

# India's Rise from a Regional to a Global Power

Sanjaya Baru

<https://doi.org/10.46272/2587-8476-2020-11-2-122-134>

## ABSTRACT

Most economic forecasts made after the trans-Atlantic financial crisis of 2008 – 2009 have suggested that by 2030 China and India will overtake the United States to become the world's largest and second-largest economies, respectively. This is why India is viewed as a global power, graduating from its regional role. The COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing "Cold War" between the United States and China could present new challenges and open up new opportunities for India. While dealing with short-term economic and geopolitical challenges, India will continue to carve out its path in its relations with the world that is defined by its civilizational inheritance, its core national interests and its economic performance and capabilities.

This article discusses why, given India's focus on its economic development and growth, the country seeks a regional and global economic and security environment that would be conducive to attaining these objectives. The author suggests first, that as a rising power, India has remained committed to multilateralism in both the economic and security fields. It has adhered to the discipline of existing multilateral regimes, including in trade, finance and nuclear non-proliferation. India has also actively supported a global solution to the challenge of global warming and climate change. Second, that even as India pursues a policy of multi-alignment in a world marked by a multipolar balance of power, the viability of its policy will hinge upon how China responds to India's rise and its core national security concerns.

Finally, that as Big Power rivalries return and a new Cold War may be in the offing, India will have to reassess its options given its developmental aspirations. An assertive China seeking hegemonic dominance in Asia could reduce India's options and encourage it to build new alliances that are aimed at enhancing national security and ensuring a more balanced distribution of power.

## KEYWORDS

*India, Asia, civilizational state, Indian Ocean, geo-economics, non-alignment, multi-alignment, middle powers*

Most forecasts made in the years preceding the global disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic have suggested that by 2030 India will emerge as the world's second largest economy behind China in terms of purchasing power parity. Such forecasts are based on assumptions about demographic trends, labour and capital productivity and human capital formation. In US dollar terms, India is expected to rank fifth behind China, the United States, the European Union and Japan, and second in PPP, ahead of the United States and behind China.<sup>1</sup> According to the London-based multinational bank Standard Chartered, India's nominal GDP using purchasing power parity exchange rates is projected to be \$46.3 trillion in 2030, compared to \$64.2 trillion for China and \$31 trillion for the United States (*Table 1*). By 2050, various forecasts suggest that India will be the second largest economy in US dollar terms as well.

Of course, all these forecasts pre-date the COVID-19 pandemic. No one knows for sure how individual countries and their economies will emerge from this crisis, nor can we accurately predict the level of economic disruption that will eventually be caused by the post-outbreak lockdown of economic activity. What we do know is that, while countries will be hit differently by the pandemic, national and global economic growth will certainly be affected, but India will remain a major global economy. How the Indian economy performs over the next decade, especially with respect to China, will shape its regional and global geopolitical and geo-economic role and power. While India's economic performance will necessarily define its regional and global role, the question arises as to what a more prosperous and capable India would mean for international relations and the global community. What kind of regional and global power would be a "New India", as defined by Prime Minister N. Modi?<sup>2</sup>

*Table 1.*

**COUNTRY RANKING ON NOMINAL GDP TO 2030**  
**РЕЙТИНГ СТРАН ПО НОМИНАЛЬНОМУ РАЗМЕРУ ВВП к 2030 г.**

Country	\$ trillion PPP
China	64.2
India	46.3
United States	31
Indonesia	10.1
Turkey	9.1
Brazil	8.6
Egypt	8.2
Russia	7.9
Japan	7.2
Germany	6.9

**Source:** "Opportunity2030: The Standard Chartered SDG Investment Map," Standard Chartered, accessed January 16, 2020, <https://av.sc.com/corp-en/content/docs/Standard-Chartered-Opportunity-2030.pdf>.

