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## Restructuring Indian Foreign Policy in 21<sup>st</sup> Century: A Paradigm Shift during Modi Era

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### ABSTRACT

The advent of Narendra Modi as Prime Minister of India in 2014 marked a significant transformation in the country's foreign policy. Modi's approach, characterized by strategic autonomy, proactive diplomacy, and economic pragmatism, has sought to elevate India's global standing and address contemporary geopolitical challenges. This article examines the paradigm shift in India's foreign policy under Modi. His bold diplomatic decisions demonstrate a major transformation through close engagement with the US, outreach towards China and Russia despite impediments, and adaptation to rapidly changing global dynamics, placing India on a new track. In the post-Cold War era, India has focused on positioning itself as an influential stakeholder in international institutions. The Modi government is pursuing a status-seeking strategy and aims to become a leading global power. Modi has asserted on various occasions that India desires a prominent role in global leadership. This article will particularly analyze the modernization efforts in defense, economy, and technology transfers within the context of balancing relations with major powers. The combination of soft power and cultural diplomacy in multilateral engagements at global forums has made India a prominent state in the 21st century.

**Key Words:** Foreign Policy, India, Modi, Paradigm and Transformation

### Introduction

Soon after assuming power, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi presented a task to his top officials to help India attain and effectively play the role of a leading player on world stage, rather than just being a balancing power. Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, India's foreign secretary, elaborated on this theme by saying that

Narendra Modi's bold diplomatic moves showed India's rising self-confidence and that it now desires to be a dominant nation with potential to play a leading role (Jaishankar, 2015). When this goal is accomplished, it will be one of the most major shifts in autonomous India's foreign policy, one that could have important repercussions for the future global order. Getting to this point, nevertheless, will require consistent effort in the years to come. India will need to restructure its economy, bolster its good governance, and raise the levels of rationalization throughout the country and society at large. Only then will New Delhi be capable of manufacturing the military equipment that will enhance its security and impact in world politics. This is crucial as Modi wants to make India more than just a powerful nation—he wants it to be a country whose choices and clout are defining for world order (Tellis, 2016).

### **Major Reformation in Indian Foreign Policy**

India's foreign policy has undergone paradigm shift. It has been through many changes since India's inception. Raja Mohan, a foreign policy analyst, described this change as "transformation through incremental adaptation" (Sharma & Mehta, 2020). While successive Indian Prime Ministers adjusted foreign policy according to changing global dynamics, Prime Minister Modi brought clarity and new energy. For assessing shifts in foreign policy, it is important to identify global inflection points, such as the end of WWII.

Economic reform program of 1991 changed India. Globalization and economic liberalization increased GDP growth rate. As India is a middle-income country and has low human development capital; therefore, foreign policy is primarily aimed towards peaceful regional and global environment economy can thrive. Other important issues are food, water and energy security, global issues like environment, fair trade and nuclear disarmament and safety of Indian citizens internationally. Military nexus with China and hostility with Pakistan are the major hurdles in achieving foreign policy goals. As India is not a veto power at UNSC, it has limited power in global politics, but continuous military and diplomatic assistance from the US has enabled it to gain influential position in South Asia (Sharma & Mehta, 2020).

After independence, first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru joined nonalignment movement for keeping India out of major power rivalry. However, Indian foreign policy evolved over the period. When Indira Gandhi came to power, she changed India's policy towards major powers and neighbors. Indira Gandhi became prime minister in 1966, when Indian economy was stagnant and it was heavily depended on US for grains to handle food insecurity. Moreover, Pakistan had close ties with US and alliance with China, the US also supported Pakistan during 1971 war. At that time Prime Minister Gandhi took advantage of major power rivalries and supported fall of Dhaka despite major Chinese and US support, who even deployed fifth naval fleet at the Bay of Bengal. In the following years India conducted its first nuclear test in 1974, resulting in massive western

*Restructuring Indian Foreign Policy in 21st Century: A Paradigm Shift during Modi Era* sanctions that served as a severe blow to Indian economy. The bold foreign policy of Indira Gandhi again underwent changes when Rajiv Gandhi came to power at inflection point when USSR was pulling troops out of Afghanistan. During this situation, Rajiv Gandhi put aside conventional Indian position towards China and US and engaged with the US in the field of technology. He also visited China and ASEAN countries for containing Chinese trained separatists in Northeast of India. He deployed peace keeping forces in Sri Lanka; however, he was outmaneuvered and lost the trust of Sri Lankan and Sinhalese Tamils(Sharma & Mehta, 2020).

