**5.4 India as an Emerging Global Power**

**Introduction**

India lies in the region of the [Indian Ocean](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_Ocean) - a zone with unprecedented potential for growth in the scale of transoceanic commerce, with many Eurasian and increasingly Afro-Asian sea-trade routes passing through or close to Indian [territorial waters](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Territorial_waters). The subcontinent's land and water resources, though strained, are still sustaining its massive population. The Republic of India, the second most populous country and one of the fastest growing economies in the world, is considered as a major power and a potential superpower. It is India's growing international influence that gives it a prominent voice in global affairs.

Although Nehru often spoke against great-power politics, underneath his idealism lay a submerged realism about the potential of India to become a great power in the international system. Such a desire was evident in the pursuit of nonalignment, in the autarkic economic development strategy which placed heavy emphasis on the public sector and heavy industry, and in the prominence given to science and technology. The building up of the nuclear and space programmes was also driven largely by the desire to become a great power. In the first four decades of India's independence it grew at an average annual rate of 3 to 5 percent per capita. But during the past decade, India has achieved per capita annual growth rates of 5 to 8 percent.

India is making its presence felt in the global market place. Backed by its mind power-five lakh engineers, 2.5 lakh doctors and 75 lakh graduates India is seen as having a clear claim at being the software capital of the world, the business process outsource for the global corporations, and the centre for cutting edge research information technology and even biotechnology. India is also the global original equipment manufacturer of auto ancillaries and the preferred supplier of infrastructure-erection construction skills.

**Population as a factor**

India has the [world's second largest population](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_and_dependencies_by_population). A very large number of India's population, about 50%, is below the age group of 24. This provides the nation with a large workforce for many decades, helping in its growth. Due to its high [birth rate](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Birth_rate), India has a young population compared to more developed nations. It has approximately 65% of its population below the age of 35. In addition, declining fertility is beginning to reduce the youth dependency rate which may produce a [demographic dividend](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographic_dividend). In the coming decades, while some of the powerful nations will witness a decrease in workforce numbers, India is expected to have an increase. More than 35 million [Indians](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_people) live across the globe. Under fair opportunities, they have become socio-economically successful— especially in the US and the UK where they are the highest earning ethnic demographic. India has the world's largest [English](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_English) speaking/understanding population. It claims one of the largest workforce of [engineers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Engineer), [doctors](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Physician) and other key professionals, all comfortable with English. It has the 2nd largest population of "fluent English" speakers, second only to the [United States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States), with estimates ranging from 150 to 250 million speakers, and is expected to have the largest in coming decades.

**Political Factors**

**Democratic republicanism**

India is the world's largest [democratic republic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democratic_republic), more than three times bigger than the next largest (the [United States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States)). It has so far been successful politically, especially considering its functionality despite its difficult ethnic composition. The fact that India is a [democracy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democracy) has improved its relations with other democratic nations and significantly improved its ties with the majority of the nations in the [developed world](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Developed_country).

**Candidacy for Security Council**

India has been pressing for permanent membership of the [United Nations](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations) [Security Council](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations_Security_Council) (as part of the [G4 nations](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/G4_nations)) but with a clause that it won't exercise its [veto](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Veto) for the next 15 years. It has received backing from [United States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States), [France](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/France), [Russia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russia), and the [United Kingdom](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Kingdom). However, [China](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/China)'s stand remains unclear.

