
India: Leaning to One Side (Cautiously)

C. Raja Mohan

MIDDLE POWERS PROJECT
NOVEMBER 2025



HARVARD Kennedy School

BELFER CENTER

for Science and International Affairs



HARVARD Kennedy School

RAJAWALI FOUNDATION INSTITUTE FOR ASIA

Key Judgments

- India's sheer economic scale and population size give it the potential to become a global power, yet its persistent challenges, such as low per capita income and ongoing nation-building issues, place significant limitations on its international leverage. Tensions between India's aggregate national strength and its developmental challenges mean that it must carefully navigate this paradox to have a meaningful influence on global affairs.
- India needs to skillfully balance relationships among the world's leading powers, particularly the United States and China, against a backdrop of increasing rivalry and competition. India's ability to harness its growing economic and political clout depends on its diplomatic agility — leveraging its importance without becoming unduly dependent on, or antagonistic toward, any one major power. This balancing act is seen as crucial for India's pursuit of prosperity and security.
- India hopes to create a multipolar Asia and position itself as a leader of the Global South, competing with China while maintaining a distinct identity from the West, especially as U.S. policy toward India becomes less predictable under President Trump. To achieve this, India could revamp coalitions like India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) as outreach to other middle powers is seen as both a strategic necessity and a challenge.
- The volatility of U.S. domestic and foreign policy has significant implications for India. Rapid oscillations in American priorities — especially under divergent administrations — complicate its efforts to sustain a consistent strategic partnership. This creates a perpetual need for India to hedge its bets, reassess alliances, and remain vigilant to changes that could affect its security environment and development trajectory.
- India views the global order as being reshaped by an intensifying clash between liberal internationalism and resurgent nationalism, highlighting that shifts in Western — and especially American — values have created new dynamics for countries like India. As debates over sovereignty, nationalism, and the nature of international cooperation evolve, India must continually reassess how to position itself amid these ideological crosscurrents, identifying opportunities for collaboration as well as managing new sources of tension across different regions and blocs.

India's Role and Importance as a Middle Power

India's fast-growing economy and expanding comprehensive national power make it more than a middle power; in fact, it has the potential to be a great power, albeit one facing significant constraints. As of early 2025, India's aggregate gross domestic product (GDP) stands at just under \$4 trillion in U.S. dollars and is growing at around 6% to 7% annually. It is on track to become the world's third-largest economy by the end of the decade, but its low per capita GDP, at about \$2,900, ranks 141st among about 190 countries. The vast divergence between India's aggregate strength and per capita income is a result of its massive population of roughly 1.5 billion people. India's challenges of nation-building are real and unlikely to disappear any time soon. Still, in global politics, aggregate size does matter, and it gives India a growing international salience. The strategic challenge for Delhi lies in leveraging its size to accelerate prosperity for its citizens amid intensifying competition between the world's great powers.

Perceptions of India, both at home and abroad, began to change at the turn of the century as the country's

economic underperformance in the second half of the 20th century yielded higher growth rates generated by market reforms initiated in the early 1990s. The idea of India as a “developing” or “third-world” nation has given way to an image of a “rising India” that will inevitably take its “natural place” at the global high table. Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s government has set itself an ambitious goal to become a “developed nation” by 2047 — the centennial year of India’s independence.¹ Reaching a per capita income of \$12,000 to \$15,000 (the lower threshold for developed status) by 2047 will be a demanding job,² given the objective constraints India faces. These include the unfinished tasks of nation-building, a federal polity, a political class wedded to welfarism, and entrenched resistance to economic reform. Still, the country’s aspiration and commitment to its goal are likely to drive continuing growth and reinforce India’s upward trajectory in the international system, even if change comes at a measured pace.

Already one of the fastest-growing major economies, India is close to overtaking Japan to become the fourth-largest global economy, and it is projected to overtake Germany to become the third largest by the end of this decade.³ Although low per capita income constrains its great power ambitions, its status as the largest middle power is assured for the foreseeable future. It is now difficult for the United States and China to ignore India, thanks to its large population, market size, impressive technological talent, and growing military capabilities. In fact, the United States has actively promoted India’s potential over the last two decades, promised to assist in its global rise, and made Delhi central to its plans to rearrange the Asian security order. Although China tends to dismiss India’s power, it sees the dangers of an India aligned with the United States. Delhi continues to surprise Beijing with its advances amid seemingly insurmountable external obstacles and what the Chinese see as disorder and anarchy at home. India resists Chinese military pressures on the border, openly rejects China’s signature initiatives such as the Belt and Road Initiative, and presents itself as an alternative destination for growth, trade, and investment in the region and worldwide.

However, despite India’s rising profile in the international system, it is likely to remain a distant third to the United States and China for the foreseeable future. Given its large population size and growing economy, India is set to join the ranks of world powers, measured in terms of aggregate GDP, military manpower, defense spending, and technological capabilities. In fact, some projections into the later part of the century suggest that India could overtake even the United States in aggregate GDP.⁴ Such projections, however, have limited analytical value for understanding India’s current policies today, and given its aforementioned low per capita income and many unfinished domestic development and nation-building tasks, its progress remains constrained. Still, these estimates highlight India’s massive, unrealized potential as a major power. In the interim, India’s substantial gap in comprehensive national power relative to China and the United States will heavily influence its policy choices.⁵

India’s entrenched conflict with China, coupled with its growing tilt toward the United States, makes it different from most other middle powers. At the same time, Delhi shares common interests with other middle powers in preventing the U.S.-China competition from weakening its strategic autonomy and freedom of action. This duality will be a hallmark of India’s international politics, but it is not the only one. Segments of the Indian elite continue to nurture post-colonial resentments against the U.S.- and Western-dominated international system and continue to harbor ambitions of leading the Global South.

Yet as a rising middle power and potential great power, Delhi increasingly sees itself as a participant in managing regional and global order. On the economic front, the demands of poverty alleviation and protecting vulnerable populations at home continue to clash with demands for trade liberalization and collective solutions for climate change. On the political front, the shared ideology of democracy and political pluralism does not always translate into alignment with the West when it comes to values. The need to maintain domestic stability in a diverse society that is still recovering from the 1947 religious partition of the nation contrasts

with the rights-based approach of Western liberal internationalists, which fails to take into account history or context.⁶ Fear of Western meddling in domestic affairs prevents India from fully aligning with the United States and Europe on issues of democracy promotion, sometimes pushing it closer to China, Russia, and the Global South on issues of sovereignty and self-determined development paths.

There is much intellectual support within India for a “multipolar world,” reflecting both lingering anti-Western suspicions among the foreign policy elite and recognition of the United States’ persistent unilateralism. However, this rhetoric is increasingly tempered by the reality of growing Chinese dominance over Asia and its negative impact on India, leading to a new emphasis on the need to build a “multipolar Asia.” There is also widespread, though often uncritical, domestic support for India’s effort to reclaim leadership of the Global South.⁷ This, too, is a legacy of the nonaligned movement, long romanticized by the Indian political elite. This stance is driven by an acute desire to retain a separate identity from the West as well as compete with China for the affections of the non-Western world.

