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India's Policy of De-hyphenation in an Emerging Multipolar World Order

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ABSTRACT

This research article examines the transformation of India's foreign policy, particularly the policy of de-hyphenation in this emerging multipolar world order. In the post-Cold War period, the global power dynamics shifted significantly. The global order has moved away from a unipolar world dominated by a single superpower, namely the United States of America (USA), towards a more complex and diverse landscape of multi-polar world order. The beginning of the third decade of the 21st century has been marked by significant events such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the Russia-Ukraine war, the Israel-Palestine escalation, and the multiple conflicts between the United States and China in various fields. Moreover, the emergence of new alliance systems such as Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), BRICS, QUAD, I2U2 and more are contributing further to global power politics. In 2014, a political leadership shift occurred in India, which subsequently led to a paradigm shift in its foreign policy approach. India has adopted various strategic initiatives to navigate this new global power structure, including Panchamrit, multi-alignment, strategic autonomy, and more. However, in this new global order, the East and West are divided on various issues, which has also been reflected in the new alliance mechanisms. In contrast, India has been able to make a strategic position in both East and West by being part of both alliances. In summary, this research paper comprehensively examines India's policy of de-hyphenation in the emerging multipolar world order.

Keywords: Dehyphenation; Multi Polarity; Global order; Multialignment; Strategic autonomy; Panchamrit

INTRODUCTION

The foreign policy of any country is crucial, especially since it influences the nation's security, prosperity, diplomacy, and ability to navigate complex global issues. The domain of foreign policy is very dynamic, and it involves complex interactions and considerations that influence a nation's approach to its external relations. The foreign policy of any country will evolve according to the changes happening in the global and domestic order. India's foreign policy, too, has evolved in response to changes happening in the global order. The end of the Second World War and the independence of India occurred in the same period. The Second World War also emphasised the decolonisation movement all around the world; along with it, India's foreign policy also emphasised decolonisation, disarmament, and supporting newly independent nations in Asia, Africa, and Latin America¹. In the post-Second World War period, the globe dived on an ideological base, leading to the

emergence of the Cold War¹. During this period, India pursued a non-aligned foreign policy and highlighted the Non-Alignment Movement (NAM), aiming to maintain independence from both the United States and the Soviet Union². The non-alignment policy sought to diversify its international partnerships and maintain strategic autonomy with both blocks and meanwhile not align with either superpower officially³.

The end of the Cold War changed global power dynamics, and the bipolar world order changed into a unipolar world dominated by a single superpower, namely the USA⁴. The disintegration of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR) and the changes that happened at the global and domestic levels during the 1990s were also reflected in India's foreign policy. In the aftermath of the Cold War, India emphasised a balance between economic interests, security concerns, and regional and global diplomacy². The adoption of a new liberal economic policy, popularly known



as economic liberalisation, contains the new principles of liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation. India's adoption of economic liberalisation in the early 1990s led to a greater emphasis on economic diplomacy. Meanwhile, India moved away from its old non-alignment to multi-alignment. The adoption of a new foreign policy approach is more pragmatic and realistic and includes partnerships with multiple countries, including the USA, Russia, and China⁵.

In the 21st century, global power dynamics started to change again. The global order has moved away from a unipolar world towards a more complex and diverse landscape of multi-polar world order⁶. The financial crisis of 2008, the economic boom of China, the re-emergence of Russia, the installation of new powerful blocks, and more have made global order multi-polar. In this new order, power is distributed into various entities, and this new global framework ensures that no single party can get a hegemonic position in the global domain⁷. The position of India's foreign policy needs to be examined from this background and this new global framework, navigating the reasons for the adoption of these new foreign policy principles by the government of India since 2014. The emergence of new alliance systems such as Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), BRICS, QUAD, I2U2 and more are contributing further to global power politics, especially on the background of the East-West divide. However, India has been able to make a strategic position in both East and West by being part of both alliances through its policy of de-hyphenation⁵.

In international politics, de-hyphenation refers to the independent handling of two nations with an adversarial relationship. This approach involves establishing a relationship with one nation while disregarding the complexities of its relations with the other. If a third nation is overly mindful of the enduring hostility between two such countries, it may encounter foreign policy challenges in maintaining smooth relationships with both. The policy of de-hyphenation is characterised by a pragmatic and realistic approach involving a nation's independent engagement with two rival or conflicting nations rather than viewing them through a single hyphenated lens. As a result, a declaratory policy of de-hyphenation serves to create the necessary flexibility for the third nation by reducing expectations of partisanship from it in relation to the other two nations. There were multiple examples of de-hyphenation by various countries.

