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## US-India Relations: Evaluating Convergences and Divergences

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### Abstract

Considering the current state of global affairs, the significance of US-India relations in maintaining equilibrium within the international community is vital. As the dynamics of the globalized world continue to evolve, a shift in the nature of US-India relations has emerged. While some experts view this shift as a strategic partnership, others consider it a temporary alliance. Therefore, the objective of this research paper is to investigate the topic of US-India relations to gain a comprehensive understanding of the foreign policy objectives that have guided the relationship since its inception. This analysis will be conducted through the lens of structural realism to identify both the convergence and divergence of foreign policy objectives and to explore the underlying reasons for these differences. To achieve this goal, this study will divide the entire spectrum of US-India relations into four distinct phases and assess the cyclical nature of these relations by analyzing the convergent and divergent objectives of both nations. In conducting this investigation, the study relies solely on secondary data analysis and employs qualitative research techniques. The results of this study will provide a foundation for future analyses of US-India foreign policy objectives and will also help bridge gaps in existing literature. The findings of this research will enable policymakers and scholars of international relations to gain a comprehensive understanding of the nature of the US-India relationship over the years, as well as the reasons behind its characteristics.

**Keywords:** US-India relations, Foreign policy, Shift, China, Convergence, Divergence

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### 1. Introduction

In this era of changing world order, some policymakers will have to rethink their strategies according to environmental dynamics. One such change can be noted in the US-India foreign policy. Over the past two decades, the relation between India and the United States has grown stronger as both countries share mutual concerns about China's increasing power and aggression in Asia. In recent times, India has departed from its formerly held policy of non-alignment and has embraced a more collaborative approach with the United States regarding military, diplomatic, and economic affairs. This joint venture has proven to be mutually beneficial for both nations, allowing them to confront regional challenges and capitalize on their respective

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strengths to promote regional stability. The primary impetus for this shift in policy can be attributed to the complex security predicament between India and China (Bajpaee, 2015). Although some scholars have posited that this shift is a response to China's growing power, the strategic partnership between India and the US is a vital component of the larger geopolitical landscape in Asia. Consequently, to fully comprehend the intricacies of the US-India relationship, a comprehensive investigation must be conducted to discern the areas of alignment and discordance in the foreign policy objectives of both nations. This approach will furnish a judicious empirical foundation for understanding the US-India relationship. This study employs structural realism as a theoretical lens to systematically scrutinize secondary data on US-India relations.

The existing literature delves into the complex ties between the United States and India, examining their foreign policies from the Cold War to the present. These resources offer insights into the diplomatic, economic, strategic, and cultural factors that are crucial to comprehending the multifaceted nature of bilateral relations between the two nations. Scholars like Cohen (2000) explore the possibility that major structural changes in the US-India relationship occurred, altering perceptions and policies in both Washington and New Delhi, along with the reasons for such a shift in stance. Burgess (2019) highlights the evolution of US-India relations and India's strategy over two decades, driven by factors such as the fall of the Berlin Wall, China's rise as a major power in Asia, and domestic politics. Alyssa Ayres (2015) discusses US relations with India, highlighting the progress made in various areas such as civil-nuclear cooperation, economic ties defense cooperation, and democracy and human rights. It recommends a joint venture model for the US-India partnership, prioritizing support for India's economic growth and strengthening collaboration on defense and security. It also proposes private diplomacy to deal with democracy and human rights issues and calls on the US to make better preparations to work with India as a world power. Kapur and Ganguly highlight the transformation from distant to close collaboration between the US and India in 2007 analysis of their evolving relationship. The authors attribute this shift to a combination of both individual and systemic factors within each country. According to a report on US-India Relations authored by Kronstadt *et al.* (2021) and presented by the Congressional Research Service, there is a growing recognition of India's pivotal role and its ability to impact global affairs.