## **India's Foreign Policy under Prime Minister Modi**

Modi Doctrine, Indian foreign policy under Modi regime, is the policy initiatives of Modi government towards other countries. Foreign policy of India is carried out by the Ministry of External Affairs. India's current foreign policy is focused on improving ties with South Asian and extended Southeast Asian neighbors and major world powers. For pursuing this, he officially visited Bhutan, Japan, Nepal, Myanmar, Fiji, Australia, and the US.

## **A Factual Background**

When Narendra Modi was CM of Gujrat, he faced Western sanctions, he visited major Asian powers for fostering his business ties. He met Japanese Prime Minister in 2007 and 2012 and built personal rapport. He also reached out to Israel and China for investment deals(Hall, 2015). He sought to expand ties with Israel beyond agriculture and defense. He was also appreciated for his efforts for organizing an international business summit, Vibrant Gujrat, which increased investment and promoted business friendly and pro-development image.

## **Reaction of P5 Countries**

Soon after Modi assumed office, major leaders expressed willingness to enhance ties with India and engage with Modi government, as India is a big market. All permanent members of UNSC sent envoys to India, which was significant given long standing bid of India to gain permanent membership. Chinese envoy was the first to visit and showed willingness to settle border dispute. Russian envoy also visited India to discuss joint defense cooperation. French Foreign Minister also visited India for high level talks regarding defense and strategic cooperation with Prime Minister and External Affairs Minister. Moreover, US Secretary of State John Kerry also visited India, he emphasized the significance of India and US in 21<sup>st</sup> century and quoted Narendra Modi's slogan "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikaas" signifying inclusive growth. During his visit he also lobbied for gaining India's support for sanctioning Russia over 2014 Ukraine crisis(Hall, 2016).

## **A Significant Policy Initiatives under Prime Minister Modi Administration**

Foreign Secretary Shivshankar Menon described Narendra Modi's foreign policy as of "strategic incoherence" which is implemented without a "overarching conceptual framework"(Sharma & Mehta, 2020). Modi administration have taken various policy initiatives that have been making headlines:

### **India's Strategic Partnerships and Hedging**

India's national security strategy outlines strategic partnership with minor and major powers, notably Japan, Russia and the US(Gul, Hussain, Imran, Rehman, & Haider, 2021). The nature and precise nomenclature of these partnerships are variable. Top of the list is US India partnership, which also raises some concerns about increased American influence. To shun such concerns, India has developed global and strategic partnership with Japan and privileged and special partnership with Russia. It even aims for nominal strategic ties with China, though main purpose of this to reduce tensions by looking for opportunities to work together and encouraging strategic communication. India's multilateral and bilateral strategic partnerships provides it leverage to circumscribe adversary's support and further its ties with friends. The strategic approach of Modi government is discussed below.

#### **i. Approaches to Gaining Political Support**

Despite India's policy of limited strategic partnerships, it has gained much by garnering political support. Prime Minister Modi followed the policy of his predecessors in this regard. During Cold War, Russia consistently supported India against Chinese threat, on Kashmir issue, backed the setup of heavy industries in India in the initial years and was a major arm supplier. Due to these reasons, India particularly values its relations with Russia. Prime Minister Modi government called Russia a pillar of strength which supported India during difficult period(Gul et al., 2021). Russian support was important for India when it was facing US sanctions after its nuclear tests. Later, the US had its part when it assisted India in bypassing restrictions of nonproliferation regime and take part in arms trade. India also improved relations with Japan, who supported its claim for permanent membership of UNSC. Though, China did not support India's claim, but refrains from clear opposition when all major and many middle powers are backing India. Due to ties with major powers, India is confident that no major country will go against India on its territorial disputes with Pakistan or China.

