

Why Bharat Matters

By Subrahmanyam Jaishankar

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The book *Why Bharat Matters*, written by Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, India's Minister of External Affairs, analyses India's regional and global relations, diplomatic efforts and India's various strategic positions and analyses what the future role of the country should be. In his book, Subrahmanyam Jaishankar offers a



comprehensive analysis of foreign policy and national mindset based on his experience as a Minister of External Affairs. The author explains how the state's mindset influences its foreign policy, investments, innovations, and development policies. It is noteworthy for its examination in which Jaishankar highlights India's active engagement in global issues and discusses its leadership role on topics such as the pandemic, climate change, and energy security.

The book consists of 11 chapters, the first 10 chapters provide detailed information on the threats, opportunities, and policies pursued in foreign policy. The final chapter explains the importance of 'Bharat.' Bharat is the Hindi name for India, a South Asian nation known for its cultural diversity, historical significance, and economic power. The term 'Bharat' has been frequently used by Indian politicians recently due to its cultural and historical significance rooted in ancient Indian scriptures. India holds significant global importance as the world's largest democracy and a fast-growing economy with a significant impact on international trade. India's soft power, including

yoga, traditional medicine, and cultural exports, has also helped shape global perceptions. The country has a multifaceted impact on the world, extending its influence in social and environmental spheres.

It is clear that India's foreign policy has significant ideological implications.

However, these implications cannot be evaluated as a commodity in terms of content. It provides a valuable framework for understanding how India balances conflicts along the East-West and North-South axes. As an illustrative example, the author delves into India's diplomatic efforts with neighboring countries, showcasing how trust-based relations and regional collaborations have played a crucial role in maintaining equilibrium amid these geopolitical challenges. It also discusses how trust-based relationships and regional cooperation with neighboring countries are formed. It analyses how India has created and maintained regional balances in a historical context. The author also explains India's global responsibility in these processes. So, the book highlights the international solidarity efforts during the pandemic and India's health diplomacy. It discusses India's effectiveness and sense of responsibility at the global level, as well as its rise to a global leadership position.

The author also provides a realistic analysis of India's relations with China. By analysing India's strategies towards China, including border conflicts and economic relations, this

book comprehensively explains India's position in these complex relations. It offers a broad perspective of India's interaction with China, assessing its position in regional security as well as global economic dynamics. Additionally, the book analyses India's rise in the world economy and its increased influence as a global actor. The text emphasises the significance of domestic policy and economic breakthroughs in positioning India as a regional and global power. It analyses India's ascension in the global economy, with a particular focus on technology, innovation, and economic growth strategies.

The author's historical contextualisation of India's foreign policy strategies is a prominent feature of the book. This allows readers to comprehend India's current strategies by drawing on its past experiences. The author highlights India's involvement in global affairs throughout the book, demonstrating how the country is a significant player not only in its own region but also on a global scale.

The book includes a detailed analysis of India's challenges and coping strategies with China, within the framework of the principle of realism. It discusses the implications of this conflict on both regional and global levels and explores India's strategies to manage these dynamics. From this standpoint, the book analyses a state's foreign policy and a nation's mindset. It conveys how the state mind works in foreign policy, investments, innovations, and development policies. This can be an important source of reference for understanding the internal dynamics. It also discusses the steps followed in foreign policy decisions, constantly referencing Hindu sacred scriptures as its main theme. The author uses a story from a sacred scripture to illustrate each problem encountered and prove their viewpoint. For instance, when discuss-

ing the Indian citizens finding themselves in the armed civil war in Sudan in April 2023, the author explains that nearly 4,000 Indian nationals were faced with a crisis during a time of heightened tensions. The Indian Embassy considered various possibilities, including occupying a belligerent's facilities under extreme circumstances. The ultimate solution was to evacuate as safely, quickly, and discreetly as possible. However, this decision was made amidst conflicting objectives, particularly in the face of personal and political pressures. This story shares similarities with the unexpected events in the ancient Hindu sacred scriptures referenced in the book that shaped the fate of revered figures such as Rama and Lakshmana. Their encounter with 'evil forces' in the settlement of sainthood marked the beginning of a path full of unexpected twists and turns, like the challenges of modern times.

The author uses the example of Rama's confrontation with Maricha's deceptive return as the golden stag to illustrate the challenges modern governments face in responding to unforeseen crises. The complexity of contemporary geopolitics is reflected in the interweaving of events and the fates of characters such as the monkey-king Vali or eagle-king Jatayu. The consequences of decisions can be unpredictable, highlighting the inherent uncertainties of our world. For instance, King Dasaratha's gifts and Ravana's abduction of Queen Sita serve as examples.

The sacred scriptures and contemporary advice stress the significance of evaluating, planning, and responding to uncertainties. The similarities between ancient stories and modern challenges highlight the enduring nature of navigating geopolitical complexities and the significant impact of decisions on individuals' lives. The author emphasizes that

sacred scriptures were acted upon and that this was the attitude adopted in the face of every challenge and difficulty they encountered. After each event in the book, the author references examples from the scriptures.

The book is critical in understanding Indian foreign policy in the future. It analyses the regional perspectives, ways in which the Indian diaspora is being used, and the angles that India needs to consider in its relations with other countries. The author examines the ideas of past leaders of Indian foreign policy, from Patel to Mookerjee, from Ambedkar to Masani, to explain their understanding of foreign policy through historical figures. This fragment is already well-written and adheres to the desired characteristics.

Although the author's work on India's foreign policy is undoubtedly rich, there are some points of criticism that cannot be ignored. Firstly, the work takes an overly ideological approach to foreign policy, which may prevent the reader from approaching the subject objectively. This could distract from the analysis of the work and its objectivity. The references to the Vedas, Ramayana and Mahabharata may be seen as subjective and should be excluded to maintain objectivity in the book. However, placing the book in a historical context by examining the realist paradigm in literature provides an enjoyable reading experience. Critics argue that such contextualisation is not in line with contemporary and universal norms, particularly at a time when religion and politics are viewed as separate subjects.

To enhance the book's value for academics and specialists, the reader may benefit from more concrete examples and analyses sup-

ported by real-world events. Additionally, the author's emphasis on using the book to understand future Indian foreign policy is ambiguous in some chapters. Due to the complexity and volatility of foreign policy, the reliability of the book's predictions may be questioned. Despite this criticism, the book has the potential to be an important resource for academics working in the field of foreign policy. However, readers inclined towards a more balanced perspective and a meticulous examination of future predictions may find the book less appealing.

Why Bharat Matters offers a comprehensive overview of India's foreign policy strategies and their implications for its future role. The book is a valuable resource for readers seeking to understand India's position on the world stage, with analyses of historical context and current global dynamics. It provides a thorough examination of how India has risen as both a regional and global actor. The book's analysis and commentary focus solely on economic achievements and national strengths, neglecting important sociological aspects such as social dynamics and changes within the country. India's rising power and structure are covered in detail, but an analysis of its social structure is lacking. Every chapter emphasizes India's position as one of the world's five-largest economies and a regional superpower. References to sacred scriptures also highlight this fact. However, proposed solutions and roadmaps for crises consistently praise policies without identifying or solving underlying problems. In addition, the book fails to address important issues such as the crises in Indian domestic politics, the uprisings, and the sanctions resulting from corruption in their economic policies.