

International Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Studies



ISSN Print: 2664-8652
ISSN Online: 2664-8660
Impact Factor: RJIF 8.31
IJAHS 2026; 8(1): 18-25
www.socialstudiesjournal.com
Received: 19-11-2025
Accepted: 20-12-2025

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Climate diplomacy as a key aspect of foreign policy: India's growing focus under the Narendra Modi Government

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DOI: <https://www.doi.org/10.33545/26648652.2026.v8.i1a.367>

Abstract

India's negotiations over climate issues have been a major key agenda of India's foreign policy since 2014, under the NDA-led Modi government. India's engagement has also been reflected through its bilateral and multilateral actions, while attending several global climate summits and formulating the climate agenda with global leaders. The Narendra Modi government has therefore introduced several ranges of climate agendas on these global platforms while conducting India's climate diplomacy as a key aspect of India's foreign policy. This not only shows India's evolving role in global climate dialogue but also an increasingly leading role to strengthen global financial institutions, the industrial potential of states, and technologically advanced world governments to combat climate change. Thus, the foreign policy of India is, in fact, paying serious heed while putting India's domestic agenda in front of the global climate regime. Although India's role cannot be undervalued as a pioneer country, to raised its voice to settle global climate issues like climate justice, carbon equity, and sustainability on the global platform from time to time. Moreover, the problem of clean energy, International Solar Alliance (ISA), and technology sharing and innovation are a few important areas of India's emerging climate diplomacy in its foreign policy. However, focusing on energy security, climate finance, circular economy, and green building techniques begins a new phase of India's modern climate diplomacy. Hence, the study tries to examine the historical growth of India's climate diplomacy in terms of its foreign policy, along with the changing agenda of India's climate diplomacy under the Narendra Modi government, and its new priorities that remain inadequate to fulfil the primary objective of India's foreign policy. At the end, the major issues and challenges of India's climate diplomacy have been critically examined in the course of India's foreign policy. Priorities have also been extended to understand Modi's bold step to make India a responsible state to lead the COP summit and influence the current World Climate deliberations.

Keywords: Foreign policy, climate diplomacy, Narendra Modi government, climate justice, and cop summit

Introduction

India's foreign policy today is no longer merely based on its traditional forms. Apart from border conflicts, bilateral relations, national security, and geopolitical concerns, perhaps it has also assumed a more significant role in climate diplomacy. In general terms, climate diplomacy is the expression of a country's direct or indirect involvement in climate policy-making, ranging from the national to the international level. Accordingly, the sharing of important treaties, agreements, and effective measures through global arrangements at the bilateral and multilateral levels of climate dialogue, which has remained a crucial part of India's foreign policy in climate diplomacy. However, due to anthropogenic change and Greenhouse Gas (GHG), climate change remains an unavoidable phenomenon across the world. India is also facing severe consequences like climate disasters, severe floods, landslides, cyclones, and human deaths every year. Being the fourth-largest economy and the third-largest carbon emitter, India is still contributing a significant amount to the global renewable energy sector. Despite this, India is also known as a victim of climate vulnerability and poor weather conditions. However, the fact is that the origins of India's climate foreign policy are often much older, dating back over fifty years. As far as climate diplomacy is concerned, the global conference on Climate Change and Human Environment (CHHE) was held in Stockholm in 1972, marking the first instance of Indian diplomatic participation in the field of foreign policy and climate diplomacy.

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The Earth Summit or Rio summit of 1992, the Montreal Protocol, and the SDGs of 2015 are some of the prominent areas of India's climate negotiation since the late 90s. Climate policy has evolved significantly as a subset of foreign policy for India due to its vulnerability (Chaitra C., 2023:192) ^[1]. In addition, to counter this, India's climate diplomacy carries a series of agendas since 2014. For the first time, India's foreign policy goes hand in hand with its climate policy to strengthen its weak parts, neglected areas and to match growing emerging trends and demands of the domestic sector. Based on India's Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC) in 2008, the country has adopted India's first binding National Climate Action Plan in the Paris Agreement of 2015. Interestingly, India's climate diplomacy has shifted massively under the NDA-led Modi government, as the elected Prime Minister of the Republic of India. The government undertook a serious focus on the climate issue, both in domestic politics and international relations. The government also decided to reform its industries, manufacturing hubs, companies, business, and private corporations, cities, and replace petroleum products like natural gas, oil, coal, and so on. In fact, the national government introduced clean and green technology practices to mitigate the country's carbon footprint in the present time (Meher, 2024) ^[2].

