



From Chola Conquests to Modern Strategies: Lessons for India's Contemporary Geopolitical Paradigm

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AADS600: Dissertation

MA (SEM-IV)

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Date of Submission: 29-03-2025

Date of Acceptance: 08-04-2025

ABSTRACT

This paper explores the relevance of ancient Chola naval and maritime strategies in shaping India's contemporary geopolitical framework, with a focus on countering China's growing influence in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). The Chola Empire, renowned for its formidable naval power and maritime dominance between the 9th and 13th centuries, provides a unique historical lens through which modern India can reassess its approach to naval warfare, diplomacy, and regional influence. By analyzing the Chola's strategic foresight in controlling crucial trade routes, conducting maritime expeditions, and engaging with both regional and distant powers, this paper draws parallels with India's present-day geopolitical challenges.

As China asserts its presence in the IOR, particularly through initiatives like the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the expansion of its maritime capabilities, India faces the challenge of balancing its response. On one hand, India seeks to counter China's maritime assertiveness, and on the other, it must navigate economic and diplomatic ties that are integral to its growth. This paper states that India can learn from the Cholas' adaptability in using maritime strength not only as a means of defence but also as a tool for diplomacy and economic leverage. By strengthening its naval presence, engaging with regional players through multilateral forums, and focusing on strategic partnerships within the IOR, India can ensure its security while maintaining constructive relations with China. The Chola legacy, marked by a balance of military prowess and diplomatic insight, offers valuable understandings for India's current and future maritime strategies, enabling the nation to assert its regional influence while promoting stability in the broader Indian Ocean framework.

Keywords: Chola Empire, Indian Ocean Region (IOR), Geopolitical Strategy, Maritime Diplomacy, Naval Dominance.

I. Introduction

The Chola Empire, one of the most prominent and enduring dynasties in Indian history, offers invaluable lessons for understanding India's contemporary geopolitical strategies. Spanning from the 9th to the 13th century, the Chola Empire's geographical extent covered not only southern India but also parts of Southeast Asia.¹ Initially a minor dynasty in southern India, the Cholas supplanted other regional powers, expanding their influence through a combination of military strength and a sophisticated soft power diplomacy. Under their rule, the Cholas fostered an era of stability, economic and cultural prosperity. The empire was not just a political force; it was a vibrant cultural and religious entity, fostering the development of Tamil language and literature, monumental temple architecture, and a thriving trade network with distant lands.²

The origins of the Chola dynasty trace back to the ancient Tamil kingdoms of the Sangam period, where they were one of the three major powers in the Tamil-speaking world, alongside the Pandya and Chera dynasties. However, it was during the medieval period, particularly from the 9th century onward, that the Cholas truly rose to prominence under the leadership of remarkable kings such as Rajaraja Chola I and his successors. These rulers transformed the Chola kingdom into an empire of

¹ Sastri, K. A. N. (1955). *The Cōlas* (No. 9). University of Madras.

² Chawda, A. P. S. (2022). *Temple Economy In Ancient & Medieval India*.



unparalleled strength, governance, and cultural richness.³

The military prowess of the Cholas was one of the cornerstones of their success. This military dominance was complemented by a well-organized administrative system that utilized a sophisticated hierarchy of governance. At the local level, the Cholas implemented a system of self-governance, with village assemblies playing a significant role in the administration, which fostered a sense of civic responsibility and participation among the people.⁴ The Chola Empire's maritime dominance also played a central role in their rise, with Tamil merchants engaging in prosperous maritime trade with regions as distant as the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and China, thus extending their geopolitical influence.⁵ This economic power was complemented by military and political strength, allowing the Cholas to remain a dominant force for several centuries. Their legacy reached beyond the Indian subcontinent, as evidenced by references in the historical chronicles of China's Song dynasty, *Songshi*, including an account of a Chola ambassador visiting the Song court in 1077.⁶

The Cholas also maintained a sophisticated and elaborate system of trade and diplomacy. They had extensive maritime connections with Southeast Asia, particularly with the Srivijaya Empire in present-day Indonesia, and other parts of Southeast Asia, including Cambodia and Thailand. The Chola Empire was a key player in the Indian Ocean trade, exporting goods such as spices, textiles, and precious stones, while also importing exotic items like gold, ivory, and silk. This international trade network helped the Cholas maintain their economic strength and facilitated the exchange of ideas, technologies, and cultural practices.⁷

This paper aims to explore the lessons that contemporary India can draw from the Chola Empire's strategies—particularly in terms of military prowess, economic diplomacy, and

diplomatic engagement with global powers. By analyzing the Chola Empire's approach to governance, warfare, and international relations, the paper tries to uncover valuable insights for India's modern geopolitical paradigm. In the face of contemporary global challenges, revisiting the Chola experience offers a nuanced perspective on India's position in the evolving international order.

³ Ramesh, S., & Ramesh, S. (2018). The Chola Dynasty: 350 BC to 1279 AD. The Rise of Empires: The Political Economy of Innovation, 171-199.

⁴ Bhagwan, V., & Kumar, P. (2018). Village Administration System of Chola Empire: An Overview. Asian Journal of Multidimensional Research (AJMR), 7(4), 9-14.

⁵ Kulke, H., Kesavapany, K., & Sakhuja, V. (Eds.). (2009). Nagapattinam to Suvarnadwipa: reflections on the Chola naval expeditions to Southeast Asia (Vol. 1). Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

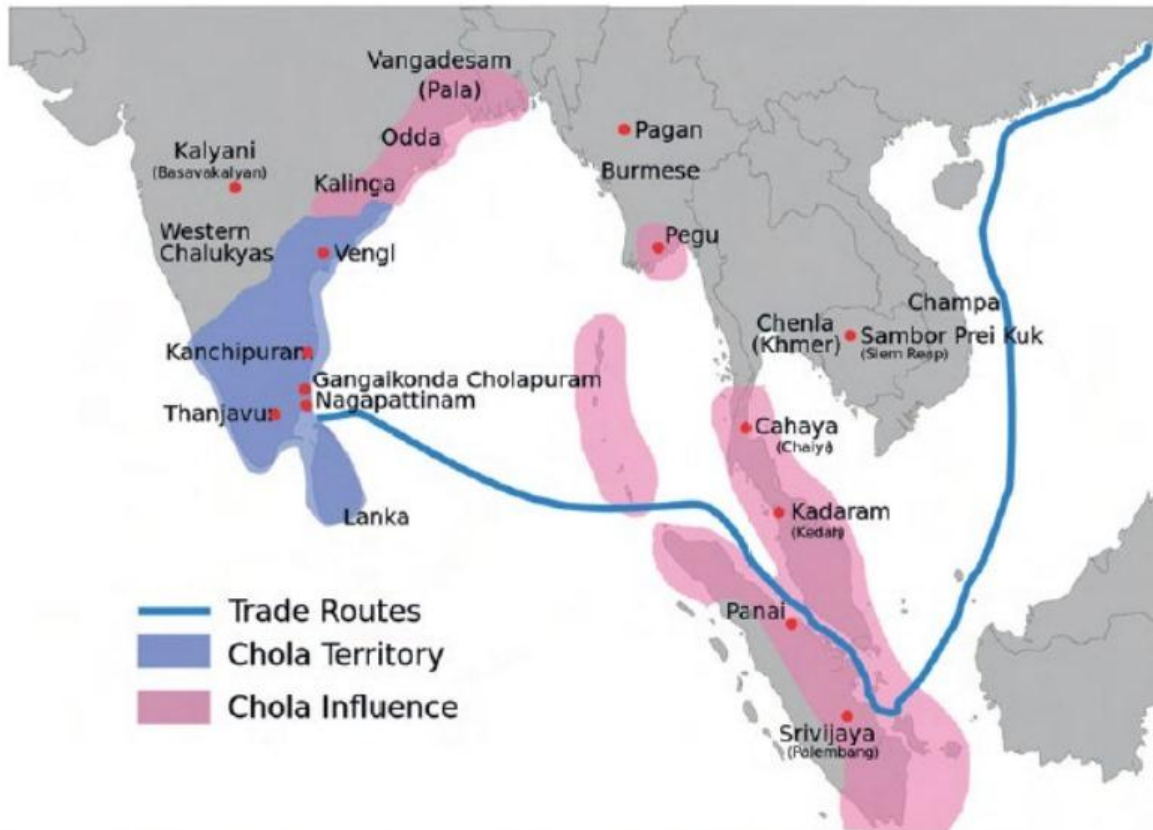


Fig 1.1. The Chola Empire during Rajendra Chola I.⁸

⁸ Anderson, J. A. Pearls and Power: Chola's Tribute Mission to the Northern Song Court within the Maritime Silk Road Trade Network". *Silk Roads: From Local Realities to Global Narratives*, 223-36.



The Maritime Legacy of the Chola's

The Cholas' unparalleled naval strength and strategic maritime endeavours played a pivotal role in establishing their dominance in the Indian Ocean. The Cholas were not just a regional power; they were maritime giants whose naval prowess shaped the course of history in the Indian Ocean and beyond. The significance of the Chola navy goes beyond mere military conquest. It was an instrument of imperial expansion, economic prosperity, cultural exchange, and diplomatic influence. By dominating the seas, the Cholas were able to control vital trade routes, maintain extensive contacts with distant lands, and project their power to far-off regions like Southeast Asia. The Chola navy was a central element in the creation of a flourishing maritime empire, and their dominance on the waters remains one of their most remarkable legacies.