Indian scholars have for decades viewed the country's imprint on world affairs not merely in terms of economic power and geopolitical reach, but equally in terms of its

1 Gros, Alcidi 2013.

2 The term "New India" has been used by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to distinguish his imprint on the country from that of his predecessors. While Modi has not clearly outlined what exactly he means by "New India," a large body of literature has been generated seeking to define the concept. See for example: Debroy et al. 2019.

civilizational and cultural influence and its role as a “Third World” democracy. India’s regional role is also defined by geography and history. Contemporary literature on India’s rise and its role in international affairs is influenced by each of these factors. This literature can be divided into two schools of thought: idealist and realist. The idealist view places an emphasis on India’s civilizational inheritance, its global cultural imprint and its experience as a plural, secular and liberal democracy. This view stresses India’s “soft power.” There is, however, a new strand to this variant that combines the focus on soft power with an emphasis on hard power. This is the Hindu nationalist view articulated by the Bharatiya Janata Party, which also emphasises India’s civilizational inheritance and cultural soft power but believes that the country should combine this with investment in “hard power” capabilities. The realist approach is divided into two strands – one that prioritises geopolitics, military power and balance of power politics; and another that regards economic capabilities and power as the foundations of national power. In this essay, we shall consider each of these approaches to the study of India’s national personality and global role.

### A Civilizational State

Four of the world’s eight great religions originated in the Indian subcontinent – Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism. Each of these religions has acquired a global footprint. Hinduism spread East into Asia both through trade and the expansion of southern Indian kingdoms of the Satavahanas and the Cholas. It has left a permanent mark in several Southeast Asian countries and reached as far as Vietnam and Japan. Buddhism has had a far greater global impact, engulfing all of Asia to the north, east and southeast of India. The spread of Sikhism and Jainism is more recent and associated with the overseas settlement of people of Indian origin in such far off places as the Caribbean islands, Canada, southern Europe, Australia and Southeast and Central Asia. Jainism has moved around the world mainly through the foreign settlement of people from Western India (Rajasthan and Gujarat).

The leadership of the Indian national movement was acutely aware of the cultural influence of India on the world. In his two influential books, *Glimpses of World History* (1934) and *The Discovery of India* (1946), Jawaharlal Nehru brought home to the people of India a nationalist account of the great cultural imprint that the country had left on the world. The Constitution of India opens with the line: “India, that is Bharat.” The idea of a distinct cultural, if not strictly civilizational, identity to the post-colonial Indian Republic is embedded in this formulation. The name Bharat has its roots in the Hindu religion. The Hindu nationalists draw attention to the fact that Vedic texts dating back 3000 – 4000 years describe the Indian subcontinent as “Jambudweepa Bharata Khande,” meaning the land that stretches from the Indus River to the West, the Himalayas to the North, and the Indian Ocean and the other seas surrounding it to the South, Southeast and Southwest, the home of the Vedic civilisation. Viewed as such, India has always thought of itself as a nation with an independent worldview and a global footprint.

Reassuring China of India’s independent worldview based on its civilizational inheritance, Prime Minister M. Singh told the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in January 2008, “I look forward with optimism to the future and the role which India and China are destined to play in the transformation of Asia and the world [...]

History shows that our two civilisations flourished for centuries side by side, interacting and influencing each other.”<sup>1</sup> In calling on the past, Singh did not define India’s message to the world in religious or cultural terms. Rather, he believed that the inherent pluralism of Hindu society, Gandhi’s message of non-violence, and the ancient belief in *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* (“the world is one family”) were important civilizational values that contemporary Indian foreign policy should bring to the global table.

In September 2005, M. Singh told the United Nations general Assembly, “The ideals of the UN run parallel to our own civilizational ethos. This is the ancient Indian concept of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*, that is, ‘the whole world is one family.’”<sup>2</sup> This view of India’s global role should not be dismissed as being purely idealistic, since it is grounded in the Indian *Realpolitik* of leveraging the power of ideas to project “soft power.” Mahatma Gandhi championed India’s struggle for freedom from British colonial rule, projecting it as not merely an Indian national movement, but rather as a global campaign for racial justice and a nonviolent approach to the resolution of conflicts. However, it is the idealism inherent to this worldview that India has used to good effect in asserting its leading role on a range of issues, including human rights and climate change.

