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**Внешняя политика Индии: основные
стратегические направления**

**India's foreign policy: main strategic
directions**

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Аннотация. В статье рассматривается проблема становления стратегических направлений внешней политики Индии, так как современная внешняя политика Индии определяется именно потребностью преодоления географической и геополитической изолированности. Делается вывод, что упор на экономическую составляющую в современной системе международных отношений содействует решению двух базовых задач – создание условий для экономической безопасности страны и усиление ее конкурентоспособности на макроэкономическом уровне. Следующий вывод – будет возрастать степень соперничества Индии с КНР за региональное влияние, и существенным для обеих азиатских держав станет борьба за признание мировым сообществом. В данном контексте Индия будет опираться на два фактора: «индийской демократии» в противовес «китайскому социализму» и индийской поддержки США в вопросе «сдерживания Китая».

Ключевые слова: Индия, Китай, США, Россия, внешняя политика, «соседство прежде всего», внешнеполитическая стратегия

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Abstract. The article deals with the problem of the formation of strategic directions of India's foreign policy, since the modern foreign policy of India is determined precisely by the need to overcome geographical and geopolitical isolation. It is concluded that the emphasis on the economic component in the modern system of international relations contributes to the solution of two basic tasks – creating conditions for the economic security of the country and strengthening its competitiveness at the macroeconomic level. The next conclusion is that the degree of rivalry between India and China for regional influence will increase, and the struggle for recognition by the world community will become essential for both Asian powers. In this context, India will rely on two factors: "Indian democracy" as opposed to "Chinese socialism" and Indian support for the United States in the issue of "containing China".

Keywords: India, China, USA, Russia, foreign policy, "neighborhood first of all", foreign policy strategy

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Introduction. Contemporary Indian foreign policy is characterized by increasing conceptual changes. Despite the fact that Delhi's foreign policy remains committed to strengthening its role in its home region of South Asia and protecting its interests on regional agendas, achieving the status of a global actor is still of key importance today. In turn, the state's political establishment often exaggerates the impact of the rapid development of the Indian economy on the country's foreign policy and tries to ignore negative economic and social factors that reduce its importance and authority in the international arena and reduce the scope of opportunities for Indian diplomacy.

Materials and research methods. The article uses a structural-functional method that implies the decomposition of the object under study into its component parts and the disclosure of internal connections and relationships between them. The thematic field of research contributed to the use of general scientific methods of theoretical knowledge, such as the scientific description of the object of knowledge, the axiomatization method, the hypothetico-deductive method, the formalization method, etc. Among the specific scientific research methods, the authors turned to the method of theoretical pluralism.

The degree of scientific development of the topic. An analysis of the features and directions of Indian foreign policy is reflected in the works of such authors as A. Belov [1], E. Bragin [3, 85-88], K.K. Dryazgunov [4], N.N. Emelyanova [5, 35-53], G. Kanwal [21, 1951-1972], Sh. Kumar [22, 353-371], C. Lu [27], Ya.A. Levitan [11], S.I. Lunev [12, 37-41], Y. Liu [28], Sh. Menon [23], O.A. Kharin [21, 9], I. Hall [18, 271-286], V. Chandra [16, 98-117], S.K. Shah [24], V. Shekhar [25, 235-251], etc.

Research results and their discussion. From the point of view of geopolitical directions, Indian foreign policy can be divided into several relevant strategic directions:

In the first direction, which includes relations with neighboring states, the Indian leadership strives for leadership and obtaining the right of veto on intervention from the position of a third party, and in the context of activities in this perspective, the Indian government proclaims the "neighborhood first" policy, which was announced on January 1, 2020 during telephone conversations between the Prime Minister of India and the leaders of five neighboring countries: Bhutan, Sri Lanka, the Maldives, Bangladesh and Nepal. Thus, the Indian leadership assured neighboring countries that it would continue to "remain in the position of ensuring peace, security and prosperity for India's friends and partners in the region" [6]. The designated course is expressed in a number of documents. Thus, in 2020, seven agreements were concluded with Bangladesh, and, as the Prime Minister clarified, this was primarily a consequence of the Indian strategic vector of "neighborhood first." Still, it should be noted that Bangladesh, which in 2021 celebrated the half-century anniversary of the declaration of independence from Pakistan, could always count on support from India, including in the struggle for independence.

India also fully supports the political structure of Sri Lanka, making its feasible contribution to the development of stability and economic development in it: in 2022, the Indian government stated that "in accordance with our "neighborhood first" policy, India has provided support to the people of Sri Lanka more than US\$3.5 billion to help overcome their current difficulties" [7].

