

## **SECURITY CHALLENGES FACED BY THE MODI ADMINISTRATION IN THE INDO PACIFIC REGION:**

The arrival of Narendra Modi, in 2014, to the political forefront in Indian politics has attracted a great deal of attention recently by the western media. India is the world's largest democracy, and the 2014 elections, which brought Modi to power, was the biggest one that the country has ever seen. Jaskaran Teja writes 'Modi's administration intends to focus on providing clean and efficient governance, improving infrastructure, and building a strong, modern India for all its citizens (Shrestha Bharat)' (Teja, 2015, 375). Modi has also followed an active foreign policy and has visited countries as diverse as Japan, Bhutan, Australia and America within one year to facilitate bilateral ties between India and the countries that he has been visiting. None of India's earlier prime ministers have been as active and as decisive as Modi, when it comes to foreign policy. For instance, none of India's leaders had visited Australia in the last twenty eight years. The last time an Indian leader travelled down under was Rajiv Gandhi in 1986. Modi seems to have injected a new dynamism into Indian foreign policy, which is in contrast to the earlier prime minister, Manmohan Singh's government.

The rise of Modi as India's prime minister represents a decisive break from past politics. A challenge to Nehru-Gandhian dynastic politics was long overdue. The Nehru Gandhi leaders had dominated India's political landscape for more than six decades and their governments have often suffered from policy paralysis and high levels of corruption. They were unable to fulfil the needs and aspirations of a rapidly changing India with a huge rising middle class. However, now with Modi in power, there seems to be a lot more hope for people in India<sup>1</sup>. Some believe that India has finally won its 'real independence', and when asked, independence from what, many say independence from the dynastic politics associated with the Nehru-Gandhi family that ruled India for decades since 1947, the formal year when India became independent from Britain.<sup>2</sup> From his bold statements during his election campaign, it seems that Modi will be able to fill in that vacuum left by the earlier Congress leaders. It is of course too early to make an assessment of Modi's performance, because it has only been a bit more than a year since he has been in power, as India's prime minister. That said, one can still make some predictions for the next five years based on his performance so far.

It is the aim of this paper to look at some of the key security/foreign policy challenges that the Modi administration faces especially in the Indo Pacific region. The paper has a special emphasis on neighbouring countries like Pakistan and China, both of which have traditionally been enemies with India. Both countries have had problematic relations with India, ever since India gained independence from British colonial rule in 1947. Both countries have also been allies, and have tried to destabilise India, both individually as well as collectively, by joining hands together. The paper will start by looking at Modi and his role in South Asia, immediately after his swearing in ceremony in May, 2014. This will help to set the context. Then the paper will take a look at some of the key security concerns that India under the Modi administration faces in relation to Pakistan. The second half of the paper will have

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<sup>1</sup> Interviews carried out by the author in India, 2013, 2014, 2015.

<sup>2</sup> Interviews carried out in India, 2014/2015.

more of a focus on China. In the final analysis, certain predictions will be made with regard to some of the security concerns that this paper has raised. The paper also makes use of international relations theory, mainly realism and liberalism to understand Indo Pak relations and Sino Indian relations.

### **REALISM AND LIBERALISM AS IR THEORIES:**

The two theories which have dominated international relations and the academic discourse associated with it, since the Second World War, include realism and liberalism. Since these two explanations have been used in this paper as a theoretical framework to understand the security challenges faced by the Modi administration in the Indo Pacific region, they both deserve some attention.

Although realism as a theory gained in importance mainly after the Second World War, it has a long history. Realists go back as far as ancient and medieval times associating Realism with Thucydides, Machiavelli and Thomas Hobbes. Realists are by and large sceptical of the idea that universal moral principles exist, and therefore warn state leaders 'against sacrificing their own self interests in order to adhere to some indeterminate notion of ethical conduct' (Dunne and Schmidt, 2001, 163). Moreover, realists argue that the need for survival requires politicians and leaders to distance themselves from ethics and traditional understandings of morality, which attaches a lot of importance to values like compassion, piety and the greater good of mankind. Classical realists like Machiavelli thought that if state leaders adhered to ethical and moral values then this would adversely impact on interests of the nation. It was thus necessary for state leaders to go by a different kind of morality that suited the needs of the state, which was not in keeping with Christian values. Realists consider the state as the primary actor in international relations. This is often referred to as the state centric assumption of realism. Statism is the term given to the idea that the state is the legitimate representative of the collective will of the people. According to realists, outside the national/territorial boundaries of the state, there is a situation of anarchy. 'By anarchy what is most often meant is that international politics takes place in an arena that has no overarching central authority above the individual collection of sovereign states' (Ibid). In this situation of perpetual anarchy, states must rely on self-help. In the absence of a global government, states must rely on helping themselves, and the use of force becomes necessary. Each state is responsible for ensuring their own wellbeing and survival in this situation of on-going anarchy. In other words, states should not depend on other states and international organisations like the UN to ensure their own security. Thus, just to conclude this section on realism, it could be argued that those who take a realist approach towards IR, view the behaviour of states in the international system unfavourably. Individual states are only out for themselves. International politics is driven by an endless power struggle and fight between states, as to which state will dominate the world system. In such a context, justice, law or moral values have no place or at best should be circumscribed. The anarchical system forces all states to maximise their relative power position, and the use of force becomes necessary.

Liberalism as a theory is seen as a strong alternative to Realism. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, liberal thinking influenced policymaking elites and public opinion in a number of western states. 'Liberal values such as individualism, tolerance, freedom,

and constitutionalism can be contrasted with conservatism, which places a higher value on order and authority and is willing to sacrifice the liberty of the individual for the stability of the community' (Dunne, 2001, 186). Just because there is no overarching world body to enforce international law, that does not mean we live in a situation of constant anarchy, according to Liberals. Liberals seek to project values of order, liberty, justice and toleration into international relations. Both domestic and international institutions are required to protect and nurture these values. It is also believed by liberals that free trade would create a more peaceful world order since trade brings mutual gains to all the players irrespective of their size and the nature of their economies.

