

INDIA'S DIPLOMATIC CALCULUS IN THE 2025 MIDDLE EAST CRISIS: NAVIGATING FRIENDS, FUEL, AND FORESIGHT

ANIL KUMAR

Assistant Professor of Political Science, IGN College Ladwa, Kurukshetra, Haryana

ABSTRACT

With growing tensions endangering both regional peace and global energy security, the Middle East crisis of 2025 has presented a serious obstacle to international diplomacy. Given its strategic objectives, established ties with Gulf countries, oil dependence, and rising international prominence, India faces a challenging diplomatic calculation in this situation. This essay looks at how India has handled the complex situation by striking a balance between principle and practicality, putting the interests of the country first while promoting peace and international cooperation. India's diplomatic reaction shows that its foreign policy objectives—preserving energy security, safeguarding its diaspora, preserving strategic autonomy, and fortifying ties with major Middle Eastern nations like Saudi Arabia, Iran, and the United Arab Emirates—are carefully aligned. India has tried to defuse tensions while maintaining its strategic flexibility through tactful participation at both the bilateral and international levels, including the UN and regional organizations. The research also looks at how India's response to the issue highlights its growing prominence as a responsible global player with the ability to mediate and handle challenging geopolitical situations. This article concludes by highlighting how India's foreign policy has changed in a tumultuous world order and how a robust and adaptable international strategy may be shaped via diplomacy based on foresight, non-alignment 2.0, and regional connectivity.

1. INTRODUCTION

Contextualizing the 2025 Middle East Crisis (Israel–Iran Escalation)

After Israel and Iran engaged in direct combat, the Middle East crisis of 2025 broke out. Iran's support for proxy groups around the region, its nuclear aspirations, and Israel's preemptive strikes against Iranian military sites in Syria were the main causes of the long-simmering tensions. Iran launched a full-scale retaliatory missile assault in April 2025 in response to an Israeli raid on an Iranian command center in Damascus, which included coordinated assaults by the Houthis and Hezbollah. As the two governments' first direct military conflict, it quickly heightened tensions in the area, upended international oil markets, and jeopardized vital shipping channels. While China and Russia provided subdued answers in line with their strategic objectives, the United States and European Union called for moderation in the face of the crisis, which attracted considerable international attention. Concern centered on the Strait of Hormuz, a crucial chokepoint for the world's oil traffic. India faced a significant diplomatic and geopolitical dilemma as a result of these events, necessitating an immediate adjustment to its foreign policy. Has India addressed this dispute? On June 13, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called Prime Minister Narendra Modi to alert him on Israel's strike on Iran's nuclear facilities. Iran launched targeted strikes in a number of places, including Tehran, where top Iranian generals were killed. At the UN Security Council, Israel said that these assaults were "preemptive" and not retaliatory for any attacks, while Iran contended that they were a blatant breach of international law. Mr. Modi "shared India's concern and emphasised the need

for an early restoration of peace and stability in the region," the administration said in a statement. External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar made a call to Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, expressing "the deep concern of the international community at the turn of events" and urging non-retaliation and diplomacy. Gideon Sa'ar, the foreign minister of Israel, also spoke with Mr. Jaishankar. In a statement, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) adopted a cautious approach and urged communication and compromise.

Presenting India's Strategic Imperatives

India's response to the 2025 crisis was shaped by five interrelated imperatives:

