



Viksit Bharat: the Reshaping of the Global World Order

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The vision of *Viksit Bharat* (Developed India by 2047) articulated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi reflects an integrated strategic framework encompassing economic modernization, social transformation, political stability, and technological advancement. It represents an aspirational long-term state-building project aimed at elevating India to developed-nation status by its centenary of independence in 2047. Central to this vision are four core socio-economic pillars: **Yuva (youth), Garib (poor), Mahilayen (women), and Annadata (farmers)**. These pillars highlight the centrality of demographic dividends, poverty eradication, gender empowerment, and agricultural modernization in India's developmental trajectory.

The *Viksit Bharat* agenda underscores the need to enhance human capital through employability, skill development, and entrepreneurial capabilities to enable India's youth to participate competitively in the global knowledge economy. Technological advancements in the information technology (IT) sector, growth in manufacturing, and the expansion of renewable energy resources have increased India's systemic relevance in international trade, digital services, and global value chains. At the geopolitical level, India's positioning in international commerce, strategic partnerships, and multilateral diplomacy further strengthens its emerging role as a consequential actor in global governance.

To achieve developed-nation status, India must prioritize equitable growth, reduction of socio-economic inequality, infrastructure enhancement, food and energy security, and sustainable development outcomes. Government initiatives such as the National Education Policy (NEP 2022), Skill Enhancement Courses (SEC), the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), and the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan are aimed at strengthening the educational and vocational landscape while improving the gross enrolment ratio (GER) in higher education. Similarly, significant infrastructural expansion—including universities, Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs), and medical and nursing institutions—contributes to the consolidation of India's socio-economic foundations.

In the agricultural sector, schemes such as the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) and the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) provide financial support and crop insurance for small and marginal farmers, thereby enhancing agricultural productivity, stabilizing rural incomes, and reducing vulnerability to climatic shocks. In the social sector, policies such as the Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana—launched within the broader *Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao* campaign—aim to address gender discrimination, support female enrolment in education, and ensure long-term financial security for girls and women.

Taken together, these interventions demonstrate that the pursuit of *Viksit Bharat* is not merely economic but involves a comprehensive reconfiguration of India's internal developmental structures and external strategic engagement. The vision seeks to produce a capable, self-reliant, and globally competitive India that is positioned to influence the emerging global order.

Domestic Transformation and Strategic Modernization

The realization of *Viksit Bharat* requires the consolidation of domestic capabilities through economic restructuring, human capital enhancement, institutional strengthening, and technological modernization. India's long-term development trajectory must align with global competitiveness benchmarks such as per capita income, productivity levels, innovation capacity, macroeconomic stability, and social welfare outcomes. The pursuit of developed-nation status therefore necessitates a multi-dimensional developmental approach that encompasses industry, services, agriculture, finance, and social policy.

In macroeconomic terms, India's growth patterns reflect sustained expansion driven by services, manufacturing, and digital sectors. Since 2014, India's nominal GDP has enabled the country's rise from the tenth to the fifth largest economy globally, with most international financial projections identifying India as the prospective third-largest economy by 2027. The expansion of high-growth sectors—including information technology, pharmaceuticals, renewable energy systems, and advanced manufacturing—has strengthened India's global market presence and enhanced its role in international supply chains. Equally significant has been the infrastructural push under programs such as Bharatmala, Sagarmala, Digital India, and the National Logistics Policy, which collectively aim to improve mobility, digital connectivity, and supply chain efficiency.

Simultaneously, India must overcome structural challenges that may impede its transition toward developed status. These include socio-economic disparities, uneven regional development, livelihood vulnerability, skill mismatches, urban governance deficits, and infrastructural bottlenecks. The Indian state's developmental agenda therefore requires sustained institutional reform and the expansion of state capacity in key areas such as taxation, public service delivery, data systems, and financial inclusion.

A critical dimension in India's domestic modernization concerns the empowerment of women and integration of gender into national development strategies. Initiatives such as the Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana and the broader *Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao* scheme address long-standing challenges related to gender discrimination, socio-economic exclusion, and unequal opportunities. By linking education, financial inclusion, and social protection, these interventions reflect a recognition that gender equity is not merely a social imperative but a crucial determinant of India's developmental competitiveness.

At the same time, agricultural modernization remains central to India's developmental ambitions due to the continued demographic significance of the agricultural workforce and the role of food security in national stability. Schemes such as PM-KISAN and PMFBY serve to stabilize rural incomes, mitigate agrarian risk, and incentivize adoption of climate-resilient and technology-driven farming practices. Strengthening agricultural supply chains, expanding storage and cold-chain capacities, and improving access to agricultural-finance will be essential for enhancing farm productivity and rural welfare.

