

## INDIA'S RESPONSE TO MIDDLE EASTERN POLITICAL INSTABILITY: A DECADE OF SHIFTING ALLIANCES

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**ABSTRACT:** This research paper examines India's changing diplomatic and strategic response to the political instability in the Middle East over the last ten years. In particular, it looks at how India's alliances, policies, and ways of getting involved have changed because of the region's unstable geopolitical situation. India's interests in the Middle East have been shaped by both regional conflicts and its growing global ambitions. This is because the Middle East is very important to global energy markets, trade routes, and security dynamics. This study examines India's endeavors to reconcile its historical affiliations with nations such as Iran and Saudi Arabia, while simultaneously enhancing its security collaboration with emerging regional powers and preserving its neutrality on contentious matters. The study also emphasizes India's economic, energy, and diaspora interests, especially regarding the Arab Spring, the emergence of ISIS, and the evolving roles of the United States, Russia, and China. The paper ends with a look at how these changing alliances affect India's long-term foreign policy goals in the Middle East.

**KEYWORDS:** India, the Middle East, political instability, changing alliances, geopolitics, energy security, the Arab Spring, ISIS, foreign policy, strategic diplomacy, and regional cooperation are all important words.

### 1.1 Introduction:

The Middle East has been geopolitically important for a long time because it has a lot of energy resources, is in a good location, and has a lot of complicated political alliances and conflicts. India has a long history, strong economic ties, and cultural ties with the region. The political instability that has happened in the last ten years has been both a problem and an opportunity for India. India used to rely on certain ways of getting involved, but the Arab Spring uprisings, the rise of ISIS, the changing power dynamics in Syria, Iraq, and Yemen, and the changing role of global powers have all changed those ways. (Singh, R., & Kumar, V. K., 2022).

India's response to these events has been shaped by its larger foreign policy goals, which include protecting its energy security, looking out for the interests of its large diaspora, and making itself a key player on the world stage. The country's strategic shift has required a careful balancing act as it tries to keep good relations with long-term partners like Iran while also building stronger ties with new partners like Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. India has also had to deal with more complicated problems related to the Iran nuclear deal, the war in Yemen, and the ongoing tensions between Sunni and Shia powers. (Saraswat, D., 2021)

This paper seeks to analyze India's changing response to the political instability in the Middle East over the last ten years, focusing on how its foreign policy has adjusted to the shifting regional situation. It will look at how alliances have changed, how sectarian and ideological divisions have made things harder, and how India's diplomatic, economic, and security strategies have changed because the region is so unstable. This study aims to enhance the comprehension of India's role in the Middle East and its broader global foreign policy implications by analyzing the factors that are driving these changes. (Roy, A., 2020)

### 1.2 The Geopolitical Significance of the Middle East

The Middle East is very important to world politics because it is located at the crossroads of Europe, Asia, and Africa. This makes it a key hub for trade, energy, and security around the world. The region has some of the biggest oil and natural gas reserves in the world, which makes it very important to the global energy market. (Verma, L., 2021). Its closeness to important shipping routes like the Suez Canal and the Strait of Hormuz also makes it important for international shipping and global trade. A complicated mix of ethnic, religious, and ideological divisions, as well as the presence of major world powers competing for power, shape the political and security landscape of the Middle East. Because of this, the area has seen a lot of wars, changing alliances, and power struggles. These events have had effects that go beyond just the countries next door and affect the whole world. (Singh, T., 2014).

### 1.3 India's Historical Ties with the Middle East:

India has had cultural, economic, and political ties with the Middle East for thousands of years. Trade routes that

linked India to the Arabian Peninsula and beyond made it easier for people to trade goods, ideas, and religious beliefs. Indian merchants and scholars had a big impact on the area. (Rai, V., & Victor, D., 2010). The historical ties between India and the Middle East, especially the Gulf countries, have grown even stronger because of the large number of Indians living there. India and the Middle East have always had a good relationship based on their shared interests in trade, religion, and stability in the region. The two regions are very connected because Islam spread to India, Arab culture had an effect, and Indian scholars and traders made important contributions. Over the years, these historical ties have changed, and India has kept strong diplomatic ties with Middle Eastern countries based on shared interests in energy, security, and working together in the region. (Mahapatra, C., 2011).