1. **Energy Security:** The possible closing of the Strait of Hormuz posed a direct danger to India's economic stability because more than 85% of its crude oil was imported, with a sizable amount coming from the Gulf. Historically, a key provider of crude oil. Significance of maintaining oil diversification options available.
2. **Diaspora Protection:** About 9 million Indians live in the Middle East, and their safety, economic contributions, and remittance flows are essential to India's social cohesion and economic growth. Whenever there is a problem in the Middle East, the entire Middle East has to face the crisis. At that time, the Indians living there also have to face the crisis. In such times of crisis, India comes forward to protect its citizens. Seeing the Iran-Israel conflict that is going on now, India has started forgetting its citizens from both the countries. India was afraid that the war might escalate further; Iran and Israel are bombing each other.
3. **Strategic Autonomy:** India has to respond diplomatically in a carefully measured manner because of its balanced connections with Israel, Iran, and the Gulf states. India's quest for strategic autonomy, regional stability, economic expansion, and worldwide influence forms the basis of its strategic imperatives. India's foreign policy is still founded on strategic autonomy, which gives it the freedom to decide on matters of national interest rather than in accordance with any one power bloc. India's balanced diplomacy is guided by this idea, which calls for keeping close connections with the US and its allies while also interacting with China, Russia, and Iran as needed. Modernizing its defenses, guaranteeing food and energy security, and defending its extensive marine interests in the Indian Ocean region are among India's main priorities. Through the Act East and Look West strategies, India expands its strategic reach while prioritizing stable ties with its neighbors in order to defend its borders and affirm its position as a regional leader. India utilizes organizations like the G20, BRICS, QUAD, and SCO to increase its economic and geopolitical clout, promotes a multipolar world order, and works to change global governance institutions. When taken as a whole, these requirements represent India's goal of becoming a powerful, independent, and significant force on the international scene.
4. **Maritime Trade and Security:** India's commercial and geopolitical positioning depended on the Arabian water and Persian Gulf having free and safe water channels. International politics and the global economy depend heavily on maritime trade and security. Since maritime routes account for more than 90% of all international trade by volume, sea lanes' safety and stability are crucial for both economic expansion and energy security. Important conduits of international trade, such as the Suez Canal, the Strait of Hormuz, and the Strait of Malacca, are also susceptible to dangers including smuggling, marine terrorism, piracy, and geopolitical unrest. The maritime security situation has become even more complex in recent years due to increased naval competition, particularly in the Indian Ocean and South China Sea. Countries are upgrading their warships, improving marine domain awareness through technology, and stepping up collaboration

through regional partnerships, UNCLOS, and the International marine Organization (IMO) in order to solve these issues. Initiatives like SAGAR are likewise being advanced by nations like India to guarantee a safe marine neighborhood. All things considered, marine security and trade are closely related, and their efficient administration is crucial for.

5. **Regional Influence:** Through channels like I2U2 and IMEC, the crisis gave India a chance to demonstrate its diplomatic might and solidify its position as a regional stabilizing force. India's location, economic goals, security concerns, and civilizational identity all influence its strategic imperatives, regional influence, and global aspirations. India, which has a strategic location in the Indian Ocean, places a high priority on protecting commerce and energy security, defending marine routes, and thwarting regional threats. Maintaining internal stability, controlling its borders with China and Pakistan, guaranteeing energy security, and updating its defense and technology industries are some of its strategic priorities. With programs like Act East, SAGAR, and Neighbourhood First, India aims to establish leadership in the region while strengthening its connections with South Asian and Indo-Pacific countries. In West Asia, Central Asia, and Southeast Asia, India maintains equilibrium while opposing China's ambition. India wants to be a major force in the world, supporting a rules-based international order and multilateral reforms including UNSC membership. India is establishing itself as a responsible force with both strategic autonomy and worldwide impact by actively participating in organizations such as BRICS, QUAD, G20, SCO, and Global South leadership.

2. FRIENDS

India–Israel: Military Cooperation & Strategic Dialogue

India and Israel have established a strong defense alliance that includes joint development of cyber security frameworks, UAVs, and missile defense systems. India and Tel Aviv kept up backchannel talks during the crisis, highlighting moderation and strengthening military technology cooperation. Based on shared geopolitical interests, technical cooperation, and security imperatives, India and Israel have a strong and expanding defense and strategic partnership. An organized summary of their strategic communication and military cooperation may be found below:

India–Gulf: Energy, Diaspora, and Regional Diplomacy

India has a wide range of relationships with the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Oman, including defense discussions, energy commerce, and a sizable Indian labor force. To guarantee the safety of the diaspora and the continuity of the energy supply, India maintained diplomatic relations with these governments. Important instruments for regional participation were initiatives such as the India-UAE Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), I2U2, and IMEC. India's involvement in the Gulf area is multifaceted and includes rising diplomatic and strategic collaboration, a sizable Indian diaspora, and energy security.