Under the leadership of the Chola monarchs during the 9th and 13th centuries, particularly under Rajaraja Chola I (r. 985–1014 CE), the empire's naval power truly began to take shape.⁹ Rajaraja Chola I, one of the greatest rulers in Chola history, recognized the strategic importance of a powerful navy in ensuring the security and expansion of his empire. He not only expanded the Chola territory on land but also began a systematic process of strengthening the Chola fleet, recognizing that naval supremacy was essential for controlling the vast stretches of coastline and ensuring the safety of maritime trade routes. Under Rajaraja and his successor, Rajendra Chola I (r. 1014–1044 CE), the Cholas established their reputation as a naval superpower.¹⁰ Rajendra's campaigns, in particular, demonstrated the effectiveness of the Chola navy. The expansion of the empire into Southeast Asia, especially in regions like modern-day Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Maldives, was facilitated by the Chola fleet's ability to navigate and control the waters of the Bay of Bengal and the Indian Ocean.¹¹

Structure and Organization of the Chola Navy

The Chola navy was a well-structured and hierarchical force, composed of various ranks, specialized roles, and different types of warships that contributed to its efficiency. The Chola naval forces were meticulously organized, with a

command hierarchy ensuring operational effectiveness. The navy was under the direct control of the king, with experienced admirals or *Jalathipathi* leading different squadrons.¹² These admirals were responsible for both defensive operations along the Indian coastline and offensive campaigns across maritime regions. The naval forces were divided into different units like the elite naval regiments trained in amphibious warfare, the nautical engineers - specialized craftsmen responsible for ship construction and maintenance, the combat units - soldiers trained for both on-deck combat and land-based invasions after naval landings, and the logistics teams - responsible for managing food supplies, weapons, and naval provisions. This hierarchical and specialized system ensured smooth operations during military expeditions, trade protection, and strategic interventions.¹³

Naval Power and Technological Innovations

The Cholas built a diverse fleet of warships designed for different naval functions, like large battleships used for long-distance voyages, military expeditions, and carrying hundreds of troops and equipped with weaponry like raised platforms for archers and siege weapons like catapults. They had small, maneuverable fast attack ships designed for quick strikes, hit-and-run tactics, and for intercepting enemy merchant vessels and engaging in coastal raids. They also had merchant and supply ships, which were used as support ships during long naval campaigns, transport food, trade goods, and also served in diplomatic missions to Southeast Asia. The presence of specialized warships, ranging from large battleships to swift attack vessels, made the Chola navy highly effective in both warfare and trade protection.¹⁴

They were pioneers in naval engineering, constructing some of the most advanced ships of

⁹ Ramesh, S. (2018). *The Rise of Empires*. Springer Books.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Kulke, H., Kesavapany, K., & Sakhuja, V. (Eds.). (2009). *Nagapattinam to Suvarnadwipa: reflections on the Chola naval expeditions to Southeast Asia (Vol. 1)*. Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

¹² Chola Navy - Organization and Administration - Rank structure. (n.d.). https://www.liquisearch.com/chola_navy/organization_and_administration/rank_structure

¹³ Priyadarshini, S. (2015, August 8). *The Cholas Empire: history, rules and life*. History Discussion - Discuss Anything About History. <https://www.historydiscussion.net/history-of-india/the-cholas-empire-history-rules-and-life/2531>

¹⁴ Priyadarshini, S. (2015, August 8). *The Cholas Empire: history, rules and life*. History Discussion - Discuss Anything About History. <https://www.historydiscussion.net/history-of-india/the-cholas-empire-history-rules-and-life/2531>



their time. Their shipbuilding methods incorporated technological innovations that gave them a strategic edge over rival maritime powers. Their shipyards were established at strategic locations, ensuring continuous production and maintenance of warships. Some of the most important shipbuilding hubs included: Nagapattinam – a major naval base and port city with dry docks for warship construction, Kaveripattinam – a leading center for shipbuilding, training, and military logistics, Arikamedu – utilized as the Indo-Roman trade hub, and Kodikkarai – known for constructing long-range vessels used in foreign expeditions. These shipyards employed highly skilled artisans and engineers who specialized in crafting vessels for different purposes.¹⁵

The Chola navy's strategy was built on a balanced, dual-tier approach that combined robust offensive manoeuvres with vigilant defensive measures. This system allowed them to swiftly counter maritime threats while launching calculated attacks to expand their empire. A cornerstone of their success was an exceptional command of maritime geography and navigation. Their fleets, renowned for their agility, could execute sudden strikes against enemy coastal targets and port cities, often outmanoeuvring larger and more powerful adversary fleets. Chola naval officers and sailors were rigorously trained in ancient navigational methods, using celestial bodies, ocean currents, and natural landmarks to guide them across vast, open seas. This sophisticated maritime strategy not only secured critical trade routes but also established the Chola Empire's enduring dominance in the Indian Ocean region.¹⁶

They also utilized naval blockades to isolate their enemies. By cutting off vital sea routes, they could cripple the economy and resources of rival kingdoms, forcing them into submission. The

Cholas understood the importance of controlling strategic maritime chokepoints, such as the Malacca Strait, which was a vital trade route between the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea. The Chola naval forces employed a combination of long-range bombardment and close-quarter combat to overwhelm enemy ships. Their ships were equipped with archers, crossbowmen, and soldiers who were skilled in hand-to-hand combat, allowing for both long-range and close-quarters engagement.¹⁷

One of the most important weapons used in Chola naval warfare was the catapult. These large siege engines were used to launch projectiles, such as stones, flaming arrows, or metal bolts, at enemy ships from a distance. The catapults were mounted on the decks of the warships, and their range allowed the fleet to bombard enemy vessels and fortifications before engaging them in close combat. They also made use of crossbows, which were smaller and more portable than the larger siege weapons. These weapons were manned by soldiers aboard the ships, allowing them to target enemy crew members, and sailors from a distance. Crossbows could shoot bolts or heavy arrows with greater accuracy than traditional bows, making them an effective tool for naval skirmishes. Another tactic employed by the Cholas in naval warfare was the use of fire ships. These ships, set alight and propelled towards enemy fleets, were essentially floating bombs designed to spread fire and chaos. Fire ships could be sent to the heart of enemy formations, setting enemy vessels ablaze and forcing them to break ranks. This tactic was especially effective against fleets that were tightly clustered, as the fire could easily spread from ship to ship.¹⁸

The Chola navy was not only well-equipped for attack but also had defensive measures in place to protect their ships during battle. The ships themselves were often covered with layers of protective armour, including metal plates along the hull to protect against bombardment attacks and boarding attempts. In addition, sailors would wear

¹⁵ Admin. (2021, May 12). Ports of Ancient TamilNadu - Tamil Heritage. Tamil Heritage. [https://telibrary.com/en/ports-of-ancient-tamilnadu/Kaveripattinam in Tamilnadu](https://telibrary.com/en/ports-of-ancient-tamilnadu/Kaveripattinam%20in%20Tamilnadu). (n.d.). https://www.indianetzone.com/kaveripattinam_the_1ost_chola_portcity_india#google_vignette

¹⁶ Webmaster, S. (n.d.). The shipping technology of the Cholas. <https://sangam.org/2007/10/Shipping.php?uid=2610>
Mallikarjunaiah, D. M. & S S A S Govt. First Grade College, Hosapete. (2018). CHOLA NAVAL POWER AND MARITIME TRADE: A HISTORICAL STUDY. International Journal of Research and Analytical Reviews (IJRAR), 5(4), 368–370. <https://www.ijrar.org>

¹⁷ Mallikarjunaiah, D. M. & S S A S Govt. First Grade College, Hosapete. (2018). CHOLA NAVAL POWER AND MARITIME TRADE: A HISTORICAL STUDY. International Journal of Research and Analytical Reviews (IJRAR), 5(4), 368–370. <https://www.ijrar.org>

¹⁸ Divekar, N., & Divekar, N. (2025, February 9). How the Chola Navy Became India's First Great Maritime Superpower - Tales of BHARAT. Tales of BHARAT - Rediscover Bharat's Untold Legacy. <https://talesofbharat.com/the-mighty-chola-navy-unveiling-indias-first-blue-water-maritime-power/>



light armour such as chainmail or leather, which allowed them to move freely while providing protection from arrows and other projectiles. Additionally, Chola warships were equipped with shields and barricades to protect the crew during naval engagements. These shields could be used to deflect arrows, bolts, and other missiles that were fired from enemy ships or from the shore.¹⁹

Economic Prosperity and Maritime Trade

One of the key reasons for the Chola Empire's economic prosperity was its extensive port infrastructure along the eastern coast of India. These ports served as major centres for international trade, naval operations, and cultural exchanges. *Nagapattinam* was the most prominent port in the Chola Empire and a major centre of trade and cultural interaction. It also served as the gateway to Southeast Asia, facilitating commerce with the Srivijaya Empire (modern-day Indonesia and Malaysia). The port was also home to a large community of Chinese, Arab, and Southeast Asian traders, making it a cosmopolitan hub.²⁰ Buddhist monasteries and temples built by foreign traders, particularly from Sri Lanka and China, further indicate the religious and cultural exchanges that took place at this port. *Kaveripattinam*, also known as *Poompuhar*, was another vital commercial city with bustling markets and a thriving merchant community. This port connected inland agricultural and textile industries with international maritime trade. It also played a crucial role in exporting cotton, spices, pearls, and precious stones, which were in high demand in Southeast Asia and the Middle East.²¹ *Arikamedu*, while initially an Indo-Roman trade centre during earlier centuries,

continued to thrive under the Cholas. The Cholas utilized this port for ceramic and textile trade with Southeast Asia and the Persian Gulf. Excavations have revealed evidence of Roman coins and amphorae, indicating sustained trade links with the Mediterranean world.²² *Kodikkarai* and *Tranquebar*, these ports functioned both as naval bases and trading hubs, ensuring control over commercial sea lanes, and played a significant role in defensive naval operations and the protection of merchant convoys from piracy.

