

## India's Role in Global Governance

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### Abstract

India's role in global governance has evolved significantly since independence, moving from a cautious post-colonial state to an emerging power with increasing global responsibilities. This paper examines India's engagement in multilateral institutions such as the United Nations (UN), G20, BRICS, and IBSA, its contributions to global norm-setting in climate change, trade, and peacekeeping, and the strategic frameworks guiding its foreign policy. India faces challenges including institutional underrepresentation, resource constraints, and geopolitical tensions, but its democratic legitimacy, coalition-building capacity, and soft power enhance its influence. Using the lens of middle-power diplomacy and normative internationalism, this paper argues that India is increasingly a stakeholder and shareholder in global governance, with potential to shape a more inclusive and equitable international order (Narlikar, 2017, p. 95; Pant, 2022, p. 12).

**Keywords-** *India, Global Governance, Multilateralism, United Nations (UN), G20, BRICS, IBSA, Middle-Power Diplomacy, Peacekeeping, Climate Change Governance, Trade Negotiations, Strategic Autonomy, Soft Power, South-South Cooperation, Institutional Reform*

### Introduction

Global governance encompasses the formal and informal institutions, norms, and processes that regulate international cooperation on issues ranging from security, trade, development, to environmental sustainability (Bhattacharyya & König, 2016, p. 3). In the contemporary multipolar world, emerging powers are redefining global governance, and India, with its growing economic, political, and normative influence, plays a pivotal role (Pant, 2022, p. 15). Since independence in 1947, India has gradually shifted from a non-aligned stance to a proactive engagement in global affairs. Its foreign policy combines principles of strategic autonomy, normative diplomacy, and developmental partnerships (Narlikar, 2017, p. 98). This paper explores India's role in global governance through historical evolution, participation in key multilateral institutions, strategic frameworks, challenges, and future policy pathways.

## 2. Historical Evolution of India's Role in Global Governance

India's engagement in global governance has evolved through multiple historical phases, reflecting the interplay of domestic priorities, regional realities, and the shifting contours of international politics. From its early post-independence non-alignment to its contemporary assertive diplomacy, India's global role demonstrates a gradual yet significant trajectory toward greater influence and responsibility in international affairs.

### 2.1 Post-Independence and Non-Alignment

At the moment of independence in 1947, India emerged as a newly sovereign nation in a world dominated by the bipolar conflict of the Cold War. The leadership of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru recognized the importance of maintaining strategic autonomy, ensuring that India would not become a satellite of either the United States or the Soviet Union (Bhattacharyya & König, 2016, p. 25). The policy of non-alignment was

not merely a strategic calculation but also a normative statement reflecting India's commitment to sovereign decision-making, decolonization, and the promotion of global justice (Anant, 2022, p. 10). India's early foreign policy emphasized moral authority and normative legitimacy, seeking to bridge ideological divides in an increasingly polarized world. Nehru's vision of India as a morally responsible power extended to multilateral institutions such as the United Nations, where India contributed diplomatically and operationally despite limited material resources (Pant, 2022, p. 16). India actively participated in debates over peace, security, and development, often championing the causes of newly decolonized countries and advocating for self-determination and national sovereignty. The adoption of non-alignment allowed India to pursue an independent foreign policy while participating selectively in multilateral institutions. For example, India became a significant contributor to UN deliberations on disarmament, peacekeeping, and economic development, highlighting its commitment to global norms despite economic and military limitations (Bhattacharyya & König, 2016, p. 27). Moreover, India's approach during this period was shaped by its domestic challenges, including nation-building, poverty reduction, and industrial development, which required balancing international engagement with internal priorities.

India's role in global governance during the post-independence era was also influenced by its emphasis on soft power. Through moral persuasion, advocacy for decolonization, and leadership in the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), India sought to shape international norms in favour of developing countries. NAM, founded in 1961, became a platform through which India could exercise leadership and articulate an alternative vision of global governance—one that emphasized equity, sovereignty, and the protection of newly independent states (Anant, 2022, p. 12). Importantly, India's engagement was not limited to political advocacy. It participated in early UN peacekeeping operations, contributing personnel and logistical support in conflict zones such as the Congo in the 1960s. These contributions, though constrained by limited military capability, established India's long-term reputation as a responsible participant in multilateral peace efforts (Pant, 2022, p. 18). Thus, the post-independence period laid the foundational principles for India's approach to global governance: strategic autonomy, normative leadership, and selective engagement in multilateral forums. This phase highlighted the tension between India's domestic developmental needs and its aspirations for global influence—a tension that has persisted in subsequent decades.

