

## **CHAPTER III**

# **ENGAGEMENTS WITH UNITED STATES AND INDIA'S STRATEGIC UNDERSTANDING**

The last chapter dealt with the strategic worldview of the United States and India's position within it. This chapter tries to describe India's strategic understanding as an emerging regional power and thereby to position India's engagement with U.S within such strategic vision. The chapter proceeds with a brief description of the evolution of India's foreign policy followed by a study into major strategic objectives of India and finally positing India's engagement with the United States confines the strategic vision.

### **3.1 Understanding worldview**

Worldview constitutes a broad ideational variable affecting foreign policy decisions of a state (Johnston, 1995). It allows isolation of a handful of terms or ideas central to describing and analyzing the interests and the role of a state. Strategies and policies are thereby shaped and connoted by efforts to harness political, military, diplomatic and economic tools to realize its aspired worldview. It is believed to be the favourable system and conditions under which the state perceives to attain its best form. Alastair Iain Johnston conceptualized a strategic cultural paradigm and notes two factors (a) the strategic environment constitutes the central paradigm, (b) based on the central paradigm a set of policy preferences are enforced. Strategic choices will be optimizing ones, determined and constrained only, or largely, by variables such as geography, capability, threat, and a tendency of states to refrain from behaviors which clearly threaten their immediate survival (Johnston 1995). Thus, construction of a strategic worldview is largely perspective oriented; it is dependent on a state's perception of the international system within which it is operating, the kind of threats it is confronted with, the utilization of its capabilities and in consideration of these, it determines the position it desires and the kind of role it will perform ( Nau & Ollapally 2012:1-5). Perceptions differ from state to state and even within a single state, time and situations alter perceptions over values and issues and the means they are willing to employ to protect those; hence strategic worldview is not static or

uniform, rather it is dynamic and subjected to timely changes and exhibits national styles of strategies. It is a combination of perception and preference.

## **3.2 Underlining the Evolution of Indian Foreign Policy**

### **3.2.1 The idealism and non-alignment**

India's foreign policy was framed in the backdrop of its struggle for independence against British Imperialism, its recurrent subjugation and the consecutive outbreak of the world wars. These crystallized the ideas of anti-imperialism, decolonization and reorganizing of the world order towards respect for sovereignty, peace and freedom. Nehru further envisioned the special role India was bound to play "an important part in any scheme of world reorganization" (AICC, 1940:17). An independent India was to promote an emancipatory, free and peaceful world order that ensures dignity and integrity of all nations alike. India was to follow an activist foreign policy to resist any form of imperialism or oppression. "A free democratic India will gladly associate herself with other free nations for mutual defense against aggression and for economic cooperation. She will work for the establishment of a real world order based on freedom and democracy" (AICC, 1940:16).

India's independence and framing of its initial foreign policy was shaped by the power politics of the Cold War. India had to prepare itself to respond to the power preponderance and posit its strategic interests. India pursued an idealistic foreign policy stressing on non-alignment. It was largely shaped by Jawaharlal Nehru's vision of having a definite role for India in shaping of the world order that would promote international cooperation (Nehru, 1946). Nehru's fundamental objective was to establish India as a world power based on the idealistic claim of great civilization and culture. But what must be pointed out that being a newly independent nation with limited capabilities, India from the beginning had a vision of an emancipatory, multipolar world order. The international order envisioned was a multipolar one that is cooperative, accommodative and emancipatory (Nehru, 1946). Non-alignment was conceived to enable India to construct positive relations with both powers and not be entangled in the bloc politics. This provided two imperatives, one, India lacked the capabilities to resist and protect itself from conflicts and hence it was an ostensible strategy of keeping great powers out, secondly, it helped India to carve out a moral

legitimacy in the international system and as a state that refuted the alignment compulsion of Cold War and augmenting autonomy in its decisions. Thus, it can be said that India sought to leverage the polarized world to its own benefit (Jaishankar, 2014). Thus, the initial years contributed in forming three fundamental aspects of Indian foreign policy, belief in India's entitlement to great power status, stress on maintaining autonomy of decision making and seeking a more emancipatory multipolar world order.

### **3.2.2 International integration and engagements**

The end of the cold war altered the nature of the international system changing the pattern of distribution of power, security perception and economic and strategic considerations. In Johnstons's (1995) term it brought about major changes in the central paradigm and hence states were compelled to change their perceptions and set out new preferences. Thus it was not only necessary to adapt to new changes but also to realize what they would stand for in this altered system. India was confronted with a new strategic situation of an international system dominated by the United States in which the Soviet Union was no longer available as a political, economic and security anchor. Bereft of an ally coupled with an acute economic crisis India needed new ideas and strategies to tide over the predicaments and also seize the moment freed from the cold war constraints to think where it wants to see itself within this new system and how it would operate. The sequence of adaptation, innovation and transformation was the key to achieve a desired status in the international system.

The five decades following India's independence saw the international system as a hegemonic one imposing its will and norms on a developing state and India's instinct was to protect itself against the shifts and conflicts of the major powers. The challenge was how India protects itself from the fluctuations of the relations among major powers (RajaMohan 2016). The challenge was to avoid entangling India in the systematic structural conflict of the major powers and to retain the independence over strategic choices and policies so India had to create a niche foreign policy as an alternative to the satellite status in world politics. In quest of providing an alternative to being subordinate to cold war enmeshments and bloc alignments India sought to exercise its freedom of choice in its own decisions on foreign relations and also voiced for a just and norm based international order based on the principles of

equality, respect for sovereignty and peaceful coexistence and further institutionalized its ideas through the nonaligned movement. India mobilized the developing world and provided a certain amount of bargaining power to the lower ranking members of the international system (Nayar & Paul, 2003:12). However, India's strong idealist stand has often been viewed as a mere cover for weakness. It is more like a weapon of the weak, a ruse that weak powers use to carve out some space for themselves in the international system (Karnad, 2004).

The end of the cold war did not do away with India's apprehensions about the international system being a hegemonic, structured by the interests and will of the most powerful but it longer wanted to distance or shield itself from it rather wanted to be an integral part in great power politics. The new system could no longer be identified by a single overarching criterion as the cold war, it is diverse, complex and interwoven and hence engagements and enmeshments are the key to sustain and rise in this system. Since 1990's India has exhibited significant rise in its stature and capabilities and is conscious of the ways it is capable of affecting the great power politics and the degree to which it can be affected by fluctuations of the same (Raja Mohan, 2016). There has been a transition from the defensive stance of India to one where it matters, how India deals with this change to attain what strategic goals remains the major question.

### **3.3.3 The regional global nexus**

India's enhanced power projection capabilities, expanded economic ties, multifaceted global engagements have ushered it as a rising power with potential for a substantial global status. A greater change towards power diffusion has also impacted India's emergence in the international system. There has been quite a consensus and unanimity regarding the idea of emerging role of regions in world politics and a larger degree of autonomy for local states in managing their affairs within such regions. David Lake asserted that in the Post Cold War world 'regional level stands more clearly on its own as the locus of conflict and cooperation for states...' (Lake, 2009). Drawing on a similar premise, Buzan and Waeber (2003) have argued that the end of the cold war has accelerated the process of regional level security becoming both more autonomous and more prominent in international politics. Mohammed Ayoob (1991) is of the opinion that the changing nature of superpower relations have opened

up prospects for regionally pre-eminent powers to adopt more overt managerial roles in their respective regions.

The centrality and superiority of India within South Asia presented it with an opportunity to recalibrate its approach to integrate the region and to adopt dynamic, wholesome policies to usher growth, development in the region and to consolidate its position in the region. The understanding was based on the fact that if India wants to emerge as a major player at the global level it needs to consolidate and accelerate its dominance over the region. A central aspect of emerging India's efforts to regional preponderance is rooted in its global approach of attaining a great power status. The global regional nexus redefines the objective of a regional power from being focused on regional eminence to having a greater global aspiration (Hurrell, 2007; Destradi, 2010).

India has propelled itself to integrate into global economy, actively participate and present its ideas in international and regional institution and it has projected its capability in maintaining stability of the regional order furthering its prospects to be counted as a responsible emerging global power.<sup>11</sup> Andrew Hurrell (2007) argues that what makes a rising power want to revise or challenge the system is unlikely to come from calculations of hard power and material interest. What stands distinct of India as a new emerging power, is its objective of resisting the biases in the present international order and its desire to bring about substantial changes in it. India's claim to global power status is not only based on having a higher status in power hierarchy and obtain significant resources and influence but more from the inherent believe that the existing system does not grant the needed recognition or values the ideas that India feel it is entitled to and will eventually contribute to the construction of an inclusive International Order. The understanding of India as an emerging regional power that is motivated to bring about changes in the present system is embedded with the larger debate about global transformation which presupposes a particular view of international order.