Review of Literature

Irem Askar Karakir (2018) ^[7] article, entitled 'Environmental Foreign Policy as a Soft Power Instrument: Cases of China and India,' argues that environmental issues have gained widespread recognition in the agenda of environmental politics. In his opinion, the global environmental dialogue and climate governance have assumed a greater willingness on the part of two South Asian powers, such as India and China. Both nations are supporting the climate agenda in their foreign policy as a strategic move, and most of the time in their climate negotiations as well. For India Paris Agreement is an eventful episode to adapt binding climate norms in the country's national climate policy, whereas China is heading towards a sustainable policy. Patil and Maitry's article on 'Environmental issues as a key part of India's foreign policy: strategic imperatives, challenges, and future aspects' insists on India's deep concerns and growing necessity over environmental issues. It can be noted that protection of the environment is not only India's ethical consideration, but also has become a major pillar of sustainability. As India started talking of the 2070 goal to make a carbon-free world is also taking negotiations to maintain sustainability with the multilateral order. Environmental issues today are not only a part of the international crisis but also a nuisance for India's energy security and renewable energy sources. Gupta and Jose (2024) ^[9], in their book chapter entitled '*Intersecting priorities: India's Approach to the politics of Climate Change-Domestic development and global commitment*', argue that India is a spokesperson and a critic of the global climate disaster. Despite having a fast-growing economy and being the third global polluter, India still possesses the lowest per capita greenhouse gas emissions. As a vulnerable country, India always shows its active cooperation in the global climate dialogue as required. India's priorities today revolve around industrial reform, human development, and agricultural transformation by combating green emissions as well as its role as a dealmaker in global climate governance. Dubash and Rajamani's (2015) ^[10] book chapter entitled

'Multilateral Diplomacy on Climate Change' addresses the evolution of India's climate diplomacy in the late 1990s. It is obvious that India's foreign policy on global climate negotiations suggests many key concepts and debates in its early phases. Until 2015, the shift in India was less impressive. Due to domestic politics and international pressure, India has adhered to a more subtle range of climate approaches in its foreign policy, which is nearly multilateral and based on certain domestic drives. 'Reconsidering India's Climate Diplomacy and Domestic Preferences with a two-level approach' noted India's ongoing effort at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Principles like climate equity, polluter pays, and historical responsibility are India's major diplomatic successes in its foreign policy. Alongside, India's role in the voluntary reduction of carbon emissions will show as domestic preferences and a global imperative.

Research Questions

The following are some of the most important research questions of the study.

- How does the climate diplomacy of India remain an inseparable part of its foreign policy?
- Does the Climate Diplomacy of India mark a major strategic move under India's foreign policy?
- What are the major environmental agendas included in India's foreign policy under the Narendra Modi Government?
- How does India's climate diplomacy bring international cooperation in global climate governance under the leadership of Modi's government?

Research Design

The present paper provides an overview of India's foreign policy in particular and climate diplomacy in general. In this respect, a needful focus is made here to find out the increasing role of India's climate diplomacy in the light of its foreign policy under the Narendra Modi government. Similarly, India's role in the last few years has tremendously evolved through India's engagement in the global climate platform, including the World Climate Summit and multilateral negotiations and so on. Even India is now becoming a crucial player in influencing global climate governance, to some extent, also as a deal maker. In fact, India's climate cooperation with multilateralism has undertaken a major paradigm shift through India's foreign relations during the period of Modi's government. While arguing India's importance in the global climate centre, India had raised its concerns about the low performance of industrialised economies and their negligence to bring cooperation with lower-middle economies, climate equity and the CBDR principles. In foreign relations, India remains an unbeatable player as it has chaired many international climate summits, COP meetings, groupings with BASIC, and taken a leading role in supporting Global South countries. Hence, India's foreign policy and climate cooperation presently address importance subjects like (1) concerns for developing nations; (2) multilateral cooperation; (3) adaption of climate co-benefit approach; (4) concerns for renewable energy; (5) international solar alliance; (6) India's evolving global climate leadership and lastly India's domestic climate discourse and politics.

