

## **INDIA – A MAJOR INTERNATIONAL PLAYER LOCATED BETWEEN BRICS AND THE OCCIDENTAL POWERS**

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***Abstract:** India is one of the two demographic superpowers of the world and one of the most important regional actors with a great deal of potential for playing an important part on the world stage. From a military point of view, India is the fourth most powerful country in the world, according to Global Power, economically speaking, being the fifth most powerful country on a global scale, with growing trends, while geographically speaking, it is the seventh largest country in terms of area, however, it occupies a very advantageous geopolitical position. India is seen as a strong voice within BRICS and the UN against proposals or actions that could harm the interests of any member. It rejected China's proposal to invite Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Mexico into BRICS because India believed that the focus should be on developing the current members rather than inviting other weaker nations and that bringing these nations would drag BRICS down as an alliance and ultimately meet the same fate as the European Union. At the same time, different issues of the regional security equation of Asia (South-East Asia – India) – Pacific and complications which have resulted from Russia's invasion of Ukraine in the hierarchy of the most influential international actors make India's standing and role more important in decision-making on both a regional and a global level.*

***Keywords:** BRICS; major international player; emerging nations; foreign policy; global power; international hierarchy.*

### **Introduction**

India is one of the two demographic superpowers of the world (behind China, which has a population of 1,397,897,720) with a population of 1,339,330,514 with forecasts showing India will overtake China, according to <https://www.cia.gov> (in 2021). Also, it is one of the most important regional actors with a great deal of potential for playing an important part on the world stage. At the same time, different issues of the regional security equation of Asia (South-East Asia – India) – Pacific and complications which have resulted from Russia's invasion of Ukraine in the hierarchy of the most influential international actors make India's standing and role more important in decision-making on both a regional and a global level. From a military point of view, India is the fourth most powerful country in the world (behind the USA, Russia and China), according to Global Power (in 2021), with a defense budget of 73.65 billion dollars, 1,445,000 active personnel and 1,155,000 reserve personnel being equipped with 160 nuclear weapons, 2,119 total aircraft, 4,730 tanks, 10,000 armored fighting vehicles, 4,140 total artillery and other important military capabilities.

Economically speaking, it is the fifth most powerful country on a global scale (behind the USA, China, Japan and Germany), with growing trends, with a GDP of 2,835,927,000,000 \$, according to <https://www.cia.gov> (in 2019), while geographically speaking, it is the seventh largest country in terms of land surface with 3,287,263 square kilometers (behind Russia, Canada, the USA, China, Brazil and Australia), however, it occupies a very advantageous geopolitical position, dominating the Indian Ocean area.

### **1. The main goals of India's foreign policy**

National interest drove the foreign policy of India ever since achieving independence under Nehru, who believed in peace, tolerance and self-respect between nations. In

operational terms, the idea of national interest takes the form of certain objectives of foreign policy. According to authors Appadorai and M. S. Rajan, there are three fundamental objectives of India's foreign policy (Chellaney 2006, 273):

1. Retaining India's territorial integrity and an independent foreign policy: Territorial integrity and the protection of national borders against foreign aggression is the main interest of any nation. India has hardly achieved independence from foreign rule after a long time. So, it was only natural for it to highlight an independent foreign policy. India's effort of consolidating African-Asian support behind non-interference principles, in domestic affairs of other nations and, eventually, adopting a non-aligned policy should be seen this way.

2. Promoting peace and international security: As a newly-independent and developing country, India has realized that peace and international developing are related. Its accent on disarming and policy on staying away from military alliances have the purpose of promoting global peace (Brigadier Şi Nair 1992, 305).

3. Economic development of India: The quick development of the country was the fundamental request of India during independence talks. Also, it was requested the consolidation of democracy and liberties in the country. In order to receive financial resources and technology from both blocks and to focus its energy on developing, India chose not to join either power block, which was the main feature of the Cold War.

India's foreign policy reveals its two other objectives:

1. Eliminating colonialism and racial discrimination.
2. Protecting the interests of Indian nationals.

An official statement from India's Ministry of Foreign Affairs notes that its foreign policy tries to protect its own interest.

Its main goal is promoting and maintaining a peaceful and stable external environment, where internal goals such as abolishing poverty could progress rapidly. Thus, India looks for balance between international actors and it portrays a peaceful policy in order to maintain good relations with its neighbors.

## **2. India, a member of BRICS**

BRICS is an acronym for Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa - five emerging nations that have formed an alliance for economic and social development. The similarity between them is that they are all newly industrialised and aim for maximum trade and development (Mohan 2016). Together, BRICS account for about 40% of the world's population and about 30% of GDP (Gross Domestic Product), making it a critical economic engine. It is an emerging investment market and a global energy bloc. And as the world's third largest economy, it is important that India takes its role within BRICS seriously.

