



## Back to Reality: India's National Interests and Multilateralism

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Ten years ago, the United States and other great players viewed India's potential global role with excitement. After the Cold War ended, India looked to stimulate its national economy by integrating with global economies. India's revised foreign and global policy formulations, cautious though they were, appeared to mark a closing of the country's Cold War estrangement from the Atlantic alliance. The resultant decade-long growth and liberal political leadership suggested the country's administration had a new weight to punch with. Indeed, the 2005 India-US civil nuclear energy agreement was pushed through partly in recognition of this new weight and partly to encourage India to follow through on global agendas.

The corollary that flowed was an expectation that India would be far more active in related multilateral forums, not only on global economic reforms but also on indirectly connected issues such as climate change, terrorism, and piracy. Inadvertently but inevitably, given its prior activism in peacekeeping and state-building, international actors such as the United States further assumed that a globally active India would revitalize and transform its engagement with issues of international peace and security.

Some of that sheen has worn off now. Over the past five years, Indian hesitation on the major global issues of the day has

begun to breed cynicism, and the economic downturn that India now faces has strengthened the view that Indian policymakers are incapable of harnessing the country's potential. Today a consensus has begun to build in influential quarters that India can be written off. Most Indian policy analysts concur with the view that India is a half-hearted global player, much as the United States has been described as "a reluctant global policeman," but few would concur with the write-off conclusion.

In fact, the description is only partially accurate. India's rise in the first decade of this century was based on a strategic vision of India's role as a stabilizer in its neighborhood, a balancer in Asia, a reformer of global trade and monetary policies, and an actor in global peace and security. It was partly in movement toward these goals that India helped create the G-20; agreed to strategic partnerships with the United States, the European Union (EU), and China; joined key East Asian institutions such as the East Asia Summit and the Asian Regional Forum; and engaged in multilateral naval exercises with Japan, Singapore, Australia, and the United States, eventually forming the Indian Ocean Rim Association.

In each of these engagements, India has worked toward fulfilling its strategic goals: economic growth, which would

also enable the country to become a more influential global actor; homeland security, especially counter-terrorism and maritime safety; and peacemaking in its neighborhood.

This brief summarizes policy debates of the past ten years over India's global role and suggests ways the Indian government is likely to tackle global issues in the next five years by looking at the question from three perspectives: India's geopolitical context, India's approach to current global challenges, and the what, where, and how of India's participation in multilaterals.

## The Neighborhood Debate

Indians frequently say, "We live in a dangerous neighborhood," with the implication that the Indian government's room for action is therefore severely limited. But India's rediscovery of Asia some 15 years ago was based on its geopolitical context, including how to overcome the obstacles posed by inimical neighbors. India is situated squarely at the southern end of Asia, and its interests lie in developing strong and stable relations with East Asia, an economic powerhouse; Central Asia, a potential energy hub; and West Asia or the Middle East, whose countries supply India's energy and are the most consistently active in India's northwestern neighborhood (along with, increasingly, China, which has developed strong ties with all of India's neighbors). If a network of such relations were to develop, it would anchor India's troubled neighbors and help release the region's economic potential—or so goes the thinking. Most Indian policy analysts also recognize that US support is vital to influence the changing international and security dynamic in Asia.

### India-China

At the same time, India's active engagement with East and Southeast Asian countries, including in their multilateral economic and security forums, has raised hackles, especially in China, which began to explore its global role at the same time as India, with an overlapping regional focus. China's rise from the late 1990s, and the United States' relative decline in East Asia in the 2000s, created a vacuum that led many in East Asia to look for greater Indian engagement for a balance of power that might lead to cooperation instead of competition, but the results have been mixed.

Though China punches at a much higher level than India, its relationship to India remains competitive and even conflicted. The two countries have long-disputed borders in India's northwest and northeast; China's growing influence with India's neighbors and its prolonged security

and nuclear aid to Pakistan pose a security dilemma for India. Conversely, India's growing influence with China's neighbors, and its rapprochement with the United States and the EU, pose security dilemmas for China, though these are relatively minor. India's asylum for the Dalai Lama and other Tibetan refugees is a further pinprick.