Research Methodology

The proposed research work is conducted through qualitative research of social science studies. For a clear understanding, both descriptive and analytical approaches have been used. To give a realistic touch, secondary sources like books, articles, newspapers, magazines, reports of research organisations, and publications of UNEP reports, Websites of MEFCC and UN are extensively consulted for the present study. By following the mentioned method, the proposed work tries to provide a systematic explanation of the ongoing topic, suggests its key challenges and opportunities, and offers a reliable solution to these challenges.

India's Foreign Policy and Climate Diplomacy: Historical Background

Climate diplomacy is the study of the relationship between climate change and the foreign policy of a country.' In this respect, the national climate concerns of a country have been associated with international cooperation. Thus, the climate diplomacy of India basically revolves around four primary fundamental principles or assumptions of its foreign policy. Firstly, climate diplomacy denotes the formation of alliances or groupings of countries based on ideational or material forces. Secondly, it concerns and expresses the geopolitical interests of states in the global climate setting. In the third place, climate diplomacy is indicated as the rule of soft-power projection, whereas fourthly, it deals with a strategically designed rule for international climate cooperation. Therefore, to find out the present demand and growing forces of India's foreign policy and India's international behaviour in the sphere of climate change and its mitigation, it is noteworthy to delve into the historical phase of India's climate affairs from time to time (Jayaram, 2021, 1:5)^[11].

The independent India that was set free in 1947 immediately became an active member in the pitch of international politics, and it often faced a wide range of issues in terms of global relations. Within a few years, India's scope of international relations had increased manifold. India was also concerned about global environmental challenges. Thus, environmental issues gained international importance because of ongoing environmental degradation, industrial pollution and deforestation, and urban development across the country. Moreover, the Protection of the natural environment, forests, water, sea areas, and wildlife has become a more serious issue in the global context. Further, to overcome this, collective efforts were taken, as a necessity from the side of national governments all around the world, by the world leaders. The beginning of India's foreign relations fell into the same place, especially in the sphere of conservation of nature and environment, which was hopefully met in the Stockholm conference, 1972. It was the first global environmental conference, known as the United Nations Conference on Human Environment (UNCHE) that held from June 5-16, 1972, in Stockholm, Sweden. Participants from developing, developed, and less industrialised worlds attended this global gathering to assume environmental issues as their national importance (United Nations, 1973)^[3]. Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India, spearheaded and took India's leadership at the Stockholm conference. Gandhi made her historic speech while raising the issue of poverty, resource shortage, and lack of development. She blames the excessive industrial tendency of the West on nature exploitation. In her words, developing countries are far away from carrying this responsibility as much shall do by the

developed states should. In her words, "The inherent conflict is not between conservation and development, but between the environment and reckless exploitation in the name of efficiency (Raman, 2022)^[4]. The speech of Gandhi was based on 'One Earth, One Environment, and One Humanity. The climate change concerns of India were again tested in the Rio Climate Conference held in 1992, June 3-4, at Rio de Janeiro, New York. The conference is known as the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). This was a non-binding treaty on climate change. For the first time, the concept of sustainable development appeared in the policy of global climate governance (United Nations, 1993)^[5]. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was also founded in the same year to combat climate change among the parties' countries (United Nations, 1992)^[6]. A significant change was also witnessed during the Kyoto protocol and its post-scenario climate diplomacy of India. India's continuous engagement in climate negotiations was also reflected in the Rotterdam Convention (1998), Nagoya Protocol (2010), Minamata Convention (2013), Paris Agreement (2015), and Kigali Amendment (2016), which are India's landmark courses of climate diplomacy throughout its foreign policy (Chaitra C., 2023:187-192)^[1]. Later on, at COP 21 of UNFCCC, India came across an internal and international compulsion to limit global warming by 1.5 - 2 degrees Celsius, which was decided at the Paris Summit in 2016. This was a universal, legally binding treaty for the COP members. For the first time, around 189 countries submitted their Nationally Determined Commitment (NDC) in Paris, where they decided to cut off GHG emissions at the national level, and India is not an exception (UNFCCC, 2015:)^[15]. In the plenary session of COP 21, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi strongly reflected on India's position and its future agenda and articulated that climate negotiations could be possible if it emphasised making climate action legally acceptable and binding and the Importance of Common but Different Responsibilities (CBDR).

New Priorities of India's Climate Diplomacy under Modi's Government

To understand the climate diplomacy of India, it is necessary to understand the new priorities and policy alternatives of India's foreign policy.