Taken together, India's domestic reforms demonstrate a shift from traditional welfare-based paradigms toward capability-driven development models that integrate economic efficiency, human empowerment, and technological adaptation. This internal modernization forms the foundational base upon which India seeks to project power and influence beyond its borders in pursuit of the *Viksit Bharat* vision.

Indian Foreign Policy and the Emerging Global Order

India's pursuit of *Viksit Bharat* intersects with profound geopolitical transformations occurring in the international system. The post-Cold War unipolar moment characterized by U.S. dominance has gradually eroded due to strategic overextension, economic diversification, and the assertive rise of new centres of power such as China and Russia. At the same time, middle powers including Japan, Germany, Australia, Turkey, South Korea, and the European Union have expanded their strategic agency within multilateral institutions and regional security frameworks.

India's foreign policy since 2014 has undergone a discernible shift from traditional Nehruvian idealism toward a more pragmatic, interest-driven, and multi-aligned strategic orientation. The doctrine of "multi-alignment" represents India's attempt to simultaneously engage multiple power centres-rather than align exclusively with one-while maintaining strategic autonomy. This strategic shift enables India to maximize diplomatic capital,

diversify economic partnerships, expand defense cooperation, and reduce vulnerability to great-power coercion.

India's growing proximity to the United States must be analyzed within the broader context of Sino-American rivalry and the Indo-Pacific's strategic centrality. The United States views India as a critical partner in maintaining a balance of power in Asia, whereas India views the U.S. as an indispensable partner in technology transfer, defense innovation, and economic cooperation. However, India has deliberately avoided alliance entrapment by preserving constructive relations with Russia, maintaining economic engagement with China, and sustaining diplomatic engagement with West Asian and Global South states.

Concurrently, India's foreign policy apparatus has embraced geo-economic instruments, prioritizing trade, investment, connectivity, and digital cooperation as primary tools of statecraft. This shift reflects the recognition that international influence in the 21st century is increasingly determined by economic leverage, technological capacity, and normative leadership rather than military power alone. India's strategic aspiration is not merely to be a balancing power but to emerge as a leading power capable of shaping norms, institutions, and rules within multilateral arrangements.

The conceptualization of India as *Vishwaguru* (global teacher or moral guide) is also central to India's preventive diplomacy and soft power strategies. This cultural-diplomatic narrative emphasizes civilizational ethos, democratic values, non-Western pluralism, and collective advancement. The idea complements the institutional and material dimensions of the *Viksit Bharat* project by presenting India as a legitimate normative actor capable of contributing to global governance beyond narrow geopolitical interests.

Strategic Realignment and the Indo-Pacific

The Indo-Pacific has emerged as the principal geopolitical theatre of the 21st century, replacing the erstwhile Asia-Pacific construct and encompassing a wider strategic continuum from the western Indian Ocean to the western Pacific. This expanded spatial conception reflects the strategic reality that global economic flows, maritime trade, supply chains, and security dynamics are increasingly concentrated along this littoral region. More than 60 percent of global GDP and nearly 50 percent of global maritime trade transit through Indo-Pacific sea lanes, underscoring the region's economic and strategic centrality.

India's Indo-Pacific strategy is driven by three foundational imperatives:

- (1) Maintaining freedom of navigation and maritime security
- (2) Balancing China's assertiveness; and
- (3) Advancing regional connectivity, economic resilience, and institutional cooperation.

China's rapid military modernization, expansion of its naval presence in the Indian Ocean, and the establishment of overseas logistics facilities have heightened regional security anxieties. Beijing's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), including port development projects in Sri Lanka, Pakistan, and Myanmar, has been interpreted by Indian analysts as an encirclement strategy that challenges India's strategic depth in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

In this context, India has strengthened security partnerships with like-minded regional actors including the United States, Japan, Australia, and various Southeast Asian states. These alignments are not formal alliances but represent security coalitions designed to promote a free, open, and rules-based maritime order. India's "Act East" policy serves as the diplomatic pillar of this orientation, enhancing engagement with ASEAN, East Asia, and Pacific Island nations through economic diplomacy, strategic dialogues, and defense cooperation.

India's strategic realignment in the Indo-Pacific also represents a decisive shift from continental to maritime security outlooks. Historically preoccupied with land-based security challenges emanating from Pakistan and China, India is now investing in naval modernization, maritime domain awareness, and defense infrastructure in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands to strengthen its operational reach and deterrence posture in the Eastern Indian Ocean.

The QUAD and Maritime Security Cooperation

The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD), comprising India, the United States, Japan, and Australia, constitutes a central pillar of India's Indo-Pacific strategy. Originally initiated as a consultative arrangement in 2007 and revived in 2017, the QUAD has evolved into a flexible strategic platform addressing maritime security, supply chain resilience, emerging technologies, infrastructure development, and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR).

