



INDIA'S EVOLVING ROLE IN GLOBAL GOVERNANCE: STRATEGIES, CHALLENGES, AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

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Abstract

This study examines India's expanding role in global governance through its proactive engagement in leading international organizations, such as the United Nations, World Trade Organization, BRICS, SCO, and the G20. India's increasing economic strength and political prominence have established it as an influential participant in shaping global standards concerning trade, peace, and international diplomacy. Its initiatives within the G20 demonstrate a deliberate attempt to shape global policy-making, despite existing structural challenges. However, India's leadership aspirations continue to face constraints due to inadequate representation in major institutions, geopolitical tensions, limited resources, and internal domestic challenges. To enhance its international position, India should further refine its strategic priorities and reinforce its dedication to multilateral cooperation. Future studies may explore India's contribution to the reform of global institutions, the influence of domestic political dynamics on its international objectives, and the role of strategic alliances in strengthening its presence in global governance.

Keywords: *Global Governance, World Trade Organizations, Multilateral Cooperation, Political Dynamics.*

Introduction

In the twenty-first century, global governance has developed into a multifaceted and evolving system through which countries collaboratively respond to cross-border challenges such as climate change, economic disparities, technological advancements, and geopolitical uncertainty. Within this changing environment, India has gradually established itself as an influential participant by utilizing its demographic advantage, economic progress, and democratic values to contribute to international discussions. As the world's largest democracy and one of the fastest-growing economies, India's engagement in multilateral institutions, including the United Nations, the World Trade Organization, as well as regional platforms such as BRICS and the G20, reflects both its ambitions and obligations in shaping global standards.

India's contribution to global governance extends beyond a reactive approach; it has become increasingly purposeful, guided by the principles of multipolarity, inclusiveness, and sustainable development. Through advocating reforms in international organizations, representing the interests of the Global South, and advancing digital transformation and development-oriented initiatives, India aims to reconcile its national priorities with broader global objectives. This introduction provides the foundation for analysing the strategies India adopts to strengthen its international influence and the wider significance of its participation in the evolving structure of global governance.

Review of Literature

India's foreign policy has progressively transformed from a policy of non-alignment to one of strategic autonomy, guided by its civilizational heritage and the philosophy of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam ("The world is one family"). This evolution reflects India's efforts to reconcile its national priorities with its international obligations in an increasingly multipolar global order (Bhanwala and Jaiswal, 2026) [1].



Within the United Nations, India has made significant contributions to international development cooperation; however, despite its distinguished record in peacekeeping operations, it continues to encounter challenges in influencing global security policies (Thakker, 2018) [2].

In economic platforms such as BRICS and the G20, India has established itself as an emerging global power by promoting multipolarity and equitable economic development. Its presidency of the G20 represented a significant milestone in strengthening its role in global economic governance (Sonkar, 2025) [3]. More recently, India's foreign policy has shifted toward a pragmatic strategy of multi-alignment, particularly in the Indo-Pacific region and multilateral institutions, where it aims to preserve strategic autonomy while expanding cooperation with key international partners (Bakhteyar and Ruidas, 2025) [4].

Taken together, these studies present India as a careful yet determined participant in global governance, employing coalition-building, norm leadership, and digital diplomacy to advance its international influence while continuing to face structural constraints and geopolitical complexities.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine India's historical contribution to global governance.
2. To evaluate India's strategies within multilateral institutions.

Historical Evolution of India's Global Engagement

India's involvement in global governance has a long historical foundation, shaped by its colonial legacy and aspirations after independence. Following independence, Jawaharlal Nehru introduced the policy of non-alignment, establishing India as a prominent representative of the Global South and a defender of national sovereignty. The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), founded in 1961, became a fundamental pillar of India's foreign policy, enabling the country to avoid Cold War rivalries while supporting decolonization and balanced global development. India's participation in the Bandung Conference (1955) further strengthened its reputation as a spokesperson for newly independent countries.

Alongside its political leadership, India became one of the leading contributors to United Nations peacekeeping operations by deploying thousands of personnel to conflict-affected regions such as Congo, Sudan, and Lebanon, thereby reinforcing its image as a dependable international partner. During the 1970s and 1980s, India promoted South-South cooperation and supported the establishment of a New International Economic Order aimed at reducing inequalities in trade and technology transfer.

The economic reforms of the 1990s represented a major milestone, as India integrated more closely with the global economy while preserving its strategic independence. Its engagement in organizations such as the World Trade Organization demonstrated its commitment to protecting agricultural assistance and food security for developing countries. By the early twenty-first century, India's expanding economy and democratic values enabled it to assume a more proactive role in multilateral institutions. Its leadership in climate governance, particularly through the Paris Agreement and the International Solar Alliance, illustrated its capacity to influence global sustainability policies. India's historical development therefore reflects a continuous effort to harmonize domestic priorities with international responsibilities, evolving from a principled advocate of the Global South into a pragmatic and influential participant in global governance.



Research Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative methodology using descriptive and analytical approaches to investigate India's strategies and contributions to global governance. Through the integration of secondary data analysis and thematic content analysis, the study offers a comprehensive assessment of India's participation in multilateral institutions. The research is exploratory in nature, aiming to examine India's historical evolution, evaluate its present strategies, and assess its future role within global governance structures.