Concerns for Developing Nations

The first important growing priorities of India's climate diplomacy are to understand India's evolving demand as a developing nation. In this respect, India's climate diplomacy is meant to understand India's advocacy to represent the future role of developing nations. India's negotiations on climate change are therefore purely based on the principles of the Kyoto Protocol of 1997. Since its operation in 2005, a proposal was made regarding that all developed nations set their target to cut down carbon emissions and provide financial and technological assistance to developing nations. However, the Kyoto Protocol has two phases of climate action. From 2005 to 12 was the first period. After the adoption of the second phase commitment in 2012, at the Doha Amendment, the second phase of the Kyoto Protocol began from 2013-2020. India ratified the Kyoto protocol in 2017, under the high decision-making body chaired by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi government. At the cabinet meeting, the Modi administration claimed that 'India will

embark on being a path maker for other developing nations ' in the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol. The process for the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), which was developed earlier, gave a renewed interest in that phase (Mohan, 2017) ^[12]. It is important to note that India is considered the leading voice of the global south. After the Paris Agreement in 2015. In fact, at COP 25, India claimed the early submission of GHG emissions on behalf of industrialised nations before India's new climate target. India also strongly criticised the commitment of industrialised states to their economic aid of about 100 billion dollars to developing states that remained unfulfilled (Modi and Venkatachalam, 2021, p. 58) ^[30]. India's climate diplomacy also stands for the 'Global South Cooperation' where India portrayed itself as a real climate leader of the Global South. The reason is that the engagement with industrialised states was to get support in terms of foreign finance, technology, and innovation. However, this was perhaps India's traditional method, which did not fully support towards emerging economy. India is convinced that a historically industrialised economy is responsible for Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions and should never be dealt with on equal footing. Hence, the Global South is demanding economic and technological assistance under India's leadership. Apart from that, in the G20 summit held in New Delhi, under India's aegis, the Global South-South Cooperation, in the lens of 'Global South-South' and 'North Cooperation', was stressed by the Narendra Modi government. India tries to bridge the relationship between the Global South and the North while introducing the Global South climate Identity from New Delhi. To the Modi government, multilateral climate cooperation should not be kept on the side of the global South states (Xavier and Nachiappan, 2024) ^[36].

Multilateral Cooperation

India's climate negotiation is generally administered by the forces of multilateral cooperation. One of the first choices for India on multilateralism was to hold a founding membership of the BASIC countries. The BASIC forum represents the deep interest of each developing nation. The countries like Brazil, South Africa, India, and China formed this coalition group in 2009. Two climate summits, including the Copenhagen Summit and the Bali Action Plan, led the foundation to its early establishment. The member states are therefore drawing a power shift approach in the form of Climate diplomacy. Even in the meeting of member states, the BASIC group stresses the abstinence from Western dominance while pushing their own agenda of climate equity and climate Justice at the top of their interests. Perhaps, this led to a new climate order called justice for the Global South. Member states gave a strategic importance to nationally appropriate mitigation actions, capacity building to enable technology, and to support sustainable development (Jayaram, 2021; 23-26) ^[13]. However, India's stance at the Copenhagen Summit was a new shift in its climate politics. The government made India's per capita emissions to the average level of industrialised countries, and the national action plan on climate change (Dubash, 2013) ^[14]. India's climate negotiation was also extended to African countries. Through the Indo-Africa forum summit, India and Africa have raised the issue of climate change in one voice. Apart from that, African states are known as lower-income states. Even the African state joined its relationship with Small Island States (AOSIS), the Organisation of Petroleum

Exporting Countries, the Coalition of Rainforest Nations, the Least Developed Countries (LDC) Group, and the Like-Minded Developing Countries. On the contrary, India's diplomatic engagement is further heading towards BRICS, BASIC, and G77 countries. Despite regional and geopolitical differences, India's relations with African states have been reflected on many grounds, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The agenda for the common African position became a common expression of the climate action plan of India with African states (Modi and Venkatachalam, 2021, pp. P:44-50) ^[30]. In the Bali Action Plan 2007, New Delhi and Africa endorsed their common interest to bring financial aid and funds alongside boosting a strategy for the industrialised economy, to both Indo-African climate concerns (Ibid., 53). As a result, in 2018, the Narendra Modi government initiated a climate action programme for African states. Around 22 African states were facilitated under solar electrification projects. Solar multi-utility (SMU) Centres were established in Kenya, Ethiopia, and Malawi. In 2019, under the ISA framework 2019 ^[23], teams of Indian experts had conducted feasibility studies and held multistakeholder meetings in Guinea, Mali, Uganda, DR Congo, Niger, and Malawi (ibid, 62). Multilateral cooperation of India has also been guided under the five 'S' important principles, such as Samman (Respect), Samvad (dialogue), Sahyog (Cooperation), Shanti (Peace), and Samridhi (Prosperity). As India's foreign policy relies on the Neighbourhood First agenda, sharing deep concerns for neighbours is also enhanced through its climate diplomacy. On this account, the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) was founded, that presently working to accelerate its focus on the direction of climate resilience building and improving vulnerability. In fact, in 2018, the South Asian Cooperative for Environment Protection (SACEP) was implemented to draw logistical help and technical support to counter natural disasters (Joshi, 2021) ^[35].