The geographical distribution of these ports allowed the Cholas to dominate maritime commerce, ensuring the empire's wealth and economic stability. The prosperity of the Chola maritime economy was also fueled by powerful merchant guilds, which functioned as both economic and diplomatic institutions.

The Cholas actively supported and partnered with influential Tamil merchant organizations, which had a strong presence across Southeast Asia and beyond. These guilds were comparable to modern multinational corporations, controlling large trade networks. *Ayyavole Ainurruvar*, powerful guild of Tamil and Kannada merchants, known as the "Lords of the Five Hundred", with trading outposts in Sri Lanka, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East, they controlled the trade of textiles, spices, and gemstones, ensuring economic dominance in the region. They were granted royal patronage by Chola rulers, allowing them to establish exclusive trade agreements with foreign states.²³ *Manigramam*, another influential merchant guild specializing in maritime trade with China, the Persian Gulf, and Southeast Asia were instrumental in spreading Tamil cultural and religious influence across maritime Southeast Asia. *Nanadesi Guilds* operated across India and foreign lands, creating an interconnected trade network spanning from the Bay of Bengal to the South China Sea.²⁴

¹⁹ Chola Navy: The world's first blue water maritime force. (2024, January 14). Retrieved March 21, 2025, from <https://organiser.org/2024/01/14/216201/bharat/chola-navy-the-worlds-first-blue-water-maritime-force/>

²⁰ 'Srivijaya' is 1400 years older than Port Blair: Read the story of a Buddhist kingdom in Sumatra, and Rajendra Chola's epic naval war. (2024, September 17). https://www.opindia.com/2024/09/srivijaya-name-1400-years-older-than-port-blair-story-of-a-buddhist-kingdom-in-sumatra-and-rajendra-cholas-epic-naval-war/#google_vignette

²¹ Admin. (2023, April 28). Kaveripattinam - The Ancient Port City - THE INDIAN BLOG. THE INDIAN BLOG. <https://indianblog.co.in/kaveripattinam-the-ancient-port-city/>

²² Did You Know? The Port Trade Centre of Arikamedu and Roman Exchange with the Indian Subcontinent | Silk Roads Programme. (n.d.). <https://en.unesco.org/silkroad/content/did-you-know-port-trade-centre-arikamedu-and-roman-exchange-indian-subcontinent>

²³ T, M. (2024). Ayyahole-500: An ancient Merchant Guild of South India. *Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research*, 11(9), e197–e198.

<https://www.jetir.org/papers/JETIR2409425.pdf>

²⁴ Arockiaraj. (2022, March 31). Ancient Tamil trade guilds, a power center behind imperial Cholas.



Chola rulers also actively engaged in economic diplomacy by forging trade agreements with foreign kingdoms and merchant networks. Diplomatic missions were sent to China's Song Dynasty, securing preferential trade rights for Chola merchants.²⁵ Alliances with the Srivijaya Empire (before the Chola invasion in 1025 CE) allowed Chola traders to access Southeast Asian markets without restrictions. The Chola navy played an active role in protecting trade convoys, ensuring safe passage for merchants in the Indian Ocean and South China Sea. The merchant guilds not only contributed to economic growth but also enhanced the Cholas' soft power, influencing foreign cultures through trade and diplomacy.²⁶

The Srivijaya Empire controlled important maritime choke points in Southeast Asia, restricting Indian traders. In 1025 CE, Rajendra Chola I launched a naval invasion of Srivijaya, establishing Chola dominance over regional trade. This allowed Tamil merchants unrestricted access to markets in Sumatra, Java, and the Philippines. The Cholas exported cotton textiles, spices, and jewellery to the Khmer rulers (Cambodia and Thailand). In return, they imported elephants, gold, and high-quality timber used for shipbuilding.²⁷ They also actively traded with the Song Dynasty (960–1279 CE), establishing a lucrative economic relationship, Indian textiles, spices, and ivory were in high demand in China, while the Cholas imported Chinese porcelain, silk, and tea.²⁸

Geopolitical Implications of Naval Dominance

The Chola empire's expansion into the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia during the 10th

Inmathi. <https://inmathi.com/2022/03/27/ancient-tamil-trade-guilds-a-power-center-behind-imperial-cholas/45833/>

²⁵ Anderson, J. A. Pearls and Power: Chola's Tribute Mission to the Northern Song Court within the Maritime Silk Road Trade Network." *Silk Roads: From Local Realities to Global Narratives*, 223-36.

²⁶ Mallikarjunaiah, D. M. & S S A S Govt. First Grade College, Hosapete. (2018). CHOLA NAVAL POWER AND MARITIME TRADE: A HISTORICAL STUDY. *International Journal of Research and Analytical Reviews (IJRAR)*, 5(4), 368–370. <https://www.ijrar.org>

²⁷ Kulke, H., Kesavapany, K., & Sakhuja, V. (Eds.). (2009). *Nagapattinam to Suvarnadwipa: reflections on the Chola naval expeditions to Southeast Asia (Vol. 1)*. Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

²⁸ Ibid.

and 11th centuries CE was one of the most significant geopolitical feats in pre-modern Indian history. While many Indian dynasties focused primarily on territorial conquests on land, the Cholas understood the power of naval supremacy in shaping regional politics and trade networks. By leveraging their maritime strength, they extended their influence far beyond the Indian subcontinent, establishing control over Sri Lanka, the Maldives, and the Srivijaya Empire (modern-day Indonesia and Malaysia).

The geopolitical implications of Chola naval dominance were profound. Their strategic control over key maritime trade routes, coupled with their ability to project power over distant territories, ensured their hegemony over the Bay of Bengal and the Indian Ocean trade network.

One of the defining aspects of Chola geopolitics was their aggressive naval expansion into key territories, consolidating their control over crucial maritime choke points. Sri Lanka, due to its strategic location in the Indian Ocean, was a primary target of Chola expansion. The island was a vital link in the Indian Ocean trade network, serving as a midway point between India and Southeast Asia.²⁹ Rajaraja Chola I launched a naval and land-based invasion of Sri Lanka, targeting the Anuradhapura Kingdom. The Cholas sacked Anuradhapura, destroyed Sinhalese resistance, and annexed northern Sri Lanka. The Cholas established Polonnaruwa as their administrative capital, replacing the Sinhalese dynasty with a Chola governor.³⁰ Rajendra Chola I completed the full conquest of Sri Lanka, incorporating it into the Chola Empire. The Cholas captured King Mahinda V, who was taken as a prisoner to India, and ruled Sri Lanka for over 50 years, controlling its ports and trade.³¹

The Maldives was a crucial hub for trade and naval logistics, linking the Indian subcontinent with the Arab world and East Africa. The Chola navy invaded and annexed the Maldives during the reign of Rajendra Chola I. Control over the Maldives provided them with an advanced naval outpost,

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Karthikeyan, A. (2017, September 3). The imperial Cholas' conquest of Sri Lanka. *DNA India*. https://www.dnaindia.com/analysis/column-the-imperial-cholas-conquest-of-sri-lanka-2542493#google_vignette

³¹ Rajendra Chola I - *New World Encyclopedia*. (n.d.). https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Rajendra_Chola_I



allowing them to monitor Arab traders and protect merchant convoys in the western Indian Ocean. They established maritime garrisons in the Maldives, ensuring continued access to Indian Ocean sea routes.³²

The Srivijaya Empire (modern-day Indonesia and Malaysia) controlled the Strait of Malacca, the most important maritime chokepoint for trade between India and China. Srivijaya maintained a monopoly over Southeast Asian trade, charging high tariffs on Indian merchants. In 1025 CE, Rajendra Chola I launched a massive naval expedition to break Srivijaya's dominance. The Chola navy attacked and captured 14 key Srivijayan ports, including *Kadaram* (modern Kedah, Malaysia). The invasion allowed Chola merchants to trade freely across Southeast Asia, reducing their dependence on Srivijayan intermediaries. The victory weakened Srivijaya's control over regional trade, allowing Tamil merchant guilds to expand their influence.³³

Chola naval dominance was not just about trade and conquest—it was also about diplomatic influence and soft power projection. Hinduism and Tamil culture spread across Southeast Asia, with many temples being built in Chola architectural style. The Brihadeeswarar Temple inscriptions in Tamil were found in Southeast Asian regions, proving Chola cultural influence. The Cholas also promoted Shaivism and Vaishnavism in Sri Lanka, Indonesia, and Cambodia, shaping regional religious identities.³⁴

The Cholas established naval bases and outposts in key locations like, Andaman and Nicobar Islands – used as a refuelling station and supply base for the Chola navy, Sri Lanka and the Maldives – acted as forward operating bases, allowing the Cholas to project power into the Indian Ocean, and Kedah (Malaysia) and Sumatra (Indonesia) – controlled by Chola-backed rulers after the Srivijaya conquest,

ensuring influence over the Malacca Strait.³⁵ Through a mix of military expansion, economic control, and cultural diplomacy, the Cholas reshaped the geopolitical landscape of South and Southeast Asia, a legacy that remains relevant for India's Indo-Pacific ambitions today.

Lessons from the Chola Era for Modern India

Modern India stands at a crossroads, facing a myriad of challenges, including socio-economic inequality, political fragmentation, environmental degradation, and a rapidly changing global landscape. In the quest for nation-building and securing its rightful place on the global stage, India often looks for solutions from various sources — be it from its ancient traditions, contemporary innovations, or through the experiences of other nations. While modern India is very different from its ancient counterparts, there is immense value in revisiting its rich history for timeless lessons that can guide current policy, governance, and cultural discourse.

