

**Understanding Superpower-Regional Power
Relations in the Post Cold War Scenario: A Case
Study of the United States and India, 2000-2016**

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the degree of
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CONCLUSION

The most significant consequence of the end of the cold war was the rise of the United States as the sole superpower and an international system maintained by it. Parallely by the end of 1990's, concrete discussions and debates can be observed regarding the role, behavior and capabilities of regional powers as agents of power diffusion in the unipolar structure.(Buzan, Waever,2003;Christensen, 2006; Shambaugh, 2004/2005; Walt,2009). More importantly the deliberations on understanding regional powers through global approach and the attempt to establish indigenous structures elaborates and enhances the parameters of regional powers with global ambitions.(Flemes,2009; Hurell,2007; Destradi,2010). This work positions India as a regional power with its major power ambitions as the system altering trait. Understanding regional powers through their global aspirations modifies the framework of understanding superpower and regional powers. Understanding the regional powers through their global aspirations widens the scope of them not being restricted in their attempts to retain dominance in its region but also a contender for attaining major power status in the power hierarchy that the superpower dominates hence engagement strategies of the superpower will no longer be attained by only incentives or containment. Regional powers are balancing the region and its global ambitions hence their engagement strategies are to be understood not only interested in maintaining regional stability and domination rather motivated towards recognition building, role elevation and status attribution. The strategic imperatives also changed as both the superpower and regional power have nuclear capabilities, vested strategic interdependence and the presence of a greater rival in the region. Understanding the United States and India within the above mentioned aspects help to outline how combinations of contradiction and cooperation can define power asymmetric relations and diverse engagement strategies.

Findings

The study aimed to delineate how in an interdependent globalized international order a superpower is motivated to protect its primacy and an emerging regional power trying to attain a major power role engages with each other despite the structural constraints and the differences over strategic understanding. The relations between United States

as a superpower and India as an emerging regional power is posited within such an ambit to underline how in spite of power asymmetry, divergences over strategic understanding they could construct a strategic partnership. The following observations and findings evolved out of the study that duly answers the important research questions and simultaneously adds new aspects to the understanding of superpower regional power relations.

The central research questions of the study are

- How to understand the relation between US and India within the ambit of superpower regional power relations?
- Where is India posited in the United States' broader strategic vision of the international order?
- How is engagement with the United States perceived within India's strategic understanding of the world?
- What are the interests that make engagement plausible?
- Considering convergences and divergences over interests, what forms of interaction will be more adoptable?

Indo-U.S relations through systematic understanding and their sense of entitlement

The relation between U.S and India as superpower and regional power can be understood by the structure of an interdependent international order. The interdependent world order that emerged in the Post Cold War scenario stressed an expanded role for formal and informal institutions, an increase in scope, density and intrusiveness of rules and norms made at the international level, enforcement of global rules and integrated economic structure mainly outlined in consonance with the interests of the sole superpower. The United States defined its interest by structuring a conducive international order aimed at preserving its primacy. By creating a network of integrated institutions and global norms, the U.S also binds itself to reassure smaller States and to prevent balancing against the U.S power. It became the provider of public goods and security that created legitimacy and made other states accept the role of the US in the international order. An emerging regional power that aspires to attend a

major power role has to work within such structures of the existing international order and the interdependent nature of it, levies substantial constraints in its aim of maintaining autonomy and projecting distinct vision.

The difference in strategic objectives of the United States and India should be considered in terms of systematic understanding and their sense of entitlement that constructed their respective idea of power and interests. The difference in structural position within the power hierarchy informs how they frame their interests and how they act to promote those. In the international system, there is no permanency in power positions and all powers have to continuously pursue to maintain and extend their power and influence. Superpowers will indulge in strategies to extend its power and to bring others under its dominion through spheres of influence, thus, regional powers that are ambitious and want to follow autonomous course are to be modified or coaxed to incur compliance. On the other hand, regional power's way to climb the power hierarchy is to attain a major power status and it must increase its capabilities and be able to exercise their influence. Thus, being a compliant follower of the superpower will not serve its purpose of securing higher status with distinct identity. The natural impulse of a superpower is to exercise domination over regional powers and this runs in contradiction to the regional power's impulse of avoiding domination and their thrust for role elevation sets them on a conflictual course.