## **MODI AND SOUTH ASIA:**

One of the first things that Modi did, after coming into power was to invite heads of the SAARC countries to his swearing in ceremony. The SAARC is the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, which is headquartered at Kathmandu in Nepal, and it finally came into existence in 1985. The SAARC movement went through three distinct phases and was spearheaded by Bangladesh, primarily to check the rise of Indian hegemony in the South Asian region. The smaller countries of South Asia were feeling overwhelmed by neighbouring India, and hence many of them thought that a regional organisation in place would be able to check what they perceived as Indian oppression or Indian high handedness. Smaller countries in South Asia like Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka have feared India because of its demographic weight, military might and economic superiority. India is most certainly the most dominant force in the region. Although the SAARC was founded to economically integrate the region and deal with key security concerns, one of the real reasons as to why it came into existence was to check Indian dominance and pre-eminence in the region. Because of the on-going problems in South Asia, particularly between India and Pakistan over the disputed region of Kashmir, it took the countries of South Asia a long time to come together as a regional unit (Mukherjee, 2014, 373-381). And even after its founding, the SAARC has still been ineffective in dealing with interstate political tensions within the subcontinent. In the post second world war phase, other regions have founded their regional organisations at much earlier dates. For instance, the ASEAN, Association of South East Asian Nations, was founded in 1967. The reason why South Asia took so long to come together as a regional unit was not only because of the conflicts that plague the region both at the interstate level, but also because of the conflicts that have been taking place within the national territorial boundaries of each individual country. In relation to insecurity in South Asia Singh argues, 'The South Asian region has been suffering from governance deficit that has become the perennial source of insecurity for various regimes building a spiral of insecurity for the individual, society and state at large' (Singh, 2015, 98). In other words, the SAARC region or South Asia as a region is one of the least integrated parts of the world today because of on-going political tensions between countries, and also because of problems/insecurities which exist at the domestic level. Thus, it was a serious challenge to bring all the SAARC leaders together. But Modi successfully brought in all the leaders, including Pakistan's prime minister, Nawaz Sharif. So this was a good start for the new government. The only leader who could not attend the ceremony was Bangladesh's Sheikh Hasina, who had made earlier arrangements to visit Japan. The very fact that South Asian leaders were at least

making an effort, showed signs of cooperation, which is in keeping with liberalism. Of course one has to wait and see whether or not these initial signs of cooperation will ultimately lead to long lasting peace in South Asia.

Modi's decision to invite all the SAARC leaders was seen as a great move because it showed that he was trying to reach out to countries in South Asia, and since most of them attended or at least sent in their delegates for the swearing in ceremony, this showed that they too were reaching out to the Modi administration. Inviting the SAARC leaders was Prime Minister Modi's attempt to embed India within the South Asian regional matrix. To allow him to focus on domestic economic issues, especially with infrastructure development and manufacturing, which are the two areas that he's most keen on, he would need to have a much more stable, safe and secure neighbourhood/immediate neighbourhood. He thus started his new journey as prime minister by strengthening or at least by making an effort to strengthen neglected ties with his immediate neighbours, and has actively encouraged cross border economic linkages amongst different countries within the South Asian region. Countries with greater or higher levels of economic interdependence are obviously not likely to go to war with each other since it is likely to have an adverse knock on effect on its own economy if they do go to war (Segal, 1997, 235-249).

His first trip, after becoming Prime Minister, was to the Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan. By choosing Bhutan as his first destination outside India, the new prime minister signalled the immediate priority of India's Himalayan frontiers. Not only did he want to strengthen economic ties with Bhutan, but he also wanted to check Bhutan's gravitation towards China (Pant, 2014). Following Modi's visit to Bhutan was an official bilateral visit to Nepal, the first by an Indian prime minister in seventeen years (Teja, 2015, 376-377). Modi stressed on the historical and cultural commonalities which both India and Nepal shared. He also offered a substantial package of a billion dollars as aid to the earth quake stricken country. This approach that the Modi government took recently in relation to earth quake stricken Nepal is more in keeping with liberalism, which is strongly linked with moral and ethical values, as discussed earlier. This move made by the Modi government with regards to Nepal makes a clear shift from realism, which only talks about self-interest and protecting only one's own interests in the international arena. Realism argues that a state can only depend on itself during times of crisis, but India under Modi displayed compassion and generosity to Nepal, when the latter was recently hit by a devastating earthquake.

Modi has also displayed greater sensitivity towards Nepal's sense of national identity. Nepal is not a very large Himalayan country. It lies under India's shadow, and has over the years expressed its concern that it does not like being seen as an extension of India despite cultural commonalities and historical linkages. Some have clearly expressed that there is a distinct Nepali identity, which is different from that of the mainstream Indian identity, which has always loomed large, threatening the Nepali identity. Modi has reassured Nepal, that his administration will follow a policy of non-interference in Nepal's domestic matters and will also maintain good neighbourly relations. Furthermore, Modi's administration has also expressed an interest to help Nepal in its transformation into a constitutional democracy. Although Nepal has struggled with this transitional phase to a complete democracy, and sometimes it has been really hard, the Modi administration has reassured Nepal that it

will stand next to Nepal through thick and thin, as the country makes its transition to a democracy, and till it has acquired full democratic status. Current external affairs minister, Sushma Swaraj has followed Modi's bilateral visits up with visits to Nepal, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan and even to countries outside South Asia like Vietnam. She has also hosted the Sri Lankan foreign minister. She is expected to reassert her ministry's position in foreign policy decision making, which had been side-lined by the previous government.

