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## ***Debate in India on the Foreign Policy Course of Narendra Modi's Government***

Although there is generally a consensus in India on foreign policy issues, the leading opposition party, the Indian National Congress (INC), has been critical of the ruling coalition's foreign policy line.



Traditionally, foreign policy matters have not been at the center of the confrontation between the ruling and opposition parties, and there has been more or less a nationwide consensus on them. This issue usually takes a backseat during election campaigns and power struggles. However, this does not mean that there are no disagreements at all between rival political forces on certain aspects of India's foreign policy. Such contradictions existed both during the over 30-year rule of the National Congress and when power first shifted to right-wing opposition forces after the 1977 elections.

The party is particularly concerned about the plight of the Hindu minority in Bangladesh, though this concern is fully shared by the current BJP-led government

Currently, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), led by Narendra Modi, has been firmly in power at the national level and in most Indian states (28 in total) since 2014. The government

conducts its foreign policy without much regard for the opposition, which—due to its weakness and disunity—is unable to challenge the ruling coalition except in about 10 states where the INC and influential regional parties lead local governments. The largest opposition force, the INC, headed by the Indira-Rajiv Gandhi family clan—represented by Rajiv’s widow Sonia Gandhi and their two children, Rahul and Priyanka—has until recently focused its criticism on the government’s domestic policies, with only minor dissatisfaction expressed toward Modi’s foreign policy.

The situation changed in April 2025 when, after a long lull, the INC leadership sharply criticized some fundamental aspects of the government’s international course during a session of the party’s All-India Committee in Ahmedabad, the capital of Gujarat (Modi’s home state). In a resolution adopted at the meeting, BJP leaders were accused of pursuing a “weak, failed, and nationally detrimental” foreign policy. Among the criticisms were claims of Modi’s administration allegedly yielding unjustifiably to American pressure following the recent imposition of 27% import duties on Indian goods. The INC also condemned the government’s silent acceptance of the deportation of Indian migrants from the U.S. and its inadequate response to the persecution of the Hindu diaspora there. At the same time, the INC did not dispute the correctness of the policy of strengthening ties with the U.S. and EU countries.

Congress members are also dissatisfied with the state of New Delhi’s relations with Beijing, particularly China’s continued occupation of Indian territory in eastern Ladakh (Kashmir) and northeastern India. However, the resolution omits the fact that China seized these small territories during border clashes under the National Congress’s rule, meaning these issues were inherited by the BJP from previous governments. The INC also ignored the India-China dialogue initiated under Modi to improve bilateral relations and resolve disputes—though, to be fair, no major breakthroughs have been achieved in this direction so far.

The INC is further discontent with India’s relations with Bangladesh, which—until last summer’s political upheaval and change in government—had traditionally been a friendly and India-aligned nation. The party is particularly concerned about the plight of the Hindu minority in Bangladesh, though this concern is fully shared by the current BJP-led government. The resolution adopted at the INC session also includes other, more minor criticisms of foreign policy.

Overall, given the INC’s weak position on the national stage, these critical remarks by the leading opposition force are largely for internal party consumption and will not affect the confident, independent, and balanced multi-vector foreign policy pursued by Modi’s

government—a policy that aligns with India’s national interests. Alongside strengthening ties with the U.S. and the West in general, as well as neighboring countries (including China), Russia continues to hold a priority place in New Delhi’s foreign policy efforts.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to visit Moscow in May for events commemorating the 80th anniversary of the victory over fascism. Another Russia-India summit is also planned this year in New Delhi, aimed at further strengthening the specially privileged strategic partnership between the two traditionally close and friendly nations.

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