U.S. and China Ties

As the strongest of the middle powers, India differs in many ways from other middle power countries. In addition to its size and economic potential, India’s geopolitical situation is unique. Unlike many nations, it does not view U.S.-China competition in the abstract; it responds to the rivalry’s economic and security impact in real time. Because China is a neighbor with which India has multiple territorial and other disputes, Delhi does not view China-U.S. relations solely from the perspective of a great power rivalry. At the same time, while India has various issues with the United States, it is a “distant power” with no direct, first-order disputes with India.

Delhi has now graduated from navigating between the United States and China to a closer alignment with Washington to cope with the deep structural challenges posed by Beijing. It remains to be seen if this tilt will survive the second term of President Donald Trump’s administration, which focuses less on partnerships and more on great power bargains with Russia and China.⁸ Trump’s “trade-first” approach and his bullying tactics have also cast a shadow over U.S. security partnerships in Asia. Delhi’s confidence in the relationship with Washington, built painfully over the last two decades, has certainly been shaken. Still, despite Trump imposing combined tariffs of 50% on India, displaying new warmth toward Pakistan, and repeatedly publicly criticizing Delhi, India has chosen not to exacerbate the situation by confronting him. Delhi’s decision to continue trade and security discussions with the new administration highlights the high stakes in the relationship and the importance of preserving it.

For now, the structural contradictions between the United States and China, and between India and China, are likely to endure, providing the basis for a long-term partnership between Delhi and Washington in maintaining an Asian balance of power. However, managing the new volatility in U.S. engagement with China and India has emerged as an important concern for Delhi. As Chinese power becomes a generational challenge for India in the 21st century, Delhi leans on an eager and willing Washington. Stronger economic, technological, and military ties with the United States are crucial for bridging the massive power gap with China, enabling a peaceful coexistence with its northern neighbor, and elevating India’s regional and global standing.

Relations with China and the United States are at the forefront of India’s political, economic, and foreign policy debates. While the strategy of cultivating deeper ties with the United States to counter China enjoys broad support, suspicion about the United States and its tendency to meddle in India’s internal affairs persists across party lines. Anti-American sentiment endures in the liberal and left sections of the Indian political and

intellectual elite. At the same time, a new strain of anti-American resentment has emerged from the nativist right. On both sides of the political spectrum, there is strong support to maintain an “independent” foreign policy that lends Delhi considerable room for strategic autonomy and prevents India from being seen as a “junior partner” of America. Unlike the left, the right celebrates India’s rise and its great power ambitions but worries about the United States and China coming together in a G2 framework.

The deepening U.S.-China rivalry has coincided with sharpening military, political, and economic tensions between Delhi and Beijing, providing new possibilities for India’s cooperation with the United States and the West. To be sure, India began the post-Cold War era wary about the “unipolar moment” and its impact on core national security interests. Over the past two decades, India’s ties with the United States have improved and problems with China have worsened, shifting entrenched sentiments of nonalignment and neutrality among the Indian foreign policy elite and political class. The new dynamic has also softened anti-American sentiment and hardened attitudes toward China. Delhi is now focused on deepening ties with Washington while managing its relationship with Beijing, aiming to restore peace on the border through patient military dialogue, avoid provoking Beijing into a wider conflict, and ensure the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (“the Quad,” which includes Australia, India, Japan, and the United States) does not become a military alliance. Delhi is acutely aware that it must live with China as a powerful neighbor and seeks to balance resisting Chinese dominance and avoiding a needless military conflict.

Modi’s two meetings with Xi Jinping in Kazan, Russia, in 2024 and Tianjin, China, in 2025 have eased the military standoff in Ladakh that began in the early summer of 2020, when Beijing moved a large number of troops across the disputed frontier in violation of previous agreements and India responded in kind. Modi-Xi talks paved the way for a slow normalization of bilateral relations. At Kazan, the two leaders approved a carefully negotiated agreement to disengage troops at points of contact and restore patrolling rights in disputed areas along the border. Full de-escalation and troop withdrawals remain incomplete,⁹ but the agreement provided sufficient political space for Modi and Xi to move forward on resetting ties. At Tianjin, the two sides agreed that India and China were “development partners and not rivals” and insisted that their relationship should not be viewed through a “third-country lens.” They also committed to expanding bilateral contact and exchanges at all levels.¹⁰

Policy Objectives

Foreign Policy/Security

When it first became independent, India hoped to assert regional leadership and began its foreign policy by reaching out to Asia, only to find itself marginalized by the end of the Cold War. Since then, reconnecting with Asia has been one of the central themes of India’s foreign policy. Economic reforms, institutional integration with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) structures, and greater military engagement have laid the groundwork for India’s return to the region. India’s trade with the ASEAN region has grown significantly since the launch of the Look East Policy of the 1990s. India now participates in all major regional institutions except the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum, and it has intensified military and security cooperation during this period. India’s comprehensive power ranking in the region has steadily risen, placing it third, after the United States and China and just ahead of Japan.¹¹

Although India’s relative weight in the region has grown, it has done so under China’s shadow, limiting its

impact. China's sheer economic and military size make it difficult for India to carve out an effective regional role for itself. India often presents itself as an alternative source of technology and capital, but it cannot compete with China in broader Asia. India has sought to compensate by working closely with the United States and its Asian allies like Australia and Japan.

On global issues, India has limited interest in the anti-Western agenda of Russia and China. To be sure, fear of the U.S.-dominated unipolar world order pushed India closer to Russia and China in the 1990s and led to the creation of the BRICS platform, a group of major emerging economies that has grown from Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa to include 11 members. In the early 1990s, the United States declared its intention to cap, roll back, and eliminate India's nuclear weapons and missiles. It also questioned the accession of the state of Jammu and Kashmir to India. All of this led Delhi to join forces with Moscow and Beijing in the late 1990s to promote a "multipolar world." But today, India sees China as the largest threat to its core national security interests — on territorial disputes, Pakistan, regional stability in South Asia and the Indian Ocean, and Delhi's desire for a larger role in the international system. Today, its rhetoric on a multipolar world is coupled with an emphasis on a multipolar Asia.

While India has not walked out of the forums led by Russia and China, it has become a less enthusiastic partner in BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Meanwhile, it participates in U.S.-led like-minded groups, such as the Quad, Mineral Security Partnership, and Artemis Accords. In addition, India is regularly invited to the annual G7 summits of leading Western nations. To reclaim its traditional equities in the non-Western world, Delhi has resumed its activism with the Global South, but without the past anti-Western posturing and with an intent to compete with China for influence. Even more importantly, Delhi has increased its independent engagement with major actors in Latin America, Europe, the Middle East, and the Indo-Pacific — actions that speak to its great power ambitions.