## 2.2 Economic Liberalization and Multilateral Engagement

The second significant phase in India's global governance trajectory was marked by economic liberalization in 1991, which transformed India's capacity to influence international institutions and global norms. Prior to liberalization, India's economic constraints limited its ability to participate substantively in trade negotiations or development financing mechanisms. However, the reforms of 1991—reducing trade barriers, deregulating industries, and encouraging foreign investment—enabled India to emerge as a significant actor in global economic governance (Pant, 2022, p. 18). Economic liberalization allowed India to transition from a reactive to a proactive participant in global forums such as the WTO, G20, and multilateral development banks. India's engagement in WTO negotiations reflected its commitment to balancing domestic developmental objectives with global trade obligations (Bhattacharyya & König, 2016, p. 30). India advocated for fairer trade rules, protection of infant industries, and special provisions for developing countries, positioning itself as a voice for the Global South (Narlikar, 2017, p. 101). This period also saw India assume a greater role in multilateral development finance, contributing to and influencing policy in institutions such as the World Bank and Asian Development Bank. By advocating for projects that prioritized poverty reduction, infrastructure development, and human capital formation in developing countries, India began to shape normative agendas beyond its borders (Pant, 2022, p. 20). India's increased economic capacity enabled it to pursue issue-based leadership

in areas such as climate change, technology, and public health. For instance, India participated in UN conferences on environmental sustainability and human development, emphasizing the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities—arguing that developing countries should not be unduly burdened with mitigation commitments (Narlikar, 2017, p. 102).

Moreover, the post-liberalization era witnessed India strengthening its diplomatic networks, particularly with other emerging economies. India became an active member of the BRICS coalition and IBSA Forum, using these platforms to promote South-South cooperation, advocate for financial reform, and address global inequality (Pant, 2022, p. 22). These coalitions allowed India to enhance its normative influence in global governance, positioning it as a bridge between the Global North and South. Another hallmark of this phase was India's integration of domestic policy with global norms. The liberalization era encouraged India to adopt international best practices in governance, economic regulation, and environmental policy. By aligning its domestic developmental objectives with international expectations, India enhanced its credibility and influence in multilateral forums (Bhattacharyya & König, 2016, p. 33).

In essence, economic liberalization transformed India from a constrained participant in global governance to an actor with the capacity to influence agendas, shape rules, and advocate for the interests of developing nations. This phase established the structural and economic foundations for India's contemporary assertiveness in international affairs.

### **2.3 Contemporary Turn: Assertiveness and Reformism**

The third phase in India's historical evolution is characterized by assertiveness and reformist ambition, particularly since the early 2000s. Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, India has demonstrated a proactive approach to global governance, emphasizing its role as a normative and operational leader (Narlikar, 2017, p. 105). India has expanded its presence in multilateral institutions such as the UN, G20, BRICS, and WTO, signalling readiness to shape global norms and institutional reform. India's 2023 G20 presidency, for example, highlighted its leadership in promoting inclusive economic recovery, sustainable development, and equitable global governance (Singh, 2024, p. 5). India used its presidency to amplify the concerns of developing countries, emphasizing debt relief, financial stability, and climate adaptation initiatives. In the UN, India continues to advocate for Security Council reform, emphasizing the underrepresentation of developing nations. By positioning itself as a responsible contributor to peacekeeping and peacebuilding, India has sought to demonstrate its readiness to assume greater responsibilities in global decision-making (Anant, 2022, p. 15).