India's foreign policy has evolved from the principles of the Nehruvian era Panchsheel to the pragmatic and realistic 'Panchamrit' policy of the Modi era. This newly evolved 'Panchamrit' has emerged as a new cornerstone of Indian foreign policy. India's policy of the 'Panchamrit' principle has again substantiated its strategic position in this new global order⁸. The shift in foreign policy strategy is primarily attributed to the evolving global environment and national political dynamics. India is compelled to nurture

and safeguard its relationships with multiple global powers on the international stage while safeguarding its security, identity, and national interests. Against this backdrop, the 'Panchmrith' policy assumes greater significance, advocating five pillars for India's Foreign Policy: 'Samman' (dignity and honour), 'Samvad' (enhanced engagement and dialogue), 'Samriddhi' (shared prosperity), 'Suraksha' (regional and global security), and 'Sanskriti' or 'Sabhyata' (cultural and civilisational linkages). A closer examination of these foreign policy principles reveals a notable emphasis on strategic autonomy. This research paper provides a comprehensive examination of India's policy of de-hyphenation in the emerging multipolar world order⁸.

THE NEW GLOBAL ORDER: FROM UNIPOLARITY TO MULTI-POLARITY

In recent years, substantial changes in the global landscape have led to a departure from the previously predominant unipolar world order. This transition towards multi-polarity is observable in diverse economic, geopolitical, and technological advancements. In the post-Cold War, a unipolar world emerged, characterized by the unmatched supremacy of the United States of America. After the dissolution of the USSR, America assumed the sole superpower, influencing global politics and institutions to align with its interests and values⁴. The rise of China and other emerging powers in the global economy has disrupted the previously dominant unipolar structure led by the USA⁹. This new phenomenon has led to a more decentralised distribution of economic influence, creating a multi-polar system of wealth and power. This shift challenges the efficacy of established international institutions, prompting a need to reassess global governance structures to accommodate diverse viewpoints better and address common challenges. Additionally, traditional alliances are evolving as nations pursue strategic partnerships based on mutual interests. Regional powers are gaining significance, resulting in a more intricate geopolitical environment with influence dispersed among multiple actors⁷.

The 21st century has seen the establishment of a novel multilateral global order, denoting the rise of fresh modes of collaboration and discourse among nations and regions in this contemporary era⁶. This development has arisen in response to diverse opportunities and challenges brought about by climate change, globalisation, the COVID-19 pandemic, the rising terrorist threat, and other related transformations necessitating collective efforts and shared solutions. The new global order encompasses various characteristics, including the expansion and diversification of existing multilateral institutions such as the United Nations Organizations (UNO), World Bank (WB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF), incorporating a broader array of voices and perspectives from the global south and developing world. Additionally, it involves the



establishment and reinforcement of new regional and sub-regional organisations such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), African Union (AU), European Union (EU), Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and BRICS, and with the aim of fostering regional integration, development, and cooperation. Furthermore, the emergence of informal networks and initiatives, such as the Alliance for Multilateralism, G20, and QUAD, seeks to address specific issues and challenges that transcend national boundaries and necessitate coordinated action.

The primary factor driving this shift in power dynamics is the ongoing ascendance of China and the resulting strategic complexities it has engendered. These complexities encompass the growing power hegemonic tussle between China and the United States of America and the geopolitical imperatives faced by other countries, particularly those in Asia that are dependent heavily on the Chinese economy. The different influential Asian countries with various levels of political and economic influence, often categorised as 'middle powers', have found themselves particularly vulnerable to the dilemma of balancing high-stakes security concerns with economic interests². The ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine (2022) has accelerated the evaluation of various global alliances. Countries from the Indo-Pacific region, such as Japan, South Korea, and Australia, who are treaty allies of the USA, have opted to castigate Russia by imposing sanctions on its economy and providing non-lethal military support to Ukraine. The other major countries, particularly China and India, have chosen to remain neutral in this scenario. These nations have emphasised the increasing disparity between the developed and developing world, pointing out the unequal effects of the war on different regions. The latest war erupted in the Middle East between Israel and Hamas again, resulting in turmoil.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has implemented a series of comprehensive policy initiatives, including Act East, Neighbourhood First, Act West, Security and Growth for All in the Region, and the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative, which has considerably advanced the strategic agenda of India⁶. The escalating global events such as the trade war and rising tensions between the USA and China, the Russia-Ukraine conflict of 2022, the Israel-Hamas war of 2023 and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic have had a major impact. Furthermore, the emergence of new alliance systems such as the BRICS, QUAD, Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), I2U2 (India, Israeli, UAE, USA), and others is further contributing to global power dynamics. India's de-hyphenation foreign policy must be carefully evaluated and assessed within this complex global context. India's realpolitik approach holds great significance amidst the myriad of complex global challenges, particularly in the background of the emerging multipolar global order.

