

Ancient Statecraft and Modern Strategy: An Analysis of the Mandala Theory in India's Foreign Relations

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Abstract: -The Mandala Theory provides a complex model of ancient Indian geopolitical strategy and was proposed by Kautilya (also called Chanakya) in his key work Arthaśāstra. It imagines a dynamic framework of interstate relations based on strategic interest and geographic proximity, in which governments outside of one's immediate neighbourhood are seen as possible friends and those nearby as natural enemies. This cyclical and practical approach to alliance-building, diplomacy, and battle served as the foundation for ancient Indian political philosophy and is still relevant in today's strategic debate.

This study investigates the theoretical basis of Mandala Theory, as well as its resonance and application in contemporary Indian geopolitics and geostrategic. By examining India's foreign policy paradigms such as the "Neighbourhood First" policy, the "Act East" program, and strategic collaborations with global powers such as the United States, Japan, and Russia, the paper demonstrates how India continues to use a nuanced version of the Mandala strategy. The study also looks at regional dynamics including China, Pakistan, and smaller South Asian countries, demonstrating the persisting strategic imperatives of balance, deterrence, and coalition-building.

The research illustrates that Kautilyan statecraft is an important indigenous lens for understanding India's foreign policy conduct by comparing ancient concepts to present strategic activities. The research emphasizes the importance of classical Indian political philosophy in producing modern global strategies, and it advocates for more academic attention to indigenous knowledge systems in international relations and strategic studies.

Key Words: - Mandala Theory, Arthaśāstra, Kautilya, Indian Geopolitics, Geostrategy, Indian Foreign Policy, Ancient Indian Statecraft

INTRODUCTION

International relations research frequently requires an assessment of both historical and contemporary

frameworks in order to understand how classic political ideas continue to impact present state behaviour. Kautilya's Mandala Theory, based on the ancient Indian treatise Arthaśāstra, is a crucial model for understanding India's international relations today. Kautilya's treatise, written almost two millennia ago, explained the dynamics of interstate relations using a strategic worldview based on geographic realities, alliances, rivalries, and state interests. This ancient theory conceptualises a state positioned at the centre of concentric circles of allies and foes, with neighbours as the most urgent threats and neighbours' neighbours potentially acting as allies, forming a cyclical balance of power that governs diplomacy, war, and alliance-building.

Kautilya's Mandala Theory characterises the state as a rational actor seeking power and survival in a competitive setting. His approach is an example of what modern political science refers to as classical realism, which emphasises pragmatic and strategic state behaviour over idealistic or moralistic concerns. The theory proposes six foreign policy methods, including peace (Sam), war (Danda), neutrality (Vigraha), alliance-building by gifts and bribes (Bheda), and others, that emphasise adaptability in response to changing geopolitical conditions. It emphasises the importance of realpolitik, intelligence (espionage), and military preparedness in protecting the state's interests.

India's strategic environment now reflects many of these founding concepts. The complicated geopolitical environment includes long-standing rivalry with neighbouring countries like Pakistan and China, as well as strategic alliances with global powers like the United States, Russia, and Japan. Policies like "Neighbourhood First" and the "Act East" initiative demonstrate India's multifaceted approach to foreign relations, which combines diplomacy, defence, and

economic strategy to foster positive partnerships while protecting against dangers. This multifaceted technique parallels the Mandala concept of regulating relationships in concentric circles, demonstrating the longevity of indigenous intellectual traditions in moulding modern statecraft.

Despite the prevalence of Western political theories in international relations studies, there is a rising appreciation for the significance of indigenous frameworks such as Kautilya's Mandala Theory in giving culturally grounded and historically relevant viewpoints. Such theories broaden understanding by providing alternate perspectives on state behaviour, particularly in non-Western situations. Furthermore, tackling India's distinct geopolitical concerns using the Mandala paradigm fosters a better understanding of how ancient knowledge systems continue to inform and adapt to global strategic realities.