The generally held belief that a stronger and more affluent democratic India is in the best interest of the United States frequently influences this acknowledgement. As a result, the US Congress and successive administrations have taken measures to enhance America's engagement with New Delhi, with the aim of strengthening and deepening the relationship between the two nations. The discourse on the relationship between the US and India has been a topic of discussion in the academic community for several years. Various aspects of their foreign policies, such as trade, security, and strategic partnerships, have been explored. However, a comprehensive and systematic study that offers a holistic view of their entire spectrum of foreign policy interactions is yet to be undertaken. Considering this, a thorough examination of the convergence and divergence of the US-India foreign policy is essential. Such a study would not only fill the gap in the existing literature but also contribute to a deeper understanding of international relations dynamics. The findings of this study would be valuable for policymakers, scholars, and anyone interested in international relations, providing them with insights for making informed decisions and predictions about global partnerships.

The relationship between the United States and India is multi-faceted and ever-evolving, with a foundation rooted in shared democratic principles, strategic interests, and cultural ties. Despite initial tensions and strains stemming from India's nuclear programme during the Cold War, both nations have worked towards strengthening their partnership through various initiatives. These include increased trade, defense cooperation and joint efforts to tackle global issues such as climate change and terrorism. While there have been occasional disagreements on specific issues, overall, the trajectory of the US-India relationship has been positive, with both countries recognizing the importance of their partnership in promoting stability within the region and globally. As a result, the US-India foreign policy remains a vital area of focus for policymakers in both nations.

## 2. Research Methodology

The objective of this scholarly article is to assess the convergences and divergences across the entire range of relations between the United States and India. To achieve this aim, this investigation uses a systematic approach to examine the existing literature on US-India relations from 1947 to 2023. This study encompasses data on

various aspects related to US-India relations. Employing a qualitative research methodology, specifically content analysis and archival research, the entire spectrum of US-India relations will be divided into various distinct phases, and convergences and divergences in each phase will be assessed using the theory of structural realism. To gather secondary data for this investigation, various sources such as journals, government and institutional reports, and newspaper articles will be used.

### 2.1. Scope of Constraint

This study exclusively employs secondary sources of data.

## 3. The Nehru Era: 1950s–60s (Phase I)

The formal commencement of the US-India relationship traces back to the arrival of American soldiers in India during World War II. The strategic deployment of at least 400,000 American soldiers in India and Burma was pivotal for the successful execution of crucial military operations. 1946 witnessed the signing of an agreement between India and the United States that pertained to a loan-lease, reciprocal aid, and surplus war property. The agreement was a comprehensive and conclusive settlement for all financial claims arising from World War II. It is noteworthy that no monetary compensation had to be exchanged between the two governments, as they had both received equitable benefits from the mutual aid exchange. In accordance with the reverse Lend-Lease agreement, the United States was granted complete ownership of all items received from India during the war, whereas India was granted absolute ownership of all items within the civilian Lend-Lease inventory. Additionally, a mutual agreement was made for the appropriate disposal of US surpluses in India, with the United States receiving fifty percent of the profits exceeding the \$50 million threshold for procuring real estate, cultural, and educational resources in India ([International Commitments of India: Indo-US Agreement on Lend-Lease, 1946](#)). This agreement marked a positive beginning for future relations between India and the United States. Another important fact was that a river of Indian goods flowed by reverse lend-lease from Indian factories, warehouses, and retail sources to Americans, both in the rear echelons and on the fighting front. The procurement of these goods called for countless contacts between American supply troops and Moslem and Hindu manufacturers and merchants ([Vest, 1948](#)).

In 1949, Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru had the opportunity to embark on a long-term visit to the United States, where he had the pleasure of meeting President Harry S. Truman. This significant encounter marked the onset of friendly cooperation between the two nations. Nonetheless, this unprecedented meeting occurred during a period of international turmoil, when both the Cold War and the emergence of the Chinese Communist Party were creating tensions and challenges to the international order. Despite these challenges, Nehru and Truman maintained cordial relations and continued to engage in dialogue, with Nehru returning for three more visits to the United States in 1956, 1960, and 1961 ([Maizland, 2023](#)).