Bhutan's King D. Wangchuck, despite his prime minister's statements in favor of strengthening ties with China, visited New Delhi in April 2023 as India intends to strengthen financial support for Bhutan by approving an additional (third) line of credit. Long-term agreements were signed on the export of agricultural products from Bhutan and the supply of oil, coal and fertilizers to the kingdom. In the future, it is planned to launch a railway connection between India and Bhutan (Kokradjhar-Gelephu), cooperation in the field of STEM education (in natural sciences, technology, engineering and mathematics) [8].

India traditionally supports the Maldives: in 2022 alone, the latter received a loan of \$100 million for the implementation of infrastructure projects; the parties signed “a total of six cooperation agreements, including in the field of cybersecurity, disaster management, marine scientific research and infrastructure development” [9].

India's assistance to Nepal is not decreasing either: over the past two years alone, the world media have noted that “India will save Nepal from the threat of famine” [10], “India is donating 30 ambulances and six buses to Nepalese hospitals, charitable organizations and educational institutions for on the occasion of Independence Day” [20], “Nepal and India concluded cross-border energy deals” [14], etc.

Neighboring Myanmar, which is not included in the list of “close friends,” nevertheless also counts on the support of the Indian government: in June 2023, a high-level meeting of representatives of the countries was held, where the creation of a mechanism for trade settlements in national currencies was discussed, which will undoubtedly be promote bilateral trade and investment growth.

In our opinion, this guideline in relation to neighboring countries is intended to outline four points. First, New Delhi's willingness to give political and diplomatic priority to its immediate neighbors and Indian Ocean island states. Second, provide support to neighbors in the form of resources, equipment, and training when needed. Third, and perhaps most important, is the expansion of integration capabilities to improve the free flow of goods, people, energy, capital and information. The fourth is to promote a model of India-led regionalism with which its neighbors feel comfortable.

However, it is worth noting that Delhi's policy towards neighboring countries is today complicated by the growing participation of China. In addition, neighboring states do not seek to fully recognize India's status as a regional power, and all its activities aimed at forming a regional system and positioning itself as a regional political leader have so far yielded few positive results.

This is determined by several factors that undermine India's regional ambitions. First of all, due to common religious, linguistic and ethnic ties, foreign policy debates in neighboring countries are often associated with discussions about national identity, which emphasize differences from India [26, 2]. Consequently, Indian interference in neighboring countries may be perceived as a threat to their national identity. In Sri Lanka, Buddhist nationalist groups are characterized by frequent criticism of India, in Bangladesh, debates about Bengali and Bangladeshi nationalism are closely linked to their closest powerful neighbor, and in Nepal, most parties argue about relations with their larger neighbor to the south [26, 2]. The common religious, ethnic and linguistic traditions that should bind the region also act as a counterbalance to India's regional ambitions.

Along with this, from a political point of view, China still has more advantages than India, as it is considered a “neutral” player in most countries in South Asia. China has never been part of the nation-building debate in South Asia, so its bilateral relations with most countries in the region often lack a history of sociocultural ties and previous interventions. Economically, China is also a more attractive partner for South Asian countries than India.

The most acute still remains the territorial dispute with Pakistan, which recently culminated in a major terrorist attack in Pulwama district in February 2019, which brought the two states to the brink of war. In addition to this, Art. 370 of the Indian Constitution, which granted autonomy to the state of Jammu and Kashmir. It is obvious that this step was carried out by the Indian leadership with the aim of dividing the state into two regions controlled by the center, revising some local laws, and thereby creating a platform for internal migration, which could further contribute to changing the demographic composition of Kashmir in favor of the non-Muslim population.

From this we can conclude that Indian policy in South Asia faces a dilemma. On the one hand, religious, linguistic and ethnic ties bring India closer to the region. On the other hand, these ties separate India from its neighbors in terms of nation-building. Such structural contacts

and their consequences are difficult to eliminate. In this regard, India, which is building its sphere of regional influence, still needs to find adequate responses to the challenges of the existing asymmetry in its immediate environment.

The next strategic direction, which serves Delhi's geopolitical interests, is the desire to balance the influence of other powers and prevent them from limiting India's participation in the Asian region and the Indian Ocean (extended neighborhood strategy).

This area includes the countries of East and Southeast Asia, the Middle East and Central Asia, in which India seeks to ensure its strategic, economic and energy interests.

Over the past two decades, Delhi has successfully pursued its Look East Policy, which under the Modi government has transformed into the Act East Policy, which provides for accelerated comprehensive interaction between the two growth poles of dynamic Asia. At the core of this Asian relationship is India's growing cooperation with the ten countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the three pillars of which are trade, culture and communications.

