

Profitable Partners: Theorising the relationship between India and the United States since the end of the Cold War

Introduction

The relationship between India and the United States of America has changed considerably since the end of the Cold War. The Cold War bipolarity of international politics meant that a state such as India was pressured strongly by both the USSR and the USA, but more strongly by the USA, to join their respective 'bloc'. India's resistance to this, and its stated policy of 'non-alignment' led to considerable resentment on the part of the Americans. American military aid to a more pliant Pakistan, much of which was used against India in various conflicts between New Delhi and Islamabad, along with prevailing Indian suspicion of American capitalism and hegemonic ambitions, meant that the two democracies remained estranged throughout the Cold War (Kux, 1993). Since 1991, the relationship has changed considerably, such that by 2001 leaders from both countries were describing the two as "natural allies" (Vajpayee, 2000) (Powell, 2001). The two countries now boast excellent bilateral relations, with a large degree of cooperation on a number of issues. Relations between India and the US are to a far greater extent independent of the US-Pakistan bilateral relationship than was the case before 1991, though they are by no means completely so. The extent of the transformation in the bilateral relationship can be seen from the words of George W. Bush in a farewell address to members of the State Department: "We opened a new historic and strategic partnership with India" (Bush, 2009).

This relationship, and a proper understanding of it, is hugely important. The USA remains the dominant global power in 2010, the only state capable of projecting its power across the world. India, along with China, is one of the two biggest countries in the world by

population, with one of the world's fastest-growing economies. It will undoubtedly be one of the most important bilateral relationships of the 21st Century. It is therefore vital that the motivations for this deepening relationship are properly understood, whether they be security concerns related to other states such as China, the desire for mutual economic gain, or because of an understanding of shared values between the two nations. This paper will argue that though the rhetoric concerning India-US relations should not be taken at face value, to view this relationship simply through the structural lens of neo-realist theory would be to misunderstand it. I will argue that the relationship cannot be viewed purely as a systemic reaction to the rise of China. This case study cannot be understood solely through the application of one single theoretical framework, rather understanding it requires an approach that draws on liberal and post-positivist traditions in international relations, as well as on a broader realist tradition than simply neo-realism. I will argue that the theoretical tradition with the most explanatory power with respect to this case study is that of liberalism. This paper will argue that the desire for profit is at the heart of the improvement in Indo-US relations, and that this should not be ignored by scholars or politicians adhering blindly to neo-realism, a structural theory focused on security concerns.

Research Methodology

The crux of the research for this paper, in addition to a comprehensive analysis of the secondary literature, available governmental policy documents and public statements, consisted of ten semi-structured interviews with key informants. These interviews were carried out in New Delhi during a two week period and were crucial to my analysis of the problem and the assessment of my research hypotheses. The aim of these interviews was to gather qualitative data on Indian foreign policy making with respect to the United States from those who were

involved in observing, and in some cases implementing that policy. Additionally, the interviews also yielded insights into the perspectives and practices of American foreign policy with respect to India, and the way in which these were perceived in New Delhi.

My interviewees comprised two prominent journalists, with the other eight all part of what can be termed the Indian security community. The two journalists were Indrani Bagchi from the *Times of India* and Pramit Pal Chaudhuri from the *Hindustan Times*. All of the other eight are currently based at Indian think tanks, all but one in New Delhi. Two have military backgrounds, these are retired Major Generals Katoch and Banerjee, while two others are former officers with the Indian Foreign Service, C.V. Ranganathan, who served as the Indian Ambassador to China and G. Parthasarathy, formerly the Indian High Commissioner to Pakistan. V. Krishnappa is currently a Research Fellow at the Institute for Defence Studies & Analyses (IDSA) in New Delhi. P.R. Chari is a Research Professor at the Institute of Peace & Conflict Studies (IPCS), and was formerly a high ranking member of the Indian Administrative Service, serving in the Ministry of Defence. Bharat Karnad is perhaps India's strongest exponent of a realist foreign policy and is a Professor at the Centre for Policy Research. He was also a member of the first National Security Advisory Board of the National Security Council, set up in 1998. The last interviewee to mention is K. Subrahmanyam, arguably the most prominent strategic affairs analyst in India, a former member of the Indian Civil Service, and long the strongest voice in India in favour of the acquisition of a credible nuclear deterrent.

In addition to interviews with key informants, the other methodological tool used for this paper is a comprehensive analysis of the available secondary literature. Of particular influence has been the work of C. Raja Mohan on Indo-US relations (Mohan, 2006), as well as the description of Indian diplomatic practices by Stephen Cohen (Cohen, 2001) and the work on India's strategic culture by Kanti Bajpai (Bajpai, 2002). I have also sought to compare the evidence presented in the literature with the qualitative data collected in my interviews. This

paper also required a thorough analysis of the broader framework of international relations theory, in particular, that of neorealist theories of international politics, as well as its liberal and post-positivist critics. Of particular importance is the work of the founder of neo-realist theory, Kenneth Waltz (Waltz, 1979), and of neo-liberal critics of Waltz such as Keohane and Nye (Keohane & Nye, 2001).

This study is arranged as follows: I will first give an overview of neo-realist theory, followed by an account of its main competitors in international relations theory, which are constructivism and liberalism. Next I will describe the account of the Indo-US relationship offered by neo-realism, and show that this account is lacking in several important respects. I will then discuss the role played by democratic values in this relationship, and argue that these do not constitute its positive substance, though they do prevent the two countries fearing one another. I will then examine the role of individual leaders in Indo-US relations, followed by a discussion of the importance of economic links between the two countries and the significance of the Indian diaspora, none of which are properly accounted for in neo-realist theory. My contention is that this is a relationship built on profit and mutual gain, which can only be understood through a liberal analysis of the relationship.