Adaptation of the Climate Co-Benefit Approach

India's climate diplomacy is also lauded for its concerns for a climate-based co-benefit approach and its adaptation. As the World Bank states, 'climate co-benefit refers to the use of financial resources to draw a positive benefit associated with the reduction of greenhouse gases or carbon emissions.' At this point, the World Bank and its two financial institutions, such as IBRD and IDA, are responsible for sponsoring funds and enabling related projects to generate benefits in the process of climate development (Shenvi *et al*, 2021:1) ^[16]. The World Bank gives its primary focus on two distinct areas, beneficiaries and the affected zone. Areas like infrastructure development, disaster-risk management, landscape, livelihood, capacity building, and policy development are the most important aspects globally, in these two financial heads (Ibid.,5-6). In the words of Dubash, India's climate policy has supported a climate co-benefit approach since the early days of India's climate policy discourse, given its vulnerable and poverty-stricken scenario. For poverty mitigation, emission reduction, and energy security, India is giving priority to its domestic markets and the global platform. It also implies market and industrial reform by reducing greenhouse emissions and working for job creation, economic growth, energy security, promotion of renewable energy, technology exchange, and inclusive development (Dubash,

Raghunandan, Sant, & Sreenivas, 2013:47:51)^[17]. However, the co-benefit approach is a third way between development and climate mitigation together without being imbalanced. For developing countries, the concerns for development come first, as they want to move further; therefore, climate mitigation stands secondary to them. India's position in such ground is necessarily predominant as India acts towards a co-benefit approach and makes climate mitigation without compromising its development (Stahlke, 2023)^[31]. India's co-benefit measures include Green Energy Corridor Projects (GEC), the National Green Highway Mission (NGHM), the National Hydrogen Energy Mission (NHEM), the National Smart Grid Mission (NSGM), Electric Vehicle Initiatives (EVI), the National Bio-Fuel Policy (NB-FP), Green Energy Corridor (GEC), and so on (MOEFCC, 2015:7-25). However, under Modi 3.0, the climate diplomacy of India has obtained wider importance in climate finance and leveraging technology innovation. The reason is that India's climate finance is an inclusion of developed economies' funding. By 20250, the climate finance demand moves around \$10 trillion economies, of which to date, \$1 trillion of climate finance India has contributed. The \$100 trillion economies that rich countries were kept to full seems to distance reality from restoring the condition of a developing economy (Kumar, 2024)^[39].

Concerns for Renewable and Clean Energy

India is presently considered a key global leader in the renewable energy sector. India's renewable energy performance is constantly increasing as ever before. As per the annual report released by the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, India stands as the 4th global renewable energy producer and 5th in solar energy production. As the data of 2024 says, India achieved 209 GW of renewable energy installed capacity. It marked India's extra 15th per cent growth rate in comparison to 2023 (Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, 2025:1)^[18]. In terms of strategic global engagement, India has also obtained a considerable place so far as energy security is concerned. To promote the need for renewable energy, the 'Indo-Australia Renewable Energy Partnership' was signed on 19th November 2024. The governments of India and the government of Australia shared a mutual partnership in seven important areas, including solar supply chain, green hydrogen, circular economy, and in the level of capacity building, and so on. This partnership was also strengthening at bilateral relations between the two states (Australian Government, Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, 2024)^[19]. Similarly, the Indo-German energy partnership is based on the Indo-German vision to enhance cooperation in innovation and cooperation in 2023 (Fahimi *et al*, 2024: 9)^[20]. The 'Indo-US agenda for the clean energy 2030' roadmap was also prepared by the state of India with the USA. The partnership will enable a climate action plan through the promotion of renewable energy. Five areas are negotiated, including increasing energy efficiencies, sustainable growth, technology assistance, and so on (Sinha, 2024)^[21]. However, the Indo-US climate diplomacy also covered the principle of "moving forward together on climate change, clean energy, energy security, and environment." This generally describes the Indo-US partnership to advance clean energy that was signed in 2014 between the Modi government and the Obama administration. The Indo-EU joint statement on clean energy and climate change was adopted at the 14th Indo-European

Summit. The Indo-EU will also enhance bilateral cooperation while forwarding a commitment together on practical and result-oriented diplomacy (Singh, 22:30).

