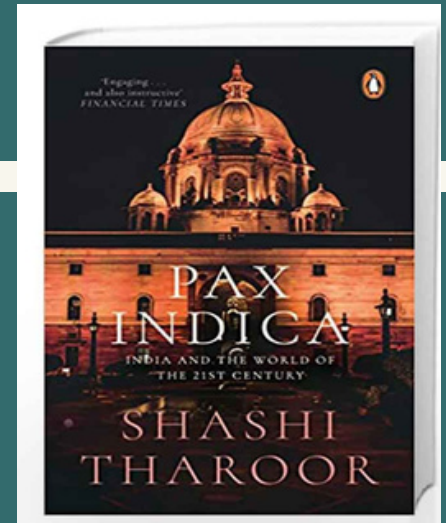


PAX INDICA : INDIA AND THE WORLD OF THE 21ST CENTURY, AUTHORED BY DR. SHASHI THAROOR (NEW DELHI)

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INTRODUCTION

What role must India assume in the changing global order of the 21st century? Should it be merely a spectator to great power politics, or a player proactively shaping a more just international order? In *Pax Indica*, Dr. Shashi Tharoor, a celebrated diplomat, public intellectual, former UN under-secretary-general, and Member of Parliament provides an ambitious and intriguing solution. The book examines India's foreign policy from the post-independence Nehruvian vision to the more aggressive, 21st-century face-offs of an emerging power. Tharoor argues for India to look outward and aim at global leadership by the power of its democracy, pluralism, and cultural heritage.

OVERVIEW AND SUMMARY

Pax Indica is named after the concept of a tranquil Indian-led world order, drawing inspiration from past precedent like *Pax Romana* and *Pax Americana*. The book is one of hope, asking the reader to envision a world where India's strategic autonomy and moral authority serve to stabilize and shape global life in a positive way.

The book is organized in thematically grouped chapters that discuss India's diplomacy with the leading world powers such as the United States, China, and Russia as well as with multilateral institutions such as the United Nations and WTO. Tharoor also makes considerable space to cover India's regional diplomacy, especially with troubled neighbors such as Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka

In subsequent chapters, he delves into newer aspects of diplomacy like diaspora diplomacy, economic soft power, cultural influence (such as yoga, Bollywood, and food), and the increasing dominance of public opinion and media in international affairs. His critiques of India's foreign policy successes and failures are candid, he denounces bureaucratic impedimentalism, strategic inconsistency, and the tendency for India's foreign policy to be reactive.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS STRENGTHS:

One of the strong points in the book is the interdisciplinarity that it carries: Deepak mingles law, history, politics, and philosophy together to argue how the impact of colonialism has continued subtly through policy, language, and education. He writes, for instance,

1. Expertise Grounded in Experience:

Tharoor does not write as a remote commentator but as a person who has traversed the corridors of the UN and dealt with actual diplomatic crises. This insider perspective brings gravity and a distinctive texture to the account.

2. Lush, Lucid Prose:

Although the subject matter is very intellectual, Tharoor's wit and eloquence ensure that it is extremely readable. He eschews technocratic bluster and uses instead anecdotes, metaphors from literature, and even a dash of humor to drive home a point.

3. Visionary Insight:

The range of themes from peacekeeping to energy diplomacy, from neighbourhood policy to soft power makes the book almost a complete primer for comprehending India's international positioning. His treatment of India's UN interactions and the inability to get on the Security Council is especially grim.

4. Balanced Perspective:

Tharoor does not romanticize India blindly or plunge into pessimism. He navigates a delicate middle path as critical only when required, but optimistic in spirit. To take one example, he admires India's unwavering non-alignment but is unsure if its contemporary manifestation is passive enough for the geopolitics of the present age.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS WEAKNESS:

1. Idealism and Lack of Realpolitik:

Although the concept of Pax Indica is exciting, it tends to be overly utopian in an era ruled by realpolitik. Its critics might say that India's own problems such as poverty, inequality, communal tensions have to be addressed before it can dream of moral leadership in the world.

2. Out of Touch with Fast-Changing Contexts:

Since the book was published in 2012, significant geopolitical events such as the eruption of China's wolf-warrior diplomacy, the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the Galwan Valley skirmish, QUAD revival, and COVID-19 global diplomacy are not addressed. An updated edition would be extremely useful.

Personal Reflections

As a young Indian and a political science student, I was both enlightened and moved by Pax Indica. It's not a dry policy tome. It is a call to action like to dream, to ask questions, and to be involved in India's role in shaping world futures.

One chapter that really caught my attention was Tharoor's call to utilize the diaspora as diplomatic capital. In an era where countries demonstrate power through culture, economy, and education, India's large and thriving diaspora can be both ambassadors and bridges. I had never really considered "Indianness" as something one could export until I read this book.

His own musings on soft power struck a chord. In an era of digital preeminence where mere content rules, the concept that India can rule not by force, but by charm, had a deep resonance. Having spent my life growing up watching Bollywood movies, communicating in several Indian languages, and engaging in democratic discourse, I knew these were not merely national characteristics, they were diplomatic capitals

However, I too was made uncomfortable occasionally. Tharoor's positivity left me wondering, are we actually living our own ideals back home? Can we practice pluralism overseas and not be able to defend it in our own country? Can a fractured society promote worldwide harmony?

RELEVANCE AND RECOMMENDATION

In the international turmoil of 2025, at a time of climate crisis, nationalism, competition in technology, and multipolar diplomacy. Pax Indica provides something greater than policy prescriptions; it provides moral imagination. Though certain sections are temporally out of date, the core principles are timeless: strategic autonomy, moral leadership, cooperative regional order, and cultural influence.

This book must be read as important by:

- Scholars of international relations, political science, public policy, and history
- Potential diplomats or civil servants
- Reflective citizens curious about India's role in the world
- Anyone who appreciates a literary voice in policy arguments

LAST THOUGHTS

Pax Indica is an intellectual but deeply human meditation on the future of Indian foreign policy. It's a memoir, a manifesto, and a how-to book all at once. Tharoor's prose is not merely provocative but also encouraging, challenging readers not just to diagnose the state but to envision its possibilities. Whether you agree or disagree, you'll be left with a deeper sense of what it means for India to lead — not by domination, but by dialogue, dignity, and depth.