During the outset of the 1950s, the escalation of Cold War competition began to intensify, thereby resulting in newly autonomous nations situated within Asia and eastern Europe becoming entrapped within its grasp. It was within this particular context that Nehru declared India's non-aligned policy. Following the non-aligned conference in Bandung in 1955, Nehru embarked on a diplomatic mission to the Soviet Union, where he engaged in discussions with Soviet leaders. During these conversations, Nehru emphasized that opposition to certain aspects of US policy did not equate to the complete rejection of the American people. Additionally, he pointed out to Soviet leaders that he observed elements within the US that were conducive to negotiations and settlements. Nehru then proceeded to London to meet Prime Minister Eden and Foreign Secretary Macmillan, while also engaging in correspondence with President Eisenhower. In his dealings with Western governments, Nehru advocated for the Soviet Union and supported the United States while in the Soviet Union. During the Summit Conference in Geneva that summer, both sides worked towards a mutual understanding, which many saw as a positive development. Although no significant breakthroughs were achieved at the conference, both sides acknowledged that Nehru's interpretation of each country's position had been instrumental in advancing the communication.

In an article regarding atomic assistance to India, Wit & Clubok mention that "*uncertainty as to the foreign-policy justifications for an American extension of atomic-power assistance to India has the same basis as the debates over proffering any other type of American help to Mr. Nehru's government: the latter's neutralist or "independent" foreign*

*policy. Therefore, in so far as the general policy question is concerned, a decision in favor of atomic-power aid must be weighed in terms of its compatibility with the other facets of American foreign policy as well as in the light of its contribution to American national self-interest. The national-interest justifications for all forms of American help to India are several, and emerge not only from the components of American self-interest in world affairs but also from the outstanding relevant characteristics of contemporary India. Since both of these subjects have received extensive treatment in the past, we need only summarize the argument here. In general, it is essential to recognize that American national interest involves the promotion of democracy and the independence of other peoples as well as the enhancement of American power, independence, and wellbeing. This understanding is particularly needed today. In dealing with India, American policy confronts one of the largest and most populous lands, recently emerged from colonialism, whose position in Asia is of major consequence politically, economically, militarily, and psychologically. Moreover, it is a country whose Western-trained and domestically anti-Communist leadership is committed to national development through reasonably democratic though moderately socialistic means." (1958, p.286).*

The discussion presented in the Wit and Clubok articles elucidates the influence of the non-alignment movement on the United States. The emergence of mistrust between the two nations resulted from divergent strategic goals and interests. It is imperative for Washington to acknowledge that India perceives the US as resolute in using force to undermine the Soviet Union and having renounced its support for anti-colonial movements in favor of advancing military security objectives. Conversely, Moscow facilitates peace, liberalizes its authoritarian government, and actively promotes the liberation of colonial states.

The deteriorating relationship between the United States and India was the result of mutual mistrust. Conversely, the United States and Pakistan grew closer due to the USSR's involvement in the Middle East. In September 1954, the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) was formed by the United States, Great Britain, New Zealand, Australia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Pakistan to prevent the spread of communism in the region. As part of this agreement, Pakistan was provided with a substantial amount of weaponry by the United States and Britain. Furthermore, considering the USSR's interference in the Middle East, a military intelligence base was established in Pakistan. The Indian government became resentful towards the United States because of these developments.

Notwithstanding the political unrest of the time, the United States provided India with substantial technical and financial aid amounting to \$267 million between 1958 and 1966, in addition to a wheat loan of \$192 million (Wit and Clubok, 1958). In 1956, Prime Minister Nehru held a series of discussions with President Dwight Eisenhower at his Gettysburg estate, which helped establish a rapport between the two leaders. Consequently, economic assistance from the United States to India increased to \$822 million annually (Maizland, 2023).

According to Brecher, the Kennedy–Macmillan–Nassau agreement was formulated on December 21 and involved a military support initiative worth 120 million dollars. During their Birch Grove summit in Sussex six months later, the American and British heads of state pledged to continue providing military assistance to India, albeit without specifying the exact amount. These moves assisted India in preparing for any potential resumption of Chinese invasion. In August 1963, a US–Commonwealth Air Training Agreement was signed, followed by combined air defense exercises conducted in India in December. Consequently, the West demonstrated its willingness to support India's defense but in a far less aggressive, controversial and precarious manner than what was initially anticipated in Nehru's plea of November 1962. Ironically, China's unilateral ceasefire coupled with the West's cautious approach contributed to India's retention of a tarnished non-alignment as the formal pillar of her foreign policy (1979, p.626).

