

India's global foreign policy engagements – a new paradigm?

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■ Executive summary

How does India see itself in the modern world and what factors help us understand its foreign policy decisions? Prime Minister Narendra Modi's strong mandate has opened up a series of new policy initiatives to explore in both hard power and soft power terms, highlighting what India uniquely brings to the global stage. But there also appear to be many inherent contradictions in Indian foreign policy, as the country looks to be a global power in some settings, an emerging developing country power in others and a poor Global South participant in yet others. The different arms of India's foreign policy apparatus can (and do) argue for all of these approaches simultaneously in an effort to further their respective policy goals. In order to explore this playing field, the report gives a brief background to India's global interactions, and then explores contemporary foreign policy drivers through India's engagements in five representative issue areas: climate change, energy security, food security, economic engagements and the Responsibility to Protect. It concludes with thoughts on how India's interactions in pursuit of its interests in terms of these global issues can illustrate the varied and often contradictory components that constitute the country's varied current foreign policy engagements.

Introduction¹

How does India see itself in the world today, and what factors help us to understand its foreign policy decisions? Attempts to answer these questions have usually led down a well-trodden path. Indian analysts, including Bharat Karnad, Brahma Chellaney, Rajesh Rajagopalan and others, argue for a neorealist framework to determine India's foreign policies.² According to this view, the world is an anarchic playing field where state security is the paramount driver of all international relations. This belief is thus considered a valuable lens for understanding Indian foreign policymaking even into the 21st century. Moments of crisis and war tend to best illustrate this philosophy – scenarios of which India has no shortage of experience.

Yet these frameworks, while useful to explain Indian actions in tense bilateral relations like those with Pakistan, are less helpful as India looks beyond South Asia to expand its global leverage and attempts to project its regional role as a strength rather than a hindrance. In addition, multifac-

eted challenges can be identified in Indian foreign policy as the country looks to be a global power in some settings, an emerging developing country power in others and a Global South participant in yet others. To add to the complexity of this picture, different arms of India's foreign policy apparatus can (and do) argue for all of these approaches simultaneously in an effort to further their respective policy goals.

In order to better understand the basis of many of India's most substantial foreign policies with a global reach, this report first looks at where India's foreign policies began, what the country wants to be today and how it acts on the contemporary global stage. In general, regional foreign policies inform a policy substructure that can influence global policies, and India is no exception to this rule.³ This leads one to ask how the South Asian region constrains or emboldens Indian foreign policy at the global level; how South Asia defines India's global objectives, agenda and determinations; and how India sees itself on the global stage – whether as a singularly placed emerging power

¹ An extended version of this policy report will be released in 2016 under the ongoing Indian Council of Social Science Research project "India's Regional Relations in a Transitioning World: Policies, Priorities and Practices".

² For a better appreciation of the goals and attitudes of nationalists and great-power realists in Indian political thinking, see Ollapally and Rajagopalan (2014).

³ Buzan and Weaver (2003) find that the mediating effect of the region shapes how global power dynamics operate across the international system. Also see Lake and Morgan (1997).

from the developing world, an Asian or Asia-Pacific power, or simply a South Asian power?

This report has three sections. Firstly, it gives a brief background to India's global interactions, from Nehru through to Modi. Then it explores contemporary foreign policy drivers through India's engagements in five representative issue areas: climate change, energy security, food security, economic engagements and the Responsibility to Protect. It concludes with thoughts on how India's interactions in pursuit of its interests in terms of these global issues illustrate the varied and often contradictory components that constitute the country's current foreign policy mindset.

