

## India's Geopolitical Evolution: A Rise to Transformational Growth

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"Where will India fight her next war?" This question, posed during an international course in Taiwan in June 2023, resonates with the world's growing recognition of India as a rising power. In an era where global dynamics often demand dramatic, highly visible actions, the international community appears to be awaiting India's strategic move. Historically, the Western world's international relations calculus has often been punctuated by events of profound visibility and destructiveness, from Pearl Harbour to the bombing of Japan, and the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan. Such events are etched in the collective memory of humanity, often epitomising a nation's 'arrival on stage.'

How will India, a nation now notably present on the global stage, define its role? The question, however, is not why India has arrived; it already has, stoically and resolutely. Rather, the question is whether the world should view this arrival with apprehension or applause. It is a question of assessing whether India's rise embodies a hegemonic ascent or a transformational growth. To comprehend India's geopolitical evolution and its impact on the global stage, we must delve into its historical journey, its current strategic posture, and its aspirations for the future.

### Past Experiences

India's history is marked by centuries of cultural richness, diversity, and resilience. Its ancient civilisations, the Saraswati Civilisation followed by the Indus Valley, laid the foundations for a multifaceted heritage. While the Mauryan Empire spread across 50 lakh sq km during 250 BCE, the Gupta Empire extended to 3.5 lakh sq km during 400 CE.<sup>[1]</sup> Relevantly none of the ancient Indian Kings annihilated any society or decimated a group of people. There were no Crusades or Dark ages and India never saw any religious war.

Since Independence in 1947, military was never deployed to defeat a country, instead to save a country and its people.

- In 1988, Indian paratroopers thwarted a coup attempt against the government of President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom of Maldives.<sup>[2]</sup> The force flew out over 2000 km and restored control of the capital to President Gayoom's government within hours. The coup leaders and rebels were brought to Male and handed over to the Maldivian authorities. On request, the paratroopers took care of the rebels on a prison Island Gamadoo till the legal proceedings could be completed. The Indian paratroopers returned on 17 November – two weeks from landing.
- Bangladesh known as East Bengal in 1947 was a province in the Dominion of Pakistan, separated by 2204 km of Indian Territory. Pakistani military junta refused Sheikh Mujibur Rahman party's (Awami League) self-rule aspiration in 1970s. This triggered the Bangladesh Liberation War in 1971 led by indigenous Mukti Bahini. The Pakistani

retribution was a genocide and the massacre of pro-independence Bengali civilians and intellectuals. 15 million refugees crossed into Indian Territory by mid-1971 and Indian military intervened for humanitarian reasons on request of liberation fighters. The war lasted for only two weeks resulting in a Pakistani surrender<sup>[3]</sup> and the birth of a new country - People's Republic of Bangladesh.

## **Global Responsibility**

Indian leadership has been instrumental in shaping India's contemporary international presence. This dynamic and charismatic approach has garnered attention and admiration on the global stage. India's robust diplomatic outreach, its proactive engagement in forums like BRICS, QUAD, G20 highlight its commitment to foster regional stability and international cooperation. India maintains strategic partnerships with diverse nations like the United States, Russia, France, and Japan. These relationships bolster India's strategic capabilities, open avenues for defence cooperation, and promote economic ties. As a voice for Global South, India acknowledges its responsibilities and actively participates in international forums. India had pointed out that Europe cannot expect support and solidarity while remaining indifferent to the challenges of the Global South, which is now resonating across many governments. Membership of African Union to G20 stems for this very logic - the European Union with a population less than 450 million is a member, why can't the African Union with more than 1.3 billion?

The populous India also has skilled and educated youth bulge. Migration and Mobility pacts with countries offer highly incentivised stay back for talented Indian students, latest being France, where they will be granted a five-year post-study visa<sup>[4]</sup>. Indian youth are a major participants in India's economic growth. It has emerged as one of the world's fastest-growing major economies, attracting foreign investment and fostering innovation. The Make in India initiative and the Digital India campaign have positioned the nation as a hub for technological innovation and manufacturing. The new legislations invite FDI, and promise security of investments and markets.