The United States and United Kingdom's aid response to India was interpreted with a notably subdued tone, which was largely attributed to the "Pakistan connection". President Kennedy explicitly acknowledged this restriction in his announcement of the Harriman Mission, stating that their military support for India must consider their partnership with Pakistan. Importantly, he emphasized that their assistance to India should not diminish their commitment to Pakistan (Brecher, 1979).

The robustness of the Anglo–American association with Pakistan became clear in the reactions to Nehru's plea concerning the Air Defense System. India was compelled to devise a defensive approach that considered the escalating dangers posed by its neighboring countries and the insufficient response from the West.



Furthermore, the unfavorable atmosphere that the West inadvertently fostered added to India's predicament. As a result, India was left with no other feasible option than to seek a strategic partner, which ultimately materialized in the form of the USSR and was subsequently formalized in 1971 (Brecher, 1979).

### **3.1. Convergence in Divergence**

During the Nehru era, the relationship between the United States and India can be characterized as a case of convergence in divergence. The strategic goals of both nations' foreign policies were distinct. The United States was primarily focused on limiting the involvement of the USSR in the Middle East and Eastern Europe, while India was more preoccupied with its economic development. Notwithstanding the constraints created by the United States' relations with Pakistan, the proliferation of communism in South Asia provided an opportunity for cooperation between the United States and India. The need to curtail the Communist revolution in Asia and China's aspirations to steer the communist movement in South Asia were imperative. Nehru's non-alignment strategy, backed by the United States, had the potential to limit the sway of the Communist movement not only in South Asia and the Middle East but also in India, where the populace had a more socialist inclination that favored communism over capitalism. Consequently, the association between the United States and India during this period can be characterized as convergence in divergence, where collaboration was feasible even when the foreign policy objectives of each nation were divergent.

## **4. The Cold War Tilt: 1970s-1980s (Phase II)**

The historical epoch spanning the 1970s and 1980s witnessed momentous transformations in the South Asian region. Towards the end of the 1960s, the political landscape was mostly dominated by the Nixon and Kissinger administrations in office, whose primary focus was on the Soviet Union. Concurrently, India's foreign policy strategy of non-alignment emerged with renewed vigor following Shastri's truncated tenure as prime minister and the nascent years of Mrs. Gandhi's leadership.

The repercussions of the Sino-Indian War led to the formation of a strategic alliance between China and Pakistan, primarily due to the growing US-India relationship. The Sino-Soviet border clash in 1969 brought both communist nations perilously close to war. Recognizing this as an opportunity, President Nixon initiated confidential talks with China through Pakistan to establish and enhance relations with China. The US foreign policy objectives were clearly aimed at incorporating the concept of triangular diplomacy, with the US being the pivot in the US-USSR-China triangle. The 1971 Bangladesh War in East Pakistan (present-day Bangladesh) provided further opportunities for the US to promote its triangular policy and tension between the USSR and China. As a result, the US remained neutral at the beginning of the crisis and later entirely sided with Pakistan during the conflict. Considering the crisis in its vicinity, India was compelled to take appropriate measures to safeguard the security and stability of the region.

The year 1971 was a pivotal moment that shaped the course of international relations in South Asia for almost two decades. The Bangladesh Liberation Movement, which started in March of that year, escalated into a full-blown war that lasted until December of that same year. In the midst of this conflict, Henry Kissinger made a clandestine visit to China in July 1971, laying the groundwork for Nixon's historic visit to the country. This diplomatic maneuver was made possible by Pakistan's strategic role in the region. Additionally, the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Peace, Friendship, and Cooperation was signed in August 1971, marking a significant turning point in the regional conflict as it took on a broader geopolitical dimension, viewed by many observers as yet another proxy war in the larger global struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union (Agarwal, 2014).