Background

Historically, India's foreign policy has embraced the country's outward-looking nature. During most of the cold war India's leadership of the Non-Aligned Movement, comprising those states wishing to support neither the U.S. nor the Soviet Union, defined the country's global relationships and was born of the geostrategic reality that countries like India were caught in, characterised as they were by deep and complex developmental needs and a conflict-prone or otherwise unstable neighbourhood. Under the guidance of India's first prime minister (and self-appointed⁴ foreign minister), Jawaharlal Nehru, Indian foreign policy attempted to straddle two worlds: the pragmatic, rationalist one that characterised a newly independent nation, and the internationalist, idealist realm of high global politics that Nehru aspired to influence.⁵ Nehru's personal beliefs were fundamental in shaping India's foreign policy architecture, from his belief in an international Asian power resurgence to his revulsion for the use of violence and force in international politics in favour of diplomacy, e.g. in the crises in Hungary and over the Suez Canal of 1956.⁶

The Nehruvian philosophy of encouraging India's engagement with the world remained largely intact throughout the decades after his departure, even as particular ideals (most notably that of non-alignment) fell out of favour. Among many such influences, the economic liberalisation policies initiated by the Congress Party in the 1990s and expanded by subsequent administrations have given India greater bilateral influence, and even the nuclear tests conducted by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in 1998 have increased Indian prestige after a brief period of sanctions

and diplomatic fallout as the U.S., Russia and others perceive responsible Indian action in this space. U.S.-India bilateral ties in particular are finally reaching the heights that have been long predicted for two of the world's largest democracies.⁷ And even though India has been wary about projecting a thaw in its relationship with China,⁸ it has slowly expanded trade relations, attracted Chinese investments and discussed joint threats of terrorist violence, particularly in the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation.⁹

In many ways the rise of Narendra Modi to prime minister in 2014 dovetails with India's evolving global aspirations. Today the country is more self-assured and assertive about taking its seat at global power broker tables – an aspiration that many in the Modi administration and their supporters in the centre-right BJP see as being in accordance with India's historical civilisational greatness. As India asserts this more proactive and dynamic self, it engages in a multidirectional diplomacy intended to expand its global influence. These efforts are “symptomatic of India's acceptance and urge to be part of a world that is more interdependent, inter-reliant, and interconnected in its affairs” (Ogden, 2014: 160). This is evident in India's new diplomatic paths. From an “Act East” policy, India has extended the purview of its foreign policy priorities to “Link West” (France, Germany, Canada) (Raja Mohan, 2014), and the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean region, Central Asia, and the Arctic.

Modi's election has also triggered a flurry of diplomatic activity. Most of the newly elected prime minister's first foreign visits were to the region (including Bhutan, Nepal, Myanmar and Sri Lanka), and he has since expanded these visits to most of the world's great powers and high-profile international forums. Commentators speak of a new energy – a “high-octane diplomatic style” that is unique to Prime Minister Modi (Raja Mohan 2015a), and Modi's public emphasis on diplomacy and outreach can be said to rival only that of Nehru himself. Indian external affairs minister Sushma Swaraj described the special significance Modi has given to foreign policy and diplomatic outreach as “breakthrough diplomacy”; this “new vision, new vigour” has been spelled out in an e-book by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA, 2014).

A harder hard power; a harder soft power

Modi's new administration and strong mandate have opened up a series of new policy initiatives to explore. But

⁴ This appointment was the right of the Indian prime minister, as laid down in the constitution.

⁵ Note that this is a contested position, contrasted by two other historical understandings. The first is the idea that there was a more definitive and recent break with the past: that India has moved from an idealist to a pragmatic foreign policy. Raja Mohan (e.g. 2014; 2015a; 2015b) is the best exponent of this interpretation of history. The second interpretation focuses on competing foreign policy ‘schools’, as explained by Bajpai and Mallavarapu (2005). Thanks to Varun Sahni for this point.

⁶ See Power (1964); Maxwell (2001); and Raghavan (2010) for analyses of the sophistication and imprint of Nehru on the formation of Indian foreign policy in terms of both its successes and failures.

⁷ The nature of this alliance still causes tensions on numerous fronts, ranging from domestic resistance, to deeper nuclear and economic ties, to U.S. pressure for a more anti-China approach; see Madan (2015) and Huntsman and Gopalaswamy (2015).

⁸ Soon after the Modi government came to power External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj was unambiguous in establishing “fresh rules of engagement” with China, expecting a “One India” policy to counter Beijing's “One China” policy (Dhai, 2014).

