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The significance of India in the US Pivot to Asia

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Declaration of Authorship

This assessment is my own work. It contains no unreferenced verbatim extracts from the works of others and it has not, (either in whole or in part), been submitted towards the award of any other qualification either at National Research Tomsk State University or elsewhere.

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Abstract

The US-India relations experienced vicissitudes until the collapse of the USSR although the relations gained momentum after India liberalised its economy in 1991.

The US-India relations have been moving in the upward trajectory particularly after signing of the nuclear deal between the two countries. China's assertiveness on the global stage has led to the development of the US-India strategic partnership.

However, there is a plausible reason for the US to cooperate with China since the US has high stakes in China's economic rise. On the other hand, India and China cooperate on regional and global issues although they have incompatible positions in South Asia. Hillary Clinton in an article titled 'America's Pacific Century' in 2011 drew attention to the US-India relationship being labelled as one of the defining partnership of the 21st century nonetheless she also remained privy to the obstacles in the relationship.

The US pivot to Asia has provided a remarkable opportunity for US-India civil and defence cooperation since the US regards India's rise as more responsible than China's. However, India is not ready to become a military ally of the US for its reluctance to raise tensions with China. Moreover, some Indian strategic thinkers are anxious about the loss of strategic autonomy in India's foreign policy if it closely aligns with the US.

Therefore, the significance of India in the US pivot to Asia remains a subject of discussion hence the research in question.

The dissertation analyses the significance of India for the US in the Afghanistan-Pakistan (Af-Pak) region and the Asia-Pacific besides overviewing the US-India relations until the declaration of the US pivot to Asia.

The data collection is systematic in nature and literary sources such as online newspapers, journals, magazine, websites, YouTube videos and eBooks have been reviewed for finding answers to the research problematic. The findings of the research provide a comprehensive account of India's developmental and security initiatives in the Af-Pak region and the Asia Pacific. Overall, the research in focus provides India's answer to the US pivot to Asia with scope for further research on the same topic in a decade or so.

Introduction

The US-India relations date back to pre-1947 era when the US supported India's independence from the British (Kux 1993). India became independent in 1947 and chose to remain non-aligned to any of the world powers i.e. US, USSR and UK (Cohen 2001, Chaudhuri 2014). Non-alignment meant the exercise of independence in foreign relations, to be free but friendly with the world powers (Chaudhuri 2014). However, India had to seek military help from the US to defend its territory in the 1962 war between India and China, which led to a review of the Indian foreign policy (Kux 1993, Ray 2011). Nonetheless, the momentum in the US-India relations could not be sustained as the US established diplomatic relations with China with the help of Pakistan; both adversaries of India (Kux 1993, Hodge & Nolan 2007). The Indian apprehensions regarding the perceived US, Pakistan and China alliance led it to sign the 1971 Indo-Soviet Friendship Treaty with the USSR (Hodge & Nolan 2007). The end of the Cold war saw India and the US coming together as India imbibed on the Western Capitalistic model and liberalised its economy (Kux 1993). However, the US-India relations were disturbed after India conducted second round of nuclear tests in 1998, the first round were conducted in 1974 although the US eventually understood India's nuclear concerns vis-à-vis China (Chacko 2012, COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS 2016 & Chaudhuri 2014). The unfortunate events of 9/11 brought India

and the US closer particularly in the defence realm (Ray 2001). The US-India relations further strengthened when the Bush administration offered India an exceptional nuclear deal besides boosting security and economic ties in the wake of an assertive China (Jain 2016). The Obama administration augmented the US-India relations by initiating strategic dialogue with India, a country that was supposed to become a key partner in the US pivot towards Asia ('Clinton helped Obama rope in India as potential ally: Report' 2009, Koshy 2012).

The primary reason for the US pivot to Asia is the rise in Asia of these two big countries - China and India - as military and economic powers (Chacko 2016). It has been argued that the Indian Ocean is perhaps an important place to determine the future of US power (Kaplan cited in Chacko, 2016). The US should identify its struggles with those of the larger Indian Ocean Region (IOR) to preserve its influence (Kaplan cited in Chacko, 2016). The US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, in her speech to the East-West Center in Honolulu, described the Asia-Pacific region as the driver of growth in the 21st century and emphasised that the US will have to invest its resources in the region for sustained global leadership (U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE 2011). She argued that the US needs access to the newly developing markets in Asia for its own economic growth (U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE 2011). Secretary Clinton further added that the US presence is also necessary for maintaining peace in the region, such as defending

freedom of navigation in the South China Sea (SCS), dealing with the activities of North Korea's dictatorial regime and for promoting balanced and inclusive economic growth (U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE 2011).

Secretary Clinton defined the Asia-Pacific, stretching from the Indian subcontinent to the Western shores of the Americas while writing for the November 2011 Foreign Policy magazine (Clinton 2011). As Buzan cited in Chacko 2016, the idea of an Indo-Pacific region sometimes mooted by the Obama administration, is so vast as to challenge the concept of 'region.' This fits with a long-standing and very clever anti-regional diplomatic tactic of the US. By defining itself as part of various super-regions (the Atlantic, Asia-Pacific, the Americas) the US both legitimises its intrusions into them and gives itself leverage against the formation of regional groups that exclude it (respectively Europe, East Asia, Latin America).

However, South Asia has geographically been considered a distinct strategic sub-region of Asia (Koshy 2012). The reason for India's inclusion in the US administration's Asia-Pacific plan could perhaps be because India is the largest democracy in the world and shares the same values of freedom, liberty and rule of law as the US (Clinton 2011). In addition, India is close to the size of China in terms of population and is a rapidly growing economy that could bring balance of power in Asia (Koshy 2012). (Koshy

2012) in 'India: Linchpin of the Pivot' explains that India cooperates with the US in its geostrategic initiatives to counterbalance China and the US conducts more joint military exercises with India than with any other country. (Koshy 2012) indicates that India has started to buy substantial defence equipment from the US, yet India is not ready to become a military ally of the US for its reluctance to raise tensions with China. Moreover, a section of the Indian strategic community is apprehensive about the loss of strategic autonomy in India's foreign policy if it closely aligns with the US (Jain 2016). However, Senator John McCain in a major speech over the floor of the US Senate in June 2014 asserted that the logic of US-India strategic partnership is powerful (Jain 2016). He stressed the key commonalities of the Indian and American societies: creativity, critical thinking, risk-taking, entrepreneurialism and social mobility (Jain 2016). As Koehane explains, it seems unlikely that the US hegemony of the 1950's will be restored during our lifetime; therefore, if we are to have cooperation; it will be cooperation without hegemony (Jain 2016).

There is a compelling reason for the US to cooperate with China rather than to work against it since the US has high stakes in China's remarkable rise (Jain 2016). The US-China bilateral trade stood at USD 562,184.1 million in the year 2013 (Jain 2016). The US firms have a Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) of USD 50-70 billion in China (Jain 2016). However, there are contrasting differences between the US and China on

important issues such as human rights and territorial disputes in the SCS (Jain 2016). The US Defence Secretary Ashton Carter directly criticised China for its land reclamation activities in the SCS and declared that the US will fly, sail and operate according to international law (Chacko 2016). India's concern with regard to the SCS stem from the fact that 50 percent of its trade with South East Asia and East Asia is conducted through SCS and the presence of Chinese defence infrastructure could disrupt India's trade in the region (Chaudhury 2016).

Even so, India and China signed strategic and cooperative partnership agreements in 2005, under which the two countries cooperate on regional and global issues such as climate change, human rights and Iran's nuclear programme, besides conducting joint military exercises (Jain 2016). Nevertheless, India and China have conflicting positions in South Asia (Koshy 2012). These include Chinese claims over India's territory, China's nuclear links with Pakistan and its support for the Pakistani position on Kashmir (Koshy 2012). The US had remained largely silent on the India-China conflicting positions in South Asia (Koshy 2012). However, lately the US administration is warming up to the Indian position with regard to the disputed state of Arunachal Pradesh controlled by India but claimed by China ('U.S. envoy says Arunachal integral part of India, China raises objection' 2016). The potential for the US-India strategic cooperation is immense; India could secure advanced technology for

defence and civilian use, whereas the US could gain access to the lucrative Indian defence and energy sectors (Jain 2016). Moreover, the two countries could cooperate in the Indian Ocean and the SCS for securing mutual strategic interests (Jain 2016).

President Obama, in a speech to Pentagon officials in 2012, identified his administration priority as counter-terrorism, in addition to challenges posed by an emergent Asia dominated by China (Cornwell 2012). Moreover, the 2012 Pentagon document further identified Middle East and South Asia as the hotbed of terrorism, even after the elimination of Osama bin Laden and many other senior al-Qaida leaders (fas.org 2013). It may be noted that the Indian military expertise in the desert and high-altitude warfare could be useful for the US in its counter terrorism efforts (Jain 2016).

Xenia Dormandy, former senior associate at the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, argued that the role of India and the US would be essential for political stability in Kabul and Islamabad (Jain 2016). She wrote that the US should work with Pakistan to stabilize Afghanistan, while still recognizing that Pakistan itself could become a failed state, but it would be hard to stabilise either one without India (Jain 2016).

(Clinton 2011) in 'America's Pacific Century' describes the Asia-Pacific as a key driver of global politics and calls for substantial increase in the US diplomatic, economic,

strategic and other investments in the region that houses several key US allies and important emerging powers like China, India and Indonesia. She states that the enhanced US engagement in Asia will build architecture for sustained American leadership in this century. She categorise the American political opposition calls of downsizing the US foreign engagement in favour of pressing domestic priorities as a misguided notion. (Clinton 2011) states that opening new markets for American businesses, curbing nuclear proliferation and ensuring freedom of navigation of sea-lanes is essential for the US prosperity and security. She negates claims made by some people about the US willingness to remain engaged in Asia and reaffirms the US commitments with sustained action. She explains that open markets in Asia provide the US with unparalleled opportunities for investment, trade, and access to cutting-edge technology. Moreover, she stresses that the US economic recovery will depend on exports and the ability of American firms to use the exponentially growing consumer base of Asia. She states that the Asia-Pacific region is also eager for the US security leadership and for the US business. (Clinton 2011) refers to the President Obama speech to the Indian parliament in 2010 where he mentioned that the relationship between the US and India will be one of the defining partnerships of the 21st century, rooted in common values and interests. She proclaims, India's greater role in the world will enhance peace and security and America is making a strategic bet on India - a dynamic, vibrant pluralistic democracy. However, (Clinton 2011) remained mindful of the

obstacles in the US-India relationship that left the reader wondering about the impediments in the relationship and the factors that will make the US-India relationship one of the defining partnership of the 21st century.

(Overdorf 2012) in 'India: Manmohan Singh makes pitch for broad role in SE Asia' states that the Indian Prime Minister (PM) Manmohan Singh strategy of intensively engaging with Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), ten nation regional grouping, as expressed at the India-ASEAN Summit in Phnom Penh in 2012 is in line with the further-elaborated Indian engagement with the ASEAN. (Overdorf 2012) elaborates that this move by the Indian government is similar to the Chinese engagement in India's periphery such as with Nepal, Bangladesh and Bhutan. Nonetheless, (Overdorf 2012) does not mention whether there is enough space for both India and China to grow together and avoid a confrontation.

(Lowther 2014) in 'The Asia-Pacific Century: Challenges and Opportunities' examines diplomatic, economic, and military challenges facing the Asia-Pacific region's key players, with a particular focus on their relevance to the US military. This book provides a broad perspective on the topics that will shape the future of the US involvement in the Asia-Pacific region. John Geis in the first chapter of (Lowther 2014) seeks to examine the global leadership shift that is under way from the West to the East and

explores answers to questions such as why does Asia matter and in what way? To answer the questions, John Geis studies economic growth, geography and military power across the Asia-Pacific including China and India and concludes that Asia is regaining a level of importance that it has not enjoyed for centuries. Additionally, this newfound importance of Asia will likely last for a long time to come. As a result, the US must now “pivot” toward Asia. (Lowther 2014) explores contemporary thinking of academicians, business people, policy practitioners and military service members over the Asia-Pacific based on focus groups and a modified Delphi study in chapter 2. Chapter 3 offers broad overview of economic integration in the Asia-Pacific by comparing key economic variables for six of the region’s leading economies- China, India, Australia, Japan, Korea and the US. Brooks Robinson explains that it is highly unlikely that a military conflict will occur in the Asia- Pacific in the coming decade because the countries of the region are well aware of the economic implications of the war. Chad Dacus suggests in chapter 4 that China might employ economic policies that not only maximise economic opportunities but minimise real or perceived strategic threats with soft economic warfare. Simon Reich in Chapter 5 states that American realist are overstating the potential threat posed by China to the US leadership in the international system. Justin Logan discusses US-China relationship in Chapter 6. He recommends the alteration in the US foreign policy in the Asia-Pacific whereby the US allies and partners shoulder more responsibility for their own security while the US

becomes an offshore balancer. Dhirendra Vajpeyi offers an Indian perspective on the complex relationship that exists among India, China and the US in chapter 7. In chapter 8, Rajeshwari Pillai argues that China seems to be deviating from its peaceful development strategy and suggests a broad alliance of India, Russia, Japan and the US to act as a counterweight to China in the Asia-Pacific. Sanu Kainikara provides Australian view of regional security in chapter 9 where he explains Australia's strategy of pursuing its interests in the region. Sheldon Simon overviews the territorial disputes in the SCS in chapter 10. He advocates the use of US diplomatic means instead of military for the resolution the of the SCS disputes. In chapter 11, Stephen Cimbala examines the potential for nuclear arms race in the Asia-Pacific over the coming years. He employs nuclear stability models that look at the potential for first-strike escalation. Stephen Cimbala claims that there exists a real potential for nuclear conflict in the Asia-Pacific based on the insecurity of nuclear powers in the region. Kimberly Gill and Tom Dolan examine the prospects for reunification on the Korean Peninsula in chapter 12. Gill and Dolan conclude that finding the most cost-effective and stabilising method for reunifying the two Koreas will be a major challenge. Gill and Dolan do not believe that a conflict on the Korean peninsula is likely. In chapter 13, (Lowther 2014) focusses on the United States Air Force (USAF) partnership-building efforts. He suggests that the USAF is likely to rely on its soft power as the US seeks to shape the Asia-Pacific. (Lowther 2014) concludes that a major leadership shift from West to East is under way.

The US has a strong economic and military interest in shaping this shift in a manner that result in free and unrestricted commerce across the whole of the Asia-Pacific, objectives that are of mutual benefit to all nations. However, this book is compiled with a militaristic focus on the Asia-Pacific region and does not fully explain India's significance in the US pivot to Asia.

(Fraser 2012) in 'Overbalancing: The Folly of Trying to Contain China' warns that countries such as Australia, where US Marines are deployed should desist being drawn into a potential dangerous American strategy of containment of China in the name of the US pivot to Asia. (Fraser 2012) explains that America's defence spending is 41% of the world's total whereas China's defence spending is 8.2% of the world's total when China is surrounded by unstable countries. Moreover, as the author points out China has no border dispute with the US, therefore American current defence spending is unjustified and unnecessary and the US policy of containment also ignores the fact that the China and America's economy are closely interlinked by debt, capital investment and markets all of which are important to both the countries. (Fraser 2012) blames the American domestic politics for its faulty international policy. (Fraser 2012) mentions India's border dispute with China and that the US is building a strategic partnership with India however he fails to comprehend that India and several South East Asian countries welcome the US military presence in the region in the face of an assertive

China (FIRSTPOST 2016).