However, existing work focusses on conceptual and theoretical parallels rather than delving further into how Mandala Theory impacts policy decisions and diplomatic practices in contemporary India. Furthermore, current foreign policy is becoming more complex, encompassing economic diplomacy, cyber strategy, and multilateral institutions dimensions that conventional Mandala Theory does not directly address. There is an urgent need to explore how old strategic doctrine is understood, altered, or changed to address 21st-century challenges and opportunities.

This study seeks to close this gap by examining the Mandala Theory's theoretical foundation and mapping its resonance and application in India's current foreign relations. This study aims to establish the long-term influence of Kautilyan statecraft on India's geopolitical conduct by investigating policy paradigms, strategic collaborations, and regional dynamics, as well as identifying areas of innovation and divergence. It promotes a balanced approach that combines historical insights with contemporary geopolitical realities, emphasising the importance of indigenous knowledge systems in improving international relations and strategic studies.

The strategic concepts included in the Mandala Theory go beyond historical curiosity. They provide tangible insights into how India sees its role in a multipolar world characterised by shifting alliances, regional rivalries, and increasing global concerns. The theory's deep grasp of friend-enemy dynamics, combined with its emphasis on adaptation and pragmatism, provides

policymakers with a culturally based but flexible framework for developing foreign policy. Analysing India's diplomatic initiatives, defence tactics, and economic relationships via the Mandala lens reveals patterns of continuity that reflect indigenous wisdom in line with contemporary international norms.

The Mandala framework's emphasis on multidirectional diplomacy and balance of power necessitates a rethinking of India's relations with both close neighbours and distant global entities. It offers a complex conceptual tool for understanding India's efforts to nurture strategic autonomy, manage asymmetrical threats, and contribute to regional stability while aspiring to a larger position on the global arena. This indigenous perspective challenges Western-centric international relations theories and emphasises the significance of context-sensitive approaches to understanding state behaviour in South Asia.

At the same time, the evolution of the international system, including novel realms such as cyber security, space rivalry, and transnational economic networks, raises concerns about the adaptation of classical strategic theory in a quickly changing world. Addressing this necessitates a critical examination of how ancient notions such as Mandala are being reinterpreted or updated in order to remain relevant. Such research not only enhances academic discourse, but it also assists practitioners in developing policies that are grounded in historical legitimacy while responding to contemporary needs.

This study thus situates itself at the crossroads of history, political theory, and modern geopolitics, with the goal of illuminating how ancient Indian statecraft continues to influence and inform India's foreign policy framework. It seeks to bridge the gap between classical strategic philosophy and contemporary world realities through in-depth analysis and case studies, providing new insights on India's diplomatic strategies, alliance formations, and security policies. In doing so, this study hopes to contribute to a more pluralistic understanding of international relations, in which indigenous intellectual traditions such as Mandala Theory are given their due alongside dominant global perspectives. It emphasises the lasting importance of ancient knowledge in modern strategy and urges further investigation of non-Western perspectives in global politics.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Kautilya's Mandala Theory (2012) explores the geopolitical logic in which near neighbours are natural foes while neighbours' neighbours are friends. This concept of interstate relations served as the foundation for ancient Indian statecraft and diplomacy, with an emphasis on strategic geography for security and power balance.

Brillopedia (2022) investigates Kautilya's concept of mandalas as concentric circles of nations, providing specific procedures for alliance formation and military techniques. The study emphasises the Mandala Theory's realism in practical statecraft and its long-term relevance in India's regional security paradigm.

The Mandala Theory's relevance to contemporary geopolitics is revisited in an SSRN paper (2024), which asserts that India's strategic policies, such as balancing relations with China, the US, and Russia, replicate the old framework of allies and adversaries determined by geographical proximity and interest.

According to an IJCRT article, Kautilya's vision of neighbours as dangers and neighbours' neighbours as allies strongly influences India's conservative yet expansionist foreign policy, particularly in managing Pakistan and China as strategic adversaries while cultivating regional cooperation.

According to Studocu analysis (2024), Kautilya is a classical political realist who believes that power is essential for existence. The Mandala system's cyclical power dynamics are understood as a timeless foundation for comprehending modern India's strategic autonomy and alliance patterns.