⁹ Indian and Chinese media continue to spat over perceived slights and skirmishes (like the Daulat Beg Oldi incursion of May 2013) and the more recent decision by China to block India's attempt to address the UN on the issue of Pakistan's release from prison of Zaki-ur-Rehman Lakhvi, the mastermind of the terrorist attacks that took place in Mumbai from November 26th to 29th 2008.

in both hard and soft power terms, Modi's approach has been one of incremental expansion and response to a rising China with two comparable – yet uniquely Indian – approaches.

Over the last decade India has not only expanded its land, sea and air military capability as befitting the world's largest arms importer, but has also sought to project strength beyond its region. In doing so, defence deals have become an important component of India's foreign policy. In addition to expanded ties with both the U.S. and Russia, Israel has emerged as a major supplier of military technology, and the two countries are expected to sign a \$2 billion joint development deal for high-tech defence equipment such as missile systems and remote weapons (*Business Standard*, 2015). A direct result of growing Israel-India relations has been India's abstention on a UN High Commissioner for Refugees vote condemning Israel's actions in Gaza in 2014 – a departure from India's traditional support for the Palestinian position (Roche, 2015). India will also expand purchases from the U.S. of attack helicopters, aircraft for strategic airlift, howitzers, and maritime patrol aircraft, and purchases from Russia of both conventional and nuclear attack submarines (Pandit, 2015; Pubby, 2015). Official statements tend to speak in terms of balancing rhetoric with China, but the focus on sheer numbers and technology over planning and long-term direction suggests policy that remains knee-jerk in application (Cohen & Dasgupta, 2010).

India has also begun to aggressively implement new soft power initiatives. While the hosting of global sporting events such as the Commonwealth Games in 2010 and successfully putting a robotic probe into orbit around Mars in September 2014 have added to India's sense of international prestige and self-worth, Modi's outreach to the Indian diaspora as beacons of 'Brand India' overseas is particularly illustrative of how (and whom) the current administration wishes to project as the voice and face of India. Modi's foreign policy speeches often invoke India's cultural and civilisational heritage, albeit within narrowly defined and politically motivated perceptions of what both 'India' and its 'heritage' represent. While critics call this "rhetoric, not foreign policy" (George, 2014), Modi's preference for Hindi even in international speeches and interviews is part of the same attempt to project a nation proud of its Hindu heritage, and to undo what the BJP and its affiliates see as a historically self-effacing and servile attitude to the great powers of the international system. As another example, the new political support for International Yoga Day through Indian diplomatic circles can be

interpreted as a response to the international Confucius Centre programme that China established a decade ago.

Despite many foreign policies that have dramatically changed the Indian state (and the lives of Indians themselves) over the previous three decades, these changes have been typically incremental and reactive in nature.¹⁰ In terms of both direction and substance, the 'Modi Era' is representative of an overall continuity and evolution of long-held Indian positions rather than a fundamental breakthrough of personality into policymaking. India's selective use of its 'developing country' status provides the background for (and at least partially explains the lack of coherence in) several of the country's foreign policy positions and activities at the multinational level of negotiations. Showing that it is still influenced by the dual pillars of Nehru and the post-colonial international experience, India's international positions are driven by respect for national sovereignty and a reputation for 'pragmatism'. This includes public statements and participation in forums that prioritise developing country 'emerging power' leaders, including the BRICS,¹¹ BASIC,¹² IBSA,¹³ the G20 and the UN.¹⁴ Nevertheless, an Indian grand strategy is still elusive: there is no parallel to British or Chinese white papers, such as the 2015 White Paper on China's Military Strategy – China's ninth such output since 1998.¹⁵

India's global agenda: emerging but still developing?

Lacking such official textual guidance, the report instead uses a selection of diverse global issues to show how India's established foreign policy philosophies are operationalised. It explores five such issue areas that cut across the security, economic and normative platforms: *climate change*, *energy security*, *alternative economic integration*, *food security* and *humanitarian intervention*. These areas are selected to illustrate a cross-section of India's presentation of its engagements in the international and multilateral spheres, ranging from poor developing country to great power.

Climate change

India has endorsed the principle of *common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities* (CBDR) as the base line for all climate negotiations. As developed countries push India and China to take on more responsibilities, India has argued that it will do whatever is in its capability to meet the challenge of climate change, but only if the (broadly defined) development and security of its

¹⁰ Most notably, India's economic foreign policies have made India much richer as a country, but also much more unequal.