Against this, the two countries have strong economic relations. China is India's second-largest trading partner (after the United Arab Emirates), though the balance of trade is heavily weighted in China's favor. Of a total India-China trade of around \$65.7 billion in 2012–13, imports from China made up \$52.2 billion and exports to China \$13.5 billion.<sup>1</sup> At the June 2013 Delhi summit between Chinese President Li Keqiang and Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, the two leaders discussed measures to redress the trade imbalance, but the only concrete agreement that emerged entailed an Indian expertise transfer to China in pharmaceuticals and information technology. With the two countries looking to push their trade to \$100 billion by 2015, India should be able to extract better concessions from China, but this is a lever that India has not yet used, to our knowledge.

The Indian policy debate on China has centered largely on security threats—especially over Chinese incursions into a buffer zone overlapping the Indian territory of Ladakh—and can broadly be summarized as proactive versus negotiator. The proactive argument is that India must match China incursion for incursion, modernize its maritime- and border-security forces on a priority footing, and take measures to counter China's growing presence in India's neighborhood (through, for example, policing the Indian Ocean and standing firm with allies in East Asia, which India failed to do in the case of Vietnam). The negotiator approach, adopted by the Indian government, is to tackle issues one by one through dialogue while at the same time modernizing India's maritime- and border-security forces and engaging in joint naval exercises with a number of countries in the Persian Gulf and Asia-Pacific to become a net security provider in the Indian Ocean region.

At the same time, India has made common cause with China on critical multilateral issues, such as reform of international financial institutions, climate change, and the Responsibility to Protect. Both countries prefer a UN mandate to coalitions of the willing for peace-keeping and humanitarian actions.

One area of opportunity that has emerged is for India-China cooperation to stabilize Afghanistan. Both countries have a stake in preventing the return

of religious extremism to Afghanistan and its spill-over effects from Central to South Asia and beyond. As Afghanistan moves closer to a double transition in 2014 (the International Security Assistance Force drawdown in Afghanistan and presidential elections), India and China are increasingly viewed as the two regional countries that could play an anchoring role. The Istanbul Process's vision of regional integration and Kabul confidence-building measures can only materialize if India and China put their weight behind both. It helps that there is broad international and regional backing for the two countries to play such a role. A limited discussion on how they can cooperate for Afghanistan has begun between India and China, and is likely to grow. However, the two countries have different levels and scales of engagement with Afghanistan. Though China also has a strategic partnership with Afghanistan and is potentially one of its largest investors, China's close relations with Pakistan have allowed the Chinese government to simultaneously contain the threat of militancy and hedge against it with feelers to the Taliban.

### India, Afghanistan—and Pakistan

There are high stakes for India in Afghanistan. The most immediate of these is security, especially the prevention of attacks on India by cross-border extremists. But longer-term stakes include trade, resources, and transit to Central Asia, all three of which would contribute to India's economic growth. These latter aspects have been overshadowed by the immediate security question. Nor has their salience been recognized by Indian industry, whose focus is on immediate requirements.

By and large, Indian policy analysts agree on the stakes but disagree on what actions should follow. Clearly, India's role will grow in importance as the US and NATO role diminishes. But can India fill the vacuum that their departure leaves? India cannot supply the economic resources that they did, and it is fairly certain China and/or Russia will not wish to. In any case, NATO has the financial responsibility for Afghan security forces, and the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework group of donors is responsible for financing governance and development. India's greater role, therefore, would have to comprise political leadership, especially to mobilize regional cooperation, combined with security support, without which political leadership will ring hollow.

While the international community appears cautiously interested in such an Indian role, there is little consensus on how to overcome the obstacles to it. India's

activism in mobilizing regional cooperation around the Istanbul Process is widely welcomed, but India's growing influence in Afghanistan continues to be opposed by Pakistan's military leadership. The United States and Europe have thus far ignored this opposition, and the regular and periodic sacking of Afghan government officials held by Pakistan to be "too close to India" has gone largely unprotested.