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<sup>11</sup> For information on India's growing clout to be considered as an emerging power refer to Mahapatra, C. (2018). India: The New Power in the Emerging Global Order. *Indian Foreign Affairs Journal*, 13(2), 101–106. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/45341119>, Stephen P. Cohen (2000), India rising, available at <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/india-rising/>

### **3.4 Underlining Certain Strategic Objectives of India**

The 21<sup>st</sup> century witnessed unprecedented attention in portraying India as a rising or emerging power destined for a global stature (Cohen 2001; Ganguly 2003; Kiesow and Noring 2007). The enthusiastic support by the external actors has also been complemented by India's engaging and activist policies in the international system. But there remains an abstruseness regarding the core ideas and interests that India seeks in the current world order to further its global status. The study tries to underline certain dominant themes that have been prominent in various discussions, negotiations and deliberations of India with the world order. The attempt is to present the ideas and interests pursued by India in major international relations and forums to weave a cohesive structure and to give semblance to the idea of a strategic worldview of an emerging India.

#### **3.4.1 Aspiration to achieve a major power status**

The core of India's strategic worldview is the enduring and deep rooted aspiration of achieving the status of major power within the international system. India's quest for its great power aspiration can be traced over the periods since independence, conditioned and manifested across different administrations.

India's claim to such status has been based on its sense of entitlement to a great power status more than anything else. Drawing from its civilizational heritage and its distinct success of maintaining internal pluralism and diversity bounded by democratic traditions, India asserted that it should naturally be recognized as a major power and ought to have a leadership role in the international system. This sense of entitlement breeds that if India can follow its independent course greatness will naturally come to it (Mehta 2009:214).

Following India's independence India's leaders saw Great Power status as based upon moral idealism rather than territorial, economic or military indicators. Employment of this language also helped to portray India as a self-assured state (Ogden, 2011:5). As Nayar and Paul (2003:128) argues that it was believed India's relatively weak material capabilities as compared to the other great powers can be compensated by non-material normative attributes. Nehru himself asserts this while laying his idea of

India as a potential major power, “obviously we are not a great military power, we are not an industrially advanced Power—India even today counts in world affairs... but because we count, because we are going to count more and more in the future... it is merely the fact that we are potentially a great nation and a big power...” (Nehru, 1946:535).

India utilized its soft power influences of presenting itself as a nation that denounced power rivalry and conflicts and stood in favour of peaceful co-existence. It adhered to norms and order while representing a distinctive voice and approach towards global rules from newly emergent Asia in the international forums. Lack of necessary capabilities was not considered as an impediment to its claim rather it pursued capacity building which will be an added strength to its moral legitimacy.

The disintegration of the Soviet Union and the rise of an international system under one superpower altered the systematic constructs within which India was operating and seeking its desired status. The preponderant power was a complete power with both hard and soft power influences and was structuring a new world order with chosen norms. Status in this new system was based on capability measures (specially economic and military), building linkages and integrating on bilateral as well as multilateral levels and interconnectedness of all the factors. Thus, a state’s claim to major power status based on a single ideational component was no longer plausible. India needed to adapt to the new system, upgrade its capabilities and seek constructive engagements realizing that relations downwards are as important as relations upwards (Cohen, 2001:32). India was also confronted with a new systematic constraint; the emerging system within which India was seeking its aspiration was governed by a sole superpower whose key aim was to consolidate and perpetuate its position globally and focused on precluding the emergence of any potential rival power. India needed to work for positive relations, to abjure confrontations while remaining firm on issues of fundamental importance to its strategic interests (Dixit, 1996:177-78). India espoused its engagements to build its capabilities, especially to nurture its nuclear option which it believed to be essential to its security concerns and an important step towards realizing its status. It is this area where India by far has shown the most consistent and staunch opposition against the constraining and discriminative nonproliferation regime, its opposition upgraded to complete defiance and India

successfully conducted its second nuclear test in 1998 being completely aware of the coming consequences.

The proclamation of its nuclear status was a challenge to the existing international system which had to recognize if not ready to accommodate India as a nuclear power. Political isolation and economic sanctions were the chosen methods of punishment which India overcame with indigenous efforts. Soon the United States supplemented its containment with strategic engagements, France and Russia extended support. India by the end of the period had entered into arrangements for security or strategic dialogue with all major powers, it became a strategic partner of the EU and even received enthusiastic support from Russia and France for a permanent seat in the UN Security Council (Nayar & Paul, 2003:233-242). A decade after the end of the cold war India was not only free from isolation and sanctions but also elevated India's position in the international system and was being considered as a potential emerging power. Yet its desired major power status still eluded it.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century India is almost universally acknowledged as potential or emerging power, its voice matters in the international system, it has formidable capabilities including nuclear power, it has nurtured multiregional engagements and integration and especially India's potential to become a major power has been supported by other major power specifically United States proclaimed to assist in India becoming a major world power in 21<sup>st</sup> century<sup>12</sup>. Despite these India is still striving for a major power status. One reason holds that India's capabilities, specifically its economic capabilities remain relatively low in comparison to other major powers. It has certainly embarked on a higher rate of growth, but it was not adequate to lift the Indian domestic living standards or pursue other capabilities like advanced technology or military needs. Capabilities has a significant role in the question of elevation to major power status, as George Modelski points out that the capabilities of a new power should be such as to cause other major powers to fear it, but they should also

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<sup>12</sup> The Bush administration has time and again acknowledged India's potential as a global power, for details refer to Indo-U.S joint statement, 2005 available at <https://2001-2009.state.gov/p/sca/rls/pr/2005/49763.htm>,

Press release after President Bush's visit to India, 2006 available at <https://mea.gov.in/articles-in-foreign-media.htm?dtl/16237/Bushs+journey+to+India+Washington+and+New+Delhi+see+benefits+in+a+new+relationship>



be such as to serve to attract them (Modelski,1999). India has been held back by numerous internal constraints and difficulties, notably its large and poor population, innumerable domestic conflicts, and the many imperfections of its democracy (Basrur, 2010; Cohen 2001).

A majority opinion sways to the fact of India's inability to substantially contribute or influence the international order or any major global event by itself. Power among interdependent entities has two facets. Negative power involves the ability to resist a particular set of rules and processes sought to be established; positive power involves the ability to actively shape regimes through processes of generating ideas, persuasion, and bargaining.

In regime building, India exhibits greater readiness to use its capability than it does in traditional strategic relationships, but thus far it has exercised only negative power in resisting the construction of regimes it sees as inimical to its interests. Until it shows the capacity to wield positive power in the politics of regimes, it will remain, at best, a state aspiring to become a major power (Basrur, 2011:184). Some have argued that it has potential, but has a considerable way to go: it can resist strong pressures to alter its strategic behavior, but it is not yet able to exercise significant influence on others (Mistry 2004; Nayar & Paul 2003; Perkovich 2003/2004).

In a similar line of thought it is often remarked that though India strives for a major power status it remains quite ambiguous about the role it wants to perform. As Raymond Aron perceived, "in the twentieth century the strength of a great power is diminished if it ceases to serve an idea" (Aron, 1973). At the global level, India is a state with currently limited capacities and limited status attribution, but considerable potential in the long term to lay claim to the status of a major power. Thus aspiring a major power status will continue as India's dominant strategic objective and it will continue seeking a world order where its objective can be fulfilled.

### **3.4.2 Maintaining strategic autonomy**

Closely following its desire for a major power status is India's stress on maintaining independence in its foreign policy. Its penchant rests on maintaining independent outlook and decision making powers and protect against external influences and

constraints with respect to issues defining its core security and strategic interests, thereby, its termed as India's strategic autonomy. In its pure form, strategic autonomy presupposes the state in question possessing overwhelmingly superior power. This is what would enable that state to resist the pressures that may be exerted by other states to compel it to change its policy or moderate its interests.

It follows from this that regional powers like India with relatively low capabilities can express the aspiration to be completely strategically autonomous but their ability and willingness to practice it are likely to be inconsistent and variable. India has the will to resist external pressure to change its policy or moderate its interest on core issues of national security irrespective of the costs involved. But there should remain possibilities whereby India is likely to alter its policy or moderate its interest if the associated costs are calculated to be disproportionate to the benefits that may accrue from persisting with the preferred policy or interest. Thus the ability and the degree to be strategically autonomous should not be absolute but only relative.

A bipolar or a multipolar order as opposed to unipolarity is likely to provide greater diplomatic room for maneuver and thus help avoid the high costs of pursuing a policy or interest. But a unipolar order is likely to restrict the diplomatic elbow room available and thus the ability to avoid the costs associated with pursuing a particular policy.