Despite the vast changes in the political and social fabric of India, the Chola period offers numerous lessons that resonate even today. The Chola dynasty exemplified effective governance, economic prosperity, and social cohesion, all while maintaining cultural vitality. In the context of modern India's quest for a balanced development model that embraces both tradition and modernity, the Chola era provides relevant insights – from their geopolitical strategy to their maritime influence and diplomatic engagements, the Chola Empire provides a model for how modern India can balance its ambitions with global responsibilities.³⁶ These aspects, though rooted in a bygone era, hold a mirror to the aspirations and challenges India faces today. The Cholas offer a blueprint for modern India in navigating the complexities of democracy, development, and global relations.

India's Geopolitical Position in the 21st Century

The geopolitical landscape of the 21st century is increasingly complex, with India

³² Gupta, A. (2025, February 25). The Rise of the Chola Empire - Aseem Gupta. Aseem Gupta. <https://aseemgupta.com/the-rise-of-the-chola-empire/>

³³ Kulke, H., Kesavapany, K., & Sakhuja, V. (Eds.). (2009). Nagapattinam to Suvarnadwipa: reflections on the Chola naval expeditions to Southeast Asia (Vol. 1). Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

³⁴ H., T., & K., V. (2023). CHOLA MARITIME TRADE: ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL EXCHANGES WITH SOUTHEAST ASIA. International Journal of Research and Analytical Reviews (IJRAR), 10(4), 254–256. <https://www.ijrar.org>

³⁵ Giles, D. (2024, January 5). THE UNTOLD HISTORY OF THE ANDAMAN AND NICOBAR ISLANDS.

<https://www.andamanchronicle.net/index.php/features/29596-the-untold-history-of-the-andaman-and-nicobar-islands>

³⁶ Satsangi, A. (2024). Ancient Indian Management: Leadership, Corporate Governance & Motivation. Academic Guru Publishing House.



emerging as a pivotal global player.³⁷ Situated at the crossroads of South Asia, the Indian Ocean, and the Pacific, India's strategic position offers both immense opportunities and significant challenges.³⁸ The Chola Empire, which was one of the most powerful maritime forces in the Indian Ocean region, understood the significance of its geographical location and used it to its advantage. Their control over maritime trade routes, particularly through Southeast Asia, exemplifies the importance of India's own geopolitical position today.³⁹

In the modern context, India is located at the heart of several key global trade routes and has substantial influence in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). The Indian Ocean serves as a vital shipping route for global trade, with over 80% of the world's oil passing through it.⁴⁰ India's geopolitical positioning makes it a central player in issues of maritime security, trade, and regional stability. The Chola's mastery of maritime governance and naval strength offers an important lesson for modern India. Today, India should focus on strengthening its naval capabilities, ensuring the security of critical sea lanes, and leveraging its position to promote stability in the region.⁴¹

Furthermore, India's strategic location at the crossroads of East Asia, the Middle East, and Africa allows it to play a crucial role in regional peacekeeping, counterterrorism, and humanitarian efforts. In the 21st century, India's rising influence as a counterbalance to China in the Indo-Pacific region underscores its potential as a global strategic partner.⁴² By embracing its geographical significance, India can enhance its geopolitical footprint while ensuring the protection of its economic interests, much like the Cholas did with

their naval expeditions across the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia.

Reviving India's Maritime Heritage

One of the most remarkable aspects of the Chola Empire was its robust maritime culture, which spanned trade, diplomacy, and military influence. The Cholas not only controlled extensive territories but also developed a powerful navy that dominated the Indian Ocean. Their maritime prowess allowed them to establish control over crucial trade routes, promote Indian culture in Southeast Asia, and maintain a network of alliances across the region. The Cholas knew the importance of protecting the sea lanes and ensuring safe trade, which in turn, boosted their economy and diplomatic relations.⁴³

In today's context, India's maritime heritage is an invaluable asset that needs to be revisited. Modern India can draw inspiration from the Chola Empire's naval strategies to protect vital sea routes and bolster its naval presence. The importance of maritime security in today's world cannot be overstated, given that global trade is heavily dependent on shipping lanes. India's coastal regions and maritime territories, including its Andaman and Nicobar Islands, provide it with a strategic advantage that should be maximized.

Modern India's revival of its maritime heritage should focus on strengthening its naval forces, enhancing the security of critical sea lanes, and improving port infrastructure to facilitate trade and commerce.⁴⁴ By doing so, India can enhance its global standing, not just as a regional power, but as a major player in the global maritime sphere.⁴⁵ The establishment of initiatives like the "SAGAR" (Security and Growth for All in the Region) policy, which focuses on India's maritime security and connectivity with the Indian Ocean region,⁴⁶ reflects

³⁷ Kumar, G. INDIA AND CENTRAL ASIA ENGAGEMENT: EMERGING NEW GEOPOLITICAL OUTLOOK IN THE 21 ST CENTURY.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Chew, E. (2007). *Crouching tiger, hidden dragon: The Indian Ocean and the maritime balance of power in historical perspective.*

⁴⁰ Baruah, D. M., Labh, N., Greely, J., & Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. (2023). *Mapping the Indian Ocean region.* Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. https://carnegie-production-assets.s3.amazonaws.com/static/files/Baruah_IO_fin_al_6-28.pdf

⁴¹ Kumar, N. *India's Role in Indo-Pacific Maritime Security: Challenges and Strategic Choices.*

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Kulke, H., Kesavapany, K., & Sakhuja, V. (Eds.). (2009). *Nagapattinam to Suvarnadwipa: reflections on the Chola naval expeditions to Southeast Asia* (Vol. 1). Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

⁴⁴ Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways. (2021). *SAGAR MALA PORT-LED PROSPERITY MARITIME INDIA VISION 2030.* In Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways. <http://sagarmala.gov.in/sites/default/files/MIV%202030%20Report.pdf>

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ India believes in "Security and Growth for all in the Region" to focus on cooperative measures for sustainable use of oceans: President Kovind. (n.d.).



an understanding of the importance of these lessons from the Chola period.

Additionally, the Cholas were known for their far-reaching maritime trade networks, which spanned from the Maldives and Southeast Asia to China and even parts of the Arabian Peninsula.⁴⁷ In modern terms, India should seek to expand its economic and cultural engagement with maritime neighbours through initiatives like the "Act East" policy, which emphasizes closer ties with Southeast Asian countries.⁴⁸ This would not only revive India's historical role as a maritime power but also bolster its economic diplomacy and soft power.

Diplomatic Strategies and International Relations

The Chola Empire, despite being located in South India, was deeply engaged in international diplomacy.⁴⁹ The Chola rulers understood the importance of forging strategic alliances to protect their empire's interests, as well as advancing their cultural and political influence.⁵⁰ They established diplomatic ties with countries like Sri Lanka, China, and the Srivijaya Kingdom, and often sent emissaries to strengthen these relationships.⁵¹ The Cholas also utilized military diplomacy, conducting naval expeditions to protect trade routes and assert their authority over maritime territories.⁵²

Modern India's diplomatic strategies can benefit from these lessons in several ways. In the 21st century, diplomacy has become a multi-faceted

endeavour, requiring a balance between hard and soft power.⁵³ India's strategic alliances, particularly with countries like the United States, Japan, Australia, and ASEAN members, are crucial in maintaining regional stability and countering the influence of China.⁵⁴ Drawing from the Chola example, India can enhance its diplomatic outreach by engaging in multilateral forums, participating in peacekeeping missions, and leveraging its growing economic influence.⁵⁵

India's diplomatic strategies today must be grounded in the principles of mutual respect, economic cooperation, and cultural exchange. Just as the Cholas used cultural diplomacy to foster goodwill and expand their influence, India can use its rich cultural heritage to strengthen ties with the global community. Cultural diplomacy, through initiatives such as the promotion of Indian languages, art, and the practice of religious tolerance, can help India project a positive image internationally.⁵⁶

Moreover, India's soft power—its ability to influence through culture, values, and ideals—has become a key element of its diplomatic approach. The Cholas used art and architecture as tools of cultural diplomacy, building temples and sponsoring religious institutions that served as symbols of their power and influence.⁵⁷ In the modern era, India's soft power can be enhanced through its leadership in global initiatives like climate change, sustainable development, and technology.⁵⁸

Economic Diplomacy and Soft Power

<https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1800028>

⁴⁷ Kulke, H., Kesavapany, K., & Sakhuja, V. (Eds.). (2009). *Nagapattinam to Suvarnadwipa: reflections on the Chola naval expeditions to Southeast Asia* (Vol. 1). Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

⁴⁸ Kesavan, K. V. (2023, December 4). India's 'Act East' policy and regional cooperation. orfonline.org. <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/indias-act-east-policy-and-regional-cooperation-61375>

⁴⁹ Sibi, S. FROM SPICE TRADE TO MODERN DIPLOMACY WITH THE SOUTHEAST THROUGH THE LENS OF SANGAM LITERATURE. INDIAN STUDIES REVIEW, 94.

⁵⁰ Kulke, H., Kesavapany, K., & Sakhuja, V. (Eds.). (2009). *Nagapattinam to Suvarnadwipa: reflections on the Chola naval expeditions to Southeast Asia* (Vol. 1). Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Sibi, S. FROM SPICE TRADE TO MODERN DIPLOMACY WITH THE SOUTHEAST THROUGH THE LENS OF SANGAM LITERATURE. INDIAN STUDIES REVIEW, 94.