India has also leveraged its democratic identity and soft power in global governance. Its democratic credentials, combined with developmental experience and technological innovation, enable it to act as a credible bridge between the Global North and South (Pant, 2022, p. 22). India's initiatives in digital governance, renewable energy, and public health diplomacy have contributed to norm-setting in emerging areas such as digital public goods, AI ethics, and climate justice (Vajpayee, 2024, p. 11). Furthermore, India's approach reflects a dual strategy: advancing national interests while promoting a normative vision of inclusive, multipolar governance. By engaging in issue-based coalitions, advocating for South-South cooperation, and participating in global negotiations, India demonstrates its capacity to balance pragmatism with idealism (Niranjan, 2025, p. 12). This contemporary phase also underscores India's ability to adapt to evolving global challenges, including geopolitical competition, economic uncertainty, and climate change. India's assertive diplomacy is complemented by strategic autonomy, allowing it to navigate complex global power structures without compromising national sovereignty (Vajpayee, 2024, p. 13).

In conclusion, the historical evolution of India's role in global governance reflects a trajectory from cautious non-alignment to economic engagement and assertive global leadership. Each phase—post-independence non-alignment, post-liberalization multilateral engagement, and contemporary assertiveness—demonstrates India's growing capacity to influence international institutions, shape normative agendas, and bridge global divides. India's journey underscores the interplay of domestic priorities, economic capabilities, and normative ambition in defining its global role (Pant, 2022, p. 24).

### **3.Strategic Frameworks Guiding India's Global Governance Role**

India's approach to global governance is underpinned by several strategic frameworks that reflect its unique position as a rising power, a democracy, and a country with significant developmental responsibilities. These frameworks—middle-power diplomacy, democratic legitimacy combined with soft power, and strategic autonomy—have enabled India to navigate complex international landscapes, enhance its normative influence, and pursue its interests without compromising sovereignty. This section examines these three frameworks in detail, exploring how they have evolved and how India operationalizes them in global governance.

#### **3.1 Middle-Power Diplomacy**

India is frequently described as a middle power, a state that is not a superpower but possesses sufficient influence to shape international outcomes through strategic engagement, coalition-building, and active participation in multilateral forums (Niranjan, 2025, p. 10). Middle-power diplomacy emphasizes coalition formation, normative influence, and leadership in specialized issue areas. For India, this approach has been critical in amplifying its voice in global governance despite the presence of more powerful states such as the United States, China, and the European Union (Pant, 2022, p. 35). Historically, India's middle-power status emerged during the post-liberalization era when economic reforms provided the country with the resources and credibility to engage substantively in global institutions such as the WTO, G20, BRICS, and the UN (Bhattacharyya & König, 2016, p. 30). By focusing on issue-based coalitions and normative leadership, India can leverage collective influence without confronting dominant powers directly. For example, through BRICS, India has promoted financial inclusion, development financing, and equitable trade rules, thereby advancing the interests of developing nations while projecting leadership (Niranjan, 2025, p. 11). Middle-power diplomacy also allows India to navigate complex geopolitical rivalries. By maintaining strong bilateral relations with both the U.S. and China while simultaneously leading coalitions of emerging economies, India avoids over-dependence on any single global power. This approach has been particularly visible in the Indo-Pacific region, where India balances strategic cooperation with the U.S.-led Quad alongside diplomatic engagement with China and ASEAN countries (Pant, 2022, p. 37).

Moreover, India's middle-power diplomacy extends to norm-setting in international governance. India has emerged as a normative leader in areas such as climate equity, sustainable development, and peacekeeping norms. For instance, in UN climate negotiations, India advocates differentiated responsibilities for developing nations, arguing that historically industrialized countries must shoulder a greater burden of mitigation (Narlikar, 2017, p. 108). Similarly, in UN peacekeeping, India emphasizes local ownership and capacity-building in post-conflict regions, demonstrating normative leadership while strengthening its international credibility (Anant, 2022, p. 16). Another aspect of India's middle-power diplomacy is its active engagement in regional organizations, such as the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and BIMSTEC. Through these platforms, India has promoted regional stability, infrastructure development, and economic cooperation, reinforcing its position as a responsible regional actor (Pant, 2022, p. 39). By

combining regional initiatives with global coalitions, India creates a multi-level strategy to influence governance outcomes.