Maintaining autonomy is stressed among all schools of strategic thought though it differs in its manifestation and degree. Nehruvians are most stringent on preserving India's strategic autonomy, India must be able to refuse and resist external pressures and influences and its exceptionalism lies in its ability to judge international issues in light of India's interest and general principles of international norms and security. To them India's great power aspirations must be based on autarky and self-reliance (Hoffmann 2002:229; Bajpai & Sahni 2008). For neo liberals or pragmatists, relations with great powers represent opportunities as much as threats. India aspires to be a great power and seeks change in the international order so it needs to integrate within the existing one. Neo-liberals, by contrast, argue that in the contemporary world India can only become a great power by raising its economic growth rates, and this is feasible if India works not against, but rather with the great powers as a way of increasing trade, technology transfers and investment(Bajpai &

Sahni,2008:98). The hyperrealists do not completely reject the Nehruvian principle of resistance neither the neoliberal view of engagement with great powers but they believe that India has all the appearances of a great power and can, through an act of will, transform its potential into actuality. Ultimately, India must sit at the high table of international affairs on equal terms with other major powers specially by building its military capabilities. Autonomy should be exercised as long as it helps India to stand firm on vital interests.

Pratap Bhanu Mehta insists that India should be an area of great power agreement and see each issue on its merits, to think hard about our interests (Mehta, 2016). Rajagopalan argues that, “The idea that we can make a la carte choices on strategic issues is equally difficult to understand. Issues are linked, even if they are not zero-sum... This is not a recipe for strategic autonomy but for strategic loneliness” (Rajagopalan, 2016). She further asserts that the proponents of the strategic autonomy argument often fail to recognize that while partnerships come with some constraints, under many circumstances they are also deliverance (Rajagopalan, 2016). Autonomy is thought of as appropriate for weak states trying to protect themselves from great-power competition but not for a rising force such as India. As India starts to recognize that its political choices have global consequences, it will become less averse to choosing sides on specific issues (Rajamohan, 2006:29)

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in his interview with Charlie Rose said, “I have always regarded non alignment as— a statement that India’s policies— foreign policy, will be guided by what I describe as enlightened national interest. That means we will make judgments— on an independent basis with the sole concern being what is enlightened in India’s national interest. In that sense, non-alignment remains as relevant today as it was in the 1950s” (Ministry Of External Affairs, 2006).

### **3.4.3 Quest for recognition and strategy of engagements**

India’s strategic thought and diplomacy was guided with the ominous quest for recognition and to have its status acknowledged. Post cold war several structural considerations compelled India to rework the relations with major powers specially crafting a better understanding with the long estranged United States was the utmost priority. The new system presented India with an opportunity to claim its position as a

major power and thus a new and vital partnership with the United States and improving relations with other great powers including China, Japan and EU emerged as the most prominent approach to attain recognition and to engage with the great power club. (Schaffer, 2010; Rajamohan, 2006). Thomas Volgy makes a distinction between *being a major* power and *being attributed* a major power status by other states, whereby the relationship between status attribution and various forms of material capabilities and foreign policy behaviors is not straightforward. Attribution can occur as states in the international system recognize a group of other states as having achieved the status of being a major power. We refer to this process as community attribution, and it is the primary process on which we focus to assess status (Volgy, 2011:6-10).

India in the Post Cold War attempted to reinvigorate its relations through an overall strategy of seeking constructive engagement. The important elements of the strategy were: to work for positive relations with all major powers, to abjure provocations and confrontations in dealings with them, to resolve bilateral problems in a practical manner through identifying areas of agreement as a basis for building mutually beneficial relationships (Dixit,1996:210). India realized that relationships upwards were as important as building relationships downwards. As India long claimed its preponderance over the region it realized that redefining and strengthening its ties with the immediate and extended neighbourhood was equally vital. It implemented a Look East Policy in the wider Asian neighbourhood, especially with the ASEAN countries (Saran, 2007).

India sought through its strategy of constructive engagement to improve relations so as to build its capabilities, especially its economic pursuits. The economic dimension of Indian foreign policy had focused to a larger extent on seeking economic aid and shifted its emphasis to trade, investment (Schaffer, 2010). Economic partnerships were easy to construct, and increasing trade flows provided a new basis for stability in India's relations with other major powers. India's emergence as an outsourcing destination and its new prowess in information technology also give it a niche in the world economy (Rajamohan, 2006). India's outward economic orientation has allowed it to reestablish trade and investment linkages with much of its near abroad. New Delhi is negotiating a slew of free- and preferential-trade

agreements with individual countries as well as multilateral bodies including the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), and the Southern African Development Community. Thus, India's engagements serve two main purposes of gaining recognition and fulfilling its pursuit capability building. The then Indian Foreign Secretary Jaishanker comments, "the quest towards becoming a leading power rests first and foremost on our success of expanding economic pursuit. The role of diplomacy in attracting foreign investment, capital, technology and best practices is significant. This has been central issue in our engagements abroad including high level visits... persuading key partners to understand that it is in their interest that India develops its economy is the core interest of diplomacy"(Jaishankar, 2016).

#### **3.4.4 Advocates a multipolar world order**

Amidst the various structural conditions India's emergence as a major power also depends on the kind of international system that prevails. The strategic thinking on this includes concepts covering international power structures that India thinks will be preferable to its rise. India prefers a world with diffused centers of power, It sees itself acquiring its desired status and taken more seriously within such a system. A poly-centric or multipolar world will not only be more conducive towards absorbing a new power but it will also be conducive towards acknowledging it with more flexible terms of operation. This would provide greater strategic flexibility and the concerned efforts for integration and interconnectedness will be much more indigenous and free from a specific structure forced by a hegemonistic state. Shyam Saran (2007) perceives "greater strategic space" for the country in the emerging international order that is should be more diffused and diversified. Shyam Saran goes on to add that it "fits well with our own instinctive preference for a multipolar world, which includes a multipolar Asia" (Saran, 2007). He suggests that India should work with other countries that share this objective and "build coalitions on different issues of shared concern" (Saran, 2007). The world should be better ruled by more powers, where old and new powers have balanced influence on world leadership affecting its decisions and planning. They can speak for and support other states inside or outside their alliances, previously marginalized or manipulated by single or few unopposed superpowers. "From an Indian perspective, the ideal world will consist of many great

powers, each dominant in its own region, and pledged to avoid interference across regions” (Cohen, 2001:32).

### **3.4.5 Espouses an alternative order**

India’s desire to transform the existing order can be noticed in its desire to have

- a) A world with multiple centers of power freed from the constraints of working under an overarching structure constructed by one or more superpowers.
- b) An international order with its underlying principles and laws under the preponderance of a superpower is often skewed to serve its interest and are ignorant or less accommodative to the interests and needs of others smaller states, especially developing nations. India has long leveled its criticism against such biases in the international system and strives to promote a more emancipatory and receptive structure that will be conducive to emerging or developing nations. Thus, India espouses an alternative approach to the existing structure by promoting procedures, rules and debates for accommodating interests of smaller powers and tries to make the great powers reconsider their established norms.

Philip Nel asserts that the goal of redistribution is premised on a more fundamental unfinished struggle of developing countries, one that Brazil, India, and South Africa particularly have taken up. This is the struggle for recognition of developing countries and equal partners in the society of states, but also as states with specific development that are too easily plowed-under in the spurious universality promoted by the developed North (Nel, 2010:951). Thus recognition is depicted as an intersubjective process which strives not only for the acknowledgement of equal status but also to recognize the interests the emerging states project; “ what states want strategically - including prestige - is constituted by the inter-subjective process of recognition through which states are acknowledged as full and equal members of the society but also as agents with distinct needs and interests that may or may not coincide with the presumed universal interests of established states”(Nel, 2010:954). India in its strive to bring about alteration in the established order acts through two distinct ways:

- a) It tries to induce changes in norms and rules by working within the established institutions through negotiations or by building sub-forums with others.

- b) To construct and participate in indigenous regional attempts to form new organizations or institutions that can provide alternative approaches to address the concerns.

India strives to alter the distribution of the benefits generated by the global economy more in favour of developing countries. It rely on its predominant regional and emerging global stature to try and shape the international economic environment to bring it closer to what it perceives to be optimal conditions for the domestic and global advancement of the developing world. In its individual capacity, but also through collective measures. Within WTO India vociferously advocates for a fairer distribution of the benefits of trade and the removal of non-tariff obstacles obstructing access to markets in developing countries, increased development-focused capital flows and others. India has been promoting its distributive approach to international negotiations and voicing against the indifference towards the concerns of developing countries through its active participation within the New QUAD to alter the decision making processes in WTO, with other developing countries through G20 and G77. India is a part of the Heiligendamm Process which is the semi-institutionalized dialogue between the group of industrialized countries and the emerging economies of Brazil, China, India, Mexico and South Africa, and the G20, whose summits are replacing those of the G8 as the primary coordination venue in the global economy (Cooper. A, 2008:1-18). India together with South Africa, Brazil and China has emerged as some of the most vocal opponents to developing countries being saddled with quantified emission- abatement targets in the post Kyoto negotiation processes of UNFCCC.