Added to this inherent element of systematic contradiction is the sense of entitlement of U.S and India that further explains their divergences in thinking. Embedded prominently in the U.S foreign policy is the ideas of exceptionalism and entitlement that U.S is destined to be the world power that can responsibly lead and manage the international order. Since the days following the Second World War, the U.S is determined to structure the international order and in the Post Cold War period, with its emergence as the predominant power, it has taken up the responsibility to construct, protect and preserve a new world order. For India its sense of entitlement is based in its civilizational and cultural heritage that catalyzed its claim to a leadership role in the region and in the international order. It has long believed the international order as a hegemonic one that does not provide the strategic space for accommodation of new powers. While U.S believes its predominance and authority is embedded in its ability to maintain an international order and make others believe in the benefit and stability

of such an order, India's entitlement lies in attaining a major power role which it believes is possible by changing the unilateral structure of the present order to a diffused multilateral one. Thus, the formation of strategic interest from their power positions and the sense of entitlement can be key to understanding the inconsistency that often plagues the Indo-U.S relations.

India's position in U.S strategic vision

India has never been a central piece of American foreign policy but strategic imperatives have propelled successive U.S administrations since Bill Clinton to consider India into greater U.S considerations. From engaging India as a big emerging market to effectively positioning it in U.S security architecture of the Asia Pacific, India has found a niche space within U.S strategic objectives. U.S has taken some constructive efforts to engage India from modifying U.S laws on non-proliferation, bending its foundational defense agreements to supporting India's rise by integration in International regimes and enhancing its global recognition. Such events must be assessed in the light of the fact that engaging India is beneficial to present U.S strategic interests and will be a positive way to secure India's acceptance in the long run.

A combined strategy of Accommodation and Engagement

Since the Bush administration, U.S policies towards India seem to pursue a combined strategy of accommodation with elements of engagement. The formal recognition and support from the Bush and Obama administrations for India's rise as a global power or its permanent membership in the United National Security Council (UNSC) marks a deviation from the structural dynamics of conflict between a superpower and a regional power. This can be explained by the application of a combined strategy of accommodation and engagement by the superpower towards a rising regional power. The concept of accommodation is taken from George Liska's (1973) typology of policy options for great powers towards middle powers and T.V Paul's (2016) idea of accommodation of rising powers. By accommodation, Liska (1973) refers to 'devolution of regional responsibility to apparently disposed middle powers' and for Paul(2016) accommodation stands for status adjustment and leadership role sharing between established and rising powers through membership and due roles in

international institutions and acceptance of spheres of influence. Engagement is considered a strategy in U.S foreign policy. Richard N. Haass and Meghan L. O' Sullivan defines engagement as a foreign policy strategy which depends to a significant degree on positive incentives to achieve its objectives (Haass, Sullivan; 2000:1-2). A mixed strategy of accommodation and engagement seems to suit the purpose whereby through accommodation, the U.S tries to recognize and enhance India's status in the international order and by strategic engagement it provides resources and incentives to influence India in modifying its non- status quo traits.

Element of Absorption

A further element of absorption should be added to the existing strategies of accommodation and engagement. The policy of the U.S seems more inclined towards binding the rising power within its desired perimeters by being accommodative and entwining it in various initiatives or agreements even with minor tweaking to the original version to suit the rising power's interest but largely designed by the superpower itself. Thus, more than devolution of power to the regional it is about absorption. Absorption is more lucrative as it is not as costly as to maintain continuous engagement through supply of aids or resources and it is not a long term adjustment process like accommodation. Absorption moreover allows the superpower to enmesh the rising power in a web of agreements and joint initiatives that becomes fundamental to the development and status projection of the rising power. Under such a scenario, it becomes difficult for the rising powers to pursue distinct policies or interests that are contradictory to those agreements and commitments.