Middle-power diplomacy also aligns with India's long-term vision of becoming a permanent member of the UN Security Council. India leverages its coalition-building capabilities, multilateral engagement, and normative leadership to make the case for greater representation of developing countries in global decision-making processes (Pant, 2022, p. 40). In essence, middle-power diplomacy provides India with a framework to pursue both strategic and normative objectives simultaneously, maximizing influence while minimizing risks.

### 3.2 Democratic Legitimacy and Soft Power

India's status as the world's largest democracy confers significant advantages in global governance. Democratic legitimacy enhances India's credibility in international forums, enabling it to project a moral and normative image distinct from authoritarian powers (Vajpayee, 2024, p. 7). India's democratic values resonate with the principles of transparency, accountability, and human rights, which are increasingly emphasized in global governance discourses. Soft power, as conceptualized by Joseph Nye, refers to the ability of a state to influence others through attraction rather than coercion. India has cultivated multiple sources of soft power, including cultural diplomacy, diaspora engagement, educational initiatives, and technical assistance (Pant, 2022, p. 34). For example, India's cultural diplomacy promotes its rich heritage, literature, cinema, and yoga traditions, creating a positive international image that facilitates cooperation and dialogue in multilateral negotiations (Vajpayee, 2024, p. 8).

The Indian diaspora, numbering over 30 million worldwide, also serves as a critical instrument of soft power. Diaspora communities contribute to economic investment, knowledge transfer, and cultural influence, further enhancing India's standing in global governance (Pant, 2022, p. 34). India's engagement with its diaspora, through initiatives such as Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, strengthens transnational linkages and amplifies its voice on global issues. India also leverages educational diplomacy to shape norms and capacity in global governance. Indian scholarships, technical training programs, and partnerships with universities in developing countries contribute to human resource development, enabling India to influence governance outcomes indirectly (Vajpayee, 2024, p. 9). Programs such as the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) initiative have enhanced India's normative influence by fostering expertise in governance, administration, and technology across the Global South. In addition, India's development cooperation serves as a soft power tool. Through lines of credit, technical assistance, and infrastructure support, India reinforces its image as a responsible global partner (Pant, 2022, p. 36). This assistance is particularly visible in Africa and South Asia, where India has invested in renewable energy, education, and healthcare, thereby shaping developmental norms and strengthening partnerships. Soft power is further complemented by India's moral leadership in global norms. India's democratic credentials allow it to articulate positions on human rights, climate justice, and equitable development with legitimacy. In forums such as the UN General Assembly and G20, India uses its soft power to influence consensus-building, creating coalitions that reflect democratic and developmental values (Narlikar, 2017, p. 110).

Through a combination of democratic legitimacy and soft power, India has established itself as a credible and attractive partner in global governance, capable of shaping norms, building coalitions, and enhancing its influence without resorting to coercion or hard power.

### 3.3 Strategic Autonomy

Strategic autonomy is a cornerstone of India's approach to global governance. It refers to the ability of a state to pursue its national interests independently, without undue dependence on any single major power or bloc (Vajpayee, 2024, p. 9). For India, strategic autonomy allows flexibility in foreign policy, enabling it to respond dynamically to evolving global challenges while maintaining sovereignty and operational independence (Pant, 2022, p. 37). India's commitment to strategic autonomy is rooted in historical experience. During the Cold War, non-alignment reflected India's desire to avoid entanglement in superpower conflicts. In the contemporary era, strategic autonomy is applied in a multipolar context, where India balances engagement with major powers, regional neighbours, and global coalitions to maximize leverage (Bhattacharyya & König, 2016, p. 28). Strategic autonomy enables India to adopt a pragmatic and issue-based approach to global governance. For instance, in the Indo-Pacific, India engages with the Quad, ASEAN, and other regional frameworks to ensure maritime security and economic cooperation, while simultaneously maintaining diplomatic channels with China (Pant, 2022, p. 38). This flexibility prevents over-dependence on a single power, ensuring that India retains decision-making freedom in strategic and economic arenas.