INDIA'S POLICY OF DE-HYPHENATION

India's foreign policy in the 21st century has undergone a paradigm shift. India's adoption of a de-hyphenation strategy has marked significant changes in its global outlook. Traditionally, India's diplomatic practices often involved being closely associated with its neighbouring nations and the global community. However, there has been a strategic and deliberative shift towards de-hyphenation in recent years, indicating a departure from past approaches and a more sophisticated and strategic engagement with the global community. The de-hyphenation policy has emerged as a defining feature of India's new pragmatic global outlook⁶.

India's decision to pursue de-hyphenation was primarily driven by the desire to strengthen its global position and independently establish relations with major global powers. India aimed to establish robust diplomatic and economic partnerships with countries across the globe. This strategic shift was intended to project India as a self-reliant and confident player capable of contributing significantly to international affairs. The Panchamrit policy, Atmanirbhar Bharat, Make in India, and Vocal for Local are some crucial initiatives by India for achieving self-reliance and independent foreign affairs. The Panchamrit policy adopted by India has a similar pragmatic approach in its engagement with global affairs and has replicated India's realistic global outlook¹⁰. India's stance on the Russia-Ukraine conflict of 2022 demonstrates its de-hyphenation policy.

India's de-hyphenation has allowed it to leverage and capitalise on its position in areas such as defence, energy security and trade, and strategic alignments with both the U.S. and Russia. While this policy has brought advantages in multiple sectors, it has also presented different challenges. One of the primary obstacles has been managing global powers in this complex scenario. Furthermore, India's traditional ideal global perspectives and historical complexities have presented key hurdles in India's actions, and it also requires careful diplomatic navigation to prevent misunderstandings. The de-hyphenation policy also raises questions about India's regional responsibilities and relationships with neighbours. As a significant power in South Asia and the Indian Ocean, India's actions and policies inevitably impact its neighbours and surrounding countries. Balancing its assertion of independence in global affairs and addressing regional concerns poses an ongoing challenge for India. This new global approach has also faced criticism for deviating from its previous liberal, idealistic global outlook.

India has successfully navigated the de-hyphenation policy in the 21st century. A big market and leader of the global south like India has more weight in global affairs especially after becoming economically and militarily in a strong position. India has cleverly capitalised the situation and along with its realpolitik approach of the present government helped India to manage de-hyphenation policy strategically. Along with the Ukrainian crisis, India has



been able to manage Palestinian crisis, Iraq- US ongoing issues, becoming the part of new alliance systems of both West and East and so on. The consequences of India's de-hyphenation policy have implications that reach beyond diplomatic nuances. From an economic perspective, India's endeavours to broaden its partnerships have resulted in tangible benefits, opening new avenues for investment and trade. Furthermore, India's increased involvement in international and multilateral organisations, independent of regional hyphenation, has enhanced its trustworthiness and influence in global decision-making arenas. In summary, India's de-hyphenation policy in this multi-polar world order signifies a strategic transformation of its diplomatic approach. This deliberate departure has enabled India to establish a more autonomous and assertive role on the global platform. While challenges persist, the overall trajectory demonstrates that the de-hyphenation strategy is a dynamic and adaptive response to the complexities of contemporary global politics⁷.

CONCLUSION

The de-hyphenation policy of India in an emerging multipolar world order indicates a strategic recalibration of its diplomatic and global approach. India's deliberative shift away from its historical global outlook and this strategic move signifies India's aspiration for a more autonomous and nuanced position in the global political frame. This notable shift in foreign affairs aims to engage with major powers and emerging powers on individual merits and foster its national interest. The membership of India in both QUAD and SCO replicate India's strategic autonomy. India's de-hyphenation policy reflects a dynamic response to the complexities of the evolving multipolar global order. Additionally, India has been able to make a strategic position in both East and West by adopting the policy of de-hyphenation. However, this strategic move poses specific challenges towards Indian

diplomatic global missions. The durability of some of the ongoing crises could also make a strategic challenge for India's diplomatic missions. The world is slowly awakening from the Covid-19 crisis and global peace and cooperation is very much-needed at this moment. India has to manage both its national and global interests in this critical juncture. Managing global powers in this complex global scenario, delinking with its earlier liberal ideal approaches, and more are some challenges facing India. The policy of de-hyphenation by India at this critical situation is a pragmatic move and it will light India's way for global interests in this multipolar world order.

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