The aftermath of the 1971 war marked a significant downturn in diplomatic ties between the United States and India. Prime Minister Gandhi was resolute in expressing her disapproval of American policy during the conflict. In an article published in the October 1971 issue of *Foreign Affairs*, Mrs. Gandhi castigated the United States for its decision to deploy the warship *Enterprise* in support of a tyrannical military regime, which was aimed at exerting pressure on a democratic nation (Agarwal, 2014).

President Nixon exhibited an astute awareness of the gravity of the circumstances and recognized the significance of fostering amicable relations with India. To achieve this objective, Nixon discerningly opted to

appoint Daniel Patrick Moynihan as the subsequent ambassador to India. Despite being affiliated with the Democratic party and having previously voiced disapproval of the administration's approach during the war, Moynihan's selection was anticipated to assuage the strained relations between the two nations (Agarwal, 2014).

Quoting D.P. Moynihan, United States ambassador to India in 1973-75. *"We have moved well beyond the uneasy and often unequal relationship of the fifties and sixties. The end of that era was abrupt. It led to a condition that briefly approached a rupture between us. It was a shock to our separate systems, as well as to our relations. We neared a brink neither of us really sought. In the end, wise and prudent leaders in both nations saw where we had come and realized this was not where we wanted to be. Their actions have effectively turned what looked like an end into something that resembles a beginning. A beginning of something new, something neither of us can yet fully define, but something of value to us both. I hope and trust that the coming years will find us building on that fine start."*

After the period of peace between 1974 and 1975, the relationship between the United States and India experienced a tumultuous shift, although trust had dissipated within the partnership. Even though India and the United States had made strides in improving relations since 1977, a dispute regarding the United States' non-proliferation policy and the Indian response to its effects on nuclear arrangements between the two nations served as an obstacle to further progress.

Following the 1978 Afghan crisis, the Soviet Union's resolution to invade Afghanistan became clear. Meanwhile, the United States was once again supplying Pakistan with armaments that had the potential to be used against India at any given time. China, the United States' newfound ally, was actively training and equipping insurgents recruited from separatist groups in India's northeastern regions. This was an effort to disrupt the political climate in India and ultimately obtain control over certain Indian territories (Horn, 1983).

The perception of a threat to India was significantly intensified by Pakistan's acquisition of F-16 jet aircraft in a remarkably short time. Consequently, in May 1980, a delegation from India travelled to the USSR to resume negotiations that had last taken place in September 1979. The USSR agreed to provide a credit of \$1.63 billion to India, spread over a period of 10-15 years, for the purchase of weapons and equipment. The products included in this package were 100 T-72 tanks, five MiG-25 "Foxbat" planes, and an unspecified number of rapid-attack boats equipped with missiles. The most significant concession made by the USSR was the promise to increase its crude oil supply to India by one million tons annually (Horn, 1983).

In the beginning, India had a stance of opposition to the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan. However, during the initial half of 1982, New Delhi's perspective towards Moscow underwent a softening process. A significant event during this period was Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's visit to the United States. This visit indicated India's broader shift in foreign policy focus, as it moved away from excessive reliance on the Soviet Union towards a more neutral approach that maintained an equal distance from both superpowers. India's efforts to expand its military supplies and capital sources, as well as Mrs. Gandhi's recent diplomatic visit to Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states, were all interconnected components of this strategic shift (Mrs. Indira Gandhi's Visit to The U.S.A., 1982).

One of the major aims of the visit was to procure American technology and capital. The Indian economy suffered a slowdown due to the scarcity of international funds, compounded by several geopolitical events such as the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the Iranian revolution, the Gulf War, and the US treating Pakistan as a 'frontline' state. These events have made India more cautious and adaptable in its external relations. As a result, the non-alignment policy was revitalized (Mrs. Indira Gandhi's Visit to The U.S.A., 1982).