## **ii. An Aspiration to Avoiding Dependence**

India's has diversified its arms imports, which explains its preference of strategic autonomy. The nature of its military cooperation with major power also highlights policy of avoiding dependence. Despite rapidly growing defense partnership with the US, India is cautious about "fundamental agreements", which will deepen military cooperation with the US. Modi has been careful about signing the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA) and the Communications and Information Security Agreement. This hesitancy is due to lingering suspicion of US intrusion (Lakshman, 2015). Broadly speaking, Indian policy makers are aware of unwelcomed effects of dependence on critical policies.

India once had close relations with Iran which were eroded due to US pressure. India had to reduce oil and gas purchase from Iran and drop Iran-Pakistan-India pipeline project. There are concerns about American dominance due to which India had been preferring 'polycentric' global order, in which its ties with Russia will likely be an important part. France also has important place in India's foreign policy, as it's a vital arm supplier. It was highlighted when French presidents were invited five times to Republic Day parade, it is the highest honor extended to any country (Basrur, 2017).

## **iii. Avoiding Entanglement Towards Various Security Conflicts**

India avoids get involved in the security conflicts of its allies. For instance, the US has been calling out China over Taiwan since long, but India has diplomatically distanced itself from the issue. Similarly, India refrain from getting involved in tensions between North Korea and the US, though it occasionally criticizes North Korea. India has taken part in joint naval exercises with the US and Japan in South China Sea and East China Sea but did not take any stance on specific regional disputes. However, it stridently calls for freedom of navigation in sea and has also held talks with the US for joint patrols in sea (Sanjeev, 2016). Similarly, India has no stance on territorial dispute between Japan and Russia. It is also noteworthy that Russia, Japan and the US also don't directly interfere in India's territorial disputes with Pakistan and China. Thus, India and its strategic partners are not committed to support each other in their disputes.

## **iv. India's Engaging Ties Towards China**

India China relationship is described as 'protracted rivalry' due to longstanding border dispute and balance of power in the region (Sanjeev, 2016). However, there is simultaneous economic engagement and trade between both countries as well. India tries to ease tensions with China by maintaining limited strategic partnership. In his 2015 visit to China, Modi talked about new milestone in ties China; however, that visit did not meet much expectations.

## **Status Seeking and Upward Mobility**

As mentioned before, India distanced itself from the great power economic and political rivalry, particularly the capitalist and Cold War economy. At the same time India pursued the strategy of increasing its standing among world powers. This latter is the center of Modi's foreign policy. Many countries are quite conscious about their status in international society. Status is based on characteristics like diplomatic influence, wealth, and power. It involves respectful treatment by other states. For gaining this status, state should achieve status markers like frequent engagement with other major states, leadership position in international organizations and membership of elite clubs. After the independence, India resisted the world order that was based on dynamics of Cold War and liberal capitalism. Instead, it sought to maintain an independent stance on global affairs and achieve leadership status among other post-colonial countries. India's leadership pursued three-pronged strategy for achieving international leadership. First, Jawaharlal Nehru championed a strong international agenda which emphasized on post-colonial matters like decolonization, democratizing states and ending apartheid. Second, he joined the Non-Aligned Movement and created a third force outside the politics of Cold War, to bridge gap between Western and Eastern blocs and called for global nuclear disarmament. Third, major Indian leaders like Indira Gandhi added new dimension to Nehru's approach by calling for "South –South" cooperation and "New Economic Order" and by actively playing a leadership role among post-colonial countries. However, material power is compulsory for attaining status. Though, owing to its efforts, India gained a momentary prestige, but lost momentum due to insignificant military capability and economic stagnation. India switched to a open economy in the post-Cold War era, resulting in increased growth rate and emerging economy. In 1998, it declared its nuclear weapons and withstood Western sanctions for a short period, only to earn the label of 'rising power' later. (Basrur, 2017). This quest for power encompasses the following markers.

### **Initiative to Increasing Military Capability**

Economic liberalization resulted in rapid growth of Indian economy. Consequently, it has been able to raise its military spending without stressing its resources. Major powers possess strong defense capabilities. Accelerated economic growth has enabled India to gain more and more military strength. During Cold War, it heavily depended on the USSR for arms, while now it has been balancing its purchases to avoid such dependence. Though Russian weapons still make large portion of India's arm imports, yet balance is shifting as India now has major contracts with the US. Prime Minister Modi government has embarked on collaboration with the US on various advanced technologies including joint aircraft carrier production. Moreover, India also held talk with Japan for supply of diesel electric submarines and amphibian aircrafts.