In global economic governance, strategic autonomy is evident in India's approach to trade and finance. India negotiates trade agreements and participates in WTO discussions while safeguarding domestic economic priorities and developmental objectives (Narlikar, 2017, p. 112). By pursuing a balance between global integration and domestic protection, India exemplifies a nuanced model of independent engagement. Strategic autonomy also shapes India's defence and security policies. India maintains diversified defence partnerships with countries such as the United States, France, Russia, and Israel, ensuring access to advanced technologies and strategic options without becoming overly reliant on a single supplier (Pant, 2022, p. 39). This autonomy enhances India's ability to act independently in international security forums and peacekeeping missions. Moreover, strategic autonomy reinforces India's normative leadership. By retaining the freedom to adopt positions based on principles rather than coercive pressures, India can advocate for equity, multipolarity and inclusive governance (Vajpayee, 2024, p. 10). This independence is particularly important in climate negotiations, where India argues for differentiated responsibilities and fair burden-sharing between developed and developing nations.

In summary, strategic autonomy provides India with flexibility, independence, and normative leverage, enabling it to navigate complex international systems while pursuing national interests. Combined with middle-power diplomacy and soft power, it forms a comprehensive strategic framework that guides India's engagement in global governance.

### 3.4 Synthesis: Integrated Strategic Frameworks

The three strategic frameworks—middle-power diplomacy, democratic legitimacy and soft power, and strategic autonomy—are interlinked and mutually reinforcing. Middle-power diplomacy amplifies India's voice in coalitions and multilateral forums, while democratic legitimacy and soft power enhance its credibility and attractiveness. Strategic autonomy ensures that India's engagement remains principled and independent, allowing it to pursue long-term objectives while responding flexibly to global dynamics. Together, these frameworks have allowed India to transition from a cautious participant to an assertive global actor, shaping norms, building coalitions, and influencing decision-making across political, economic, and environmental domains. Whether in peacekeeping, climate governance, trade negotiations, or digital norms, India's strategic frameworks provide both operational tools and normative guidance, reflecting a holistic approach to global governance (Pant, 2022, p. 40; Niranjana, 2025, p. 14).

By leveraging these frameworks, India demonstrates a model of responsible global leadership, combining pragmatism with principles, power with persuasion, and autonomy with cooperation. This integrated approach is likely to remain central to India's engagement in global governance in the coming decades.

#### 4. Challenges and Constraints

India's growing role in global governance is accompanied by several significant challenges that shape its engagement and influence. These challenges are both structural and contextual, ranging from institutional underrepresentation in global decision-making forums to domestic resource limitations, regional security pressures, and normative conflicts with established governance norms. Understanding these challenges is critical to evaluating India's effectiveness and strategy as a global actor.

##### 4.1 Institutional Underrepresentation

One of the most significant constraints on India's influence in global governance is institutional underrepresentation, particularly in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). Despite being the world's fifth-largest economy and a major contributor to UN peacekeeping operations, India remains outside the permanent membership of the UNSC, limiting its role in decisions on global security and conflict resolution (JCP, 2023, p. 14). This structural exclusion reduces India's ability to shape policies on critical issues such as sanctions, peacekeeping mandates, and international law enforcement.

India's position in other global financial institutions is similarly constrained. Its voting share in the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank is below its economic weight, limiting its capacity to influence major financial decisions, development financing, and institutional reforms (Pant, 2022, p. 40). India has repeatedly advocated for reforms in these institutions to reflect contemporary global economic realities, emphasizing the need for equitable representation of emerging economies and developing countries.

The challenge of Institutional underrepresentation is compounded by the slow pace of reform. Structural inertia and vested interests among existing powers often impede changes in governance arrangements. Consequently, India has had to rely on coalition-building with other emerging powers through forums such as BRICS and the G20 to advance its agenda in global governance (Niranjan, 2025, p. 13). These coalitions help India amplify its influence despite formal institutional limitations, but they cannot entirely substitute for direct decision-making authority.

##### 4.2 Resource Constraints

India's ambitions in global governance are also shaped by domestic resource limitations. Despite rapid economic growth, India faces pressing challenges at home, including poverty alleviation, infrastructure development, healthcare expansion, and education. Balancing these domestic priorities with global responsibilities requires careful allocation of resources (Bhattacharyya & König, 2016, p. 37).