Neo-realism and its critics

Neo-realism is intended to be a theory of the international system, not the entirety of international relations. Kenneth Waltz, its key early exponent, seeks to explain why states exhibit similar foreign policy choices despite differing internal organisation, leadership and stated ideologies (Waltz, 1979). As with other forms of realism, he suggests that states act in their own self-interest in order to survive. The theory he expounds suggests that the underlying structure of the international system is the primary determinant of state behaviour, unlike

classical realism, which suggests that the constraints in international politics ultimately derive from human nature. It presents an international system defined by anarchy, which imposes the need for accumulation of power as a structural requirement on states, and ensures that different states will behave in a similarly rational way. This ensures that outcomes will fall within a predictable range, with policy differences between states resulting from different power and capabilities. Anarchy in the international system and hierarchy within states are seen as a strict dichotomy (Donnelly, 2000). Neo-realism clearly posits the state as the central, indeed sole, unit of analysis, and it does not 'look inside' these units. These units act in a predictable manner because of the structural constraints with which they are faced, and which they are not capable of transcending in order to produce different kinds of behaviour.

A neo-realist explanation of the decision by India and Pakistan to test nuclear weapons in 1998 is that the similar behaviour from two states with very different internal structures derived from the impossibility of rule enforcement in the international system, due to its prevailing anarchy. Waltz argued that the primary goal of states is to maximise their relative power in order to ensure security (Waltz, 1979). Thus, states will seek to balance against the greatest external threat, by forming short-term alliances with other states similarly threatened. States that do not exhibit balancing behaviour for any period of time will be punished by the nature of the system and will return to this type of behaviour as a result.

Neo-realist theory suggests that the relationship between India and the United States will be determined by the nature of the international system. A neo-realist analysis would point to the rise of China, a power that poses a threat to the US due to its size and rapid increase in capabilities, as well as to India, due to the fact that the two countries share a disputed border and because China is the principal threat to Indian regional hegemony in South Asia. Neo-realist theory suggests that the US, as the primary hegemon in the international system, is anxious to retain its pre-eminence and thus will seek to contain the rise of China (Mearsheimer,

2001). The only power with the potential to really compete with China at a regional level and thus check its ability to challenge American power globally is India, due to its comparable population and similar economic growth rates, albeit from a far lower base. Neo-realism would not predict a long-term alliance or ‘bandwagoning’ by India, nor does the theory give any credence to rhetoric about ‘natural allies’, particularly as such rhetoric is based on shared values and the use of similar democratic internal organisation by the two states. Neo-realism suggests that the growing closeness between India and the US will endure as long as similar conditions prevail in the international system. If China ceased to be a threat, or India and the US to be useful to one another in increasing their relative power within the system, or the two began seeing the other as a threat to their security based ambitions, the relationship would not continue in the way that it does currently.

The recent rhetoric from the leadership of the two countries suggests the stronger challenge to neo-realism with respect to this case study will come from the constructivist school of international relations. Constructivist theories are post-positivist, they suggest that the social world exists in the way it does because people believe it does and act accordingly (Adler, 1997). Relations between states are guided by intersubjectively shared ideas, norms and values held by actors. Shared ideas create ideational structures that constrain and shape behaviour. This is very different to the materialist capabilities that are emphasised by structural realism, where the international system is a brute fact. Constructivism suggests that “anarchy is what states make of it” (Wendt, 1992), that states and peoples can choose to act differently to the strategy predicted by neo-realism of self-interested power maximisation. It also allows for the possibility that states will view capabilities very differently, for example nuclear weapons, depending upon their perspective of the state that holds them.

A classic empirical work that suggests the importance of such perceptions is Harold Isaacs’ *Scratches on Our Minds* (Isaacs, 1980). Published originally in 1958, it is based on a

series of interviews with almost two hundred American 'leadership types' held by Isaacs in 1954 and 1955 in which he questioned them about their views of the Indians and Chinese. Though his methodology and candidate selection was by no means scientific, Isaacs' results make fascinating reading. They suggest that the Chinese, despite China becoming a Communist country not long before, were viewed far more favourably than the Indians. Additionally, the work of Isaacs hints at the impact this may have had upon American foreign policy, with various diplomats and politicians describing Indians as more or less generally "inscrutable" or "dishonest", with one US Senator tellingly suggesting that he was "far more impressed with the sincerity of the Pakistanis." With respect to the case study here of the Indo-US relationship, many constructivist analyses are possible, but one possible thesis, seemingly endorsed by the words of policymakers, suggests that the relationship has warmed due to the fact that the two countries and their leaderships perceive a commonality of values between them. Thus, the status of the United States as the world's oldest and most powerful liberal democracy, and India's as the world's largest liberal democracy, is suggested to be an important reason for the two countries to work together. The rise of India is thus welcomed by the United States, in a way that the rise of China is not, as the Indian and American ideologies are perceived to be compatible. India and the United States can thus be expected to support one another, even when this involves sacrificing narrowly defined national interests.

Another challenge to neo-realism comes from liberal theories of international relations. The liberal tradition in international relations theory originated with the efforts of Woodrow Wilson and others at the end of the First World War to try to create a new international politics in which states would choose to cooperate rather than compete, thus avoiding war; the logical endpoint of competition. Among its core assumptions are the importance of individuals and private groups, rather than simply seeing international politics as the battleground of like units in the form of states. Additionally, liberal theory argues that a state's domestic politics is

crucial to the foreign policies that it practices in international politics, as well as the exogenous circumstances that a state finds itself in (Moravcsik, 2003). The preferences of a state are thus an open question, not completely set by the international system, as argued by neo-realism. The behaviour of states towards each other emerges from the configuration of preferences of all states interacting with one another.

An important point to consider when analysing this case study is the fact that liberalism allows for the causal efficacy of the 'low politics' of economic links between private individuals, businesses and other organisations, as well as for the possibility of states achieving, and being interested in achieving, absolute gains as well as relative gains vis-à-vis other states. Neo-realism does not allow that any of the above could have played a role in Indo-US relations, only that the behaviour of the two states towards each other will have determined by circumstances exogenous to each, namely the situation of the international system, and the desire of each to maximise their relative power within that system in order to boost their security. It is not necessary to espouse a completely idealist theory in order to allow the assumptions above. Neo-liberal theories of international relations accept the anarchic nature of the international system and the continuing importance of the rational state as the primary unit in the international system. However, neo-liberalism emphasises the 'complex interdependence' that exists between societies, with multiple channels other than the official state level contacts and multiple agendas other than simply the desire to gain and exercise military power (Keohane & Nye, 1977).