Poojn's article (2025) connects Mauryan imperial strategy to modern Indian diplomacy, demonstrating continuity in strategic autonomy, territory defence, and multipolar balancing tactics based on Mandala principles.

Unravel (2023) discusses the Mandala Theory's indirect impact on India's commercial diplomacy, connecting strategic economic ties and hedging techniques to the ancient concept of managing friends and rivals in concentric circles.

The Geostrata (2024) offers a regional viewpoint, emphasising the Mandala Theory as an interpretive tool for South Asian geopolitical conflicts, such as India-China competition and the management of Pakistan and its smaller neighbours within the framework of alliance and antagonism. EJSSS (n.d.) analyses Kautilya's idea of Vijigishu

(dominant state) and its relation to India's self-perception as a regional hegemon, connecting strategic diplomatic attempts to retain dominance and balance regional powers within the Mandala's domains of influence.

RESEARCH GAP

While much research has been conducted to investigate the conceptual connections between Kautilya's Mandala Theory and India's contemporary foreign policy, there has been little detailed empirical analysis to demonstrate how these ancient principles have directly influenced specific diplomatic decisions and strategic outcomes in recent years. Most studies focus on geographic and power-balancing features, but there is little integration of other dimensions like economic diplomacy, cyber strategy, and ideological factors that play important roles in India's modern foreign relations. Furthermore, comparable evaluations of India's strategic orientations to various neighbours and global powers using the Mandala framework are limited. The role of non-state actors and domestic political dynamics in affecting foreign policy under the Mandala paradigm is also understudied. Finally, new strategic domains such as cyber security and space diplomacy have not been thoroughly analysed using this antique lens. Addressing these deficiencies would provide a more nuanced and diversified understanding of how classical statecraft adapts and functions in today's complicated context of Indian geopolitics.

OBJECTIVE

- To critically examine the theoretical basis of Kautilya's Mandala Theory and its key concepts in terms of interstate relations, diplomacy, and strategic statecraft in ancient India.
- To explore the amount and manner in which Mandala Theory informs modern Indian foreign policy concepts, such as neighbourhood diplomacy, strategic cooperation, and security strategies.
- To identify and analyse Mandala Theory's adaptations and limitations in tackling rising difficulties in India's foreign relations, such as economic diplomacy, cyber security, and

interaction with global powers other than its immediate geographic neighbours.

Hypothesis

H1: Kautilya's Mandala Theory substantially forms the theoretical foundations of Indian foreign policy by giving a strategic framework based on geographic proximity, alliances, and rivalries that is still important in modern interstate relations.

H 2: Mandala Theory has clearly influenced India's present foreign policy paradigms, which include neighbourhood diplomacy and strategic collaborations with global powers, as evidenced by the management of friend-enemy dynamics and balancing methods.

H3: While Mandala Theory provides fundamental insights, its conventional geographic-centric approach has limitations in completely addressing modern foreign policy concerns such as economic diplomacy, cyber security, and multilateral engagements, demanding changes for current relevance.

Justification of Hypotheses

- This notion is supported by Mandala Theory, which holds that a state's close neighbours are the principal factors impacting its security and diplomacy, while secondary neighbours play a variety of roles, including allies and neutral parties. This spatial and relational logic is strongly reflected in India's foreign policy, particularly its "Neighbourhood First" approach. Historical writings and contemporary policy show that India prioritises managing ties with neighbouring countries using Mandala Theory concepts, demonstrating the ancient framework's effect on modern strategic thinking.
- This idea is reinforced by India's numerous strategic ties outside of its immediate neighbourhood, including the Quad alliance and collaborations with Russia, Japan, and others. These relationships are analogous to Mandala's concept of concentric circles including allies and adversaries at varied distances, in which the state must balance power through flexible diplomacy. India's subtle balancing act of cooperation and rivalry is consistent with Kautilya's six-fold policies of war, peace, neutrality, and alliances,

demonstrating how Mandala Theory influences modern diplomatic practice.