## **Summary of Wars**

Wars have been fought for economic or territorial gains, religion, nationalism, revenge. Wars have also been classified as civil war, revolutionary war or as a defensive war. Historical and modern analyses in the earlier paragraphs prove that Indian wars will not be triggered by economy or religion.

India faces territorial disputes, cross-border terrorism, and regional power dynamics. Its border disputes with Pakistan and China sometimes escalate into military standoffs, which are controlled and terminated. Demonstrating reliance on self-worth, India avoids international

mediations and pressure points. Confident in its own capabilities, India has no intention of joining NATO[5], citing that the military alliance is not suitable for India. Defensive wars to protect territory will of course intensify nationalism and call for revenge. For Indian watchers it is obvious: 1947 Indo-Pak war was surreptitiously planned and led by British Officer and India lost 78,000 sq km of land, 1962 War with China and in 1965 with Pakistan was not initiated by India and finally 1999 Kargil war was a deceitful effort by Pakistan.

That leaves a possibility of civil or revolutionary war. Consider this - out of the ten largest world economies, India is the only country which never had a civil war. Though, strictly speaking Japan also never had one, if the Boshin War (1868-69) is disregarded - fought between forces of the ruling Tokugawa shogunate and a coalition seeking to seize political power in the name of the Imperial Court. India did have one civil war – Mahabharat (Great War) in 3139 BCE!

## **Conclusion**

India, as a nation with a rich and diverse history, thus remains committed to peace and stability on the global stage. The country's foreign policy has consistently emphasised diplomacy, cooperation, and non-aggression. War is never a desired course of action, and India's historical experiences, have instilled a deep commitment to resolving conflicts through peaceful means. It is apt to quote Prime Ministers Modi's address of 23 August after the successful landing of Chandrayan-3 on Moon[6], "On this joyous occasion, I would like to address all the people of the world, the people of every country, and region. India's successful moon mission is not India's alone. ---- Our approach of 'One Earth, One Family, One Future' is resonating across the globe. ----- Therefore, this success belongs to all of humanity. And it will help moon missions by other countries in the future. ----- We can all aspire for the moon and beyond". India's guiding principle of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' is deeply rooted in its cultural heritage and can be traced back to the Maha Upanishad. This mantra underscores the idea that the world is akin to a single family, emphasising a universal brotherhood that transcends narrow boundaries and divisions. So the world should freely applaud such a rise and participate in Indian transformational growth.

However, it is essential to note that India, like any sovereign nation, places the highest priority on safeguarding its national integrity and security. In the face of genuine threats to its sovereignty, India has demonstrated its readiness to defend itself. In the foreseeable future, India's path is one of responsible global citizenship, promoting regional stability, and contributing to international development and peace, while reserving the right to protect its sovereignty and national integrity if ever challenged.

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[1]<https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/the-largest-empires-in-the-history-of-india.html>, accessed on 25 September 2023.

[2]<https://www.aviation-defence-universe.com/indian-armed-forces-spearheaded-operation-cactus-at-maldives/>, accessed on 25 September 2023.

[3][https://origins.osu.edu/milestones/bangladesh-liberation-war?language\\_content\\_entity=en](https://origins.osu.edu/milestones/bangladesh-liberation-war?language_content_entity=en), accessed on 25 September 2023.

[4]<https://www.schengenvisainfo.com/news/indian-masters-students-in-france-to-be-granted-5-year-post-study-visas/#:~:text=Indian students pursuing their Master's,the Indian Community in Paris.>, accessed on 25 September 2023.

[5]<https://www.livemint.com/news/india-capable-of-countering-chinese-aggression-refuses-to-join-nato-says-s-jaishankar-11686288765836.html>, accessed on 25 September 2023.

[6]<https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1951491#:~:text=I am confident that all,journey beyond the Moon's orbit>. accessed on 25 September 2023.

**Brig Pawan Bhardwaj, YSM**

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