International Solar Alliances (ISA)

Another important milestone in India's climate diplomacy within the global climate regime is the International Solar Alliance (ISA). This arrangement was created to help meet the global climate target set before the Paris Agreement by reducing the 0.5°C temperature rise of global warming, as both India and the USA (The White House, 2016:2) [22] aim to do. As a result, India launched the International Solar Alliance (ISA) in 2015, in partnership with the French government. This was the first-ever bilateral cum global intergovernmental attempt under the Modi government on solar energy among sunshine countries that led to establishing a standard for international collaboration to resolve energy solutions simultaneously on the sidelines of the COP 21 summit. While arguing the capacity of this solar alliance, it further emphasises solar power adaptation and a carbon-neutral approach. The ISA also enables the promotion of solar energy cooperation among the member states to work together in their respective field to enlarge solar energy production. Alongside, the signatory countries also uphold an aim to invest 1 trillion dollars by 2030 to enlarge solar energy capacity through the way of financing. As of now, the ISA has achieved the signatory of 100 countries, out of which 90 countries are ratified members (ISA, 2015). Further, at the United Nations COP 26, held in Glasgow, a joint effort was made by both India and the UK to launch Solar Green Grid Initiatives (SGGI). This was to foster a bilateral partnership towards solar energy production between the two states. Under the solar green grid mission scheme, the theme of 'one sun, one world, and one grid system' was adopted. The major concern focuses on the areas of green transition, investment, global energy transition, and infrastructure development between the two partner states (The Economic Times, 2021)^[24].

India's Global Climate Leadership

India is said to be a global climate leader for several reasons. One of the central stands of India's climate diplomacy is based on the principle of Climate Justice. India's concerns for climate justice refer to giving increasing priority to the poorest nations in the climate action strategy (TERI, 2021)^[25]. It generally enables weaker, vulnerable, and developing countries in the direction of reducing greenhouse gases (GHG). At COP 21 of UNFCCC, India emphasised the principle of [common but differentiated responsibility (CBDR) and climate equity. Achieving 175GW of renewable energy by 2022 and 33-35 per cent emissions, as said in 2005, and generating 40 per cent of its energy from non-fossil fuel sources was India's first binding announcement at the Paris climate summit (Modi, 2015). In 2019, India, under the Narendra Modi government, launched the International Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (ICDRI) at the UN climate action summit. This has brought a global partnership among the national governments to prepare necessary arrangements to counter disaster risk. Similarly, at COP 26 of UNFCCC, Infrastructure for Resilient Island States (IRIS)" was introduced by India with the parties of Australia, Fiji, Jamaica, Mauritius, and the UK at the Glasgow summit. The Modi government approved 480 crores of corpus funds to promote cooperation to meet a resilience-

building approach in disaster areas. By 2024, around 39 countries and 7 international organisations became parties to this framework. Infrastructure development, knowledge sharing, and global partnership among states are the central focus of this initiative (Ministry of Home Affairs). India's climate diplomacy is also led by the 'LIFE movement'. Here, LIFE refers to 'Lifestyle for the Environment', which was India's global climate agenda. It focuses on '*mindful and deliberate utilisation*' instead of '*mindless and wasteful consumption*'. The Prime Minister Narendra Modi government launched this comprehensive initiative at the COP 26 climate summit in Glasgow. In his words, life indicates the basic theme of 'pro-planet-people' (P3) in his climate agenda for the world. This generally addresses a climate-friendly behaviour in daily life by individuals and nations. The government emphasises the idea of the circular economy while addressing India's concerns over the reduce, reuse, and recycle approach. Hence, India's life movement was inspired by Mahatma Gandhi's notion of a zero-carbon lifestyle (NITI Aayog, 2022) ^[22]. The Glasgow Summit of COP 26 of the UNFCCC reflects India's 'Pnachamitra Climate Agenda' under Modi's political leadership as follows: (1) India will accelerate and expand its domestic production of non-fossil energy up to 500 GW by 2030; (2) by 2030 India's renewable energy contribution will reach 50 per cent; (3) reduction of 1 billion tonnes of carbon emissions by 2030; (4) reduction of carbon intensity of the economy by 45 per cent by 2030 over 2005 level and (5) achieving the target of net zero carbon emission by 2070 (MEFCC, 2022).