India-Russia

Even as it turns to the United States to balance China, India is eager to maintain its historical ties to Russia. While Moscow's relative weight in terms of great power relations has decreased, Delhi seeks to maintain the partnership as insurance against continuing volatility in great power relations. India withstood considerable political pressure from the United States and Europe to condemn the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. Although it avoided violating Western sanctions against Russia, it took advantage of gaps in energy sanctions to purchase large quantities of crude oil from Moscow at discounted prices. At the same time, Delhi recognized the dangers of siding with Russia on a critical issue of European security and sought to compensate for its lack of criticism by stepping up strategic engagement with Europe. This has seen intensified talks on a free trade agreement, greater cooperation on technology, and new consultations on maritime and other security issues.

India's approach to Russia is rooted in the recognition of Russia's relative decline in the great power constellation, its deepening confrontation with the West, and its growing partnership with China. Radical foreign policy shifts are not India's style, especially given Russia's continued dominance of India's military inventory. While India is diversifying its arms supplies and emphasizing indigenous production of weapons systems, it will take time before Delhi can free itself from dependence on Russian weapons systems. Delhi does not see Moscow as a major source of capital and technology, but it sees considerable potential for Russia to supply raw materials to power India's industrial transformation. In the past, Delhi saw Moscow as a natural balancer against both the West and China. Today, India's warming ties with the West make Russia more of a problem than a force multiplier in dealing with the United States and Europe. Delhi no longer sees

Russia as the main balancer against China either, given the shared anti-Western agenda of Moscow and Beijing. Moscow is also moving away from its unambiguous tilt toward Delhi as it cultivates a new relationship with Islamabad amid its confrontation with the West. Even so, Delhi continues to see value in maintaining the partnership as a hedge against turbulence in the international system and volatility in U.S. foreign policy. In sum, India's relations with Russia are seeing a "managed decline."¹² While India does not seek to "decouple" from Russia, the growing economic, technological, and military weight of Western engagement overshadows its ties with Moscow.

Political Values: Non-Intervention

Political values remain an important factor in shaping the international order and have always held particular significance for middle powers. Since the Russian Revolution of 1917, political and economic ideological issues have been critical in global politics, when the anti-imperialist and emancipatory rhetoric of communism and socialism drew many non-Western elites away from the West. In the post-colonial era, many middle powers were gripped by different transcendental ideologies: communism, socialism, Pan-Asianism, Pan-Islamism, and Pan-Arabism, to name a few. Though they varied in substance, they shared a common thread in targeting Western imperialism and its post-colonial forms. Communist powers, like Russia and China, were quick to tap into these resentments.

Over time, many middle powers reconciled their ideological aspirations with the realities of power politics, but the public discourse retained a strong anti-Western and anti-American tinge. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the wave of economic globalization in the early 1990s appeared to render the question of values irrelevant. The easing of great power rivalry after the Cold War was accompanied by a sense that economic and political ideas among the major powers had converged. But that appearance turned out to be deceptive.

At the turn of the 21st century, great power bonhomie dissipated, and ideological arguments returned as values once more took center stage. China and Russia feared that the United States would promote color revolutions and regime changes, and they loudly defended each nation's right to choose its own path and urged resistance to U.S.-led Western values as central to their internationalist narratives. In a joint statement issued by Presidents Vladimir Putin and Xi in February 2022, on the eve of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, they conceded that democracy is a "universal value" but denounced the U.S. tendency to present itself as its champion. The statement also denounced "certain states" for attempting to impose their own "democratic standards" on other countries, saying that to monopolize the right to assess the level of compliance with democratic criteria "is nothing but the brazen exercise of political hegemony."¹³

Many emerging middle powers, including democracies like India, deeply resent Western meddling in their domestic affairs in the name of human rights—ranging from the political, religious and gender. For many non-Western powers, the liberal internationalist agenda clashes with social and religious conservatism at home while also challenging their sovereignty through doctrines like "right to protect" and "humanitarian intervention."

During the Cold War, the West hailed India as a democratic alternative to communism in Asia and the non-Western world. However, under Modi, liberals in the United States and the West have widely criticized India's "democratic backsliding," citing the growing insecurity of caste and religious minorities, mounting pressures on the free press and judiciary, and the empowerment of Hindu vigilante groups that seek social and cultural control.¹⁴ Although criticism from Western democracy activists has acquired a sharper tone during the Modi years, governments in the United States and Europe have not made it a point of contention

in their engagement with India. Instead, they have competed to build productive relations with India, seen as a growing market as well as a key partner in Asian security politics.

Former President Joe Biden's administration, which saw the conflict between democracies and autocracies as the defining global contradiction, took several steps to consolidate the strategic partnership with India. Crucially, Biden gave Modi a prominent position in his democracy summits. Still, Western criticism of the Modi government generates a backlash on the Indian right, that reflectively accuses the West of meddling in India's domestic politics. Even Indian liberals, who think Indian democracy is under threat, find it hard to align with the Western liberal critique, given the America's perceived hypocrisy on political values. Unsurprisingly, Indian elites often find it more comfortable to engage with China and Russia, which do not question its internal orientation. This is true of most non-Western powers, which prefer the Chinese and Russian approach to political values and non-intervention in the internal affairs of states.

However, a new situation is emerging in the second term of the Trump administration: internal pushback against liberal hegemony and intervention. As the United States lessens its promotion of liberal values abroad and eases its interventionist impulses, it could help remove many of the long-standing irritants between the United States and non-Western elites in powers like India. Trump's new emphasis on interests over values alters the salience of liberal ideology for the global order and creates more possibilities for the United States to engage with middle powers.

In his speech at Riyadh in May 2025, Trump spoke about the unfolding economic transformation of the Gulf region and denounced past U.S. policies of intervention, stating, "In the end, the so-called [American] nation-builders wrecked far more nations than they built, and the interventionists were intervening in complex societies that they did not even understand themselves."¹⁵ The new American message of non-intervention also figured prominently weeks later in Singapore, at the annual Shangri-La Dialogue. Addressing the Asian defense community, U.S. Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth emphasized, "We're not here to impose our will on you. We're all sovereign nations. We should be able to choose the future we want to build."¹⁶

Meanwhile, the mainstream right in India remains skeptical that the U.S. has truly shifted its approach to non-intervention in other societies. Many view Washington's continued bullying of other nations as more offensive than the liberal condescension they have long known. For now, the U.S. battle over values is largely focused on Europe. Trump and his allies have been brazen in their attempt to intervene and reshape the politics of America's European cousins. This, in turn, has helped create — at least temporarily — a level playing field between the United States and China on the question of political values.