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Under Prime Minister Modi government, military spending has increased sharply along with increase in arms imports, making India the leading buyer of conventional arms. India has been accumulating weapons on a large scale without a structured strategic policy, which suggests that this process is not only driven by security and defense motives. India is considered a “reluctant” nuclear power, yet it is continuously accumulating nuclear capabilities, including a range of warhead and ballistic missiles, which is divergent to its doctrine of minimum deterrence. The benefit of such capabilities is prestige associated with them. Indian policy makers understand after 1998 tests the US was unprecedentedly interested in strategic partnership with India. Thus, this trend continues unabated (Tellis, 2016).

#### **i. India's Effort Towards Strategic Restraint**

India has been pursuing the policy military restraint despite its enhanced military capabilities, which has given it a status of responsible nuclear power. In post-Cold War era, India did not wield its military power even though there have been periods of heightened tensions with Pakistan. Though, during Modi government there has been no major occasion where it had to opt between restraint and action, but it did indicate unnecessary use of force on any occasion. Modi government has been focusing on soft use of hard power. India is distinctly making efforts to gain the status of “net security provider” by combating piracy in Indian Ocean and providing aid during humanitarian crisis (Mukherjee, 2014).

#### **ii. Prime Minister Modi Struggle for Joining Major Global Blocks**

Modi government is energetically tracking the major global partnership and performing the role as global leadership. It has been ambitiously trying to achieve permanent membership in UNSC. It has also achieved G20 membership. (Basrur, 2017).

He held meetings with major powers and gained considerable success in gathering support for permanent membership of India at UNSC. In 2015, he spearheaded efforts for reform of UN, though such large-scale changes appear unlikely, but many UN member states supported India's claim. Prime Minister Modi also actively pursued the campaign of making India a part of non-proliferation regime. For India, exclusion from regime is akin to a low state status. 2008 nuclear deal with the Nuclear Supplier Group (NSG) and the US was a critical breakthrough indicating India's uphill struggle. Modi is continuing efforts for obtaining membership of NSG, though it became member of Missile Technology Control Regime in 2016 (Basrur, 2017).

#### **iii. Striving for Global Partnership Through Institutionalization**

Prime Minister Modi's quest for upward mobility is centered on strengthening social capital by networking multilaterally and bilaterally to gain the status of major power in international politics. The US is the major ally without which it

will be difficult for India to attain this status. Though in past, India has used its ties with the US as balance of power against China, now it has band wagoned with the US for raising its international status. India has also developed strategic partnership and sought bilateral support of Russia, Japan, France and Britain. Prime Minister Modi has also been networking with other major powers for building India's image of major player through institutions like IBSA (India, Brazil, South Africa) and BRICS. India is also the member of regional institutions like ASEAN, which makes it a player and stakeholder in issues concerning ASEAN members and the US, Russia, Japan, China and Australia. Additionally, India is also the member of the Indian Ocean Rim Association and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. In the Indian Ocean Rim Association, India is strong candidate for leadership as major powers like the US, the UK, France, China, and Japan are 'dialogue partners' only. Thus, India is consistently pursuing for status in the hierarchical global order. Currently, it is not in the same military or economic league as China or the US. In 2021, India's GDP was US \$ 3.1 trillion compared to the United States US\$ 23 trillion, and China's 17.7 trillion. Clearly, there is a way to go, but India's leadership over last twenty years have put country on an upward trajectory (Ganguly, 2021).

