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# THE INDIA WAY IN Foreign policy

Over the last decade, India's foreign policy initiatives have undergone a metamorphosis. India's new global image now projects a more mature, sound and efficient force driving the country's diplomatic initiatives

BY MANISH CHAND



Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi with global leaders at the inaugural session of Raisina Dialogue 2020



**P**urposeful, pragmatic and proactive. Shaper, not an abstainer; stabiliser, rather than a disruptor; a net security provider and a dispenser of global good.

India's foreign policy has found a new vocabulary and framework, as articulated with masterly precision by the country's External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar at the 5th edition of the Raisina Dialogue held in New Delhi in January 2020.

In foreign policy, words matter, and hence this new lexicon of a rising India fittingly encapsulates the current form and trajectory of the country's foreign policy in a world undergoing unprecedented transformation.

Purposeful pursuit of national interests, pragmatic issue-based alignments with

countries, big and small, and proactive diplomatic outreach have come to characterise and configure India's foreign policy and diplomacy in the 21st century.

### **SHAPER & STABILISER**

A new India is emerging in the second decade of the 21st century, which is proactively shaping the international agenda on a wide array of cross-cutting issues, including climate change, sustainable development, counter-terrorism, maritime security and the reconfiguration of global governance architecture.

In a wide-ranging conversation on The India Way at the Raisina Dialogue, Dr Jaishankar illuminated key features of a new foreign policy for a new India. "The India way would be to be more

PM Modi with ministerial delegations from various countries, on the sidelines of the Raisina Dialogue 2020





External Affairs  
Minister of India  
Dr S Jaishankar  
during a  
discussion at the  
Raisina Dialogue  
2020

of a decider or a shaper rather than an abstainer,” he said, while stressing that India has made a difference in the last few years on issues like climate change or connectivity. Most important, he fleshed out the kind of power India will be in the next few years. “It is not the India way to be a disruptionist power internationally, we should be a stabilising power. It’s also not the India way to be self-centred and to be mercantilist. The India way would be a country which brings its capacities to bear on the international system for global good,” he said.

Driven by the ethos of mutual empowerment, India has shared

funds, technology and expertise with countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe. This development cooperation, channelised through Lines of Credit and grants, includes assistance in capacity building, training and enhanced cooperation in education and health. In the spirit of South-South solidarity, India has committed around USD 29 billion in Line of Credit for a host of development projects in 160 countries.

#### **Diplomatic Outreach**

As India’s global stature rises, the Indian government has also embarked on an unprecedented

**In building a New India, the 25-million strong Indian diaspora, spread across different countries and continents, will play an important role**

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diplomatic outreach to mobilise international support for national resurgence. Cutting across hemispheres, the last few years have seen a record number of high-level incoming and outgoing visits at the level of the President, Prime Minister, Vice-President, External Affairs Minister and other ministers. Prime Minister Narendra Modi alone has travelled to over 70 countries in the last six years. In an evolving multipolar world, India has chosen the path of multi-alignment, which entails forging issues-based alignments with like-minded countries and major power centres.

### **Diplomacy for a New India**

What animates this multifarious diplomatic outreach is the mantra of diplomacy for the country's

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development. With the Indian government setting an ambitious target of creating a \$5-trillion economy, the foreign policy is being directed to harness the network of partnerships with all friendly countries to create a 'New India' by 2022, the 75th anniversary of India's independence, as promised by PM Modi. Development-focused diplomacy is seen in the interweaving of flagship schemes of national renewal like 'Make in India', 'Smart Cities', 'Skill India' and 'Stand-up India' with India's diplomatic outreach. Forging robust and sustainable



EAM Dr Jaishankar meets Urmas Reinsalu, minister of foreign affairs of Estonia during the Raisina Dialogue

partnerships in technology, innovation and start-ups will be crucial to creating a New India, and making India count on the global stage.

### Shaping Global Agenda

Looking ahead, with its growing global stature and rising expectations the world has of a resurgent India, PM Modi has advocated reformed multilateralism to create a new world order that reflects the ongoing shift of power and realities of the 21st century. India has also taken the lead in combating climate change by fulfilling its commitments under the Paris Accord and taking a series of initiatives for promoting a low-carbon economy. In a recognition

of New Delhi's leadership role in this area, more countries are joining the International Solar Alliance that seeks to usher in a white revolution for a clean and green world. India has launched a new international initiative called the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure, which is finding greater global support.

### BRAND INDIA

In mapping the way ahead, cultural diplomacy and civilisational values will acquire a greater salience in India's foreign policy. Home to all major religions and diverse cultures, the idea of India as a vibrant pluralistic society has struck a chord making the world more amenable to India's aspirations. This

PM Narendra Modi meets Dr Mohammad Javad Zarif, minister of foreign affairs of Iran, on the sidelines of the 2020 Raisina Dialogue







Prime Minister Modi addresses the United Nations General Assembly during his visit to USA in September 2019

cultural connect is reflected in myriad ways, ranging from the worldwide celebrations of the International Day of Yoga and the recognition of Kumbh Mela as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO.

In building a new India, the 25-million strong Indian diaspora, spread across different countries and continents, will play an important role. As Dr Jaishankar puts it: "The India way would be really Brand India. Brand India in terms of what is unique to us as a power," he said while alluding to the extraordinary Indian diaspora and Indian culture and heritage. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has encapsulated the essence of Brand India. "All our endeavours are centered on 1.3 billion Indians. But the dreams that these efforts are trying to fulfil, are the same dreams that the entire world has, that every country has, and that

“**OVER THE YEARS, THE RAISINA DIALOGUE HAS EMERGED AS A VIBRANT FORUM FOR DISCUSSING IMPORTANT GLOBAL AND STRATEGIC ISSUES. I ALSO HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO MEET LEADERS WHO ARE GREAT FRIENDS OF OUR NATION.**”

**Narendra Modi**  
Prime Minister of India

every society has. The efforts are ours, but their fruits are for all, for the entire world,” said PM Modi in his speech at the United Nations General Assembly in New York.

Going forward, as it scripts its global ascent on its own terms, India will have to relentlessly assert its strategic autonomy as it navigates geopolitical rivalries to make independent decisions that benefit people of the country. This will entail dovetailing diplomacy with development and interweaving foreign policy with an unclouded vision of India as a leading power with a unique voice and narrative in a rapidly transforming world order.



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