Alliances and Coalitions

The question of alliances, coalitions, and how Delhi deals with them has long been central to both domestic and global discourse on Indian foreign policy. Historically, India's approach has been shaped by its relations with the great powers, especially China, Russia, and the West (including the United States and Europe). The debate over great power politics and how to navigate them can be traced back to the interwar period, when the Indian National Congress refused to take sides between colonial Britain and the Axis powers, Germany and Japan. That early position evolved into a strategy of nonalignment in the Cold War, as India sought to maintain autonomy between the East and the West. This nonalignment strategy did not, however, stop India's realpolitik — such as its tilt toward the United States (during and after the 1962 war with China) and toward the Soviet Union (after the Sino-American rapprochement in the 1970s). Given its own great power aspirations,

India also offered security alliances to smaller neighbors in the subcontinent — especially Bhutan, Nepal, and Sikkim — soon after independence, offering protection to those that looked to Delhi.¹⁷

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War in the early 1990s marked a turning point in India's approach to alliances and coalitions. The evolution reflected the new orientation of its economy and the changing nature of its security challenges. As it opened its economy toward internal liberalization and external globalization, its commercial ties with the West rapidly expanded, driving economic growth and increasing trade volumes. Meanwhile, trade with post-Soviet Russia waned, but arms ties endured. A 1990s border accord with Beijing opened channels for commerce, which surged as China became the world's second-largest economy, deepening India's economic exposure.

During that same period, India's geopolitical orientation evolved in a more complex fashion. The 1990s fear of a unipolar moment saw India join hands with Russia and China to hedge against potential U.S. hostility. Fueled by the United States' relentless pressure on India's economic restructuring and American meddling in security issues, including India's nuclear program and Kashmir disputes with Pakistan, the Indian political class and policy establishment partnered with Russia and China to promote a multipolar world. This led to the Russia-India-China forum that eventually became the BRICS in the 2000s and BRICS Plus in the 2020s. Later, India also joined the SCO, which sought to limit U.S. interference in Eurasia. This hedging strategy coincided with expanding commercial, technological, and political engagement with the United States beginning in the 1990s. While it navigated the unipolar moment, India also stressed the creation of middle power coalitions, such as the India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA), while deepening outreach to its South Asian neighbors. At the same time, Delhi made a special effort to connect with adjacent regions in East Asia, Central Asia, and the Middle East.¹⁸

The steady evolution of India's policies, from nonalignment to multi-alignment, began to face challenges in the 2010s. China's rapid rise and growing assertiveness over territorial disputes was reflected in four military crises—during 2013, 2014, 2017, and 2020—that shattered nearly two decades of peace and tranquility on the disputed border. As it became the dominant power in the region, Beijing's policies inevitably undermined India's presumed primacy in the subcontinent. Beijing refused to yield space for India, leading Delhi to strengthen its ties with Washington. Amid the deterioration of U.S.-China relations, Washington was more than happy to oblige. By early 2025, India had moved closer than ever to the United States. However, there is now uncertainty about the relationship given the radical shifts in U.S. foreign policy under Trump's second term. While the February 2025 summit between Modi and Trump signaled continuity in the partnership, the situation quickly turned. By the summer, Trump's tariff war against India, Delhi's effort to reset ties with Beijing, and growing speculation about a deal with Xi Jinping had introduced new complexities into the triangular dynamic among India, the United States, and China.

Shifts in great power relations are bound to result in significant changes in the global economic system, the rules governing technological production and flows, and international political institutions. Multilateralism is expected to take a back seat in the near term, creating space for minilateral groups and coalitions of like-minded states to address global challenges. Indeed, minilateralism has become a central theme in India's international relations in the 21st century.

In recent years, India has joined several minilateral coalitions with the United States. These include the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, which was revived during the Trump administration's first term and energized during the Biden administration. Despite U.S. pressure, Delhi's reluctance to make the Quad a military alliance led Washington to shape it as a forum for public goods in the Indo-Pacific, facilitating its wider acceptance.¹⁹ If the Quad was about new forms of engagement with East Asia, the I2U2 (which brings together India, Israel,

the United Arab Emirates, and the United States) is the new forum to promote minilateral cooperation in the Middle East.²⁰

India's engagement with the Quad and other U.S.-led minilateral institutions, along with its continuing participation in BRICS despite growing tensions with China, has had one unintended consequence: the marginalization of India's initial enthusiasm for middle power coalitions. The IBSA, originally conceived as a coalition of non-Western middle power democracies, has largely been subsumed by BRICS, despite the eagerness of its three members to retain an independent identity. Equally challenging for India's middle power coalition strategy is the fact that the United States and China are now far ahead of other major powers. Whether the world is bipolar or multipolar, the dominance of the U.S.-China dynamic is a reality that India and other middle powers cannot ignore.

Since becoming independent, the nature of U.S.-China relations has had a profound effect on India's foreign policy.²¹ Right now, there is a shared interest between Delhi and Washington in managing the challenges presented by China. However, this could change in the event of a new Sino-American entente (G2) or a Sino-Indian rapprochement (A2). Both Washington and Delhi continue to seek improved bilateral ties with China, and despite repeated territorial conflict with China in the last decade, Delhi has insisted on maintaining engagement with Beijing and preserved space for regional and multilateral collaboration.

As India draws closer to the United States, segments of the political elite in Delhi are apprehensive about losing the country's traditional identity as an independent actor within the non-Western world. The United States' volatile approach to alliances and partnerships under Trump 2.0 is likely to sharpen these anxieties, further incentivizing Delhi to strengthen its strategic autonomy, reboot its middle power engagement, and emphasize its equity in the Global South.

Three and a half decades after the Cold War, India is less anti-Western and more open to military cooperation with the United States, while avoiding formal security alliances due to its deep structural contradictions with China. However, the new uncertainty in U.S. engagement with the world, accentuated during the Trump era, is likely to prompt India to rethink its approach of leaning toward one side. While Delhi will not abandon its investments in Washington, it will likely intensify efforts to coexist peacefully with China and broaden partnerships across the wider West.

Technology and Trade

Technology issues have been at the heart of the relations between India and the United States in good times and in bad. If technological denial was at the center of the India-U.S. divergence from the 1970s through the early 2000s, expanding cooperation has become the driver of a new strategic partnership in the 21st century. As China emerges as a technological powerhouse and controls key manufacturing inputs required for India's industrial modernization, it is becoming increasingly important for India's technology sector.²² The Soviet Union was once an important source of technology, a role that modern day Russia now only maintains in limited sectors such as nuclear and defense. Delhi has long championed technology sharing with developing countries. Even when India was among the poorest countries in the world, it sought to shape global governance of atomic energy in the immediate aftermath of World War II. Since then, its focus on promoting just and equitable regimes and limiting military use has persisted in relation to advanced technologies.

India's engagement with the United States on technology predates its 1947 independence. While much of the emerging Indian middle class sent their children to England to become barristers, a segment of the emerging

industrial class in western India preferred to send their children to the United States, particularly to MIT. The proto-industrial class in India recognized the importance of technological mastery in India's modernization. In his first visit to the United States in 1949, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru visited MIT and later launched the Indian Institutes of Technology, which now produce top technical talent for India and the world.²³ In the 1950s — the era of “scientific internationalism” and “developmentalism” — the United States actively promoted technological cooperation with India in advanced sectors such as nuclear energy and space. The first Indian reactors and satellites were American, reflecting Washington's effort to promote high-tech cooperation with India in the 1950s and 1960s.