### **A Disclosure of Soft Power Diplomacy**

Soft power is an important component of Prime Minister Modi foreign policy. Indian soft power encompasses four categories including ancient heritage, Bollywood, economic aid and democracy. These categories are incorporated in Narendra Modi foreign policy aims. Ancient civilizational ties and heritage are mainly appealing for regional connectivity and security. Prime Minister Modi often stated that in today's era, India has increased roles and responsibilities. India should play the role of 'vishwa guru' (world's teacher), not only for leading world but also for protecting India's own heritage (Lahiri, 2017). He portrayed India as an amalgamation of ancient civilizations and young demographics simultaneously. Major themes representing ancient heritage are Yoga and Buddhism. India has been earnestly exploiting these themes and aiming to become spiritual capital of the world. Narendra Modi's predecessors also focused on using these themes as cultural tools. Prime Minister Modi followed the same policy discourse and has been promoting Buddhism in his Act East Policy. He explicitly mentioned that "without Buddha, this century cannot be Asia's century" (Pethiyagoda, 2015), and during his international visits he reserved for Buddhist temples.

India has always talked highly of its democracy. In 2005, India joined UN Democracy Fund. However, India does not have a policy of promoting democracy abroad, especially after disastrous consequences of US efforts to export democracy in Middle East. Nonetheless it has been silently helping young democracies. Modi frequently talks about democratic values in diplomatic engagements. In his visits to Myanmar, Japan, South Korea, Australia, United States, Nepal and Bhutan he constantly used democracy card to engage with West and form partnership with



***Restructuring Indian Foreign Policy in 21st Century: A Paradigm Shift during Modi Era*** Asian democracies. He proclaimed that Indian democracy has made it a major global player.

India is also building its image as aid donor. Given its economic growth, India can provide funds not only to its neighbors like Nepal and Bhutan but to various African countries. In 2015, India created its aid agency called the India Agency for Partnership in Development (IAPD) and reserved \$11.3 billion to be spent as foreign aid in coming years. Historically, India has provided highest aid to Bhutan to support its hydropower sector, and in return built its clout in region. India also provides aid to Afghanistan and provide support for development of infrastructure projects. India's aid disbursement to Afghanistan and Africa is associated with strategic reasons. In Africa, China and India are competing for energy resources, thus generous aid is reserved for Africa to create influence in the continent. India has always maintained cordial ties with Afghanistan. Unlike Pakistan, who uses coercive strategies like Taliban to maintain influence, India uses aid packages and investment in infrastructure to retain control. For India economic intervention have yielded more benefits than military intervention.

Another cultural tool used by India is Bollywood, through which it exports culture to East Asia, Middle East, and Africa. However, it is very rarely used as official foreign policy tool by Indian government, but it proves beneficial as Nye stated that in today's world propaganda comes from the non-propaganda sources, which increases their credibility.

## **India's Relations with Major Power under Prime Minister Modi**

### **Indo-US Partnership**

Since the end of the Cold War, several Indian regimes have shown willingness to develop strong bilateral ties with the U. S (Tellis, 2006). Thus, the growing strength of the Indo-America relationship over the past 25 years is a nonpartisan trend. The partnership underwent a fundamental shift during Modi's term in office, starting in May 2014 (Pant, 2014). Currently, Indo-US ties appear to be in an incredibly ideal place, with the contentious subject of civil nuclear energy cooperation resolved, defense cooperation greatly improved, and a variety of international issues coming to a consensus (Pant & Joshi, 2017).

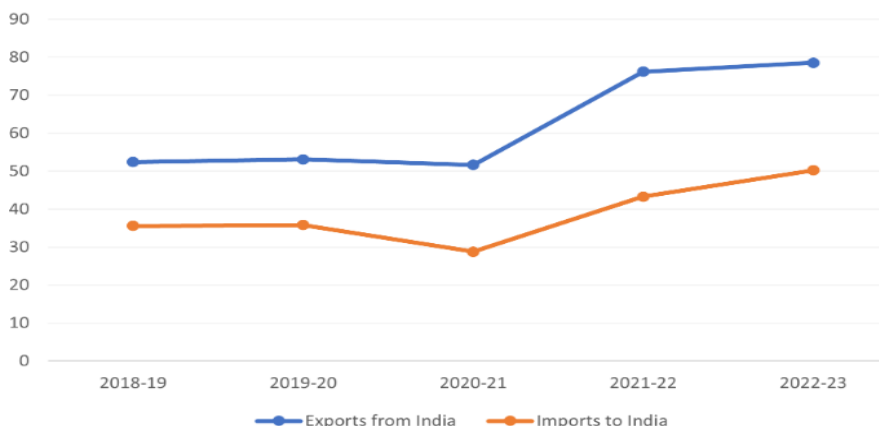
This section investigates the evolution of US-Indian ties under Prime Minister Modi administration. Initially, Narendra Modi reputation and the relationship's baggage from the past lead to a rough start of US-India ties. The section then goes into detail on the important advancements made in the two-way partnership and the overall improvement in ties. The purpose of Narendra Modi approach towards the U. S. is also explained. The belief that India's developmental objectives cannot be achieved without meaningful American cooperation, the powerful political clout Prime Minister Modi enjoys both within his own club and in the Indian parliament, and the fundamental changes in India's security posture brought about