The idea of satellization

The concept of satellization talks about building dependence by assuming interventionist capabilities (Liska, 1973) but here the U.S can be seen offering aid, incentives and even capacity building resources and its strategy is influenced by modification rather than interventionist. But as India's rise becomes more concerning or threatening to U.S primacy it might develop into interventionist capabilities. Thus, there remains the chance of applying certain elements of the policy of satellization in the U.S engagement strategy towards India if India resorts to being too challenging or threatening to core U.S interests.

India's strategic understanding and the United States

India's resentment and suspicion towards the motives and ideals of U.S gave way to a nuanced understanding of cooperation on common concerns and interests. Structural power obligations, strategic and security imperatives together with India's urge to enhance its capacity and international recognition ushered close engagements with U.S since the end of the Cold War. India's deepening engagements with the United States is not only a response to power preponderance rather it found a willing partner in the U.S on many occasions. If U.S is accommodating India for greater American strategic interests then India is also leveraging the strategic moment to its benefit by developing its resources and capacity and utilizing the U.S support to integrate in the international order and enhance its status all the while effectively balancing its niche interests. For India, U.S as a superpower is territorially non-threatening, supports India's rise, envisions a central role for India in the region and in global arena, provides it with necessary resources and recognition thus, a partnership with U.S in the present scenario is lucrative and strategic for India's emergence. However, that does not dilute India's differences with American strategic understanding or India's desire to alter the existing international order. Such a balance of divergences and convergences seems to be managed by India by adopting certain engagement strategies.

A combination of engagement strategies of soft balancing and Omni- enmeshment

A combination of soft balancing and omni-enmeshment enables India to manage its relations with U.S and extend its distinct ideas and interests. Soft balancing may occur through diplomatic means of participating in international institutions, economic statecraft and ad hoc diplomatic arrangements (Pape, 2005). "A core purpose of soft balancing is not to coerce or even to impede the superior state's current actions, but to demonstrate resolve in a manner that signals a commitment to resist the superpower's future actions (if it becomes threatful)" (Pape,2005:37). While omni-enmeshment refers to the strategy of secondary powers in enmeshing a preponderant power through sustained engagements and exchanges to ensure its deep involvement in the region, to turn the geopolitical reality of great power penetration into the secondary state's benefit by involvement in building strategic cooperation, trade agreements, joint military and naval exercises and retain secondary power's role in shaping and stability

of the regional order (Goh, 2008). India as an emerging power wants to attain major power status on its own terms and project its own ideas that often do not resonate with the prevailing norms. India's stress on maintaining strategic autonomy and its protests against the norms and structures of the present international systems renders bandwagoning with U.S difficult. The tacit means of soft balancing and omni-enmeshment enables India to maintain its flexible yet strategic partnership with U.S, nurture multiple engagements with other powers and most importantly to project its distinct ideas and interests. Omni-enmeshment provides India the opportunity to engage both with US and China and integrate itself with other regional powers enabling it to play a leadership role in shaping the contours of regional order. Soft balancing on the other hand helps India to retain its strategic partnership with the U.S while acting collectively with other developing countries to resist the biases in prevailing international order or construct alternative regional structures.

The Concept of Enabling Engagement Strategies

International Relations tend to be defined by great power politics and it is not unusual that most engagement strategies are developed to decipher the responses of smaller states to power preponderance based on threat perception.³⁰ Broadening the scope of engagement strategies will help us to understand the behavior of non-leading states, beyond responding to threat perception from the dominant power, and focus on the agency of the emerging powers seeking engagements to assert its leadership role and develop its capacity. The study, while dealing with various engagement strategies, has found that strategies like soft balancing or omni enmeshment have the potential to enhance opportunities of emerging powers to respond beyond power preponderance and these have been termed as enabling engagement strategies.

Strategies that help to manage relations with dominant power and promote niche interests and objectives of secondary powers are termed as enabling strategies. These strategies go beyond the threat perception prism and stresses on the reconfigured

³⁰ Kenneth Waltz considers the presence of great powers in a system will automatically make the smaller states indulge in balancing while Walt asserts that it is threat perception and not great capabilities that leads to balancing. See Stephen M. Walt, *The Origin of Alliances* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987); Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 1979); Kenneth N. Waltz, *Man, the State, and War* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1959)

scope and choice of action that can be available to emerging powers.