Interestingly, Prime Minister N. Modi too invoked the principle of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* in his first address to the United Nations General Assembly in September 2014, reiterating India’s commitment to multilateral institutions and to multilateralism in general when dealing with global opportunities such as trade and global challenges such as climate change.<sup>3</sup> Modi’s emphasis has been on uniting the Indian diaspora around the world and raising the question in the minds of countries where people of Indian origin live whether the Bharatiya Janata Party views the global Hindu community as “one family,” in the same way that the Islamic idea of *ummah* means a global community of Muslims. Modi’s outreach to the Indian diaspora, facilitated by Hindu organisations in host countries, is an attempt to diplomatically leverage the diaspora’s influence in projecting Indian soft power.<sup>4</sup>

Just as President V. Putin has leveraged the Orthodox Church in his foreign policy outreach, Modi too has used global Hindu organisations to extend India’s diplomatic footprint. The Bharatiya Janata Party’s approach combines India’s cultural “soft power” with the “hard power” of Hindu majoritarianism. The Modi government’s recent decision to grant citizenship to refugees from Hindu communities in Muslim-majority neighbouring countries like Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan lends a harder edge to the use of religious and cultural symbols in diplomacy.

- 1 “Speech by Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Beijing,” Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, January 15, 2008, accessed May 19, 2020, <https://mea.gov.in/outgoing-visit-detail.htm?1445/Speech+by+Prime+Minister+Dr+Manmohan+Singh+at+the+Chinese+Academy+of+Social+Sciences+Beijing>.
- 2 “Address by Dr. Manmohan Singh, Prime Minister of India at the High- Level Plenary meeting of the 60th session of the United Nations General Assembly on September 15, 2005,” Permanent Mission of India to the UN, accessed May 19, 2020, <https://www.pminewyork.gov.in/pdf/uploadpdf/79079lms57.pdf>; Tharoor 2012.
- 3 Narayan Lakshman, “Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam” is India’s Philosophy: Modi,” *The Hindu*, September 28, 2014, accessed May 19, 2020, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/vasudhaiva-kutumbakam-is-indias-philosophy-modi/article6453203.ece>.
- 4 See for example, Jhurani 2019, 475–482; Pant 2019, 457.

## The Role of Geography and History

India's regional role is defined by geography. Given its location on the Indian Ocean and its susceptibility to monsoons, the country has traditionally been at the centre of maritime links across the entire wider Indian Ocean Region connecting West, South, Southeast and East Asia. Equally important are India's land links both to the West through West and Central Asia, and to the East through Southeast Asia. As historian F. Braudel famously observed, India lay at the crossroads of Asia, linking East and West through both land routes and, importantly, maritime links.<sup>1</sup> The Indian subcontinent has been integrated through regional trade flows within Asia for centuries. India also had strong maritime links with West Asia, East Africa and the entire Indian Ocean Region.<sup>2</sup> India's regional role is also defined by history. Lord Curzon, British Viceroy in Colonial India, defined India's regional role in strategic terms as early as in 1906 in an essay entitled "The Place of India in the Empire" in these words:<sup>3</sup>

The central position of India, its magnificent resources, its teeming multitude of men, its great trading harbours, its reserve of military strength, supplying an army always in a high state of efficiency and capable of being hurled at a moment's notice upon any given point either of Asia and Africa – all these are assets of precious values. On the west, India must exercise a predominant influence over the destinies of Persia and Afghanistan; on the north, it can veto any rival in Tibet; on the north-east and east, it can exert great pressure upon China, and it is one of the guardians of the autonomous existence of Siam. On the high seas it commands the routes to Australia and the China Sea.

The conflict with Pakistan has disrupted India's links with Central Asia. However, the India – Iran strategic relationship is now built on the premise that Iran will offer that link to India through the Chabahar Port. India has built strong economic and people-to-people links with West Asia, especially with the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC) member states. India has defence relations with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. On the East, India is actively engaged in strategic cooperation with key members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), including Singapore and Vietnam. India has been able to retain its influence in Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and the Maldives, despite pressure from China. All these regional relationships have historical roots and are increasingly defined by trade, people-to-people business ties and shared strategic perspectives. Geography has played a key role in defining India's strategic landscape, giving it a regional role long before it became one of the world's major economies.<sup>4</sup> Geography and history have combined to define India's regional role.

1 Braudel 1984, 484; Braudel 1985.

2 Pannikar 1951; The literature on India's historical maritime links emphasises the strategic importance of the Indian Ocean Region. See, for example, Das Gupta 2001; Furber et al. 2004; Chaudhuri 1985; Sanyal 2016.