Further, Rajiv Gandhi's 1984 liberalization of India's economy led to a memorandum of understanding (MOU) signed in November 1984, which led to the transfer of technology and the easing of American restrictions on trade. In 1988, Washington agreed to sell India a ring-laser gyroscope for use in its newly designed LCA. During the Gulf War, the Indian government granted permission to American airliners to refuel at its airports. The American aid policy to Pakistan remained intact even after the fall of the USSR, with reports pointing out that the aid was intended to contain Soviet communism but also had a hidden agenda to undermine India's position and prevent it from becoming a regional power. With the disappearance of the wall between East and West, the US had reverted to a pro-Pakistan stand on Kashmir, but there had not been any noticeable shift in American strategy (Gaan, 1992).

Following the Soviet withdrawal, the provision of aid to Pakistan created a security predicament for India, as stated by Richard N. Haas, who served as the senior director for Near East and South Asian affairs and special assistant to the US President. It is noteworthy that the US had shifted its foreign policy in South Asia to view India and Pakistan as distinct and separate regions rather than as a subset of its global whole. Haas acknowledged that Pakistan's support for the Afghan resistance was highly appreciated by Americans and that the US has a special relationship with Pakistan that predated the conflict in Afghanistan and survived its end. The recognition of India's competent managerial role in Sri Lanka, as per the Indo-Sri Lanka accord, and its subsequent withdrawal upon the request of the Sri Lanka government, as well as in Mauritius and the Seychelles against externally organized coups, was a significant departure from the United States' earlier policy of containing India's growth as an independent center of power in South Asia. This recognition allowed India more leeway to take on a managerial role in South Asia (Gaan, 1992).

#### **4.1. The Era of Divergence**

The decades spanning the 1970s to 1980s marked a significant period of deviation in diplomatic relations between India and the United States. The US foreign policy prioritized the implementation of a triangular policy that considered the strained relations between China and the Soviet Union. India, in turn, had to tilt towards the Soviet Union to maintain regional stability and security. Although efforts were made to revitalize the relationship, mistrust and conflicting foreign policy objectives made such endeavors unsuccessful. The US decision to abstain from the Bangladesh War created an impression of the US as an unreliable partner for India. This perception continues to haunt Indian policymakers to this day. As such, the era spanning the 1970s to the 1980s can be accurately labelled as a period of divergence in the context of US-India relations.

### **5. Post-Cold War Reorientation in the 1990s (Phase III)**

During the 1990s, the United States experienced a unipolar moment in which globalization permeated the global economic landscape. This led to a shift away from centralized economies towards open market-based systems. India, facing dire financial difficulties with PV. Narasimha Rao, as the Prime Minister, also adopted these policies. Rao's government implemented substantial economic changes aimed at rescuing India from the debt trap, including a market economy orientation and liberalization. The Indian government's economic reforms, which enabled it to secure significant loans for development from the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the Asian Development Bank (ADB), were lauded by the US administration (Gaan, 1992).

Due to India's economic difficulties, Rao found himself increasingly dependent on American assistance. Moreover, the former Soviet Union placed immense pressure on India to repay substantial debts while maintaining the ruble and rupee at exorbitantly inflated levels (Abadi, 1993).

Within Indian government circles, a realization had dawned that the technological superiority of the West exceeded that of the Soviet Union. This realization catalyzed a shift towards a greater inclination to comply with American demands for India's economy to be liberated from outdated regulations and limitations. The liberalization of India's economy was accompanied by a similar evolution in foreign policy. For instance, India's reluctance to establish full diplomatic ties with Israel for a prolonged period was rooted in its association with Western imperialism and its leader's non-alignment. In India's endeavors to normalize its relationship with the United States, Israel played a pivotal role in the improvement of bilateral relations, which explained the change in India's previous stance on Israel (Abadi, 1993).

In May 1998, India conducted nuclear tests, which resulted in the imposition of technology and economic sanctions. This policy had a detrimental effect on the relationship between America and India, causing a great deal of tension between the two powers. The tests were viewed as a tremendous obstacle to a more normalized relationship between the countries. However, following India's nuclear tests, Washington and New Delhi engaged in remarkable, extended high-level dialogues. It was during this dialogue that Talbott (US Deputy Secretary of State) and Singh (India Foreign minister) established a relationship that proved to be of great value in the summer of 1999. This was particularly evident when India was faced with Pakistani moves across the line of control at Kargil. Thanks to the relationship between Talbott and Singh, India was able to respond to the

Pakistani attack in a measured way, while Washington had the opportunity to exert pressure on Pakistan to withdraw (Cohen, 2000).