**Foreign Relations**

India has developed relationships with the [world powers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_power) like the [European Union](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India%E2%80%93European_Union_relations), [Japan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India%E2%80%93Japan_relations), [Russia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India%E2%80%93Russia_relations), and the [United States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India%E2%80%93United_States_relations). It also developed relationships with the [African Union](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Africa%E2%80%93India_relations) (particularly [South Africa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India%E2%80%93South_Africa_relations)), the [Arab World](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arab_World), [Southeast Asia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Southeast_Asia), [Israel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India%E2%80%93Israel_relations) and [South American](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_America) nations (particularly [Brazil](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brazil%E2%80%93India_relations)). To make the environment favourable for [economic growth](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economic_growth), India is investing on its relations with [China](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/China%E2%80%93India_relations). It has significantly boosted its image among [Western nations](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western_world) and signed a civilian nuclear deal with the United States in March 2006. It is also working for better relationships with [Pakistan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India%E2%80%93Pakistan_relations).[[51]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India_as_an_emerging_superpower#cite_note-51)

**Role in International Politics**

Historically, India was one of the founding members of [Non-Aligned Movement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Non-Aligned_Movement), and had good relationships with [Soviet Union](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet_Union) and other parts of western world. It played regional roles in [South Asian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Asia) affairs, e.g. its use of the [Indian Peace Keeping Force](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_Peace_Keeping_Force) in the [Bangladesh Liberation War](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bangladesh_Liberation_War) and in [Sri Lanka](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sri_Lanka). It took a leading initiative to improve relations between [African](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Africa) and [Asian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asia) countries. India is an active member of the [Commonwealth](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Commonwealth_of_Nations) and the [WTO](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Trade_Organization). The evolving economic integration politics in the West and in Asia is influencing the Indian mood to slowly swing in favour of integration with global economy.

Currently, India's political moves are being influenced by economic imperatives. [New Delhi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Delhi) is also being observed to slowly, cautiously, and often hesitantly, step into the uncharted role of becoming one of the two major seats of political power in Asia, the other being at [Beijing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beijing). Some enlightened thinkers from the subcontinent have also envisioned, over the long run, of a South Asian version of free trade zone and even a Union, where the South Asian nations relinquish all past animosities and move to make economic growth a pan subcontinental phenomenon.

**Multi-polarity**

A new and highly controversial geopolitical strategy, being debated in the West, is whether India should be trusted/helped to become an economically strong democratic citizen of the world, and be used to [balance](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Offshore_balancing) the powerful but non-democratic forces, to insure a more stable world. Generally speaking, it is discussed in the context of adopting a policy of [offshore balancing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Offshore_balancing) on the part of the United States. A new American strategy towards India has been indicated in George W. Bush's recent visit to the subcontinent.

**Economy as a Factor**

India's current economic growth (as the world's fastest-growing major economy as of 2015) has improved its standing on the world's political stage, even though it is still a developing country, but one that is showing strong development. Many nations are moving to forge better relationships with India. The [economy of India](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economy_of_India) is currently the world's [third largest](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_GDP_(PPP)) in terms of [real GDP](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Real_versus_nominal_value) ([PPP](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Purchasing_Power_Parity)) after the United States of America and the People's Republic of China. According to the [World Bank](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Bank), India overtook China to become the fastest-growing major economy in the world as of 2015. Its record growth was in the third quarter of 2003, when it grew higher than any other emerging economy at 10.4%. India, growing at 9% per year, is the world's second largest producer of food next to China. Food processing accounts for USD 69.4 billion as gross income.

India currently has an expanding [IT](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Information_Technology) industry which is considered one of the best in the world. Some have begun to describe India as a *technology superpower*. It is considered the World's Office and is leading in the Services Industry. This is mainly due to the availability of a large pool of highly skilled, low cost, English speaking workforce.

According to a 2016 CEO survey conducted by global consulting and accounting firm[KPMG](https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/india/2017-10-16/will-india-start-acting-global-power) found India to be its top growth opportunity for the next three years. India’s economy has a GDP of over $2 trillion at current exchange rates, surpassing Canada and Italy. Moreover, U.S. government projections backed by Bank of America forecasts India to be the[third-largest economy](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/business/india-business/india-to-overtake-japan-to-become-third-largest-economy-by-2028-report/articleshow/61631681.cms) in the world by 2029. India has already overtaken Brazil and Russia through purchasing power parity measured by the International Monetary Fund. This blossoming economic powerhouse illustrates the power and prosperity that India will continue to grab onto this decade and beyond.