¹¹ Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.

¹² Brazil, South Africa, India and China.

¹³ India, Brazil and South Africa.

¹⁴ It is not lost on the authors that many of these organisations were conceptualised or created outright by the Western powers that the associations often compare themselves to or try to change.

¹⁵ As Joshi (2015) notes, "white papers matter. They allow a state to craft its signals carefully, rather than have them trickle out in ad hoc briefings or sporadic bilateral communiqués. For instance, India's Act East policy has emerged piecemeal in separate joint statements with the US, Japan, Australia and others. Collecting and cohering these messages can bring clarity for friends and adversaries alike." While the Indian armed forces have produced some policy papers, it has been difficult to consider them as representative of the government's position.

people are not compromised in the process. This was enunciated in the National Action Plan on Climate Change, which prioritises “strategies that promote developmental goals while also serving specific climate change objectives” (MoEF, 2008: 11). In this plan India unveiled eight core national missions that were designed to showcase its commitment to participate in climate change mitigation and meet the domestic energy needs of its 1.2 billion people.

Several areas of focus such as technology transfers, regulatory policy and energy efficiency reveal the country’s technological approach to climate change. India has been pressing developed countries to transfer adaptation technology at little or no cost due to the country’s low-income status. While wishing to be compared to China in other settings, India seeks a de-linking of itself and China in climate negotiations, emphasising the large gap between China’s carbon footprint and its own. After the 2014 U.S.-China agreement that outlined national contributions to address climate change, India has felt pressure to do the same, especially after Modi repeatedly called for a ramping up of domestic coal production to meet local energy gaps. As in the case of CBDR, India has maintained a narrative that only it can set “benchmarks” for itself in order to ensure that they do not threaten future development growth. This approach is justified in terms of asserting India’s sovereignty and its attempt to claim moral responsibility both for the immediate needs of its own people and also the larger global community.

However, these dual responsibilities are often challenged in practice. Like many developing states, India is host to a panoply of interest groups that lobby for influence in the climate space. Some of the most active are resource firms with international connections to fossil fuel extraction, and India’s national interests in global foreign policy are closely tied to its business interests. These connections can serve as the basis for policy positions such as the one articulated by Modi on a recent trip to the U.S., where he professed an “uncompromising commitment” to tackling climate change – and yet refused to permit that any carbon limits for India be set, keeping with his earlier promises (Lee & Mandhana, 2015).

Energy security

India continues to face a severe energy crisis, given its growing economy and population. Much of the country’s foreign diplomacy in the past few years has been driven by its search for affordable and durable energy resources, exemplified by the Energy Security Division in the Ministry of External Affairs, which was established as a cell in 2007

and upgraded to a division in 2009. In these efforts India has been criticised for working with countries that have poor human rights records, including Angola and Nigeria for oil and Tajikistan for its uranium reserves. Both India and China have also been labelled ‘neo-colonial’ for prioritising predatory, statist interests as they expand their presence in Africa’s resource sector and explore the Arctic shelf along with a handful of other countries (Canada, Denmark, Norway, Russia and the U.S.).¹⁶ As a typical riposte, former foreign secretary Shyam Saram (2012) argues that the industrialised countries lose no opportunity to preach a low carbon growth strategy to developing countries like India on grounds that this is globally responsible behaviour. And yet their actions, including in the Arctic, demonstrate their intention of intensifying their own carbon intensive lifestyles.

India also has an ambitious programme to expand civil uses of nuclear energy, and lobbies extensively to join high-level global nuclear forums such as the Nuclear Suppliers Group. While previous administrations aligned closely with both non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament initiatives, India has long argued that the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) creates ‘nuclear haves and have-nots’ by restricting the legal possession of nuclear weapons to states that tested them before 1967. Instead, Modi is following the lead of the previous Manmohan Singh administration and expanding the 2011 U.S.-India Civil Nuclear Agreement, which was signed in recognition of India’s ‘responsible stewardship’ of nuclear weapons (Bajoria & Pan, 2010). India is the only nuclear weapons country that is not a party to the NPT, but is still allowed to carry out international nuclear trade.