It is my contention in this paper that neo-liberalism has far greater explanatory power than neo-realism in analysing the relationship between India and the United States. This is primarily because of the richness and multitude of contacts between the two societies, and because the impact of the security threat faced by each with respect to China and the rest of the international system is overstated as a factor in Indo-US relations. The arguments of post-

positivist theorists have some application to this case study, as my research indicates that the perception of common values based on the status of each country as democracies acts as a safeguard on the part of each that they need not see the other as a threat. Though this view is not universally held, it is repeatedly suggested by analysts as well as politicians that the rise of India is not feared by America, and that India does not see the US as a military threat.

Neo-realism and the Indo-US relationship

A neo-realist analysis of the relationship between India and the United States argues that the crucial factor in the improvement of the relationship is the rise of China and the perception by both countries that this is a threat to their security. The rise of China has been the most important change to the balance of power in the international system since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991. Neo-realism suggests that the Indo-US relationship is built on the fact that each country sees the other as a vital hedge against the threat posed by China. This conception sees the emergence of India and China as powers leading to a triangular relationship between these two and the United States. It might be expected that India and China would work together to balance the power of the US, as the US is still the dominant power in the international system, and thus surely the greatest threat to India and China's ability to maximise their own power. The key reason why this possibility is not examined at length here is that China and India are, and will be for the foreseeable future, much greater rivals in a security sense due to their proximity and recent history than are India and the US. China and India share thousands of miles of border, areas of which are disputed. There was a war between the two countries in 1962, memories of which are still strong and there is a clear struggle between the two for primacy in South Asia. It is for these reasons, which are related to security concerns, that neo-realist theorists do not expect the two to cooperate to balance against the

United States. Likewise, China and the United States have no reason to hedge against the rise of India by working together, at least at this stage, as India is comfortably the weakest of the three powers, and because of the security related tensions between China and the United States. Neo-realist theory suggests that India and the United States will cooperate due to their mutual fear of Chinese power, and that this is the reason for the improvement in Indo-US relations since the Cold War.

An explicit argument for closer cooperation between the United States and India in order to prevent China from wresting control of the balance of power can be found in an article written in 2000 in the run up to the Presidential election in the US by Condoleezza Rice. After the election, she became Bush's National Security Adviser, and after the 2004 election, his Secretary of State. She argued that "India is an element in China's calculation, and it should be in America's, too. India is not a great power yet, but it has the potential to emerge as one" (Rice, 2000). This article was referenced by Strobe Talbott, former US Deputy Secretary of State, in 2005 as part of his criticism of the Indo-US Nuclear Deal. He suggested that there was "an important, though officially muted Chinese subtext" to the agreement (Talbott, 2005). This was echoed by critics of the Deal in India, with the left wing writer Siddharth Varadarajan arguing that the Deal is an attempt to use India's nuclear weapons to "tether" China and bring India into an anti-Chinese alliance led by the US (Varadarajan, 2005).

My interviewees were emphatic in stating that the rise of China should not be seen as the only factor in the growing closeness between India and the United States, or even as the primary factor, certainly not from the Indian side at least. Some suggested that it was almost irrelevant to the Indo-US relationship, while others suggested that it is just one of a number of motivating factors between India and the US. Moreover, as Perkovich points out, India clearly has national interests, primarily commercial but also strategic, in having good relations with China as well as with the United States (Perkovich, 2005). Such unwillingness to join explicit

alliances has a tradition in post-Independence India, with the country having remained formally non-aligned throughout the Cold War, though towards the end of it India was much closer to the Soviet Union than to the United States. It is therefore unsurprising that the Indo-US relationship is a mutually beneficial partnership, but that the countries are not allied to one another, they still have differences of opinion over certain questions, though without the mutual hostility that characterised the relationship prior to 1991. India's national interest is to continue to grow, primarily in an economic sense but also in leveraging greater global political power. US assistance in a number of different ways is seen as instrumental to achieving these goals, which means that India will also consider American interests when conducting its foreign policy, but this is not the same as India becoming the junior partner in a US led alliance aimed at containing the rise of China.

It is worth discussing briefly Sino-Indian relations here. The India relationship to China is very insubstantial by comparison to the one between India and the United States. The state to state aspect of the relationship is considerably more important than in the India-US relationship, because that is almost all there is to it. There are very few people to people connections outside of official channels and very few citizens from either country are resident in the other. The development of India-China relations since 1991 has been largely positive, there has been no conflict beyond minor incursions on the disputed border areas. As mentioned above, there has been considerable expansion in bilateral trade, with China now India's largest trading partner. Experts on the Indo-Chinese relationship suggest that the Indian government is very keen to continue improving relations with and that the Indian elite certainly do not see China as the main factor in the warming of the Indo-US relationship.¹ Additionally, the progress that has occurred in the India-China relationship in recent years should not be taken lightly, such as the 'confidence building measures' (CBMs) that have been taken by the two

¹ Phone interview with C.V. Ranganathan, Indian Ambassador to China from 1987-1991, 31st May 2010

sides since Rajiv Gandhi's visit to China in 1988. The same source argued strongly that CBMs have been "far from window dressing", but rather represent substantial progress.² These have included advance notification of military exercises close to the border by both sides, as well as regular meetings between military commanders and mutual troop reductions. Thus, it does not seem to be a fair analysis to suggest that Indo-US relations can have been solely driven on the Indian side by the perception of China as a security threat that must be balanced. Another noted China analyst in India, Major General Banerjee, suggested that Beijing does fear a US-India alliance, more so than any other bilateral alliance. However, he also argued that Indian diplomacy has been "extremely even-handed" and that this alliance has not and will not come to pass.³

There is little doubt that India and the United States have a common interest in security questions, as is evidenced by the increase in intelligence sharing and defence cooperation between their respective militaries. Such cooperation on security questions is continuing to grow, with an inaugural Strategic Dialogue meeting to be held between the US Secretary of State and the Indian Minister of External Affairs in June 2010 (Hindustan Times, 2010). The fact that such high level dialogues now take place between figures of equal rank on the two sides shows the level to which America is interested in engaging with India. These kinds of policy dialogues are further evidence of the desire of both countries for a pragmatic relationship and confirm seem to confirm the view, expressed by Kanti Bajpai that "it is in respect to relations with the United States that Indian official policy is most neoliberal... particularly in the security realm" (Bajpai, 2002).