The Doha talks with the Taliban and the leaked High Peace Council roadmap further added to Indian fears that it would have to go it alone in Afghanistan. As neither India, which supported the reconciliation process, nor the majority of Afghanistan's neighbors were involved, it seemed as if the regional strand and the reconciliation strand were quite separate. In a region littered with security dilemmas, this was not the wisest approach. Fortunately, India is now being briefed.

Most Indian policymakers grimly forecast that Afghanistan will be far more vulnerable to regional politicking after 2014 than it was before, though the situation has been precarious for the Afghan government from the start, and the Najibullah government managed to hold on for three years in a similar situation with far less international support in the 1990s. Nevertheless, the point is well taken that the international community, with the UN, needs to ratchet up the focus on regional diplomacy, in coordination with regional actors such as India, China, and Russia, to prevent any spillover effects.

India's leaders, from the president and prime minister to the foreign secretary, have repeatedly stressed that India is in Afghanistan for the long haul. These statements reassure that India will continue with its commitment to aid reconstruction and capacity building in Afghanistan, including the training of Afghan security forces, as long as the security situation permits. Indian External Affairs Minister Salman Khurshid's recent meetings at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit in early September 2013 and prior trips to the Central Asian republics indicate an active focus on regional cooperation, which could expand in the coming years.

However, the Indian government faces a dilemma on the Afghan government's request for arms. India does not have a clearly defined policy on arms supplies, which have thus far been decided case by case. India's indigenous capacities to meet export requirements, and the lack of ready supply routes, are further problems. The counter-argument here is that India should

supply Afghanistan with what indigenous arms it can, given that Afghanistan is a close ally with which India has a strategic partnership agreement. Were Afghanistan to return to civil war (which we may be better able to judge by 2016–17), India might well find itself forced to aid one side. Indian military aid and training could provide a critical tool of prevention against such an eventuality of the perils of civil war. Clearly it would be ideal if it were part of a coordinated program of international support to strengthen the Afghan security forces, as discussed by President Barack Obama and Prime Minister Singh when they met in September 2012.

How will Pakistan react to an enhanced Indian role in Afghanistan? Many Indian and foreign analysts fear an adverse reaction, leading to intensified violence. Others, including Afghan analysts, argue that there is already considerable violence, and stronger Afghan National Security Forces should be able to keep it at its current levels, so India has little to lose.

Looking at the positives, first steps to revive an India-Pakistan peace process were taken in June 2013, when the Indian envoy to Afghanistan and Pakistan went to meet Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and his advisers. This was followed by an Indian offer to provide electricity to Pakistani Punjab; electricity supplies could increase exponentially if the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India pipeline project is fast-tracked. Unfortunately, these first small steps were immediately blocked by a sharp increase in infiltration attempts across the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir, and the gradual return of cross-border militancy to the Kashmir valley. Apparently, Pakistani militant groups and their supporters are trying to see how far they can push the new government.

Based on the September 2013 meeting between Prime Ministers Singh and Sharif on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly, militants may have met their limit. The prime ministers discussed action against the recent cross-border attacks and cooperation to prevent infiltration, progress in the prosecutions against the terrorists who attacked Mumbai in 2008, fast-tracking trade, and Afghanistan. The two countries' directors-general of military operations and troops on the ground are to cooperate to restore the 2003 cease-fire and prevent infiltration across the borders. If the Pakistani government and military can implement these decisions, the two countries can move to settle the larger issues of dispute through peaceful negotiation.

Finally, the Pakistan government has reiterated its commitment to improve trade with India and implementing the South Asian Free Trade Agreement, scheduled to come into force in 2015, restating these commitments during negotiations with the International Monetary Fund for a \$6.6 billion loan.<sup>2</sup> Trade between the two countries in 2012–13 was \$2.4 billion, compared to \$200 million in 1998–99.

These are mainly confidence-building measures. But it is worth noting that considerable progress was made in 2004–07, during which years the two countries narrowed their gap on key disputes such as Jammu and Kashmir, Siachen and Sir Creek. In a back channel, government envoys Tariq Aziz of Pakistan and Satinder Lambah of India agreed on a framework for Jammu and Kashmir combining self-governance, demilitarization, and joint development. The resolution of disputes in Siachen and Sir Creek are today stuck on technical rather than existential points, such as whether the Thalweg principle can be used to demarcate the Sir Creek waters. The Pakistan People's Party government of 2008–13 was unable to capitalize on this progress, partly because of the impact of the 2008 Mumbai attacks and partly because of internal military opposition. Whether Prime Minister Sharif's government will be able to do better remains to be seen.