East Asia as a whole is emerging as an increasingly important political and economic partner for India. Despite the fact that Delhi's economic relations with the countries of the region are developing dynamically, they are still at a fairly low level. Thus, Indian-Japanese economic relations are characterized more by their political nature than by their real economic basis. This is mainly due to India's orientation towards the domestic market, which determines the economic isolation of the state. The virtual absence of economic complementarity and convergence of economic interests limits India's effective participation in pan-Asian integration. In addition, the country strives to curb the external relations of those states over which it has serious leverage. In such a situation, in the near future, the Indian leadership, while continuing to expand economic interaction, will pay special attention to cultural-civilizational, military-strategic and, mainly, political relations.

Central Asia also remains an important partner for India, primarily as a supplier of natural resources. In order for cooperation in the energy sector to be successful, the Indian state needs to have strong political ties with the countries of the region. Just like Russia and China, Delhi has a more than 2,000-year history of developing cultural, religious and linguistic relations with the countries of the region, which are currently being used by the Indian leadership to restore its influence. For example, in one of the statements of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of India it was noted that India and Uzbekistan have ancient ties, since the Uzbeks were mentioned in the Indian epic [19].

India's Central Asia Policy is linked to China's increased economic influence in the region, which is now Central African Republic's largest trading partner. Unlike China, India does not have territorial borders with the Central African Republic, and the shortest route to the region passes through Pakistan or China. But since India never wanted to depend on either Pakistan or China to achieve its long-term goals, in 2016 it signed a trilateral agreement with Iran and Afghanistan to operationalize the strategic port of Chabahar in order to establish trade links with the Central African Republic, bypassing Pakistani territory and China.

Today, researchers note that India is emerging as a giant on the Asian stage. Thus, it has "deployed soft power assets around the world, especially in Central Asia, and is in the process of implementing capitalist-oriented economic reforms that are bringing fresh wind to its economy. The country also has a large, young, and well-trained population, which, against the backdrop of China's aging population, gives India a long-term advantage... Thus, India is an ideal partner for the United States in its policy to preserve the independence and sovereignty of Central Asia from Russia and China" [11].

Apart from the Asian direction, India has demonstrated a high degree of persistence in promoting partnership strategies in the Middle East, especially Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Israel. At the same time, Iran's interests are largely ignored: as a result of India's refusal to supply oil, Iran is losing tens of billions of dollars; in turn, "this alliance allows the Saudis to weaken Iran, and the Indians expect to have a negative impact on China by disrupting ties in the

China-Egypt-Iran group. The government of N. Modi is making attempts to attract investment and strengthen partnerships in the security sector” [4].

Oil remains the driving force behind Delhi's policy in the region. Thus, as a result of active cooperation, the Gulf countries have recently increased investments in the Indian energy sector, despite lower oil prices [1]. Considering that India is a major space power, from 2023 India's relations with the countries of the Middle East in the field of space cooperation will be intensified with the aim of exploring outer space for peaceful purposes. Yet, given the growing militarization of space, it is worth expecting that states such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE will be interested in deepening cooperation to build their intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities in outer space.

However, for the current Indian government, the Middle East is not just about commercial deals but also about security relationships. Delhi views Israel as a supplier of advanced military technologies. The country is also showing signs of overcoming its reluctance to build security partnerships with Gulf countries whose security services have long worked closely with Pakistan. For example, in 2018, India entered into an agreement with Oman allowing the Indian Navy to use the strategic port of Duqm.

In turn, against the backdrop of such steps, relations with Iran are increasingly fading into the background, and two factors contribute to this. The first is the reinstatement of American sanctions against Iran. Thus, contrary to the statement of the Indian Ministry of Foreign Affairs that the state does not recognize “any sanctions against a specific country,” many Indian companies do not dare to face repeated US sanctions [12,39]. Second, Iran, like India, is characterized by a tough type of negotiations. For example, complex negotiations regarding the project to develop the Iranian Farzad-B gas field have been ongoing since 2009 [12, 39].

Thus, the Indian “extended neighborhood” policy will remain an important foreign policy priority for the country’s leadership for many years to come.

Delhi persistently strives to play the role of a great power, an influential actor in international relations. This area includes relations with major world centers of power, regional powers, participation in large international associations, as well as policy towards subjects of world politics territorially distant from India.

Today India is a member of the G20, the East Asia summit and the BRICS coalition, and within the Group of Four (G4: India, Brazil, Germany, Japan) strives for permanent membership in the UN Security Council. The country has also lobbied hard for full membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, as well as the Nuclear Suppliers Group and the Missile Technology Control Regime.

Note that from the point of view of Delhi’s relations with world powers, interaction with China, the USA and Russia plays a key role.