Unlike traditional military alliances such as NATO, the QUAD does not operate through formal treaty obligations. Instead, it functions as a coalition of democracies that share convergent strategic interests in maintaining a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific order. For India, participation in the QUAD enhances deterrence capabilities without compromising strategic autonomy.

Maritime security cooperation remains a core focus of QUAD engagement. Joint naval exercises such as Malabar have expanded in scale and complexity, enhancing interoperability among the four navies and signalling collective resolve to uphold international maritime law. Intelligence sharing, maritime domain awareness initiatives, and coordinated patrols contribute to India's capacity to monitor and respond to regional contingencies.

Beyond security, the QUAD emphasizes economic and technological cooperation. Initiatives on critical and emerging technologies, semiconductor supply chains, cyber security, vaccine production, and clean energy reflect an integrated approach to comprehensive security. This broader agenda aligns with India's preference for geo-economic statecraft and its aspiration to position itself as a technology-enabled development partner.

India's engagement in the QUAD also serves a balancing function in its relations with China. While New Delhi continues to pursue diplomatic engagement with Beijing, persistent border tensions and unresolved territorial disputes have reinforced India's perception of China as a long-term strategic competitor. Consequently, India's participation in the QUAD represents a hedging strategy aimed at strengthening deterrence while avoiding direct military confrontation.

UNSC Reform and Multilateral Institutions

A central component of India's global leadership aspirations is its long-standing demand for permanent membership in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). The existing UNSC structure reflects the geopolitical realities of 1945 rather than contemporary power distributions. Consequently, its legitimacy and representativeness have been increasingly questioned by emerging powers and large segments of the Global South.

India's claim to permanent membership rests on multiple objective criteria. India is the world's most populous country, the largest democracy, and among the top five global economies in nominal GDP as well as the third largest in purchasing power parity terms. India is also one of the largest contributors of troops to United Nations peacekeeping operations, demonstrating sustained commitment to global peace and security. Additionally, India's civilizational tradition of pluralism, tolerance, and non-violence strengthens its normative credentials as a responsible stakeholder.

India has pursued UNSC reform through coalition-building, most notably within the G4 grouping (Brazil, Germany, India, and Japan). Collectively, these states advocate expansion of both permanent and non-permanent categories of UNSC membership to reflect contemporary geopolitical realities. Although most permanent members have expressed support for India's candidature, China's opposition remains the principal obstacle.

Beyond UNSC reform, India seeks enhanced influence within global economic governance institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, World Trade Organization (WTO), and regional development banks. India argues that voting shares, leadership selection processes, and policy frameworks within these institutions must reflect shifting global economic weights.

Parallel to institutional reform, India also aspires to membership in the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG). Membership would legitimize India's access to advanced nuclear technologies and enable deeper integration into global nuclear commerce. China's linkage of NSG membership to India's non-signatory status to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) remains a major impediment, despite the precedent of India's civil nuclear agreement with the United States.

India's multilateral diplomacy thus reflects a dual strategy: reforming existing institutions while simultaneously strengthening alternative platforms such as the G20, BRICS, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) to expand its influence.

Energy Security and Atmanirbhar Bharat

Energy security constitutes a foundational pillar of India's developmental and strategic ambitions under the *Viksit Bharat* framework. Sustained economic growth, industrial expansion, urbanization, and digitalization require reliable, affordable, and sustainable energy supplies. Consequently, India's quest for *Atmanirbhar Bharat* (self-reliant India) is inseparable from the objective of energy self-sufficiency.

India remains heavily dependent on imported hydrocarbons, rendering its economy vulnerable to price volatility and geopolitical disruptions. The Russia-Ukraine war and instability in the Middle East have underscored the fragility of global energy markets. In response, India has pursued a diversified energy import strategy, expanding procurement from Russia, West Asia, Central Asia, Africa, and the United States. India's willingness to purchase discounted Russian crude despite Western sanctions reflects a pragmatic approach prioritizing national economic interests.

Simultaneously, India is accelerating its transition toward renewable energy. Ambitious targets have been set for solar, wind, green hydrogen, and bioenergy capacity expansion. The International Solar Alliance (ISA), spearheaded by India, exemplifies its leadership in promoting global solar deployment. India's commitment to achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2070 further underscores the strategic integration of sustainability within national development planning.

Domestic energy reforms focus on enhancing energy efficiency, expanding electricity access, modernizing transmission infrastructure, and incentivizing private-sector participation. Nuclear energy also occupies an important place in India's long-term energy mix. Ongoing cooperation with Russia, France, and other partners aims to expand civilian nuclear capacity while strengthening indigenous technological capabilities.