India is an enthusiastic participant in various indigenous regional organizations in its immediate and extended neighbourhood to Central Asia and Africa. It identifies with the self-reliant efforts of the regional actors to address questions of economy, trade, security etc. in contrast to the established norms. India has established links with diverse organizations ranging from ASEAN, BRICS, IBSA to organizations with extended neighbourhood including BIMSTEC, Mekong- Ganga Initiative. These initiatives appreciate what is distinct and valuable to these regional actors which are often neglected by the established system. Such regional endeavours works toward institutionalizing policy coordination on a range of fronts between regional powers

across regions, encouraging bilateral and multilateral trade, reciprocal investment by developing infrastructural links between member countries, negotiating strategies in areas as diverse as multilateral trade talks, climate and environmental issues, financial and technology regulation and management. However, the degree with which India voices its concerns against the established norms has been quite lukewarm in its efforts to contribute new ideas or processes to these regional initiatives and rather remains satisfied by just being a participant. As the present Foreign Secretary Dr. S. Jaishankar (2016) points out, “India should drive rather than be driven by regional cooperation.” In fact, we should be pursuing our goals purposefully without being overly influenced by the limitations of our partners or diverted by difficulties of the day.”

### **3.4.6 Predominance over the region**

South Asia remains the most concerning issue in framing India's foreign policy, it definitely has a region first approach. As Rajamohan asserts, “India's grand strategy divides the world into three concentric circles. In the first, which encompasses the immediate neighborhood, India has sought primacy and a veto over the actions of outside powers” (Rajamohan, 2006). It has to be noted that India’s claim to a major power status greatly stems from the preponderance it enjoys in the region. It should be acknowledged that its larger quest of emerging as a systematic global player depends heavily on consolidating and pacifying its own region through integrative transformation. In fact, the projection and exercising of Indian dominance in the region has been a complex and evolving affair, not uniform in character and often contested. It is India’s strategic priority to successfully engage and manage regional affairs to maintain and bolster its regional pre-eminence. The BJP government under Prime Minister Narendra Modi that came to power in 2014 also proclaimed a neighbourhood first policy and attached a strong sense of priority to shared prosperity by raising levels of connectivity and co-operation (Jaishankar, 2016).

However such a sense of priority is often not complemented with equal vigilant policies and efforts. It has been obsessed with a leadership status in South Asia and naturally subscribed to a pre-eminent status for itself with rarely reviewing the changing dynamics at the regional level and utilizing its regional ties for larger impact and achievements. Sisir Gupta has presciently commented that India never seriously



considered the ways in which the power of the small nations could be leveraged for furthering its own goals (Sisir Gupta, 1981:47). Apart from certain trading arrangements and agreements and the celebrated policies of Look East and Gujral Doctrine the approach towards cementing regional ties seems lackluster. The region has also undergone several changes since 1990's, it has become more integrated at the international level through multilateral or bilateral initiatives which has increased the involvement of external actors in regional affairs together with the rise of non-traditional security threats that requires innovative prudent policies involving diverse dimensions. India should embrace a dynamic and vigilant approach to address the regional concerns. Dependence and acceptance will only follow if the other neighbouring states see India performing with agility and willingness and not through sporadic visits and symbolism.

India's actions and aspirations on the global stage have changed dramatically towards greater activism and leveraging of its economic strength. A majority opinion sways to the fact of India's inability to substantially contribute or influence the international order or any major global event by individual effort. Power among interdependent entities has two facets. Negative power involves the ability to resist a particular set of rules and processes sought to be established; positive power involves the ability to actively shape regimes through processes of generating ideas, persuasion, and bargaining. In regime building, India exhibits greater readiness to use its capability than it does in traditional strategic relationships, but thus far it has exercised only negative power in resisting the construction of regimes it sees as inimical to its interests. Until it shows the capacity to wield positive power in the politics of regimes, it will remain, at best, a state aspiring to become a major power (Basrur, 2011:184). Some have argued that it has potential, but has a considerable way to go; it can resist strong pressures to alter its strategic behavior, but it is not yet able to exercise significant influence on others (Mistry 2004; Nayar and Paul 2003; Perkovich 2003/2004).

### **3.5 United States in India's Strategic Thinking**

India's foreign policy has been formed with its inherent disdain of great power conflict and the domination of great powers over the international order (Mistry, 2004). The intense power rivalry between the two superpowers during the cold war

evoked India's penchant for retaining strategic autonomy and its determination to reform a hegemonic international order to a more emancipatory multipolar one. Thus, its decision to not join any alliance of either of the superpowers and its protest against existing biases in international norms actually set India in much contradiction to what U.S was seeking during the Cold war.

Kanti Bajpai (2015) stressed on five interpretative lenses to study Indian foreign policy of which we would consider two to highlight how the fundamental thinking in India's foreign policy contrasts those with the U.S. The first is India's deep seated concern for maintenance of sovereignty that includes territorial concerns, nationhood and independence in decision making. This stress on retaining sovereignty found resentment over the American stance on Kashmir and added to the concern of its ability to withstand U.S power and influence (Bajpai, 2015; Kux, 1993; Chaudhuri 2013, 51-57). Secondly, the alliance based politics of the United States since the Cold war has embedded a sense of suspicion in the Indian mindset that U.S will gravitate towards Pakistan or China where it can find alliance for a strategic purpose.

### **3.5.1 Post Cold War and Clinton Administration**

The end of the Cold war marked a paradigm shift in international order and a significant alteration in India's foreign policy. India lost the trusted Soviet support and was to structure its foreign policy within an international system dominated by a sole superpower and one that India had estranged ties (Kux, 1993). The new international order was based on interdependent structures and a globalized liberal economy which in turn pushed India to embark on opening up its economy and integrate into the global economy. As pointed out by Sanjaya Baru, "emerging out of the Cold War cocoon, India had to redefine its political, economic and strategic links with the developed and developing world, examining old assumptions and discovering new opportunities and challenges"(Baru,2006). The interconnectedness of the global economy and India's aim of developing its capabilities created the imperative to seek constructive relation with the United States. On one hand, India's stress on integration into the world order by building new ties complemented the policy of engagement and enlargement of the Clinton administration but on the other

hand, a series of contradictory policies like the passage of the Pressler Amendment<sup>13</sup> in the American Senate kept India from forging a closer tie with U.S (Rubinoff, 2001:49). The structural imperative and the economic aspect opened up avenues of cooperation between India and the US but a discord appeared on the question of nuclear non-proliferation. While the Clinton administration was determined to limit the spread of nuclear weapons and restrict new states from acquiring nuclear capabilities (Inside the Pentagon,1993). India considered nuclear tests as a deterrent for a deteriorating security environment and a vital element towards its goal of a major power status (RajaMohan,2003). The limitations imposed as part of U.S led non- proliferation regime were considered biased and aimed at restricting new powers like India to realize their interests. The Indians, for their part, viewed the U.S. as a quasi-colonial power, determined to deny India both its rightful dominant role in South Asia and its status as an important player on the larger global stage (Cohen,2001:86-87). Confirming this resentment was the U.S decision to levy economic sanctions on India and even pressured the international community to condemn India. United States staunch punitive measures and its intentions of pressurizing India to accommodate to its preferred international standards further convinced India that U.S is committed to retain a hegemonic international order and deter the rise of new powers through any means. United States' tacit military support to Pakistan and the diplomatic and economic overtures to China also made India believe that it was deliberately trying to contain India by increasing its security concerns. Nayar & Paul (2003) stresses that U.S followed a policy of indirect regional containment towards India whereby it tried to contain India's capabilities by divesting its nuclear program, promoting international regimes that restricts its attempts to acquire nuclear capabilities and supporting other regional powers like China and Pakistan to put pressure on India (Paul & Nayar,2003:209-215). India was also concerned about the biased attitude of the U.S administration whereby it underplayed the transfer of nuclear technology by China to Pakistan even when China was a signatory to the NPT (Kux, 2001:282-6). This further implicated that U.S was determined to stall India's capacity building initiatives in particular and was

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<sup>13</sup> The Pressler Amendment was initiated to have a Presidential certification to waive the sanctions imposed on Pakistan after the nuclear test while India was not given any such special provision. For details refer to Mahmood, T. (1994). Pressler Amendment and Pakistan's Security Concerns. *Pakistan Horizon*, 47(4), 97–107. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41393504>

purposefully constraining it through various efforts. The eagerness on the Indian part to pursue constructive engagement with U.S soon ran into deep disdain. Even with the Cold War criterion removed a fundamental chasm continued to plague Indo U.S relations over the differences in the strategic interest of U.S as the sole superpower and that of India as an aspirant major power.