### **THE AFPAK/AFGHANISTAN-PAKISTAN REGION AND MODI:**

The AFPAK region is a term in international relations which refers to the countries of Afghanistan and Pakistan collectively as a single theatre of operations in the post 9/11 phase. The term was coined by the Obama administration especially in the context of the global war on terror or what is also called overseas contingency operations. Let us now take a look at the situation in the AFPAK, focussing primarily on Pakistan. During the election campaign, some BJP candidates made some strong anti- Pakistan comments but Modi has been very careful not to do so. He was ready to write a new chapter in bilateral relations with Pakistan, provided Pakistan would stop launching terrorist attacks against India from Pakistani soil. Pakistan would first of all need to demonstrate its commitment towards peace. The new national security advisor, Ajit Doval, has made it clear that his focus will be primarily on counter terrorism and counter extremism especially pertaining to the immediate neighbourhood. The initial visit made by Pakistan's Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif to India was seen as a cordial visit but nothing ground breaking. Although it was a good start for the two countries, there have been internal developments within Pakistan which are likely to act as an impediment to better Indo Pak relations in the years to come for the Modi administration. Before we look at the internal developments that have taken place within Pakistan, it is also important to note that Pakistani leaders have met up with Kashmiri separatists before the first round of official level talks were even held, which obviously did not go down well with New Delhi. Thus, the policy to engage in dialogue with Pakistan is still in place.

In the immediate years, just before Modi came to power, from 2012 to the early months of 2014, Indo Pak relations have been quite strained. There are three issues which deserve special mention in this context. First of all, the ceasefire violations, have strained bilateral relations. Official India Pakistan peace talks have been stalled since 2013 due to the rise in ceasefire violations across the Line of Control, which divides the disputed state of Kashmir (Marino, 2014, 252). Each country has blamed the other for breaking and breaching the ceasefire, which has been in place since 2003. Secondly, India has also remained concerned about the slow pace of the Pakistani trial of the alleged conspirators in the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks. Thirdly, a reminder of the fragile state of regional South Asian security was the unsuccessful terror attack on the Indian consulate general in Herat, Afghanistan, which took place on the twenty third of May, 2014, just three days before Modi's inauguration. Afghanistan's Hamid Karzai has publicly stated that the Pakistan based Lashkar e Taiba terror group was involved in the attack. 'By supporting Islamists, Pakistan has sought to block the possibility of India gaining influence in Afghanistan and being able to threaten Pakistan's western border' (Siddique, 2014, 41). This has of course not stopped India from going ahead with its projects in Afghanistan. India is increasingly becoming concerned about what it perceives to be Pakistani attacks on

Indian assets in Afghanistan. India has been very involved in Afghanistan with its reconstruction and development since 2001.

In relation to Indian involvement in Afghanistan, well known Indian politician, Shashi Tharoor writes, 'India offers 675 scholarships a year to Afghan students. We are digging tube wells in six provinces, running sanitation projects and medical missions, and working on lighting up a hundred villages using solar energy. India has also given at least three Airbus planes to Afghanistan's fledgling national airline, Ariana. Several thousand Indians are engaged in development work. We are currently engaged in the construction of the Salma Dam across the Hari Rud river in Herat, and we are finishing the Afghan Parliament building, a visible and evocative symbol of democracy and of India's desire to see the Afghan people determine their own political destiny. During his May, 2011 visit to Afghanistan, Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh announced additional assistance of \$500 million, over and above India's existing commitments, which are now expected to cross the \$2 billion mark' (Tharoor, 2012, 92-93).

India's huge involvement in developmental activities in Afghanistan especially post 9/11 clearly shows that countries are not just out for themselves, which realists tend to believe. Some countries like India attach a lot of importance to ethical values and believe in helping poorer nations. Despite the fact that Afghanistan today is seen as a failed or failing state by the western world and as the hotbed of radical Islam, which is having negative implications for regional Asian security, India has shown much tolerance to neighbouring Afghanistan, and tolerance is one of the key facets of 20<sup>th</sup> century liberalism. India's example in Afghanistan also shows that it is not only the rich industrialised countries of the West who can offer aid to the poorer countries of the global south. Developing countries like India can also assist countries that are grappling with issues such as poverty and terrorism. Thus, international relations today is not just about furthering one's own national interests but is also about helping weaker nations. India's approach to Afghanistan has most certainly been a liberal one, particularly in the post 9/11 period. Indian humanitarian intervention in Afghanistan post 9/11 of course stands in contrast to the way the western world has intervened in Afghanistan, spearheaded by America.

When Indian assets in Afghanistan are attacked, India tends to blame Pakistan, but Pakistan has time and again rejected these charges arguing that New Delhi deliberately built up its influence and significant presence in the country since 2001 in an attempt to prevent Pakistan from gaining strategic depth there. Furthermore, India has been worried about the question of complete withdrawal of NATO troops from Afghanistan. New Delhi believes that once the NATO troops completely withdraw from Afghanistan, this will adversely impact on Indian security (Pant, 2014). India is concerned with the political vacuum, and how this will impact on Indian security and who will fill in that vacuum. The question of how Afghanistan will fare in the post withdrawal period will be another major security challenge for the Modi administration (Strategic Comments, 2014). Modi has also accused Pakistan of continuing to engage in the proxy war of terrorism against India, but Pakistan sees this as baseless rhetoric and has said that both countries should focus more on resolving territorial issues rather than engaging in a blame game. In the event of another Mumbai type attack it remains to be seen how Modi would follow through on his publicly stated policy on zero tolerance against both terrorism and extremism.