(Mishra 2017) in 'Indo–US Security Cooperation: Implications for the Indian Ocean' explains that the US and India's maritime interests have come to converge. India seeks to expand its strategic influence in IOR and that supports the long-term interests of the US in balancing China in the region. The IOR has emerged as an important maritime domain in the post- Cold War period in which the US has expanded its maritime pursuits. The US and India began their maritime cooperation in 1991. The following year saw the start of the Malabar series of naval exercises between their navies. Lately, India is matching its outgoing maritime policy with actions. India has moved to retool its Look East policy into making the Act East policy, thereby emphasising the importance of the Indo-Pacific maritime region in its regional foreign policy outlook. This move is in harmony with the concept floated by the US of looking at the Indian Ocean as the south-western leg of its Rebalance Strategy. In 2015, both countries announced the US–India Joint Strategic Vision for the Asia-Pacific and IOR. This move was also meant to convey India's message to the US that the former was ready to accept larger maritime responsibilities although India stopped short of committing joint patrols along with the US in the SCS and other maritime areas of Asia. However, India did not shy away from invoking the freedom of navigation and overflight in the SCS. This assertion, coming on the back of India's improved relations with the US, cannot ignore

the dynamics of the balance of power in Asian waters. India's growing relationship with the US has drawn other US allies in the Asia-Pacific towards it, especially Japan and Australia. This has in turn prompted China to embrace Pakistan. Russia, too, is displaying great friendship with Pakistan and China, compelling thought on a possible China-Pakistan- Russia axis in future, with maritime connotations. The rivalry that would characterise any such future realignment would have immense implications for the IOR. (Mishra 2017) proclaims that the India-US defence partnership is growing, however the author does not explain the reason for India's reluctance for a joint US-India patrol in the SCS.

(Pant & Joshi 2016) in 'The US Pivot and Indian Foreign Policy: Asia's Evolving Balance of Power' discuss the political and military aspects of the US 'pivot to Asia' but ignore the economic aspect, which is fundamental in reducing the economic dependence of the states of Asia-Pacific on China thereby distancing them from China's coercive economic policies. The main theme of the book rest on the argument that the geo-strategic factors induce India to enter into an alliance with the US to balance against China however, India is hedging against China rather than endorsing the pivot. This is due to Indian policy of strategic autonomy. (Pant & Joshi 2016) argue that India has followed a three-pronged strategy to hedge against China. First, India is reconfiguring its relationship with the US. Second, it has tried in vain to improve its relations with

China. Third, India is deepening and strengthening its strategic partnerships and engagement with regional powers in East Asia such as Japan, South Korea and the ASEAN countries especially Vietnam, Indonesia and Singapore. The authors assert that there is continuity in India's hedging with respect to China under the Narendra Modi led Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government. Modi has pursued a more proactive hedging strategy in comparison to the Indian National Congress (INC) led coalition government headed by Manmohan Singh. (Pant & Joshi 2016) claim that India cannot internally balance China because it lacks internal capacity to do so therefore India needs to collaborate with the US and strengthen political, economic and security relationship with the Asia-Pacific countries. Moreover, India perceives the 'pivot' both as an opportunity and as a concern. However, the authors do not discuss India's significance for the US in the Af-Pak region. India might not be able to discharge its leadership role in the Asia-Pacific region without a peaceful neighbourhood.

(Tow & Stuart 2015) in 'The New US Strategy Towards Asia: Adapting to the American Pivot' examine Barack Obama's "rebalancing" or "pivot" strategy, intended to demonstrate continued US commitment to the Asia-Pacific region in military, economic, and diplomatic contexts. The US pivot to Asia was launched in 2011. The ongoing pivot campaign is best understood as an effort to preserve American hegemony in the face of an unprecedented shift in global power from West to East. One essential

precondition for the success of the US pivot to Asia is the acceptance and support of the pivot by the US friends and allies. This book is designed to help the US policymakers and security experts to appreciate the specific strategies, priorities and concerns of the Asia-Pacific governments as they relate to the pivot. The first section of this book introduces readers to the pivot strategy and to the situation, the US faces in the region. The remaining chapters present the diverse points of view of experts from most of America's Asia-Pacific partners. The US partners in the Asia-Pacific are generally welcoming the US pivot and discuss various forms of security cooperation with the US. Many of the experts are willing to go further in support of the US pivot if the US could reassure the economic, political and strategic sustainability of the pivot. They also seek reassurance from the US that the pivot will be managed in such a way that they will not be forced to choose between China (a major source of prosperity for most of these nations) and the US (a major source of security for the region). However, most of the US regional partners will keep their options open until they are satisfied that the US is in the region for a long haul. Some Asian experts question the over-reliance of the US on military means to influence the pivot however the US policy makers are aware of their military superiority that could translate into influence in the US dealings with China. The primary difficulty for the US to manage the pivot is the contradictory goal of engaging and containing China at the same time. The defence experts of Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, South East Asia and Oceania regions have all

voiced their opinions in the book however; the most interesting opinion in relation to the research in question is of the Indian defence expert. Mahesh Shankar states that India welcomes the US pivot although India could be pushed to circumspect the US pivot if it leads to undermining India's strategic autonomy or if the US is not able to sustain its commitments in the region. Political and economic developments within India could also result in its moving away from foreign affairs with complex implications for the US-Indian security cooperation. All the chapters in this book (Tow & Stuart 2015) make it clear that the US pivot to Asia is still work in progress, the future is by no means certain, and no regional actor wants to be forced to make a choice between China and the US.

Richard Rossow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) refers to the concerns regarding China's rise and potential aggressiveness that has brought India and the US together on defence and security (CHINESE MEDIA ON U.S. SECRETARY OF STATE INDIA VISIT 2017). However, Sourabh Gupta, an expert on International Relations at the Institute for China-America Studies (ICAS), points out that though India welcomes American support in the Asia-Pacific and particularly in IOR, it is not seeking strategic alignment with the US (CHINESE MEDIA ON U.S. SECRETARY OF STATE INDIA VISIT 2017). Unquestionably, the Indian role is crucial for the stability of the Af-Pak region and the Asia-Pacific for the US. However,

the actual role that India has been playing and is willing to play in the future continues to be a subject for discussion (Jain 2016). The goal of the research in question is to discover the significance of India in the US pivot to Asia.

This dissertation presents a complete overview of the US-India relations until the declaration of the US pivot to Asia in chapter two. An in-depth analysis of India's significance for the US in the Af-Pak region and the Asia-Pacific is presented in chapters three and four followed by a conclusion.

This research will adopt a systematic methodology in analysing economic, political and security relations of two countries in a regional context. Scholarly material such as books, journals, research reports, blogs, magazines, newspapers and You Tube videos will be reviewed. The research will utilise open resources from Asia and the West and will be based on Neorealism approach, which enunciates that States seek to maximise their power and influence in International Relations (Lowther 2014). The research will use Harvard style of referencing.

The US-India relations until the declaration of the US Pivot to Asia

India gained independence from the British in 1947 (Cohen 2001). The US administration had demonstrated its support for India's independence as early as 1944, when Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, sister of the first PM of India Jawahar Lal Nehru visited

the US on a trip backed by the US State Department (Kux 1993). Mrs. Pandit lectured all over the US on the necessity of India's independence for its people (Kux 1993). Nehru had also supported the idea of an independent India backing the US against the Japanese in 1942, in return for the American support for Indian independence (Chaudhuri 2014). President Roosevelt subsequently commented against the British imperialism in India when he mentioned that much of the Orient is ruled by a handful of whites, while those being ruled resent it (Kux 1993). However, some people in the US administration were in doubt as to whether India could be governed by its own people, primarily because India was entangled in poverty, caste conflict and social issues (Cohen 2001).

American pressure may have contributed to the British forming an interim government in India represented by the INC in 1946 (Kux 1993). The formation of India's interim government led the Acting US Secretary of State Dean Acheson to seek and receive President Truman's approval for raising the American diplomatic mission to full embassy status in India, a sign of strengthening the image of India's interim government (Kux 1993). Nonetheless, the Truman administration became disillusioned with India immediately after it gained independence, as India seemed excessively poor and heavily populated (Chaudhuri 2014). Even so, the Truman administration gradually became aware of the importance of India in containment of

the USSR (Chaudhuri 2014). On the other hand, the Indian government attitude towards the US administration could be regarded as uncertain because the Indian government was following the policy of non-alignment (Chaudhuri 2014).

Non-alignment meant the exercise of independence in foreign relations (Chaudhuri 2014). It was designed to shield India from the Cold War politic; to be free but friendly with the major powers: US, UK and USSR (Chaudhuri 2014). However, to translate the non-alignment policy into everyday diplomacy was not easy (Chaudhuri 2014). The idea of maintaining contact with all countries was little understood in the US and was often labelled as anti-West in the US media (Chaudhuri 2014). Non-alignment also meant anti-imperialism and the US was seen as of little help in advising its European allies such as Britain, France and the Netherlands to follow suit, whereas the USSR favoured the Indian position (Kux 1993). Nonetheless, colonialism had many manifestations, including the way in which the USSR compelled Eastern European countries post-1945 to become its satellite states that found no mention in Indian discourse against colonialism (Ray 2011).

Even so, Nehru was disillusioned with Communist USSR and had virtually aligned India with the Western bloc (Chaudhuri 2014). Nehru admired the Western model of democracy; perhaps even more so, for India was in need of economic and military

assistance from the US (Chaudhuri 2014). Nehru wanted to remain as independent as possible in the conduct of India's foreign policy, as he once stated 'foreign affair is utterly a realistic business' (Chaudhuri 2014). Nehru's vision was to develop national defence industries, although he was aware that it would take time and until then India will need to source defence infrastructure from abroad (Chaudhuri 2014). In addition, Nehru was not averse to using force as long it served India's interest, and he demonstrated that in Kashmir (Chaudhuri 2014).

Kashmir was a princely state in South Asia which chose to not join India or Pakistan after the two gained freedom from the British in 1947 (Kux 1993). However, a few months into their independence, tribal entities from Pakistan attacked Kashmir (Kux 1993). The King of Kashmir sought and received Indian military support on the condition that the King would sign the letter of accession of Kashmir in favour of India (Kux 1993). The King of Kashmir finally signed the letter of accession in favour of India after the tribals were partly flushed out by the Indian army (Kux 1993). Pakistan did not accept the Kashmiri accession to India because the majority of Kashmiri population was Muslim and favoured international intervention in solving the dispute (Kux 1993). Nehru has been criticised in India's politics for two reasons: agreeing to a ceasefire with Pakistan before the tribals were completely flushed out

from Kashmir and for taking the Kashmir conflict to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) (Ray 2011, Kux 1993).

Nehru was sentimental about Kashmir since his family came from there (Kux 1993). Nehru and INC regarded Kashmir as a mini-Pakistan whose successful governance was to prove India's secular character (Kux 1993). Nehru may have thought that if he could become the first PM of India then there was no reason for an ordinary Kashmiri to not realise his/her ambitions and aspirations within secular India (Kux 1993). The US viewed Kashmir as a disputed territory between India and Pakistan (Kux 1993). The US administration left the resolution of the Kashmir dispute to the UNSC (Kux 1993). The US administration eventually realised that war could break out between India and Pakistan over the Kashmir dispute (Kux 1993).

The Kashmir dispute found prominence in discussions held at the White House between PM Nehru and President Truman while Nehru was on an official visit to the US in 1949 (Kux 1993). President Truman had authorised US Secretary of State Acheson to discuss the intricacies of dealing with the Kashmir conflict with Nehru (Kux 1993). Even so, Nehru was not ready to part with even an inch of the Kashmiri territory, and he regarded the Pakistani claim over Kashmir as illegitimate (Kux 1993). Nehru expected American backing on India's position over Kashmir, and this may

have been the only reason stopping India from tilting towards the Western bloc in the Cold War equation (Chaudhuri 2014). Australian jurist Sir Owen Dixon was sent as a UNSC representative to solve the Kashmir dispute in 1950 (Kux 1993) He recommended withdrawal of the UNSC mediation effort in the interest of bilateral political settlement of the Kashmir dispute between Pakistan and India (Kux 1993).

Nehru, while on an official trip to the US in 1949, suggested to the American administration that the US should be more reasonable in dealing with the Russians and should recognise Communist China (Kux 1993). It seemed that the Indian government was going through a colonial hangover and looked at the American Capitalist system through a prism of imperialism (Kux 1993). The thinking of the Indian political elite was that the US would somehow use its economic power to interfere in India's sovereignty or unfairly exploit India's natural resources similar to what the British had done in colonial India (Kux 1993). The Americans regarded India's socialist economy as poor and difficult for conducting business (Kux 1993).

Moreover, Nehru was in favour of friendly relations with China (Ray 2011). He thought Asia's destiny should be shaped by China and India, and not by the Europeans (Kux 1993). Even so, India had interestingly occupied a pivotal state position in the American strategic thought as early as 1950, when China fell to the Communists (Kux 1993). The American administration was concerned by the thought of India falling to

the Communists for it would have meant nearly the whole of Asia becoming Communist (Kux 1993). Therefore, the American strategists recommended closer government-to-government consultations, the supply of military equipment and economic aid programmes for India (Kux 1993). The American strategists were hopeful that India would voluntarily align itself with the Western bloc against Communism (Kux 1993). Nehru, however, consistently disapproved of India's aligning with any Cold War power bloc, thus creating an impression in the American administration that India was an unreliable partner (Kux 1993). It may be argued that the difference in expectations of the Truman administration and that of the Nehru-led Indian government complicated the relations between India and the US for years to come (Kux 1993).

India may have completely fallen out of America's favour after showing its reluctance to sign the security pact formulated by John F. Dulles, Secretary of State in the Eisenhower Administration (Kulke & Rothermund 2004). Dulles was a staunch anti-Communist and was in favour of the American allies signing the pact (Kulke & Rothermund 2004). Moreover, Eisenhower himself was a former supreme commander of North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) (Chary 1995). According to Collins Dictionary, NATO is an international organisation composed of the US, Canada, Britain, and 26 European countries: established by the North Atlantic Treaty (1949) for

purposes of collective security. Eisenhower was fully aware of the need for regional security pacts (Chary 1995). The Eisenhower Administration was clear in its assessment that US forces were inferior in numbers compared to the Russian or Chinese forces (Chary 1995). Therefore, the US administration formulated regional security pacts that were useful to respond to the Communist threat anywhere and anytime by using the defence forces of the allies (Chary 1995). In addition, the signing of such a pact was also cost effective for the US economy as the cost of maintaining a US soldier was much higher in comparison to maintaining a soldier from a developing country (Chary 1995). By the mid 1950's, Pakistan had secured its position as the most allied ally of the US in Asia, having become a founding member of both the Central Treaty Organisation (CENTO) in the Middle East and the Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO) in Southeast Asia (Riedel 2016). The Pakistani government reasoning for joining SEATO and CENTO was to find allies and resources to confront India, not China or the USSR (Riedel 2016). India was alarmed by the military pact between the US and Pakistan, which envisaged military aid to Pakistan (Kux 1993). According to Nehru, the military pact had the capacity to disturb the balance of power in Asia (Kux 1993). However, Dulles believed that the military aid to Pakistan was primarily formulated to check Communism and was not to affect the inherent superiority of the Indian defence forces (Kux 1993). Moreover, the Eisenhower administration simultaneously offered military aid to India and was also ready to react in case Pakistan

misused the US military aid against India (Kux 1993). Even so, Nehru regarded the US military aid to Pakistan to be partially against the Indian position of non-alignment (Kux 1993).