For example, India contributes personnel and financial resources to UN peacekeeping missions, invests in global climate initiatives, and engages in international development cooperation. These contributions are significant, yet they are constrained by competing domestic needs such as rural development programs, urban infrastructure, and social welfare schemes (Pant, 2022, p. 42). Resource limitations thus pose a structural challenge, requiring India to prioritize areas where its global engagement can yield the highest strategic and normative impact.

Furthermore, India's financial contributions to global governance are often scrutinized both domestically and internationally. Ensuring transparency, accountability, and effectiveness in global contributions is crucial to

maintain domestic support while sustaining India's credibility in multilateral forums (Bhattacharyya & König, 2016, p. 38).

### 4.3 Geopolitical Risks

India operates in a complex regional security environment. Border disputes with China, periodic tensions with Pakistan, and instability in Afghanistan and neighbouring regions require India to devote substantial attention and resources to national security (Pant, 2022, p. 42). These geopolitical risks constrain India's ability to engage fully in broader global governance initiatives, as domestic security priorities often take precedence. Additionally, the growing great power competition between the United States and China presents strategic dilemmas. India must navigate these rivalries carefully to maintain strategic autonomy while safeguarding its economic, security, and diplomatic interests (Niranjan, 2025, p. 13). Missteps in these complex geopolitical contexts could undermine India's credibility as a neutral and responsible global actor, limiting its capacity to shape governance norms and multilateral agendas.

### 4.4 Normative and Institutional Challenges

India's normative vision—emphasizing equity, inclusivity, and development—sometimes clashes with entrenched norms that favour established powers. For instance, India's insistence on differentiated responsibilities in climate negotiations and its advocacy for developing country interests in trade agreements often encounter resistance from developed nations (Narlikar, 2017, p. 110). Reforming global governance institutions remains slow, as changes often require consensus among existing powers. India's efforts to influence institutional structures, such as UNSC reform, equitable voting rights in financial institutions, and trade rule modifications, demand sustained coalition-building and diplomatic engagement (Pant, 2022, p. 44). These challenges underscore the difficulty of advancing global norms that reflect contemporary realities rather than historical hierarchies.

## 5. India's Contributions to Global Norms and Governance

Despite these challenges, India has made substantial contributions to global governance, demonstrating both operational capacity and normative leadership. Its engagement spans peacekeeping, climate governance, economic governance, and digital and technological leadership.

### 5.1 Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding

India has been a consistent and significant contributor to UN peacekeeping missions, providing both personnel and resources. Indian troops have participated in over 50 missions, including in Congo, Lebanon, Sudan, and South Sudan, highlighting operational competence and commitment to global stability (Anant, 2022, p. 16). Beyond military participation, India emphasizes peacebuilding principles such as local ownership, capacity-building, and community reconciliation. Indian peacekeepers often engage in training local forces, rebuilding infrastructure, and supporting governance institutions in post-conflict settings. These contributions not only enhance operational effectiveness but also shape global norms regarding comprehensive and sustainable peacebuilding.

India's approach reflects a belief in inclusive and cooperative governance, where peacekeeping is not limited to enforcement but extends to developmental and institutional support. This positions India as a model for middle powers that seek normative leadership alongside operational contribution.

### 5.2 Climate Governance

India has played a leading role in climate governance, advocating for climate justice and equity between developed and developing countries. It emphasizes that historical emitters should bear a greater responsibility

for climate mitigation, while developing nations should receive support for adaptation and sustainable development (Narlikar, 2017, p. 113). India has committed to expanding renewable energy, promoting solar initiatives through programs such as the International Solar Alliance, and facilitating technology transfer and climate finance for developing nations (Bhattacharyya & König, 2016, p. 39). By integrating environmental sustainability with economic growth, India demonstrates that climate action can align with developmental priorities, influencing global debates on sustainable development goals.

India's climate diplomacy also emphasizes inclusive multilateralism, advocating for participation of all stakeholders in designing global agreements and ensuring that the burdens of climate change mitigation are equitably distributed. This approach strengthens India's normative influence in international environmental governance.