by an assertive Beijing and its significant positive convergence with Islamabad all appear to have played a significant role.

### **Explaining the Embrace: India's Welcoming Ties with US**

The quality of Indo-US ties has changed under Prime Minister Modi. Even while every government before Narendra Modi has sought to forge a solid relationship with America, Modi's outreach to the country has taken on a very different tone and tenor. With the new administration, Indian foreign policy looks to have lost its prior ambiguity and is no longer constrained by the ideological burden of non-alignment (Pant & Super, 2015). Moreover, the two-way connection now has a fresh flavor because to Narendra Modi personalized diplomacy. He has been as adamant about getting to know President Obama personally as he has been in forging relationships with the Senate and the Congress. The fact that the bilateral ties had bipartisan backing on Capitol Hill is evidence of the success of India's attempts under the new administration. The speed with which the MEA and the MoD have cleared many barriers they have faced, including the civil nuclear liability and defense collaborations, contrasts significantly with the previous administrations and suggests that Modi, unlike his forebears, is a problem-solver. This new vitality in the diplomatic process is attested to by even Narendra Modi detractors in terms of foreign policy. What then accounts for Prime Minister Modi's push for this recalibrating of US-Indian connections? . This increased strategic embrace is being fueled, in part, by personal conviction. America is still crucial to Modi's plan for India to undergo profound change. His numerous, grand plans for India's economic transformation, like "Made in India" and "Digital India," depend on strong ties with America. According to him, both the countries have underlying interests in each other's success—and New Delhi's stake is much bigger given its desire for swift transition into a developed nation (Modi, 2014). Prime Minister Modi is analogous to his forebears in this regard as, since 1991, all Indian decision-makers have recognized how crucial America is to India. The distinction can be found in Narendra Modi's ability to publicly and without hesitation admit India's bandwagoning behavior. It has been noted that Prime Minister Modi has thrown away both the hesitations and the historical hypocrisies by adopting the 'most unapologetic engagement with America' in India's foreign policy behavior (Gupta, 2016)

**Figure 1: India-US bilateral trade trend**



Source: Bhardwaj (2023)

The signing of LEMOA is noteworthy not just for its military ramifications but also because it represents a fundamental policy change from the previous administration's ambivalence to its current commitment to a successful strategic partnership with America. This conviction serves as a solid foundation for Prime Minister Modi foreign policy, together with an unparalleled control of the parliament in recent Indian history. Since 1989, no previous Indian prime minister has had a clean majority in the lower chamber. Although the PM has always had primary responsibility for determining foreign policy, the behavior of the parliament has been influenced by power dynamics. A weak prime minister with minimal support from the legislature is vulnerable to numerous pressures from party associates, supporters, and the opposition. As a result, the lack of parliamentary power frequently tempers personal commitment, as was most notable in Manmohan Singh's handling of foreign policy (Pant & Joshi, 2017). Singh's political position was weak, and even while he appeared to be fully on board with the rationale of a robust Indo-US alliance, there was a drift in diplomatic cooperation that was mostly caused by disagreements with important ministries and the party high command. Prime Minister Modi encounters no such challenges. Within the BJP and in the lower chamber of the legislature, he has complete power. Prime Minister Modi is one of the few Indian heads of government, along with Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi, who have had complete control over foreign policy issues in the country because of this unusual convergence of party and parliamentary authority (Pant & Joshi, 2017).