One of the crucial enabling factors for closer cooperation between India and the United States is that there is are few significant disagreements between the countries, particularly after

² Ibid.

³ Personal Interview with Maj. General Banerjee (Retd.), Director of the IPCS, 30th March 2010, New Delhi

the Nuclear Deal effectively sanctioned India's status as a nuclear power, whilst also preventing further testing on the part of New Delhi. The significance of the agreement of the Nuclear Deal in 2005 is disputed. Opponents of the deal suggest that it compromised India's sovereignty and room for manoeuvre in making foreign policy. Among its supporters, some have claimed that it was a hugely important step, likely to lead to greater cooperation than would have been possible without it, while others have argued that it is merely representative of the underlying dynamics of the relationship, a sign pointing the way. Certainly the Nuclear Deal has allowed the Indo-US relationship to progress in other areas without being held back by concerns about future sanctions, those imposed in 1998 by the US on India inhibited high technology trade between the two countries before they were gradually lifted. One foreign policy expert summed this up by arguing that the Deal removed the main "irritant" in the India-US relationship.⁴ This again bespeaks a pragmatic diplomacy prevailing between the two states.

Common Values

It is my contention that the causal power of the liberal democratic values supposedly held by the two countries has been overstated, often by those in favour of deepening the relationship. Despite the rhetoric which describes the two countries as 'natural allies', there is little evidence that this makes a substantial difference to the relationship. Almost all of my interviewees viewed India as operating as a pragmatic power with respect to foreign policy, the exception being Bharat Karnad, who argued strongly that India has moved too close to the United States.⁵ Nonetheless, this was attributed more to personal failings and a lack of strategic vision on the

⁴ Personal Interview with G. Parthasarathy, former Indian High Commissioner to Pakistan, 31st March 2010, New Delhi

⁵ Personal Interview with Professor Bharat Karnad, member of the first National Security Advisory Board of the National Security Council, 29th March 2010, New Delhi

part of India's leadership than to the role of democracy in binding the two countries together. Another important point is that democracy is not regarded in India with the same quasi-religious fervour that it attracts in the United States. Indrani Bagchi at the *Times of India* suggested that the principle of sovereignty is held in higher importance by the Indian elite and public, which is partly due to India's colonial legacy.⁶ India does have a value structure, but is hesitant about exporting this elsewhere or making it the basis of their foreign policy. Bagchi further suggested that India is a "difficult country to get close to", an idea that is supported by Stephen Cohen's conception of "the India that can't say yes" (Cohen, 2001). The reason why the Indo-US relationship is a partial exception to this is due to the alignment of national interests involved.

The idea that India and America are 'natural allies' was described by Professor Chari, at the Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies as a "new rhetorical discovery", rather than being anything more substantial.⁷ He further asserted that "national interests are supreme". Cohen suggests that whatever form it takes, Indian foreign policy will be justified according to a particular set of broad principles (Cohen, 2001). However, he indicates that this does not necessarily impact substantially on the nature of that foreign policy. Another example of India's modern pragmatism in foreign policy making is relations with Myanmar, an example highlighted by Major General Katoch (Retd.), at the Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS), a think tank funded directly by the Indian army. He suggested that India had previously sacrificed its national interest by refusing to work with the Junta regime and supporting the pro-democracy movement.⁸ However, since 1993, aware that India was losing commercially and strategically from this policy, successive Indian governments have cultivated closer ties with the regime, and bilateral trade levels have risen sharply. Democracy, or in this

⁶ Personal Interview with Indrani Bagchi, *Times of India* diplomatic editor, 26th March 2010, New Delhi

⁷ Phone Interview with P.R. Chari, Research Professor at the IPCS, 28th March 2010

⁸ Personal Interview with Major General Katoch (Retd.), Additional Director at the Centre for Land Warfare Studies, 29th March 2010, New Delhi

case its absence, does not appear to be a relevant factor in Indian foreign policy. It seems clear that the Indo-US relationship is similarly based on self-interested goals, both at the state level and on the level of private individuals and businesses, rather than the triumph of liberal democratic values in themselves. There is no doubt that the fact of Indian and the US both being liberal democracies has facilitated the achievement of many goals that have been mutually beneficial for the two societies, such as closer economic cooperation. However, it does not appear to be the case that an idea of compatible values is doing the causal work in bringing the two countries closer together.

The role that is played by the perception of a commonality of values between the two countries is that it appears to act as a background guarantee of non-aggression for both countries. This is not a guarantee that the other will always act in their interest or even take their interest into account when making their foreign policy, but simply that at a fundamental level neither feels threatened by the other. It is particularly clear in the behaviour of the US that the rise of India is not feared, despite the long-term possibility of India being capable of challenging American power due to its sheer size. Clear evidence of this is the fact that the US agreed the Nuclear Deal with India in 2005, when a stated goal of US foreign policy is to restrict proliferation in a number of other countries. One noted strategic analyst argues that the rise of India is not feared by the US because it is the first example of a country rising to the status of world power while holding the status of a democracy, except perhaps for the United States, and this was a democracy in which the civil rights of more than one in ten of its population were hugely restricted.⁹ All other countries have risen to great power status and then democratised, the UK, Germany and France being notable examples. China is a world power that is yet to democratise. Subrahmanyam suggested that it is the fact that India is currently a

⁹ Personal Interview with K. Subrahmanyam, former Chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee and Former Director of the Institute for Defence Studies & Analyses, 30th March 2010, New Delhi

functioning democracy that explains why other countries, most notably the United States, do not fear its rise. This is a difficult claim to prove or disprove, but nonetheless it does seem clear that the US does not see India's rise as a threat.