- This concept is supported by the reality that modern international relations include issues beyond territorial neighbours, such as economic interdependence, cyber warfare, space diplomacy, and global multilateralism, which the conventional Mandala framework cannot fully account for. India's developing policies in several fields highlight the necessity to broaden and adapt the Mandala theoretical framework in order for it to stay helpful. The need for such changes supports the premise that Mandala Theory is a valuable foundation but requires modernisation to reflect today's geopolitical circumstances.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study uses a qualitative research design and a descriptive-analytical approach to analyse the theoretical foundations of Kautilya's Mandala Theory and its implementation in modern Indian foreign policy. The study intends to critically examine how ancient statecraft concepts continue and evolve in current strategy, providing a more nuanced view of India's geopolitical behaviour.

Theoretical Framework

The study is based on the classical realism theoretical framework, with a focus on pragmatic state behaviour, power balancing, and strategic alliances. It also combines ideas from indigenous knowledge systems to better understand the cultural and historical context of the Mandala Theory as an analytical tool in international affairs.

Data Collection

The study utilizes secondary data collected from diverse and credible sources, including:

- Primary Ancient Texts: Mandala Theory's core notions are based on translations and authoritative comments of Kautilya's Arthaśāstra and other traditional Indian political literature.
- Academic Literature: Peer-reviewed journal papers, books, and dissertations on Mandala Theory, Indian foreign policy strategies, and the

junction of ancient wisdom and modern geopolitics.

- **Government and Policy Documents:** Official publications, strategic doctrines, white papers, and press announcements from Indian ministries and international organisations that provide information about current diplomatic policies and efforts.
- **Think Tank and Research Institution Reports:** Analytical studies and policy briefs from reputable institutes evaluating India's strategic environment and foreign relations.
- **Credible Media Sources:** Selected news stories and expert commentary on present diplomatic engagements and strategic manoeuvres.

Data Analysis

The data will undergo thematic content analysis, involving:

- **Data Coding:** The systematic coding of textual information to uncover repeating themes, concepts, and patterns related to Mandala Theory and its use in modern politics.
- **Comparative Analysis:** Examining ancient theoretical frameworks alongside contemporary foreign policy practices to identify continuities, adaptations, and divergences.
- **Synthesis:** The integration of facts into a coherent narrative describing the relevance of Mandala Theory in India's current geopolitical policy and foreign relations.

Triangulation of data from multiple sources will be used to enhance reliability and validity, ensuring a balanced and well-substantiated analysis.

Scope and Delimitations

The study focusses on the era between the classical articulation of Mandala Theory in ancient India and its interpretations and applications in the twenty-first century geopolitical setting. Geographically, the focus is on India's interactions in South Asia and strategic engagements with major world powers. The study is limited to qualitative analysis, ignoring primary data collection methods such as interviews or surveys, which could be explored in future research.

Ethical Considerations

The research meets academic integrity requirements by correctly citing all sources and respecting intellectual property rights. Texts and policies will be interpreted objectively and culturally sensitively to avoid misrepresenting ancient beliefs as well as contemporary initiatives.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

This part examines and interprets secondary evidence gathered to investigate the relevance and application of Kautilya's Mandala Theory to contemporary Indian foreign policy. The analysis, guided by the research objectives, uses thematic content analysis to examine how ancient statecraft ideas inform present strategic doctrines, diplomatic endeavours, and security policies. The data is reviewed using key thematic categories such as neighbour relations, strategic collaborations, regional initiatives, economic diplomacy, security posture, and adaptations to evolving geopolitical issues.

The following discussion synthesises these issues, emphasising similarities between ancient and modern techniques as well as required modifications to India's changing geopolitical context.