In a recent article that was published in the journal, *Washington Quarterly* by Frederic Grare, 'India-Pakistan Relations: Does Modi Matter?' Grare argues that for bilateral relations between the two countries to develop in a positive way, the main responsibility lies with Pakistan. For the situation to develop in a healthy way, the internal situation in Pakistan especially the civilian military relationship needs urgent attention (Grare, 2014, 101-114). Grare argues that Pakistan has always had a difficult civilian military relationship. This relation between the civilian political leaders and the Pakistani military and the Inter-Services Intelligence is a dysfunctional one (Ibid). Whilst the civilian leaders like Nawaz Sharif, who travelled to India for Modi's swearing in ceremony, want normalisation of relations with India, the Pakistani military and the men associated with the intelligence services have been opposing it (Ibid). Some believe that India under the Modi administration will pave the way for effective peace building measures between the two countries over the Kashmir issue, whereas others think that the Hindutva ideology or militant Hindu nationalism which Modi's government is often associated with, will act as an obstacle for the development of better relations between the two countries. Grare thinks better relations between the two countries will depend more on resolving the internal situation in Pakistan, and unless the difficult civilian military relationship is resolved within Pakistan, there is little that Modi or his administration can do with regards to the on-going conflict over Kashmir. Let us now take a look at this internal situation in Pakistan in some detail.

Pakistan has been ruled by the military for much of its existence since 1947 (Mukherjee, 2010, 67-77). In this context mention maybe made of Generals Ayub Khan, Yayha Khan, General Zia and Musharraf. Pakistan has struggled with democracy for a variety of reasons such as the strong presence of semi feudal elements in the country, due to the tremendous power and might of the military, because of the dismal state of the judiciary, because of the weakness of civilian leaders who did not even use the gaps in between military rule to establish a strong democratic government, and finally because America has supported the Pakistani military throughout the Cold War and post 9/11 period (Haqqani, 2006). The lack of strong democratic leaders during Pakistan's birth has allowed the military to take over major sectors in the country. T.V.Paul, writes, 'The major weakness of the Pakistani political order was the dearth of strong political leaders or political parties with a deep democratic sense or commitment' (Paul, 2014, 45).

In the words of ex-President of Pakistan, Pervez Musharraf, 'A brief political history of Pakistan shows how we have failed to create a true democracy' (Musharraf, 2006/8, 156). He further writes in his, 'In the Line of Fire, that, 'our dysfunctional democracy has caused us great grief, most hauntingly in the separation of East Pakistan in 1971' (Ibid, 155). He goes on to talk about the founder of Pakistan, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, whose death shortly after the creation of Pakistan has stopped or stunted the growth and progress that Pakistan could have made had he been alive. 'With his departure the infant state of Pakistan lost its lead politically, physically, metaphorically and even ideologically. We took nine years to finally produce a constitution in 1956, and even this constitution violated the basic tenet of one person, one vote' (Ibid, 156).

Musharraf himself has been responsible to a large extent for the lack of democracy in Pakistan. Accusing him of this, Benazir Bhutto writes, 'He suspended the constitution and arrested hundreds upon hundreds of party officials, human rights activists, lawyers, judges, and journalists. He suspended independent television. He banned print media that were critical of his military rule' (Bhutto, 2008, 157).

Since the military has been in power for so many years after Pakistan came into existence in 1947, they now have an entrenched position in education, transportation, communication, business and the corporate sector (Rizvi, 2000). It might seem that democratic forces are coming to the political forefront but the real power lies with the Pakistani military who still continue to rule the country from the side lines. It is what scholars like Rizvi call soft intervention, which means an indirect takeover. This means that although the military is not directly in power, it controls the country indirectly from the side-lines, or in more subtle ways. The military has pulled the strings from behind even when civilians have held power, to regain control over domains that they have always seen as theirs such as foreign policy and security. Civilian leaders have often been weak and have depended on the military for support during times of crisis. The military still has huge control over Pakistan's foreign policy decision making process and will not allow civilian leaders to make inroads into this area. The civilian leaders are more like puppets in the hands of the powerful military. This situation in Pakistan is often called political hybridity, which refers to an uneasy coexistence between democratic elements and authoritarian elements within the same political system. The relationship between the two sides is often very strained, with the civilian side being the more peaceful out of the two, but also quite weak, and the military generals being the stronger, although the more recalcitrant side.

Ever since Pakistan came into existence, state survival has been the main concern because of the internal pressures and the external challenges that the country has faced since 1947. The most threatening external challenge has been with neighbouring India over Kashmir, which is a contested area between India and Pakistan (Mukherjee, 2014, 44-54). The military elite in Pakistan have argued from the 50's that Pakistan's national identity will not be complete unless it captures the whole of Kashmir, since Kashmir is a predominantly Muslim region leaning against Pakistan's national frontier, and Pakistan is also a Muslim state. The Pakistani claim on Kashmir is thus an irredentist one. The Pakistani military has gone to war with India on four occasions primarily over Kashmir. It has also engaged in asymmetric warfare and has also encouraged terrorism related activities on its own soil to destabilise India. In addition to these policies, the Pakistani military has trained and sent insurgents to Kashmir, followed a policy of alignment with great powers such as China and the United States, and followed a policy of building up its arms against India particularly the acquisition of nuclear weapons. These policies taken up by the Pakistani military, to achieve strategic parity with India, is in keeping with realism as an international relations theory. Realists argue, 'that the need for survival requires state leaders to distance themselves from traditional morality which attaches a positive value to caution, piety, and the greater good of mankind as a whole' (Dunne and Schmidt, 2001, 163). Dunne and Schmidt further argue that 'it is largely on the basis of how realists depict the international environment that they conclude that the first priority for state leaders is to ensure survival of the state' (Ibid). Realists have argued that the basic structure of international politics is one of anarchy and under



anarchy the survival of the state cannot be guaranteed. All states, according to realists want to perpetuate their existence, and looking back at history realists note that the actions of some states resulted in other states losing their existence, which is what we see happening to Pakistan, particularly in relation to India. India assisted former East Pakistan in becoming independent and breaking away from West Pakistan. This is partly explained in the light of the power differentials which exist within the international system. Obviously states with more power stand a better chance of surviving than states with less power. India is more powerful than Pakistan in most parameters of national strength: demography, economy and also from a military standpoint. After former East Pakistan seceded from West Pakistan and became the independent country of Bangladesh in 1971, Pakistan was almost halved, and thus India became even stronger which the Pakistani military has always found unsettling and disturbing. 'Power is crucial to the realist lexicon and traditionally has been defined narrowly in military and strategic terms. It is the ability to get what you want either through threat or the use of force. Yet irrespective of how much power a state may possess, the core national interest of all states must be survival' (Ibid, 164).