As nonproliferation concerns replaced scientific internationalism in the 1970s, Delhi became the subject of several technology sanctions that increased after India refused to join the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and conducted a nuclear test in 1974. Mounting U.S. sanctions in the 1970s saw the Soviet Union gain a foothold in India's nuclear and space sectors, and by 1998, India declared itself a nuclear power. India-U.S. relations simmered for several years before the nuclear disputes resolved between 2005 and 2008.²⁴ Then, technological cooperation soared, especially under the Biden administration, which unveiled the Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies (iCET) in 2023. The iCET is part of the U.S. effort to rebalance Asia, reduce economic reliance on China, and rearrange global technological supply chains,²⁵ boosting India's technological and industrial capabilities. After initial skepticism, Delhi has approached technological collaboration with Washington in a more productive and engaged way.

For India, the iCET supports the modernization of its techno-industrial base while advancing its strategic autonomy by reducing reliance on Russian defense systems and Chinese civilian technologies. Traditionally, India's idea of strategic autonomy meant keeping a safe political distance from the United States, particularly when resisting U.S. dominance in the region. On both fronts, the United States and the West are eager to facilitate India's transition away from Russia and China. However, India does not want to replace military dependence on Russia with dependence on the West. Its emphasis is on producing weapons domestically, which the United States supports, encouraging U.S. industry to invest in Indian defense manufacturing. The challenge is no longer U.S. political willingness but India's capacity to create the right policy and regulatory environment for American industrial participation.

American allies in Europe and Asia are now more amenable to deeper technological ties with India. In fact, technological cooperation is a major element of the Quad agenda, facilitating more interactions between India, Japan, and Australia. Europe has followed the United States in integrating technology into their partnership with India through a newly formed Trade and Technology Council.²⁶ The United States has also initiated a trilateral forum for technological cooperation with South Korea and India.²⁷ Under the Biden and Modi administrations, Washington urged U.S. private capital to deepen techno-industrial collaboration in areas like semiconductors and jet engines, while Delhi urged its public and private sectors to partner with U.S. industry. Undergirding this political warmth between Washington and Delhi is the strong connection between India's emerging technological hubs — Bangalore, Chennai, Hyderabad, and Pune — with Silicon Valley, staffed by a growing number of Indian and Indian American professionals. India's expanding startup ecosystem is also deeply tied to U.S. venture capital. This success in leveraging technological talent is beginning to influence other Western countries, which are seeking to attract Indian engineering manpower despite broader challenges with immigration.

The United States is also supportive of India using its technological resources to compete with China in the Global South. Washington looks positively on Delhi's independent initiatives to promote a “digital public infrastructure” developed in India, worldwide. Still, India and the United States remain some distance apart when it comes to developing a common approach to the global governance of advanced technologies, including

digital systems, outer space, and artificial intelligence. While U.S.-China competition has strengthened technological collaboration between Delhi and Washington, India's ties with Russia have cast a shadow over the partnership.²⁸ U.S. concerns about potential technology leaks from India to Russia are driving Washington to impose restrictions in sensitive high-technology areas.

The Biden administration's decision in January 2025 to put India on a lower tier for liberal exports of AI chips underscores the continuing constraints on India-U.S. technology cooperation.²⁹ The situation has become even more complicated with Trump's "America First" policy, which undermines the Biden administration's approach to leveraging alliances and partnerships in AI and other advanced technologies. Strong opposition in the MAGA movement to temporary tech workers under the H-1B visa program — for which India is the biggest source — along with a \$100,000 fee for new H-1B applicants and rising racism against Indians, also threatens the otherwise robust technology relationship between India and Silicon Valley.³⁰ India is not in a position to hedge against renewed U.S. hostility in advanced technology cooperation. Russia has little presence in new sectors like AI and semiconductors, while China's impressive leadership remains more of a challenge than an opportunity.

As technology and trade become increasingly intertwined amid geopolitical fragmentation, India has begun to recalibrate its policies to enhance supply chain resilience and competitiveness. As the United States and Europe de-risk their exposure to China in key sectors, India seeks to position itself as a reliable partner for Western democracies while simultaneously advancing domestic capabilities. The iCET exemplifies this realignment, facilitating cooperation in semiconductors, AI, quantum computing, and defense tech. India's full potential in Western corporations' "China-plus-one" strategies — or the desire to diversify away from Chinese market — has yet to be realized due to the continuing challenges of doing business in India. For example, Apple has made significant investments in diversifying its production from China to India, but Trump prefers "onshoring" to the Biden administration's "friend-shoring." This would severely undermine India's strategy of deepening trade and technological cooperation with the United States.

While managing the turbulence of the Trump administration, India is also looking to Europe through the India-EU Trade and Technology Council (TTC), which aims to align regulatory frameworks, secure supply chains, and promote trusted technologies. India has also established a Technology Security Initiative and signed a trade liberalization agreement with the United Kingdom in early 2025. Trade talks with the EU have accelerated, but it remains unclear when they might successfully conclude. During Trump's second term, India has prioritized negotiating a trade treaty with Washington that integrates more closely with its main Western trading partners. However, the talks have stalled over U.S. demands to open India's protected agricultural sector — a contentious issue in EU discussions as well. As a late economic modernizer with many protected sectors, India faces difficult choices in making trade concessions, with significant internal political consequences.

At home, India is simultaneously trying to expand domestic industrial capabilities through policy such as the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) program and reduce dependence on China for critical manufacturing inputs. The PLI scheme seeks to attract, through financial incentives, large scale domestic and foreign investment to widen the base of domestic manufacturing, integrate with global value chains, enhance exports, and promote technological upgrading. It was unveiled in early 2020 and followed through with several supplementary initiatives.³¹

Energy and Climate Change

India's approach to climate change reflects the full range of political and ideological perspectives that have evolved over the past five decades, from "third worldism" to the sensibility of a responsible major power. The last few years have seen a shift from a narrow North-South lens to a more pragmatic approach focused on resolution in cooperation with other powers. At home, India continues to emphasize fossil fuels as critical for growth, while simultaneously committing to expand renewable energy production. At the same time, there is a lingering emphasis on financial transfers from developed to developing countries — a demand that is unlikely to materialize given growing resistance in Europe to the costs of climate action.³² Furthermore, there is massive pushback against green policies in the United States in Trump's second term.³³

India's early responses to climate change concerns emphasized the primacy of growth while recognizing the importance of sustainable development. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi articulated this stance at the 1972 Stockholm Conference, embedding it into Indian climate diplomacy through the principle of "common but differentiated responsibility." This principle highlighted the historic emissions of developed countries and low per capita consumption of developing countries, including India. These propositions led to the widespread perception of India as a naysayer on climate change. While India's limited mobilization within the Global South bought some time and space for a future green transition, there was no effort to actively pursue energy efficiency or the development of green technologies. As a result, India found itself in a dead-end rhetorical battle against the North, without enhancing its internal capacity to address the imperatives of a green transition. Modi has since shifted course, insisting India be a "part of the solution" in climate negotiations. This includes domestic initiatives to expand green energy generation and build new multilateral groups, such as the International Solar Alliance and the Coalition for Disaster Resilience. In 2021, Modi set the goal of achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2070. While these initiatives boosted India's climate diplomacy, challenges quickly followed.