3. FUEL

Energy Security amid Strait of Hormuz Disruptions

A third of the world's oil transits via the Strait of Hormuz, which was in risk due to the fighting. India implemented contingency measures, including as using strategic reserves, improving maritime shipping insurance, and collaborating with Gulf producers to ensure a steady supply. Nearly 20% of the world's oil and one-third of its LNG exports flow through the Strait of Hormuz, a small chokepoint between the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman that is vital to global energy security. Any interruption, whether brought on by regional war, Iranian threats, or marine assaults, poses serious

dangers to supply chains and energy costs for major energy-importing countries like China, Japan, India, and a large portion of Europe. Iran has frequently used the strait as a geopolitical bargaining point by threatening to block it in reaction to military pressure or sanctions. These interruptions raise the cost of shipping insurance, cause global oil prices to rise, and intensify strategic rivalry in the Gulf. Countries invest in strategic petroleum reserves (SPRs), diversify their energy sources, strengthen naval cooperation for maritime security, and explore renewable energy options in an effort to reduce these risks. Given India's heavy reliance on Gulf oil, maintaining energy security in the face of these threats calls for a combination of bolstering military presence in the Indian Ocean, engaging diplomatically with Gulf countries, and lowering reliance on fossil fuels by switching to green energy.

Alternate Sourcing and Supply Diversification

India increased imports from the Americas and West Africa to diversify its energy sources. In order to protect against supply shocks from the Middle East, it also increased expenditures in local manufacturing and renewable energy. To improve energy security, alternative sourcing and supply diversity are crucial tactics, especially during periods of geopolitical unrest or interruptions like those in the Strait of Hormuz. Countries are increasingly looking to a variety of suppliers in Africa (Nigeria, Angola), Latin America (Brazil, Venezuela), and North America (U.S. shale oil) to lessen their over-reliance on a single source, such as the Middle East. More flexibility is also made possible by the rise in LNG imports from nations like the US, Australia, and Qatar. In order to mitigate short-term shocks, countries are now investing in strategic petroleum reserves, or SPRs. This entails investigating long-term energy deals, strengthening energy connections with nations like the U.S. and Russia, and balancing imports from both OPEC and non-OPEC sources for India. Diversification also entails moving toward domestic energy generation and renewable energy sources like solar, wind, and green hydrogen. When combined, these initiatives lessen susceptibility to supply interruptions and promote a more robust and independent energy future.

4. FORESIGHT

Strategic Autonomy and Non-Alignment

India called for de-escalation but refrained from adopting a clear stance, refusing to support anti-Israel resolutions at multilateral venues such as the SCO. This position enabled India to maintain relations beyond geopolitical boundaries and supported its goal of strategic autonomy. India's philosophy of strategic autonomy and a contemporary definition of non-alignment serve as the foundation for its interactions with the Middle East, enabling it to pursue its own interests without being embroiled in regional conflicts. Today's non-alignment indicates India's attempt to maintain balanced ties with contending powers—such as Saudi Arabia and Iran or Israel and Palestine—without choosing sides, in contrast to the Cold War era when non-alignment meant distancing from superpower blocs. India can strengthen commercial and strategic relationships throughout the region, protect its diaspora, and ensure its energy security with this strategy. India has maintained energy and civilizational ties with Iran while forging solid defense and commercial ties with Israel. Additionally, it has strong relations with Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) nations like Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, which are key oil suppliers and are home to millions of Indian expats. India maintains its reputation as an impartial, trustworthy, and practical partner dedicated to communication, growth, and regional stability in the Middle East by avoiding involvement in ideological or sectarian conflicts.