Juridical notions of sovereignty deeply influence Indian thinking on energy security. Given that India considers energy resources to be closely tied to its military and economic power, it is natural that the country’s foreign policies will follow state-centric, independent and narrowly defined zero-sum interests. It is for this reason that India perceives Western excessiveness and intrusion in the concept of ‘responsible sovereignty’, particularly when applied to trade relations with resource-rich countries of the world through global governance mechanisms.¹⁷ Although mindful of the bad press it has received, Indian diplomats and policymakers emphasise how India is different from other countries in its engagement with resource-rich countries of the developing world through its engagement in the health, education, agriculture and telecommunications sectors in the form of value-added activities (Sharma, 2011).

¹⁶ In 2013 India was admitted to the Arctic Council as an observer member together with China, Italy, Japan, Singapore and South Korea.

¹⁷ For Deng et al. (1996) responsible sovereignty means that countries should ensure minimum standards of security and social welfare for their citizens and be accountable both to the national body politic and the international community. Jones et al. (2009) highlight the importance of responsible sovereignty by arguing that countries need to be accountable for their actions that impact beyond their borders such as transnational terrorism, civil conflict, climate change and nuclear proliferation.

Food security¹⁸

As a large agrarian economy India has a key interest in supporting global governance solutions to the dilemmas of food security and food sovereignty. In India, food insecurity and malnutrition coexist with a rapidly growing and increasingly globalised economy. This can be understood as a “paradox of plenty” (Cullather, 2010), as Amartya Sen (1981) forewarned. The Indian government has thus repeatedly stressed the importance of placing food security on the agenda of international trade negotiations, but has taken a cautious view on open pricing systems, as this would leave Indian farmers vulnerable. India hosts a number of powerful movements, including civil society groups and small landholders, that promote food sovereignty both nationally and internationally. Food sovereignty implies a holistic approach to food, including the right to grow food and the right to have secure access to healthy and affordable food, resources and entitlements (Ghosh, 2009). Many ‘food sovereignty’ supporters view pressure from global markets as the key cause of increased reliance on pesticides and genetically modified seeds, and a reduction in the variety of crops produced. India has its own Patenting Act (1970), which prohibits the patenting of agricultural and horticultural plants, and Indian organisations have strongly criticised the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights Agreement for opening up for patenting and private ownership ‘global commons’ such as seeds and plants.

Enhanced global governance for food security is a growing concern across the Global South. In 2011 the BRIC countries adopted an action plan on “Making Joint Efforts for World Food Security”. Similarly the IBSA trilateral forum has also focused on finding solutions to the global food security challenge. At the World Trade Organisation (WTO) India has been pushing developed countries to remove agricultural subsidies that are harmful to developing countries’ economies. As with climate negotiations, India leverages its status as a low-income country with high food insecurity for more favoured negotiation terms. Consequently, India blocked the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) on the grounds that removing trade barriers in the agricultural sector could pose a food security threat to the country by forcing India to disband its food subsidy programme (Miklian and Kolås 2013). A final agreement brokered by the U.S. and India in September 2014 allowed the TFA to go through by assuring that India’s food subsidies would not fall under WTO rules. However, whether this marks a victory is unclear, because the agreement only postpones the issue to a later date and farm subsidies in developed countries like the U.S., Europe and Japan have been left untouched by the TFA.

Again, tension has developed between the practical application of state sovereignty and how India projects its concerns as a member of the ‘developing economy’ community. India has been accused of playing the ‘poor country’ card to

achieve concessions at the WTO (Siddiqui et al., 2014), while the tension between international interest in more liberalised food markets and India’s not-that-distant experiences of famine pressures Indian administrations from both above and below. Thus, policy organically emerges from the reality of India’s agricultural sector, presenting a perception that the international rules of the game (at the WTO) are unfair and unmindful of the grievances of India’s farmers and poor. While the 2014 U.S.-India agreement was lauded as a breakthrough, it is already in danger of collapsing over concerns about price support systems – further pushing the Modi government into a quagmire of competing external pressures to maintain a signature foreign policy achievement as seen outside of India.