Soon, India faced steep divisions within the Global South, with island nations demanding immediate limits on fossil fuel use while hydrocarbon-producing countries resisted the transition. In addition, India's attempt to coalesce with China and other middle powers to bargain with the West on climate change unraveled as Beijing chose to negotiate bilaterally with Washington, with then-President Barack Obama dubbing climate change a strategic priority in U.S.-China relations. Far more consequential was Beijing's massive investment in green technologies and associated natural resources, securing its global dominance on solar energy, batteries, and electric vehicles. India now faces significant dependence on China to meet its own green energy targets, as Indian businesses urge the government to lift import restrictions on China and avoid a \$100 billion trade deficit.³⁴ India's climate diplomacy has seen some successes in the form of expanding cooperation with Europe, especially with Scandinavian countries, and the slow but continuous functional cooperation with the United States on climate issues, advanced under the Obama and Biden administrations.

Under the Trump administration's second term, however, the prospects for such cooperation look dim, as the administration signals vigorous opposition to climate change efforts. While the Global South has long been divided on climate change, deep cracks across the Atlantic are now evident. Republicans in the United States and several conservative parties across Europe have rejected the liberal and centrist focus on climate change, and it is unclear whether European actors have the clout to counter the new U.S. stance. Even as climate change demands urgent action, political dynamics make the current framework of negotiations unsustainable. If future efforts focus on new technological solutions, India is likely to rely on its most valuable technological partner, the United States.

While not abandoning its climate goals in the Trump era, Delhi must navigate several competing objectives

in its climate and energy policies — increasing per capita energy consumption while limiting emissions and promoting growth while ensuring sustainability. Unlike in the past, Delhi is not dismissing the need to address climate change, given its growing impact on society and the economy. At the heart of this strategy is the five-point action plan, announced at COP26, which outlines key targets for 2030: achieving 500 gigawatts (GW) of non-fossil fuel energy capacity, generating 50% of electricity from renewables, reducing emissions intensity of GDP by 45%, cutting 1 billion tons of CO₂, and reaching net-zero emissions by 2070.³⁵

The expansion of renewable energy, especially solar, is central to this ambition. India's solar capacity has grown significantly, reaching over 350 GW in 2025, supported by financial incentives as well as government programs, including an initiative to install rooftop solar panels on 10 million homes. Wind energy, particularly offshore projects in Tamil Nadu and Gujarat, and the 2023 National Green Hydrogen Mission are also part of this strategy. Additionally, Delhi has introduced incentives for key industries to decarbonize their production. A major new initiative is India's expansion of nuclear energy, particularly through Small Modular Reactors (SMRs). Delhi aims to deploy at least five SMRs by 2033 and reach 100 GW of nuclear capacity by 2047. External partnerships with the United States, France, and Russia are key to realizing these goals, and several private players, like the Tata Group, L&T, Reliance Industries Limited, and Adani Group, are exploring investments in the sector. Before significant progress can be made, India must modify its legal and regulatory framework governing atomic energy, which has long blocked private and foreign investment.³⁶ Amid the U.S. retreat on climate action, Delhi is doubling down on partnerships with the EU, UK, and Japan to mobilize climate finance and technology. It is also pressing ahead with the aforementioned international initiatives, including the International Solar Alliance and the Coalition for Disaster Resilience.

Conclusion and Recommendations

By most metrics that define comprehensive national power, India will remain a distant third to the United States and China for the foreseeable future. Yet its growing economic heft and geopolitical salience make it a “swing state” that can influence great power politics, particularly amid the U.S.-China rivalry.³⁷ India's impact varies from issue to issue, but it is most significant in the Asian balance of power and Indo-Pacific security. The parallel rise in tensions between the United States and China and between India and China has put Delhi and Washington on the same side of Asian geopolitics since the mid-20th century.

For India, addressing the gap with China will likely remain a generational challenge.³⁸ China, whose relative power in relation to India has dramatically grown in the 21st century, has undermined India's traditional approach to stabilizing their disputed border through a set of confidence building measures, retaining its primacy in the subcontinent, expanding its influence across the Indo-Pacific, and securing a seat at the top tier of the international system. On the economic front, reducing dependence on Chinese imports is now central to its strategy of self-reliance — a strategy that was once aimed at Western capital. Since the mid-2010s, cooperation with the United States and its allies has emerged as a critical pillar of India's national strategy.

Still, India's commitment to strategic autonomy prevents it from aligning too closely with the United States. It seeks to secure favorable terms of collaboration that protect its interests without sacrificing freedom of action. At the same time, given the massive power differential and changing military balance along the border, Delhi has no desire to provoke a conflict with Beijing. It needs to secure sustainable terms of peaceful coexistence with China — now the second largest economy in the world and a major military power. Although

India is leveraging the U.S.-China rivalry to its benefit, it does not want an escalation of tensions between Washington and Beijing that could lead to an unwanted war with Beijing. India has a vested interest in a stable and predictable U.S.-China relationship, though its ability to control that relationship remains limited. Ultimately, it has no option but to adapt to its consequences.

During Trump's first term and the Biden administration, U.S. policy favored India by lifting technological restrictions, promoting resilient supply chains, and cultivating cooperation among trusted geographies. However, in Trump's second term, the administration is focused on reshoring over friend-shoring, aiming to draw foreign investment into the United States and gain unilateral technological advantage rather than building frameworks centered on alliances and partnerships. It remains to be seen if Trump will focus on negotiating a "big and beautiful" deal with Beijing or strengthening economic ties with allies and partners. Delhi will also watch to see if the Trump effect influences how Beijing interacts with its neighbors and whether it becomes more willing to accommodate their concerns. In other words, there is much uncertainty in the global economic order, which India will have to navigate in the years ahead. Many of the answers lie at home, and India has not yet fully leveraged the "China plus one" strategies pursued by Western powers to reduce economic dependence on Beijing.

Along with other middle powers, India must navigate growing volatility — not only in the bilateral relationship between the United States and China but also in the potential shifts in their internal orientation. While churn in the United States is overt, India and its peers must also expect change within China. Even if Xi Jinping has reversed many policies of his predecessors, it would be unwise to assume that his successors will simply continue his approach to domestic and international politics. Managing this uncertainty will be the greatest challenge for India and other middle powers.