There was a gradual realisation in the Eisenhower administration that India was an important regional player and a prominent member of the Non-Aligned Movement; hence alienating India was not in the US interest (Chary 1995). Moreover, the US administration realised that the Soviets were filling the void created by American indifference towards India (Chary 1995). The Soviets had extended support to India's position on Kashmir and Goa (Kux 1993). Goa was under the control of the Portuguese government, which was refusing to give it up, arguing that it was a Portuguese province and not a colony (Kux 1993). The US was supporting the Portuguese position on Goa (Kux 1993). On the other hand, the USSR had supplied India with economic aid, which included capital-goods investment; something that the US administration had refrained from doing in India (Chary 1995). This geopolitical development led the Eisenhower administration to devise an economic aid programme for India (Chary 1995). India was looking to rapidly industrialise under the Second Five Year Plan, and Nehru thought the US could help India achieve its economic goals, despite the USSR (Chary 1995, Kux 1993). The Second Five Year Plan, which commenced in 1956, was devised to cut Indian dependence on imported steel, electrical supplies and heavy machinery, on the

assumption that the food problem, which was a priority under the First Five Year Plan of 1951, had been largely solved (Chary 1995). The Indian planners also proclaimed that the Indian economy would follow a socialistic pattern (Chary 1995).

President Eisenhower invited Nehru with his daughter Indira for a US official visit in 1956, where both the leaders were able to develop good rapport (Chary 1995). This followed a reciprocal visit by Eisenhower to India in 1959 that he regarded as most memorable (Chary 1995). It may be noted that Eisenhower was the first sitting US President to visit India and to address the Indian Parliament (COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS 2016). Eisenhower's visit helped develop better understanding between the Indian and American administrations; however, differences on the core issues such as Communism and Kashmir persisted (Chary 1995, Kux 1993).

The relations between India and the US improved under the short tenure of President John F. Kennedy from 1961 to 1963 (Kulke & Rothermund 2004). Kennedy regarded India as a vibrant example of democracy and the free world (Kulke & Rothermund 2004). The Kennedy administration committed USD 1 billion in developmental assistance for the first two years of India's Third Five Year Plan, beginning 1962 (Kux 1993).

The attention of the Kennedy administration was focussed on two major events in the early 1960's that had the potential of redefining the geopolitics of South Asia (Kux 1993). First, Nehru sent Indian forces into Goa in 1961, and that resulted in a bloodless Portuguese surrender of the Goan territory (Kux 1993). The US administration was astonished at the Indian use of force to capture a territory because Nehru had been advocating the use of peaceful means in settling international disputes (Kux 1993). Second, India and China went to war in 1962 over a border dispute (Kux 1993). An uninhabited high plateau called the Aksai Chin was at the centre of the dispute (Kux 1993).

Aksai Chin is located in Ladakh, north of Kashmir and carries strategic significance for China because it serves as a link between Chinese Sinkiang province and Tibet (Kux 1993). India and China were also at odds over the Eastern frontier, the borders defining India's Northeast Frontier Agency (NEFA) and Tibet (Kux 1993). The Indian stance on the frontier known as MacMohan Line was fixed by the Simla Convention signed between British India and the Chinese Nationalists in 1914 (Kux 1993). However, Communist China believed that there had been no formal treaty between the Indian Government and the Chinese Central Government, and, therefore, the borders were subject to negotiation (Kux 1993). The situation became more complicated when Tibet revolted against Communist China in 1959 (Kux 1993). The Tibetan spiritual leader,

the Dalai Lama, fled to India and was granted political asylum by the Indian Government (Kux 1993). China became furious over this development (Kux 1993). Nehru wanted to help the Tibetans while still maintaining a friendly relationship with China, a challenging task which the Indian Government continues to this day (Kux 1993, Riedel 2016). The Communists in China thought that India was collaborating with the Chinese Nationalists and that the US administration was covertly supporting the Tibetan revolt (Kux 1993). The Chinese then toughened their stance over the border dispute with India and entered the virtually defenceless Indian territories (Kux 1993). It was during the India-China war that Nehru had reviewed his policy of non-alignment, while seeking and receiving American military assistance for defending India's borders (Ray 2011). Nehru and his foreign secretary even started to contemplate containment of Communist China in the rest of Asia, both militarily and politically (Ray 2011). Unquestionably, the fear of the perceived Indian and American military alliance led the Chinese military to abruptly call a ceasefire and give up almost all the territory occupied during the war, with the exception of Aksai Chin (Ray 2011, Kux 1993). The 1962 war created rivalry between India and China that brought Pakistan and China closer (Kux 1993). In the same year, President Ayub of Pakistan announced an agreement in principle with Communist China on border delimitation (Kux 1993). The power dynamics created as a result of the 1962 war are evident even today between India, China and Pakistan (Riedel 2016).

In 1963, another important event took place between India and the US (COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS 2016). India had been increasing wheat importation from the US beginning in 1954 (LIVING HISTORY FARM 2007). However, India had to develop its own sources of food for sustainable development (LIVING HISTORY FARM 2007). The Indian government was aware of Norman Borlaug, an American food scientist, who had increased the production of wheat in Mexico with semi-dwarf varieties of seeds (LIVING HISTORY FARM 2007). Based upon his success, the Indian government brought Borlaug to India, with assistance of the US Rockefeller Foundation, to gain expertise in increasing wheat production, and the results were positive (LIVING HISTORY FARM 2007). India gradually became self-sufficient in food production (COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS 2016). The assassination of President Kennedy in November 1963 and the death of PM Nehru in May 1964 marked an end to an era in US-India relations (Kux 1993).

The succeeding US administration of President Lyndon Johnson became disenchanted with India (Kux 1993). India and Pakistan had fought another war over Kashmir in 1965; and there was still no solution in sight on the Kashmir issue (Kux 1993). The US stopped military and economic assistance to both India and Pakistan during the 1965 war (Kux 1993). American strategic thinkers were of the opinion that the US should

not be bearing the cost of a war in the form of military and economic aid to both countries (Kux 1993). Moreover, India was seen as a big country with many poor people struggling to perform economically (Kux 1993). It was at this point that India lost its importance in Washington's revised geostrategic calculations (Kux 1993).

Richard Nixon took office as the American President in 1969, and he continued with his predecessor's policy of giving low priority to India (Hodge & Nolan 2007, Kux 1993). However, in the same year, Chinese and Russian troops clashed along their border, and that incident provided an opportunity for the Nixon administration to initiate a dialogue with China (Kux 1993, PBS 2013). Nixon thought that the rapprochement with China was essential for the balance of power in Asia (Kux 1993, PBS 2013). It is widely known that Nixon had sought Pakistani help in warming relations with China (Hodge & Nolan 2007). The Indian apprehensions regarding a perceived US, Pakistan and China alliance led to the signing of the 1971 Indo-Soviet Friendship Treaty with the USSR (Hodge & Nolan 2007). This was a clear departure from India's age-old stance of non-alignment (Hodge & Nolan 2007). The key articles in the Indo-Soviet Friendship Treaty advocated consultations between the two countries in the event of a crisis, with a pledge that neither country would support a third party against the other (Kux 1993).

In that same year, (1971), East Pakistan was brewing under a political crisis (Kux 1993). India was initially reluctant to interfere; however, it was left with little choice after Indira Gandhi, PM of India, recognized that the political crisis in East Pakistan could become a refugee crisis for India (Kux 1993). A mass exodus of refugees crossed over to the Indian side to escape Pakistani brutality (Kux 1993). The Indian government then sent its army to liberate East Pakistan, which later came to be known as Bangladesh (Hodge & Nolan 2007). Nixon was furious, and had sent the US naval fleet to the Bay of Bengal to scare the Indian government (Kux 1993). However, India quickly declared a ceasefire after achieving its military goals in East Pakistan (Kux 1993). Even so, Soviet submarines were following the US naval fleet (Ray 2011). Interestingly, the US also wanted to send a signal to the Chinese that they could count on the US support in times of trouble if they collaborated with the US (Kux 1993). The diplomatic relations between the US and China were also established in 1971 (Hodge & Nolan 2007).

In 1974, India tested a nuclear device for development of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes (Chacko 2012). The Indian government maintained that it did not intend to develop nuclear weapons (Chacko 2012). However, the US administration considered the Indian nuclear testing contrary to its efforts in thwarting nuclear weapons proliferation (Chacko 2012). Even so, the US administration contemplated providing independent nuclear capacity to New Delhi in anticipation of the Chinese

nuclear tests in the early 1960's (Cohen 2001). Nonetheless, the India-US relations took a nosedive with the imposition of a state of Emergency declared in India by PM Indira Gandhi in 1975 (Kux 1993). The Emergency was imposed to stop the political unrest against Indira Gandhi led INC government after a court in India ruled in favour of a petition seeking Mrs Gandhi's election to the Indian Parliament be set aside for technical irregularities (Kux 1993). The imposition of the Emergency restricted the democratic rights of the Indian citizens (Kux 1993). However, because of this, the relations between India and USSR were strengthened during the Emergency, as India was perceived by the USSR to be moving towards Communism (Kux 1993). This development isolated the few American friends in the US administration who were appreciative of India's democracy (Kux 1993).

Nevertheless, a positive momentum in the US-India relations was expected when the US President Carter assumed office in 1976 and Morarji Desai became PM of India in 1977, after Indira Gandhi abruptly lifted the Emergency and elections took place (Kux 1993). President Carter and PM Desai shared similar beliefs about democracy, human rights, disarmament and economic growth of developing countries (Kux 1993). President Carter addressed the Indian parliament during his visit to India in January 1978 (Kux 1993). President Carter stressed the success of democratic values in both the countries in his address to the Indian Parliament (Kux 1993). However, the US and the

Indian governments could not agree on the nuclear issue (COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS 2016). The Carter administration enacted the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Act in March 1978 (COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS 2016). According to the Act, all countries not included in the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), including India, were to allow inspections of all nuclear facilities by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) (COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS 2016). The NPT came into force in 1970 and was enacted to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and weapons technology (International Atomic Energy Agency 2016). The US ended all nuclear assistance to India after its refusal to abide by the Act (COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS 2016).

The geopolitical developments took a dramatic turn in South Asia in the late 70s and early 80s (Kux 1993). The USSR invaded Afghanistan in 1979 to dislodge President Amin and install a more flexible Babrak Kamal regime. (Kux 1993). In India, Indira Gandhi was elected back into power in 1980, after the Janata Party coalition government collapsed due to political infighting (Kux 1993). Nonetheless, India did not condemn the Soviet action in Afghanistan and instead advocated withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan at an appropriate time, a stance that infuriated the US (Kux 1993). Ronald Reagan became President of the US in 1981, and his administration

quickly began renewing economic and military assistance to Pakistan for training the Mujahedeen to fight against the Soviets (Kux 1993).

However, the Indira Gandhi led INC government made sincere efforts to improve relations with the US because it needed advanced technologies for India's economic development (Ray 2011). Moreover, Indira Gandhi was in favour of balancing India's relations with the US and the USSR (Ray 2011). The growing Indian immigrant community in the US was also a factor in India's desire for improving India-US relationship (Ray 2011). Toward this end, Indira Gandhi paid a successful state visit to the US in 1982 (Ray 2011). Unfortunately, Indira Gandhi was assassinated in 1984 by her bodyguards, seeking revenge for her approval of a military attack on a treasured Sikh temple in Amritsar (Kux 1993). Her son Rajiv Gandhi, who also preferred improving relations with the US, succeeded her (Kux 1993).

Nonetheless, a tragedy struck India-US relations in 1984 (COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS 2016). A toxic gas and chemical leak at the Union Carbide Pesticide Plant in Bhopal, India, owned by a subsidiary of the US company Union Carbide Corporation, killed tens of thousands of people in the consecutive years (COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS 2016). India sought extradition of the former Union carbide CEO, Warren Anderson. The US did not honour the request (Lakshman 2015). The

Bhopal gas tragedy continues to harm US-India relations (COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS 2016). Furthermore, the question of liability and accountability raised by the Bhopal tragedy became a basis for the enactment of an Indian nuclear liability law, which will be explained later in the text (Schor 2010).

Rajiv Gandhi visited the US in 1985 and signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Reagan administration regarding technology transfer (Ray 2011). Even so, India soon faced restrictions resulting from India's development of missile-related technology, following the 1987 Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) (Ray 2011). The aim of the MTCR is to restrict the proliferation of missiles, complete rocket systems, unmanned air vehicles, and related technology for those systems capable of carrying a 500-kilogram payload for at least 300 kilometres, as well as systems intended for the delivery of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) (MTCR 2016). The Indian desire for improving relations with the US gained momentum after the end of the Cold War in 1989 and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 (Kux 1993). The US became the sole super power after the collapse of the Soviet Union (Kux 1993).

Narsimha Rao became the PM of India in 1991, and, he had to deal with India's balance of payments crisis (Ray 2011). India had barely one month's foreign reserves left for importing goods (Ray 2011). Narasimha Rao entrusted the task of liberalising the

Indian economy to Manmohan Singh, India's Finance Minister (Ray 2011). Manmohan Singh eliminated licensing obligations, which reduced government control over private sector investment, reformed the banking sector, liberalised the rules for FDI and rationalised the exchange rate (Ray 2011). These reforms led to the increase in economic growth and facilitated the flow of FDI to India (Ray 2011). The FDI in India increased from USD 100 million in 1990 to USD 2.4 billion in 1996 (Ray 2011). American companies accounted for more than one third of the total FDI in India (Ray 2011). It may be argued that the performance of the Indian economy reflects a pivotal role in the conduct of the Clinton administration's foreign policy (Hodge & Nolan 2007).

Bill Clinton became the American President in 1993 (Hodge & Nolan 2007). His foreign policy was focussed on domestic economic recovery, but with emphasis on exploring foreign markets that had good business potential for American companies (Hodge & Nolan 2007). India was among those countries that had been ignored by American companies (Hodge & Nolan 2007). In the mid- 1990's, fragile coalition governments in India delayed the reform process, although the impact of India's economic reforms upon India-US relations became more visible with the passage of time (Ray 2011). During the same period, India and the US established a Defence Policy Group (DPG) to facilitate military cooperation between the two countries, and that resulted in the 1996-97 India-US joint naval exercises in the Indian Ocean (Ray

2011). The year 1998 marked the election of yet another coalition government in India led by the Hindu nationalist political party, BJP with Atal Bihari Vajpayee as PM (Chacko 2012).