Infrastructure Diplomacy: Chabahar, IMEC, and I2U2

Through its active involvement in the India-Middle East-Europe Corridor (IMEC) and the Chabahar Port in Iran, India enhanced its infrastructure objectives. Concurrently, I2U2 (India, Israel, the United Arab Emirates, and the United States) promoted technical collaborations and cooperative investment initiatives that struck a balance between regional alignment and military involvement. India's concentration on infrastructure diplomacy, as seen by key projects like Chabahar Port, the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), and the I2U2 grouping (India, Israel, UAE, USA), is significantly influencing its expanding footprint in the Middle East. New Delhi's interest in regional connectivity and commercial diversification is symbolized by the Chabahar Port in Iran, which was built with Indian aid and provides India direct access to Afghanistan and Central Asia without going via Pakistan. Launched during the 2023 G20 Summit, the recently announced IMEC seeks to oppose China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) by connecting India with the Middle East and Europe through multimodal transport corridors that traverse through the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Israel. I2U2, on the other hand, promotes economic collaboration in the areas of infrastructure, food security, energy, and innovation by fusing Indian technology and labor with Middle Eastern funding and strategic support from the United States. When taken as a whole, these initiatives show India's desire to strengthen its geo-economic influence, serve as a center for connectivity, and stabilize a strategically important area.

Contingency Measures to Protect Abroad Indians

India increased consular outreach in high-risk areas and triggered evacuation ready procedures. For Indian people to be protected and maybe repatriated, coordination with the governments of the Gulf was essential. India has a high strategic and humanitarian focus on protecting its diaspora, which consists of more than 9 million Indians living throughout the Middle East. India has put in place a number of contingency preparations to protect its inhabitants in times of crisis, including military wars, political upheaval, pandemics, and natural catastrophes. Through its embassies and consulates, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) keeps emergency hotlines open, registers foreign nationals, and works with host governments to arrange evacuation and relief efforts. To repatriate thousands of trapped citizens, India has carried out significant evacuation operations like as Operation Rahat (Yemen, 2015) and Vande Bharat Mission (COVID-19, 2020). While MoUs on labor cooperation with Gulf nations seek to promote safe migration and grievance redressal, the e-Migrate system controls and protects migrant workers. The Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF) also offers emergency assistance and financial help. India reaffirms its dedication to the security, well-being, and dignity of its diaspora in the Middle East by combining diplomatic readiness, early warning systems, and crisis response coordination.

5. STRATEGIC CALCULUS

Balancing Complex Relations

India walked a tightrope, balancing its ties with:

- **Israel** (defense, technology)
- **Iran** (infrastructure, connectivity)
- **Gulf States** (energy, diasporas)
- **US, Russia, and China** (global strategic competition)

Balancing Complex Relations refers to India's strategic and sophisticated approach to foreign policy, which involves managing frequently tense relationships with a range of regional and international

players. Because of overlapping and perhaps conflicting interests, this is especially difficult. India treads this diplomatic tightrope as follows:

Israel – Defense, Technology

- **Close cooperation** in agriculture, defense, and intelligence exchange.
- Israel is a major provider of advanced technology and military hardware.
- India maintains close connections with Israel without offending anyone, notwithstanding Israel's conflicts with Iran and the Arab world.

Iran – Infrastructure, Connectivity

1. Iran plays a key role in regional connectivity initiatives like the Chabahar Port, which allows India to circumvent Pakistan and get access to Afghanistan and Central Asia.
2. Historically, one of India's main suppliers of oil.
3. Balancing act: Given Western sanctions, India must maintain its connections with Iran without endangering those with the US or the Gulf States.

Gulf States – Energy, Diasporas

- The Gulf is vital for:
 - **Energy security** – A large portion of India's gas and oil imports come from the area.
 - **Remittances** – In the Gulf nations, there are more than 8 million Indian laborers.
 - **Strategic partnerships** – boosting economic and defense collaboration
- In regional conflicts, such as the Saudi-Iranian rivalry, India remains neutral.