Alternative economic integration

Perhaps the single most emblematic initiative that India has participated in to reflect a changing world order is the joint establishment in 2014 of the New Development Bank (NDB).¹⁹ Developed together with Brazil, China, Russia and South Africa, the \$100 billion NDB aims to be an alternative to the Western-led World Bank and International Monetary Fund. Like the latter, the NDB aims to help poor countries finance their infrastructure projects, particularly in light of the financial slowdown in developed countries, and to circumvent the conditionalities imposed by the Bretton Woods system. The NDB charter agreement (NDB, 2014) repeatedly mentions the importance of the bank in solidifying primarily the economic ties of BRICS members, and uniquely allows for investments in BRICS countries themselves. Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov said that the bank’s creation even “illustrates a new polycentric system of international relations” (BBC, 2015). But despite the lofty headlines some see the structure as little more than bilateral guarantees between states at vastly different levels of development packaged up together in the interest of projecting political power through impressive numbers alone (*The Economist*, 2014).

Regardless of the actual benefits to the developing world, the perception of the NDB as a ‘great power’ activity was paramount in Indian policy circles. India saw the NDB as being such an essential stepping-stone to international legitimacy that there was domestic blowback when Shanghai – and not Mumbai – was selected as the bank’s headquarters. This element (arguably much less important than the nationality of the bank’s president – currently Indian Kundapur Vaman Kamath) was presented in the Indian press as Modi’s failure to be a visionary leader or even a capable international negotiator. Modi attempted to illustrate how the selection of projects will play a positive political role for the bank and its members by announcing in his BRICS plenary address on July 9th 2015 that he hoped the first project to be funded under the NDB would be in the area of clean energy, thus highlighting the bank’s role as financier and agent of change.

¹⁸ Thanks to Åshild Kolås for comments on this section.

¹⁹ Formerly known as the BRICS Development Bank.

From R2P to RWP

India is also increasingly looking to define the global humanitarian agenda, not only in terms that support its long-standing commitment to democracy and human rights, but also to those that favour its arguments for regional supremacy. Although India is a long-standing contributor to UN peacekeeping forces, it continues to perceive humanitarian intervention engagements abroad through the lens of national sovereignty. Even where the UN-endorsed concept of *Responsibility to Protect* (R2P) is concerned,²⁰ India's position has been cautious, particularly vis-à-vis the third pillar of the concept: "If a State is manifestly failing to protect its populations, the international community must be prepared to take collective action to protect populations, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations" (UN, 2014). This wariness increased when the Security Council authorised NATO's intervention in Libya under the R2P principle in March 2011. India abstained from authorising Resolution 1973 (along with China, Russia, Brazil and Germany), and criticised NATO actions in Libya once they were under way by arguing that operations went beyond protecting the citizens of Libya and were focused instead on regime change (Bolopion, 2011). Indeed, India's permanent representative at the UN, Hardeep Singh Puri, claimed that R2P had been invoked "selectively to promote national interests and bring about regime change" in conflict-ridden countries instead of saving civilians, as in the cases of Libya and Syria (Singh, 2012). The Libyan experience was directly responsible for why India was determined to "not endorse even the most narrowly worded resolutions for fear they might be twisted by Western powers into regime change" (Bloomfeld, 2015: 46).

Recognising the importance of supporting alternatives, India has instead been supportive of Brazil's concept of *Responsibility while Protecting* (RWP). RWP is seen as a compromise that proposes the inclusion of criteria such as "last resort, proportionality, and balance of consequences to be taken into account before the U.N. Security Council mandates any use of military force" (Steunkel, 2012). In light of Indian unease with R2P's interpretation of the sovereignty norm, RWP allows India to support the humanitarian philosophy that underlies the principle of R2P. By supporting RWP as a potential alternative to more aggressively supporting R2P benchmarks, India, together with other like-minded nations, has put forward what it sees as a "middle ground between modern humanitarian principles and strict state sovereignty" (Avezov, 2013).²¹