The BJP government announced the conduct of a series of underground nuclear tests in 1998, close to the border with Pakistan (COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS 2016). The tests drew international condemnation and damaged India's relationship with the US (COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS 2016). Bill Clinton recalled the US ambassador to India and imposed economic sanctions on India (COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS 2016). Nevertheless, intensive discussions followed between the American and Indian governments soon after the tests (Chaudhuri 2014). The Indian Minister of External Affairs, Jaswant Singh, represented India, whereas Talbott, the US Deputy Secretary of State, represented the American side (Chaudhuri 2014, Brookings 2016). According to Talbott, the goal of the back channel dialogue was to address the interrelated issues underlying India and its approach to non-proliferation (Chaudhuri 2014). On the other hand, the dialogue that lasted until 2000 provided an opportunity for Jaswant Singh to put across India's views on the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and non-proliferation (Chaudhuri 2014). The CTBT bans testing of nuclear bombs (CTBTO PREPARATORY COMMISSION 2012). The Jaswant-Talbott talks began to show results by 1999 (Chaudhuri 2014).

In July 1999, Pakistani forces infiltrated across the Line of Control (LoC) that divided Pakistan-administered Kashmir and the Jammu and Kashmir in the Kargil district (Chaudhuri 2014). The Indian Army retaliated, and the Clinton administration was left with no doubt that the attack had been stage-managed by the Pakistani Army (Chaudhuri 2014). President Clinton put forth two conditions prior to agreeing to invite Nawaz Sharif, PM of Pakistan for talks to the US (Chaudhuri 2014). The two conditions were non-intervention of the US in the Kashmir dispute and the unconditional withdrawal of the Pakistan forces back across the LoC (Chaudhuri 2014). The dialogue between Jaswant Singh and Strobe Talbott continued during the Kargil conflict (Brookings 2016). Moreover, the dialogue provided the US an important role in reducing tensions between India and Pakistan, which might have developed into a nuclear exchange (Brookings 2016).

The US gradually accepted India's nuclear program but refused to grant India official nuclear status (Cohen 2001). On the other hand, India refused to sign CTBT, although agreeing to maintain a moratorium on nuclear testing (Cohen 2001). President Clinton removed economic sanctions from India in October 1999 (Ray 2011). Differences persisted on India's imposition of tariff and non-tariff barriers on American goods and regarding India's failure to stop the piracy of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) that

caused losses to American businesses (Ray 2011). IPR provide an exclusive right to the creator over the use of his/her creation for a certain period of time (WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION 2016). Moreover, India and the US could not agree on other arms control measures such as missile material freeze or missile restraints besides non-weaponisation and non-deployment (Cohen 2001). Nonetheless, the Talbott-Singh dialogue laid the foundation for Clinton's transformational visit to South Asia in March 2000 (Brookings 2016).

President Clinton addressed the Indian Parliament during his India visit (Lyon 2008). He praised India's democracy, diversity and the country's efforts to build a modern economy (Lyon 2008). He openly discussed US-India differences over nuclear issues and endorsed a peaceful solution for the Kashmir issue (Lyon 2008). He signed bilateral agreements on trade, economic co-operation, science and technology with PM Vajpayee ('Clinton Visit Opens New Chapter in Indo-U.S. Relations' 2000). Moreover, the two leaders signed a joint statement titled "India-US Relations: A Vision for the 21st Century," which was meant to create a closer and qualitatively new relationship between the two countries ('Clinton Visit Opens New Chapter in Indo-U.S. Relations' 2000). Nevertheless, the two most important points of the joint statement were cooperation in nuclear non-proliferation and counterterrorism (Ray 2011). The US-India relations further consolidated under the tenure of President George W. Bush (Lyon 2008).

George Bush became the American president in 2000 after one of America's most controversial elections (Lyon 2008). President Bush was not a foreign policy expert, and he relied on his National Security Advisor (NSA) Condoleezza Rice for advise on international issues (Chaudhuri 2014). NSA Rice was of the view that India had the potential of becoming a great power and that a close partnership between India and the US could balance China's growing influence in South Asia and beyond (Chaudhuri 2014). It may be argued that the events of 9/11 and its aftermath expedited the Indian-American partnership (Lyon 2008).

The events of 9/11/2001 saw two hijacked passenger airlines crashing into the World Trade Centre towers in the New York City, another hitting Pentagon building in Washington D.C. and yet another crashing perhaps short of its intended target, the White House (Lyon 2008). This terrorist act led to the death of 3000 people (Lyon 2008). President Bush declared a war against terrorism, the epicentre of which was perceived to be Afghanistan (Lyon 2008). The Americans and the British forces bombed the Taliban and Al-Qaeda targets in search of Osama bin Laden, the principal architect of the 9/11 terrorist attacks (Lyon 2008).

The 9/11 incidents led to the fostering of a global alliance against terror (Kulke & Rothermund 2004, Ray 2011). India promptly offered its bases to the US for operation against terrorists (Kulke & Rothermund 2004, Ray 2011). The Indian offer was not accepted by the US, although the gesture opened the possibility of increased military partnership between the US and India (Ray 2001). The US-India DPG met in late 2001 in New Delhi for the first time since the Indian nuclear tests of 1998, and the DPG proposed systematic dialogue for facilitating a defence partnership (Ray 2001). The Indian government thought that joining the global alliance against terror could help in the destruction of the terrorist camps in Pakistan, which were known for their anti-India activities (Kulke & Rothermund 2004). However, Pakistan was a front-line state in America's war on terror; therefore, the US did not coerce Pakistan to eliminate the terrorist infrastructure directed at India, causing disappointment within the Indian establishment (Kulke & Rothermund 2004). Nonetheless, President Bush lifted the remaining sanctions on India in September 2001 (Hodge & Nolan 2007). The sanctions had been previously imposed by the American administration after India conducted nuclear tests in 1998 (Hodge & Nolan 2007).

PM Vajpayee's visit to the US in Nov 2001 consolidated the India-US relationship (Yale Law School 2008). This summit meeting was reported to be the most substantive of all in the history of US-India relations, for it forged partnerships in the areas of

defence, counter-terrorism, India's role in Afghanistan, US missile defence plans, civil nuclear cooperation and economic cooperation (Yale Law School 2008). Moreover, the US was seen supporting India when the Indian parliament was attacked on 13 December 2001 by organisations based in Pakistan, namely Lashkar-e-Tayyiba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) (Khan 2009). The US administration blacklisted these organisations and included them in its global terrorist organisations database (Khan 2009).

In March 2003, the US invaded Iraq on the pretext that it had WMD; an argument, which later proved untrue (BBC 2004). The US administration sought Indian help in the policing of Iraq when the death toll of its soldiers was on a rise; negatively affecting the popularity of the Bush administration (Deen 2003). However, the Indian government's response reflected much caution and restraint (Deen 2003). The Indian government argued that it could send an Indian military contingent only under the auspices of the UNSC (Deen 2003). Unquestionably, it was an unpopular war, and India was not enthusiastic about it (Raja Mohan 2003). Moreover, the Indian government did not want to infuriate its Muslim population or to disturb its age-old ties with Muslim nations, while not openly criticising US military action in Iraq (Raja Mohan 2003).

The Indian elections of 2004 saw the INC led coalition government coming to power headed by PM Manmohan Singh (Kesselman et al 2009). In 2005, the visit to India by the US Secretary of State Rice led to the agreement for the inception of an energy security dialogue between the Indian government and the US administration (COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS 2016). India was facing a chronic deficiency of power supply and required nuclear power for its fast developing economy (David & Grondin 2006). The US-India nuclear deal was supposed to marry Indian interests in procuring clean energy with American interest in protecting the planet against global warming (David & Grondin 2006). Secretary Rice's visit signalled a warming of relations between the two countries, despite disagreements over India-Iran energy cooperation and the US sale of fighter jets to Pakistan (COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS 2016).

The US and India signed a new framework for the US-India Defence relationship in June 2005 that defined parameters for defence cooperation in maritime security, humanitarian assistance and counterterrorism (COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS 2016). The US-India Defence pact allowed New Delhi to join the multilateral Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) (Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies 2006). The PSI is a global plan designed to stop worldwide the shipment of WMD, related materials and their delivery systems (Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies 2006).

The Pentagon approved the lease of two P-3C reconnaissance aircraft for India in a USD 133 million military sale for providing logistical support under the Defence pact (Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies 2006). The Pentagon's Defence Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) announced that the proposed sale would help improve the security of India and strengthen the US-India strategic partnership (Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies 2006). India and the US also agreed to further strengthen bilateral defence cooperation with an emphasis on service-to-service engagement at the meeting of the DPG in Washington in September 2005 (Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies 2006). Officials of both countries were also optimistic about the US-India defence trade, which stood at USD 287 million in 2005 (Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies 2006). The defence trade was expected to conclude with major deals for Indian defence forces in the pipeline (Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies 2006). The Defence Framework agreement would further strengthen the strategic agreement between the US and India (COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS 2016).

The strategic agreement signed between the US and India in July 2005 highlighted the scale of US-India cooperation, permitting India to receive civilian nuclear technology in return for agreeing to separate its civilian and military nuclear facilities and placing

all its civilian resources under IAEA safeguards (COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS 2016).

In 2006, President George W. Bush visited India to finalise the framework of the civilian nuclear deal with PM Manmohan Singh (COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS 2016). The two leaders also held discussions on boosting security and economic ties (COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS 2016). President Bush was fully convinced about India's unblemished record as a responsible nuclear power (Jain 2016). Therefore, he made a sincere effort to convince the US Congress to amend the US Atomic Energy Act 1954, because India was deemed an exceptional case (Jain 2016).

In September 2008, India's international nuclear isolation of more than three decades ended with the grant of a waiver by the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) (Jain 2016). The NSG is a group of nuclear supplier countries that seeks to promote the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons through the implementation of guidelines for nuclear and nuclear-related exports (Nuclear Suppliers Group 2015). The nuclear agreement had put India in a unique position as the only country outside of the NPT that had nuclear capabilities and was permitted to engage in nuclear commerce (COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS 2016).

In November of 2008, LeT terrorists from Pakistan attacked the Taj Mahal Palace Hotel in Mumbai India (COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS 2016). This act of terrorism resulted in the death of more than three hundred people, including six Americans (COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS 2016). The US stood by India and closely cooperated with Indian agencies in investigating the terrorist attack (COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS 2016). It may be argued that the US played a successful role in diffusing tensions between India and Pakistan (rediff.com 2008, theguardian.com 2008). The visits of the US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Senator John Kerry, a close advisor to incumbent US President Barack Obama, were undertaken to pacify India and to persuade Pakistan to act against terrorists within its territory (rediff.com 2008, theguardian.com 2008).

The Indian government and some foreign-affairs analysts were apprehensive about the future of India-US relations after Barack Obama became President in January 2009 (Raja Mohan 2008). There was a perception that the Obama administration might raise nuclear-weapons concerns as well as the Kashmir issue with their Indian counterparts (Raja Mohan 2008). Obama, as a Senator, had attempted to deny India the supply of nuclear fuel through the Obama amendment that had put the nuclear deal in jeopardy

(Raja Mohan 2008). It was the Bush administration's determination that saw the nuclear deal through in conducting bilateral negotiations with India (Raja Mohan 2008).

Moreover, Obama had promised to pursue both the CTBT and the Fissile Materials Cut-off Treaty (FMCT) with India if elected to power (Raja Mohan 2008). The FMCT is a proposed international treaty prohibiting the production of weapons-grade uranium and plutonium (CTBTO PREPARATORY COMMISSION 2012). Obama, while writing an article in the summer edition of 2007 Foreign Affairs magazine, not only mentioned Kashmir but also linked it to Pakistan's Afghan policy (Raja Mohan 2008). This implied that the US administration could persuade India to enter into a dialogue with Pakistan on Kashmir, provided Pakistan cooperated with the US in its fight against terrorism (Raja Mohan 2008).

The fear of the Obama administration internationalising the Kashmir issue grew stronger in India when Richard Holbrooke was ready to accept the assignment as the US Special Envoy to India on Kashmir, Pakistan and Afghanistan in February 2009 (Richter 2009). Nevertheless, Holbrooke's mission was modified to exclude the territorial dispute over Kashmir after vigorous closed-door diplomacy was pursued by India with the US administration (Richter 2009).

Secretary Clinton visited the Asia-Pacific region during her first foreign tour, signalling the importance of the region in the US geo-political strategic calculations (Chacko 2016). This might have been because of the pursuit of an aggressive foreign policy by China that began in 2008 (Chacko 2016). Secretary Clinton's visit to India dispelled all doubt about the US relations with India (Singh 2009). There was a clear message from the Obama administration that US-India relations were set to climb to a much higher level (Singh 2009). The US was ready to start regular, high-level, multi-ministerial strategic talks with India ('Clinton helped Obama rope in India as a potential ally: Report' 2009). On the other hand, Secretary Clinton won an agreement for the supply of the US military and nuclear power plant equipment for India ('Clinton helped Obama rope in India as potential ally: Report' 2009). India and the US shared common concerns about the rise of China ('Clinton helped Obama rope in India as potential ally: Report' 2009). Moreover, India and the US had suffered from Islamic extremism, and it was in their mutual interest to deepen their partnership against terrorism (Singh 2009, 'Clinton helped Obama rope in India as potential ally: Report' 2009). During the same visit, Secretary Clinton extended an invitation from the US President Barack Obama to PM Manmohan Singh, to be the first State guest of the new US administration, reflecting the priority that the US assigned to India ('Clinton helped Obama rope in India as potential ally: Report' 2009). Even so, PM Singh's November 2009 visit to the US turned out to be symbolic in nature and did not result in garnering any significant

breakthroughs in the bilateral relationship (COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS 2016).

The year 2010 could be regarded as eventful in US-India partnership (COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS 2016). The US Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner visited India in April 2010 to launch the new US-India Economic and Financial Partnership in order to institutionalize stronger bilateral relations on economic and financial sector issues (COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS 2016). In June 2010, India's External Affairs Minister, Shri S.M. Krishna, visited the US to launch an 'India-US Strategic Dialogue' with Secretary Clinton (U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE 2010). The idea behind the initiative was to deepen people-to-people, business-to-business, and government-to-government linkages for the promotion of economic growth and prosperity between the two countries, and for advancing global peace and security (U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE 2010). In 2010, Obama gave India recognition as a global player (Reuters 2010). President Obama addressed the Indian Parliament and referred to India as 'emerged', rather than as an 'emerging economy' (Reuters 2010). He further promised to welcome India as a UNSC permanent member in due course of time (Reuters 2010). However, differences persisted between the Indian government and the US administration regarding trade access to Indian markets and civilian nuclear cooperation (COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS 2016). The nuclear liability

law passed by the Indian parliament in August 2010, a legacy of the 1984 Bhopal Union Carbide chemical accident, was causing a rift with the US nuclear suppliers (Bloomberg 2016). Critics of the law argued that it held nuclear suppliers liable for an accident, which was a sharp deviation from the international liability regime that held nuclear operators solely responsible for an accident (Bloomberg 2016).