As the description above indicates, India faces grave security challenges in its neighborhood—to its borders, from terrorism, and to connectivity for economic growth—that have for the past 20 years driven India's policy preoccupations in its region and beyond. How have these preoccupations been transmitted in global and multilateral forums?

## India's Approach to Current Global Issues

The global issues that most closely affect Indian national interests are counterterrorism, climate change, the Millennium Development Goals, and maritime safety. On all four of these, India has been active domestically, bilaterally, and multilaterally. A further issue of great concern is cybersecurity, on which India hopes to help formulate international norms and rules.

### Counterterrorism

India's counterterrorism strategy has evolved over the past decade. Initially, India had to rely on national unity to limit the effects of cross-border terrorism, while keeping infiltration at the borders down and plugging away at talks with Pakistan. The events of 9/11 made counterterrorism a global priority (especially with regard to Pakistan), but given the exigencies

of international presence in Afghanistan, the relief that came India's way was mainly rhetorical. The international community began to recognize terrorism against India as a serious concern, but relatively few of the anti-India militant groups found their way into the UN's list of banned terrorist organizations.

After the 2008 Mumbai attacks, the Indian government's strategy changed, with a new focus on extraditing terrorists wanted in India. Between 2000 and 2013, India signed 33 extradition treaties, including ones with Saudi Arabia, Portugal, the United Arab Emirates, and Bangladesh, all 33 of which have led to the extradition of wanted terrorists to India over the past few years. This series of extraditions has provided valuable information on recruitment for and financing of terrorist attacks in India, allowing disruption of the former and tracking of the latter.

At the domestic level, India has taken a series of post-Mumbai steps to improve intelligence, policing, and the delivery of justice, along with initiatives for interfaith reconciliation and addressing minority grievances. The National Intelligence Agency, set up in December 2008, has helped improve prosecution cases to convict as well as to release alleged terrorists. In May of the same year, the influential Deoband seminary Darul Uloom issued a fatwa against terrorism that is now supported by as many as 15,000 *ulema* (Islamic scholars). And the Indian government took a slew of measures to create opportunities for Muslims, whose status was shown to be extremely poor by the Sachar Committee Report of 2007. Approximately \$3 billion was recently allocated for further measures in the Indian government's 12th Five Year Plan budget of 2013.

As shown above, counterterrorism is no longer a purely bilateral matter between India and Pakistan. The Afghanistan factor weighs heavily in Pakistani calculations; indeed, it can hardly be a coincidence that cross-border attacks are increasing in India at the same time as the international community accelerates draw-down from Afghanistan.

India was one of the first countries to engage in the UN debates on defining terrorism, and policymakers and analysts from there continue to be frustrated that a common definition has yet to be agreed on. Similarly, the UN unit set up to track, disrupt, and interdict terrorist financing has made elephantine progress, largely because implementation is voluntary. Though the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation and the

Shanghai Cooperation Organization have conventions on counterterrorism, they, too, little headway in implementation. Clearly, counterterrorism is still a problematic issue when it comes to multilateral action.

### Climate Change and the Millennium Development Goals

Climate has become a priority domestic issue in India, with a dawning consensus that climate change, poverty reduction, and development are interlinked issues that have to be tackled together. After the devastation wrought by flash floods in Uttarakhand this summer, implementing the National Action Plan on Climate Change (2008–2017) gained new urgency. The action plan identifies eight priority areas: solar energy, habitat, water conservation, forest cover, agriculture, energy efficiency, preserving the Himalayan ecosystem, and environmental technology transfer. An ambitious National Solar Mission has been launched, with the goal of generating 20,000 megawatts annually by 2022. A scheme for energy savings has been announced, and new building regulations demand conformity with green guidelines. It is planned to afforest 6 million hectares by 2017, increasing forest cover from 23 percent to 33 percent. And a Climate Science Research Fund has been set up to develop new clean technologies. Moreover, the Indian government is currently negotiating civil nuclear cooperation with a large number of countries and signed agreements in 2013 with the US firm Westinghouse, which will enhance the share of nuclear energy in its energy mix.