Despite the development of political ties, as well as economic partnerships and social contacts, the effectiveness of Indian-American relations is reduced by disagreements related to access to trade markets, as well as disputes over certain mechanisms for technology transfer. Moreover, in such significant areas as defense and the military sphere, both states are not completely satisfied with what has been achieved, as they expected more from interaction. It is clear that India's current leadership will have to be particularly flexible in order not to compromise its commitment to fulfilling the commitments made within the framework of the grand partnership.

India's relations with China are associated with a number of both historical and modern factors, starting with the territorial problem and ending with the growing influence of China in the area of vital Indian interests and in the world as a whole. For both sides to work more effectively, they still need to address each other's concerns in a convincing and credible manner, which will require frank exchanges and political will.

In relations with Russia, N. Modi did not become hostage to subjective ideas and, demonstrating caution and integrity, contributed to the growth of Russian-Indian trade contacts, as this was in the interests of India. Taking into account the need to move bilateral cooperation

beyond the traditional framework of the military sphere, the Indian leadership focused its actions on the formation of new prospects for the strategic expansion of partnership in the field of energy, scientific and technological innovation in the civilian sector of the economy, in joint investment in innovative areas, as well as joint development of projects on modernization of defense platforms.

Delhi attaches fundamental importance to its relations with Moscow also due to the fact that Russia is becoming, albeit unequally, a counterweight to US leadership in numerous subregional platforms. It is also obvious that India, with its special attention to the Central African Republic, recognition of Russia's support for its entry into the SCO and the need to gain direct access deep into Eurasia, bypassing Europe, cannot help but contribute to strengthening contacts with Moscow along with increasing interaction with Washington. In particular, the United States cannot replace Russia as one of India's main arms suppliers. Overall, although India is a member of the QUAD (USA, Japan and Australia) alliance, which deepens its ties with the West, relations with Russia remain stable.

Conclusion. The current stage of development of international relations is characterized by an increasingly comprehensive approach to interaction between states. Due to the increasing involvement of states in global processes, "the property of unpredictability is increasingly becoming a property of politics at all levels and scales of the event field" [2, 142]. In accordance with this, it is obvious that in order to realize its progressive development, the state needs to implement a calibrated foreign policy course, focused on cooperation with a significant number of international actors in various fields. Thus, taking into account all of the above, we can highlight the general provisions of India's foreign policy strategy at the present stage.

Unlike China, which is strengthening its role in South Asia mainly through economic participation, India is expanding political and economic contacts with Vietnam, Mongolia, Japan, and other states of Southeast Asia due to the growing perception of China as a threatening force in the region. Along with this, Delhi refuses excessive cooperation with the United States and its allies, striving to implement an independent foreign policy and economy.

Today, the rapid development of China and India - two of the most populous countries and fastest growing economies in the world - has an impact not only on the situation in the Asian region, but also on the state of the international system as a whole, and therefore the importance of bilateral relations between these two powers is increasing. Although the hidden confrontation between the two countries will continue, constructive interaction will nevertheless take place. The parties adhere to the tendency to maintain political contacts at a high level and refrain from harsh rhetoric in the bilateral dialogue. The status quo remains with regard to the border dispute as neither China nor India are willing to make any compromise. Therefore, the development of this scenario can last for quite a long period.

The lack of trust reflected in the public consciousness and national concern based on the fact of India's historical defeat in the 1962 conflict with China are becoming a significant factor hindering constructive interaction between the two states. As a result of a series of diplomatic crises in Sino-Indian relations, the mutual perception of any unilateral actions as threats to national security is being updated in official discourse and government rhetoric, increasing the likelihood of an open armed conflict.

Against this background, India is forced to join a larger international bloc, the goal of which is to contain China and prevent it from occupying a dominant position in the region. This coalition takes the form of the "Eastern Military-Political Alliance" consisting of four states in the Indo-Pacific region: the USA, Japan, Australia and India.

Along with this, the inclusion of issues of Indo-Pakistan territorial settlement on the agenda by one of the SCO member states leads to a weakening of the organization and entails a serious loss of its effectiveness and prestige in international affairs.

Despite the fact that the likelihood of an open military confrontation between India and China still seems insignificant, the parties are actively using the mechanism of hybrid wars,

drawing an increasing number of neighboring countries of the continent into the process of confrontation.

The emphasis on the economic component in the modern system of international relations helps to solve two basic tasks - creating conditions for the country's economic security and strengthening its competitiveness at the macroeconomic level. The development of India as one of the full-fledged centers of a multipolar world order gives the continent's security system stability and significant predictability, and has a positive impact on global processes. Although the problem of border settlement with China still remains not fully resolved, such issues are gradually moving beyond the security dilemma and are being regulated in the context of bilateral formats through established procedures.

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