The signs of American focus on Asia and its dependence on India as a principal anchor grew stronger with the subsequent visit of Secretary Clinton to India in 2011 ('It is Time for India to Lead: Hillary Clinton' 2011). She gave a speech in the Indian port city of Chennai, where she proclaimed that the ties between the US and India will be the defining partnership of the 21st century ('It is Time for India to Lead: Hillary Clinton' 2011). Secretary Clinton welcomed India's 'Look East' policy, however, laying emphasis on the need for Indian administration to not only look east but to engage and act east as well ('It is Time for India to Lead: Hillary Clinton' 2011). Secretary Clinton asserted that countries cannot look inward at the cost of looking outward in the present times ('It is Time for India to Lead: Hillary Clinton' 2011). This statement may have had to do with India's hesitation in taking a leadership role in the Asia-Pacific region, in seeking to not irritate the Chinese ('It is Time for India to Lead: Hillary Clinton' 2011). However, the US administration believed that Indian action was essential for the integration of the Asia-Pacific region under a US umbrella (Koshy 2012). The January

2012 Pentagon document on Strategic Guidance, entitled “Sustaining Global Leadership: Priorities for Twenty First Century,” only named India as a 'principal partner,' whereas other American allies such as Australia, Japan and South Korea were grouped together as ‘existing alliances’ (Koshy 2012). The US Defence Secretary, Leon Panetta, visited India in 2012 after the Obama administration’s US 'Pivot to Asia' announcement (Koshy 2012). On his visit to India, Secretary Panetta described the defence cooperation with India as 'a linchpin in US strategy' in Asia (Koshy 2012).

The significance of India for the US in the Af-Pak region

The Af-Pak region came into limelight after the 9/11 terrorist attacks (Brookings 2013).

The US and the allied forces attacked Afghanistan for it had become the hotbed of al-Qaeda terrorists under the ruling Taliban regime (Brookings 2013). The Taliban regime was supported by neighbouring Pakistan (Brookings 2013). However, Pakistan abandoned its alliance with Taliban post 9/11 due to the US pressure and became a front line US ally in its war against terrorism perhaps in words and not in deeds (Brookings 2013).

The Taliban were rooted out of Afghanistan after a bloody war and, the Afghan government led by Hamid Karzai assumed office in 2001 (OBSERVER RESEARCH FOUNDATION 2016). India's efforts since then have centred on rebuilding Afghanistan (OBSERVER RESEARCH FOUNDATION 2016).

India has been assisting Afghanistan in the areas of infrastructure building, engineering, training, and humanitarian needs (COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS 2015). India has constructed the Afghan parliament building and Salma Dam, among other projects, besides training the Afghans in civil service, carpentry, plumbing, welding, and microenterprise (COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS 2015, Haidari 2015). Moreover, India has donated over USD 2 billion to Afghanistan for reconstruction efforts (Haidari 2015). The Indian private sector has been playing an important role in developing commercial ties with Afghanistan particularly in the mining sector (Haidari 2015, The Finnish Institute of International Affairs 2013). The Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) is responsible for conducting consultations amongst the regional chambers of commerce under the Istanbul Process (COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS 2015). The Istanbul Process was created in 2011 for increasing cooperation between Afghanistan and its neighbours in the areas of security, economics, and politics (CARNEGIE-TSINGHUA CENTER FOR GLOBAL POLICY 2015). India accounts for 27 percent of Afghan exports and offers exciting business prospects for Afghanistan once it becomes better connected to India through the Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA) (COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS 2015).

APTTA came into existence in 2009 through several rounds of hard negotiations between Afghanistan and Pakistan officials (Haider 2016). APTTA allows for transportation of Afghan goods up to the Wagah border between India and Pakistan, in return for Pakistani goods transit to Central Asian countries bordering Afghanistan (Haider 2016). However, Indian goods cannot be imported under APTAA and the Afghan trucks need to drive back empty to the Afghanistan-Pakistan border where they are permitted to load Pakistani goods if they decide to do so (Haider 2016). This means that India-Afghanistan trade expansion is dependent on India-Pakistan ties (Haider 2016).

Even so, India-Pakistan relations have shown little sign of improvement since 2010 and India-Pakistan-Afghanistan trilateral seems a nonstarter (Haider 2016). The Most Favoured Nation (MFN) talks between India and Pakistan made some progress in 2011 towards the Non-Discriminatory Market Access (NDMA) agreement; however, Pakistan abandoned it after the right wing Modi led BJP government took office in India in 2014 (Haider 2016). MFN necessitates that every time a country opens up a market or lowers the trade barrier, it has to do so for the same goods or services from all its trading partners in the WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION (WTO) (WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION 2017). The formal trade between India and Pakistan stands at USD 2.3 billion; however their informal trade via Dubai is estimated to be USD 4.71

billion, of which Indian exports are roughly 80 per cent or USD 3.99 billion (Haider 2016). Even so, 61 per cent of Afghan exports and 53 per cent of its imports came from India and Pakistan in 2015-16 (Haider 2016).

Pakistan wants to maintain strategic influence in Afghanistan, which it enjoyed during the Taliban regime, and considers Indian influence in Afghanistan harmful to its strategic interest (COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS 2015). Dr. Snedden at Deakin University clarifies that Pakistan's strategic interest in Afghanistan pertains to Pakistan moving some of its military assets, particularly aircraft, to Afghanistan to keep them away from Indian control in the event of a war (Identities in conflict: India, Afghanistan and Pakistan, 2016). The Pakistani backed terrorist groups carried out the terrorist attacks on the Indian embassy in Kabul in 2008 and 2009 and on the Indian consulate in Herat in 2014 (COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS 2015). Indian officials want to minimize the risk of a terrorist attacks on its assets, so India has not sent security forces to Afghanistan except to protect its diplomatic facilities and construction teams, despite the Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) (COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS 2015).

India and Afghanistan signed the SPA in 2011 that entitled India to impart security training and provide equipment assistance to Afghanistan (COUNCIL on FOREIGN

RELATIONS 2015). Since then, India has played a limited role in training Afghan forces, always on Indian soil (COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS 2015). Former Afghan President Hamid Karzai had requested India for arms supply but the current Afghan President, Ashraf Ghani abandoned the request in favour of normalising relations with Pakistan (COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS 2015). The act of the Afghanistan government procuring arms from India might have irritated the Pakistani establishment (COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS 2015).

Pakistan is still going on about its age-old stance that the Kashmir dispute should be resolved before the normalisation of relations between India and Pakistan (Jamal 2016).

Nevertheless, both Dr. Snedden and journalist Ms. Sally Neighbour suggest that the Kashmir issue needs to be resolved for the integration of South Asia (Identities in conflict: India, Afghanistan and Pakistan, 2016). Dr. Snedden points out an argument in favour of resolution of the Kashmir dispute stating after its resolution, Pakistan would feel more secure and is less likely to meddle in Afghanistan. Moreover, India, which competes with Pakistan and other countries in Afghanistan, would also become more circumspective (Identities in conflict: India, Afghanistan and Pakistan, 2016).

Even so, Dr. Christine Fair, an American analyst on South Asia has argued that even if the Kashmir dispute is resolved; Pakistan's insecurities would persist and Pakistan would continue to obstruct India's rise (Jamal 2016).

It may be argued that the resolution of the Kashmir issue might also provide a basis to solve the Afghanistan-Pakistan border issue on the Durand line. As Ms. Neighbour explains, the British drew the Durand line in 1893 to separate the British India from Afghanistan (Identities in conflict: India, Afghanistan and Pakistan, 2016). However, the Durand line divided the Pashtun region between Afghanistan and modern day Pakistan (Identities in conflict: India, Afghanistan and Pakistan, 2016). Nevertheless, the Afghans do not recognise the boundary and refer it to as Pashtunistan (Identities in conflict: India, Afghanistan and Pakistan, 2016). According to the former Foreign Minister of Pakistan, Hina Rabbani Khar, the porous border between Pakistan and Afghanistan is a huge threat in building trust between Pakistan and Afghanistan and for the security and stability of both Afghanistan and Pakistan (The Continuing Struggle for Afghanistan and Indo/Pakistan Relations, 2016). Ms. Khar argues that anyone who accuses Pakistan of providing safe havens to the terrorists must also understand that sixty thousand people cross the border every day without any checking, and there is a possibility that some of them are terrorists (The Continuing Struggle for Afghanistan and Indo/Pakistan Relations, 2016). She further adds that when Pakistan tried to introduce biometrics for border-crossing identification, the international community resisted the move (The Continuing Struggle for Afghanistan and Indo/Pakistan Relations, 2016). Ms. Khar goes on to say that, Pakistan has never denied the presence of terrorists within the three million Afghan refugees living on its soil (The Continuing

Struggle for Afghanistan and Indo/Pakistan Relations, 2016). However, she adds that with limited resources at Pakistan's disposal it is difficult to deal with the terrorists (The Continuing Struggle for Afghanistan and Indo/Pakistan Relations, 2016). Even so, Professor Samina Yasmeen at the University of Western Australia explains that democracy in Pakistan is undermined by the presence of extremist and fundamentalist groups on its soil (Identities in conflict: India, Afghanistan and Pakistan, 2016). Nonetheless, Ms. Neighbour is of the view that the US has supported military dictators in Pakistan by giving them more economic aid compared to the democratically elected government (Identities in conflict: India, Afghanistan and Pakistan, 2016).

India recognises the reality of Pakistan's existence although it does not agree with the two-nation theory that was the foundation of Pakistan's creation (Jamal 2016). The two-nation theory stated that Hindus and Muslims could not live together peacefully (Jamal 2016). However, the two-nation theory contradicts with the secular character of the Indian state (Jamal 2016). The Indian state has no religious identity (Jamal 2016). Even so, the same is not true for Pakistan that was the first state created based on religion in opposition to India (Jamal 2016). Therefore, Pakistan's comparison with India is a nonstarter (Jamal 2016). Moreover, Pakistan is much smaller in geography and socio-economic terms (Jamal 2016). However, Pakistani leadership is not ready to accept this reality (Jamal 2016).

The water issue is also causing Pakistan to be at loggerheads with India (Identities in conflict: India, Afghanistan and Pakistan, 2016). Dr. Snedden explains that Pakistan is experiencing significant water scarcity per capita because its population is growing, but the amount of water has remained finite (Identities in conflict: India, Afghanistan and Pakistan, 2016). There are some efficiencies that could be gained by better cropping and better usage of water in Pakistan (Identities in conflict: India, Afghanistan and Pakistan, 2016). India and Afghanistan are in the upstream position and there are fears in Pakistan that India is doing things to manipulate the water flow, or will do it in the future, and at some stage will turn the water off (Identities in conflict: India, Afghanistan and Pakistan, 2016). Additionally, Pakistan is not ready to recognise India's concerns regarding China (Jamal 2016). Pakistan counters any Indian developmental initiatives in Jammu and Kashmir and Afghanistan by using non-state actors to keep India absorbed in countering terrorism (Jamal 2016). However, that does not deter India in playing a more proactive role in Afghanistan, particularly when China is becoming more active there (Jamal 2016, COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS 2015).

India does not want China to displace its influence in South Asia (COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS 2015). PM Modi has developed a regional doctrine

prioritizing ties with all the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) neighbours (COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS 2015). SAARC is an economic and geopolitical organisation for the countries in South Asia (SAARC 2009). However, SAARC is a weak organisation plagued by political divisions and bureaucratic inertia and has been of little help in dismantling non-tariff barriers to trade and investment (THE DITCHLEY FOUNDATION 2016). Non-tariff barriers include various legal or bureaucratic issues that obstruct trade (WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION 2017). Nevertheless, the Modi government's regional doctrine entails development of South Asia with the rise of India; a stance Washington supports (COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS 2015). India has recently launched a SAARC satellite for catering to the communication needs of all SAARC countries, except Pakistan which chose not to join the project revealing that it is working on its own satellite ('India calls satellite 'gift to South Asia', Pakistan says no thanks' 2017). India called the launch of the satellite a gift to South Asia ('India calls satellite 'gift to South Asia', Pakistan says no thanks' 2017). However, Pakistan seems unwilling or unable to keep a check on terrorism emanating from its soil raising concerns for both India and the US (COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS 2015).

The international military presence in Afghanistan has decreased dramatically and Afghan forces are now responsible for the security of their country (COUNCIL on

FOREIGN RELATIONS 2015, OBSERVER RESEARCH FOUNDATION 2016).

Even so, Afghanistan's security situation is worsening (Is Afghanistan a new battlefield for two traditional rivals? – Inside Story, 2017). The Taliban says it controls more than half of Afghanistan (Is Afghanistan a new battlefield for two traditional rivals? – Inside Story, 2017). The US has high stakes in securing a stable future for Afghanistan and so does India (COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS 2015). The resurgence of Taliban, the development of the Islamic State Caliphate, the launch of al-Qaeda's new South Asian subsidiary; and the presence of Pakistan-based Haqqani network and Lashkar-e-Taiba pose a big threat to Indian and the American interests in Afghanistan (COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS 2015). India cannot forget the persistent threats experienced in the late 1990s by Pakistani-backed terrorists in Afghanistan (COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS 2015). However, President Ghani is determined to make Afghanistan the graveyard of Islamic State and other terrorist organisations (President Ashraf Ghani (FULL) interview – BBC NEWS 2016). Preventing the destabilisation of Afghanistan is a top Indian and American priority; therefore, the US should encourage India to multiply its efforts in assisting Afghanistan in areas of strengthening democracy, economics, and civilian security (COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS 2015).

The US should press Pakistan to include India in APTAA (COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS 2015). The Indian Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj has already proposed India's inclusion in APTAA to President Ghani (Haider 2016). This idea may become a reality if Afghanistan is ready to induct Tajikistan on Pakistan's insistence in exchange for India's entry to APTAA (Haider 2016). India's inclusion in APTAA will advance regional economic integration and is fully compatible with the US New Silk Road initiative (COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS 2015). The New Silk Road initiative was first envisaged in 2011 by the US administration, whereby the US and its allies could facilitate opening new markets for trade by connecting Afghanistan to Central Asia, Pakistan, India and beyond (US DEPARTMENT OF STATE 2017). The Silk Road initiative will also reinforce peace and stability in the region when the countries in question experience the economic benefits of working together in comparison to being isolated or working at cross-purposes (US DEPARTMENT OF STATE 2017, Haider 2016).

The US and India should work on strengthening democratic institutions in Afghanistan (COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS 2015). The National Unity Government (NUG) led by President Ashraf Ghani with Abdullah Abdullah as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) was formed in Afghanistan in 2014 (OBSERVER RESEARCH FOUNDATION 2016). However, the Ghani government has been unable to initiate

electoral reform because of disagreement between the leaders over members of the Election Commission (OBSERVER RESEARCH FOUNDATION 2016). The NUG has also failed to hold parliamentary and district council elections, causing doubts in the mind of ordinary Afghans about the efficient functioning of their government (OBSERVER RESEARCH FOUNDATION 2016). India and the US should share their experiences with democracy to advise the NUG as it works with a power-sharing structure unforeseen in the Afghan constitution (COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS 2015).

India has already assisted in building Afghanistan's parliament that reflects on its commitment to help strengthen democracy in Afghanistan (OBSERVER RESEARCH FOUNDATION 2016). The Afghans considered PM Modi's 2015 speech before the Afghan Parliament as positive (OBSERVER RESEARCH FOUNDATION 2016). However, India should help facilitate a dialogue across political spectrum in Afghanistan for passing much needed electoral reforms (OBSERVER RESEARCH FOUNDATION 2016). This move will help develop confidence of the ordinary Afghans towards their government and will further prompt the NUG to hold district and parliamentary elections (OBSERVER RESEARCH FOUNDATION 2016). The Afghan election officials took a training programme in India in 2013 organised by India's Election Commission (OBSERVER RESEARCH FOUNDATION 2016). India

should continue holding such training programmes for the Afghan officials, which help in the propagation of democratic values in Afghanistan (OBSERVER RESEARCH FOUNDATION 2016). This will supplement the US Agency for International Development (USAID) work which has supported Afghan electoral institutions, civic and voter education programs, and Afghan-led electoral reform since 2004 (USAID 2017).