When it comes to values, India has remained closer to China and Russia on issues of national sovereignty, reflecting wariness about the interventionist impulses of Western liberal internationalism. However, the Biden administration's framing of the world order as a conflict between democracies and autocracies has limited resonance in Trump's world. What we see today in the United States — and increasingly in Europe — is a rising conservative challenge to liberalism at home and liberal internationalism abroad. Ideas that seemed immutable — open borders, open markets, and global rule of law backed by international institutions — are now under siege. If sovereignty has long been an important part of the lexicon of India and other middle powers, Trump and his counterparts in Europe highlight their commitment to nationalism and sovereignty. It is not clear how deeply rooted this tendency is and how vigorously the old liberal establishments will fight it. Nevertheless, the West's new war of values between liberalism and nationalism could open space for cross-cutting engagement between the United States and China (and Russia), East and West, and North and South. At the same time, the rise of nationalism could trigger new conflicts both within the West and South as well as between the North and the South.

In this context, this case study offers five broad recommendations to India and other middle powers.

- India must closely track domestic political churn within the major powers that has seen the rise of many radical political forces challenging the post-War and post-Cold War conventional wisdom. This internal change has emerged as a critical variable shaping the post-Cold War order. At the same time the middle powers must remain alert to the significant structural shifts underway in great power relations among the United States, Europe, China, and Russia.
- Trump's current approach to world politics and to India's neighborhood have raised doubts about a long-term strategic partnership with the United States. Coping with volatility in U.S. policy has become an urgent priority for Indian foreign and security policy.

- Given the renewed uncertainty in U.S. foreign policy and U.S.-India relations, Delhi must continue to explore the terms of a peaceful coexistence with China.
- Looking beyond the North-South and East-West axes that have long dominated Indian political thinking, Delhi should also recognize sharpening tensions within the Transatlantic alliance and strengthen its partnership with Europe, which can significantly contribute to the accelerated accretion of India's comprehensive national power. A stronger partnership with Europe also requires India to rethink the costs of its current engagement with Russia.
- Unlike in the 20th century, middle powers now have greater room to navigate global changes through mutual collaboration and coalition building with the great powers. But they must resist the old temptations of anti-Western crusades now being promoted by Russia and China for their own interests. Moscow and Beijing are open to bilateral deals with Washington and will abandon their gullible followers among the middle powers. At the same time, there are limits to bandwagoning with the United States. India needs to revive middle power coalitions, like IBSA, that it built in the early 2000s but abandoned in favor of BRICS.

Statements and views expressed in this commentary are solely those of the authors and do not imply endorsement by Harvard University, the Harvard Kennedy School, or the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs.

Endnotes

- 1 “India Needs 8% Growth for Two Decades to Achieve Viksit Bharat by 2047, Says Economic Survey,” *The Economic Times*, January 31, 2024, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/indicators/india-needs-8-growth-for-two-decades-to-achieve-viksit-bharat-by-2047-says-economic-survey-2024/articleshow/117779983.cms>.
- 2 “EY Projects India to Become a US\$26 Trillion Economy by 2047 with a Six-Fold Increase in per Capita Income to US\$15,000,” EY India, January 18, 2023, https://www.ey.com/en_in/newsroom/2023/01/ey-projects-india-to-become-a-us-dollar-26-trillion-economy-by-2047-with-a-six-fold-increase-in-per-capita-income-to-us-dollar-15000.
- 3 “India on Track to Surpass Japan’s GDP, Could Overtake Germany by 2027: IMF,” *India Today*, March 26, 2025, <https://www.indiatoday.in/business/story/india-gdp-growth-105-percent-overtake-japan-fourth-largest-germany-by-2027-imf-data-2699195-2025-03-26>.
- 4 “How India Could Rise to the World’s Second-Biggest Economy,” Goldman Sachs, July 6, 2023, <https://www.goldmansachs.com/insights/articles/how-india-could-rise-to-the-worlds-second-biggest-economy>.
- 5 Shyam Saran, “Delhi’s Moment as Voice of Global South,” *Asia-Pacific Leadership Network*, September 11, 2023, https://www.apln.network/news/member_activities/delhis-moment-as-voice-of-global-south.
- 6 India’s independence in 1947 from nearly two centuries of British colonial rule was accompanied by its traumatic partition along religious lines. The creation of India and Pakistan set the stage for entrenched and intractable conflicts in the post colonial subcontinent. For the making of the South Asian partition, see Yasmin Khan, *The Great Partition: The Making of India and Pakistan* (Yale University Press, 2007); see also Ian Talbot and Gurharpal Singh. *The Partition of India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).
- 7 For a criticism of the concept, see: C. Raja Mohan, “Is There Such a Thing as a Global South?” *Foreign Policy*, December 9, 2023, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/12/09/global-south-definition-meaning-countries-development/>.
- 8 Edward Wong, “Trump’s Vision: One World, Three Powers?” *New York Times*, May 26, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/05/26/us/politics/trump-russia-china.html>.
- 9 Tanvi Madan, “Has India Made Friends with China After Modi-Xi Agreement?” Brookings Institution, October 29, 2024.
- 10 See the Indian press release after Modi’s meeting with Xi at Tianjin at: “Prime Minister’s bilateral meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping (August 31, 2025),” Ministry of External Affairs: Government of India, August 31, 2024, https://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/40072/Prime_Ministers_bilateral_meeting_with_Chinese_President_Xi_Jinping_August_31_2025.
- 11 Lowy Institute, *Asia Power Index 2024* (Sydney: Lowy Institute for International Policy. <https://power.lowyinstitute.org>
- 12 Chietigj Bajpae, “Managing a Managed Decline: The Future of Indian-Russian Relations,” *War on the Rocks*, February 27, 2024, <https://warontherocks.com/2024/02/managing-a-managed-decline-the-future-of-indian-russian-relations/>.
- 13 “China-Russia Joint Statement on International Relations Entering a New Era,” Moscow, February 4, 2022, <https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/Portals/10/CASI/documents/Translations/2022-02-04%20China%20Russia%20joint%20statement%20International%20Relations%20Entering%20a%20New%20Era.pdf>
- 14 Chietigj Bajpae, *How India’s Democracy Shapes Its Global Role and Relations with the West*, Research Paper (Chatham House, 2024). See also: Christophe Jaffrelot, “A De Facto Ethnic Democracy? Obliterating and Targeting the Other, Hindu Vigilantes, and the Ethno-State,” in *Majoritarian State: How Hindu Nationalism is Changing India*, eds.

Angana P. Chatterji, Thomas Blom Hansen, and Christophe Jaffrelot (Oxford University Press, 2019).

15 “Full Text of Trump’s Speech in Riyadh,” *Times of Israel*, May 16, 2025, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/full-text-of-trumps-speech-in-riyadh-dawn-of-the-bright-new-day-for-the-great-people-of-the-middle-east/>.

16 “Remarks by Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth at the 2025 Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore,” U.S. Department of War, May 31, 2025, <https://www.defense.gov/News/Speeches/Speech/Article/4202494/remarks-by-secretary-of-defense-pete-hegseth-at-the-2025-shangri-la-dialogue-in/>.