Domestic Climate Discourse

India adopted a national climate action strategy in 2008, known as the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC). The office of the Prime Minister (PMO) primarily approved it, then India became a part of the international forums and dialogue (MOEFCC, 2014: 1-12). But the plan originally came in 2007. When the Prime Minister's Council (PMC) was constituted to monitor climate change with the help of an advisory committee. In this direction, the Ministry of Environment and Forest (MoEF) extended its focus on six major areas relating to agriculture, water resources, health, coastal zone management, natural ecosystem, and climate modelling (Ibid). It was particularly invited to examine the effect on these areas and to take measures accordingly. However, the recent NAPCC was indeed pursuing the highly determined goal of combating the vulnerable impact of climate disasters. It also emphasises an ecologically sustainable development roadmap to balance economic growth and the standard of living simultaneously, without damaging the environment. For the adaptation and mitigation of climate change, the NAPCC has incorporated eight National Missions. These are, namely, the National Solar Mission (2010), the National Water Mission, the Green India Mission, the Enhanced Energy Efficiency Mission (2011), the Sustainable Agriculture Mission (2014-15), the Sustainable Habitat Mission (2010), Sustaining Himalaya Eco-System, and the Strategic Knowledge for Climate Change (Ibid). Since 1993, India has ratified the UNFCCC treaty and, over the years, remained a non-binding party under the non-annexed member list. No legal and compulsory obligation would have been imposed, rather than to take an autonomous decision by India while framing a nationally determined goal to reduce global temperature.

Challenges and Way Forward

India's foreign policy faces various challenges in its climate action while combating greenhouse gases (GHG) or carbon emissions in its domestic and global context. The most crucial challenges of India's climate diplomacy are based on India's climate vulnerability as a developing state. It is the biggest responsibility for India in the ongoing climate debate of the Global South bloc, if not the least, then the Global North. Creation of climate awareness about climate vulnerability and knowledge for capacity building for India in the domestic politics may raise a new hope towards a potential opportunity for growth. It relates to India's present attempt to drive its business organisation, markets, and private sector in the creation of a Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) in the renewable energy sector. There are not many possible alternatives left in the hands of India except the adoption of a green growth strategy. Definitely, in this regard, India's future depends upon low-carbon growth, technology transformation, climate financing, and so on. Moreover, giving importance to improving energy access, accelerating energy efficiencies in industries, and synergy between growth and climate policy are the needs of the hour (Isaksen & Stokke, 2014: 114-15) ^[33]. Apart from that, another crucial opportunity for India's climate diplomacy is to adhere to global climate security and international peace. This behaviour of India is necessarily made out of the climate crisis. It indicates India as a crusader of poverty alleviation, green transition, and low-carbon growth through India's Nationally Determined Climate Action (INDC) at the Paris agreement. Even to accomplish this commitment, India's climate leadership felt globally because of India's evolving collaborative agenda in bilateral and multilateral climate diplomacy. The International Solar Alliance (ISA) and Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) express India's leading role in influencing global climate action. These two intergovernmental frameworks not only closely prevent India's domestic concerns from seeking to increase India's track record of achieving low-carbon growth, clean energy development, and balancing regional vulnerability, but also relate to possible outcomes (Joshi, 2021) ^[35]. The geopolitical dynamics of countries are a major challenge to India's climate diplomacy. Due to bilateral and personal conflicts within the state, the climate targets are often affected. As such, a sideline in the consensus of climate decision on behalf of poor states that are controlled by industrialised states often does not meet the goal of India's climate diplomacy, which expresses India's concerns for climate justice, representation of the Global South, and climate equality (Patil & Maitry, n.d., 27-28) ^[8].

India's climate diplomacy intends to explore some valuable outcomes to combat the impact of climate change in its foreign policy. As India has envisaged itself as a fast-emerging economic and global leader in the international climate regime is essentially shaped by giving serious attention to a few important areas.