3 Akhilesh Pillalamarri, "Geography and Indian Strategy," *The Diplomat*, July 30, 2014, accessed May 19, 2020, <https://thediplomat.com/2014/07/geography-and-indian-strategy/>.

4 Sinha 2019, 465–474.

A sizeable amount of literature has since appeared that seeks to explore and define India's emerging role in regional and global politics given its growing economic clout. Although India was left behind somewhat during the Asian boom, it started to mimic the growth experience of East and Southeast Asia from the mid-1990s. Following the rise of Japan and the emergence of the four Asian Tigers of South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore, China's surge established the Asia-Pacific as the new centre of global growth. India may have lagged behind, but its rise has encouraged geopolitical analysts to reinterpret the structure of power in the 21<sup>st</sup> century – instead of the “Chinese” century (following the European and North American centuries), analysts increasingly view the 21<sup>st</sup> century as the “Asian” century in which India plays an ever important role.<sup>1</sup>

### **The Geo-Economics of India's Rise**

The economic performance of nations has become a vital, indeed a defining, metric in shaping their role in global affairs. The notion that economic performance and might are the foundations of national power gained currency with the end of the Cold War. The implosion of the Soviet Union was a result of both the domestic political weaknesses of the Soviet state and the weakness of its economy. The accumulation of military power and nuclear capability was not adequate to sustain its global power. The recognition of this fact prompted historian S. Huntington to observe towards the end of the Cold War<sup>2</sup>:

In the coming years, the principal conflict of interests involving the United States and the major powers are likely to be over economic issues. US economic primacy is now being challenged by Japan and is likely to be challenged in the future by Europe. Economists are blind to the fact that economic activity is a source of power, as well as well-being. It is, indeed, probably the most important source of power and in a world in which military conflict between major states is unlikely economic power will be increasingly important in determining the primacy or subordination of states. In the realm of military competition, the instruments of power are missiles, planes, warships, bombs, tanks and divisions. In the realm of economic competition, the instruments of power are productive efficiency, market control, trade surplus, strong currency, foreign exchange reserves, ownership of foreign companies, factories and technology.

At the turn of the century, Indian strategic thinkers were influenced by such views regarding the end of the Cold War, as well as by the newly built data series which showed that pre-colonial India and China had for several centuries been the world's dominant economies. Cambridge historian A. Maddison's monumental millennial study of the world economy commissioned by the Paris-based Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) showed that over the course

1 See for example, Basrur 2017; Cohen 2001; Khanna 2019; Schaffer et al. 2016.

2 Huntington 1993, 68–83

of more than one thousand years, China and India accounted for almost a quarter of the global income each, or more than half of the global income combined.<sup>1</sup> It was only after 1800 that their shares of the global income began to decline dramatically. India's struggle for freedom against its colonial oppressors, as well as its post-independence model of self-reliant, non-aligned development was informed by this awareness. Throughout the Cold War period, India, much like China, slowly but surely improved its economic performance, with growth rates surging after 1990. While China performed commendably, sustaining high rates of investment, saving and growth over a prolonged period, India's rise was more gradual.

The "Rising India" story was built on three simple numbers. From 1950 to 1980, the Indian economy grew by an average of 3.5 per cent per year, which was only marginally lower than China's growth during the same period (at closer to 4 per cent). Between 1980 and 2000, the Indian economy grew by an average of 5.5 per cent per year, compared to almost 10 per cent for China. And from 2000 to 2012, the Indian economy grew by approximately 7.5 per cent per year. Thus, while India was consistently behind China in terms of its economic growth, it too demonstrated that it was capable of growing at higher rates. India's rapid rise in the period 1995 – 2010 altered the geopolitical discourse around the country.<sup>2</sup>

With its improved economic performance, India was able to liberalise its trade and investment policy and integrate its economy into the new engines of growth in Asia. India's "Look East Policy" contributed to greater engagement with East and Southeast Asia. In South Asia, Pakistan's hostile approach towards India encouraged the latter to promote the regrouping of the region with the creation of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), an economic grouping made up of Bangladesh, Bhutan, the Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand. Modi's policy has been to liberate India from Pakistan's attempts, with the support and encouragement of China, to keep India confined to South Asia. Through BIMSTEC and its relations within ASEAN, India has sought to redefine the surrounding region.