India plays a multifaceted role economically, politically and socially. The first BRICS summit took place in 2009, in the midst of the global recession. Since then, India has assumed the role of trade facilitator in South Asia and Africa, thanks to its economic strength at that time. In fact, forum analysts have called India South Asia's best-performing economy and an engine of growth in the region (Naidu 2013).

India has taken several steps to improve trade, including proposals for a new BRICS portal, so that the next time any BRICS country changes its import or export licenses, imposes anti-dumping duties or changes its product registration criteria, the other members will be able to find out about it immediately. It has also set up an independent BRICS rating agency so that members can compare rankings with members themselves instead of other developed countries.

India is also promoting intra-BRICS trade, which means it has asked member nations to import goods into member countries instead of Europe. The idea is that intra-trade offers

the flexibility of trading in currencies other than the dollar (Opall-Rome 1998, 366). For example, India and Brazil could trade in Rupee or Lira, as appropriate. By doing so, countries can strengthen their own currency while weakening the US Dollar (Opall-Rome 1998, 376).

And when it comes to improving trade and industrial infrastructure, India has contributed more than \$10 billion to the New Development Bank (BRICS bank) to redevelop industrial bases in South Africa and Brazil.

Of course, trade policies and structure are not the only facilitators. The Indian Ocean, as one of the world's busiest trade routes, is an important region for BRICS. India wants control over this region for two very specific reasons - firstly, developing bases in this region would mean faster trade between member countries. And second, the bases would prevent any resources mined here, such as the 100 tonnes of natural gas found in 2017, from being taken by other countries like the US or Japan.

For BRICS to flourish, each country needs to focus first on its own economic development. A strong nation will strengthen BRICS as a whole, and India is the growth engine of BRICS (O'Neil, Building Better Global Economic BRICs 2001).

From 2001 to 2013, the economic output of BRICS countries increased from \$3 billion to \$15 billion. Investors saw India, China and Brazil as a sure thing. But all that soon changed. In recent years, the BRICS have been facing a tough time. Growing sanctions on Russia, China's stock market crash in 2015 and Brazil's ongoing economic crisis have prompted investment to return to the US.

Of all these, only the Indian market has recovered fast enough to reverse the damage. By 2018, India's growth rate was the highest among BRICS nations and convinced investors to reinvest in BRICS. Member nations are now looking to India to help grow faster. For starters, India has invested nearly \$4 billion in South Africa and started the Global Executive Development Programme to train the workforce there.

This has helped Brazil and South Africa replicate its 'Digitising Education' initiative, providing technological help to schools there. It has also offered to host trade fairs so members can learn and share innovation. It wants each country to be independent so that the burden of BRICS consolidation doesn't fall on one or two nations.

India is seen as a strong voice within BRICS and the UN against proposals or actions that could harm the interests of any member. Rejected China's proposal to invite Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Mexico into BRICS (Huntsman & Bharath 2015). Because India believed that the focus should be on developing the current members rather than inviting other weaker nations and that bringing in these nations would drag BRICS down as an alliance and ultimately meet the same fate as the European Union.

As a BRICS member and to strengthen relations between countries, India also plans to set up funds with the New Development Bank for sports training, developing green energy facilities and hosting trade fairs and film festivals.

China is already the top economic influencer here, which only makes it easier for it to influence the World Bank. With such power, it can secure political leverage to pass projects that would otherwise have been rejected, such as the development of the new Silk Road. The World Bank's aim is to ensure weaker countries develop faster and reduce their dependence on foreign aid.

But the Silk Road rejects this goal in order to make China even more economically dominant. The road will lead to a faster spread of terrorism and hinder local business in the countries it passes through, thanks to the ease of international trade. These countries will also have to bear the costs of security on the road to prevent theft. This is an additional expense for already weaker economies such as Afghanistan and Egypt.

India realises this danger and has therefore been firmly against the OBOR (One Belt, One Road) project. In 2018, it skipped the China Silk Road forum as a gesture of dissent.

Then India and the US jointly announced a plan to build their own Silk Road, build a highway to Thailand and proposed another north-south corridor with Russia. All this to counter China's OBOR initiative.

Another such counter-balancing incident occurred at the start of the Development Bank. China demanded that each country's share of the bank should depend on their economic strength. Clearly, a higher share meant more control for China. India rejected this too, calling for an equal share for all five members so that each would have a say in BRICS meetings.