In the realm of nuclear affairs, the United States of America gradually came to terms with the nuclear programs of both New Delhi and Islamabad, albeit with the caveat of imposing mutually acceptable constraints. Furthermore, the US government refrained from conferring any official nuclear status on either India or Pakistan. The altered relationship between the US and China has had a significant impact on the perception of India in Washington. India gained more favor due to the growing recognition that exerting direct pressure could prove counterproductive. Instead, a more nuanced, long-term strategy is required to encourage New Delhi to adopt tighter restrictions on its nuclear programme (Cohen, 2000).

The Indian-American community, with a staggering count of 1.5 million individuals, had made a significant contribution to positively shaping the perceptions of India in the United States and the United States in India. This community has demonstrated remarkable success in diverse domains such as high-technology, aerospace, telecommunications, and software and computer development (Cohen, 2000).

### *5.1. Divergences and Convergence*

The 1990s were characterized by both divergence and convergence in US-India relations. Non-proliferation was the central focus of US foreign policy, while the Kashmir issue and India's nuclear test presented significant challenges to the relationship between the two nations. Following a prolonged meeting, both countries settled on a valuable solution, which marked a shift in the perception of US foreign policy. The decade witnessed a dichotomy of divergence and convergence in diplomatic relations between the United States and India.

## **6. Strategic Partnership: The 21<sup>st</sup> Century (Phase IV)**

Following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the United States' foreign policy began to shift its focus towards the Middle East, with the war in Iraq becoming a major priority alongside the ongoing threat of terrorism. India, having also experienced similar terror attacks in Kashmir during the 1990s and in Delhi in 2001, began to cooperate more closely with the US on counterterrorism. However, the rise of China ultimately led the US and India to forge a closer relationship. China's rapid economic growth, combined with the increasing importance of the trade route in the Indo-Pacific region, prompted the US to view India as a balancing force against China. Notably, India's economic growth following the reforms of the 1990s was also significant. While Indian policymakers in the 2000s did not initially view China as an immediate threat, they sought to work with China to establish a multipolar world in which US power would be moderated. India's desire to improve its relations with the United States and China was further incited by longstanding concerns over the relationship between the United States and Pakistan. As American foreign policy became more preoccupied with China, India's role in US foreign policy increased accordingly. The US-India nuclear deal, considered a foreign policy success of the Bush administration, helped solidify India's status as a major power. Scholars have identified this complex relationship as the development of the Strategic Triangle involving the US, India, and China (Kemenade, 2008).

The foreign policy orientation of the Obama administration marked a broad approach to values and a resolute commitment to collaborating with allies and partners. In July 2009, Clinton's visit to India served as a clear indication of the United States' eagerness to elevate the relationship to new heights. Nonetheless, scholars have pointed out that the fledgling entente between the two nations is more of a "selective partnership" that hinges on specific shared interests in certain areas and reciprocal agreements in others, rather than a true alliance (Malone and Mukherjee, 2009).

Given the rise in trade and favorable structural conditions in Asia, a ripe opportunity for closer relations between the United States and India was presented. Regrettably, the transactional approach, economic nationalism, and domestic political turmoil espoused by the Trump administration have contributed to a complicated outlook. While this approach may have some advantages from a realist perspective, it also has multiple disadvantages for India. Despite the Modi government in India pursuing a similar approach, the relationship between the United States and India remained stable (Rajagopalan, 2017).



Modi's foreign policy for India has been redirected towards a more extensive and outward-focused approach, showcasing the country's strategic alliance with the United States, which is deemed beneficial. The partnership is now characterized by various collaborations on geopolitical, economic and military fronts, as well as joint efforts in combating international terrorism and limiting China's influence. In support of India, Washington has voiced its approval of India joining the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), which will provide India with the opportunity to participate in global nuclear trade and access to modern technology (Khan, 2017).