India has also strengthened economic ties with West Asian countries, including the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf. The country's "Look West Policy" has allowed it to expand trade and security relations with the GCC. In addition, India has defence partnerships with Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Oman. It has maintained an independent foreign policy with respect to Iran, despite pressure from the United States. Over six million Indians live and work in West Asia, remitting around \$70 billion annually.

India has also become more active in the Indian Ocean Region.<sup>3</sup> Modi's SAGAR ("Security and Growth for All in the Region") doctrine is aimed at revitalising community building in the Indian Ocean Region. The Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) has not been able to make an impact because it was both ahead of its time and too unwieldy with too many members. SAGAR has a more limited focus on the Indian Ocean Region and is aimed at strengthening India's relations with island nations including Singapore, Mauritius, the Maldives and the Seychelles, as well as with countries along the East African and Southeast Asian seaboard.

1 Maddison 2006.

2 For a detailed discussion on the geopolitical implications of India's economic performance, see Baru 2006.

3 Chaturvedy 2017.

It is important to note that each of these new “regional” groups has a strong economic dimension with geopolitical undertones. The aim is to ensure that China does not dominate India’s wider Asian neighbourhood. Hence, for these regional blocs to acquire relevance, the Indian economy has to continue to grow and be willing to integrate with them. How these regional groups will develop in the post-COVID world with the growing economic protectionism and disruption of world trade and transportation will be an important challenge for India.

Moving forward, the relative performance of the economies of the United States, the European Union, China, Russia, Japan and India will define India’s foreign policy options. If the West emerges from the COVID-19 pandemic weaker and China comes out stronger, then India will have to re-examine its strategic options. Rather than return to a bipolar balance of power system, India will seek a “third option” of strengthening relations with middle powers including Russia, Japan, Germany, France, the United Kingdom, Australia, and Indonesia. An increasingly assertive China will narrow India’s strategic options and may force it to build closer relations with the West. It remains to be seen how a rising China would accommodate a rising India. Both nations are seeking to regain their lost space in the global economy. China has been ahead of India in this respect. However, India will seek to accelerate its development, and its global partnerships will be determined by which countries are willing to accommodate, if not facilitate, India’s ascendance and which countries will seek to thwart its progress.

In addition to border issues with China and Pakistan, India’s core national interest will continue to be economic development for several decades to come. The country’s regional role and global aspirations will be defined by its national development objectives and capabilities. Indeed, India’s global engagement remains largely defined by its long-term economic interests – the need to access markets, capital, technology and resources. India will also remain actively engaged in all multilateral institutions, despite attempts by both the United States (WTO) and China (WHO) to disrupt and distort their functioning. India will once again assume membership of the UN Security Council and will seek to revitalise the UN system, pursuing its longstanding objective to acquire permanent membership.

While India has signed up to the Chinese initiative to create a regional financial institution, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), it has chosen to stay outside the China-dominated regional free trade arrangement, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), because it is concerned about the unfair trade practices being adopted by China and the unwillingness of some regional economies to include trade in services into the ambit of free trade within the organisation. India remains actively engaged in strengthening multilateral financial institutions, seeking a greater voice in them. There is a vocal debate within India among those who wish to pursue a more inward-oriented development model, raising tariffs and promoting the “buy Indian” policy; however, such economic nationalism will be balanced against India’s global economic needs and interests. While the Indian market is big and its growth (which is based on higher incomes and productivity) can sustain India’s rise, the country has a shortage of natural resources on a per capita basis and needs access to foreign capital and technology. These external dependencies will, understandably, influence India’s foreign relations and its global engagement.



## From a Non-Aligned to a Multi-Aligned India

When it gained independence, Indian foreign policy was defined by its development objectives and its decision to stay outside the military alliances and the power blocs of the Cold War. As Jawaharlal Nehru famously told the Constituent Assembly in December 1947, "Talking about foreign policies, the House must remember that these are not just empty struggles on a chess board. Behind them lie all manner of things. Ultimately, foreign policy is the outcome of economic policy".<sup>1</sup>

After the Cold War, India continued to pursue the policy of retaining its "strategic autonomy," even though its decision to integrate with the global economy strengthened its economic relations with the G7 economies. The decision of the G. Bush administration to recognise India as a nuclear power and acknowledge its need to access new technologies helped the country forge a closer strategic partnership with the United States. However, by working with Russia and China within the BRICS format and through membership in a range of other multilateral organisations, including the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), India continued to pursue an independent foreign policy. India's decision to expand its horizons in terms defence procurement reduced Russia's share in the country's defence imports (although it remains the largest supplier) and increased that of the United States, the European Union, Israel, and Japan.