⁵³ Shairgojri, A. A. (2021). India's Soft Power as a Pillar of Foreign Policy. *Journal of Corporate Finance Management and Banking System (JCFMBS)* ISSN, 2799-1059.

⁵⁴ Roy-Chaudhury, R., & de Estrada, K. S. (2018). India, the Indo-Pacific and the Quad. *Survival*, 60(3), 181-194.

⁵⁵ Banerjee, M. A., Kumar, G., & Kumar, R. MULTILATERALISM: APPROACHES AND DIPLOMATIC ENGAGEMENT OF INDIA IN CENTRAL ASIA.

⁵⁶ Mahapatra, D. A. (2016). From a latent to a 'strong' soft power? The evolution of India's cultural diplomacy. *Palgrave Communications*, 2(1), 1-11.

⁵⁷ Orr, L. C. (2007). Cholas, Pandyas, and 'Imperial Temple Culture' in Medieval Tamilnadu. *The Temple in South Asia*, 2, 83-104.

⁵⁸ Luxmi, M., & Kashyap, M. S. INDIA: A GLOBAL SOFT POWER LEADER IN THE 21ST CENTURY.



Economic diplomacy is a critical aspect of India's foreign policy in the contemporary world.⁵⁹ The Chola Empire was a powerful economic entity, thanks to its thriving trade networks and maritime dominance. The Cholas were involved in trading goods such as spices, textiles, and precious metals, not just within the Indian Ocean, but also across Southeast Asia, China, and the Arabian Peninsula.⁶⁰ By fostering economic connections, the Cholas were able to establish a network of influence that transcended military power.

Economic diplomacy is crucial for India to secure a prominent role in the global economic landscape. As its economy grows, India is well-positioned to become a leading force in trade, investment, and technology. To capitalize on this potential, it must leverage economic diplomacy to negotiate favorable trade agreements, attract foreign capital, and advance its technological expertise.⁶¹ Key to this approach is the "Make in India" initiative, which aims to position India as a global manufacturing hub,⁶² and the "Startup India" program, which supports innovation and entrepreneurship.⁶³

India's soft power, driven by its culture, traditions, and democratic values, has gained prominence on the world stage. The global appeal of Indian cinema, yoga, cuisine, and spirituality has contributed to India's growing influence.⁶⁴ This soft power is an essential part of India's foreign policy toolkit, complementing its economic and military strength. By fostering people-to-people exchanges, promoting cultural diplomacy, and enhancing educational and scientific collaborations, India can

extend its influence and enhance its image as a global leader in various domains.⁶⁵

The Chola Empire's use of cultural diplomacy, coupled with its economic and naval power, provides a timeless example for India's approach to soft power and economic diplomacy. Today, India must continue to leverage its cultural diversity, democratic values, and economic potential to strengthen its global position and influence.

Applying Chola Lessons to Contemporary Challenges

In today's rapidly evolving global arena, modern India is redefining its role as a key strategic and economic player. Amid unprecedented challenges—ranging from geopolitical rivalries to economic uncertainties—India is compelled to reimagine its strategies for national security, economic growth, and regional cooperation.

Today's India is navigating a complex interplay of strategic challenges. The Indo-Pacific region, with its pivotal trade routes and strategic chokepoints, is emerging as a central theatre for global power competition.⁶⁶ At the same time, the intricate and often tense relationship with China—a neighbour whose economic ambitions are paralleled by its strategic assertiveness—adds another layer of

⁵⁹ Nandy, D. (2024). Evolving strategies: India's economic diplomacy in the global era. *Journal of Sharia Financial Management*, 5(1), 54-71.

⁶⁰ Kulke, H., Kesavapany, K., & Sakhuja, V. (Eds.). (2009). *Nagapattinam to Suvarnadwipa: reflections on the Chola naval expeditions to Southeast Asia* (Vol. 1). Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

⁶¹ Tiwari, A. Economic Diplomacy as a foreign policy tool: India's Trade relations and investments in global markets.

⁶² Make in India | Prime Minister of India. (n.d.). https://www.pmindia.gov.in/en/major_initiatives/make-in-india/

⁶³ Startup India Programme. (n.d.). <https://pib.gov.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=147661>

⁶⁴ Reddy, P. R. INDIA'S CULTURAL AND SOFT POWER EFFORTS AND THEIR IMPACT ON GLOBAL PERCEPTION.

⁶⁵ Educational Diplomacy: India's role in fostering global connections through scholarships and exchange programs. (2024b, November 30). *Diplomatist*.

[https://diplomatist.com/2024/11/30/educational-diplomacy-indias-role-in-fostering-global-connections-through-scholarships-and-exchange-programs/?](https://diplomatist.com/2024/11/30/educational-diplomacy-indias-role-in-fostering-global-connections-through-scholarships-and-exchange-programs/)

Kumar, R. (2025, March 3). Mahakumbh and Beyond: The Power of India's cultural diplomacy in shaping global affairs – analysis. *Eurasia Review*.

<https://www.eurasiareview.com/03032025-mahakumbh-and-beyond-the-power-of-indias-cultural-diplomacy-in-shaping-global-affairs-analysis/?>

Guwahati, H. T. I. (2024, December 13). India's approach to science Diplomacy: Leveraging technology for global cooperation. *Home Tuition in Guwahati*. <https://scientiatutorials.in/indias-approach-to-science-diplomacy-leveraging-technology-for-global-cooperation/?>

⁶⁶ Raska, M. (2019). Strategic Competition and Future Conflicts in the Indo-Pacific Region. *Journal of Indo-Pacific Affairs*, 2(2), 83-97.



complexity.⁶⁷ India's commitment to its Neighbourhood First Policy underscores the importance of fostering robust ties with its immediate neighbours in an effort to build a stable and prosperous regional order.⁶⁸ Each of these issues, while contemporary in nature, can benefit from insights into how the Cholas managed similar challenges through diplomacy, trade, and strategic engagement.

The modern Indian state, with its democratic institutions and rapid economic transformation, is uniquely positioned to integrate historical lessons into its policy frameworks. Their legacy illustrates that effective governance is not solely about accumulating wealth or military might; it is equally about fostering relationships, building resilient institutions, and maintaining a flexible yet principled approach to regional and global challenges. Modern India, much like the Chola dynasty of the past, must prioritize long-term strategic resilience over immediate tactical gains. By embracing principles of adaptability, inclusive governance, and strategic foresight, India can effectively navigate an era characterized by rapid change and uncertainty. The Viksit Bharat vision, which aspires to make India a developed nation by 2047, embodies this approach by focusing on sustainable economic growth, technological advancement, and inclusive development. Through long-term planning and strategic reforms, India aims to strengthen its institutional frameworks and global standing, ensuring resilience in an increasingly complex world.⁶⁹

The Indo-Pacific Region

The Indo-Pacific region has emerged as one of the most critical theaters of global strategic competition.⁷⁰ With major sea lanes of communication, significant economic hubs, and

diverse political systems, the region is a microcosm of the challenges and opportunities facing modern India.⁷¹ In this context, lessons from the Chola Empire's maritime expertise provide a compelling framework for understanding and engaging with the Indo-Pacific. The Indo-Pacific region spans from the eastern shores of Africa to the western coasts of the Americas, encompassing key maritime chokepoints such as the Strait of Malacca and the South China Sea.⁷² These routes are vital for global trade, accounting for a significant portion of the world's shipping traffic.⁷³ Modern India, with its long coastline and strategic location, is uniquely positioned to play a central role in this region. By investing in naval capabilities, maritime infrastructure, and strategic partnerships, India can secure its trade routes, enhance its economic growth, and assert its influence on regional security dynamics. The Sagarmala Project, a flagship initiative aimed at modernizing port infrastructure, improving logistics efficiency, and enhancing coastal community development, exemplifies this strategic approach. By leveraging such initiatives, India can strengthen its maritime security, boost trade competitiveness, and reinforce its position as a key player in the Indo-Pacific region.⁷⁴

The Cholas' mastery of the seas was built on a deep understanding of maritime logistics and naval warfare. Their ability to project power across vast distances was underpinned by advanced shipbuilding techniques, efficient logistical systems, and an integrated approach to maritime

⁶⁷ Ogden, C. (2022). The double-edged sword: Reviewing India-China relations. *India Quarterly*, 78(2), 210-228.

⁶⁸ Government of India. (n.d.). Neighbourhood first policy. https://fsi.mea.gov.in/Images/CPV/LS97_00.pdf

⁶⁹ Singh, B., & Chhering, M. (2024). VIKSIT BHARAT 2047: A STRATEGIC VISION FOR INDIA'S INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT. *International Journal of Research in Commerce and Management Studies*, 06(04), 91-102. <https://doi.org/10.38193/ijrcms.2024.6408>

⁷⁰ Baruah, D. M. (2022). India in the Indo-Pacific: New Delhi's Theater of Opportunity. *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*.

⁷¹ Porter, M. R. (2020). GEO-ECONOMICS IN THE INDO-PACIFIC: CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES TO THE LIBERAL INTERNATIONAL ORDER OBSERVED THROUGH UNITED STATES FOREIGN POLICY IN THE INDIAN OCEAN MARITIME REGION. (No Title).

⁷² Wang, X., Du, D., & Peng, Y. (2023). Assessing the importance of the marine chokepoint: Evidence from tracking the global marine traffic. *Sustainability*, 16(1), 384.

⁷³ Marini, J., & James, S. Indo-pacific maritime security: Challenges and cooperation.

⁷⁴ Devdiscourse News Desk. (2025, March 19). India Charts New Course for Maritime Excellence with Sagarmala 2.0 and S2I2 | Law-Order. Devdiscourse.