What stood in contrast to the Cold war period was that the impasse between India and U.S following India's nuclear test and U.S sanctions did not lead to prolonged disgruntlement rather was supplemented by negotiations and engagements. The willingness on both sides to deliberate and engage despite the profoundly contradictory positions not only signifies change in attitude of the two states but the structural change in an international order that necessitates engagements. The strategic engagement that ensued between U.S Deputy Secretary of State, Strobe Talbott and India's Foreign Minister, Jaswant Singh over two years marked a significant shift in the relationship between the two countries towards a constructive, sustained relation.<sup>14</sup> Constructive engagement was pursued through diverse issue areas from economy to health which was furthered by mutual visits by executive heads. The visit of President Clinton to India emphasizing the strength of a qualitative relationship and referring India as an emerging global power gave a significant boost to the relationship. The leaders addressed each other as 'Natural Allies' and 'partners' in peace, with a common interest in and complementary responsibility for ensuring regional and international security (Clinton White House Archives, 2000).

“The constructive mechanism for building Indo-U.S relations was cemented by President Clinton's visit to India”.<sup>15</sup> While the strategic difference over nuclear question remained as U.S remained determined to adhere to Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and its objective of persuading India to join it<sup>16</sup>, both sides showed willingness to build engagements on various issues of common interests. A partnership with the superpower was to be beneficial but India remained wary of the

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<sup>14</sup> For details of the strategic engagement refer to TALBOTT, S. (2004). *Engaging India: Diplomacy, Democracy and the Bomb*. Brookings Institution Press.  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7864/j.ctt1287b2b>

<sup>15</sup> Interview with Dr. Aneek Chatterjee, Political Analyst and Associate Professor, WBES, on 19<sup>th</sup> June, 2022, Kolkata

<sup>16</sup> Virtual interview with Anusua Basu Ray Chaudhury, Senior Fellow with ORF India, on 15<sup>th</sup> March, 2022.

fact that despite projecting India as an emerging power the U.S administration was reluctant to accept India's nuclear power status or supporting its candidature to the permanent membership to UN Security Council. Despite the overtures, the Clinton administration was unwilling to accept India with its due status as a nuclear power.

### **3.5.2 A strategic partnership: Relations under Bush Administration**

Often marked as the breakthrough period in Indo-U.S relations, this period witnessed many fundamental developments that changed the nature of the bilateral relations. At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century India had nuclear capability, its economy was growing at a positive rate, it had a big market for defense and technology requirements yet it was not that lucrative or strategic to be a top priority for the Bush administration. However, since the beginning positive attitudes and statements concerning India surfaced on various platforms that had a common stress on the rise of India as a global power. U.S Ambassador to India, Robert Blackwill commented, "President Bush has a global approach to Indo-U.S relations, consistent with the rise of India as a world power" (Blackwill, Times of India, 2001). The *Brookings Institution* commentary by Stephen P. Cohen and Sunil Dasgupta on Bush Administration's South Asia policy clearly states that the comments from Secretary of State Colin Powell and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld indicate that it is going to be an 'India first policy' (Brookings Commentary, April,2001). India wanted to project itself as a stable democracy with distinct economic growth rates and a nuclear power that is determined to play a major role beyond the regional dimension. The recognition of India as a potential rising global power and one that has a central role in U.S strategic vision of the Asia Pacific undeniably added to the required status for India<sup>9</sup>. The positive overtures and the reinvigorated engagement that ensued in the following years have significantly complimented India's strategic interests.

Nuclear cooperation, India- Pakistan trajectory and India's role in the regional security order. The commitments and involvement of U.S in such areas created a sense of trust and was reciprocated with sincere efforts of engagement from the Indian side. The Bush administration harped on India's stable democratic tradition something India has long considered as its credentials for claiming a greater role and the administration added to it India's commitment to global war on terror and its influence in maintaining the stability of the Asian balance of power creating the

moment to indulge in a strategic partnership.

The Next Step Strategic Partnership launched in 2004 entailing cooperation in four sensitive issue areas of civilian nuclear energy, civilian space, dual-use high technology and missile defense initiated a substantive positive shift in the relations. This was initiated despite strong disagreements between India and U.S over sanctions imposed on Iraq and trade policies (Tellis, 2012). Their disagreements over other issues did not stop them from cooperating on vital areas as one witnessed the declaration of civil nuclear cooperation agreement with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and President Bush. The civil nuclear cooperation agreement marked the end of India's long isolation from global structures of civil nuclear technology and most importantly India did so by remaining a non- party to the NPT or Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR).

The American administration took concrete steps to alter its foundational nuclear non-proliferation policy and created a new framework of cooperation suited to India. The Indian government under Manmohan Singh agreed to abide by certain international nuclear specific norms and fought a vehement opposition at parliament to realize this agreement. A negotiated effort at both ends helped in creating the historical Indo-U.S civil nuclear deal that enabled India to enter the global nuclear technology arena. The U.S showcased dedicated efforts to not only have a curated India specific nuclear deal but supported India's acceptance to global nuclear structures like the Nuclear Supplier's Group. This deal prominently acknowledged India as a nuclear power and helped India fuel domestic power plants, gave access to critical technologies in strategic areas and enabled India to sign nuclear cooperation agreements for peaceful means with many countries including France, Russia, United kingdom, Japan and others.<sup>17</sup> As an emerging power, this deal made a great change in the international perception of India as a nuclear power. India was long viewed as an opposing state that violated the global non-proliferation regime and conducted the nuclear test but hereafter U.S recognition of India as a responsible nuclear state raised its status attribution (Saran, The Hindu, 2018).

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<sup>17</sup> For details see [https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/10-years-of-indo-us-nuclear-deal-what-india-gained-from-the-historic-pact-118101001045\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/10-years-of-indo-us-nuclear-deal-what-india-gained-from-the-historic-pact-118101001045_1.html), <https://thebulletin.org/2016/02/taking-stock-the-us-india-nuclear-deal-10-years-later/>

### ***De-hyphenating India from Pakistan***

The Indo-U.S bilateral relation has been hostage to their relations with Pakistan. The U.S bonhomie with Pakistan has been a constant irritant and an issue of significant resentment for India. President Clinton's visit to India pointed to a change in U.S attitude towards dealing its relation with India and Pakistan on individual merit. President Clinton spent five days in India generously engaging in diverse platforms while his visit to Pakistan lasted for a few hours. However, it was the Bush administration that went ahead of symbolism and adopted a policy to decouple India and Pakistan in U.S calculations. The de-hyphenation policy was aimed to view each country on its intrinsic values and not on relational terms and it also asserts that India is on its way to become a major Asian power and warrants a higher level of engagement (Tellis, 2008:23). The policy iterated how the Bush administration envisions India as a responsible power to uphold regional stability and maintaining the regional balance in presence of a rising China (Rice, 2000). Thus, for India such a policy was not only important because it finally indicated India to be considered on its own value but again it was aimed at supporting India's rise and influence.

### ***Bush Administration's recognition of India as rising power***

As discussed above India has long harboured the desire to attain a major power status. Official statements and positive overtures from an U.S administration recognizing India's potential as a rising power that can maintain stability and balance of the Asian regional order definitely boosts India's international status. Long being overshadowed by China's promising rise or being saddled by its tussle with Pakistan, an India centric strategic policy of U.S stresses on capacity building, international integration resonated strongly with India's own strategic imperatives. However, the administration's policy of supporting India's rise is primarily aimed at striking an Asian strategic balance that advances American interests and it greatly differs with India's vision of assuming a leadership role in the regional order in its own terms (Malone & Mukherjee, 2009). Further, contradictorily the administration sanctioned that sale of F-16's to Pakistan despite commitments to embolden India's power capabilities (The Hindu, 2011). The concurrent protests from India was soon supplemented by transfer of more advanced defense equipment and most importantly the administration decided to discuss an range of contentious issues in three separate

high level dialogues on strategic, energy and economic concerns with India (Tellis,2008). The engagements of the Bush administration with India significantly transformed the Indo-U.S relations into constructive partnership based on congruence over vital interests, building of trust and confidence in each other and commitments to negotiate over core issues. The positive impact of the administration was well noted in the percentage of Indian people who has positive feelings towards U.S in a Pew global attitudes project poll while most of the nations showed a distinct anti-American attitude following the unilateral stance on global war on terror.<sup>18</sup>

The successes of civil nuclear deal, bilateral defense agreement and a greater strategic partnership on Asian regional order are building blocks of a strategic partnership but can they be treated as fundamental congruence of strategic vision? India wants to play a central role in the Asian regional order and cooperating with U.S provides it with broader scope to do so but in the long run India's vision is guided by its distinct identity and leadership role in shaping the order while Washington sees India as an ally that eventually forwards U.S interests and dominion over the region. Thus, U.S impetus in supporting India's rise has to be understood in larger terms of forwarding American interest in the region by portraying a potential India against the growing Chinese assertiveness (Tellis, 2015). A superpower that is motivated to retain its primacy is seen to support the rise of new power that has distinct interests to deter another potential rival that seems to threaten U.S interests. Thus, threat perception emanating from a rising power seems to determine a superpower's response towards it. The New York Times noted that America is seen to welcome a new kind of rising power that is militarily potent, economically dynamic, regionally assertive, independent but still no threatening to U.S.(New York Times, 2005). The strategic bet that U.S has placed on India downplays a core aspect that an independent minded rising power like India that cherishes a distinct role for itself in the international order with niche ideas will hardly be a subordinate willing ally to U.S objectives. India is simply too big, too independent, too ambitious, and too complicated to ever be a willing and deferential handmaiden of the United States (Tellis, 2012).