Engagement strategies like soft balancing and omni-enmeshment can be applied by India beyond responding to U.S and more as means to assert India's role. Emerging regional powers whose aim is to acquire major power status can adopt these strategies to not only manage their relation with superpower but the means of applying these strategies can be used to further its role and status attribution. The means of tacit diplomacy of soft balancing specially entangling diplomacy and economic strengthening will help India to increase its influence and assert its role among other secondary powers. India's active partnership in various regional institutions and regional blocs within larger international institutions like SAARC, ASEAN, BIMSTEC etc. provides India the opportunity to establish its ideas and opinions that will further its influence and acceptability among peer states. India's emphasis on promoting regional trade and transaction through various regional economic blocs, especially BRICS also enhances its integration with other emerging powers and strengthens its strategic image as an emerging power committed to address the biases in the existing system and convince others that its rise would help resolve existing problems. Thus, these engagement strategies must be understood as enabling strategies in case of emerging powers. Emerging powers like India are working adroitly to transform the existing international order to a more hospitable and inclusive one that accepts the leadership role of new powers. These enabling strategies expand the horizon of the agency of emerging powers like India to accrue benefits from great power relations and extend their own needs, values and interests to carve out a distinct space for themselves within a preferred international order.

Altered response of the superpower in case of rise of more than one power

A superpower is motivated to preserve its primacy and in consonance will try to thwart or prevent the rise of new powers specially revisionist ones that can challenge its dominant position. A superpower like the US is a system determining state that wants to extend its own power as far as possible, to exercise domination over other smaller powers and restrain the rise of new major powers. It will adopt measures or policies to lay several constraints in the path of the rising power to dissuade it from

achieving its desired goal. The contrary instincts of the rising power and the superpower set them on a course of collision. When a superpower formally declares to support the rise of an emerging power and assists it in building capabilities and enhances its international recognition it raises a question to the systematic understanding of power politics. Why does a superpower that is motivated to retain its primacy support the rise of another emerging power that aspires to transform the existing international order?

The successive U.S administrations since President Bush has constructively acknowledged and assisted India's strive to achieve a global power status. From enhancing India's capacity building endeavors from nuclear to defense cooperation, integrating India into international regimes to supporting India's candidature for permanent membership to United Nations Security Council or declaring it as a major defense partner, U.S has positively propelled India's emergence. Such concerted efforts to help an emerging power that seeks transformation in the existing order runs in contradiction to the inherent impulse of a superpower to prevent the rise of new powers with system altering traits.

U.S support to the rise of India can be explained by the proposition that the presence of a more threatening rival will see the superpower assisting the rise of another emerging power that it believes to be comparatively less threatening and still have the capabilities to effectively help it balance the rise of the threatening power. The United States is confronted with a unique situation of emergence of more than one power in a confined region. Its restructured calculations on restraining the rise of new powers are based on degree of threat perception, divergence over political structures and ideological outlooks and the intention towards the international order.³¹ In contrast to India, China appears to be an assertive power that aggressively wants to gain influence by territorial and economic claims, practices contrasting political structures and beliefs and offers ideologically and politically alternative norms and values underpinning the current liberal International order. Thus, costs of accommodating China are

³¹ On accommodation of new powers refer to Chandra, V. (2018). Rising Powers and The Future International Order. *World Affairs: The Journal of International Issues*, 22(1), 10–23. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48520045>, Murray, Michelle, 'Conclusion: Rising Powers and the Future of the International Order', *The Struggle for Recognition in International Relations: Status, Revisionism, and Rising Powers* (New York, 2018; online edn, Oxford Academic, 17 Apr. 2019), <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190878900.003.0008>,

significantly reduced by the presence of an emerging power like India that also seeks to balance the growing assertiveness of China. In addition, India is perceived as a non-threatening power that duly adheres to most of the ideological ideas of the US led international order and seeks to reform the system rather than turn it over. The U.S is practicing indirect regional containment (Nayar & Paul, 2003) against China by supporting India (the lesser adversary) with capacity building and recognition to posit it as a counter weight in the region.