During the Biden administration, bilateral relations between the United States and India were confronted with significant challenges that required extensive attention. These included the United States' withdrawal from Afghanistan, the human rights situation in India, and the Russian military intervention in Ukraine. The US administration acknowledged the unique relationship between Russia and India and their shared concerns regarding China. While the impact of China's influence has become a significant aspect of the US-India relationship, other divergent factors have been given less consideration. During Modi's visit to the United States in June 2023, both nations addressed areas of shared concern, such as climate change, national security, and critical and emerging technology. However, the transformation of this alliance into a partnership is contingent on several factors and a global outlook. Nevertheless, the relations between the United States and India remain intact.

### **6.1. Divergence in Convergence**

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the relationship between the United States and India may be aptly characterized as a case of divergence in convergence. The expanding presence of China in the Indo-Pacific region has created instability for both nations, although their responses to the challenges presented are markedly dissimilar. This divergence in approach is the foundation of the divergence in convergences. India has endeavored to maintain an independent foreign policy in relation to China, although the latter's territorial claims in the Indian borders exert pressure on this autonomy. Although the history of US-India relations indicates that divergence is a distinct possibility, adept leadership can surmount obstacles and arrive at a path of convergence, even in challenging times.

## **7. Conclusion**

The academic community has been engaged in a prolonged discussion about the relationship between the United States and India. Scholars have delved into different aspects of their foreign policies, including trade, security, and strategic partnerships. However, a thorough and methodical analysis using qualitative research methods and secondary data of the entire spectrum of their foreign policy interactions using the framework of structural realism would provide a comprehensive view. This approach would enable us to identify the areas of convergence and divergence in the US-India foreign policy since its inception and provide an empirical basis for analyzing future policies.

The diplomatic history of US-India relations can be divided into four distinct phases, each marked by divergences and convergences that can be explained through the lens of structural realism. The first phase, known as the Nehru era, spanning the 1950s-1960s, witnessed an interesting phenomenon of convergence in divergence between the two nations. Despite differences in their foreign policies, with the US primarily focusing on limiting Soviet involvement in the Middle East and Eastern Europe, while India concentrated on its economic development, the presence of communism in South Asia provided an opportunity for cooperation. China's involvement in this movement was critical, leading to a convergence in divergence between the United States and India.

During the 1970s and 1980s, the Cold War Tilt marked a notable period of departure in the diplomatic ties between India and the United States. The US pursued a triangular policy, prioritizing China and the Soviet Union, while India gravitated towards the Soviet Union for regional stability. Despite attempts to rejuvenate the relationship, it was obstructed due to a lack of trust and conflicting objectives. In the 1990s, the post-Cold War reorientation, marked by both convergence and divergence in US-India relations, also denoted a shift in the perception of US foreign policy towards India.

The ultimate phase, referred to as the strategic partnership of the twenty-first century, can be accurately delineated as a manifestation of divergence in convergence owing to China's expanding influence in the Indo-

Pacific region and the divergent approaches adopted by India and the United States. India upholds an autonomous foreign policy, whereas China's territorial claims exert pressure on it. Despite the potential for divergence, effective leadership can facilitate convergence.

The multifaceted and dynamic relationship between the US and India is founded on shared democratic principles, strategic interests, and cultural ties. The cyclical nature of the US-India relationship indicates that it is based on mutual concerns, which are fundamentally important in foreign policy. This approach, while having some drawbacks in terms of developing better relations, ultimately leads to a more mature understanding of each other due to past experiences. Although the objectives of US-India relations have been divergent in their basic characteristics, the unique nature of both nations creates an intangible bond that ties them together despite extreme differences. This bond is founded on democracy, with one nation being the oldest and the other being the largest. Mistrust will always linger in US-India relations due to past experiences, but diplomacy and a deep understanding of each other's requirements will always keep the doors open for cooperation. The overall trajectory of the US-India relationship is positive, with both countries acknowledging the importance of their partnership in promoting stability within the region and around the world. As a result, the US-India foreign policy remains a crucial area of focus for policymakers in both nations.

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