This absence of the fear of military aggression between democracies has been noted before, and has been called the 'democratic peace', or alternatively the 'liberal peace'. Liberal theorists have explained this phenomenon not by reference to the 'values' of democracies, but rather by pointing to the fact that it is the wider population, rather than the elite of a country, that tends to suffer most in war and that the influence held by the broader population in democracies inclines these states towards peace, unless vital national interests are threatened (Russett, 1990). Also, democracies have greater transparency than autocracies, which means that in the event of a dispute, their intentions and the compromises that they would accept are easier to read. Schulz argues that this preference signalling makes efficient bargains easier to reach and war easier to avoid (Schultz, 1998). These institutional features of democratic states effect international politics in a way not predicted by neo-realist theories, but do so for reasons other than simply assuming common values and natural allegiances between democracies. This is clearly true in the case of the Indo-US relationship.

Political Leaders

One key difference between the neo-realist analysis and other theories of international relations, including classical realism, is that neo-realism allows no space for active statesmen in international politics. Hans Morgenthau, in setting out the terms of his classical realism, was clear that a state's success in the field of international politics depended upon the capability of its leaders to practice foreign policy in the national interest (Morgenthau, 1985). Unlike the neo-realism of Kenneth Waltz, Morgenthau gives diplomacy and the skill with which it is

practiced a large amount of causal weight. The decisions by a country's leadership are thus not simply 'given' by the international system. The limits placed by Morgenthau on the actions of statesman are normative, rather than descriptive. Other theories of international relations also place greater emphasis on the individual role of leaders in decision making and their ability to shape policy according to preferences other than those exogenously determined by the international system. With respect to the case study here, of the relationship between India and the United States, almost all observers of and participants in foreign policy in India place a large amount of emphasis on the causal impact of individual leaders.

Foremost among such leaders is George W. Bush, but also considered important are Manmohan Singh and A.B. Vajpayee on the Indian side, as well as Condoleezza Rice in the US. The commitment by George W. Bush to a deepening of relations between the two countries was certainly marked. He spoke frequently about his affection and admiration for India, particularly focusing on its success at maintaining democracy. According to one journalist, Bush had an 'instinctive liking' for India from the very start of his term in office.¹⁰ It is true that many of the structural problems in the relationship had been removed well in advance of Bush's presidency, and many of the underlying buttresses of the relationship were already in place. This could be seen in the thawing of relations between the two countries between the nuclear tests in May 1998 and the end of Bill Clinton's presidency in January 2001. However, it is hard to examine a different administration pursuing closer cooperation with India with the same vigour and determination as did the Bush administration. Despite the turn to Pakistan after the terrorist attacks of September 11th 2001, considerable effort was made to de-link Indo-US relations and Pakistan-US relations, with some success. It should be pointed out that many aspects of the growing relationship between India and the US have received bipartisan support in the US, including the Nuclear Deal agreed between the two countries in

¹⁰ Personal Interview with Pramit Pal Chaudhuri, *Hindustan Times* foreign editor, 24th March 2010, New Delhi

2005 (Mohan, 2008). The two separate necessary parts of legislation required to sanction the Deal in the US passed with large majorities in Congress in 2006 and 2008. However, it is not likely that the Deal would have been agreed in the first place without the personal commitment of Bush and his closest advisers.

The affection with which George Bush is regarded in India can be partly gauged from the contrasting coolness towards his successor, at least among India's elite. According to G. Parthasarathy, "Barack Obama has no feel for India".¹¹ In May 2009, Obama announced plans for reforming the tax code in the United States in order to remove the incentives that it creates for multinational firms to move greater amounts of their businesses to other countries through foreign subsidiaries. In his speech announcing the plans, Obama suggested that the system encouraged companies to create jobs in Bangalore, India, rather than in Buffalo, New York in the US (Hindustan Times, 2009). This was quickly popularised in the Indian press as 'say no to Bangalore, yes to Buffalo' (Times of India, 2009). It is clearly too early to tell to what extent Obama personally will affect the Indo-US relationship during his time in office, but the suspicion with which his intentions towards India are regarded does stand in marked contrast to his predecessor. Though Indians may have disagreed with many parts of George W. Bush's foreign policy, his warmth towards India was never in doubt.

Given the elite opinions expressed above, it is noteworthy that as of 2009, in response to the Pew Global Attitudes Survey, 77% of Indians said that they have confidence in Barack Obama (Pew Research Center, 2005 - 2009). By contrast, George Bush received between 50 and 56 per cent confidence between 2005 and 2008 in the same survey, though this was always amongst the highest in any country for President Bush. Thus it is clear that the greater affection for Bush is an elite view, not representative of the Indian public as a whole. Nonetheless, the extent to which it is perceived to be true amongst India's political and diplomatic elite is

¹¹ Personal Interview with G. Parthasarathy, 31st March 2010, New Delhi

significant. Certainly, the ability of the American President to shape this relationship is not doubted, it is certainly not seen as predetermined as a structural theory such as neo-realism suggests.