The growth of China and its deepening connections with the Pakistani security establishment are the most important structural factors influencing the rising trajectory of Indo-US ties. It's no secret that the China is rapidly rising economically as well as militarily. In addition to the ongoing border issue, which constantly agitates Sino-Indian ties, India's elites are wary of Beijing because of its

efforts to prevent India's rise and integration into the international system. Most recently, this was made explicit by China's adamant resistance to India's efforts to join the Nuclear Suppliers Group as well as, less obviously, to the UNSC. But China's policy of vehemently utilizing Islamabad as a proximate has been the most unsettling change in the Sino-Indian relationship (Pant, 2012). Beijing is still providing support for Pakistan's nuclear and missile programs and arming its military, which is antagonistic against India in particular. It is currently making significant investments in the completion of CPEC, parts of which pass through the unrest-ridden province of Baluchistan and the Kashmir region of Gilgit-Baltistan, which is governed by Pakistan but is claimed by India. Beijing also seeks to surround India in the maritime sphere with the aid of its partners in Pakistan; this goal is shown in the construction of the all-weather port in Gwadar and the provision of submarines to the Pakistani navy. China also says nothing in response to Indian reservations and accusations that Pakistan supports terrorism against India. In the past, Indian regimes have attempted to address China's strategic challenges through diplomatic cooperation and communication in the hopes of influencing Beijing to adopt a more favorable attitude toward New Delhi. Modi, meanwhile, has continued Sino-Indian dialogue while standing up to China's antagonistic stance. During his May 2015 visit to China, Modi explicitly emphasized the need for Beijing to reevaluate its strategy on some of the topics that prevent us from recognizing the maximum potential of our cooperation and proposed that Beijing should take a long-term and strategic view of Sino-India ties. He was equally explicit about Beijing's use of Pakistan as a proxy in south Asia (Pant & Joshi, 2017). Words like these signals a change in India's customary defensiveness against China. Given its weaker economy, chronically dysfunctional politics, and inflexible bureaucracy, India's capacity to counterbalance Beijing alone has never been likely. Indian military leaders have publicly stated that their country cannot compete with Beijing's might (Singh, 2011). New Delhi will need to include outreach to the U. S. and its Asian alliances in any external balancing plan given the imbalance in national power between the two nations. Simply put, India cannot depend solely on internal balancing to counter China's ascent. Hence, external balancing may be the only option accessible to India, at least in the short to medium term, in order to control Beijing's expanding military capabilities and the danger they pose to India's territorial sovereignty and its presence in the Asia-Pacific. This structural logic appears to be New Delhi's compass, as evidenced by Prime Minister Modi's embrace of the US.

### **A Diligence to Build Co-Operative Relations with China**

For understanding relations between China and India during Prime Minister Modi's first term it is important to understand rapidly changing regional geopolitical dynamics and view bilateral relations in larger perspective. For the last two decades, the term "Asian Century" is defined by China's rise and India's economic growth, to some extent. It also highlights cooperation between two

***Restructuring Indian Foreign Policy in 21st Century: A Paradigm Shift during Modi Era*** major Asian countries on forums like BRICS and newly developed Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). Though border issues remained bone of contention, India and China were often seen defending similar stances in global platforms on issues like climate change and trade (Khan, 2021). For the last few years, China India bilateral relations have been characterized by the trend vacillating between acrimony and contest in Indo Pacific and camaraderie of Asian century. For instance, India is second largest stakeholder in China led AIIB, which indicates juxtaposition between diminishing US control over global economic order and Asia's rise. It is also the strong indicator of China India cooperation. This is in contrast to BRI, where China is including Indo Pacific states into its BRI network for its national security goals while ignoring and disregarding India's vision and priorities in Asia (Zhao, Liu, Wang, & Ge, 2019). India is working hard for strengthening its ability to counteract political aggression by China, even if it embraces commercial and investment opportunities. While emerging, China has demonstrated these methods for years as it benefitted from US investments and economy while it resisted US led order and its existence in Western Pacific. India should emulate this template.