Multinational firms like Apple, Bosch and Whirlpool now manufacture goods in India because of its growing middle class that is estimated between 30–270 million, according to[Deutsche Bank Research](http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.616.3527&rep=rep1&type=pdf) and the[National Council on Applied Economic Research](https://www.cgdev.org/doc/2013_MiddleClassIndia_TechnicalNote_CGDNote.pdf) (data is quoted by Center for Global Development).[McKinsey Global Institute](https://www.mckinsey.com/~/media/McKinsey/Global%20Themes/Asia%20Pacific/The%20bird%20of%20gold/MGI_Rise_of_Indian_Consumer_Market_full_report.ashx) has even called India “A Bird of Gold” because of its middle class, which is expected to grow to over six hundred million people by 2025. Now, India has begun seeing itself as “a leading power,” is one of the reasons Ford, Suzuki and Tata are building more cars in India than Mexico and slightly below South Korea—while becoming the largest market for motorcycles and scooters in 2016—overtaking China.

**Military as a Factor**

The International Institute for Strategic Studies ([ISS](https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/india/2017-10-16/will-india-start-acting-global-power)) counts India’s strengths with having 1.4 million troops on active duty and roughly 1.2 million reservists. Further military growth was calculated by The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute ([SIPRI](https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/india/2017-10-16/will-india-start-acting-global-power)), “estimated India became the world’s fifth-largest military spender in 2016, ahead of France and the United Kingdom.” U.S. military procurement has exceeded $15 billion in the past decade, which started under the Bush and Obama administrations.

Through its nuclear tests in 1998, India positioned itself as a serious contender for great power status. The tests proved to be the catalyst for change. In the contemporary era, since the possession of nuclear weapons and their delivery systems is the defining characteristic of great powers, such powers tend to seek to deny or deprive other powers of such instruments, often under the garb of concern for world order and international stability. On the other hand, for those powers that have the potential to become great powers, entrance into the exclusive club of nations is also a compelling goal. Inconsistency between aspirations and ascribed status puts pressure on the rising powers to work toward the alteration of the system.

**Science and Technology as a Factor**

India is trying to develop more highly skilled, English speaking people to fit in the future [knowledge economy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Knowledge_economy). India is becoming one of the world's leading producers of computer software and with mushrooming R&D centres it is experiencing a steady revolution in science and technology. A typical example of India's rising scientific endeavours is that it was the 3rd nation to found a National Space Agency called [ISRO](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ISRO), after the [USSR](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet_Union) and the U.S. It was the third Asian nation to send satellites into space after China and Japan in 1970, starting with [Aryabhata](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aryabhata_(satellite)" \o "Aryabhata (satellite)) in 1975.

In October 2008, India launched its first unmanned [lunar probe](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lunar_probe), [Chandrayaan 1](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chandrayaan_1" \o "Chandrayaan 1), which operated until August 2009. On 14 November 2008, the [Moon Impact Probe](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moon_Impact_Probe) separated from the Chandrayaan orbiter at 20:06 and was deliberately made to strike the Moon near the south pole, making India the fourth country to reach the Moon's surface. Among its many achievements was the discovery of the widespread presence of water molecules in lunar soil. On 24 September 2014 India became the fourth nation to have a satellite orbiting Mars. India is the first Asian nation to achieve this and the first to do so in its first try. India and the United States have increased mutual co-operation in space-travel related technologies, such as increasing the interoperability between Indian and US systems, and prospects for a commercial space launch agreement with India that would allow US satellites to be launched on Indian vehicles. India is among the world leaders in [remote sensing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Remote_sensing) a technology coming to great use, among others, to Indian fishermen & farmers. India is also trying to join international R&D projects - e.g. it has recently joined the European [Galileo GPS Project](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Galileo_positioning_system) and the [ITER for fusion energy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ITER)club.

All the above factors clearly states the emergence of India as an emerging global power.