Another important figure in the Indo-US relationship since 1991 has been Manmohan Singh, Finance Minister from 1991 to 1996 and Prime Minister since 2004. He was described by K. Subrahmanyam as a “key driver” of the improvement in relations. Even Professor Bharat Karnad, a figure critical of the closeness between India and the United States, and particularly of the Nuclear Deal agreed in 2005, does not deny the causal significance of Singh. Karnad described Singh more than once in an interview I conducted with him as “strategically myopic”, due to his failure to see the problems that come with an over-reliance on one power.¹² His criticism of Singh also suggested that Singh is over reliant, as an economist, on the power of economics to shape state preferences, with respect to the balance between India, the USA and China, he suggested that “Singh has no strategic sense whatsoever... he thinks economic factors are all” (Karnad, 2010).¹³

The role of another Indian politician deserves attention, that of Jaswant Singh, who was Indian Minister for External Affairs from 1998 to 2002. His skill as a negotiator during a prolonged high-level dialogue with the US Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott was acknowledged by Talbott and the positive relationship that emerged was instrumental in the American efforts to pressurise Pakistan into withdrawing during the short-lived Kargil War in 1999 (Talbott, 2004). After the terrorist attacks of September 11th 2001, Singh made an immediate offer of help to the Americans, which had the benefit of sending a message to the Americans that India was fully committed to helping them, but the disadvantage that some Indians perceived a snub when this offer was refused in favour of help from Pakistan,

¹² Personal Interview with Professor Bharat Karnad, 29th March 2010, New Delhi

¹³ Ibid.

inevitably so given the geography. Professor Chari suggested that this offer was made “on a very personal level by Jaswant Singh... it was very instinctive but poorly conceived.”¹⁴

Though the argument of this paper is that the substance of the Indo-US relationship lies below the official level, in civil society, business contacts and the Indian diaspora, it is clear that individual leaders of both countries have been influential in changing the dynamic of the relationship since 1991. This is a further blow to the structural realist analysis of Indo-US relations, which seeks to suggest that no individuals, whether leaders or private individuals, can seriously impact on foreign policy.

Economic Partners

Bilateral trade between India and the United States has increased vastly since the end of the Cold War. In 1991 the trade between the two countries was just over \$5.5 billion, in 2008 it stood at more than \$43 billion (U.S. Census Bureau , 2010). One of the crucial factors behind the rise in economic cooperation between India and the United States is that India’s economy has liberalised significantly since 1991. This has seen a reduction of tariffs on imported products, previously very high, with more than half of all products subject to a tariff of more than a hundred per cent. Now the average rate is less than twenty five per cent, and the complex system of import licensing has been abolished. Economic liberalisation has also meant a relaxation on rules governing foreign investment, with American companies now able to invest in a number of key sectors of the Indian economy. These reforms, along with India’s other advantages, such as a large pool of educated, English speaking workers, have allowed bilateral trade between India and the United States to flourish (Schaffer, 2009).

¹⁴ Phone Interview with P.R. Chari, 28th March 2010

Economic interaction between India and the US includes a considerable amount of highly specialised goods and services, as well as human resources, which would not easily be substituted by either country, and which involve considerable personal connection between people and businesses. This stands as a contrast to the kind of economic links that India has with China, which narrowly beats the United States to the title of India's largest trading partner. Much of this trade is in areas such as mining of iron ore from India to feed China's heavy industry and with capital equipment heading the other way. Trade growth has been very strong between India and China, but investment levels have not matched this. There have been suspicions of anti-China bias in India on project approvals, but the Indian Minister of Commerce stated in 2006 that actual investment by China was just \$3 million, but that approvals worth \$260 million had been granted (Times of India, 2006). Though levels of investment from China to India have increased, China still invests relatively little in India, when compared to investment from the United States, and the investment that does exist does not involve the creation of many Indian jobs. The goods that make up the trading partnership between the two countries could quite easily be substituted by other partners, the partnership is not particularly specialised and is therefore fungible. Equally, if India was to actually meet its stated targets for steel production in the coming years, the iron ore sold to China would be sharply reduced.

The economic relationship between India and the United States is a very different one. In contrast to the India-China relationship, the relationship between India and the United States is based upon highly specialised trade and high levels of foreign direct investment into India by American business interests. Many observers of the relationship, including Sunanda Datta-Ray, suggest that as far as the United States is concerned, India's greatest asset is its economy (Datta-Ray, 2002). The two economies are complimentary rather than competitive in a number of ways, as the number, low wage costs and ability to speak English of Indian graduates make

outsourcing work from the United States to India an attractive proposition (Kux, 2002). Levels of foreign direct investment (FDI) in India by American companies have increased rapidly in the years since 1991, with total US investments in India increasing from just \$372 million in 1990 to \$8.5 billion in 2005, with a substantial portion of that increase coming in the five years since 2000, showing that the growth rate of investment from the US is continuing to increase.

One sector which has been the focus of a large amount of attention in the context of the burgeoning Indo-US relationship is the information technology sector. This forms the focal point of service trade between the two countries, particularly in the form of outsourcing by US companies. Though this has been politically controversial in the United States, levels of IT outsourcing look set to continue rising. A study by the market research company INPUT in 2007, quoted in the Times of India, suggested that the increase year on year in IT outsourcing to the end of 2011 would be 5.9%, reaching a total of almost \$18 billion by the end of that year (Times of India, 2007). A separate study, also in 2007, predicted that not only would levels of IT outsourcing to India grow strongly in the years ahead, but also that the nature of the IT activities outsourced would grow in complexity and sophistication (Martin & Kronstadt, 2007). As well as the statistical evidence for the salience of the technology sector for Indo-US relations, the following anecdote from Prमित Pal Chaudhuri, Hindustan Times foreign editor, illustrates the point perfectly:

Look at Gurgaon, in Haryana, which is one of the big BPO (Business Process Outsourcing) centres outside Delhi, it's a big suburb with lots of malls and that kind of thing. On July 4th they all have big Independence Day sales, with flags, bald eagles and floating Uncle Sam's; it looks very bizarre driving through. You're in the middle of Haryana and there's all this American stuff for miles and miles. I met a US diplomat who had driven through Gurgaon, who said 'I felt like I was back in the Mid West or something. I actually stopped and asked someone why exactly are you holding these sales?' The reason was simple: for some 100,000 BPO workers who work for North American companies – some 70% of our software industry is linked to the US – this is one of the few days they get a holiday. Because America completely shuts down on July 4th, they all get a holiday. So these people, almost all of whom are young, they take

their money and they go off shopping. So for marketing purposes, all the shopping malls have Independence Day sales, and no one thinks this is strange at all.¹⁵

It is an amusing story, but it is also indicative of the nature of the relationship between India and the United States. It shows the synergy between aspects of the two economies, a synergy which affects large numbers of people directly through the creation of Indian jobs and the increased margins for American companies, as well as the loss of jobs for some blue-collar Americans. It also has indirect consequences for millions more people in both countries due to its impact on economic growth. The Gurgaon US Independence Day sales in India and the economic relationships they highlight have almost nothing to do with governments on either side, beyond the basic fact that they are allowed, and not banned either directly or through crippling taxes or regulation. This role as ‘enabler’, holding a potential veto, is crucial and we should certainly not conclude that the state is irrelevant in Indo-US economic relations. However, the relationship between the two countries clearly encompasses far more than simply state to state ‘official’ relations, and furthermore these relations are significant, with huge consequences for people in both countries.