This situation can also be analyzed as an opportunity for the emerging power to enhance its influence, maximize its capacity building and further its integration into the regional and global order. India utilizes the U.S support to enhance its international integration, build its technology and other capabilities while maintaining its regional coordination with China bolstering its integration in the Asian regional order.

Forms of Engagement suitable to assess Indo-U.S Relations

India and the United States have been committed to build a strategic partnership based on common understanding that their cooperation is essential to address global strategic interest and challenges and in retaining the stability of the International Order whereby they adopt varied engagement strategies to avoid the relations being held hostage by their differences. Understanding the form of engagement pattern that enables them to cooperate on a long term basis further defines the contours of Indo-US relation. The study assesses Indo-U.S relations under four forms of engagement: alliance, entente, ad-hoc coalitions and alignment.

Improbability of an alliance

Alliances are binding formal agreements with definite military and security concerns. While the United States has always preferred to work through formal alliance structures, India has been strongly opposed to such binding agreements that can limit its strategic autonomy. The fundamental difference in their strategic world view, the enormous power asymmetry, divergences in their perception of future international order and incompatibility over long term strategy objectives dissuades them from entering into formal commitments of an alliance.

Short term cooperation of Ententes or Ad-hoc coalitions

Ententes or ad-coalitions are much more flexible and temporary arrangements than formal alliances. But these strategies are based on loose diplomatic consultations and issue specific coordination. India U.S relations show serious efforts of cooperation and they have invested resources to build extensive partnership encompassing diverse issue areas and are committed to ensure stability of the regional and international order. The intent and commitment on both sides to attain a robust and enduring partnership makes extremely temporary and short term strategies of entente or ad-hoc coalition inappropriate to grasp the length and breadth of their relation.

Appropriateness of an Alignment

Alignment refers to upgrading of bilateral relations from regular diplomatic channels to an elevated or intensified condition (Wilkins, 2012:114). India and the US have identified diverse areas of congruence from defense economy to regional and global issues and have made concrete effects to upgrade their relation to a global strategic partnership through strategy and regular high level interactions. Alignment offers a structured framework of collaboration with the intended flexibility to cooperate while retaining their respective space to regulate the degree of commitment. Alignment offers the strategic flexibility to a state that wants to choose limited cooperation based on the objectives or interests it wants to achieve. It offers the benefit to the states to be able to regulate the depth and level of involvement or commitment (Erkomaishvili, 2019). Alignment offers emerging powers like India to enter into limited engagements to accrue benefits without losing autonomy of decision making (Ciorciari, 2010). Alignments are goal driven (Struver, 2016:8) based on the willingness of the both to pursue common interests without being restrained by divergences.

Flexible Strategic Alignment as the engagement pattern of Indo-U.S relations

India and the US have identified diverse areas of congruence, defense, and economy to regional and global issues and have made concrete effects to upgrade their relation to a global strategic partnership through strategy and regular high level interactions. Alignment offers collaboration with the intended flexibility to cooperate while retaining their respective space to regulate the degree of commitment.

A semi structured flexible non-binding and goal oriented engagement pattern of alignment suits the concerted efforts of India and the United States to retain and forward a strategic partnership despite structural differences. India U.S alignment constitutes certain specific features making it different from the general perception of alignment. Firstly their alignment is not restricted to specific issue areas but it is a mode of operation that runs the partnership. It is the pattern of engagement that elevates the relationship over time. Secondly their alignment offers multiple levels of negotiations whereby even within a specific issue area they can identify mediated spaces to negotiate respective opinions and strategic interest and thereby reach a mutual understanding on the final contours of an agreement. Thirdly, alignment over diverse issue areas over time has culminated into deeper levels of cooperation, helped them to bridge differences, enhance their understanding of each other's strategic vision and have constructively built confidence and fostered trust. It has incrementally strengthened the partnership. Such a process of alignment that boosts confidence elevates the partnership and can tide over differences can be termed as a cumulative upgrading alignment process.