<https://www.devdiscourse.com/article/law-order/3313965-india-charts-new-course-for-maritime-excellence-with-sagarmala-20-and-s2i2>



governance.⁷⁵ Just as the Cholas invested in building a formidable navy to safeguard their trade routes, India must continue to modernize its naval fleet. This includes upgrading its naval assets, investing in new technologies, and enhancing its maritime surveillance capabilities. The commissioning of INS Vikrant, India's first indigenous aircraft carrier,⁷⁶ along with the expansion of its submarine fleet through Project 75 and Project 75I, reflects a commitment to bolstering maritime strength.⁷⁷ Additionally, advancements in AI-driven surveillance systems and unmanned naval drones are enhancing India's maritime domain awareness.⁷⁸

The Cholas recognized that secure trade networks were essential for economic prosperity. In today's interconnected world, India can leverage its geographic advantage by fostering stronger economic ties with Indo-Pacific nations through initiatives such as the India-ASEAN Free Trade Agreement⁷⁹ and participation in the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF).⁸⁰ India's Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI) also underscores its focus

on regional security, economic growth, and sustainable maritime development.⁸¹

The Chola model was not one of isolation but of active engagement with neighbouring states. India's strategic vision for the Indo-Pacific should similarly emphasize regional cooperation. This is evident in its increasing role in multilateral security efforts, including the Information Fusion Centre – Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR)⁸² and the Indo-Pacific Maritime Domain Awareness (IPMDA) initiative, which enhances maritime security through intelligence sharing.⁸³ Additionally, India actively participates in joint naval exercises such as Malabar (with the US, Japan, and Australia),⁸⁴ VARUNA (with France),⁸⁵ and MILAN 2024, a multilateral naval exercise involving over 40 nations.⁸⁶ These efforts mirror the Chola approach of using naval strength and regional alliances to maintain stability and prosperity across the seas.

While the Indo-Pacific offers immense opportunities, it also presents significant challenges.

⁷⁵ Venkatesh, R. (2017). THE MARITIME EMPIRE OF THE CHOLAS: TRADE AND INFLUENCE. *International Journal of Research and Analytical Reviews (IJRAR)*, 4(1), 28–30. <https://www.ijrar.org>

⁷⁶ Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi commissions India's first indigenous aircraft carrier INS Vikrant in Kochi. (n.d.). <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1856230>

⁷⁷ Mukherjee, V. (2023, July 12). Project-75I: What is it, and how has India's submarine ambitions evolved? [www.business-standard.com. https://www.business-standard.com/india-news/project-75i-what-is-it-and-how-has-it-progressed-since-1997-123071200224_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/india-news/project-75i-what-is-it-and-how-has-it-progressed-since-1997-123071200224_1.html)

⁷⁸ Simha, R. K. (2024, December 4). Navigating the Future: How unmanned systems are revolutionising the Indian Navy. [raksha-anirveda.com. https://raksha-anirveda.com/unmanned-systems-revolutionizing-indian-navy/#:~:text=Unmanned%20systems%20significantly%20improve%20maritime,by%20piracy%20and%20smuggling%20activities.](https://raksha-anirveda.com/unmanned-systems-revolutionizing-indian-navy/#:~:text=Unmanned%20systems%20significantly%20improve%20maritime,by%20piracy%20and%20smuggling%20activities.)

⁷⁹ Indian Trade Portal. (n.d.). <https://www.indiantradeportal.in/vs.jsp?lang=0&id=0,959,10581,28177,28181>

⁸⁰ Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF). (n.d.). United States Trade Representative. <https://ustr.gov/trade-agreements/agreements-under-negotiation/indo-pacific-economic-framework-prosperity-ipef>

⁸¹ Haldar, S. (2024, November 22). Time to reset the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative. [orfonline.org. https://www.orfonline.org/research/time-to-reset-the-indo-pacific-oceans-initiative](https://www.orfonline.org/research/time-to-reset-the-indo-pacific-oceans-initiative)

⁸² Raksha Mantri inaugurates Information Fusion Centre – Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR). (n.d.). <https://pib.gov.in/Pressreleaseshare.aspx?PRID=1557074>

⁸³ QUAD's Indo-Pacific Partnership for Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) in the Indian Ocean Region: Challenges and Opportunities – CENJOWS. (2024, September 10). <https://cenjows.in/quads-indo-pacific-partnership-for-maritime-domain-awareness-mda-in-the-indian-ocean-region-challenges-and-opportunities/>

⁸⁴ CURTAIN RAISER. (n.d.). <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2062316#:~:text=Exercise%20Malabar%2C%20which%20began%20in,Ocean%20and%20Indo%2DPacific%20region.>

⁸⁵ INDIAN AND FRENCH NAVIES SET FOR THE 23rd EDITION OF BILATERAL NAVAL EXERCISE - VARUNA 2025. (n.d.). <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2112430>

⁸⁶ Global community must collectively aspire for peace in this age of democratic & rules-based world order: Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh at Exercise MILAN in Visakhapatnam. (n.d.). <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=2007789#:~:text=The%20exercise%20commenced%20on%20February,spirit%20of%20international%20maritime%20cooperation.>



The region is characterized by competing territorial claims, rising military expenditures, and an increasingly assertive posture by several regional powers. The strategic contest in the Indo-Pacific is marked by the rivalry between major powers, notably between the United States and China.⁸⁷ India's role in this dynamic environment requires a delicate balancing act—engaging with all stakeholders while safeguarding its own interests. Piracy, terrorism, and maritime smuggling remain persistent threats in several parts of the region. Addressing these security concerns demands not only military might but also effective regional cooperation and intelligence sharing.⁸⁸ The economic fabric of the Indo-Pacific is complex, with interdependencies that span national borders. India must navigate these economic relationships with a mix of assertiveness and pragmatism, ensuring that its strategic interests are not compromised by economic vulnerabilities. Nations in the Indo-Pacific are tightly linked through global supply chains, relying on each other for manufactured goods, raw materials, and critical technologies. For example, Taiwan's TSMC produces over 60% of the world's semiconductors, making it a key player in global electronics manufacturing.⁸⁹ Any disruption, whether due to geopolitical tensions or natural disasters, could severely impact industries worldwide. Similarly, China's dominance in rare earth minerals has pushed countries like Japan, South Korea, and India to seek alternative sources in Australia and Africa to reduce dependency.⁹⁰

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed vulnerabilities in supply chains when China's strict lockdowns led to production halts and shipping

delays, affecting global trade in medical supplies and electronics. As a response, companies like Apple and Samsung have shifted parts of their production to India and Vietnam to enhance supply chain resilience.⁹¹ More recently, Houthi attacks on vessels in the Red Sea⁹² have forced major shipping companies to reroute via the Cape of Good Hope, increasing costs and delivery times for goods moving between Asia, Europe, and North America.⁹³

To mitigate these risks, India is emerging as a global manufacturing hub, attracting investments from multinational corporations and strengthening its role in regional trade agreements.⁹⁴ Initiatives like the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) aim to diversify trade routes and reduce reliance on vulnerable maritime pathways. These examples highlight both the opportunities and challenges of the Indo-Pacific's interconnected supply chains, emphasizing the need for strategic planning and regional cooperation.⁹⁵

Drawing on the Chola legacy, several policy recommendations can be advanced for modern India to effectively engage with the Indo-Pacific, such as developing a comprehensive maritime strategy that

⁸⁷ Hu, W. (2020). The United States, China, and the Indo-Pacific strategy. *China Review*, 20(3), 127–142. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26928114>

⁸⁸ Benson, J. (2020, February 13). Maritime security in the Asia-Pacific: Measuring challenges and progress. *The Diplomat*. <https://thediplomat.com/2020/02/maritime-security-in-the-asia-pacific-measuring-challenges-and-progress/>

⁸⁹ Ranked: Semiconductor Foundries by Revenue Share. (2025, January 22). Retrieved March 20, 2025, from <https://www.visualcapitalist.com/ranked-semiconductor-foundries-by-revenue-share/>

⁹⁰ GlobalData. (2025b, January 17). China currently controls over 69% of global rare earth production. *Mining Technology*. <https://www.mining-technology.com/analyst-comment/china-global-rare-earth-production/>

⁹¹ Dixit, J. (2025, February 7). Apple's Supply Chain: Innovation, Resilience, and Sustainability in the Digital Age | By Jigar Dixit | Medium. <https://medium.com/@dixitjigar/apples-supply-chain-innovation-resilience-and-sustainability-in-the-digital-age-c8f0eb951042#:~:text=Recent%20global%20events%2C%20including%20the,Sustainability%20and%20ESG%20Initiatives>

⁹² Cursino, M. (2025, March 16). US launches wave of air strikes on Yemen's Houthis. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c05mvr3j3yro>

⁹³ Red Sea Shipping crisis: Houthi attacks disrupt global trade and shipping routes. (2025, January 20). *Acuity Knowledge Partners*. <https://www.acuitykp.com/blog/houthi-attacks-disrupt-global-trade-shipping-routes/#:~:text=Amid%20the%20Houthi%20attack%2C%20oil,week%20period%20in%20January%202023.>

⁹⁴ Briefing, I. (2024, June 24). India as an emerging global manufacturing hub. *India Briefing News*. <https://www.india-briefing.com/news/india-as-an-emerging-global-manufacturing-hub-32736.html/>

⁹⁵ Pareek, P. (2025, February 13). What is India-Middle East-Europe Corridor and how will it benefit India? *India Today*. <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/what-is-india-middle-east-europe-corridor-and-how-will-it-benefit-india-2679305-2025-02-13>



integrates defence, trade, and diplomacy. The Sagarmala Project, which focuses on port modernization and connectivity, is a key step in enhancing maritime infrastructure, including shipyards and logistics hubs.⁹⁶ Modernizing these facilities will not only support economic growth but also bolster India's strategic capabilities, as seen in its push for indigenous shipbuilding through projects like the INS Vikrant aircraft carrier.