US, Russia, and China – Global Strategic Competition

United States

- Strengthening strategic alliances (defense accords, QUAD, etc.).
- However, India maintains its independence on important matters (such as its refusal to completely unite with military blocs in the Indo-Pacific or Ukraine).
- Continue to lead the world and preserve an international system based on laws.
- Limit the emergence of revisionist nations (Russia and China).
- Encourage free markets, alliances (NATO, QUAD), and liberal democratic ideals.

Russia

- A dependable defensive partner.
- Despite pressure from the West during the Ukraine War, continued collaboration and weaponry imports.
- An essential component of multipolar diplomac.
- regain its position as a major force.
- Oppose Western influence and NATO expansion in the post-Soviet sphere.
- encourage multipolarity and undermine Western unity.

China

- A strategic opponent but a significant economic partner.
- Tense relations have resulted from border tensions (e.g., Galwan 2020).
- India uses QUAD and Indo-Pacific alignment to strike a balance between strategic containment and economic goals.
- By 2049, revitalize the country and rise to the status of a superpower.
- Challenge US hegemony, particularly in technology and Asia-Pacific.
- Encourage the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and a world order that is centered on China.

Rather from being non-aligned, India's foreign policy is multi-aligned. Engaging with many poles of power to enhance national interests while avoiding exclusive alliances is the essence of strategic autonomy. India's desire to be a global participant without getting sucked into zero-sum competitions is reflected in this balancing act.

Diplomatic Signaling

India demonstrated its neutral stance by abstaining from the SCO and UN, sending prime ministers to Egypt and Cyprus, and engaging in wider regional outreach without overt affiliation. India's desire of strategic autonomy, balanced relationships, and regional influence is reflected in its cautious diplomatic signaling in its engagement with the Middle East. India conveys its impartial, practical, and interest-based foreign policy by keeping tight connections with rival nations, such as Israel and Palestine or Iran and Saudi Arabia. India's dedication to strengthening strategic ties without being embroiled in regional rivalries is demonstrated by high-level visits, cooperative military drills, involvement in forums such as I2U2, and agreements on infrastructure and energy. For example, even as it fortifies its relations with Israel and the United Arab Emirates, India's ongoing engagement in Iran's Chabahar Port conveys a message of multi-alignment and long-term strategic purpose. Furthermore, India's economic ties with Gulf monarchs, support for Palestinian statehood, and denunciation of terrorism are all deliberately crafted to present the country as a stable, responsible partner in West Asia. This strategy improves India's reputation internationally and guarantees that it will continue to be a reliable mediator across political differences in a difficult area.

6. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Strengthen Institutional Capacity:** Create a West Asia Rapid Response Cell, improve crisis management procedures, and increase MEA manpower.
2. **Deepen Multilateral Frameworks:** To formalize regional collaboration, make investments in the Gulf-India trilateral, IMEC, and I2U2.
3. **Bolster Energy Resilience:** Build LNG facilities, diversify long-term supply agreements outside of the Gulf, and quicken the shift to renewable energy.

India can use the following strategic policy initiatives to more effectively manage intricate regional and international dynamics:

1. Strengthen Institutional Capacity

Objective: Give the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and pertinent organizations the tools they need to react swiftly and efficiently to new issues, particularly in unstable areas like West Asia.

Expand MEA Staffing:

- Considering its global aspirations, India has a rather tiny diplomatic corps.
- Adding more personnel would enhance India's capacity to actively and deeply participate, particularly those with experience in West Asia, military, and energy.
- **Enhance Crisis Management Protocols:**
 - Create systems for efficient ministry-to-minister cooperation (e.g., MEA, MoD, Home, and Intelligence).
 - Enhance communication networks, evacuation protocols, and decision-making speed during emergencies (such as the wars in Yemen or Gaza).
- **Establish a West Asia Rapid Response Cell:**
 - A specialist, multidisciplinary group tasked with keeping an eye on events, counseling decision-makers, and organizing prompt diplomatic or humanitarian efforts in the area.