Indo-U.S partnership can be comprehensively assessed in terms of a flexible strategic alignment. It introduces new features to the general concept of alignment by identifying that alignment is not just a strategy to be chosen to cooperate on certain issues and setting aside disagreements. Alignment can be a pattern of partnership between a superpower and an emerging power that differs significantly over strategic thinking and goals yet are willing to cooperate on common interests and construct a strategic partnership.

Hypothesis Affirmation

The study aims to understand superpower regional power relations highlighting how power asymmetry, difference of strategic thought and perception of preferred international order sets them on a conflictual course yet we notice constructive engagements. The engagements are possible due to the utilization of certain engagement strategies that enables both the superpower and the regional power to sustain cooperation. Understanding the complex asymmetrical relations between a superpower and an emerging regional power through the prism of engagement strategies enhances the perceptions of power diffusion, systematic conflicts,

accommodation and strategic engagements.

Indo-U.S relations have been rarely studied through the prism of engagement strategies. They have moved forward from being disengaged to superbly engaged yet have been subjected to constant disgruntlement, misperceptions and differences over varied issues. How despite such constant irritants they have managed to establish a global strategic partnership based on multi-dimensional cooperation not only helps to understand Indo-U.S relations but the larger question of how two asymmetric powers with prominent strategic differences can engage in an interdependent international order.

The hypothesis of the study is that engagements of the United States and India will remain flexible alignments due to convergences on interests and concerns but divergences over broader strategic vision and approaches.

The study proceeded by positing the U.S as the superpower that is primarily aimed at preserving its dominance and restricting any challenges to its power position or the prevailing international order and India as the emerging regional power that is motivated to attain a major power status based on indigenous ideas and transformation of the existing order. This further informed their difference in understanding of the very concept of engagement. While engagement for U.S is a strategy to modify or change another state's behavior by offering aid and recognition, for India engagement is a multipronged strategy to engage with great powers and small powers alike to enhance its power and position. The study thereby chose four issue areas where U.S and India have identified to engage and it is observed that even in those areas they have either differed over means or approaches to attain specific objectives or they have significantly diverged over the long term goal. But such differences have not stalled their engagement; rather, they have identified a space to mediate and adjust to reach a mutually agreed outcome. This they have done without entering into binding clauses of an alliance with a formidable military and security commitment. They have developed a broad based partnership and not issue specific temporary coordination as entailed by ententes or ad-hoc coalitions. They have entered a structural framework of cooperation that enabled them to actively engage over varied common interests yet they retained the flexibility of negotiating based on respective interests or opinions even when cooperating. Alignment with its inherent characteristic of being flexible

yet facilitating constructive engagement appropriately justifies the above mentioned nature of Indo-U.S cooperation. Thus the hypothesis is proved to be affirmative in the sense that their convergences are not fundamental enough to render a formal alliance and their structural differences will not hinder them from aligning over common interests that serve strategic imperatives on both ends. Their convergences over economic, military or security aspects, maintenance of stability in the Asian regional order and international order or mitigating or addressing global issues like climate change, terrorism, clean and sustainable energy etc. will not propel them to enter into formal bindings of an alliance. India is vehemently opposed to any form of security community, direct confrontational strategy and U.S also understands that India will not be a subordinate ally to all its policies. Thus, alliance is not a suited strategy for Indo-U.S relations and it is to be understood that not all partnerships have to have a security concern at the heart to render close engagements. India as an emerging regional power is redefining the norms or structures of the international order; they are not keen on securing formal alliances that will bind them to certain rigid commitments. Alignment on the other hand liberates the binding clauses by being flexible and is mainly maintained by the willingness and the intention of the concerned states to cooperate on multiple issues. Under conditions of alignment, India and U.S can regulate the degree of integration, can negotiate over multiple aspects of issue areas yet maintain the framework of their partnership. The engagement pattern of alignment provides the explanation of how despite differences over long term strategic objectives they remain committed to a specific interest and coordinate with each other. For instance, the Indo-U.S cooperation over maintaining the security and stability of the Asian regional order has divergent long term objectives. The U.S is motivated to involve India and other allies in constructing a balance to deter the Chinese influence to preserve American dominance. On the other hand, India is leveraging the U.S support to ensure its integration in the region aimed at securing a leadership role for itself in the shaping of indigenous regional order not driven by aegis of external power. Despite such divergent long term objectives India and U.S are cooperating to ensure an inclusive, stable regional architecture because under the current scenario that is where their interests are converging and they both need each other to realize that. The cooperation that ensues with this understanding could not have been possible under the binding nature of alliance where they need to have a common end or under very loose coordination of ententes or ad-hoc coalitions. Thus, the convergences of Indo-U.S

