

**Our diplomatic discourse remains trapped in a framework that emerged when India was weak and vulnerable 75 years ago. The fears of a 'developing nation' can't be the guiding principles for the diplomacy of a 'developed nation'.**

The new ambition outlined by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to make India a developed country, “Viksit Bharat”, by 2047 will demand significant changes in Indian foreign policy tradition. Some of those changes, already set in motion in recent years, must now acquire greater purpose and speed. But can India’s foreign policy community get out of its old mindset?

Our diplomatic discourse remains trapped in a framework that emerged when India was weak and vulnerable 75 years ago. The fears of a “developing nation” can’t be the guiding principles for the diplomacy of a “developed nation”. Your global perspectives must necessarily change when you move from the bottom of the scrum and to the top of the heap. While the geographic imperatives of a nation endure over time, the changing nature of the Indian economy, evolution of external conditions, emergence of new regional challenges, and shifts in the global power hierarchy all demand new foreign policy strategies.

While India is well on its way to becoming the third-largest economy in the next few years, that does not necessarily make it a developed nation. Many of the tasks of becoming a developed nation are indeed domestic — promoting social justice, internal unity, economic modernisation, resilient political institutions, and deep bases of science and technology.

Three major foreign policy tasks present themselves in the hopeful journey to a Viksit Bharat. The first is the need to overcome the residual legacies of Partition that continue to undermine Delhi’s geopolitical position. Resolving the problems left over by Partition on India’s northwestern frontier looks quite hard despite the efforts by successive PMs in the last three decades.

Deterring the dangers from across the Western frontier must remain a major priority until Pakistan is ready for a productive relationship with India. Meanwhile, Delhi must continue to build on the recent good work in overcoming the bitter legacies of Partition in the east – including the settlement of the boundary dispute with Bangladesh. If Partition weakened India, Delhi struggled to retain the regional primacy it had inherited from the British Raj in the Subcontinent and the Indian Ocean.

The reclaiming of a prominent role for India in the region can't be by fiat, but by making cooperation with Delhi more attractive to the neighbouring elites in the Subcontinent and beyond.

The initiatives of the last few years on intensifying connectivity, trade ties, and security partnerships with the neighbours will need a sustained push in the coming years. India also needs to double down on strengthening regional and trans-regional institutions. As the world's third-largest economy that wants to be a developed state, India must look beyond the immediate neighbourhood to more effectively engage with Africa, Latin America and Oceania where Delhi's footprint remains light, despite some recent initiatives.

The second is about coping with the growing power gap with China. Beijing has been the greatest beneficiary of India's Partition. China unified itself after an extended civil war in 1949 just after India chose to be divided in 1947. Beijing has leveraged the divisions within the Subcontinent to constrain India. Delhi's ability to raise its level of engagement in the extended neighbourhood and beyond also runs into substantive Chinese presence.

India has compounded that problem over the decades by persistent romanticism about China and overestimating the potential for collaboration with Beijing — whether it was Nehru's notion of an "area of peace" in Asia or the pursuit of a "multipolar world" since the 1990s in partnership with Beijing. The first came crashing down in 1962 and the second now confronts the nightmare of a "unipolar Asia" dominated by an assertive China. To make matters worse, the Chinese military can choose its time and place today to raise the military temperature on the disputed Sino-Indian border as it has done in 2013, 2014, 2017, and 2020.

All the policies outlined by the Modi government to address the China challenge — securing our frontiers, retaining India's regional position, strengthening India's manufacturing sector, improving domestic technological capabilities, and producing more weapons at home — lead us to the third task.

It is about building stronger partnerships with other major powers. But collaboration with other great powers has been hobbled by old ideas of "non-alignment" and "strategic autonomy". All countries practice strategic autonomy to the extent they can; it is not a special characteristic of Indian diplomacy. India's problem as it becomes the third-largest economy is not about seeking autonomy from other powers, but joining them in shaping a stable balance of power system in the world.

This might involve both competing and collaborating with other major powers – sometimes doing both at the same time. Building partnerships is not ceding ground to other powers, but negotiating mutually beneficial terms in dealing with complex problems. While much of the domestic debate on India's Ukraine policy has been rooted in the familiar framework of "external pressures", Pakistan's former Prime Minister Imran Khan, the other night in Lahore, has praised Delhi's successful pursuit of its own interests. If India can do this with a \$3-trillion economy, its ability to engage the other powers can only improve along with the growth of its comprehensive national power.

Becoming the third largest economy and a developed society can't just be about geopolitics and balance of power. It is also about global leadership in managing the enormous consequences of the unfolding technological revolution, stabilising the economic order, and addressing the challenges of climate change and pandemics.

India's innocent internationalism after Independence soon ran headlong into harsh realities in the high Himalayas. The uncritical acceptance of globalisation in the early 21st century has created economic problems of its own. On its way to 2047, Delhi will have to temper its soaring universalism with geopolitical sensitivity and combine the pursuit of multilateralism — at the UN, G-20, and WTO — with coalitions of like-minded nations. Getting power and principle to reinforce each other will help herald India's arrival as a developed nation and a major power.

### Expected Question (Prelims Exams)

**Q. Consider the following statements-**

1. A high level national committee of 259 members has also been constituted for programs on the occasion of 75 years of India's independence.
2. A website called 'Atmanirbhar Incubator' has also been inaugurated for Amrit Mahotsav.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- (a) 2 only
- (b) 1 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

**Ans. (b)**

### Expected Question (Mains Exams)

**Q . Recently Prime Minister Narendra Modi has outlined the ambition to make India a developed country by 2047. What important changes does India need to make in its foreign policy to become a "developed India"? Discuss. (250 Words)**

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**Note: - The question of the main examination given for practice is designed keeping in mind the upcoming UPSC main examination. Therefore, to get an answer to this question, you can take the help of this source as well as other sources related to this topic.**