How does this impact India's position in global negotiations on climate change? There appears to be a strategic shift under way. At the broad level, India adheres to its stated position that climate change is a global problem requiring global solutions, and global actions need to be based on the principles of common but differentiated responsibility and equity. Further, the larger carbon emitters need to undertake significant emission cuts and provide finance and technological support to the most vulnerable countries, such as the small island developing states and the least developed countries.

On the ground, however, a change in behavior is emerging. India has thus far coordinated its climate change negotiating positions with China, which many critics felt was a negative approach given that India was a relatively low emitter and China a relatively large one; thus India was jettisoning its own advantage instead of playing to it. Today, policymakers and experts increasingly believe that India's ability to switch to environment-friendly energy resources depends on regional

and international cooperation, including access to new green technologies. Moreover, influential Indian experts argue that “India has more in common with smaller developing countries than China in climate negotiations,”<sup>3</sup> and that, “A global atmospheric space carved up by the US, China and Europe will leave little for India and others,” therefore, “India needs to find new allies in climate negotiations.”<sup>4</sup>

One example of the shift is the agreement between Prime Minister Singh and President Obama at their meeting in September 2013 to green technology transfers that would enable India to move away from its current dependence on fossil fuels. This search for newer allies will continue; indeed, US-India cooperation on climate and energy specifics includes discussions on changes in the Arctic Ocean and potential new avenues of cooperation.

Indications are that the Indian government will take a strong position that climate change is best handled by the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the UN General Assembly, not the UN Security Council. This is seen as an extension of its position that climate change is a global issue in which all countries need to cooperate. Speaking at the Arria Formula Meeting of the Security Council on “The Security Dimensions of Climate Change,” India’s deputy permanent representative said, “We recognize that the sea level rises pose an existential threat to the small Island Developing States and coastal societies. We are particularly aware of the gravity of the situation given the number of islands, over a thousand, which are there within the territories of India. ... The issue of climate change rests squarely in the UNFCCC and the UN General Assembly. ... We, therefore, want to reiterate what has been made clear many a time that by merely adding the words security dimension, it does not become a matter fit for discussing in the Security Council.”<sup>5</sup> (This latter statement reflects the earlier fear that the United States, the EU, and China will determine the climate change agenda).

Though India was not involved in formulating the Millennium Development Goals, they have become a part of the Indian government’s priority domestic agenda in the same way as climate change and are seen as measurable targets impacting the lives of millions in India. India’s report card on the Millennium Development Goals is mixed: India is likely to meet some of the targets by 2015 or even earlier (for example, on poverty reduction, universal primary enrollment, access to safe drinking water, teledensity, and Internet connectivity). But it

has done badly on the sex ratio, especially in infant and under-5 mortality rates; still lags on the maternal mortality ratio; and has performed poorly on sanitation. The areas of poor performance were reemphasized as priority areas in the Indian government’s 12th Five Year Plan, but time is running out with 2015 as a deadline.

With the focus shifting to the post-2015 development agenda, officials have made the following points:

- India would like the agenda to be determined by a transparent and inclusive process, based on intergovernmental negotiations through 2014. Input could be provided by the High-level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda and UN secretary-general reports.
- Key agenda points should be poverty eradication (without any qualifiers such as extreme poverty, or eradication of poverty as long as it does not impact the environment), economic growth, job creation, social inclusion, and sustainable development.
- The agenda must be based on the Rio+20 outcome document and its principles, especially common but differentiated responsibilities. It should integrate the three dimensions of sustainable development and put a greater focus on sustainable consumption and production patterns among developed countries, and it should not shift burdens to large developing countries.