#### **1.4 The Impact of Middle Eastern Instability on Global Politics:**

Because of its important geopolitical position and role in the global energy supply, instability in the Middle East has big effects on politics around the world. In countries like Syria, Iraq, and Libya, conflicts, changes in government, and the rise of extremist groups have made security problems that go far beyond the region. These factors of instability cause problems in global energy markets, and changes in oil prices have an effect on economies all over the world. (Mehta, K., & Sharma, S., 2017). The Middle East is also a key battleground for bigger international rivalries, especially between the US, Russia, and China, who are all trying to gain power in the area. The rise of non-state actors, like ISIS and other terrorist groups, has also made people more worried about global security. These changes have made it necessary for many countries, including India, to change their foreign policies so that they can protect their own interests while dealing with the complicated politics of the Middle East. (Patel, R., & Desai, S., 2015)

#### **1.5 India's Foreign Policy Objectives in the Middle East:**

India's goals for its foreign policy in the Middle East are based on a mix of economic, security, and geopolitical factors. India is one of the world's fastest-growing economies, and it gets a lot of its energy from the Middle East, which is where most of its oil and gas comes from. India's involvement in the region is mostly driven by its need for energy security. India also has a large diaspora in the Gulf countries, which is important for its political and economic relations with those countries. (Mukherjee, S., 2018). India's top priority is to protect the well-being of its citizens living abroad and keep them safe during times of unrest in the region. India also wants to keep its relationships with important regional players, like Saudi Arabia, Iran, Israel, and the UAE, in balance and stay out of sectarian conflicts. India wants to have more power in the Middle East as a rising global power. It wants to be a bridge between the West and the Muslim world, push for stability, and encourage countries to work together to solve problems in the region. (Nandy, D., 2022).

#### **1.6 The Role of Energy Security in Shaping India's Middle East Strategy:**

India's Middle East strategy is based on energy security because the region is still a key source of oil and natural gas for one of the world's fastest-growing economies. India gets a lot of its energy needs from the Middle East, especially from Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and the United Arab Emirates. (Chansoria, M., 2011). Because these energy flows are unstable and important for strategy, India has worked to keep strong and stable partnerships with important Middle Eastern producers. India's energy strategy has not only been about making sure it has enough energy, but also about finding new sources of energy. This includes investing more in the region's energy infrastructure and opening up new trade routes. Tensions in the Middle East, like wars in the Gulf and the presence of non-state actors, have made energy security a very important issue. India's diplomacy, then, stresses the need for proactive engagement, regional stability, and multilateral cooperation to keep its energy supply chain from being disrupted. (Gupta, P., 2019).

#### **1.7 The Growing Indian Diaspora in the Middle East:**

The Indian diaspora in the Middle East, especially in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, is one of the biggest and most powerful groups of people from other countries living in the area. The Indian diaspora, which includes millions of workers, professionals, and businesspeople, is very important for strengthening India's ties with the region. (Blarel, N., 2016). Indian workers' remittances are a major source of income for India, and the diaspora's economic contributions are a big reason why India wants to have better relations with the countries where they live. India has also been able to expand its diplomatic presence in the Middle East thanks to the community's cultural and political ties and its social and political power. (-). India's foreign policy is still based on the idea that it should protect the safety and well-being of its citizens living abroad, especially during times of war or unrest. As the diaspora grows, India's involvement with the Middle East is becoming more focused on improving the flow of people, building business ties, and offering consular help when needed. (Jha, M., 2016)