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<sup>18</sup> For details of the survey refer to <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2007/03/14/americas-image-in-the-world-findings-from-the-pew-global-attitudes-project>



### **3.5.3 Defining partnership of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: The Obama Years**

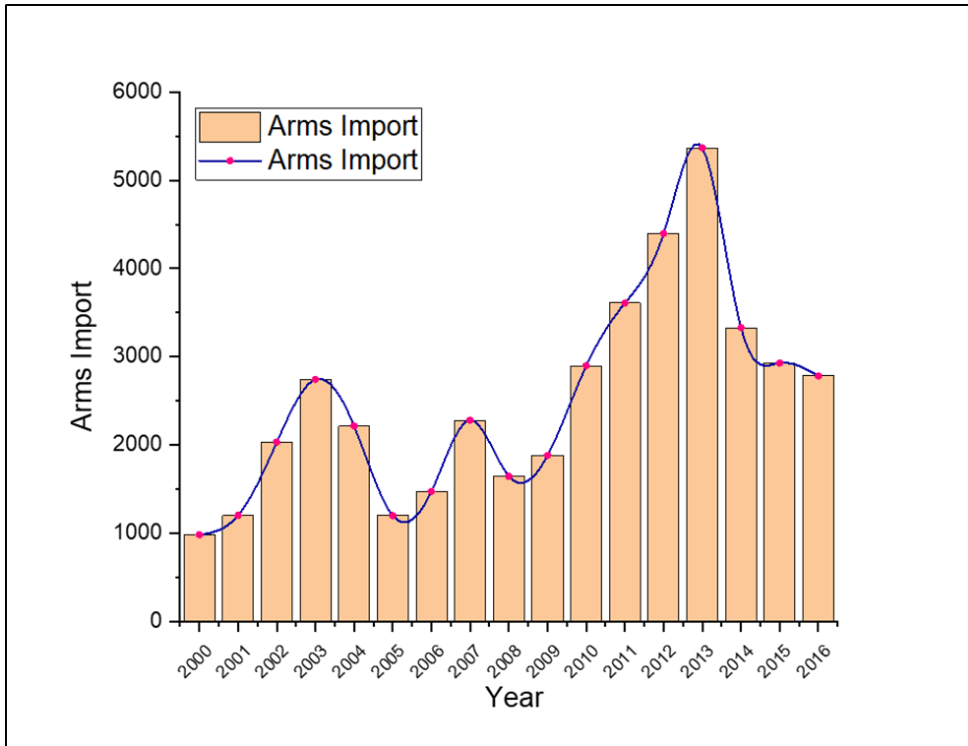
The heightened bonhomie of the Bush administration fizzled out to some extent in the initial years to Barack Obama presidency as India refused to align militarily to end wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Making India realize that strategic partnership does not entail continuous attention and to be relevant to the U.S strategic radar India needs to be a part of U.S global strategic objectives. While the Obama administration was keen to cooperate with India on military aspects, India denied sending any military troop and harped on its efforts to bring stability through economic and humanitarian aid. India's decision came at the behest of its long term strategic calculation of building a constructive developmental initiative in Afghanistan that will secure a stable neighbourhood and avoiding alienation with other powers like Russian and Iranians by aligning with U.S plans for the region (Joshi, 2017). The difference in South Asia policy of the new administration also turned from India centric towards Af-Pak strategy re-centering the focus on Afghanistan and Pakistan (Iqbal, 2010). The first high profile visit took place with the visit of Secretary of state Hilary Clinton to India in July, 2009 mainly to facilitate arms trade helping to restore a recession hit U.S economy. A major fillip to the low ebb in bilateral relations was the invitation extended to Indian Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh as the first state guest whereby President Obama stated India as an "Indispensible nation" to a future "we want to build" ( The Hindu,2009). They reaffirmed their commitment to ensure the global partnership by advancing global security, clean energy for future, strengthening economic and educational bond and moving towards effective global cooperation. President Obama declared Indo-U.S relations as the 'Defining Partnership of 21<sup>st</sup> century' (Indo-U.S Joint Statement, 2009).

President Obama's first visit to India in 2010 ticked some important aspects for India, he acknowledged India's status as a rising global power and in consonance formally announced U.S. support to India's bid for a permanent seat in the Security Council and supporting India's entry to these export control regimes -- the Nuclear Suppliers Group, the Missile Technology Control Regime to make India a full-scale stakeholder in the international community (How Obama turned his visit into a historic one, 2010).

### *Bolstering Defense Cooperation*

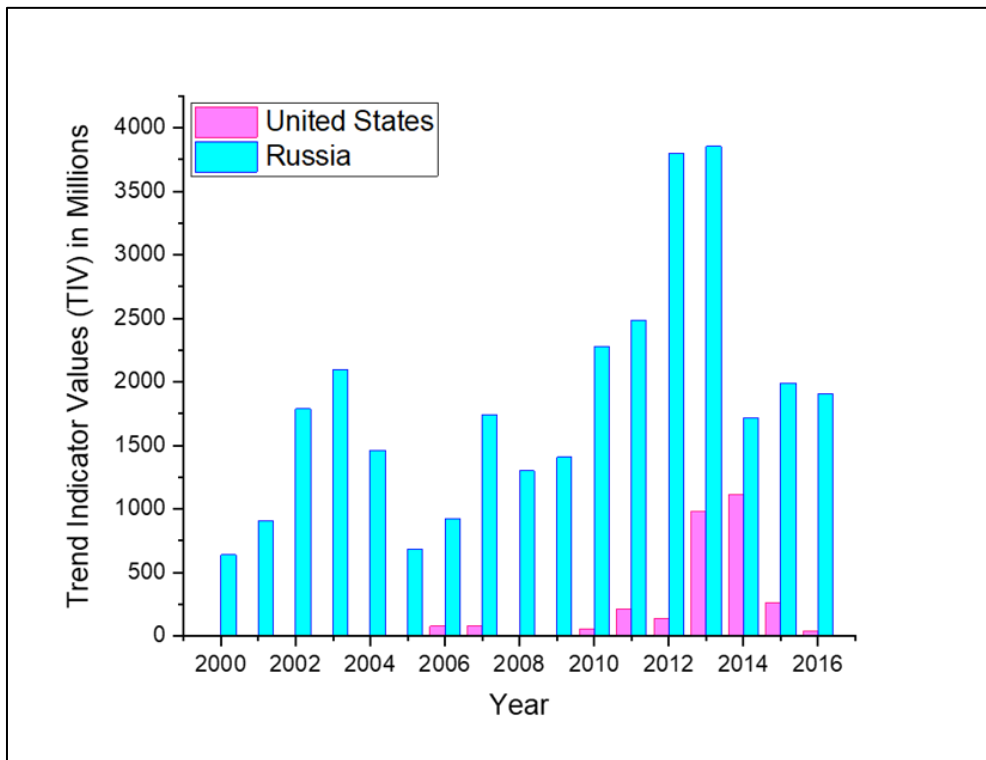
A growing demand for defense equipment in India was one of the strong motives behind the substantial engagement of the administration towards India as mentioned by US Assistant Secretary Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, Robert O. Blake, Jr. in his speech at the Chicago Council of Global Affairs stated that “Defense sales are also of great interest to American companies” (U.S Department of State, 2010).