This "middle ground", however, is not as balanced in practice. State sovereignty is repeatedly employed over and above humanitarian/UN principles and norms, and arguments for national sovereignty influence not just the debate in South Asia over Kashmir (where Pakistan has long called

for UN peacekeepers to be stationed), but also conflicts in other neighbouring regional states like Sri Lanka or Nepal. India maintains its unease over the UN's presence in South Asia due to an interest in both maintaining regional authority and attempting to limit the growing internationalisation of the South Asian space in terms of human rights issues, even as this space remains contested. Thus, India's interest in RWP can be seen as serving its public respect for sovereignty and the right to domestic scrutiny of humanitarianism to check encroachments by international agencies. However, it could also potentially be used as a mechanism to justify breaching the sovereignty of other states, with limited repercussions in international law, as other BRICS states in particular have done who see R2P and RWP loopholes as justification for taking action against regional non-state actors (Laskaris & Kreutz, 2015).

Contextualising India's global foreign policies

Modi surprised many onlookers when he embarked on an ambitious foreign policy platform almost immediately after becoming prime minister in 2014. Although Modi has injected energy into India's South Asia policy, this new "muscular regional policy" (Raja Mohan, 2015b) is merely part of the larger agenda of projecting India onto the global stage even as the country's position as hegemon of South Asia is deeply contested (Sahni, 2008). The intense post-election diplomatic activity is part of an enterprise to display India's great-power cachet and to stamp Modi's own persona on it. Whether it is humanitarian support to the Maldives in December 2014 and aid to Nepal after its earthquake in April 2015 or a military incursion such as the June 2015 engagement in Myanmar, the underlying objective is to project India's regional power to the world at large.

India's regional diplomatic engagements also prioritise expanding connectivity and deepening linkages in order to transcend the region. It is clear that India's growth and global presence are stymied by the low level of interaction and suspicion among South Asian countries. However, India has made little attempt to reframe its key ways of perceiving and interacting with the region. While regional cooperation and connectivity are professed foreign policy objectives, India does not have a "regional" South Asian approach to its larger global role. In other words, India does not see its own fate and foreign policy agenda at the global level as inseparably tied to that of South Asia's, despite scholarly and policymaker appeals to the region's importance. India continues to approach South Asia in bilateral terms and as a mere *via media* to extend its own power in the region and counter the inroads China has made all around it. Perhaps when seeking a regional dimension to India's global foreign policy it is more instruc-

20 In 2005 the UN included R2P in the Outcome Document of the UN World Summit (UNGA, 2005: paras. 138-40) and in the secretary-general's 2009 report (UNGA, 2009).

21 Also see Mohan (2014) and Miklian (2014) for an extended analysis of India and R2P.

tive to look at the Asia-Pacific rather than South Asia alone.²² Given the frustrations of a regional approach, India has been trying to “break out” of the South Asian region. At the subregional level there is the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Forum for Regional Cooperation initiative. Simultaneously, the idea of an extended neighbourhood includes Central Asia and Southeast Asia.²³ Clearly, India envisions a far larger playing field for itself than even the concept of its identity as an emerging country from the Global South.

One of the greatest challenges in trying to apply a unitary theoretical or conceptual lens to contemporary Indian foreign policy lies in the fact that there is no foreign policy from which to extrapolate. Nonetheless, several underlying themes related to India’s global foreign policy emerge from the five issue areas that this report has discussed: the over-riding importance of state sovereignty in foreign policy, the new projections of hard and soft power, the use of the country’s developing economy status as a lever in both positive and negative ways, and the multidirectional nature of current Indian foreign policy. As has been seen in other states in the post-cold war, pre-emergent power period (e.g. China), India simultaneously projects weakness and strength in terms of even its core strategic and economic interests, often depending on the audience that is spoken to and the issue being addressed. One should not assume that this is illustrative of India “playing to all sides” as part of a deeply considered multilevel game of policy, however. India is not one or the other, but both – rich and poor, developing and emerging, a South Asian power and a member of the Global South. These complexities are mirrored in India’s global agenda as it attempts to navigate global issues. Whether these attempts to engage in multiple sides of complex global challenges (through necessity more than design) will ultimately find policy success or merely muddy the waters in terms of India’s international standing remains a point of deep contestation and a primary point of departure for future study.

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²² See Brewster (2012).

²³ Thanks to Varun Sahni for these points.

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