The diplomatic coordination on Afghanistan has become a regional issue after the withdrawal of most of the NATO forces in 2014 (CARNEGIE-TSINGHUA CENTER FOR GLOBAL POLICY 2015, COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS 2015).

Therefore, India needs to play a proactive role in international forums such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process (COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS 2015, OBSERVER RESEARCH FOUNDATION 2016). The active Indian involvement in these international platforms will augur well not only for the peace and prosperity of Afghanistan, but for the entire South Asian region (OBSERVER RESEARCH FOUNDATION 2016).

Professor Robin Jeffrey from National University of Singapore explains that SCO is an organisation of the Central Asian states, Russia, and China, and is seeking to tap the natural resources and the growing political influence of the countries of Central Asia (Identities in conflict: India, Afghanistan and Pakistan, 2016). Professor Jeffrey further

adds that the SCO may provide a platform for the India-Pakistan-Afghanistan resolution to occur simply because the organisation is not an occidental organisation and has a different perspective (Identities in conflict: India, Afghanistan and Pakistan, 2016). Professor Jeffrey emphasises that it could perhaps be easier to approach the problems of India-Pakistan-Afghanistan through Central Asia with China and Russia as dominant players (Identities in conflict: India, Afghanistan and Pakistan, 2016). The full membership of India and Pakistan was accepted by the SCO in 2015 (CARNEGIE-TSINGHUA CENTER FOR GLOBAL POLICY 2015). However, it is worth pointing out that China was not initially in agreement for India to become a member of the SCO, perhaps because of rivalry between the two countries (CARNEGIE-TSINGHUA CENTER FOR GLOBAL POLICY 2015). Nevertheless, China eventually agreed for India to become a full member of the SCO in the interest of the stability of the South Asian region (CARNEGIE-TSINGHUA CENTER FOR GLOBAL POLICY 2015). Dr. Thomas Lynch at the National Defence University in Washington D.C. is of the view that the presence of India and China will create a gridlock like situation in the SCO (India-Japan Strategic Cooperation and Implications for Washington and Beijing 2017). However, former Indian ambassador to the US, Ms. Nirupama Rao thinks that the SCO will provide a platform for India to develop its relations with Central Asia (India-Japan Strategic Cooperation and Implications for Washington and Beijing 2017). Even so, the dynamics of India Pakistan relations are undermining India's role as a favourable

partner for Afghanistan (OBSERVER RESEARCH FOUNDATION 2016). Nonetheless, the inclusion of India and Pakistan in the SCO will provide a new multilateral platform for both sides for direct communication essential for counterterrorism efforts (CARNEGIE-TSINGHUA CENTER FOR GLOBAL POLICY 2015). India should not hesitate to encourage China to exercise their influence over Pakistan in stabilising Afghanistan, and this would serve the US interests in Afghanistan (CARNEGIE-TSINGHUA CENTER FOR GLOBAL POLICY 2015, ALJAZEERA 2016 & COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS 2015).

The withdrawal of most of the NATO forces in Afghanistan has also made China's involvement in Afghanistan compulsory (CARNEGIE-TSINGHUA CENTER FOR GLOBAL POLICY 2015). China has been fighting the East Turkestan Islamic Movement, which is a violent separatist group founded by Uighur militants in Chinese Xinjiang Province (CARNEGIE-TSINGHUA CENTER FOR GLOBAL POLICY 2015). The presence of the NATO troops in Afghanistan has helped maintain peace in the Chinese restive region of Xinjiang as the region borders Afghanistan, similar to Jammu and Kashmir in India (CARNEGIE-TSINGHUA CENTER FOR GLOBAL POLICY 2015, ALJAZEERA 2016). China was maintaining its traditional stance of not interfering in the domestic affairs of other countries prior to NATO troop withdrawal in Afghanistan so much so that the US President Barack Obama labelled

China a “free rider” for not taking responsibility as a partner in the international system (CARNEGIE-TSINGHUA CENTER FOR GLOBAL POLICY 2015).

The US support India's agenda of development in Afghanistan, but has not said much about India's security assistance to Afghanistan (COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS 2015). The US should counsel Pakistani officials on the benefits of Indian involvement in Afghanistan across civilian security areas necessary for rule of law and strengthening of Afghan forces (COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS 2015). Nevertheless, the US should encourage Afghanistan and India to be transparent with Pakistan in their collaboration (COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS 2015). On the other hand, India must not hesitate in providing military support to Afghanistan because of Pakistan's paranoia (OBSERVER RESEARCH FOUNDATION 2016).

India and the US must seek new avenues of cooperation in providing security assistance to Afghanistan (OBSERVER RESEARCH FOUNDATION 2016, COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS 2015). The US has been a major sponsor for the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), which takes USD 4 billion annually (COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS 2015). The US could seek budget support from India for ANSF (COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS 2015). In addition, the US and India could strengthen the ANSF by cooperating in literacy training programmes, military

emergency medicine, logistics and supply-chain management (COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS 2015).

India had supplied Afghanistan four Mi-25 gunships in 2015 to strengthen Afghanistan's combat strength (Snow 2016). Even so, Pakistan felt the pressure of India-Afghanistan military cooperation, and in a subtle reaction agreed to participate in the first meeting of the Quadrilateral Coordination Group (QCG) of Afghanistan, China, Pakistan, and the US (Snow 2016). The first meeting of the QCG was held in January 2016 for peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan (Snow 2016). The April 2016 bombing of an elite Afghan intelligence unit in Kabul indicated that Pakistan was not serious in bringing the Taliban to the negotiating table even after participating in a number of QCG meetings (Snow 2016). It is widely believed that the government of Pakistan exercises influence over the actions of the Taliban (dSR & Simionato 2013). However, Ms. Khar is of the view that participating in the QCG will not help unless trust is inspired among the regional countries (The Continuing Struggle for Afghanistan and Indo/Pakistan Relations, 2016). At present, trust is an issue between India and China, Pakistan and India, Afghanistan and Iran, and Pakistan and Iran (The Continuing Struggle for Afghanistan and Indo/Pakistan Relations, 2016).

The killing of Afghan Taliban Supreme Leader, Mullah Mansour by the US drone strike in Pakistan was meant to give a clear signal to Pakistan that the US no longer regards

Pakistan as a reliable partner in achieving peace in the region (Snow 2016). Therefore, the commander of the Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan, General John W. Nicholson, called on India to help arm Afghan forces in 2016 (Snow 2016). In addition, the US Secretary of State John Kerry had organised a trilateral meeting between the delegates of the US, India, and Afghanistan in September 2016 at UNSC summit, for a round of consultations (Snow 2016, Rajghatta 2016). The consultations provided a platform for the US and Indian government to explore ways for coordinating and aligning their assistance with the needs of the Afghan government (Ministry of External Affairs Government of India 2016). The consultations advanced the shared goals of countering terrorism and developing peace and security in the region (Ministry of External Affairs Government of India 2016). The US cancelled many defence contracts with Pakistan, besides cancelling a USD 270 million subsidy to Pakistan for the purchase of American F-16 fighter jets, a USD 300 million-reimbursement programme out of the Coalition Support Fund (CSF) (Snow 2016). The programme was designed to reimburse allies conducting counterterrorist operations (Snow 2016). However, the US Defence Secretary Ashton Carter refused to tell the US Congress that Pakistan had done enough to fight the Haqqani Network (a U.S. designated terror group allied with the Taliban) (Snow 2016). In a Heart of Asia (Istanbul Process) conference on Afghanistan, held at Amritsar in December 2016, President Ghani openly blamed Pakistan for fostering terrorism and even rejected a Pakistani offer of USD 500 million

for the Afghanistan Reconstruction Fund arguing that the same money could be used for containing extremism (RUSSIA & INDIA REPORT 2016).

Ms. Neighbour elucidates that the Afghan Taliban and Pakistani Taliban are two different entities (Identities in conflict: India, Afghanistan and Pakistan, 2016). The Pakistani Taliban is supported by al-Qaeda and works against the interest of the Pakistani state and the Western organisations, whereas the Afghan Taliban severed its ties with al-Qaeda post 9/11 and has a domestically focussed agenda for the future governance of Afghanistan (Identities in conflict: India, Afghanistan and Pakistan, 2016). Ms. Neighbour further adds that the Afghan Taliban has extended an olive branch for talks with the Afghan government, the US and the allied forces (Identities in conflict: India, Afghanistan and Pakistan, 2016). However, the counter argument is that the Afghan Taliban had scattered post 9/11 and were assisted by the Pakistani Inter Service Intelligence (ISI) to regroup at an opportune time (BROOKINGS 2013). Secondly, the former leader of the Afghan Taliban Mullah Omar did not sever his links with Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda (BROOKINGS 2013, BBC 2015). Moreover, the Afghan Taliban openly mourned the death of Osama Bin Laden who was killed in the American raid in his compound in Pakistan in 2011 (BROOKINGS 2013). Even so, al-Qaeda recognised Mullah Omar as the commander of the Afghan Taliban (BROOKINGS 2013). More interestingly, the Afghan Taliban provided some support

to the Pakistani Taliban, and the Pakistani Taliban recognised Mullah Omar as their emir, similar to al-Qaeda (BROOKINGS 2013). According to Dr. Snedden, Pakistan wants to hold on to some assets, be it human or otherwise, that could shore up its position in Afghanistan and vis-a-vis India (Identities in conflict: India, Afghanistan and Pakistan, 2016). The human assets are some members of the so-called bad Taliban or the associated groups such as the Haqqani network working against the NATO (Identities in conflict: India, Afghanistan and Pakistan, 2016). Overall, the Taliban have been responsible for deaths of many Afghans and foreign nationals working in Afghanistan including Americans (Fair 2015).

It may be argued that the US and India are on the same page when it comes to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) (modern diplomacy 2016, Quartz 2017). CPEC is an express link between Western China, the Middle East, and Africa, financed by China, but built in partnership with Pakistan (Forbes 2017). The 2015 announcement of the USD 46 billion CPEC stretching from Xinjiang to the port of Gwadar on the Arabian Sea has stirred up Balochi resentment to such an extent that the Pakistani government had to deploy 15,000 troops of a Special Security unit under Chinese government pressure to protect the project in 2016 (GATEWAY HOUSE 2016).

Balochistan is the largest of Pakistan's provinces comprising of 44% of Pakistan's territory but only 6% of its population (GATEWAY HOUSE 2016). It is a huge expanse of barren land stretching from the Afghan and Iranian borders down to the Arabian Sea with little commercial activity (GATEWAY HOUSE 2016). The Balochi people are seeking independence from Pakistan, as they feel isolated by Pakistan's developmental priorities (Joshi 2016). In the year 1947, the Khan of Kalat, the local chieftain believed he had the right to opt for independence of Balochistan (GATEWAY HOUSE 2016). However, the Pakistan army marched in to prevent secession in March 1948 (Joshi 2016). The Balochi unrest of the 1970's which led to an increase in the Balochi nationalist feeling was quelled by Pakistan's army by deploying harsh repressive tactics (GATEWAY HOUSE 2016). The Balochi nationalist feeling was further aggravated by the killing of a pro-Balochi independence leader, Akbar Khan Bugti, by Pakistani aircraft in 2006 (GATEWAY HOUSE 2016).

India is in opposition of CPEC primarily because a part of the CPEC route goes through disputed Kashmiri territory held by Pakistan but claimed by India (Quartz 2017). Moreover, India suspects that China is investing in Pakistan's Gwadar port to make it a naval and a commercial port, which will be detrimental to India's economic and security interests (GATEWAY HOUSE 2016). Therefore, India has decided to stand up for the Balochi cause and hence the mention of Balochistan in PM Modi's 2016

speech on India's Independence Day, August 15 (Joshi 2016). India has also referred Balochi human rights issue to the UNSC (GATEWAY HOUSE 2016). This is not good news for Pakistan, which fears separation of Balochistan through covert Indian assistance to separatists (GATEWAY HOUSE 2016). However, Balochistan cannot become a sustainable nation state, and the US does not support the Balochi cause, although the US has raised instances of human right violations in Balochistan (GATEWAY HOUSE 2016, moderndiplomacy 2016). Nevertheless, the US strategic preference for India is growing vis-a-vis Pakistan (GATEWAY HOUSE 2016). The US has included Jamaat-ul-Ahrar (TTP-JA), an arm of the Pakistani Taliban (TTP), to its terror database following their claim of responsibility for a failed car bombing in Manhattan (Price 2016). The US subsequently conducted drone strikes against TTP-JA and that pushed the TTP-JA into the CPEC area and out of Pakistan's tribal region (Price 2016). This development became a security nightmare for the Pakistani and the Chinese authorities and caused billions of dollars in losses (Price 2016). This may be a part of a broader US strategy to create hurdles for Pakistan for its disturbing role in Afghanistan and for checking the Chinese expansion (Price 2016).

CPEC might harm the US economic and security interests in the Middle East and Africa (moderndiplomacy 2016). CPEC is part of the wider One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative that will provide China the shortest route to the Middle East, Africa and most

of the Western Hemisphere (moderndiplomacy 2016). Therefore, CPEC could neutralise any gains that might accrue to the US for its Pivot to Asia policy (moderndiplomacy 2016).

On the other hand, India has to tread a careful path with regard to its Balochistan policy (Joshi 2016). Pakistan has successfully brought China into the region with the implementation of the CPEC project (Joshi 2016). Therefore, any Indian involvement in Balochistan besides providing moral support for the Balochi cause could peg India against China, which can exploit India's own ethnic and communal weaknesses (GATEWAY HOUSE 2016, Joshi 2016). China has already opposed India's membership of the NSG and vetoed an Indian request for designating Pakistani Masood Azhar as an international terrorist at the UNSC (Joshi 2016). However, the Chinese strategic thinkers are aware of the challenges associated with CPEC, particularly protection of the Chinese personnel working in Pakistan (GATEWAY HOUSE 2016, Price 2016). Therefore, they recommend systematic implementation and review of the projects under CPEC (GATEWAY HOUSE 2016, Price 2016). Moreover, an analyst has pointed out that the real reason behind a Chinese government invitation to the Russian government to join CPEC is to use Russia to appease India, since CPEC goes through the disputed territory of Kashmir (Forbes 2017). The Pakistan and the Chinese government are making subtle overtures towards India to join the CPEC project ('China

wonders if India will take up Pakistani general's offer to join CPEC' 2016). Some analysts are of the view that it would be in Afghanistan and India's interest to join CPEC, as it would integrate and benefit the South Asian region immensely (OBSERVER RESEARCH FOUNDATION 2016).

Nevertheless, India remains an existential threat in Pakistan's strategic calculations (Jamal 2016). However, India is not interested in the destruction of the Pakistani state (Jamal 2016). The rise of Islamic extremism in Pakistan and its economic and security weaknesses are already causing stress for India, and it would not like to absorb a state such as Pakistan in the event of its break-up (Jamal 2016). Therefore, Pakistan's stability is in India's interest (Jamal 2016).