### **5.3 Economic Governance**

India contributes actively to global economic governance through forums such as the G20, WTO, and BRICS. It promotes inclusive growth, financial stability, and equitable trade rules, advocating policies that address the interests of developing countries (Singh, 2024, p. 8). For example, India has called for debt restructuring mechanisms, improved access to global markets, and fair trade norms, highlighting its dual focus on national development and global responsibility (Pant, 2022, p. 46). India's engagement in economic governance demonstrates that emerging economies can influence global financial institutions and frameworks, contributing to a more balanced and inclusive global economic system. India's economic diplomacy also reinforces its middle-power status, allowing it to lead issue-based coalitions that amplify the voice of developing countries and negotiate reforms in multilateral economic institutions.

### **5.4 Digital Governance and Technological Leadership**

India is increasingly recognized as a leader in digital governance and technology. Initiatives such as Aadhaar, India Stack, and the promotion of digital public goods provide scalable models for other nations, particularly in developing regions (Vajpayee, 2024, p. 11). India advocates for data sovereignty, cybersecurity, and ethical AI frameworks, contributing to emerging norms in the global digital economy (Pant, 2022, p. 48). Its approach demonstrates that digital innovation can be integrated with governance objectives, promoting transparency, efficiency, and inclusivity. Through technological diplomacy, India shares best practices, facilitates knowledge transfer, and supports capacity-building in other countries. These contributions strengthen global governance by providing practical, scalable solutions to common challenges in governance, public service delivery, and technological adoption.

The interplay between challenges and contributions illustrates India's evolving role in global governance. Despite institutional underrepresentation, resource limitations, geopolitical risks, and normative constraints, India has managed to exert significant influence by leveraging operational capabilities, normative leadership, and innovative approaches. Its contributions in peacekeeping, climate action, economic governance, and digital leadership underscore India's capacity to shape norms, lead coalitions, and operationalize its strategic vision in a complex and competitive global environment.

## **6. Policy Recommendations and Future Pathways**

### **6.1 Institutional Reform Advocacy**

India should intensify its advocacy for UN Security Council reform and greater representation in global financial institutions (JCP, 2023, p. 16). Reform efforts should be pursued through coalition-building with other emerging and developing countries (Pant, 2022, p. 50).

## 6.2 Enhanced Financial Commitment

To become a shareholder in global governance, India can increase contributions to UN agencies, development funds, and peacekeeping operations (Bhattacharyya & König, 2016, p. 41). Dedicated funding for global public goods, including climate and health, will enhance India's influence.

## 6.3 Coalition-Building and South Leadership

Deepening engagement in BRICS, IBSA, and G20 allows India to shape an equitable global order (Pant, 2022, p. 52). India's leadership can bridge the Global North and South, fostering inclusive consensus on economic, environmental, and technological governance.

## 6.4 Digital and Normative Leadership

India should expand leadership in global digital governance and innovation, leveraging domestic capabilities to influence AI, data governance, and cybersecurity norms (Vajpayee, 2024, p. 13). India's normative voice can define ethical and equitable standards for emerging technologies (Pant, 2022, p. 54).

## 6.5 Domestic Capacity Building

Strengthening domestic institutions for research, policy analysis, and diplomacy enhances India's capacity to engage globally (Niranjan, 2025, p. 15). Investments in education, infrastructure, and technology will support India's long-term global governance role.

**Conclusion-** India's evolving role in global governance reflects a combination of ambition, capability, and normative vision. From non-alignment to proactive engagement, India has demonstrated leadership in peacekeeping, climate governance, and economic multilateralism (Anant, 2022, p. 20; Pant, 2022, p. 56). Challenges such as institutional underrepresentation, resource constraints, and geopolitical risks remain. However, India's democratic legitimacy, soft power, and coalition-building capabilities position it as a rising global actor capable of shaping inclusive, equitable, and resilient governance frameworks. Strategic policy action in institutional reform, coalition-building, financial commitment, and digital governance will consolidate India's role as a global "shareholder" rather than just a stakeholder.

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