### Maritime Safety

Quoting Prime Minister Singh (“India’s strategic calculus has long encompassed the waters from the Gulf of Aden to the Strait of Malacca”), India’s naval chief, Admiral D. K. Joshi, recently spelled out three factors that made India’s role in maintaining peace and security in the Indian Ocean and beyond a key national and global interest. Jutting 1,000 miles into the Indian Ocean, which connects sea-lanes from Africa through the Persian Gulf to South and East Asia, India is required to be a net security provider in the Indian Ocean region for the domestic and global economies. For the same reason, India is a key actor in counterpiracy and maritime counterterrorism.<sup>6</sup>

Most Indian analysts would agree that India’s most substantive multilaterals are in maritime security. Beginning some 20 years ago, with countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) seeking to ensure the safety of the sea-lanes from the Indian Ocean to the Malacca Strait, the Indian Navy engages in naval exercises with over 40 countries in

the Asia-Pacific and Persian Gulf and patrols the sea-lanes from Aden to Malacca. In Southeast Asia, India initially combined economic partnerships and security operations with Singapore, Thailand, and Indonesia, and was a founding member of the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC), established in Malaysia in 1995. By the 2000s, the maritime cooperation had expanded to include naval exercises with the United States, Australia, Singapore, and Japan (Operation Malabar). And the Indian Navy's Milan program, a biennial naval exercise involving the littoral Asia-Pacific states, attracted 14 countries in 2012, including Australia, Bangladesh, Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Seychelles, Sri Lanka, and Thailand. India and China are both going to join RIMPAC, naval exercises among Asia-Pacific Rim countries, led by the United States.

The outbreak of piracy in the Gulf of Aden and off the Somali coast shifted Indian maritime attention west. With Indian exports and imports, including oil and fertilizers, worth over \$1 billion passing through the Gulf of Aden, counterpiracy was a critical national interest. Between 20 and 24 Indian merchant ships transit the Gulf of Aden every month, and India's seafaring community accounts for nearly 7 percent of the world's seafarers. The Indian Navy began to engage in anti-piracy patrols in late 2008 and has provided escort to 2,400 Indian and foreign merchant ships, has foiled at least 40 piracy attempts, and has arrested more than 120 pirates. Furthermore, according to Admiral Joshi, the Indian Navy's sinking of four pirate mother ships in 2011 has deterred piracy within 450 nautical miles of the Indian coast (there have been no successful attacks since then).

While the Indian Navy deploys independently in the Gulf of Aden, it coordinates operations with other navies and regularly exchanges information through multilateral mechanisms such as Shared Awareness and Deconfliction. India also chaired the 13th Plenary Session of the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia, held at UN Headquarters in New York in December 2012. Given the long history of naval multilaterals between India and the South and East Asian countries, it is no surprise that the Indian Navy's multilateral counterpiracy engagement in Southeast and East Asia is far deeper. With Thailand and Indonesia, it engages in coordinated patrols to address a range of maritime security issues. India is also a party to the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia, a government-to-government agreement on anti-piracy cooperation and information sharing whose operations have largely controlled piracy in Southeast Asia.

There has been some speculation about a naval modernization race between India and China, sparked by China's development of deep sea ports and listening posts in India's neighbor countries (the so-called string of pearls) and exacerbated by China's pursuit of a blue-water navy. The countervailing race is to develop a code of conduct between IOR-ARC and RIMPAC countries. Having recently had to withdraw from oil explorations at the invitation of the Vietnam government because of Chinese opposition (which consisted of sending a Chinese warship to push Indian ships out), not to mention China's string of pearls, India has a strong stake in developing a code of conduct in the Indian and Pacific Oceans.

India was granted observer status by the Arctic Council on May 15, 2013, partly in recognition of India's contribution to Arctic scientific studies from 2007 on. India's observer status came at a time when the rapid melting of the Arctic ice cap was opening a deep-water sea route in the north, linking East Asia with North America and creating the potential for commercial exploitation of vast natural resources in the region. New, shorter shipping routes are now a reality. The Arctic's unexploited oil and gas and marine resources are attracting not only littoral states but also far-away countries. At the same time, climatologists warn of the adverse impact of the melting Arctic ice cap on indigenous communities and on the marine ecosystems, and an aggravation of global warming. Commenting on these developments, the Indian Ministry of External Affairs' Web site carried a piece stating "any legitimate and credible mechanism to respond to these challenges calls for active participation of all those actors who have a stake in the governance of global commons. ... India which has a significant expertise in this area from its association with the Antarctic Treaty System can play a constructive role in securing a stable Arctic."<sup>7</sup>