## **A Comprehensive Development between Russian–India Bilateral Relations**

In 2014 there was a major development in bilateral relations between Russia and India. In India government was changed and Prime Minister Modi came to power and in the same year Russia indulged in conflict with West over Ukrainian crisis and Crimea. At that time there was an impression of stagnant Indo Russian ties as both countries were assessing importance of bilateral ties and defining their role in shifting global politics. Despite 2010 announcement of “special and privileged strategic partnership” bilateral relations were clearly stagnant. The goal of bilateral trade worth \$20 billion by 2015 could not be achieved. Moreover, in 2014 India bought most arms from the US, which also indicated relatively stagnant India Russia ties (Kapoor, 2019). In 2016, India and US became defense partners, Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement and the Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement was signed and the 2+2 dialogue began. On the other hand, Russia started supplying China with latest weapons including the S400 missile and Sukhoi 35 defense system. In 2017, many agreements including completion of 3<sup>rd</sup> stage of Kudankulam nuclear power plant, were signed between Russia and China as a mark of 70 of diplomatic relations between both the countries. India also became full member of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in the same year. Regarding investment, both countries aimed to do trade worth \$30 billion by 2025, this target was achieved before and new target of US\$50 billion was set (Sushma, 2018). India gave policies such as ‘Make in India’ and took steps for boosting trade relations. Both countries identified areas that where concrete policies must be implemented. These areas include high technology products (for instance material sciences, artificial intelligence,

supercomputing technologies, nanotechnology, robotics, pharmaceuticals, medicine, information and communication technologies, agriculture, new materials, aviation and space technology), start-ups, food processing, space, high speed railways, river navigation, shipbuilding and infrastructure (Kapoor, 2019).

## **The Role of European Union and India**

Five years back, relations between European Union (EU) and India became all time low, though there is convergence of interests between the both. 2012 incident of Italian marines stalled negotiations over free trade agreement. Case of killing of Indian fishermen by Italian soldiers reached international level when Italy's former foreign minister became EU Representative for Foreign Affairs. The worsening Situation resulted in cancellation of EU-India summit 2015 Summit.

However, relations between India and the EU improved gradually after that, and currently both powers are reviving their relations. Engagement between EU High Representative Federica Mogherini and Prime Minister Modi helped to normalize relations. Common interests in rapidly changing global environment and political pragmatism have led to development of mutual ties. During the past few years many high-level dialogues have taken place which signifies active strategic partnership. In 2016, 13th EU-India Summit was conducted in Brussels, it presented five year road map for strategic partnership and the India-EU-Agenda for Action (Amin, 2019). In 2020 the Agenda for Action areas in which most progress was made were highlighted. It mentioned cooperation in foreign and security policy, counter terrorism, maritime security, cyber security and regular coordination between the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the Indian Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) (Amin, 2019). The agenda also explicitly mentioned Prime Minister Modi favorite initiatives including the "Make in India", "Digital India", "Smart Cities," "Clean Ganga" and the "Clean India" campaigns. Areas of cooperation including a "common agenda on migration and mobility," "water partnership," "clean energy and climate partnership" and "the fight against terrorism" were mentioned in joint declarations (Khan, 2021). In 2018, High Representative Federica Mogherini in December 2018 presented "Elements of a new strategy for relations with India", which recommends that India and the EU should consider dialogue on broader strategic partnership. In the wake of global economic crisis, both powers will benefit from

## **Conclusion**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's foreign policy approach is amalgamation of three elements: pursuit of status, diversifying security ties and use of power. Though there is predilection for Hindu nationalism at domestic level, Hindu element is not the significant part of his foreign policy. There is no pattern of Hindu nationalist bias in foreign policy goal or action, as opposed to its strong evidence in domestic arena. Moreover, Modi has adopted a less aggressive policy concerning use of

***Restructuring Indian Foreign Policy in 21st Century: A Paradigm Shift during Modi Era*** military force, unlike his predecessors. India's ties with major powers remain unaltered during Modi's era. The substantial change in Indian foreign policy came in 1990's, when it shifted from isolation from big power politics to developing capacity to engage with global power structure. Narendra Modi did not bring the change, but he is following the approach of his post-cold War predecessors, which was suited to the era of economic integration and coexistence. It resulted in various strategic partnerships. Modi also continued to work for India's pursuit of higher status on international theater through networking, showing strategic restraint and acquiring symbols of power. Modi led India will continue to promote itself as responsible and democratic stakeholder which prioritize peaceful means.

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