Initially, when the Pakistani Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif visited Modi, this was seen as a good start although nothing ground breaking. The two sides had different interpretations of this early meeting. The Indian side viewed it as a signal that New Delhi was open to resetting relations, but on its own terms, most of which have to do with preventing terrorist attacks originating from Pakistan or at least with Pakistani support. From the Pakistani side, although initially the political leadership in Pakistan did welcome Modi's invitation and officially the leadership favours better relations with India, large sections within the political establishment at Islamabad still view New Delhi unfavourably. A large part of the problem lies in the difficult civilian military relationship within Pakistan. Whilst civilian leaders want peace, the more powerful army and the ISI are opposed to normalisation of relations with India, and there is stiff resistance. Even amongst Sharif's own constituency, there is no consensus if, when or how to move towards normalisation (Grare, 2014). The Pakistani military is currently busy on the western front dealing with the Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan, especially in the FATA/Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan, and hence it needs and is dependent on the civilian leadership to bring about normalisation with India over the Kashmir dispute. The military is incapable of confronting India at the moment because it is so actively involved in dealing with the insurgency across the AFPAK border. Shazadi Beg writes, 'The 2,250 km border between Pakistan and Afghanistan is increasingly becoming the decisive battleground in the fight against global terrorism' (Beg, 2009, 149). Men from all over the Muslim world have come to this region for training, and then they have gone out into the wider world to fight against what they perceive as oppression directed against Muslims (Mukherjee, 2013, 93). Well known South Asian security expert, Dilip Hiro, writes, 'after the Taliban's defeat in December, 2001, the semi-autonomous Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan along its border with Afghanistan became sanctuaries for fugitive Al Qaida and Taliban leaders' (Hiro, 2011). This is currently the main concern of the Pakistani military on the western front.

Nawaz Sharif and the Pakistani military are caught up in a zero sum game of sorts. Whilst Sharif is trying to turn a tactical rapprochement with India into a more permanent arrangement, the nature of which still needs to be defined, the military is

trying to prevent the reset of relations with India from affecting any of Pakistan's territorial claims over Kashmir (Grare, 2014). 'Sharif's Kashmir policy was interpreted as a shameful surrender of vital national interests' (Behuria, 2012, 76-77). Because of this dysfunctional relationship which the military and civilian leaders share within Pakistan, there is little that Modi can do with regards to improving Indo-PaK relations especially over Kashmir. Although Modi made several statements during his electoral campaign that he would not remain passive and could not afford to look weak in case of a Pakistani attack on Indian soil, his administration is more likely to adopt a wait and see approach. The issues that really matter here include Kashmir, the situation in Afghanistan and the question of whether or not Pakistan should grant India the Most Favoured Nation status in trade and economic relations. Many in Pakistan believe that the Most Favoured Nation status should be given to China. The reasons for choosing China are fairly obvious. China has been allies with Pakistan for the past few decades (Small, 2015). 'China has always had a special place in the affections of the Pakistanis with the slogan 'Chini-Pakistani bhai bhai/Chinese-Pakistanis brother- brother embodying it'(Ahmed, 2013, 291). In 2013, when Nawaz Sharif made normalizing relations with India a central part of his campaign, it was expected that India would get the 'Most Favoured Nation' status. Had this been the case, then trade between the two countries would have grown and there would have been more cooperation between India and Pakistan. Higher levels of economic interdependence could then have ultimately paved the way for future peace in South Asia. If this had worked out, the interactions between the two countries would have been more liberal. However, a substantial part of the business community in particular, small and medium sized enterprises seem to fear a massive arrival of cheaper Indian goods on the Pakistani market and this would of course overwhelm them and put them in a disadvantageous position. Their cause has been taken up further by the Pakistani military, which tends to take a more conservative/ realist approach with regards to India. But the debate of whether or not India should be getting 'Most Favoured Nation' Status is only partially a trade/economic issue. It is also seen as a domestic political issue. The main political parties support Nawaz Sharif's policy to grant 'Most Favoured Nation' status to India, but there is opposition and resistance from Islamist groups who continue to object to any economic dealings with India so long Kashmir remains under Indian control (Grare, 2014). Sharif seems to have underestimated the opposition of the military. Some of his party members believed that with the retirement of Ashfaq Parvaiz Kayani as COAS/Chief of Army Staff, this would usher in a gentler approach towards India in Rawalpindi, which is the seat of military power in Pakistan. But the appointment of Raheel Sharif, who has no family connections with Nawaz Sharif, as Kayani's replacement did not lead to any real change in the stance that the military is taking with regards to India. The dispute with the civilian government over the trade issue and whether or not India should be given Most Favoured Nation status is still on going. In 2014, Shabaz Sharif, Nawaz Sharif's brother accused the military of obstructing trade normalisation, asserting that distrustful security agencies on both sides of the border were preventing relations to become normal between India and Pakistan. A change or advancement in trade relations between the two countries is not likely. Earlier economic relations between India and Pakistan have been depressed. Finally, Grare argues that normalisation of Indo-Pak relations would depend primarily on improving civil military relations within Pakistan, since the Pakistani military remains the most influential objector to trade normalisation with India (Ibid).