There are still a number of disagreements outstanding regarding trade rules and investment access between the two countries. One particular bone of contention is the fact that FDI is not allowed in the multi-brand retail sector of the Indian economy, and only up to fifty one per cent ownership of joint ventures by foreign companies is allowed in single-brand retail, with a hundred per cent ownership only allowed in the wholesale sector. This limits the ability of American companies to tap into the potentially huge Indian market. Additionally, the Indian government has strongly resisted large-scale agricultural reform, and in line with this has been one of the leading blocks to successful completion of the Doha trade round, where agriculture has been the most contentious issue (Schaffer, 2009). The breakdown of the talks on Doha in

¹⁵ Personal Interview with Prमित Pal Chaudhuri, 24th March 2010, New Delhi

2008 saw India portrayed as the villain of the piece by European Union members and the United States (Times of London, 2008). It has been suggested that the economic relationship between the two countries has stalled because of this, with the American administration frustrated by the inability of India to reform its economy in a way that would benefit US business. However, this is overstated, as the economic interests of the two countries are fundamentally compatible and the Indian government has indicated that it wishes to proceed with economic reforms, albeit slowly. In April 2010, it was widely reported that the Indian government had authorised the Commerce and Industry Ministry to commence work on a 'concept note' proposing that FDI restrictions on multi-brand retail should be relaxed to allow up to forty nine per cent ownership of joint ventures by foreign companies (Times of India, 2010). Another point that should be considered is that there is a political consensus that the liberalising reforms taken in India since 1991 should remain in place (Mooij, 2005). Thus, there is no sign that the people to people connections that have already been facilitated by the relaxation of restrictions on trade between the two will cease to exist. This is particularly clear given the specialised nature of much of the trade between the two countries, as stated above. The trajectory of the relationship, at least in an economic sense, would appear to be only in the direction of closer economic cooperation and interdependence between the two countries. This seems to confirm the words of numerous American officials who have described the Indo-US relationship as "irreversible" (Mohan & Khanna, 2006).

Another feature of the Indo-US relationship that is frequently ignored by theories of international relations, particularly those such as neo-realism which are state-centric, is the way in which the demography of each country is conducive to a mutually beneficial relationship. This point was strongly argued by K. Subrahmanyam, whose work is most associated with security policy. He emphasised the idea that the 21st Century will be a "knowledge century", which presents a problem for the United States, in the sense of being able to produce as many

highly skilled graduates as China or India.¹⁶ However, a crucial fact is that China, Japan, the EU and Russia all have aging populations with fertility rates at less than the replacement rate of 2.1 children per woman, meaning that all but China and Brazil's populations will have declined by 2050 (UN Population Division, 2009). By contrast, India's fertility rate is still comfortably above the replacement rate and is predicted to be so till at least 2025, while the fertility rate in the United States is comparatively high for a developed country at 2.09 between 2005 and 2010. Though this is expected to fall, the level of immigration, usually by young foreign workers and their families, into the United States means that the population is set to increase by almost ninety million to over four hundred million by 2050 (UN Population Division, 2009). This means that both countries will continue to have comparatively young populations, with the economic dynamism that this implies. As K. Subrahmanyam pointed out, the two countries are thus natural partners, particularly as the United States attempts to accelerate its knowledge base and competitiveness.¹⁷ There is only one country of significant size and potential that is broadly English speaking, reliably politically stable, with whom the US has no significant clash of interests, and that is India. The same applies to the United States for India. The successful experience of the Indian immigrant community in the United States, particularly in an age of mass transit and communication is a further reason for a close bond between the countries. Thus strong relations have few drawbacks and many advantages, further suggesting that the relationship, even if it appears to stall, will move consistently in a positive direction.

It is the relationships formed by business people and civil society that have proved so vital to the developing of Indo-US relations. This argument is strengthened by the fact that it has been implicitly accepted by those who would be expected to continue to trumpet the importance of the state to state 'security' relationship between the two countries, namely the political leadership of each. An interesting example of the importance of civil society

¹⁶ Personal Interview with K. Subrahmanyam, 30th March 2010, New Delhi

¹⁷ Personal Interview with K. Subrahmanyam, 30th March 2010, New Delhi

organisations can be seen with the visit of Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to India in July 2009.¹⁸ The vast majority of the trip was spent meeting business and civil society organisations, as opposed to direct state level meetings. This was also reflected in the visit to the United States of Manmohan Singh in November 2009, where again the greater part of the visit was not spent in meetings with government officials, but rather with non-governmental organisations and business chambers. This realisation by both governments of the importance of the non-state aspect of the relationship was highlighted as particularly significant by K. Subrahmanyam, who stated that, with respect to the relationship between India and the United States, “the state to state prism is not correct” (K. Subrahmanyam, 2010).¹⁹

Indians in the United States

One hugely important factor in the deepening relationship between India and the United States is the extent of the Indian diaspora based in the United States. There are more than two and a half million Americans of Indian descent living in the United States, as of 2007. This number had increased by more than 50% in the ten year period prior to 2007, making Indian Americans one of the fastest growing ethnic groups in the USA. Indian Americans are also among the best-educated ethnic groups in the United States, an important factor in their levels of influence. The 2000 Census suggested that sixty four percent of ‘Asian Indians’ held at least a bachelor’s degree, higher than any other group in the nation (Reeves & Bennett, 2004). There are more students from India studying at American universities than from any other country in the world. Thus there are a large number of Indian citizens living in America, as well as American citizens of Indian descent.