relations while managing the divergences are only possible if they continue to work through flexible strategic alignments.

Policy Recommendations

The study is aimed at analyzing possible engagement strategies that enable a superpower and regional power to cooperate despite the power asymmetry, divergent strategic thinking and preferences of international order. The relation of India and the U.S is analyzed as case study within such an ambit and the research has yielded certain observations concerning actionable policy recommendations.

- a) The United States and India should continue their alignment by underlining mediated spaces when confronted with differences because their cooperation is essential in realizing core strategic interests at both ends. A multiple goal oriented partnership not restricted by security centric alignment is the way forward in an interdependent international order that has emerging powers with distinct ideas and vision.
- b) The United States should continue to bolster Indian power as such an investment presently serves the US interest in retaining a balance against and over Chinese influence in the larger Asian order and comparatively less costly than pursuing a policy of accommodation towards China.
- c) The United States should focus on measures to increase American defense inputs to India as the Indo-U.S defense trade is abysmally low in comparison to Indo-Russian defense trade. The US needs to wane India from its dependence on Russian arms imports if it wants closer interoperability and propel India to work within security and strategic parameters in the Indo-Pacific under the American leadership.
- d) The United States should further India's integration with allies and countries in South East Asia but let India take a leadership role in augmenting relationships to ensure an inclusive regional architecture. The smaller powers of the region are wary of a great power driven strategy as they are balancing both U.S and Chinese presence and will be more acceptable to Indian initiative than the idea of Washington spearheading the process of shaping the regional order.
- e) India's requirements for capacity building and most importantly integration

into International regimes and structures to enhance its recognition necessitated India to remain strategically viable to American interest and reinforce the incentive for U.S to continue pursuing preferential policies towards India.

- f) India needs to understand that its strategic importance to the United States is directly linked to its economic viability. India needs to remain lucrative to U.S companies and markets to enhance trade linkages and bilateral investments. In the last fiscal year of 2022-2023, U.S China trade amounted to 690 billion dollars while U.S India trade remained at a low of 47.33 billion dollars³². Thus, in a strategic competition scenario China despite being threatening to U.S primacy constitutes a significant portion of U.S trade when compared to the negligible 2% ratio of India. On similar lines India should take the initiative to restart the U.S India trade policy forum and consider allowing duty free market access and lowering the tariffs.
- g) India urgently needs to define comprehensively what it entails as having a strategic global partnership with US. How significant that partnership is in comparison to other strategic partnerships it has with several other countries. It should be in India's consideration that Washington will not be an eternal willing partner if India cannot prioritize the special bond in clear words or action.
- h) India's integration strategy by means of multilateral diplomatic activism with other emerging powers might counter or convolute its way to attain major power status as India has actively involved itself in constructing indigenous regional structures like BRICS, IBSA, and BASICS etc. These regional forums are formed by aspiring emerging powers who seek global role so the collaborative effort is also a means for attaining individual goals, so what India is seeking is also being sought by other members thus pointing to a substantial conflict of interest in the long run. The difference in negotiation strategies among the members in international institutions also puts a certain amount of pressure on India. Status integration should be the aim but India should weigh how far it wants to integrate itself within such structures.