Energy security is thus conceptualized not merely as a supply-side issue but as a comprehensive strategic domain encompassing diversification, sustainability, technological innovation, and geopolitical risk management. Achieving energy self-reliance will significantly strengthen India's bargaining power in global politics and support the material foundations of *Viksit Bharat*.

Neighbourhood First and Regional Diplomacy

Regional stability and cooperative neighbourhood relations constitute a central pillar of India's foreign policy strategy. The "Neighbourhood First" policy seeks to strengthen political, economic, cultural, and security ties with South Asian and immediate regional partners, including Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Afghanistan, and Myanmar. This approach recognizes that India's rise as a global power is inseparable from stability and prosperity in its immediate periphery.

India's neighbourhood diplomacy is informed by deep civilizational linkages rooted in shared histories, cultural exchanges, and religious traditions such as Hinduism and Buddhism. These transnational cultural continuities provide India with enduring soft-power resources that complement formal diplomatic engagement.

In recent years, India has expanded development assistance, infrastructure financing, and connectivity projects across South Asia. Initiatives in hydropower development in Bhutan and Nepal, port modernization in Sri Lanka, and capacity-building in Bangladesh illustrate India's effort to project itself as a reliable development

partner. At the same time, India has enhanced security cooperation through joint military exercises, intelligence sharing, and maritime patrols to counter transnational threats.

China's expanding economic and strategic footprint in South Asia presents a major challenge to India's traditional regional influence. Through infrastructure investments and BRI-linked projects, Beijing has increased leverage across the region. India's response emphasizes competitive development partnerships, transparency, and respect for sovereignty rather than coercive practices.

Beyond South Asia, India's "Act East" policy strengthens engagement with Southeast Asia, East Asia, and the Pacific. This outward-looking regionalism reflects India's aspiration to integrate into East Asian production networks, participate in regional trade architectures, and contribute to Indo-Pacific stability.

Neighbourhood First diplomacy thus serves both defensive and proactive functions: it mitigates regional vulnerabilities while positioning India as the natural anchor of stability in South Asia and the wider Indo-Pacific.

Environmental Sustainability and Climate Governance

Environmental sustainability constitutes an essential dimension of India's developmental vision under *Viksit Bharat*. Rapid economic growth, urbanization, and industrialization must be balanced with ecological protection, biodiversity conservation, and climate resilience. Failure to integrate environmental priorities into development planning would undermine long-term economic stability and social welfare.

India has positioned itself as a constructive actor in global climate governance by advocating equity, differentiated responsibilities, and sustainable development pathways for the Global South. At multilateral forums such as the G20, Conference of Parties (COP), and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), India has emphasized the need for climate finance, technology transfer, and capacity-building support for developing countries.

Domestically, India has launched multiple initiatives to promote clean energy adoption, sustainable mobility, afforestation, waste management, and water conservation. Programs such as Mission LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment) encourage behavioural change toward environmentally responsible consumption patterns. India's leadership in the International Solar Alliance and participation in the First Movers Coalition further demonstrate its commitment to scaling green technologies.

India's long-term climate objectives include achieving net-zero emissions by 2070 and significantly expanding renewable energy capacity. These targets require accelerated investment in clean infrastructure, innovation ecosystems, and regulatory frameworks that incentivize decarbonization across sectors such as power generation, industry, transport, and construction.

Environmental sustainability is thus not peripheral but central to India's emergence as a developed nation. A credible green transition enhances India's international legitimacy, attracts sustainable finance, and positions India as a normative leader in global climate governance.

Conclusion

The vision of *Viksit Bharat* represents a comprehensive national transformation project that integrates domestic development with external strategic engagement. It reflects India's aspiration to transition from a developing country to a developed and influential global actor by 2047 through economic modernization, social inclusion, technological advancement, and strategic autonomy.

This paper has demonstrated that India's pathway toward developed-nation status is inseparable from its evolving foreign policy posture and its engagement with the emerging multipolar order. Domestic capability-building in education, infrastructure, manufacturing, energy, and governance provides the foundation for India's external projection of power and influence. Simultaneously, India's multi-aligned diplomacy, Indo-Pacific engagement, participation in the QUAD, pursuit of UNSC reform, and leadership in climate governance enhance its international standing.

India's rise, however, will not be automatic. Structural inequalities, demographic pressures, environmental constraints, and geopolitical uncertainties pose persistent challenges. The success of *Viksit Bharat* will therefore depend on policy coherence, institutional effectiveness, political stability, and sustained investment in human capital.

If successfully realized, *Viksit Bharat* has the potential to position India as a stabilizing force in international politics, a bridge between the Global North and Global South, and a normative leader advocating equity, multilateralism, and peaceful coexistence. In this sense, India's developmental transformation and its contribution to reshaping the global world order are mutually reinforcing processes.

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