## **CHINA AND THE MODI ADMINISTRATION:**

Let us now turn to Sino-Indian relations under the Modi administration. Before we move onto Modi's relations with China, it is important to note that with regard to Sino-Indian relations, there are two dominant schools of thought represented by the economists and by the security analysts. The economists take a more positive approach and believe that the two rising giants of Asia in a globalised world will benefit from trade with one another. In this context, mention maybe made of the concept of, 'Chindia', which refers to two separate but integrated economies (Mukherjee, 2014, 123-124). Over here the buzz word is complementarity, and not competition. Cooperation and economic interdependence is central to the concept of 'Chindia', which is in keeping with 20<sup>th</sup> century liberalism. The emphasis is on a win-win situation, and a symbiotic relationship between India and China. China is the world's number one in hardware, and India is the world's number one in software and information technology, so the two countries can actually benefit by exchanging their expertise with one another. However, security analysts view Sino-Indian relations unfavourably, and take a more realist/conservative approach, because of the on-going border tensions between the two countries. India and China have already been to war once in 1962, and the Indians were defeated badly (Gupta, 2014). Sensitive border issues still prevail, especially in Arunachal Pradesh, which is located in India's extreme northeast, in the eastern sector of the Himalayas.

Beijing lost no time in reaching out to Modi after he became Prime Minister. Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi visited New Delhi in June, 2014 as a special envoy of the Chinese president. He was sent to India to strengthen bilateral ties, and he saluted the new Indian government for injecting a new sense of dynamism into Indian administration. An early reach out to New Delhi was essential for the Chinese in case India gravitated towards an emerging anti-China coalition in the Asia Pacific region. Relations between China and other countries in the Asia Pacific, such as Japan, Vietnam and the Philippines have been deteriorating in recent times, so reaching out to India at an early date was important. The Chinese president, Xi Jinping, finally visited India in September, 2014. He promised that Indian companies and products especially those associated with the pharmaceutical, fuel and farming industries would have greater access to Chinese markets to reduce trade imbalances (Pant, 2014, 104). Modi had travelled to China four times when he was the Chief Minister of Gujarat, and much of Chinese investment in India is actually in Gujarat. With Gujarat keen to strengthen infrastructure cooperation and its manufacturing industry, the Chinese have invested heavily in telecoms, renewable energy and also in automobile parts. Due to this huge Chinese investment in India, it is believed that investment in other areas which were closed for so long due to security reasons will also open up especially in areas such as information technology and ports. Modi gave Xi Jinping a warm welcome in his home state of Gujarat in the city of Ahmedabad, before holding official level talks at New Delhi. China has offered to invest twenty billion dollars in India especially in infrastructure projects. Although this figure falls short of the Japanese offer, which was 35 billion dollars, it does represent a new high in transactional diplomacy, which is in keeping with the free trade and economic cooperation aspects of liberalism. Chinese investments will benefit Indian industrial parks in Gujarat and Maharashtra, both of which are in western India and have borders with the Arabian Sea. India is keen to benefit from China's development experience or what is often called the 'Chinese miracle'. India has also become a

member of the AIIB, which is the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, based in Beijing (Hall, 2015, 247-252). It is believed that Modi will be the new 'Nixon', and take Sino Indian relations to new glorious heights. What will facilitate the whole process is Modi's own personal philosophy and governance styles, which are quite similar to that of the Chinese. Recently, president Xi Jinping showed an interest to combine the world's factory and the world's back office, India being the outsourcing capital of not just South Asia, but also of the world. In other words, an interest has been expressed in marrying the muscle of the Chinese dragon with the wisdom of the Indian elephant. Also, China's state patronage for its infrastructure companies gives Chinese companies a more competitive edge over western companies. And because India is currently keen to invest more in infrastructure, China has become an attractive economic partner for India.

The concept of 'Chindia' and the current economic interdependence between India and China is in keeping with liberalism as an international relations theory. Unlike realism, which regards the international system as anarchic, liberals seek to project the values of order, liberty, justice, and toleration in international relations. The absence of a legitimate global authority with the power to enforce international law does not necessarily mean that we are in a perpetual state of war. Liberals believe that free trade would create a more peaceful world order. Trade brings mutual gains to all players irrespective of their size or the nature of their economies. Due to the expansion of capitalism and the emergence of a global culture, liberals have recognised a growing interconnectedness in which changes in one part of the international system is likely to have direct and indirect consequences for other parts of the international system and hence absolute state autonomy has been circumscribed by this growing economic interdependence especially in the post Second World War period. 'Such a development brought with it enhanced potential for cooperation as well as increased levels of vulnerability' (Dunne, 2001, 193). Liberals tend to focus on new actors and new international institutions such as transnational corporations, non-governmental organisations to carry out a number of functions that the state cannot perform (Ibid). In other words, new patterns of interaction and interdependence have been emerging in the post war period. According to neo liberals, these international institutions exert a force on the diplomatic relations between states, which lock them into cooperative arrangements. This applies especially to China since the late 70's when Deng opened up China's markets and liberalised the economy, and to India since the early 90's, which is when India liberalised its economy and embraced global market forces. Furthermore, both countries are now members of the AIIB/Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank, which is an international financial institution, headquartered in Beijing.<sup>3</sup> Another similar example of an international financial institution, where both India and China are members is the BRICS bank or the New Development Bank BRICS [Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa].<sup>4</sup> The New Development Bank BRICS formerly referred to as the BRICS Development Bank is a multilateral development bank operated by the BRICS as an alternative to the existing American dominated World Bank and IMF. Although headquartered in Shanghai, China, the president is an Indian, Mr. K.V. Kamath.

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<sup>3</sup> [www.aiib.org/html/pagemembers](http://www.aiib.org/html/pagemembers) (Accessed, 06.12.2015).

<sup>4</sup> <http://ndbbrics.org> (Accessed, 06.12.2015).