Collaboration with private industry and academic institutions, such as partnerships with L&T and DRDO, is driving innovation in maritime technology, strengthening both naval and commercial capabilities.⁹⁷ Additionally, India's active participation in the Quad and ASEAN-led initiatives, including joint naval exercises like Malabar and MILAN, underscores its commitment to regional security.⁹⁸ These platforms enable coordinated responses to challenges such as Chinese assertiveness in the South China Sea while reinforcing the vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific.

India-China Relations

The relationship between India and China is one of the most complex and consequential bilateral dynamics in contemporary geopolitics. Marked by historical interactions, economic interdependence, and territorial disputes, this relationship demands a nuanced and balanced approach. Drawing lessons from the Chola period—where diplomatic engagement and strategic adaptability were central to statecraft—can provide valuable insights into managing the modern challenges inherent in India-China relations.

⁹⁶ SAGARMALA NEW DIMENSIONS IN COASTAL ECONOMY. (2016). In Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways. <https://shipmin.gov.in/sites/default/files/sagarmala-eng.pdf>

⁹⁷ DRDO and L&T join hands for Realisation of Indigenous Air Independent Propulsion (AIP) System for Submarines of Indian Navy. (2023, June 22).

<https://www.larsentoubro.com/pressreleases/2023/2-023-06-22-drdo-and-lt-join-hands-for-realisation-of-indigenous-air-independent-propulsion-aip-system-for-submarines-of-indian-navy/>

⁹⁸ Quad nations' warships gather for Malabar naval exercise off India. (2024, October 11). Stars and Stripes.

https://www.stripes.com/theaters/asia_pacific/2024-10-11/quad-nations-navy-malabar-15473144.html

Historically, India and China have shared a long, intertwined history of cultural and economic exchanges. However, modern relations are complicated by border disputes, strategic rivalries, and differing political ideologies. China's rapid economic ascent and assertive foreign policy posture have introduced new dynamics into this age-old relationship. For India, the challenge is to harness the benefits of economic cooperation while managing the strategic risks associated with China's expanding influence in South Asia and beyond.⁹⁹

The Cholas were renowned for their diplomatic acumen, which was based on a pragmatic approach that combined economic incentives with strategic alliances.¹⁰⁰ In a similar vein, modern India can benefit from a multi-dimensional approach to China. India must continue to engage China on economic fronts where mutual interests align, such as trade, investment, and technology exchange. At the same time, India should assertively safeguard its strategic interests, particularly in areas related to border security and regional influence. The Chola model highlighted the importance of cultural diplomacy as a means of building lasting relationships. For modern India, strengthening people-to-people contacts, academic exchanges, and cultural initiatives can help build mutual trust and reduce tensions. While economic interdependence can be a stabilizing factor, it also requires careful calibration. India should diversify its economic partnerships and invest in critical sectors to reduce vulnerabilities that could arise from overdependence on Chinese markets.¹⁰¹

To effectively manage its complex relationship with China, India can implement a

⁹⁹ The Evolution of China's Strategic Posture in Asia – CENJOWS. (2025, February 21). <https://cenjows.in/the-evolution-of-chinas-strategic-posture-in-asia/#:~:text=Finally%2C%20China's%20relations%20with%20regional,India's%20interests%20are%20not%20compromised.>

¹⁰⁰ Aseema, H. (2019, December 26). The Chola Period: The Art Of Combining Naval Power With Diplomacy & Trade - aseemaa. Aseemaa. https://aseemamag.com/the-chola-period-the-art-of-combining-naval-power-with-diplomacy-trade/?utm_source=chatgpt.com#google_vignette

¹⁰¹ Rekhi, V. (2024, March 15). Navigating India-China Economic Relations: scrutiny, investment, and policy outlook. Modern Diplomacy. <https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2024/03/15/navigating-india-china-economic-relations-scrutiny-investment-and-policy-outlook/>



multi-pronged strategy inspired by historical precedents. Strengthening border surveillance and infrastructure, as seen in projects like the Vibrant Villages Programme and the expansion of all-weather roads in Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh, can enhance security and deter potential provocations.¹⁰²

Simultaneously, sustained diplomatic engagement through mechanisms like the Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination (WMCC) on India-China Border Affairs is essential for crisis management and confidence-building.¹⁰³

India must also prioritize technological self-reliance by investing in initiatives like Semicon India¹⁰⁴ and Atmanirbhar Bharat,¹⁰⁵ reducing dependence on foreign suppliers while boosting economic resilience. Additionally, leveraging strategic partnerships with regional powers—such as the Quad, India's defence agreements with Japan and Australia, and enhanced maritime cooperation with ASEAN nations—creates a balance of power that discourages unilateral assertiveness. By reinforcing both domestic capabilities and international alliances, India can safeguard its strategic interests while fostering stable and pragmatic relations with China.

The dual imperatives of competition and cooperation define the modern India-China

relationship. Drawing on the Chola precedent of strategic resilience, modern India should adopt policies that are both assertive and flexible, like encouraging trade and investment while instituting measures to protect critical industries. This dual approach allows India to benefit from economic engagement without compromising its strategic autonomy. Utilizing regional and international platforms to address common challenges such as climate change, terrorism, and economic instability. By aligning with global initiatives, India can reinforce its position as a responsible global actor while addressing bilateral issues with China in a multilateral context.

India's active participation in multilateral organizations enhances its reputation as a responsible global actor, which is crucial in managing bilateral issues with China. By engaging in forums like the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and the BRICS grouping, India demonstrates its commitment to regional and global stability, signaling that its policies are guided by broader interests beyond narrow self-concerns.¹⁰⁶

Through multilateral engagement, India contextualizes bilateral disputes within a larger framework that emphasizes shared interests and responsibilities. For example, during the 2023 G20 Summit in New Delhi, India played a pivotal role in including the African Union as a permanent member, showcasing its dedication to inclusive global governance.¹⁰⁷ Addressing challenges like economic instability and security threats necessitates joint action. India's involvement in the Quad—alongside the United States, Japan, and Australia—and its participation in ASEAN-led mechanisms facilitate coordinated responses to regional security challenges, indirectly managing tensions with China. This collective approach ensures that aggressive unilateral actions are met with unified responses from multiple nations, reinforcing a rules-based

¹⁰² On the eve of the Republic Day, Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation Shri Amit Shah interacted with the special guests from the Vibrant Villages in New Delhi today. (n.d.). <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=1999688#:~:text=Shri%20Amit%20Shah%20said%20that%20the%20Vibrant%20Village%20Programme%20has,development%20of%20infrastructure%20in%20the>

¹⁰³ 32nd Meeting of the Working Mechanism for Consultation & Coordination on India-China Border Affairs. (n.d.). Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India. https://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/38699/32nd_Meeting_of_the_Working_Mechanism_for_Consultation__Coordination_on_IndiaChina_Border_Affairs

¹⁰⁴ SEMICON India a strategic event, providing a platform for all major semiconductor supply chain players: Sh. Akash Tripathi, CEO, Indian Semiconductor Mission. (n.d.). <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2053280>

¹⁰⁵ Samvaad, D. (n.d.). Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India. <https://tribal.nic.in/atmanirbhar-bharat.aspx>

¹⁰⁶ Bagchi, I., Akbaruddin, S., & Madan, T. (2023, December 13). India-China dynamics in multilateral and unilateral organizations. Brookings. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/india-china-dynamics-in-multilateral-and-unilateral-organizations/>

¹⁰⁷ Parashar, R. (2024, April 1). India's multilateral engagements: an analysis - SamvadaWorld. Samvada World. <https://samvadaworld.com/featured/indias-multilateral-engagements-an-analysis/>



order and discouraging assertive moves that could destabilize the region.¹⁰⁸

India's Neighbourhood First Policy

In the quest for regional stability and prosperity, India's Neighbourhood First Policy is a cornerstone of its foreign policy. This approach emphasizes building strong, mutually beneficial relationships with countries in South Asia and the broader Indian Ocean region. The underlying principle is that a secure and prosperous neighbourhood is foundational to national security and economic growth. Lessons from the Chola Empire—characterized by regional integration and diplomatic outreach—provide a valuable perspective for reinforcing this policy in the modern context.¹⁰⁹

India's immediate neighbourhood is defined by deep historical, cultural, and economic ties, yet it remains a region marked by geopolitical competition, political instability, and economic disparities. The Neighbourhood First Policy is a strategic initiative aimed at fostering regional stability, economic growth, and inclusive development. By strengthening diplomatic and security cooperation, India seeks to mitigate regional conflicts and promote a stable security environment. India has prioritized regional integration through trade and infrastructure projects, such as the BBIN (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal) Motor Vehicle Agreement, which enhances cross-border connectivity,¹¹⁰ and the India-Sri Lanka Economic Partnership Vision, aimed at increasing trade and investment.¹¹¹ Additionally, India's

support for development projects, such as the construction of housing and schools in Nepal and Afghanistan, underscores its commitment to inclusive growth.¹¹² By fostering stronger regional ties, addressing security concerns, and promoting economic cooperation, India's Neighbourhood First Policy plays a crucial role in ensuring long-term stability and prosperity in South Asia.