While the Indian policy debate on the Arctic is still in its infancy, it is currently focused on whether India should limit itself to scientific research on the Arctic or join the race for commercial exploitation of the opportunities that the region offers. Issues India will need to consider include whether to focus on the "global commons" character of the Arctic, take a lead in mobilizing international opinion for a global regime such as the UN Arctic Commission on the lines of the Indian Ocean Commission, or put the Arctic Ocean on the agenda of the multilateral negotiations on climate change within the framework of the UNFCCC.

## Conclusion

How far has India gone in achieving its strategic vision of acting as a stabilizer in its neighborhood, a balancer in Asia, a reformer of global trade and monetary policies, and a responsible power in global peace and security?

At first glance, the answer would appear to be, not very far. However, it is also true that India has been a lifeline for Afghanistan, and its restraint has helped Pakistan. After a stormy period with Nepalese King Gyanendra over his suspension of the constitution and conflict with Maoist insurgents, Indian relations with Nepal have improved and provide some leverage for reconciliation. India's relations with Bangladesh are at their strongest. Given the strong anger in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu over human rights violations of Sri Lankan Tamils during and after the 1983–2009 war against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, India has managed to retain influence over the Sri Lankan government and urge a political solution. Finally, India has contained a potential conflagration over the 2011–12 coup in the Maldives. In its neighborhood, therefore, India is acting as a responsible power for peace and security.

India has not been the balancer in East Asia that the ASEAN countries had hoped for, despite its widening and deepening engagements there. The US “rebalance to Asia” might provide the strategic space for India to become one of the balancers; clearly, Indian policymakers would prefer multilateral balance to a great-power balance, though they are also beginning to recognize that the one cannot easily be separated from the other.

On financial and institutional reforms, India and other G-20 countries have already pushed the International Monetary Fund to partially amend quotas and vote shares; more is likely to follow. India has helped craft a time-buying compromise to keep the World Trade Organization alive, and it is likely to continue to play an active role in multilateral economic forums.

Similarly, while India has been cautious on global peace and security issues such as the Responsibility to Protect and its application in Libya and potentially Syria, India has been an influential peacemaker in its region and has increasingly sought to coordinate neighborhood initiatives with other influential actors, both regional and international.

These are all trends that are likely to be continued in the coming decade, irrespective of a change in government.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Government of India, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Department of Commerce. Export Import Data Bank Version 7.1 – TRADESTAT. <http://commerce.nic.in/eidb>, (Click “top n countries” under Total Trade).
- <sup>2</sup> Omer Farook Khan, “Pakistan to Grant MFN Status to India,” *Times of India*, September 8, 2013, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/business/india-business/Pakistan-to-grant-MFN-status-to-India/articleshow/22407883.cms>.
- <sup>3</sup> Arunabha Ghosh, “India’s Resource Nexus: Priorities for Action,” *Livemint*, April 9, 2013, <http://www.livemint.com/Opinion/zAOvm6gwBK6Bzr9DfSyxN/Indias-resource-nexus-priorities-for-action.html>.
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>5</sup> Manjeev Singh Puri, February 15, 2013, <http://www.un.int/india/2013/pmi12.pdf>.
- <sup>6</sup> Admiral B. K. Joshi, “Role of Indian Navy in Maintaining Peace in Indian Ocean Region,” speech delivered at the Institute for Defence and Strategic Analysis, March 5, 2013, [http://idsa.in/keyspeeches/RoleofIndianNavyinMaintainingPeaceinIndianOceanRegion\\_CNS](http://idsa.in/keyspeeches/RoleofIndianNavyinMaintainingPeaceinIndianOceanRegion_CNS).
- <sup>7</sup> “India and the Arctic,” Indian Ministry of External Affairs, June 10, 2013, [www.mea.gov.in/in-focus-article.htm?21812/India](http://www.mea.gov.in/in-focus-article.htm?21812/India).

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