Key Developments in India's Foreign Relations (2020–2024) Reflecting Mandala Theory Principles

Year	Key Developments	Reflection of Mandala Theory Principles	Strategic Significance
2020	Intensified "Neighbourhood First" initiatives; vaccine diplomacy and economic aid in South Asia	Management of immediate neighbours as primary strategic actors	Strengthening regional influence; balancing Pakistan and China's roles
2021	Expanded security cooperation with Quad partners (US, Japan, Australia); joint military exercises	Multi-layered alliance-building with distant powers reflecting outer Mandala circles	Enhancing strategic autonomy; counterbalancing China's regional ambitions
2022	Border infrastructure development and military readiness post-Ladakh clashes	Military preparedness with immediate rivals; balance of power through deterrence	Defence of territorial sovereignty; strategic signalling

2023	Deepened trade and strategic ties with ASEAN nations; promotion of “Act East” policy	Engagement with neighbours’ neighbours as pragmatic friends/partners	Economic integration and regional security networking
2024	Active engagement in multilateral forums (BRICS, SCO) and global climate diplomacy	Extended diplomacy beyond immediate geography; balancing multiple strategic interests	Enhancing global stature; securing diverse alliances

Source: Reports of Various Sources

The dynamic trajectory of India's international relations from 2020 to 2024, demonstrating how strategic decisions align with the core principles of Kautilya's Mandala Theory. The emphasis on "Neighbourhood First" in 2020 emphasises the traditional Mandala focus on controlling close neighbours as major sources of both threat and opportunity. This is notably visible in India's vaccine diplomacy and development contributions to neighbouring nations, which combine collaboration with a geopolitical goal of increasing regional influence. The Quad alliance's strengthening in 2021 corresponds to the Mandala's aspect of outer circles of allies. The move demonstrates India's strategic balance in the Indo-Pacific region, fighting competing countries while strengthening multilateral security frameworks.

The military buildup and border infrastructure construction in 2022 demonstrate Kautilya's idea of preparedness and deterrent against immediate threats.

The emphasis on maintaining sovereignty and territorial integrity represents the Mandala's pragmatic approach to war and peace policy alternatives. By 2023, India's expanded trade partnerships with ASEAN and the Act East policy signal a shift in diplomatic perspectives to neighbours' neighbours, a fundamental Mandala idea incorporating flexible alliances to provide strategic depth beyond immediate rivals. Finally, India's strong engagement in multilateral forums in 2024 indicates how Mandala's concentric circles have been adapted to a multipolar global system. Extending diplomacy beyond regional borders and balancing competing international interests illustrates the changing character of statecraft in a complicated geopolitical environment. Overall, the table depicts a consistent pattern in which ancient statecraft concepts shape India's multifaceted and adaptable foreign policy, proving the Mandala framework's enduring relevance in shaping current strategy.

Strategic Aspects of India’s Foreign Policy Connected to Mandala Theory

Aspect	Description	Mandala Theory Connection	Recent Example(s)
Neighbour Relations	Cooperation, rivalry, and balancing with immediate Neighbours	Neighbours as natural enemies/friends in the immediate circle	India-Pakistan tensions, India-China border stand-offs; vaccine diplomacy with Nepal, Bhutan
Strategic Partnerships	Alliances with global powers beyond immediate Neighbours	Outer circles as allies or neutrals	Quad alliance (US, Japan, Australia), India-Russia military cooperation, India-Japan partnership
Regional Initiatives	Policies to enhance influence within South Asia and Neighbourhood	Neighbourhood First policy focuses on managing immediate geopolitical circle	Development projects in Bangladesh, Sri Lanka; SAARC and BIMSTEC engagements
Economic Diplomacy	Trade, investments, and connectivity for influence	Economic statecraft complements diplomatic balance	Act East policy, Look East strategies, trade deals with ASEAN
Security and Defence	Military preparedness and strategic deterrence	Military strength to secure sovereignty and balance threats	Border infrastructure with China, armed forces modernization, Indo-Pacific naval exercises
Multilateral Diplomacy	Engagement in global forums beyond immediate geography	Expansion of Mandala framework to global multipolarity	Active participation in BRICS, SCO, UN, climate summits
Adaptation to Technology	Incorporation of cyber and space domains	Extension beyond classical geographic focus	Cybersecurity initiatives, space diplomacy, satellite programs
Non-State Actors	Impact of insurgents, terrorism, diaspora on foreign relations	Challenges traditional state-centric Mandala assumptions	Counterterrorism cooperation, Indian diaspora engagement