17 C. Raja Mohan, “India’s Regional Security Cooperation: The Nehru Raj Legacy,” ISAS Working Paper, no. 168 (2013), <https://www.isas.nus.edu.sg/papers/168-indiaocos-regional-security-cooperation-the-nehru-raj-legacy/>.

18 Many of these themes are covered in David Malone, C. Raja Mohan, and Srinath Raghavan, eds., *Oxford Handbook of Indian Foreign Policy* (Oxford University Press, 2016).

19 Dhruva Jaishankar and Tanvi Madan, “How the Quad Can Match the Hype,” *Foreign Affairs*, April 15, 2021, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2021-04-15/how-quad-can-match-hype>. See also: Leszek Buszynski, *Geopolitics and Strategy: China, the Quad, and the Southeast Asian Pivot* (Springer, 2025).

20 Anil Wadhwa, “I2U2: Strategic Prospects and Challenges Amid Geopolitical Shifts,” *India’s World*, May 14, 2025, <https://indiasworld.in/i2u2-strategic-prospects-and-challenges-amid-geopolitical-shifts/>.

21 See: Tanvi Madan, *Fateful Triangle: How China Shaped US-India Relations during the Cold War* (Penguin India, 2022).

22 Amit Kumar, “De-Risking India’s Trade with China: Identifying Strategic and Critical Vulnerabilities,” Takshashila Institution, January 1, 2025, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/618a55c4cb03246776b68559/t/6777794fcdeecb-2fa7a84bb9/1735883128275/De-risking+India%27s+Trade+with+China+-+Amit+Kumar.pdf>.

23 See: Ross Bassett, *The Technological Indian* (Harvard University Press, 2019).

24 See: Jayshree Bajoria and Esther Pan, “The U.S.-India Nuclear Deal,” Council on Foreign Relations, November 5, 2010, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounders/us-india-nuclear-deal>.

25 Rudra Chaudhuri and Konark Bhandari, “The U.S.–India Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology (iCET) from 2022 to 2025: Assessment, Learnings, and the Way Forward,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, October 23, 2024, <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2024/10/the-us-india-initiative-on-critical-and-emerging-technology-icet-from-2022-to-2025-assessment-learnings-and-the-way-forward?center=india&lang=en>.

26 “First EU-India Trade and Technology Council Focused on Deepening Strategic Engagement on Trade and Technology,” European Commission, May 16, 2023, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_23_2728.

27 “Readout of the United States-India-Republic of Korea Trilateral Technology Dialogue,” U.S. Embassy & Consulate in the Republic of Korea, March 13, 2024, <https://kr.usembassy.gov/031324-readout-of-the-united-states-india-republic-of-korea-trilateral-technology-dialogue/>. See also: “India, US, South Korea Commit to Co-ordinate Measures to Protect Sensitive Technologies in Region and Globally,” *The Print*, March 14, 2024, <https://theprint.in/world/india-us-south-korea-commit-to-co-ordinate-measures-to-protect-sensitive-technologies-in-region-and-globally/2000785/>.

28 Ravi Dutta Mishra, “Dual-Use Goods: US Alerts Indian Companies on Export of Defence Tech to Russia,” *The Indian Express*, August 20, 2024, <https://indianexpress.com/article/business/economy/dual-use-goods-us-alerts-indian-companies-on-export-of-defence-tech-to-russia-9522738/>.

29 Soumyarendra Barik, “New US AI Export Rule Excludes India from Benefits of Closest Allies. What Could Be the Impact?” *The Indian Express*, January 16, 2025, <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-sci-tech/>

[us-ai-export-rule-india-9780103/](#). Note: These rules were scrapped by the Trump administration.

30 “MAGA Split over H-1B Visas Sparks Row among Republicans, Who Stands Where,” *The Economic Times*, December 31, 2024, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/nri/latest-updates/maga-split-over-h-1b-visas-sparks-row-among-republicans-who-stands-where/articleshow/116786756.cms>.

See also: Stephen Collinson, “What the Visa Feud Says About the Coming Trump Administration,” CNN, December 30, 2024, <https://edition.cnn.com/2024/12/30/politics/trump-musk-h1b-visa-analysis/index.html>.

31 See Surendar Singh and Bibek Ray Chaudhuri. “Assessing India’s Production-Linked Incentives: A Case for Realignment of Objectives.” *Economic and Political Weekly* 59, no. 49 (2024): 12–15; available at. <https://www.epw.in/journal/2024/49/commentary/assessing-indias-production-linked-incentives.html>; see also PwC India, “India’s PLI Schemes for Manufacturing Sectors.” PwC Research & Insights, 2024; available at <https://www.pwc.in/research-in-sights/advantage-india/pli-schemes.html>

32 Szymon Kardaś, “Power to the People: How the EU’s Energy Transition Can Help Fight the ‘Greenlash,’” ECFR, October 1, 2024, <https://ecfr.eu/publication/power-to-the-people-how-the-eus-energy-transition-can-help-fight-the-greenlash/#:~:text=The%20focus%20of%20the%20greenlash,as%20a%20“green%20bully”>.

33 David Dodwell, “Trump’s ‘Drill, Baby, Drill’ Vision Adds to the Global Climate Nightmare,” *South China Morning Post*, February 7, 2025, <https://www.scmp.com/opinion/world-opinion/article/3297674/trumps-drill-baby-drill-vision-adds-global-climate-nightmare>.

34 Soumyarendra Barik and Ravi Dutta Mishra, “Govt Looks at Options as Business Mounts Pressure for China Dealings Again,” *The Indian Express*, October 23, 2024, <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/govt-looks-at-options-as-business-mounts-pressure-for-china-dealings-again-9633750/>. See also: Vikas Dhoot, “Industry for Rethink on Chinese FDI Curbs, High Import Tariffs,” *The Hindu*, June 23, 2024, <https://www.thehindu.com/business/Industry/industry-for-rethink-on-chinese-fdi-curbs-high-import-tariffs/article68324737.ece>.

35 “India’s stand at COP 26,” Government of India, Press Information Bureau, February 3, 2022, <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1795071>.

36 David Dalton, “India Pushes Ahead with Plans to Open Up Nuclear Sector, Deploy More Reactors,” NucNet, February 4, 2025, <https://www.nucnet.org/news/india-pushes-ahead-with-plans-to-open-up-nuclear-sector-deploy-more-reactors-2-2-2025>.

37 Cliff Kupchan, “6 Swing States Will Decide the Future of Geopolitics,” *Foreign Policy*, June 6, 2023, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/06/06/geopolitics-global-south-middle-powers-swing-states-india-brazil-turkey-indonesia-saudi-arabia-south-africa/>.

38 Manoj Joshi, “Comprehensive National Power,” Observer Research Foundation, May 8, 2017, <https://www.orfonline.org/research/comprehensive-national-power>.