



## India's Growing Influence in International Institutions and Forums

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### **Abstract:**

India has steadily emerged as an influential voice in global affairs, shaped by its large population, democratic values, and balanced foreign policy. As the world's most populous country and a leading democracy, India plays a unique role in connecting developed and developing nations. Its legacy of leadership can be traced back to the Non-Aligned Movement, where it stood for independence, peace, and the interests of newly formed nations during the Cold War. In recent years, India's growing economic strength and active engagement in global platforms like the G20, BRICS, and Quadrilateral Security Dialogue have enhanced its global stature. Its G20 Presidency in 2023 was particularly significant, as it successfully advocated for the inclusion of the African Union, reflecting its commitment to amplifying the voice of the Global South. India has also contributed meaningfully to global challenges such as climate change, digital innovation, and peacekeeping. What makes India's approach distinctive is its strategic autonomy—engaging with major powers while maintaining its independent stance. This allows India to act as a bridge-builder and consensus-maker in an increasingly multipolar world. Overall, India's rising influence reflects not only its capabilities but also its commitment to inclusive, cooperative, and sustainable global development.

**Keywords:** India, Global Governance, G20, Strategic Autonomy, Multilateralism

### **Background of the Study**

In the contemporary global order, the nature of international relations is undergoing significant transformation, marked by the gradual shift from a unipolar to a multipolar world. In this changing scenario, emerging economies are playing a more assertive role in shaping global governance structures and decision-making processes. Among these nations, India has gained considerable prominence due to its demographic strength, economic growth, democratic framework, and strategic geopolitical location. Its foreign policy, rooted in the principles of strategic autonomy and peaceful coexistence, has enabled it to maintain balanced relations with major global powers while advocating for the interests of developing nations.

Historically, India's global engagement was rooted in its leadership in the Non-Aligned Movement, where it advocated sovereignty, peace, and cooperation among newly independent nations (Dubey, 1993). In recent decades, India has strengthened its presence in international institutions such as the United Nations, G20, and BRICS, contributing to discussions on economic governance, security, and sustainable development. Scholars like Narlikar (2017) argue that India's role in global governance is evolving from norm-taker to norm-shaper, reflecting its growing confidence and capabilities. Similarly, Stephen (2012) highlights how India, along with other rising powers, is redefining the functioning of international institutions through its foreign policy orientation and regional influence.

In recent years, India's proactive diplomacy, economic resilience, and initiatives such as climate partnerships and digital public goods have further strengthened its global position. However, challenges such as geopolitical tensions, institutional limitations, and the need for reforms in global governance structures remain critical areas of concern.

This study adopts a descriptive methodology based on secondary data, including reports, policy documents, and a review of previous studies. It aims to analyze India's evolving role and growing influence in international institutions and forums in a systematic and comprehensive manner.

### **Objectives of the Study:**

1. To examine the growing role and influence of India in international institutions and global forums.
2. To analyze the challenges and opportunities associated with India's growing engagement in International Institutions and Global Forums.

### **India's Growing Role and Influence in International Institutions and Global Forums**

In recent decades, India has emerged as a significant player in international institutions and global forums, reflecting its

growing economic strength, political stability, and strategic vision. As one of the world's largest democracies and fastest-growing major economies, India's voice carries increasing weight in shaping global policies and agendas. Its approach is not merely about participation but about influencing outcomes, representing the concerns of the Global South, and contributing to a more balanced and inclusive world order.

Historically, India's engagement with global institutions began with its leadership in the Non-Aligned Movement, where it played a crucial role in advocating for sovereignty, peace, and cooperation among newly independent nations (Dubey, 1993). This early commitment to independent foreign policy laid the foundation for India's present-day strategy of "strategic autonomy." Unlike many countries that align strictly with major power blocs, India maintains flexible partnerships, allowing it to engage with diverse global actors without compromising its national interests.

In the contemporary period, India's influence is clearly visible in major international platforms such as the United Nations, G20, BRICS, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. Within the United Nations, India has consistently advocated for reforms, particularly in the Security Council, arguing for greater representation of developing countries. Its long-standing demand for a permanent seat reflects not only its aspirations but also its growing contributions to global peacekeeping and development initiatives.

India's role in the G20 has been especially noteworthy. During its presidency in 2023, India successfully highlighted issues such as inclusive growth, digital transformation, climate action, and debt relief for developing nations. One of its most significant achievements was securing permanent membership for the African Union, thereby strengthening the voice of the Global South in global economic governance. This move demonstrated India's commitment to inclusivity and its ability to build consensus among diverse nations.

Scholars have increasingly recognized India's transition from a passive participant to an active agenda-setter in global governance. According to Narlikar (2017), India is gradually evolving from a "rule-taker" to a "rule-maker," shaping norms and influencing institutional reforms. Similarly, Stephen (2012) highlights that rising powers like India are redefining international institutions by introducing new perspectives and priorities, particularly those reflecting the needs of developing economies.

India's engagement in BRICS has also enhanced its global standing. As a member of this grouping of emerging economies, India has contributed to initiatives aimed at reforming global financial institutions and promoting South-South cooperation. Chaturvedi and Saha (2019) emphasize that BRICS has provided India with a platform to advocate for alternative development models and strengthen economic collaboration among member countries. Through institutions like the New Development Bank, India is actively involved in financing infrastructure and sustainable development projects.