India has also repeatedly used BRICS to block several Chinese actions that would have culminated in war. In fact, a week before the 2017 BRICS summit, China withdrew its forces from Dokhlam due to fears of pressure from other member nations.

### **3. Collaboration and cooperation – crucial instruments of security and stability in relations with other regional actors**

India, which has recently entered the great circuit of international relations, has tried in every way to maintain cordial relations that it can capitalize on with other international players, both regional and global, even with the states with which it has had wars. Therefore, India has very good relations with no major problems or tense moments with all the states in the world, whether they are from the BRICS or from the western states. However, it has the best relations with the following states:

**RUSIA:** Russia, in order to strike at the states that held the colonial empires, has always been close to India, and every time it was asked for help, it was pragmatic and supported India in various economic, political, diplomatic, or military matters. Thus, Russia is still India's oldest and most trusted ally, which has supported India's role as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council. Russia is also India's largest supplier of military technology and equipment (T.V. Parsuram 1998, 112).

**JAPONIA:** Japan, competing with China for regional domination, was the only country in the world to offer maximum support to India during the Dokhlam Standoff with China in 2017, when not even Russia had the audacity (or maybe will) to have this position of full support for India. In addition, it should be noted that Azad Hind Fauj or the Indian National Army was formed in Japan and Netaji operated from Japan. Japan offered its full support to India during its struggle for freedom. Japan is thus India's most trusted ally not only in the military but also from an economic development point of view (Horimoto 2016).

**ISRAEL:** If we look at Prime Minister Modi's visits abroad and their results, we can see that the warmest and best reception for him was in Israel. The Indian army (under the British army at the time) helped liberate Haifa from the Ottomans and Turks. During the Kargil war with Pakistan, Israel provided information on Pakistani troops and their positions, and also provided military aid to India, despite pressure from the United States. After Russia, Israel is the largest supplier of military technology and equipment to India.

On the other hand, speaking of enemy states, India does not officially accept any nation as a direct adversary, but if it had to name one, it would certainly be Pakistan. India's relations with China are also complicated, so beyond normalization and trade, they are not always good. As such, India may still declare China its enemy considering its support for Pakistan.

### **4. The importance of India in international policy**

After gaining independence, in the midst of the Cold War, India formed, along with Tito's Yugoslavia and Naser's Egypt, the non-alignment movement, that group of states of some importance in the international power equation that refused to openly side with a military military or other (NATO led by the US or the Warsaw Pact led by the USSR).

Thus for the United States, which after about a decade of total supremacy, was facing the emergence of a new rival in the international arena, China, with a booming economy, capable of becoming the greatest economic power of the world in half a century (and maybe not just economic), India seemed the ideal answer to a possible Chinese-Russian alliance (as it did with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization), it was kind of an antidote to this scenario.

With a population of over one billion, comparable to China alone, with an enviable geopolitical position, massive investment in education, research and innovation, and an emerging economy, India seemed a kind of China, possibly out of phase with around 20-30 years. In any case, in alliance with Western states, especially the United States, India ensured the perfect balance of the Asia-Pacific region in the event of an exaggerated development of China's economic, political, and military power. It's just that the speedy settlement of most of the political and border disputes with China, as well as the massive trade between the two, have created the ideal conditions for the Indian Elephant and the Chinese Dragon to make cohabitation possible and even more so to reach it in a very short time. In this sense, they formed a very interesting informal power structure - the BRIC, which became after the attraction of the largest economy of the African continent, South Africa - the BRICS.

Since then, things have gotten a little complicated for Western powers, but it seems that Russia's aggression and the current war in Ukraine, at the expense of public opinion and the international community, have created a new opportunity to attract India to Western states or at least to detach India a little from China and Russia. At least for now, both the US and NATO and the European Union are trying to create a community of the main economic powers in Asia-Pacific, of course with the exclusion of China, consisting of Japan, Australia, South Korea, Indonesia, Taiwan and of course India.

## Conclusions

Although India is not yet a superpower, in terms of the sources of accumulated power, in the current international context it matters more and more, being practically the "great good colossus" who without doing anything gains continuous ground in the international hierarchy.

Because it has an emerging global economy, with investments in research and innovation, and its official position is that of a peaceful and totally nonaligned state, it makes it frequentable in all directions, with great international players wanting to ally it because India's entry or exit from the various power structures, formal or informal, automatically changes the balance of power.

These are just a few reasons why India, although part of the BRICS, is close enough to Western powers, not so much by tradition, but especially by trying to promote national interests and ensure its own security through peaceful coexistence with all major international actors.

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