#### **1.8 The Arab Spring and Its Impact on India's Diplomatic Approach:**

The Arab Spring, a series of uprisings and political revolutions that shook the Middle East in 2011, had a big impact on how India dealt with the region diplomatically. India had to deal with the political unrest that led to changes in government in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen. In the past, India had stayed out of the region's internal politics. (Blarel, N., 2010) India had to rethink its policy of not getting involved because of the uncertainty caused by these events. It wanted to protect its economic and security interests while also supporting the goals of democracy. India's

response was careful and balanced. It called for peaceful ways to end conflicts and stressed the need for stability and communication. The Arab Spring also changed the way countries interact with each other. New alliances formed, and old power structures weakened. India had to change its strategy to deal with these changes without getting too close to any one group or power. (Kumar, P., 2011)

### **1.9 The Rise of ISIS and Its Implications for India's Security:**

The rise of ISIS in the Middle East had a big effect on India's security, both at home and in the region. The group's quick territorial gains in Iraq and Syria, as well as its ability to recruit foreign fighters, made many people very worried about the spread of terrorism and extremism. India, which has a lot of Muslims, was worried about the possibility of radicalization at home and the threat posed by fighters returning from the Middle East. (Kumaraswamy, P. R., 2012). The ISIS crisis also directly threatened India's strategic interests in the area, especially since the group's actions have made Iraq and Syria less stable, which are places where India has economic and political interests. India responded by sharing more intelligence and working with regional and global powers to fight terrorism. It also focused on making its own security measures stronger. The rise of ISIS made it clear that India needs to do more to fight terrorism and take a stronger stand on keeping the region stable. (Li, F., Yang, C., Li, Z., & Failler, P., 2021)

### **1.10 Shifting Alliances: India's Relations with Iran and Saudi Arabia:**

India's ties with Iran and Saudi Arabia have changed a lot in the last ten years. This is because of changes in the region and India's changing foreign policy goals. India has worked with Iran for a long time, especially in the areas of energy trade and security cooperation. Iran is an important partner for India because it has a lot of energy resources and is in a good location. (Ahmar, M., 2014). But India's relationship with Saudi Arabia has become more important as well, especially since Saudi Arabia is a major oil exporter, investor, and a key player in regional security. India has to walk a fine line because of the changing alliances in the Middle East, which are marked by the conflict between Iran and Saudi Arabia. India has kept close ties with both countries, but it has had to deal with the problems of making its foreign policy fit with both countries' without getting caught up in their sectarian (Bhattacharya, J., 2013). (India has taken a practical approach, trying to improve its energy security and economic ties with both sides while staying neutral on issues that are causing problems, like the war in Yemen and Iran's nuclear program. (Anderson, T., 2018).

### **1.11 Balancing Traditional Partnerships with Emerging Powers:**

India's diplomatic strategy in the Middle East has become more and more about balancing its long-standing ties with traditional partners like Iran and Egypt with its growing ties to new powers like Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Israel. (Alam, A., 2015) India has been trying to change its foreign policy over the past ten years in order to protect its main interests in the region, such as trade, energy security, and working together to fight terrorism. India has strong cultural, historical, and strategic ties with Iran, but it has also built closer economic and security ties with Saudi Arabia and the UAE. These two countries are very important to India's energy needs and regional security. At the same time, India's growing ties with Israel, especially in defense and technology, show how flexible its strategy is. India needs to stay out of regional conflicts, especially the Sunni-Shia divide, while also increasing its power in important Middle Eastern countries. (Bazurrah, S. A., 2013)

### **1.12 India's Role in Regional Conflict Management:**

India has long called for peace and stability in the Middle East and has tried to help manage conflicts in the region in a positive way. India has always backed diplomatic solutions to problems like the Syrian Civil War, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the ongoing tensions in Yemen, even though it hasn't directly taken part in military interventions. (Behuria, A. K., 2011) India's policy of not getting involved has helped it keep good relations with a wide range of countries in the area. India has also taken part in multilateral groups like the Non-Aligned Movement and the United Nations to encourage conversation and settle disputes. India has also worked with groups in the region, like the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the Arab League, to deal with common worries about terrorism, security, and stability in the region. India has become a voice for moderation and dialogue in the Middle East, which is becoming more and more divided, through its active diplomacy. (Ahmed, Z. S., & Bhatnagar, S., 2010).