The Indo-U.S Defense Framework Agreement signed during the Bush administration cemented their commitment to increasing defense trade, transfer of technology and counterterrorism collaboration. Defense cooperation and trade was considered significant by the Obama administration grappling with recession. As shown in figure 2 and 3 India has consistently relied on Russia for defense supplies and its defense trade with U.S was almost nil in 2007 and 2008 but improved swiftly to 9 billion dollars in 2013, surpassing Russia as the biggest supplier of arms and military equipment to India. Figure 2, shows U.S arms imports to India from 2000 to 2016, marking an incremental growth and reaching its height in 2013 but again dips in 2016 despite signing of the LEMOA or U.S addressing India as major defense partner. Figure 3 depicts a comparative graph on arms import from U.S and Russia to India which clearly shows India’s has retained its dependence on Russian imports even while deepening its defense cooperation with U.S Interestingly figure 4 depicts share of arms import to India from different countries which shows how India is diversifying its choice of arms trade partner with indulging in arms import from South Korea, Brazil and South Africa beyond the traditional partners like Russia, France and U.S. The Obama administration expanded the civil aviation cooperation and successfully removed ISRO, DRDO from U.S Entities List. India’s ambition to bolster its strategic proficiency in the region by capacity building, greater integration and military exercises found a consonance with U.S. with the Obama administration’s pivot to Asia policy where India plays a central role in maintaining stability and security in the region further buttressed their efforts to cooperate on security and military areas. The Defense Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI) was an effort to change the transactional relationship to one based on joint technological development, co-production, information exchange and joint military exercises are indication of their shared interest in the region.



**Figure 2 U.S Arms Imports to India, 2000-2016**

Source: [portal.sipri.org/publications/pages/transfer/splash](http://portal.sipri.org/publications/pages/transfer/splash)



**Figure 3 Trend chart on Russian and U.S arms import to India**

Source: <https://www.sipri.org/databases/armstransfers>

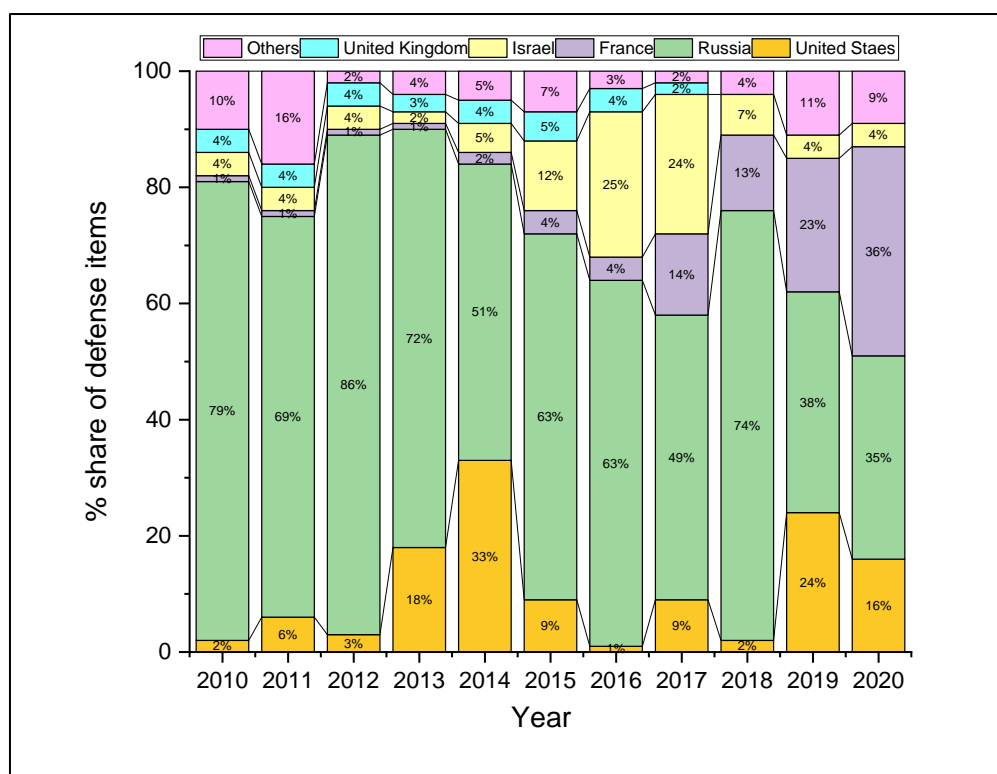


Figure 4 Defense import share of India, 2010-2020.

Source: <https://www.sipri.org/databases/armstransfers>

The defense cooperation reached new heights with India signing the Logistics Exchange Memorandum Agreement (LEMOA) in 2016 after long years of negotiations.<sup>19</sup> The LEMOA is a tweaked version of the four foundational defense agreements U.S has with closest allies and has long pursued India to sign these for facilitating supply of sensitive equipment. India has however negotiated the terms of interoperability and the application of this agreement on case by case merit thereby softly avoiding the binding commitments of a military alliance with U.S. (Hindu, 30<sup>th</sup> August, 2016). In the same year the Obama administration declared India as ‘major defense partner’ a distinctive unique definition the U.S has not conferred to any other country. This enables India access to almost all defense technologies that is on par with U.S treaty allies. It was meant to recognize that although India will not be an alliance partner of the United States, the administration seeks to treat it as such for purposes of giving it access to advanced technologies of the kind that are reserved for close US allies (Economic Times, 2016).

<sup>19</sup> For details on LEMOA refer to <https://archive.pib.gov.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=149322>.

The stronger defense ties were in tune with bolstering India's role within larger U.S rebalance to Asia policy, setting India at par with U.S treaty allies and enabling its access to a wide range of dual use technologies. India as an emerging power has showcased its desire to modernize its defense capabilities but it does not exhibit the desire to be dependent on an U.S specific defense modernization process. As visible from the above graph, India continued its reliance on Russian arms supply as immediately after reaching heights in 2014 the arms supply from the U.S dipped to 2% of the total and Russia reached 63%. Even after signing the LEMOA and the declaration of India as a major defense partner the arm supply from U.S amounted to 1% of the total, only increasing to 24% in 2019. Thus, India is seen to keep its options open and not depending heavily on U.S supplies.

### ***The Pivot to Asia and India***

Connected to the strong defense ties was the greater goal of ensuring India's active participation in Obama administration's pivot to Asia policy. The policy signifies a shift in the U.S strategic focus to Asia based on recalibration of military resources, cultivating strategic partners in maintaining the regional balance.<sup>14</sup> India had been outlined as the central focus of the strategy (Clinton, 2011). Having a prominent influence over the Asia- Pacific region has been a prime objective of India and with U.S outlining a significant role for it within the regional order saw the Indian governments respond actively to the rebalance strategy but with an inch of distinctiveness. While U.S wanted India to be its subordinate partner in its larger policy of the region.

India sought to envisage an independent vision. India engaged with U.S on multiple levels but also continued engaging China and most importantly seeking greater relations with other small powers to effectively retain the balance in the region (Estrada, 2023). India also remained wary of America's strategic calculations with China which eventually seeks a bilateral balance as noted from the joint statement of U.S and China where it iterates a global vision for China in South Asia (Obama White House Archives, 2011). The UPA government under Prime Minister Manmohan Singh advanced India's role as a stability and security provider in the region and the successive Modi government added a fresh momentum to India's "Look East" which now morphed into "Act East". Whereby India too is shaping the Rebalance narrative

by developing its comprehensive national power, building strong partnership with U.S, deepening relations with Indian Ocean littoral countries and collaborating with regional powers like Japan, Vietnam, the Philippines and Indonesia (Mishra,2015).

The bilateral relations have deepened prominently over the years and have developed into a global strategic partnership. A chart on salient points (Annexure 1) of the Indo-U.S relation from the Clinton administration to Obama administration is prepared to mark significant events, shifts in policy, defining agreements or dialogues and the way they have acknowledged each other to outline how they have intended to collaborate to construct a partnership while managing differences and retaining the intended flexibility. India and U.S have worked on a plethora of core contentious issues and have signified that their divergences over various areas have opened up new scopes of negotiation and understanding paving the way towards a sustained and matured partnership capable of handling differences.

On considering the salient points certain observations can be made

Firstly, increase in the degree of engagement both in scope and depth. From meager consideration based on lucrative market to modifying U.S laws on non-proliferation to initiate a deal with India there has been undeniable advancement in degree and scope of U.S engagements with India crosscutting the differences in their vision and understanding on many issues. Intent and persistence in an asymmetric relation is noteworthy.

Secondly, there has been substantial change in the perception about India's role and capacity as rising power in South Asia. Post nuclear tests in 1998 India was not viewed in U.S as an essential part of solution to many major international problems rather was seen as an unstable and probable source of problem that was a threat to U.S nonproliferation goals. Thus, the initiation of engagements was aimed at modifying and mitigating the Indian problem through constant communication. Within a time span of 10 years e.i 2008 India and U.S signed the Civil Nuclear Deal which acknowledged India as a responsible and stable power and it will strengthen the non-proliferation network by formally recognizing India's nonproliferation record even though it remains non signatory of NPT. India was viewed as a probable source of instability in the region post its nuclear tests this view changed within three years

whereby in 2001, Colin Powell, US Secretary of State under Bush administration in his speech before U.S Senate recognized India's potential to maintain peace and stability in Asia- Pacific and Indian Ocean region. The Obama administration also stressed on India's leadership in expanding prosperity and security of the Asia Pacific region.