2. Deepen Multilateral Frameworks

Objective: To guarantee long-term strategic influence and economic integration, India should formally join regional cooperation platforms.

- **Invest in I2U2 (India, Israel, UAE, USA):**
 - Concentrate on collaborative initiatives in technology, water, energy, and food security.
 - Make use of it as a forum to coordinate infrastructure and innovation objectives with countries that share similar values.

Support IMEC (India-Middle East-Europe Corridor):

- A projected connectivity corridor that would compete with China's Belt and Road Initiative.
- Crucial to supply chain resilience, trade diversification, and strategic alliances with West Asia and Europe.

Promote Gulf-India Trilateral Cooperation:

- Encourage three-way collaborations in energy, investment, logistics, and counterterrorism (e.g., India, UAE, and Saudi).
- Establish formal discussions to coordinate solutions to common issues such as energy transition or marine security.

3. Bolster Energy Resilience

Objective: Securing long-term, reliable energy sources while reducing reliance on Gulf oil.

- **Accelerate Renewable Energy Transition:**
 - Invest in storage infrastructure, wind, solar, and green hydrogen.
 - Respect India's Net Zero 2070 objective while lowering reliance on imports.

Build LNG Terminals:

- Expand the ability to import liquefied natural gas from various sources, such as the United States, Australia, and Africa.
- increases negotiating leverage and flexibility in international gas markets.

- **Diversify Long-Term Supply Contracts:**

- Expand your supply base to include countries like Russia, Central Asia, and Africa in addition to the Gulf.
- Contracts should be structured to protect against geopolitical shocks, such as hostilities and sanctions.

Building regional leverage, strengthening resilience in a multipolar, unstable world, and future-proofing India's foreign policy are the goals of these suggestions. India can enhance its risk management and strategic prospects by fortifying its internal skills, integrating into international frameworks, and ensuring its energy demands are met.

7. CONCLUSION

An important turning point in India's changing foreign policy framework was the Middle East crisis of 2025. India's response to the Israel-Iran armed conflict, which caused unprecedented global volatility, was cautious diplomacy based on pragmatism and strategic autonomy rather than reactive alliance. Under the guiding principles of Friends, Fuel, and Foresight, New Delhi protected its energy interests, made sure its large diaspora was secure, and managed a dangerous area without upsetting important allies.

The maturity of India's multi-aligned posture was evidenced by its capacity to interact with a variety of entities, including the US, Russia, China, Israel, Iran, and the Gulf States. Through initiatives like I2U2, IMEC, and Chabahar, India advanced economic diplomacy, strengthening its position in the world and promoting regional integration.

It will be crucial to institutionalize strategic foresight in the future. This entails strengthening energy resilience, investing in diplomatic capabilities, and integrating India into global frameworks that increase its regional clout. India must lead and balance in an increasingly uncertain world order, securing security, prosperity, and peace in West Asia and beyond.

WORKS CITED

- Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India. (2025). *Annual Report 2024–25*. Retrieved from <https://www.mea.gov.in>
- Observer Research Foundation (ORF). (2025). *India and the Middle East: Strategic Choices in a Multipolar Crisis*.
- Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA). (2025). *India's Maritime Security and Energy Dependence*.
- The Economic Times. (April 2025). "India activates energy contingency plan amid Strait of Hormuz crisis."
- Al Jazeera. (April 2025). "Iran-Israel war: Timeline of escalation."
- International Energy Agency (IEA). (2024). *World Energy Outlook 2024*.
- The Diplomat. (2025). "I2U2 and IMEC: India's Multilateral Leverage in West Asia."
- Carnegie India. (2024). *Strategic Autonomy and India's Middle East Calculus*.
- Reuters. (2025). "India ramps up oil imports from West Africa amid Middle East tensions."
- United Nations Security Council Resolutions Database. (2025). *India's voting record on Middle East crisis resolutions*.