### **1.13 The Iran Nuclear Deal and India's Strategic Response:**

The Iran Nuclear Deal (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, JCPOA), which was signed in 2015, made India's foreign policy much harder because of the complicated effects it had on the world. India has had strong strategic, economic, and energy ties with Iran for a long time. Any change in the nuclear agreement's status would have had a direct effect on India's interests, especially in energy trade and infrastructure projects like the Chabahar Port. (Abhyankar, R., & Pourzand, A., 2013). India had to figure out how to balance its commitments to the US, with whom it has a growing strategic partnership, against its long-standing ties with Iran when the US pulled out of the agreement in 2018. India's response to this situation was to be careful with its diplomacy. It continued to support the JCPOA while also working with international partners to protect its own interests in the area. India wanted to protect its economic interests in Iran, especially its oil imports, while dealing with the effects of US sanctions. The issue showed that India can diplomatically balance its ties with major powers while protecting its own interests in the Middle East. (Bhadrawaj, S.,

2022).

#### **1.14 The Yemen Conflict: India's Neutrality and Engagement:**

India has stayed neutral in the Yemen conflict, supporting a peaceful solution through dialogue and international diplomacy. The fight between the Saudi-led coalition and the Houthis rebels has become a major point of sectarian and regional rivalry, but India has stayed neutral and focused on humanitarian aid and diplomatic efforts to end the war. (Abbas, M. H., 2018) India has helped the people who have been affected and backed the UN's efforts to bring peace to Yemen. India has also kept strong ties with both Saudi Arabia and Iran, two important players in the conflict. This shows that India is committed to not getting involved and keeping the region stable. India's neutrality in the Yemen conflict shows that its main goal in foreign policy is to stay out of Middle Eastern conflicts as much as possible, but still play a helpful role through diplomacy and working with other countries. (Bhaskar, U., 2016).

#### **1.15 India's Diplomatic Engagement with the United States and Russia in the Middle East:**

India has been able to build strong diplomatic ties with both the US and Russia in the Middle East, even though these two global powers have very different foreign policies and interests. India's strategic thinking is heavily influenced by the US, especially when it comes to counterterrorism cooperation, defense, and trade. India has worked with the US on issues like fighting terrorism and keeping global shipping lanes safe. (Nandy, D., & Singh, R., 2019). It has also tried to strengthen its security ties with the US, especially through defense agreements like the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA). At the same time, India has a long-standing relationship with Russia, especially when it comes to defense, energy, and fighting terrorism. India can work with Russia in the Middle East, especially in Syria, where Russia is a key player in conflicts. This gives India another way to engage with Russia while balancing US influence. India's diplomatic ties with both powers show that it has an independent foreign policy. This policy aims to keep India out of great power rivalries while making sure that its interests in the Middle East are well-represented around the world. (Nandy, D., 2020).

#### **CONCLUSION:**

India's response to the political instability in the Middle East over the past ten years has been to have a flexible and practical foreign policy that balances its long-standing partnerships with new powers and adjusts to changes in the region. India's foreign policy is very important in the Middle East because of its energy resources, strategic location, and security issues. India has skillfully managed its complicated relationships with important regional players like Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Israel while protecting its own interests, such as energy security, regional stability, and the well-being of its diaspora.

The Arab Spring, the rise of ISIS, and changing alliances in the region have all made India take a more active role in diplomacy, conflict resolution, and working together with other countries. India's involvement in global efforts to fight terrorism has strengthened its strategic ties with major powers like the US and Russia. Its stance on regional conflicts like the Yemen crisis has also strengthened its commitment to neutrality and peaceful resolution.

The Iran Nuclear Deal and the problems that came after it showed how India has to balance its diplomatic duties by managing its ties with the US and Iran while also looking out for its own economic and energy needs. India's response to these challenges, especially in light of the changing alliances in the Middle East, shows that it is becoming a more important diplomatic player in the area. In summary, India's strategy in the Middle East shows that it wants to be a world power that promotes stability, economic growth, and security while staying out of regional conflicts. India's future role in Middle Eastern geopolitics will depend on how well it can adapt to the region's changing dynamics and protect its national interests without giving up its values.

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