Despite the hope and optimism for better economic relations in future between the two countries, there are still on-going border problems especially in the state of Arunachal Pradesh, in the remote Indian northeast. As already mentioned, India and China have been to war already in 1962. The Chinese see the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh as a part of south Tibet, and not as a part of Indian territory. The Chinese do not recognise the MacMohan Line, which is meant to be the effective boundary between India and China. The MacMohan Line was a boundary line agreed to, during the times of British rule in India, as a part of the Shimla Accord, 1914. The line forms the northern boundary of Arunachal Pradesh in the eastern Himalayas, administered by India, but claimed by the Chinese. Arunachal Pradesh was also the main focus of the 1962 war. The other important boundary line in this context is the Line of Actual Control, which separates Indian held lands from Chinese controlled territory. It is the effective border between the two countries and is over 4000 kilometres long. On the Indian side, it passes through five states which include Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim and finally Arunachal Pradesh. On the Chinese side, it passes through the Tibetan Autonomous Region. Furthermore, China has been active in helping insurgents and militant groups in India's northeast. India's northeast has seen multiple layers of conflict since India gained independence from British colonial rule in 1947 (Bajpai, 2002, 62-63). For instance, separatist tendencies in the Indian northeast have been very strong, and many of these separatist groups have been involved in acts of political violence and terrorism in the region since 1947 (Mukherjee, 2014, 149-170). China has played a crucial role in training many of these militant insurgent groups and has also provided many of them with arms and ammunition in order to destabilise India, which it has often seen as a threat (Lintner, 2012, 40).

Now let us move to the Modi administration and the border dispute with China. Despite all the euphoria and excitement and talks on economic bilateral ties, security issues have intruded, whilst Modi and Xi have been carrying out their talks. Whilst the economics between India and China look good and are in keeping with liberalism, there are still on-going border problems between the two countries and here India can only take the more realist approach of self-help. Survival becomes a key concern for India when the Chinese carry out their expansionist policy in the eastern sector of the Himalayas. Whilst talks have been going on, more than two hundred Chinese soldiers entered the disputed Kashmir province at Chumur in Ladakh. They started building a road there, which forced the Indian establishment to send in their troops before it escalated into something more threatening. Around the same time, the Chinese have objected to an irrigation canal being built at Demchock, about eighty kilometres away, and sent in hundreds of Chinese civilians to carry out protests against the activities of Indian civilians. Modi has spoken quite openly about China's policy of territorial aggrandisement and of having a mind-set of expansion. Chinese assertiveness along the Line of Actual Control is likely to make the Modi administration more active, and step up developmental activities to counter Chinese territorial expansion. A build-up of Indian naval forces is also likely to take place. The boundary dispute which clearly figured in bilateral official talks amid reports of Chinese troops crossing over into the Indian side while Xi was in New Delhi cast a shadow on Xi's visit, which compelled India to remind China of respecting the Sino-Indian boundary. Although both sides are willing to maintain peace at the border, China has made it clear to India that it is still not ready to clarify where the boundary

actually is. Although Modi has pressed for an early clarification, Xi would not go beyond friendly consultations. Soon after Xi left, the Chinese soldiers who had entered Indian territory also withdrew.

However, again in March, 2015, the Indian army reported an increase in activity by the Chinese army at a frontier site in Arunachal Pradesh, where the two sides often come eye to eye. The 'transgression' or offence was reported on the day when both countries had their special representatives holding a meeting for border talks (Special Correspondent, 2015). The special representative from the Chinese side was China State Councillor, Yang Jiechi. Ajit Doval, the new National Security Advisor represented the Indian side. It is believed by many in the Indian security establishment that border skirmishes tend to happen when high profile visits take place. One account said that a Chinese patrol had come into Indian territory near the place where the river Subansiri enters Arunachal Pradesh. Although China disputes the MacMohan Line itself, both sides acknowledge that some spots on the line see more 'transgressions' than others (Ibid). The March, 2015 talks were the first time the two countries met after Xi and Modi's meeting. The governments of the two countries are considering a proposal to establish telephone hotlines or direct communication links between the army and commanders of the two countries to resolve local disputes (Special Correspondent, 2015). No decision has been made yet. India also plans to set up mini passport issuing offices not just in Arunachal Pradesh, but also throughout the rest of the northeast which has been conflict stricken since the fifties. The Modi government also decided on a summer 2015 schedule to establish PSK's, Passport Seva Kendras in all the north eastern states of India (Kasturi, 2015). These centres will serve like traditional passport offices and would be served by a small staff, but offering all key passport related services. Senior officials have mentioned that this was not being done to provoke China but to make the point that India had no problem in asserting her rights over territory that rightfully belonged to India (Ibid). Sushma Swaraj, the current foreign minister has also stressed that she wanted passport offices in the Indian northeast as soon as possible. Guwahati, which is the main city in the northeast, in the state of Assam, has had a long standing passport office, but other states in the same region like Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and Meghalaya have never had PSK's, and so Swaraj made it clear that this deserved urgent attention.

China's behaviour in recent years has been very disturbing for India, and once addressing an election rally in Arunachal Pradesh, which borders China, Modi had emphasised on the point that China needs to shed its expansionist policies. Former Indian Army Chief, Vijay Kumar Singh has been made a minister in Modi's cabinet with the special responsibility of looking after India's northeast and north eastern affairs. Though India has been trying to strengthen its border security and defences against China for some time now, the whole process has lacked direction. Thus, Singh wants to prioritise development in the northeast to narrow the gap with Chinese infrastructure development on the other side of the border. China lays claim to more than 90, 000 square kilometres of land disputed by New Delhi in the eastern sector of the great Himalayan mountain range, which acts as a natural barrier between the two rising giants. For the first time, a young member of parliament from Arunachal Pradesh, Kiren Rijiju, has received a key ministerial position in the cabinet-Union Minister of State for Home Affairs-to place emphasis on Modi's intention of making India's troubled northeast a priority. Rijiju, in particular has been extremely

outspoken about the need to consolidate India's defences in the northeast vis-a-vis China (Pant, 2014, 104).