The Chola Empire was not only a formidable maritime power but also a pioneer in regional diplomacy, adept at balancing cultural integration, economic exchange, and strategic alliances—principles that remain relevant to modern regional policies. The Cholas actively promoted cultural and religious exchanges, as seen in their temple-building initiatives across Southeast Asia, particularly in Indonesia (Srivijaya) and Cambodia. Similarly, modern India can leverage cultural diplomacy, such as the Kashi-Tamil Sangamam initiative and Buddhist diplomacy with Nepal and Sri Lanka,¹¹³ to strengthen regional ties and enhance soft power. Modern India can similarly use cultural diplomacy to bridge gaps, enhance mutual understanding, and build soft power in its neighbourhood, their success in establishing robust trade networks underscores the importance of economic integration.

Based on the historical lessons and contemporary imperatives, several policy initiatives can be recommended to bolster India's Neighbourhood First Policy, such as enhancing regional connectivity through investments in transport, energy, and digital infrastructure such as the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway,¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁸ Bagchi, I., Akbaruddin, S., & Madan, T. (2023, December 13). India-China dynamics in multilateral and minilateral organizations. Brookings. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/india-china-dynamics-in-multilateral-and-minilateral-organizations/>

¹⁰⁹ Committee reports. (n.d.). PRS Legislative Research. <https://prsindia.org/policy/report-summaries/india-s-neighbourhood-first-policy>

¹¹⁰ Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal (BBIN) Motor Vehicle Agreement for the Regulation of Passenger, Personal and Cargo Vehicular Traffic amongst BBIN. (n.d.). <https://pib.gov.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=122417>

¹¹¹ Promoting Connectivity, Catalysing Prosperity: India-Sri Lanka Economic Partnership Vision. (n.d.). Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India. <https://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl%2F36864%2FPromoting+Conn>

ectivity+Catalysing+Prosperity+IndiaSri+Lanka+Economic+Partnership+Vision=&

¹¹² PTI, & PTI. (2021, December 8). Reconstruction of 50,000 houses in Nepal under Indian-assistance completed: S Jaishankar. The New Indian Express. <https://www.newindianexpress.com/world/2021/Dec/08/reconstruction-of-50000-houses-in-nepal-under-indian-assistance-completed-s-jaishankar-2393285.html>

¹¹³ Pandit, S. D. (2025, February 15). Importance of kashi Tamil Sangamam - The Sunday Guardian Live. The Sunday Guardian Live. <https://sundayguardianlive.com/opinion/importance-of-kashi-tamil-sangamam>

¹¹⁴ How India-Myanmar-Thailand trilateral Highway will bolster economic growth and regional cooperation. (2024, October 11). News18. <https://www.news18.com/explainers/how-india-myanmar-thailand-trilateral-highway-will-bolster->



and the India-Bangladesh Friendship Pipeline.¹¹⁵ Such initiatives not only stimulate economic growth but also integrate the region more closely with India's economy. Creating bilateral and multilateral trade agreements that reduce barriers, promote investment, and support sustainable economic development. These frameworks should focus on balancing trade deficits and ensuring equitable benefits for all parties. Efforts to strengthen the South Asian Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA) and regional supply chains would help ensure equitable benefits for all participating nations.¹¹⁶

Establishing mechanisms for regional security cooperation, including intelligence sharing, joint military exercises, and counter-terrorism initiatives. Joint exercises like Mitra Shakti with Sri Lanka,¹¹⁷ Sampriti with Bangladesh,¹¹⁸ and the DOSTI trilateral exercise with the Maldives and Sri Lanka demonstrate India's commitment to collective security and conflict prevention.¹¹⁹ Promoting

educational, cultural, and tourism exchanges to strengthen interpersonal bonds and foster a shared sense of identity and purpose among regional populations, and supporting the creation of regional institutions that can facilitate dialogue, conflict resolution, and coordinated development efforts. These institutions can serve as platforms for addressing shared challenges and promoting collective growth.

Modern India's strategic vision must incorporate lessons from the Chola era to ensure that its Neighbourhood First Policy is not just aspirational but also effective. By building on the principles of cultural diplomacy, economic integration, and proactive engagement, India can help create a stable, prosperous, and interconnected regional order. This, in turn, will contribute to its own national security and economic growth, reaffirming its role as a regional leader in a rapidly changing global environment.

II. Conclusion

In conclusion, the exploration of India's historical legacy—particularly the conquests and strategic paradigms of the Chola Empire—offers a wealth of lessons that remain profoundly relevant for shaping modern India's geopolitical outlook. As this paper has examined, the Chola era was characterized by an extraordinary blend of maritime prowess, technological innovation, economic prosperity, and a sophisticated approach to diplomacy. These attributes not only propelled the Cholas to become one of the most formidable powers in their time but also laid down a blueprint of strategic resilience that modern India can adapt to address contemporary challenges.

By synthesizing the achievements of the past with the demands of the present, India can develop a geopolitical paradigm that is both visionary and pragmatic. The lessons drawn from the Chola conquests are not mere relics of history; they are dynamic principles that, when adapted to modern contexts, offer a pathway toward a more secure, prosperous, and influential India. This integration of historical insight and modern innovation is essential for navigating the complexities of today's global order.

As India charts its course in an increasingly interconnected and unpredictable world, the

economic-growth-and-regional-cooperation-9082672.html

¹¹⁵ PM Narendra Modi and Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina jointly inaugurated the India-Bangladesh Friendship Pipeline. (n.d.). <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=1908377#:~:text=IBFP%20is%20the%20first%20cross,people%20linkages%20between%20two%20sides.>

¹¹⁶ Accessing South Asian Markets from India's SAARC Free Trade Membership, Preferential Trade Agreements - India Guide | Doing Business in India. (n.d.). <https://www.india-briefing.com/doing-business-guide/india/trade-relationships/accessing-south-asian-markets-from-india-s-saarc-free-trade-membership-preferential-trade-agreements#:~:text=Implemented%20starting%20July%201%2C%202006,some%20product%20specific%20rules.>

¹¹⁷ INDIA- SRI LANKA JOINT MILITARY EXERCISE MITRA SHAKTI COMMENCES IN MADURU OYA, SRI LANKA. (n.d.). <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=2044570#:~:text=INDIA%2D%20SRI%20LAN KA%20JOINT%20MILITARY,IN%20MADURU %20OYA%2C%20SRI%20LANKA&text=The%2010th%20edition%20of,to%2025th%20August%202024.>

¹¹⁸ INDIAN AND BANGLADESH ARMIES BEGIN JOINT EXERCISE. (n.d.). <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=1963629>

¹¹⁹ Pti. (2024a, February 25). India, Maldives & Sri Lanka's 'Dosti-16' kicks off in Maldives. The

Hindu.

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-maldives-sri-lanka-dosti-16-kicks-off-in-maldives/article67884415.ece>



enduring lessons of the Chola Empire serve as a guiding light. They remind us that strategic foresight, technological innovation, and a balanced approach to power are not new ideas but are principles that have been tested and refined over centuries. By embracing these lessons, modern India can better prepare itself to face future challenges with confidence and creativity. In practical terms, this means that India's policy framework must be dynamic and forward-thinking. Investments in naval modernization, initiatives to boost maritime trade, and strategies for economic diplomacy must be implemented in tandem with efforts to build stronger diplomatic ties and regional alliances. Such a holistic approach will ensure that India remains competitive and resilient in a world characterized by rapid change and unforeseen challenges.

The Chola Empire exemplified the power of integrated statecraft, where military strength, economic dynamism, and diplomatic ingenuity converged to create an enduring legacy. Modern India, inheriting this legacy, has the opportunity to craft a geopolitical paradigm that reflects both its rich historical heritage and its ambitions for the future. The synthesis of historical lessons and modern imperatives can lead to innovative strategies that not only address current geopolitical challenges but also pave the way for long-term stability and prosperity. By learning from the past, India can harness the strengths of its maritime heritage, cultivate strategic international relations, and pursue economic policies that foster regional cooperation and global leadership.

In embracing the wisdom of the Cholas, modern India reaffirms its commitment to a future where power is measured not just by military might or economic size, but by the ability to integrate diverse strategies into a cohesive vision. A vision that respects historical traditions while boldly innovating for the future. Such a vision will undoubtedly position India as a central player in the evolving global order, capable of navigating complex challenges with the same ingenuity and resilience that characterized one of its greatest historical empires.

The Chola legacy, rich in strategic innovation and multifaceted statecraft, provides a roadmap for modern India—a roadmap that leads toward a future marked by strategic autonomy, economic vibrancy, and robust international partnerships. In this way, the journey from ancient conquests to modern strategies is not just a retrospective exercise, but a transformative process that equips India to meet the challenges of today and

tomorrow with wisdom, determination, and an unwavering commitment to excellence.

Through the convergence of historical insight and contemporary strategy, India can continue to shape its destiny in the global arena, drawing on the enduring legacy of the Cholas as both a source of inspiration and a practical guide for navigating the complexities of modern geopolitics. In this integration of old and new lies the promise of a future where India's strategic ambitions are realized through a balanced, innovative, and historically informed approach—a future that honours the past while boldly charting a course toward sustained growth, stability, and influence on the world stage.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to express my sincere gratitude towards the paper guide, Dr. Anu Sharma, for her invaluable guidance and support throughout the research process for my paper titled, "From Chola Conquests to Modern Strategies: Lessons for India's Contemporary Geopolitical Paradigm". Her insights and patience were instrumental in shaping this paper. My heartfelt gratitude also goes to our respected Head of Institution – Dr. Anand Tiwari, AIDSS, for providing me the opportunity to undertake this research and extending his help through his knowledgeable journey. I am also thankful to the faculty and staff of Amity Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies (AIDSS), Amity University, Noida, for providing a supportive academic environment that fostered my research.

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