Source: Reports of Various Sources

Mandala Theory is used to systematically organise key aspects of India's foreign policy strategy, integrating traditional statecraft concepts to modern strategic methodologies. The emphasis on neighbour interactions reflects the core Mandala principle that local neighbours can be both adversaries and collaborators. This duality may be seen in India's complex ties with Pakistan and China, as well as its cooperative relations with Nepal and Bhutan, which are managed pragmatically inside the Mandala circle. Strategic ties with global powers indicate India's efforts to recruit outer-circle allies, supporting the Mandala emphasis on dynamic alliances that extend beyond immediate region. Cooperation within the Quad and India-Russia defence ties highlight this broader strategic outreach aimed at balancing regional dangers and increasing global influence. Regional initiatives under policies such as "Neighbourhood First" highlight India's prioritisation of its immediate geopolitical context, which aligns with the Mandala's spatial logic. These measures not only address security problems but also focus on economic and diplomatic interaction, which fosters goodwill and stability.

Economic diplomacy appears as a parallel pillar, with trade and investment serving as means to build favourable influence networks, reflecting Mandala's comprehensive approach to statecraft that extends beyond military and diplomatic channels. This is reflected in India's Act East initiative and developing economic ties with ASEAN nations. Security and defence postures are strongly aligned with Mandala precepts for military preparedness and deterrence to protect sovereignty. The expansion of border infrastructure, modernisation of the military forces, and expanded Indo-Pacific naval exercises all indicate India's desire to project power and secure its local space. Multilateral diplomacy extends Mandala's concentric circles notion to a multipolar global system, reflecting India's active participation in international bodies such as the BRICS and SCO. This expands India's strategic options and underlines its position as a regional and developing global power. The adaptation to technology domains such as cyber security and space diplomacy demonstrates a critical shift away from Mandala Theory's conventional geographic orientation, including current strategic problems and possibilities into India's foreign policy matrix.

Finally, admitting the role of non-state actors adds

complexity to Kautilya's conventional paradigm. Counterterrorism cooperation and engagement with the Indian diaspora emphasise the expanding realities of modern diplomacy and security, necessitating sophisticated solutions that align with Mandala's adaptable and pragmatic character. In conclusion, above table provides a thorough framework demonstrating that Mandala Theory continues to provide an important conceptual underpinning for India's current strategic behaviours, while also supporting innovation and adaptability to new geopolitical circumstances and difficulties.

Finding

This study uncovers three significant results that explain the ongoing relevance and evolving use of Kautilya's Mandala Theory in India's contemporary foreign policy and strategic framework:

Enduring Influence of Mandala Principles:

Mandala Theory's basic concepts, such as geographic proximity, concentric rings of allies and rivals, and flexible diplomacy, remain influential in India's strategic considerations. Foreign policy initiatives such as "Neighbourhood First" prioritise immediate neighbours, reflecting an old emphasis on managing relations with the closest circle of governments.

Strategic Partnerships Reflect Multi-Layered Mandala Circles:

India's strategic partnerships with global powers, such as the Quad alliance and defence cooperation with Russia and Japan, align with Mandala Theory's concept of outer circles, which provide strategic depth and power balance. These ties are critical to India's efforts to balance regional threats and assert geopolitical autonomy.

Modern Versions of Ancient Statecraft:

The Mandala framework is modified to include more recent fields including economic diplomacy, cyber security, and space strategy, although geographic concerns still play a major role. A practical extension of strategic policy beyond conventional geographical concerns is demonstrated by India's Act East policy and technical initiatives.

The function of military readiness and deterrence:

In line with Mandala's support for preserving military might, India has recently made investments in border infrastructure, modernising its armed forces, and conducting naval drills, all of which show a strategic stance intended to ward off immediate threats, especially those posed by China and Pakistan.

