

India's Foreign Policy

Posted at: 10/06/2025

India's Foreign Policy: From Idealism to Assertiveness

Context:

India's foreign policy came under renewed focus after **Operation Sindoor**, a decisive military strike in response to the **Pahalgam terror attack (2025)**. This operation has sparked discussions on India's evolving approach to **Pakistan-sponsored terrorism** and its overall **strategic posture**.

Phases of India's Evolving Foreign Policy

1. Nehruvian Idealism (1947-1962):

- Adopted **non-alignment** during the Cold War.
- Championed **decolonisation** in Asia and Africa.
- Strong belief in **multilateralism** and the UN system.

2. Peace and Ethical Diplomacy:

- Promoted **Panchsheel** principles.
- Influenced by **Gandhian values**: non-violence, ethics, and dialogue.
- Preferred **bilateralism** over coercion.

3. Strategic Realism (Post-1962):

- Shifted focus to **national interest and security**.
- Strengthened **border defence** and military preparedness.

- Invested in defence institutions.

4. Nuclear and Strategic Autonomy (1974-1998):

- Conducted nuclear tests to ensure **autonomous deterrence**.
- Rejected **NPT and CTBT** to safeguard sovereignty.
- Built **indigenous capabilities**.

5. Counterterrorism Posture (2000s-2019):

- Moved from **restraint to retaliation** (e.g., Uri 2016, Balakot 2019).
- Recognised cross-border terrorism as **proxy war**.

6. Operation Sindoor Era (2025 Onward):

- Operationalised **pre-emptive strike doctrine**.
- Reinforced **zero-tolerance** policy on terrorism.
- Sent strong **public and diplomatic signals**.

Key Challenges

- **Pakistan's Proxy Strategy:**
Continues using non-state actors (e.g. 26/11, Uri 2016, Pahalgam 2025).
- **China's Aggression:**
Frequent **LAC violations**, especially post-Galwan.
- **Balancing Hard and Soft Power:**
Need to maintain India's **civilisational image** while acting decisively.
- **Global Scrutiny:**

Military actions require effective **perception management**.

- **Geopolitical Realignments:**

Navigating ties with **Quad, BRICS, West Asia**, while retaining strategic autonomy.

The Way Ahead

- **Strategic Non-Alignment:**

Pursue **autonomy through flexible alliances**.

- **Strengthen Indigenous Defence:**

Advance **Atmanirbhar Bharat**.

Examples: DRDO's BrahMos, Agni, INS Arihant.

- **Proactive Deterrence:**

Continue **calibrated military responses** to terror threats.

- **Enhance Global Engagement:**

Lead on global issues like **terrorism, climate change, and AI governance**.

Conclusion

India's foreign policy has transformed from Nehru's idealism to a **strategic, self-assured, and assertive** approach in 2025. Rooted in peace, it now prioritises **national security, economic self-reliance, and global leadership**—reflecting India's emergence as a **confident global actor**.