The Cold War left India few options but to pursue a policy of non-alignment. While many Indian politicians viewed the foreign policy of non-alignment from an idealist prism, as if it were based on principles, the Polish economist M. Kalecki captured its realist essence when he compared the NAM (Non-Aligned Movement) countries to a "clever calf sucking two cows."<sup>2</sup> India's non-alignment was the pragmatic response of a newly independent nation seeking space for itself in the extant balance of power politics played by Big Powers. When the need for India to seek the support of one major power or the other arose, it did not hesitate to do so. Thus, when China attacked India in 1962, the latter reached out to the United States. When the United States and China came to the support of Pakistan during the crisis in East Pakistan, India entered into a security relationship with the Soviet Union. The strategic relationship between India and the Soviet Union was based on India's security needs, but it was equally defined by India's desire to be viewed as a trusted anti-colonial power by other decolonising nations, especially those in Africa.

After the end of the Cold War, India became more focused on its own economic development and moved closer to Western powers in search of markets, capital and technology. India has been a vocal supporter of the idea of multipolarity, recognising the growing role of other major powers in multilateral organisations. More recently, the Narendra Modi government has defined the Indian policy as one that seeks "multi-alignment," i.e. one that retains an independent foreign policy but building closer relations with all major powers. Minister of External Affairs S. Jaishankar perhaps described the policy of multi-alignment best:<sup>3</sup>

1 Baru 2006.

2 Kalecki 1972.

3 "External Affairs Minister's speech at the 4th Ramnath Goenka Lecture, 2019," Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, November 2019, accessed May 19, 2020, <https://mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/32038/External+Affairs+Ministers+speech+at+the+4th+Ramnath+Goenka+Lecture+2019>.

If the landscape looks very different today, so do India's partners. The relevance of the US or China is far more than anytime earlier. The Russian relationship has defied odds by remaining incredibly steady. Japan has become an important factor in our calculations. The rediscovery of Europe is again underway, with France now a critical strategic partner. The Gulf has been bridged in an extraordinarily effective manner. ASEAN has grown closer, and Australia's relevance is more apparent. Africa is the focus of development assistance and opening of new Embassies. And as you would have noted from the recent UN General Assembly, our outreach extends from South America and the Caribbean to the South Pacific and Baltics. Closer home, there is an unprecedented investment in the neighbourhood whose consequences are becoming apparent. Put together, the scale and intensity of our global engagement would be difficult to recognize for someone dealing with it even a few years ago.

As a rising power, India has remained committed to multilateralism in both the economic and security fields. It has adhered to the discipline of existing multilateral regimes, including in trade, finance and nuclear non-proliferation. India has also actively supported a global solution to the challenge of global warming and climate change. Even as India pursues a policy of "multi-alignment" in a world marked by a multipolar balance of power, the viability of its policy will hinge upon how China responds to India's ascendance and its core national security concerns. As Big Power rivalries return and a new Cold War may be in the offing, India will have to re-assess its options given its own developmental aspirations.

If China persists with its assertive, almost aggressive approach and seeks to create hurdles to India's development and growth, India will have no option but to balance China's might by entering into partnerships with like-minded powers. While India and China have had differences with regard to the delineation of the border between the two countries, they have both until recently managed to maintain "peace and tranquillity" along their borders. However, China has been exerting pressure on India along the disputed border. In a series of military interventions, China attempted to redefine the hitherto accepted "Line of Actual Control." In June 2020, China claimed "sovereignty" over the Galwan Valley in the disputed Ladakh province. Chinese soldiers attacked and killed 20 Indian fighters and suffered an as yet unmentioned number of casualties. The newfound assertiveness and unilateralism on the part of China have created an environment of distrust in which India will be hard-pressed to remain neutral or non-aligned in the growing rivalry between the United States and China. India's decision to establish strategic relations with Japan and Australia (involving defence and economic cooperation) has to be seen as a response to China's assertiveness.