Non-State Actor Complexities:

The study points out that the Mandala Theory's state-centric emphasis has limitations because non-state actors that affect diplomatic and security dynamics, like insurgent organisations and diaspora populations, must be taken into account in contemporary foreign policy. India's diaspora involvement and counterterrorism cooperation are essential policy extensions outside the traditional frameworks.

Multilateral Diplomacy as an Extension of Mandala Circles:

India's active participation in multilateral institutions such as the UN, SCO, and BRICS demonstrates an expanded understanding of Mandala Theory, in which concentric circles cover global multipolarity and offer more platforms for collaboration and influence.

All things considered, the results show a robust and adaptable indigenous strategic philosophy that guides India's delicate balancing act in a changing geopolitical environment. The importance of the Mandala Theory in comprehending the historical foundations and potential future directions of India's foreign policy is confirmed by this combination of continuity and innovation.

CONCLUSION

This study concluded that Kautilya's Mandala Theory remains a powerful framework for assessing India's current foreign policy and strategic behaviour. The Mandala Theory, founded on ancient notions of concentric circles of power, alliances, and rivalries, offers long-term insights into how India navigates complicated regional and global dynamics. Analysing recent diplomatic initiatives, security strategies, and economic engagements reveals that Mandala concepts such as managing immediate neighbours as primary concerns, cultivating strategic partnerships beyond direct borders, and maintaining military readiness continue to shape India's foreign policy approach. This study also emphasises the need for adaptation and

creativity within the Mandala framework to handle emerging challenges in the twenty-first century. The traditional geographic focus needs to be broadened to include multidimensional variables including cyber security, space diplomacy, economic interdependence, and the influence of non-state players. India's growing strategic tactics reflect a pragmatic synthesis of old knowledge and current realities, assuring relevance and efficacy in a continuously shifting geopolitical landscape. This study helps to provide a more nuanced and culturally grounded view of India's foreign policy by connecting ancient Indian statecraft with contemporary strategic imperatives. It demonstrates the importance of indigenous theoretical viewpoints in enriching global international relations discourse and lays the groundwork for future research into how classical ideas might guide current diplomacy and security. Finally, the Mandala Theory serves as both a historical artefact and a contemporary guide, allowing India to establish strategic autonomy, improve regional stability, and elevate its global role in the face of new possibilities and challenges.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Combine Conventional Knowledge with Modern Policymaking.

Particularly when developing neighbourhood and regional plans, policymakers should deliberately integrate the strategic insights of Kautilya's Mandala Theory into contemporary foreign policy frameworks, utilising its emphasis on practical diplomacy, power balance, and adaptable coalitions

Extend Frameworks for Strategy Outside of Geography.

In order to effectively address the opportunities and challenges of the modern world, India should keep developing the Mandala principles by including space strategy, cyber security, economic diplomacy, and multilateral engagement into its foreign policy.

Boost Diplomatic Engagement at Several Levels.

Prioritising close neighbours, regional allies, and superpowers at the same time is essential to fostering stronger diplomatic ties. India's strategic autonomy and worldwide influence will be strengthened by this multifaceted strategy, which is based on Mandala's concentric circles.

Create Sturdy Mechanisms to Deal with Non-State Players.

India should expand its diplomatic and security policy to incorporate diaspora diplomacy, transnational governance tactics, and comprehensive counterterrorism cooperation, given the important role that non-state players play in contemporary international relations.

Invest in technological and defence capabilities.

Consistent investment in border infrastructure, cyber defence, space capabilities, and military modernisation is essential to preserving India's sovereignty and strategic interests, in keeping with Mandala's emphasis on readiness.

Encourage Native American Theoretical Views in Higher Education.

International relations studies will be enhanced by promoting study and discussion of indigenous frameworks such as Mandala Theory, which offer context-specific insights that enhance prevailing Western paradigms and better guide policy decisions.

Encourage Regional Stability with Initiatives for Inclusive Development.

In line with Mandala's principles of alliance and influence-building, extending economic and developmental cooperation in South Asia through programs like infrastructure connection and humanitarian help can foster goodwill and reduce violence.

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