Dr. Snedden points out that the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline could perhaps act as a stabilising factor for the Western South Asian region comprising of India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan (Identities in conflict: India, Afghanistan and Pakistan, 2016). The rationale of his argument rests on the fact that a gas pipeline passing through the region should overcome any Pakistani apprehension about Indian military attack (Identities in conflict: India, Afghanistan and Pakistan, 2016).

TAPI is expected to commence operation in 2019, transmitting 33 billion cubic metres of natural gas per year through a 1,820-km pipeline from Turkmenistan, passing through the terror-torn terrain of Herat, Helmand, and Kandahar regions in Afghanistan and then via Quetta and Multan in Pakistan, ending at Fazilka (Punjab) in India (Business Standard 2016, Vaid & Kar 2016). TAPI is projected to cost USD 10 billion however there are perceived security concerns associated with TAPI (AL MONITOR 2016, Vaid & Kar 2016). Even so, the signatories to TAPI; Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India have come to the agreement to update TAPI's feasibility study and finalise its route through Afghanistan (Vaid & Kar 2016). India, one of the fastest growing economies of the world will increasingly consume natural gas with its demand rising by 155% in 2035 (Vaid & Kar 2016). The visit of PM Modi to Turkmenistan in 2015 gave the TAPI project a new momentum and was viewed by many analysts as India's assertion of countering China's OBOR (ALJAZEERA 2015).

TAPI will be extremely useful for both India and Turkmenistan since it would not only lead to pipeline and economic connectivity, but also diplomatic connectivity between the two countries (Vaid & Kar 2016). However, some analysts are of the view that the US is supporting TAPI because it wants to limit Russian influence in Turkmenistan that neighbours Afghanistan (ALJAZEERA 2015).

Afghanistan is upbeat about the prospects of TAPI (ALJAZEERA 2015). The Afghan government believes that TAPI would attract investment and help improve its faltering economy where only 43% of the population have access to electricity (ALJAZEERA 2015, Vaid & Kar 2016). The TAPI project is estimated to provide 25000 jobs to Afghans, besides offering Afghanistan a cheaper source of power, compared to the current diesel-based power generation (Vaid & Kar 2016). Nonetheless, Afghanistan will have to incur USD 400 million/year of transit fees (Vaid & Kar 2016). Moreover, the Afghan government has to include the Taliban in any security discussions concerning TAPI since the pipeline passes through the restive regions of Afghanistan under Taliban control, particularly the Greshk district of southern Helmand province (Vaid & Kar 2016).

India might also have to swallow the bitter pill of talking to the Taliban in the interest of TAPI and for integration of South Asia (ALJAZEERA 2016). India has so far maintained that it does not differentiate between good or bad Taliban and considers Taliban as a terrorist outfit supported by Pakistan although Taliban are in favour of TAPI (ALJAZEERA 2015, Vaid & Kar 2016). Ms. Neighbour reiterates that Lakhtar Brahimi, former UNSC representative to Afghanistan, said that Taliban should have been present in the Bonn Conference in 2001 and that would have resulted in formation of a representative government in Afghanistan (Identities in conflict: India, Afghanistan

and Pakistan, 2016). This development would have saved the world community witnessing the political quagmire as is prevalent today in Afghanistan (Identities in conflict: India, Afghanistan and Pakistan, 2016).

Pakistan's power deficient manufacturing sector will also get a boost with the implementation of TAPI (Vaid & Kar 2016). Pakistan would earn USD 200-250 million/year of transit fees from India for permitting the pipeline to pass through its territory (Vaid & Kar 2016). Overall, the success of the TAPI project would largely depend on the relations between India and Pakistan, and even as tension is rising between India and Pakistan following the Uri and Baramulla attacks, the Indian government is in no mood to call off TAPI (Business Standard 2016, Vaid & Kar 2016). In fact, direct contacts between businesspersons of India and Pakistan are being advanced as this might prove to be helpful in bringing peace to the region, provided the governments could be brought along later (THE DITCHLEY FOUNDATION).

Furthermore, an Indian Parliamentary panel has recommended that the government revive the long-delayed Iran-Pakistan-India (IPI) gas pipeline following relaxation of sanctions on Iran (NEWS18.COM 2017). The proposed 2,700-km project was to connect Iran's South Pars fields in the Persian Gulf to Karachi and Multan in Pakistan and then to Delhi, transporting 60 million standard cubic meters per day, for equal

distribution between India and Pakistan (Business Standard 2016). India had shelved the IPI pipeline in 2008 following the US sanctions against Iran over its suspected nuclear programme (NEWS18.COM 2017).

India is also working actively in developing India-Afghanistan-Iran trilateral agreement for establishing its trade connectivity to Afghanistan and Central Asia through Iran's Chabahar port (OBSERVER RESEARCH FOUNDATION 2016). Chabahar is the only Iranian port with direct access to the Indian Ocean and can also be utilised by India, Afghanistan, and Iran for increasing regional efforts in counter-terrorism and counter-narcotics trafficking (Tanchum 2014, OBSERVER RESEARCH FOUNDATION 2016). There is also room for Pakistani involvement in countering narcotics trade because it creates a similar level of health crisis amongst its populations, besides increasing organised crime (CENTER FOR STRATEGIC & INTERNATIONAL STUDIES 2012).

India has already entered into an agreement with Iran for developing and financing the Chabahar port (AL MONITOR 2016). Moreover, India is also in the process of developing a simultaneous gas supply arrangement with Iran through a sea route (AL MONITOR 2016). The linking of Chabahar port to Turkmenistan through a railway network could provide India an opportunity to increase trade with Central Asia swiftly

and economically (AL MONITOR 2016). The strategically important Chabahar port could drive Indian influence in Afghanistan through increased trade, providing a set-off to Pakistani influence (Tanchum 2014). Pakistan has so far made it impossible for India to transport its goods by road to Central Asia and hence India's interest in the development of the Chabahar port (Tanchum 2014). However, India and Afghanistan have recently inaugurated an airfreight corridor that will enable the two countries to trade goods (Bhattacharjee 2017). Mr. Jayant Prasad, the former Indian ambassador to Afghanistan explains that initially Chabahar will be used specifically for developing India's connectivity with Afghanistan and for the development of the Afghan mining and energy sector (India's World - India-Iran deal on Chabahar Port 2015). Additionally, Chabahar will be used for the development of railway link between Hajigak in Afghanistan and Chabahar in Iran that has already been committed by India (India's World - India-Iran deal on Chabahar Port 2015). However, this development could take place only when Indian investments begin to flow in Afghanistan (India's World - India-Iran deal on Chabahar Port 2015). Therefore, India needs some clarity about the eventual stabilisation of the situation in Afghanistan (India's World - India-Iran deal on Chabahar Port 2015). It may be argued that Afghanistan could not stabilise without Pakistan's cooperation (India's World - India-Iran deal on Chabahar Port 2015). Dr. Fair explains that the so-called Pakistani geographic strategic location for transporting American military supplies will not remain so strategic if the US develops good

relations with Iran and uses its Chabahar port to transport its military logistics to Afghanistan (Fair 2015). This US move could put pressure on Pakistan to distance itself from supporting terrorist groups and that will be in the interest of both India and the US (Fair 2015).

The US should encourage more people-to-people contact between India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan (CENTER FOR STRATEGIC & INTERNATIONAL STUDIES 2012).

One successful people-to-people project between India and Pakistan is Aman ki Asha, the implementation of which could also prove to be useful for Afghanistan (CENTER FOR STRATEGIC & INTERNATIONAL STUDIES 2012). These projects permit constructive dialogue between nongovernmental organisations and other civil society organisations that reduce trust deficits and create a platform for further collaboration (CENTER FOR STRATEGIC & INTERNATIONAL STUDIES 2012). The people-to-people contact could be encouraged through: educational and cultural exchange programmes, parliamentarians meeting, and medical tourism (CENTER FOR STRATEGIC & INTERNATIONAL STUDIES 2012).

In 2016 alone, 1.3 million US citizens were estimated to travel to foreign countries for medical treatment (Pakistan can earn foreign exchange by improving medical tourism 2016). India's medical tourism industry is already worth USD 3 billion and is projected

to become close to USD 8 billion industry by 2020 (Indian medical tourism industry to touch \$8 billion by 2020: Grant Thornton 2015). In South Asia, India is getting 50 percent of patients from Afghanistan, 30 percent from Bangladesh, and 20 percent from other South Asian countries (Pakistan can earn foreign exchange by improving medical tourism 2016). There is a scope of joint medical efforts and research in the region since South Asian people have similar genetic structure and behaviour – such as diet and exercise (Pakistan can earn foreign exchange by improving medical tourism 2016). India is contributing to the Afghan Red Crescent Society's program to treat Child Congenital Heart Disease and offering assistance for a programme of the Indira Gandhi Institute of Child Health in Kabul (Haidari 2015).

In the educational exchange realm, more than 10,000 Afghan students have studied in India on the Indian Council on Cultural Relations (ICCR) scholarships since 2001 (Haidari 2015). Moreover, many mid-career officers in the Afghan government have benefitted from the technical capacity building programs of Indian Technical & Economic Cooperation (ITEC) and the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) (Haidari 2015, Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation Programme 2015). In addition, India is supporting the Habibia School in Kabul and has extended the 1000 ICCR scholarships per year scheme until 2021-22 academic year (Haidari 2015). Moreover, the Afghan Embassy in Delhi has initiated the creation of sister-city relations

between major Indian cities and states and their Afghan counterparts (Haidari 2015). As soon as the respective governments in India and Afghanistan operationalise these proposals, the major cities of Afghanistan and India will get connected through tourism, and student and faculty exchange programs, besides private sector investment (Haidari 2015).

Professor Amitabh Matoo, Director of Australia-India institute at the Melbourne University points out that the region of South Asia has the youngest population in the world (Identities in conflict: India, Afghanistan and Pakistan, 2016). These high numbers of young people with proper education could fill the void created by the ageing population of the world (Identities in conflict: India, Afghanistan and Pakistan, 2016). On the contrary, the same population if left untrained might pursue anti-social activities and become a liability on the world (Identities in conflict: India, Afghanistan and Pakistan, 2016). The onus for leading their population towards the right path lies on the leaders of South Asia (Identities in conflict: India, Afghanistan and Pakistan, 2016).

Dr. Snedden proclaims that nuclear weapons will keep the peace in South Asia, for the cost of war will be too high to bear for everyone involved (Identities in conflict: India, Afghanistan and Pakistan, 2016). Even so, the scope of nuclear deterrence could be regarded as fragile since there is an absence of safeguards governing the use of nuclear

weapons in South Asia (THE DITCHLEY FOUNDATION 2016). Therefore, the risk of tactical nuclear device usage by Pakistan becomes more plausible in the event of a war with India (THE DITCHLEY FOUNDATION 2016). India and Pakistan need to enter into dialogue on the possible nuclear scenarios including the risk of nuclear weapons falling into the wrong hands to avoid fatal accidents (THE DITCHLEY FOUNDATION 2016). The US could facilitate the dialogue process between Pakistan and India (Asia Society Policy Institute 2017).

The Trump administration has unveiled a new regional strategy for Afghanistan where it calls upon India to play a bigger role in strengthening the political legitimacy of the current Afghan government and improving its governance power, besides exploring more economic opportunities in Afghanistan (George 2017). This is not any different from the role India has already been playing in Afghanistan (George 2017). The US new regional strategy in Afghanistan also sounded out Pakistan to dismantle and destroy terrorist safe havens on its soil (Sirohi 2017). Furthermore, the Trump administration has suspended almost all security aid to Pakistan (OLSON 2018). Nonetheless, the ground impact of the US new regional strategy remains to be seen, although it is hoped that India will continue to play an incremental role in bringing peace and stability to South Asia (George 2017, Asia Society Policy Institute 2017 & OLSON 2018). As Professor Sumantra Bose from the London School of Economics

points out: India's PM Modi clearly harbours ambition of being a global statesman (The Continuing Struggle for Afghanistan and Indo/Pakistan Relations, 2016). Professor Bose adds that the stepping-stone to being any sort of global statesman is being a regional peace maker, so perhaps people's personal ambitions can also be harnessed for good and noble causes in the longer term (The Continuing Struggle for Afghanistan and Indo/Pakistan Relations, 2016).

The significance of India for the US in the Asia-Pacific

The US pivot to Asia saw India and the US moving closer to each other with respect

to the plan of action in the Asia-Pacific (PRI 2012). The Indian PM Manmohan Singh announced his administration's readiness to sign an agreement on free trade in services and investments with ASEAN at the 2012 India-ASEAN Summit in Phnom Penh (PRI 2012, Ramabadran 2017). It is worth mentioning that strengthening economic cooperation is the foundation of India's Look East policy (Ramabadran 2017). The Indian PM further emphasised deepening of security ties with the members of ASEAN (PRI 2012).

PM Manmohan Singh paid his last visit to the US in 2013, amid growing discontent with his government's performance in India (Council on Foreign Relations 2017). The US administration itself was dealing with government shutdown at home (Council on Foreign Relations 2017). However, the Indian PM's visit centred on security, trade, immigration reform, and the civilian nuclear deal (Council on Foreign Relations 2017).

The Indian elections of 2014 saw the BJP party coming to power in a landslide victory with Narendra Modi as PM (Council on Foreign Relations 2017). Modi participated in the 2014 India-ASEAN Summit in Myanmar where he announced India's Act East policy, which Washington supported (Ramabadran 2017, OBSERVER RESEARCH FOUNDATION 2017).

The Act East policy included India's cooperation with countries covered under the purview of the policy in the spheres of security, strategy, politics, counter-terrorism and defence (Ramabadran 2017). The aforesaid cooperation is in addition to strengthening economic cooperation, which is already in progress under India's Look East policy (Ramabadran 2017).

There are synergies existing between the US Pivot to Asia policy and India's Act East policy (Mishra 2016). The US regards India as an active partner for promoting security and stability in the Asia-Pacific region and according to Alyssa Ayres, Senior Fellow for India, Pakistan, and South Asia, Council on Foreign Relations; India wants to be seen as a leading power (Mishra 2016, Asia Briefing: India 2018). Dr. Ayres states that the Indian Foreign Secretary in his speeches has explained that India in the past has reacted to global events but perhaps now it is time to shape global events as they unfold (Mishra 2016, Asia Briefing: India 2018). The US-India Joint Strategic Vision inked during the President Barack Obama's 2015 visit to India called for intensive engagement between the two countries in the Asia-Pacific and IOR for sustainable inclusive development and enhanced regional connectivity (THE WHITE HOUSE 2015). The Act East policy is devised to reinvigorate India's relations with ASEAN and expand India's engagement with its neighbours such as Bangladesh and Myanmar to the Koreas and Pacific Island countries (Ramabadran 2017).

India considers Bangladesh as pivotal state in developing its connectivity with Northeast region and with countries of ASEAN (Patel 2018). PM Modi declared that India's Act East Policy would begin from Bangladesh in the presence of visiting Bangladesh President Abdul Hamid in 2014 (Ramabadran 2017). India's investments in joint power enterprise in Bangladesh could trigger an India-driven proposal for a joint venture in power sector among BBIN (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal) countries (Patel 2018). India has become a power surplus country and is supplying power to Bangladesh and Nepal (Asia Briefing: India 2018). However, all villages in India will be connected to the power grid by the end of 2018 (Asia Briefing: India 2018). India is also looking at extending cooperation among BBIN countries to cover initiatives in land and air connectivity besides water resource management (Patel 2018).