¹⁸ Personal interview with V. Krishnappa, Research Fellow at IDSA, 23rd March 2010, New Delhi

¹⁹ Personal Interview with K. Subrahmanyam, 30th March 2010, New Delhi

The influence of Indian Americans on the relationship between the two countries derives partly from their social status in America, as a well educated, considerably affluent minority. This is in contrast with the large number of Indian migrants who moved to the United Kingdom in the 1950s, who tended to be largely uneducated and who largely worked in the service sectors. From the 1970s onwards, the type of migrants leaving India had changed somewhat, due to the success of the Indian higher education system in producing skilled graduates in areas such as engineering and medicine, and the failure of the Indian economy to suitably absorb these skilled workers. Many of these professionals moved to the United States, and continue to do so in large numbers. Aside from the attractiveness of the United States as a destination for such professionals, a key reason why so many Indians have chosen to move to the US since the 1970s is the relaxation of immigration laws. In 1965, the Immigration and Nationality Act was passed in the United States, which allowed vastly more immigrants into the United States than had previously been the case, with immigration doubling in the next five years (Cohen, 2001). Estimates suggest that approximately a fifth of all graduates from the Indian Institutes of Technology work in the United States after qualifying (Rajghatta, 1999).

Indian-Americans are able to exert considerable clout in American politics through political donations and a professional organised lobby, which increases their influence beyond simply being a minor source of electoral votes (Kirk, 2008). The US India Political Action Committee (USINPAC) is an example of this, a well-funded lobby group which pushes for closer cooperation between India and the United States. The India Congressional Caucuses are among the largest of any country specific caucuses, with 37 Senators and over 150 Congressmen as members in 2009, and count Hillary Clinton as a former Co-Chairperson (US-India Friendship website, 2009). The Indian-American lobby is supported by business organisations such as the US-India Business Council, which hired Patton Boggs, one of Washington's most expensive lobbying firms, to work for the passage of the Hyde Act in 2006

and of the US-India 123 Agreement required to ratify the Nuclear Deal. The non-proliferation were “unable to match” the combined efforts of business organisations and the PACs formed by wealthy Indian-Americans (Ghoshroy, 2006). USINPAC is also well connected in India itself. Members of a USINPAC research mission in 2007 met with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh as well as senior members of the leadership of the opposition parties(USINPAC Fact Finding Mission to India, 2007). This again shows the importance of private groups to the Indo-US relationship, and the extent to which this is acknowledged by the political leadership of each country.

Conclusion

The India-US relationship suggests strongly that neo-realism is an inadequate paradigm. The assumption of neo-realism and other state-centric theories that states direct their actions towards a clear goal in a coherent manner is clearly disproved by the case of India and the US. This is a relationship that has grown organically, without a clear design. Perhaps the most evocative description of this process is that it represents “a million courtships”.²⁰ The relationship between India and the US is not solely, or even primarily, state-driven, rather it is driven by societal and business links between the two countries. It is a relationship based more on considerations of individual profit than of state survival. It is not motivated by a perceived threat from China. The decentralised nature of the relationship is the source of its strength, and will continue to be so in the future. The fact that the improvement in relations has been an organic process, driven by forces largely outside the state of either country, means that relations are not susceptible to state-based disruptions, as the relationship is much deeper than

²⁰ Personal interview with V. Krishnappa, 23rd March 2010, New Delhi

purely state to state relations. This is international relations driven from the ground up, not simply operated by political leaders of states.

It could be argued that political leaders in both countries have a kind of ‘veto power’ over the relationship, given that the ‘million courtships’ can only take place with some degree of cooperation between the governments of the two countries on the movement of people and the rules governing bilateral trade. However, to focus on this ‘veto power’ is mistaken. In theory, rules could be made, at least in the short-term by an activist government on either side that would severely disrupt the economic relations at the heart of the bilateral relationship. However this is hugely unlikely given the economic interconnectedness of the two countries and the political incentives of economic growth in both countries, combined with the large transfers of people between the two countries. Continued encouragement from the leadership of both countries is to be expected.

Even state level relations are decentralised in comparison to the past, there are multiple points of contact between state officials in the two countries, and between quasi-public bodies in each. According to one expert, there are eighteen different tracts of dialogue between India and the USA at the official level.²¹ This multi-level cooperation is another reason why the relationship between the two countries is richer and deeper than simple neo-realist theory would suggest. In this vein, the Nuclear Deal should be seen as primarily a symptom of the deepening relationship between the countries than as a major cause of it. The Deal reflects the underlying political atmospherics of the relationship, it does not shape the relationship in a new way, aside from allowing it to be described in a more grandiose rhetoric.

The liberal tradition in international relations, with its focus on economic cooperation and the importance of private individuals, business and domestic politics, is best able to explain

²¹ Personal Interview with Maj. General Banerjee (Retd.), 30th March 2010, New Delhi

the increasing warmth of relations between India and the United States since the end of the Cold War. The relationship cannot be properly explained with reference merely to a simplistic neo-realist account that refers to the compunctions of the international system. The rise of China is the most compelling systemic reason for the Indo-US to form a partnership, but my research indicated that there is insufficient fear of China for this to be an adequate explanation, and that such an explanation fails to explain the substance of the relationship between India and the US. The role of democracy and the sense of shared values should not be ignored, it acts as a background condition for the relationship, causing the two countries not to fear each other. However, this does not account for the positive substance of the relationship. This substance consists in the fact that the two countries have shared economic interests and a synergy in their human resources, as well as considerable population exchange, albeit largely one way. It is largely material self-interest that has caused this relationship to grow, but it is self-interest based on profit, not security. As such, neo-realism fails to explain the Indo-US relationship. Instead we should look to a syncretic analysis, drawing on elements of the realist and constructivist schools, but led by liberalism.

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