³² For U.S trade details with China and India refer to <https://www.statista.com/topics/4698/sino-us-trading-relationship/#dossier-chapter2>, <https://www.census.gov/foreign-trade/balance/c5330.html>

Future Areas of Research

The study while analyzing superpower regional power relations and the various engagement strategies has delved to various areas ranging from power diffusion, systematic constraints, agency of emerging powers and Indo-U.S relations and has identified certain future areas o research

- a) The soft balancing efforts of the emerging powers like India, China or Brazil exhibited by their cooperation in various International forums to protest against the biases of the existing international norms and their efforts to build indigenous regional structures are initiatives directed to balance future threat from U.S power? *Can these initiatives be seen as a result of balance of contradictory interests rather than balance of threat?*

The willingness on part of the emerging powers to resist the biases in the existing international norms, their efforts to construct alternative forums like IBSA or BRICS together their motivation to put forward their interests in the international order that they feel are either not adequately represented by those of the existing order or they are structurally different from those propagated by the present super power. Can the present balancing efforts of the emerging powers be understood in terms of balance of interest with the United States? These powers do not view U.S motives as significantly threatful so their indirect balancing efforts can be understood as their attempt to balance the discords they have with present U.S led international norms or rules. Rather than balancing against threat are they balancing in response to contradictory interests? Further research in this line will reflect in understanding of the deeper structural changes in international order.

- b) The rise of emerging regional powers like India marks a transition of power in the international order. With the rise of new powers the question of accommodation and integration become significant. The engagement of a superpower and regional power despite their differential power position, divergent strategic thinking has shown that cooperation is viable while avoiding the inherent systematic conflict. Further research on understanding

the engagement strategies and their long term application can help to decipher the ways in which accommodation of new powers can happen. Whether the presence of partnership through continued engagement is a way forward to peaceful integration of emerging powers by the preponderant power or it is a part of the greater absorption strategy to restrain the rise of new powers by binding them within the preferred parameters dictated by the superpower?

- c) Enabling strategies as highlighted in the study as means by which emerging powers can manage their relations with great powers and that enables them to project and forward indigenous interest and objectives can actually contribute towards addition of new ideas within the international structures. The emerging powers by adopting these strategies are being able to pursue policies that help them to realize the distinct ideas or reform the existing ones in a collective manner. Further research can be conducted on whether these engagement strategies enable these states to attain the desired changes in the international order without engaging into a structural conflict with the preponderant power to transform the present system.

The interdependent international order with integrated structures and global norms has rendered engagement as a cardinal aspect of the international system. However, engagements did not naturally negate the differences in strategic thinking, the structure and constraints of a superpower led order or the power competition. The divergence and differences are then managed to continue the engagement as interdependence is related to high stake involvement for all states irrespective of their power position. The study analyzes the relation between two power asymmetric states with different strategic worldviews to stress how they are elevating their engagement by adopting suitable engagement strategies. Understanding superpower regional power relations through the prism of engagement strategies enhance the perception of management of convergence and divergences to build partnerships by effectively avoiding the systematic conflict.

The study effectively moves beyond the limitations of analyzing responses of secondary states as only aimed at managing great power relations. Secondary States adopt engagement strategies to construct relations with both great and small powers alike and their engagements are primarily motivated at developing their capacity

and enhancing their power and influence. The study successfully shows that emerging regional powers have considerable power capabilities, can exercise their influence over region and are capable of pursuing a whole range of strategies in continuum and are not restricted by the dichotomy of balancing or bandwagoning. Their actions or policies must be analyzed within a framework of available strategies and not by application of a single strategy to underline how they are actively utilizing their autonomy in choosing diverse strategies to meet diverse interests.

The study also points to the relevance of the new pattern of international interactions between U.S and emerging regional powers like India where the comparatively lesser powerful state has the agency to resist U.S policies and put forward its own ideas for negotiations and can actually lead to modifications to agreement or policy outcomes. The emerging new powers are asserting and widening the scope of strategic vision by successfully projecting their individual ideas and perceptions thereby redefining the contours of understanding superpower regional power relations.