It remains to be seen how China will address India's concerns regarding its territorial integrity and the challenge posed by the huge trade deficit that China has imposed on India through non-transparent economic policies. In addition to seeking a balance to China, India will also wish to revitalise its relations with major developing countries, especially those that used to be active in the now dormant non-aligned movement, drawing in countries that do not wish to be forced into taking sides between

the United States and China. Second, India will strengthen relations with middle powers, especially Russia, the European Union, Japan, Australia, Indonesia and South Korea. If the US – China Cold War intensifies, India will seek to act as a bridging force that works with these “middle powers,” none of whom see any advantage in dragging the world into a new and very disruptive Cold War.

The post-COVID situation will, in any case, force countries to focus more on their national interests to ensure economic revival. However, for this reason, the global economy runs the risk of becoming trapped as major economies will be focused on their own recovery, which will disrupt global growth and challenge international security. India must develop an economic and foreign policy that is robust enough to deal with the consequences of such shifts. Acutely aware of the fact that it will take time before it can play a bigger role at the global level, India will keep all options open when forming meaningful and credible alliances with likeminded countries, while closely monitoring global developments in the post-COVID world.

#### СПИСОК ЛИТЕРАТУРЫ / REFERENCES

- Baru, Sanjaya. *Strategic Consequences of India's Economic Performance*. New Delhi: Academic Foundation, 2006.
- Basrur, Rajesh. *Rising India: Status and Power*. London: Routledge, 2017.
- Braudel, Fernand. *Civilization and Capitalism: 15th–18th Century: Volume II. The Wheels of Commerce*. London: Fontana Press, 1984.
- Braudel, Fernand. *Civilization and Capitalism: 15th–18th Century: Volume III. The Perspective of the World*. London: Fontana Press, 1985.
- Chaturvedy, Rajeev Ranjan. “The Indian Ocean Policy of the Modi Government.” In *Modi and the World: (Re) Constructing Indian Foreign Policy*, 163–84. Singapore: World Scientific, 2017. [https://doi.org/10.1142/9789813203860\\_0008](https://doi.org/10.1142/9789813203860_0008).
- Chaudhuri, K.N. *Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985. doi:10.1017/CBO9781107049918.
- Cohen, Stephen R. *India: Emerging Power*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2001.
- Das Gupta, Ashin. *The World of the Indian Ocean Merchant, 1500–1800*. New Delhi, New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Debroy, Bibek, Anirban Ganguly, and Kishore Desai. *Making of New India: Transformation Under Modi Government*. New Delhi: Balaji World of Books, 2019.
- Furber, Holden, Arasaratnam, Sinnapah, and Kenneth McPherson. *Maritime India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Gros, Daniel, and Cinzia Alcidi. *The Global Economy in 2030: Trends and Strategies for Europe* (November 2013). <https://espas.secure.europarl.europa.eu/orbis/sites/default/files/generated/document/en/The%20Global%20Economy%20in%202030.pdf>.
- Huntington, Samuel P. “Why International Primacy Matters.” *International Security* 17, no. 4 (Spring 1993): 68 – 83. DOI: 10.2307/2539022.
- Jhurani, Diwakar. “Soft Power: The Rise of India Story.” In *Making of New India: Transformation Under Modi Government*, edited by Bibek Debroy et al., 475–482. New Delhi: Balaji World of Books, 2019.
- Kalecki, Michal. *Selected Essays on the Economic Growth of the Socialist and the Mixed Economy*. Cambridge University Press, 1972.
- Khanna, Parag. *The Future is Asian*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2019.
- Maddison, Angus. *The World Economy*. Development Centre Studies. OECD, 2006. <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264022621-en>.
- Pannikar, K.M. *India and the Indian Ocean: An Essay on the Influence of Sea Power on Indian History*. Second Revised Edition. London: Allen and Unwin, 1951.
- Pant, Harsh. “Indian Foreign Policy under Modi.” In *Making of New India: Transformation Under Modi Government*, edited by Bibek Debroy et al., 455–463. New Delhi: Balaji World of Books, 2019.
- Sanyal, Sanjeev. *The Ocean of Churn: How the Indian Ocean Shaped Human History*. New Delhi: Penguin Random House, 2016.
- Schaffer, Teresita C., and Howard B. Schaffer. *India at the Global High Table: The Quest for Regional Primacy and Strategic Autonomy*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2016.
- Singh, Sinderpal. *Modi and the World: (Re) Constructing Indian Foreign Policy*. Singapore: World Scientific, 2017. <https://doi.org/10.1142/10348>.
- Sinha, Uttam Kumar. “Regionalism as the New Realism.” In *Making of New India: Transformation Under Modi Government*, edited by Bibek Debroy et al., 465–474. New Delhi: Balaji World of Books, 2019.
- Tharoor, Shashi. *Pax Indica: India and the World of the 21st Century*. New Delhi: Allen Lane, 2012.

