense of proximity with the public. Owing to his leadership capabilities, Modi has consistently ranked among the world's most influential leaders, maintaining high approval ratings in international surveys. For instance, according to Statista (2025) ^[33], he held a 72% approval rating among surveyed global leaders as of October 2025. Under his leadership, India has become more proactive and assertive in expanding partnerships with a diverse array of international actors – not only strengthening relations with major powers but also placing particular emphasis on the Global South and international organizations. The Modi government has reshaped India's foreign policy, moving the country from a position of balancing to one of leadership, aiming to become a rule-maker rather than merely a rule-taker in global governance (Misra, 2017; Pant, 2024; Singh & Pandey, 2025) ^[22, 27, 31]. As a result, India has increasingly influenced the global agenda (Malhotra, 2019) ^[20], affirming its growing status and vital role within the contemporary international system. As India's External Affairs Minister stated, *"Its [India's] foreign policy dimension is to aspire to be a leading power, rather than just a balancing power"* (Jaishankar, 2015) ^[16]. The energetic diplomacy pursued under Modi has given powerful momentum to India's aspiration to assume a greater global role, contributing to the country's enhanced standing and voice in international forums. With its rising influence, India is no longer a peripheral actor but a willing and responsible contributor to global governance, actively

engaging in multilateral groupings such as the G20, BRICS, and the Quad, while continuing to expand its presence across key domains of the international system.

India today stands as a nation with a robust and resilient economy, marked by impressive growth at a time when the global economy is showing signs of slowdown (Nguyen Hoa, 2017) ^[24]. Currently the world's fourth-largest economy, India is on track to become the third largest by 2030, with its GDP projected to reach approximately USD 7.3 trillion (Press Information Bureau, 2025b) ^[29]. During the 2024-2025 period, India's GDP grew by 6.5%, the highest among major economies (Press Information Bureau, 2025a) ^[28]. In 2024, Prime Minister Modi affirmed that amid a world full of uncertainties, one certainty is that India will continue to grow at a rapid pace (NDTV, 2024) ^[23]. A year later, he declared that the 21st century belongs to 1.4 billion Indians and that the country will become *Viksit Bharat* (a developed India) by 2047 (The Hindu, 2025) ^[36]. India is distinguished not only by its hard-power indicators but also by its growing emphasis on soft power, which it has actively leveraged to attract and strengthen relations with other countries. India is regarded as the world's biggest democracy; moreover, it is globally renowned for cultural assets such as Bollywood and yoga, whose influence continues to expand worldwide. After India's vigorous diplomatic efforts – led in particular by Prime Minister Modi – the United Nations General Assembly declared 21 June as the International Day of Yoga in 2015. In addition, according to Singh & Pandey (2025) ^[31], the rapid expansion of digital infrastructure, fintech initiatives, and space exploration has positioned India as a global leader in emerging technologies, further enhancing the country's soft-power appeal.

It can be said that India's moment has arrived. No longer a country that can be overlooked, India has emerged as an increasingly influential actor in the international system. One may reasonably expect India to rise as one of the world's leading great powers in the future. With its massive, youthful, and dynamic population; political stability; steadily strengthening defense capabilities; pragmatic and flexible foreign policy; vibrant economy; and increasingly far-reaching soft power, India is projecting growing confidence on the global stage and gradually asserting itself as a rising star in world politics. This new status also opens up numerous opportunities for India to deepen cooperation with partners, thereby continuing to consolidate and elevate its position within a rapidly evolving global order.

Conclusion

Today, multi-alignment has become an indispensable component of India's foreign policy, reflecting New Delhi's flexible and innovative adaptation to rapidly changing realities. It may be argued that this guiding principle is shaped by the convergence of three fundamental groups of factors: (1) the international environment, (2) the regional environment, and (3) India's domestic conditions. Within this broader landscape, multi-alignment is not only a new strategic approach but also a logical continuation and evolution of India's long-standing tradition of strategic autonomy in foreign policy. It clearly embodies the principles of independence and self-determination – foundations that India has consistently upheld since gaining independence. In this spirit, India retains the freedom to choose its partners and establish cooperative relations with

any international actor in order to maximize national interests while maintaining full agency in all foreign policy decisions.

The principle of multi-alignment is not only significant for India but also offers valuable insights for many small and medium-sized states seeking to preserve strategic autonomy amid intensifying geopolitical competition. Much like the Non-Aligned Movement once served as a foundational orientation during the Cold War, multi-alignment may well function as a guiding framework for states navigating today's multipolar international order. Through this approach, India not only strengthens its own international standing but also holds the potential to continue playing a leading role among the countries of the Global South, as it once did during the era of non-alignment. Multi-alignment is thus not merely an objective and rational choice for India; it also reflects a profound strategic vision for shaping a new global order grounded in dialogue, cooperation, and the balancing of interests among international actors.

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