Firstly, there is a need for supportive politics in climate diplomacy. This suggests that for successful climate diplomacy, India must develop a correlation between climate laws and development policy, which is a part of the co-benefit approach. It offers a major shift in India's domestic energy consumption and carbon footprint. Secondly, India's climate diplomacy must focus on building institutional efficiency and on checking the weakness of its policy-making bodies. Decisions regarding climate action must be based on

multilevel governance. That means more finance, more technology, more economic aid, and clean trading technology should be promoted in domestic politics and global climate negotiations. Thirdly, the promotion of rational debate and discussion all around the globe. This is a key process in which a large part of academia, stakeholders, NGOs, civil society, media, and business houses participate to bring climate knowledge and a mitigation agenda for the national government continuously (Dubash, 2019) ^[34]. Fourthly, accelerating India's commitment towards Vikasit Bharat. It suggests that any form of diplomacy that India is conducting in its present decade under its foreign policy is equally moving in the direction of establishing a balanced approach. The vision of Vikasit Bharat, therefore, depends upon the principles of energy diplomacy, climate finance, and sustainable development. Fifthly, the Mitigation of domestic pressure and international risk. Perhaps it indicates policy engagement and sectoral reform. Less dependency on coal and petroleum products to meet India's climate target before the deadline. Sixthly, the like-minded nations of the BASIC grouping that represent Brazil, China, South Africa, and India do not fall into the legally binding emission reduction climate commitment that may pose a threat to check their economic development potential. Lastly, India must cope with its relationship towards oil-producing countries and the Nuclear Supply group (NSG) to fulfil India's energy demands, its future role in the UNSC to give more focus on net-zero carbon emission, and SDG (Chaitra C., 2023:196-97) ^[1].

Conclusion

India's climate diplomacy has evolved as a strategic doctrine of its foreign policy (Singh & Singh, 2025). The reason is that the scope of India's foreign policy has been widened and expanded to many areas of global multilateral climate negotiations. Although for years, diplomatic relations of India with global actors were relatively known, however, in terms of climate diplomacy, it has presently added the role of environmental decision-making as a new priority and policy alternatives to its foreign policy. The major priorities of India's climate diplomacy in the global climate framework are India's direct concerns for the developing nations and leadership to represent the interests of the Global South in climate action. India's climate diplomacy is also reiterated and affirmed, a true faith and allegiance to highlights multilateral cooperation. Based on this approach, India's climate diplomacy has recently become multidimensional and actively engaged in many global climate deals. Another obvious fact is to see India's climate diplomacy towards the adaptation of the global climate co-benefit approach. This is definitely based on India's new climate priorities, as India committed to reducing carbon gases and aligning with the legal norms of the climate target. This has forced India not only to work in developing climate-friendly or green-friendly technology, business, employment, and reform in the domestic market but also to achieve zero pollution by 2070. Further, India's climate diplomacy contributed significantly development of the global climate order while introducing the International Solar Alliance (ISA). This may be viewed as India's diplomatic win to enhance cooperation in solar energy, clean technology, fund exchange, and allocation of knowledge at the level of intergovernmental cooperation. To keep India out of pollution, several mega solar energy parks have been installed in Indian cities. Nonetheless, India's climate diplomacy is continuously striving to show its

leadership role in global climate forums that include the agenda of Panchamitra, the International Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI). Renewable energy is a key pillar of India's climate diplomacy and growing priorities within its foreign policy. Similarly, India holds a dominant position in resolving global energy shortages, which subsequently overcomes the problem of poverty, hunger, and climate vulnerability. The other important areas, like green hydrogen projects, wind energy, and solar energy, are some of the major pillars of India's international energy development. The fact is that India is one of the 5th largest renewable energy producers in the global ranking. The domestic climate concerns of India have adequately played a key role in its foreign policy. India's Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC) was the initial phase to entry in the pitch of global climate diplomacy. In the present time, under the aegis leadership of Shri Narendra Modi government, the direction of India's foreign policy has undergone a sea change to mitigate the climate issue at the domestic level and global platform. From 2014 to 2025, India's foreign policy is clearly to be pointed out as a phase that commences to gain attention to resolve climate change, climate vulnerability, energy consumption, and sectoral reform. A possible deal that comes in India's climate diplomacy may foreground India's sense of new policy alternatives and growing priorities, which are based on India's ethical philosophy and moral doctrine towards the world.

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