**Author(s)***Sanjaya Baru,*

PhD, Distinguished Fellow in Manohar Parrikar Institute  
of Defence Studies & Analysis, No.1 Development Enclave,  
Rao Tukaram Marg, New Delhi, India, 110010.

**e-mail:** sanjayabaru@gmail.com

**Additional Information**

Received: May 31, 2020. Accepted: August 12, 2020.

**Disclosure statement**

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

**For citation**

Baru, Sanjaya. "India's Rise from a Regional to a Global Power."

*Journal of International Analytics* 11, no. 2 (2020): 122–134.

<https://doi.org/10.46272/2587-8476-2020-11-2-122-134>

# Индия: от региональной роли – к глобальной державе

## АННОТАЦИЯ

Согласно многочисленным экономическим прогнозам, опубликованным после трансатлантического финансового кризиса 2008 – 2009 гг., к 2030 г. Китай и Индия обгонят Соединенные Штаты Америки по экономическому развитию и станут ведущими экономиками мира. Именно поэтому Индия рассматривается как формирующаяся глобальная держава, ранее игравшая лишь региональную роль. Пандемия COVID-19 и начавшаяся холодная война между США и Китаем могут стать новыми вызовами, а также открыть дополнительные возможности для Индии. Имея дело с краткосрочными экономическими и геополитическими вызовами, Индия будет продолжать прокладывать свой путь в отношениях с миром, который определяется ее цивилизационным наследием, национальными интересами, экономическими показателями и возможностями.

В этой статье рассматривается, почему Индия, акцентируя внимание на собственном экономическом развитии, стремится выйти за рамки региональной среды и создать условия в области экономики и безопасности на глобальном уровне, которые способствовали бы достижению этой цели. Во-первых, автор предполагает, что как формирующаяся держава Индия по-прежнему привержена многосторонности как в экономической сфере, так и в сфере безопасности. Она соблюдает существующие многосторонние режимы, в том числе в области торговли, финансов и ядерного нераспространения. Индия также активно поддерживает международные инициативы для решения проблемы глобального потепления и изменения климата. Во-вторых, многосторонняя политика Индии в многополярном мире будет зависеть от позиции Китая по основным проблемам национальной безопасности и его реакции на усиление глобальной роли Индии.

Наконец, по мере возобновления соперничества между крупными державами, способного привести к новой холодной войне, Индии необходимо учитывать все возможности для сохранения потенциала к развитию. Китай, стремящийся к гегемонистскому доминированию в Азии, может сократить эти возможности, что поставит Индию перед необходимостью создания новых альянсов, направленных на укрепление национальной безопасности и обеспечение баланса сил.

## КЛЮЧЕВЫЕ СЛОВА

*Индия, Азия, цивилизационное государство, Индийский океан, геоэкономика, неприсоединение, многостороннее сотрудничество, средние державы*

### Сведения об авторе

*Санджая Бару,*

доктор философии, почетный научный сотрудник Института оборонных исследований и анализа Манохара Паррикара, корп. 1, Тукарам Марг, Нью-Дели, Индия, 110010.

**e-mail:** sanjayabaru@gmail.com

### Дополнительная информация

Поступила в редакцию: 31 мая 2020. Принята к публикации: 12 августа 2020.

### Конфликт интересов

Авторы заявляют об отсутствии потенциального конфликта интересов.

### Цитирование

Бару, С. Индия: от региональной роли – к глобальной державе // Международная аналитика. – 2020. – Том 11 (2). – С. 122–134.

<https://doi.org/10.46272/2587-8476-2020-11-2-122-134>