In addition to economic and political forums, India has played a crucial role in addressing global challenges such as climate change and sustainable development. Its leadership in initiatives like the International Solar Alliance demonstrates its commitment to promoting renewable energy and environmental sustainability. Michaelowa and Michaelowa (2012) note that India has effectively balanced its developmental priorities with its global responsibilities, particularly in international climate negotiations. This balanced approach enhances India's credibility as a responsible global actor.

Another important dimension of India's growing influence is its contribution to digital governance and technological innovation. By promoting digital public goods such as Aadhaar, UPI, and other digital platforms, India has offered scalable and inclusive solutions that can be adapted by other developing countries. These initiatives not only strengthen domestic governance but also position India as a leader in digital transformation at the global level.

India's strategic engagement with multiple global forums also reflects its ability to act as a bridge between developed and developing nations. It maintains strong relations with Western countries while simultaneously deepening ties with countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. This unique positioning allows India to mediate, negotiate, and build consensus on complex global issues such as trade, security, and climate change. Its participation in groupings like the Quad further highlights its role in regional security and cooperation, particularly in the Indo-Pacific region.

Despite its growing influence, India faces several challenges in maximizing its role in international institutions. Issues such as geopolitical tensions, competition with other rising powers, and structural limitations within global institutions can constrain its effectiveness. Moreover, the need to balance domestic development priorities with global responsibilities remains an ongoing challenge. However, India's consistent efforts to engage constructively with global institutions indicate its long-term commitment to shaping a more equitable and inclusive international order.

### **Challenges and Opportunities associated with India's growing engagement in International Institutions and Global Forums**

India's growing engagement in international institutions and global forums such as the G20, BRICS, Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, and the United Nations has opened up significant opportunities for the country to shape global governance in a more inclusive and balanced manner. One of the most notable moments in this journey was India's G20 Presidency in 2023, which successfully navigated deep geopolitical divisions and achieved consensus on the New

Delhi Leaders' Declaration. The inclusion of the African Union as a permanent member marked a historic step in expanding representation for developing countries and reinforced India's role as a strong advocate of the Global South (G20, 2023; European Parliament Research Service, 2023). These platforms provide India with the ability to promote its developmental priorities, including accelerating Sustainable Development Goals, enhancing climate action, and sharing its successful digital public infrastructure as a model for other developing nations. India's engagement also strengthens its position as a consensus-builder, capable of bridging divides between developed and developing countries while advancing the principles of inclusive multilateralism.

At the same time, India's participation in multiple forums offers strategic flexibility and diplomatic leverage. Through BRICS and SCO, India maintains engagement with countries like Russia and China, promoting economic cooperation and alternative development finance mechanisms, while its involvement in the Quad enhances its role in addressing security concerns in the Indo-Pacific region. This multi-alignment strategy allows India to interact with diverse power centers without being tied to any single bloc, thereby preserving its strategic autonomy (Stimson Center, 2022). Such positioning enables India to influence global discussions on trade, technology transfer, climate finance, and sustainable development. Moreover, its ability to present itself as both a developing nation and a rising power enhances its credibility in representing the interests of the Global South. These opportunities are further strengthened by India's growing economic capacity and its increasing contribution to global public goods, which position it as an important actor in shaping the emerging multipolar world order.

However, these expanding opportunities are accompanied by complex challenges that require careful navigation. Geopolitical tensions, particularly with China, complicate cooperation within BRICS and SCO, where divergent national interests often limit effective collaboration. Similarly, achieving consensus in forums like the G20 becomes increasingly difficult in the context of great-power rivalry, as reflected in the need for carefully negotiated language on contentious issues. India also faces the delicate task of balancing its closer ties with Western countries, particularly through the Quad, while maintaining its credibility as a leader of the Global South, which sometimes remains skeptical of Western-led initiatives (Chatham House, 2025). In addition, domestic constraints such as development priorities, resource limitations, and the digital divide pose challenges to sustaining its global ambitions. The expansion of groupings like BRICS may further dilute cohesion and reduce collective effectiveness due to differing interests among member states. Therefore, while India's engagement in global institutions presents immense opportunities, it simultaneously demands pragmatic diplomacy, internal capacity-building, and a nuanced approach to managing competing expectations in an increasingly complex international environment.

## **Conclusion**

India stands at a crucial juncture in its global journey, where its growing influence in international institutions offers both responsibility and opportunity. To effectively harness this position, India must continue to strengthen its role as a bridge between the Global North and South by promoting inclusive and equitable multilateralism. It should actively pursue long-pending reforms in global institutions, particularly within the United Nations system, to ensure fair representation of developing nations. At the same time, India needs to deepen its economic and technological capabilities to enhance its credibility as a global leader. Investing in digital infrastructure, innovation, and sustainable development will not only strengthen its domestic base but also allow it to offer scalable solutions to other countries. Maintaining strategic autonomy while carefully balancing relations across forums such as the G20, BRICS, and the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue will remain essential for navigating geopolitical complexities. India should focus on building stronger partnerships with developing countries, especially in Africa and Asia, to reinforce its leadership of the Global South. By combining diplomatic agility with domestic capacity-building, India can translate its global presence into meaningful outcomes. Ultimately, a pragmatic, inclusive, and forward-looking approach will enable India to play a defining role in shaping a balanced and multipolar world order.

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