India in Multilateral Institutions

India's participation in multilateral institutions demonstrates both its ambition for greater global leadership and its dedication to inclusive international governance. At the United Nations, India has consistently supported reforms of the Security Council, advocating permanent membership to improve the representation of the Global South (Mukherjee, 2021) [8]. Its extensive involvement in peacekeeping missions, particularly in Congo and Sudan, further strengthens its reputation as a responsible international stakeholder (Thakker, 2018) [2].

Within the World Trade Organization, India has defended food security measures and agricultural support programs, presenting itself as a representative of developing economies in response to unequal patterns of trade liberalization (Chatterjee, 2020). In BRICS, India advances the principles of multipolarity and financial collaboration through initiatives such as the New Development Bank (Sonkar, 2025) [3]. India's active participation in the G20, especially during its 2023 presidency, showcased its vision of "One Earth, One Family, One Future," highlighting sustainable development and digital transformation (Pant and Nascimento, 2022) [5]. Through climate diplomacy, particularly the International Solar Alliance, India also contributes to shaping international sustainability policies (Hari Krishna, 2024) [7]. These engagements illustrate India's dual approach of safeguarding national priorities while influencing international standards.

India's involvement in multilateral organizations has remained a key element of its foreign policy and international governance strategy since independence. At the United Nations, India has repeatedly argued that its exclusion from permanent membership weakens the legitimacy and representativeness of global governance (Bhanwala and Jaiswal, 2026) [1]. As the world's largest democracy and one of the leading contributors to UN peacekeeping operations, India considers itself a deserving candidate for permanent membership (Vaishnav, 2026) [6].

India's development diplomacy within the UN is equally significant, as it actively supports the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) while emphasizing poverty reduction, climate resilience, and inclusive economic progress (Hari Krishna, 2024) [7]. Its leadership in the International Solar Alliance (ISA), established in 2015, demonstrates India's ability to coordinate international cooperation on renewable energy while aligning domestic priorities with global sustainability objectives (Madan, 2019).

Within the WTO, India has consistently defended agricultural subsidies and food security initiatives, opposing demands from developed economies to reduce support mechanisms that protect millions of farmers (Chatterjee, 2020) [9]. Its position during the Doha Development Round reflected its commitment to trade fairness and equitable globalization (Sonkar, 2025) [3]. India's engagement in BRICS highlights its pursuit of a multipolar world order and stronger South-South cooperation, encouraging financial stability and institutional reforms through the New Development Bank (Pant



and Nascimento, 2022) [5]. Likewise, the G20 has emerged as a major platform for India's international influence, with its 2023 presidency promoting sustainability, digital transformation, and inclusive development (Vaishnav, 2026) [6].

Overall, India's strategies in multilateral institutions integrate norm leadership, coalition-building, and practical diplomacy. Although structural obstacles—particularly the absence of permanent membership in the UN Security Council—continue to limit its influence, India has steadily expanded its international role by aligning domestic interests with broader global priorities (Bakhteyar and Ruidas, 2025) [4]. Its engagement in the UN, WTO, BRICS, and G20 demonstrates its transformation from a principled advocate of the Global South into an increasingly pragmatic actor shaping international governance.

Challenges and Constraints

- **Institutional barriers:** India's exclusion from permanent membership of the UN Security Council and the absence of veto authority limit its capacity to influence major global security decisions. This institutional imbalance weakens its aspiration to represent the Global South within international governance.
- **Limited resources:** Compared with major global powers such as the United States and China, India's financial and technological capabilities remain comparatively modest. These limitations reduce its ability to finance large-scale international initiatives and development assistance that strengthen global leadership.
- **Geopolitical challenges:** Continuing border disputes with China and difficult relations with Pakistan affect India's regional influence. These security concerns require significant attention and resources, limiting India's broader global governance ambitions.
- **Domestic constraints:** Issues including poverty, socioeconomic inequality, and administrative inefficiencies continue to influence India's international reputation. These internal challenges affect its ability to project itself as a comprehensive model of inclusive and sustainable development. India's balanced approach toward the Russia–Ukraine conflict illustrates its commitment to maintaining strategic autonomy.

Impact and Future Prospects

- **Inclusive international governance:** India presents itself as a representative of the Global South by advocating equitable climate policies, fair international trade, and broader access to technology. This strengthens the representation of developing countries in global decision-making.
- **Climate leadership:** India's investment in renewable energy and leadership of the International Solar Alliance demonstrate its potential to guide the global transition toward sustainable development while serving as a bridge between developed and developing countries.
- **Institutional reform:** India continues to advocate reforms of the UN Security Council and the World Trade Organization to promote more equitable representation and effective decision-making. These reforms would improve the legitimacy and inclusiveness of global governance institutions.
- **Innovation-based diplomacy:** India increasingly utilizes digital technologies, climate innovation, and cultural soft power to strengthen its international influence, combining economic advancement with value-based global leadership.



Conclusion

India's approach to global governance reflects a careful balance between safeguarding national priorities and fulfilling international responsibilities. By representing the interests of the Global South, India promotes multipolarity and inclusive governance across areas such as climate policy, international trade, and digital technology. Its leadership within organizations including the G20 and BRICS demonstrates its commitment to equitable development and sustainable growth. Beyond active participation, India seeks to become a global norm-setter by shaping international discussions on sustainability, fairness, and digital governance. This evolving role reflects India's aspiration to emerge as a leading force in the future of global governance.

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