Thirdly, Both Bush and Obama administration have formally acknowledged India's potential to become a major power or a global power. The Bush administration exhibited its support for India's rise but more importantly have taken initiatives to enhance its defense and technological resources and worked for its deeper integration in international forums like G20, UN and export control regimes. The Obama administration also declared its support over India's bid for permanent seat in UNSC, India was named a 'major defense partner' enabling it with added facilities to upgrade its defense sector.

Fourthly, the terminology for defining Indo U.S relations changed over the years. President Clinton used terms like 'natural allies' and 'building a qualitatively new relationship' stressing on the civilizational and democracy linkages to construct the new engagements post the nuclear episode. President Bush mainly acknowledged the relation as a partnership, he used terms like 'strategic partners' and ' global partnership' highlighting the mutual understanding over common strategic interests and the vision to build a multifaceted partnership that is not restricted to regional issues rather have a global outlook. It also exhibits the administrations understanding of India as a potential power and an equal stakeholder and partner with U.S to address global issues. President Obama declared India as 'an indispensable partner' and outlined the relationship as 'defining partnership of 21<sup>st</sup> century' harping on the importance of continued matured partnership with shared responsibility.

From India's viewpoint there are certainly positive aspects

- India is the only state to have a separate Civil Nuclear Deal with U.S outside the U.S nonproliferation policy structure.
- India was declared a 'major defense partner' in 2016 despite the fact that it did not sign any of the three foundation agreements with the U.S prior to becoming a major defense partner.

- The three foundational agreements LSA, CISMOA, BECA are the basic agreements needed to be signed by defense partners to enter into military cooperation. India has become signatory to tweaked versions of all three due to the reservations India was having regarding certain aspects of the foundational agreements. The India specific versions of LEMOA (2016), COMCASA (2018) and BECA (2020) were signed with modified aspects negotiated by both.
- India has been recognized by two consecutive U.S administrations as a potential major power having the capability to render global influence.

### **3.6 India's Multipronged Engagement Strategy**

India as an emerging regional power with global power ambitions is constructing its niche identity and influence. It views its engagements as stepping stones towards attaining its major power status. The structural constraints of working within an international order in presence of a preponderant power and a new global power in the region have considerable impact on India's strategic thinking. However, unlike India's stance of non-alignment during the Cold War India has adopted and integrated an engagement prone strategy. One where India is eager to build its capacity and resources, seek constructive relations with great powers and small powers alike, assess new opportunities and challenges and put out its own narrative to influence global thinking and international structures.

The US- India relations has emboldened many of India's strategic interest but like the United States, India has a global vision that is based on multiple engagements, an emancipatory world order, greater strategic space to pursue distinct objectives which can appear to be divergent from those of the United States on several issue areas or in the long run.

Emerging India's perception and intention towards the international order matter greatly in its accommodation in the existing system. If the emerging power has values and principles different and contrary to those of the existing international order, and its supports alternative structures then restraining policies will be applicable to that emerging power (Schweller,1998:24). But the United States in contrast has been supportive of India's rise which often leads to the idea that though India seeks changes



in the existing structure it is perceived as non-threatening or it seems that it wants reform while preserving the essential characteristics of the existing order. (Schweller, 1998:24; Chan,2004).

Miller (2013) argues that India fails to look beyond tactical challenges and work to ensure the realization of a world order that she envisions. India's inability to develop a top down long term strategy means that it cannot systematically consider the implications of growing power. Similarly Bajpai(2015) stresses that India's foreign policy is marked by ambivalence where it has the instinct Where it has the Instinct of internationalist and on the other inability to transcend narrow anxieties over sovereignty, he calls it the low level equilibrium trap. India's invigorating engagements, active participation across multilateral forums, deftness in resisting biases in international norms and initiatives to shape the order through alternative structures does not seem to be a feeble approach to attain desired goals. An emerging power that faces the constraints of acting in a system with a superpower and a rival regional global power may seek a multipronged engagement strategy as a way to incrementally build its influence and resources without direct confrontational or system altering initiatives (Fawcett, 2020; Cooley; Nexon & Ward, 2019)

As India diversified its regional presence to a global one, it speaks in a new voice not only representing developing countries but as a state in transition to a higher identity and role where it seeks to articulate its national interest and speak for an inclusive emancipatory and multilateral international order that needs strategic space to accommodate distinct ideas and vision of new powers .As India's external affairs minister, Dr. S Jaishankar emphatically avers that Indian Foreign Policy in an uncertain world advances its national interests by identifying and exploiting opportunities created by global contradictions so as to extract as much gains from as many ties as possible (Jaishankar,2020:9). In a competitive International system with cross cutting fractures a multipronged strategy is eminently sensible for India. The structural constraint that confronts India in presence of a preponderant power in collision with a new global power in India's regional sphere compels India to leverage situation to its benefit. India needs “ to engage America, manage China, cultivate Europe, bring Japan into the play, draw neighbours in, extend the neighbourhood and expense traditional constituencies of support all while continuing to reform economically and grow faster in a democratic system.(Jaishankar,2020;

Mukherjee,2020) In an international system beaming with uncertainties it is prudent for India to have maximum options in its relation with the outside world involving diverse partnerships and engagement. Indian strategic choice can be an example to understand how emerging regional powers have the agency and the needed autonomy to avoid polarized choices and indulge in multiple engagement strategies and act decisively when required. India's diverse identity and multiple interests has the potential to serve as a bridge between the established and emerging order and lay the foundation for creating a more just and equitable global order. (Jaishankar, 2020:116).

The last two chapters have underlined strategic worldviews of the United States and India respectively and how they are positioned within each other's strategic ambit. Drawing from this the next chapter tries to identify the areas of engagement and how they cooperate while addressing common interests and managing the differences over approaches or means.

### **3.7 Chapter Brief**

This chapter tries to understand India's strategic world view and the United States' position within it. The study views India strategy objectives, interests and foreign policy through the lens of its enduring aspiration for a major power status. The study proceeds by outlining the evolution of Indian foreign policy, identifying certain significant strategic objectives and thereby stressing on the development of a multipronged engagement strategy adopted by India as an emerging regional power.

India Foreign policy since its independence in 1947 has been framed by the necessity to respond to power preponderance in the larger international order. The cold war shaped India's response of avoiding entanglements in great power politics through the policy of nonalignment which constructed its understanding of the world order being predominantly dictated by great powers which constricts the accommodation of new powers. This understanding developed two important aspects of Indian strategic thinking, (a) India has to attend it desired major power status within the structure of a hegemonic international order by maintaining. Its strategic autonomy, (b) it has to struggle to transform the existing order towards an emancipatory multipolar one that will be more receptive of India's leadership role. The Post Cold War unipolar structure of international order introduced new structural constraints imposed by the sole superpower. The globalized inter-dependent nature of the international system

propelled India to initiate engagements necessary for developing its capabilities, especially economic capabilities to enhance its role and influence in the international system. India's South Asian region centric policies incrementally moved towards projecting a greater global power aspiration. India's strategic objectives are discussed as its aspiration to achieve a major power status, maintaining its strategic autonomy, its quest for recognition and engagement, its advocacy for a multipolar world order while espousing alternative structures and retaining its predominance over the region.

India's aspiration for the major power status with the intent of transforming the existing order naturally sets it in collision with U.S interest yet they have constructed a strategic partnership over the years. The interdependent International system with U.S as the preponderant power necessitated India's engagement amidst the disgruntlement over U.S military support to Pakistan, continued diplomatic overtures to China and most importantly U.S intention to restrict India's nuclear power capabilities by constructing restraining international regimes of nuclear nonproliferation. India as an emerging regional power needed to develop its power capacities and required international recognition hence strategic engagement with the United States was essential and prudent despite the discords. The Bush administration's stress on developing a global partnership and its acknowledgement of India as a global power struck a chord with India in need of advanced technology and defense equipment to bolster its capacity and integration into International regimes and structures.

The Indo-U.S civil nuclear deal, the defense framework agreement together with the de-hyphenated policy of the Bush administration ushered in a constructive period of cooperation. The rise of China and the Obama administration's rebalancing to Asia gave India a niche place within the American strategic objectives that also aligned with India's own interest on some levels. However India retained its autonomy even while cooperating with U.S as it refused to military interfere in Afghanistan or conduct joint patrolling of the South China Sea. Despite the deepening of defense cooperation India vehemently negotiated the terms of the logistics agreement with U.S and continued its reliance on Russian arms import. In strategic areas also India has refused to upgrade its cooperation with U.S to formal security ties in the region.

India can be seen to adopt a multipronged engagement strategy that is based on its intention of securing multiple ties to grow economically and integrate profusely to enhance its influence and avoid direct confrontation with major powers. The multipronged engagement strategy of India can be an instance to understand the agencies and autonomy of emerging regional powers to achieve indigenous objectives not being constrained by indulging in polarized choices.