Thus, the two main issues between India and China are over trade and border issues. However, in political strategic terms there is another issue: conflicting spheres of influence in the Indo Pacific, especially in the Indian Ocean area. This third area of Sino Indian competition is not strictly a bilateral issue but rather a part of the broader question of increasing Chinese strategic influence in the Indian Ocean. This raises the issue of greater attention to India's naval power in its own backyard as well as cooperation between other more friendly nations in building a stronger naval and coastal infrastructure. The Indian navy currently needs urgent attention to counter China's rise in its own backyard. India's navy needs urgent modernisation. India's position has also weakened in the region because it has failed to build an adequate maritime infrastructure in the Bay of Bengal. India needs to pay more attention to the Indian Ocean area. For instance, it could consider its own naval spice route to protect oil supplies and trade links with the Middle East as a counter to China's, string of pearls strategy. The string of pearls strategy is a geo political theory associated with Chinese intentions in the Indian Ocean along its sea links of communication. Aware of India's concern, China has proposed the BCIM corridor, referring to Bangladesh, China, India and Myanmar. Xi has offered to work with the Modi administration to develop the BCIM corridor and to discuss initiatives of reviving the ancient silk route. India has not responded to this with great enthusiasm. In March, 2015, Modi departed on a five day neighbourhood island hopping trip-covering the Seychelles, Sri Lanka and Mauritius (Kasturi, 2015). This was Modi's attempt to join hands and collaborate with friendlier nations in the Indian Ocean to counter Chinese hegemony. In this context, Modi has also taken a more realist approach with regards to China.

Modi has also been active in courting China's neighbours. For instance, he invited the political head of the Tibetan government in exile, Lobsang Sangay, for his swearing in ceremony. Modi's trips to Nepal, Myanmar and his governments outreach to countries like Sri Lanka are indicative of his intention to seize the initiative back from China in India's neighbourhood (Pant, 2014, 93-112). Modi has been much more confident than the earlier government led by Manmohan Singh in its relations with China. This has clearly shown China that India is not without options in a rapidly changing and evolving geo strategic context. This has most certainly gone a long way in increasing India's geo strategic space in the Indo-Pacific region, which Modi hopes to leverage in his engagement with China. Modi has already started a process of reengaging with India's immediate neighbours. He has given a new sense of purpose to India's ties with like-minded states like Vietnam, Japan and Australia. At a time when China has alienated most of its neighbours with its aggressive rhetoric and actions, India has a unique opportunity to expand its own profile in the region, and work pro-actively with other like-minded states to ensure a stable regional order or a stable balance of power in the Indo Pacific. China is quite clearly too powerful to be ignored, but states in China's neighbourhood are now seeking to expand their strategic space by reaching out to other both regional and global powers. Whilst smaller states in the Asia Pacific, like Vietnam look up to India as a balancer, which can check the rise of Chinese hegemony in the region, the bigger or more powerful states like Japan see India as an attractive engine for regional growth. So, whilst liberalism helps us to understand Sino Indian economic relations, which seems to be very positive, especially in the post 2000 phase, realism as a theory gives us more of

an insight into the darker side of the relationship, focussing primarily on the on-going border problems between the two rising giants.

### **CONCLUDING REMARKS:**

In conclusion, it could be said that Modi's administration is most certainly a very active one in the area of foreign policy, and much more confident than that of the earlier government, led by Manmohan Singh. Modi's politics is a clear break from that of the past. This is a much more decisive and confident government, which has injected a new sense of dynamism in Indian foreign policy. The very fact that no Indian leader had visited Australia in 28 years or Nepal in 17 years shows how dormant or inactive Indian foreign policy has been over the past few decades. Modi has travelled widely for the past one year and has made an attempt to strengthen good relations with countries not just in the Indo Pacific, but all over the world. He has taken the initiative to reach out to countries in the immediate neighbourhood and in the Indo Pacific region. The new external affairs minister, Sushma Swaraj has also reasserted the position of her ministry's office, which had been side lined by the previous government. Members from Modi's inner circle like Swaraj and Vijay Kumar Singh have been active in trying to find a solution to the on-going conflict in the Indian northeast, and border issues with China. Of course, whether or not their policies will be successful is something that we will need to wait and see. With regards to China, Modi has openly talked of Chinese territorial expansion and has started to take concrete steps to insulate India from the adverse effects of China's military modernisation and expansion. But at the same time, he has also made it clear that he would work to woo Chinese investments in India. At the heart of his foreign policy lies economics, and Modi has courted East Asian states to build factories in India and to invest more in infrastructure. Hopefully, better economic relations would have a positive knock on effect on regional security issues.

Relations with Pakistan, are however, still problematic. There is little that Modi can do unless the dysfunctional relationship between the military and civilian government in Pakistan gets resolved. There is also increasing apprehension in New Delhi as to what will happen in Afghanistan after the complete withdrawal of the NATO forces. It is true that India's immediate neighbourhood lacks a security community and the current state of South Asian regional security is still very fragile. But after his swearing in ceremony on the 26<sup>th</sup> of May, 2014, Modi has made a positive effort to reach out to his neighbours, and they in turn have also made an effort to reach out to him. It could be argued that although India's future is still fraught with uncertainty, particularly in relation to Pakistan and China, based on Modi's performance so far, this is an exciting time and a good time to be in India. From my own visits to India in the years 2014 and 2015, there is a lot of hope amongst the common people, who believe that in the long run Modi will make a difference. In the final analysis, when we apply international relations theory to understand India's relations with Pakistan and China, realism primarily helps us to understand Indo Pak relations, and both liberalism and realism gives us an insight into Sino Indian relations.



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