Trade and Investment is another area of cooperation between India and Bangladesh (Patel 2018, WORLD BANK 2017). The current value of trade between India and Bangladesh is USD 6.6 billion (Patel 2018). Nonetheless, the trade potential between the two countries is at least four times the present level (Patel 2018). India is a growing investor in Bangladesh, and now has land earmarked for development of special "Indian economic zones" in Bangladesh (THE WORLD BANK 2017). India and Bangladesh are strengthening economic partnership through joint investments under the 'Blue

Economy' programme, which requires synergised efforts of littoral states in the exploration of hydrocarbons, marine resources, deep-sea fishing, preservation of marine ecology and disaster management (Patel 2018). This is an opportune time for Indian industries to collaborate with their Bangladeshi counterparts in defence, such as in military hardware, space technology, technical assistance, exchange of experience, and development of sea infrastructure (Patel 2018). Bangladeshi companies are providing Broadband connectivity from Bangladesh Cox's Bazar to Tripura in Northeast India (THE WORLD BANK 2017). However, there is still considerable scope of Bangladesh's corporate participation in the development of Northeast India (THE WORLD BANK 2017). Similarly, Northeast India could cater to Bangladesh's growing demand for agricultural products (THE WORLD BANK 2017).

The Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM) Economic Corridor (EC) might also act as a catalyst for regional integration (Bagchi 2017). The BCIM is a sub-regional group to review economic development of the region while facilitating the construction of a 2,800-km economic corridor from Kunming in south-west China to Kolkata via Mandalay in Myanmar, Imphal (Manipur) and Silchar (Assam) in India, and Dhaka and Jessore in Bangladesh (Bagchi 2017). The idea of BCIM-EC gained force after a meeting between Chinese Premier Li Keqiang and PM Manmohan Singh in 2013 (Bagchi 2017).

China is keen on upgrading the BCIM-EC dialogue from Track I (official diplomacy) to the “intergovernmental level” (Bagchi 2017). However, India is mindful of the disparities in development between Kunming in China and Northeast India and is yet to approve the BCIM-EC plan (Linking CPEC with BCIM will benefit people: China 2017). China wants to take a step further and is stressing on the need to link the controversial CPEC with the BCIM-EC (Linking CPEC with BCIM will benefit people: China 2017). Nevertheless, China is aware of India’s opposition to CPEC although it regards India’s opposition as unnecessary quiver (US backs India’s stand in China-Pakistan Economic Corridor 2017, Linking CPEC with BCIM will benefit people: China 2017). China released a white paper Vision for Maritime Cooperation under OBOR, which envisages linking CPEC with BCIM-EC through maritime routes (Linking CPEC with BCIM will benefit people: China 2017). China is also planning to link the SCS with the Indian Ocean (Linking CPEC with BCIM will benefit people: China 2017). Nonetheless, the US backs India’s stance on CPEC (US backs India’s stand in China-Pakistan Economic Corridor 2017).

The Indian government has made concerted efforts to improve infrastructure in India’s Northeast states such as Manipur and Mizoram, which has resulted in increase of India-Myanmar trade from USD 12 million in 2013-2014 to USD 22 million in 2015-16

(Maini 2017). India, Myanmar and Thailand (IMT) had planned the construction and development of a 1,360 km highway from Moreh-Tamu on the India-Myanmar border to Mae Sot on the Myanmar-Thailand border in 2002 (Iyer 2017). The IMT highway has come a long way since its inception as the construction of 69 bridges on the Tamu-Kyigone-Kalewa section have already been completed although the highway is still under construction (Oxford Business Group 2016).

The IMT highway could be beneficial for its people since India and Myanmar have a young population with a median age of 27 compared to Thailand's median age of 37 (Iyer 2017). The large skilled Indian population could meet the training and developments needs of the people of Myanmar and Thailand, which will result in creating job opportunities for Indian nationals in addition to tackling the negative effects of an aging population in Thailand (Iyer 2017). However, for these possibilities to materialise educational qualifications have to be standardised and a level of comfort has to be created between the people of IMT (Iyer 2017). The IMT highway is expected to complete by 2020 (Iyer 2017).

The IMT highway will connect Northeast India with ASEAN through Thailand and the Greater Mekong region (Oxford Business Group 2016). The 'Mekong-Ganga Cooperation Project' (MGCP) initiated in 2000 is directed towards developing overland

trade, tourism, communications and transport linkages (Chauhan 2016). The MGCP involves India, Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam (Chauhan 2016). The IMT highway will act as a catalyst for trade between India and ASEAN, which currently stands at USD 76 billion approximately (Oxford Business Group 2016, Kundu 2017).

PM Modi had proposed the setting up of a Joint Task Force for extending the IMT highway to Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam during 14th India-ASEAN Summit held in the Laotian capital of Vientiane in 2016 (OBSERVER RESEARCH FOUNDATION 2017). India's engagement with the Southeast Asia includes cooperation with Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam (CLMV) and Thailand as a strategic priority since these countries are geographically closest to India amongst ASEAN members besides holding ample economic promise (Cook & Singh 2016). The CLMV countries connect the Bay of Bengal to the SCS by land (OBSERVER RESEARCH FOUNDATION 2017). Moreover, India and Myanmar share land and maritime boundaries in the Bay of Bengal and are working towards building Kaladan multi-modal transport project, which will reduce distance between the two countries (OBSERVER RESEARCH FOUNDATION 2017, Cook & Singh 2016).

China has been gaining political influence in the CLMV countries by emerging as their prominent trading and investment partner (Cook & Singh 2016). China has also been

building rail and road infrastructure and laying energy pipelines as part of its OBOR initiative to connect the CLMV economies with its own and that in turn will put the Indian Ocean within its reach (OBSERVER RESEARCH FOUNDATION 2017). Vietnam has been least supportive of the OBOR initiative amongst the CLMV countries despite its official statement of support (Cook & Singh 2016, OBSERVER RESEARCH FOUNDATION 2017).

China and Vietnam have clashed twice over the SCS dispute (BBC 2015). The SCS has been in news for a dispute over ocean areas and two island chains namely Paracels and Spratlys claimed fully or partially by China, Taiwan, Vietnam, Philippines, Brunei and Malaysia (BBC 2015). The Paracels and the Spratlys hold huge reserves of natural resources including oil, gas and hydrocarbons according to claims made by China (BBC 2015, Chaudhury 2016 & Counting the Cost - The battle for the South China Sea 2011). Even so, there has been inadequate exploration of the area to prove the quantity of natural resources present although the SCS is a primary shipping route between the Pacific and the Indian Ocean and a source of livelihood for many anglers from the region (BBC 2015, Chaudhury 2016).

The international maritime law proclaims that every state has right to manage and exploit an area up to 200 nautical miles from its coast which is known as the Exclusive

Economic Zone (EEZ) (Counting the Cost - The battle for the South China Sea 2011). However, China is claiming largest part of the ocean areas and island chains known by the nine-dash line (BBC 2015). Moreover, China is increasingly occupying the SCS and setting up oil and gas drilling projects (Counting the Cost - The battle for the South China Sea 2011, Crispin, cited in Fels & Vu 2016). Chinese argument rests on its centuries old claim when the two island chains were regarded as essential parts of the Chinese nation (BBC 2015). However, Vietnam disputes Chinese claim by presenting documented evidence proving its control over both the island chains since the 17th Century (BBC 2015).

Vietnam has perhaps realised that it is powerless to defend its claim in the SCS in comparison to an assertive China (BBC 2015). Therefore, welcoming Indian ships in the SCS provides a regional strategic balance for Vietnam (Times Now 2011, CENTER FOR STRATEGIC & INTERNATIONAL STUDIES 2012).

India has called for a peaceful resolution of the SCS dispute and an early conclusion of SCS Code of Conduct (Chaudhury 2016). However, some analysts in India are of the view that stepping up cooperation with Vietnam could help India offset the strategic gains that China could utilise in pursuing close ties with India's neighbours such as Pakistan and Srilanka (Thayer, cited in Fels & Vu 2016).

India has provided USD100 million LoC to Vietnam for buying four Indian navy ships for patrolling Vietnam's claimed energy assets in the SCS (rediff.com 2014, CCTV.com 2016). Moreover, India has offered to provide submarine and warplane flying training to Vietnamese sailors (CCTV.com 2016). India is also looking at enhancing its exploration activities with PetroVietnam for increasing trade opportunities in the energy sector (rediff.com 2014). In the year 2011, India and Vietnam entered into an agreement for promoting oil exploration in the SCS (CENTER FOR STRATEGIC & INTERNATIONAL STUDIES 2012). However, there were reports of a confrontation between the Indian and Chinese ships in 2011 when the former was paying a friendly visit to Vietnam (Times Now 2011). Even so, the Indian government denied the occurrence of the event (Times Now 2011). The Indian oil firm ONGC Videsh Limited (OVL) is supplying oil to Vietnam from the oil blocks awarded by Vietnam to India in the SCS despite Chinese objections (CENTER FOR STRATEGIC & INTERNATIONAL STUDIES 2012, Chaudhury 2016). The Chinese objections resulted in a statement from the then Admiral of Indian Navy, Mr. D K Joshi stating that India is ready to protect its economic interests in the SCS (CENTER FOR STRATEGIC & INTERNATIONAL STUDIES 2012). However, China regards the oil and gas exploration conducted by India in the SCS as violation of its sovereignty and territorial integrity although India insists it is purely for commercial purposes (CCTV.com 2016, CENTER FOR STRATEGIC & INTERNATIONAL STUDIES 2012).

India will be setting up a satellite tracking and data reception centre in Southern Vietnam that will provide Vietnam access to pictures from Indian satellites launches covering the region including China and the SCS (Reuters 2016). However, a Chinese analyst has advised Chinese authorities to stay alert to India-Vietnam cooperation (CCTV.com 2016). China is viewing Indian activities in the SCS with suspicion and there has definitely been a shift in Indian maritime outlook (CENTER FOR STRATEGIC & INTERNATIONAL STUDIES 2012). Unquestionably, India and Vietnam share common apprehensions with regard to the maritime security and Chinese rise (Thayer, cited in Fels & Vu 2016). Moreover, India wants to be seen as a credible security actor in the Asia-Pacific and its involvement in the SCS is in line with its Act East policy (Baruah 2015, ASIA TIMES 2017). India is helping Vietnam to build its maritime defence (Baruah 2016). According to the US-India maritime security cooperation agreement, building third party capacity is an asset for countering maritime threats such as piracy and terrorism (rediff.com 2014). Both India and Vietnam have been victims of piracy and the 2008 Mumbai terrorist attacks began as a maritime operation (rediff.com 2014).

Vietnam is geographically the most strategically located place for controlling the SCS (Chauhan 2016). The Chinese government is aware of the strategic need for building

an alliance with Vietnam particularly after the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) verdict of 2016 at Hague (Chauhan 2016). The PCA has categorically declared China's Nine Dash Line to be completely without legal merit in a case filed by Philippines (Mourdoukoutas 2017). However, the Chinese government insist that the PCA was not authorised to rule on cases of national sovereignty and the SCS dispute could only be resolved through bilateral negotiations between the concerned countries (Chauhan 2016). Vietnam has countered China's argument by referring to India's handling of maritime dispute with Bangladesh heard by the PCA, a verdict that went in Dhaka's favour and New Delhi accepted (ASIA TIMES 2017). Nevertheless, China and Vietnam have reached an agreement on managing their dispute in the SCS through talks according to a senior Chinese diplomat although a scheduled meeting between their foreign ministers was cancelled on the side lines of a regional gathering in Manila in 2017 (CNBC 2017).

The US-India partnership over geopolitical approaches in Indo-Pacific will augur well for Vietnam in its efforts to resist Chinese assertiveness in the SCS (Chauhan 2016). Indo-Pacific is a relatively newly coined term, which has grown in usage across diplomatic and security circles in the US, Australia, India and Japan (Reuters 2017). The term is a shorthand for a broader and democratic-led region substituting it for the Asia-Pacific, where China has taken a centre stage (Reuters 2017). Dr. Ayres asserted that the US usage of the strategic term Indo-Pacific already in use by the Indians,

Japanese and the Australians, expands the region and places India in a much more central role (Asia Briefing: India 2018). However, Professor Nalapat of International Relations Department at Manipal University, India; considers China as a very important part of the Indo-Pacific region because of its economic size (India's foreign policy on Korean peninsula 2017). Nonetheless, Mr. Rong Ying, Vice President, China Institute of International Studies explains that China would like to play a more proactive and constructive role in terms of managing, handling and resolving the hot spots issues in the region and therefore China's inference will grow with time (India's foreign policy on Korean peninsula 2017). Mr. Ying however adds that the perceptions created in the US and India because of China's inference should determine their relationship with China, which could complicate the situation (India's foreign policy on Korean peninsula 2017). The US pivot to Asia aimed to engage Asian nations while positioning 60% of America's naval fleet and air force in the Asia-Pacific region by 2020 and Vietnam's Cam Ranh Bay is an attractive option for such a deployment (ASIA TIMES 2017, Chauhan 2016).

India is looking to actively engage with Vietnam for meeting its petroleum-based energy requirements as Vietnam holds second largest crude oil reserves after China in East Asia (Chauhan 2016). The bilateral trade between India and Vietnam has grown from USD 412.4 million in 2003 to over USD 9.2 billion in 2014 and both the countries

have set a trade target of USD 15 billion for 2020 (Chauhan 2016).

Vietnam had granted OVL a two-year extension to explore oil block 128 in July 2017 (Mourdoukoutas 2017). However, Vietnam had to halt its oil exploration efforts, following a stark warning by Beijing that it will attack Vietnamese oil and gas bases (Mourdoukoutas 2017). Vietnam has formally asked India to play a greater role in the SCS taking cognizance to the reduced maritime patrols by the US since the election of President Trump (ASIA TIMES 2017). India's involvement in the SCS might not resolve the region's disputes however it might help in mitigating risks of any large country exploiting its smaller counterpart for selfish interests (ASIA TIMES 2017).

PM Modi has reinvigorated Buddhism ties between India and CLMV countries by using cultural diplomacy to further India's interests (OBSERVER RESEARCH FOUNDATION 2017). The Eastern Indian state of Bihar is promoting religious visitors from Southeast Asia to Bodhgaya (Maini 2017). Moreover, there is a potential in developing educational links between Nalanda University in Bihar and South East Asia and East Asia (Maini 2017).

The trade between India and CLMV nations has grown from USD 0.46 billion in 2000 to over USD 10 billion in 2015-16 portraying annual growth of 24 percent

(OBSERVER RESEARCH FOUNDATION 2017). Trade initiatives such as the setting up of India-CLMV business conclave in 2013 have been undertaken to provide a platform for decision makers and industry leaders for identifying possibilities for partnership (OBSERVER RESEARCH FOUNDATION 2017). The third India-CLMV conclave was held in 2016, where Indian Commerce Minister Nirmala Sitharaman cited India's Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) study that pointed to a potential of USD 100 billion of additional exports to CLMV countries (Trade between India, CLMV can be much better: Nirmala Sitharaman 2016) . In the same year, the Modi government gave its nod for formation of a USD 75 million Project Development Fund to increase India's economic presence in CLMV countries (OBSERVER RESEARCH FOUNDATION 2017). Earlier, in November 2015 at the India-ASEAN Summit, Modi announced a new USD 1 billion LoC to boost physical and digital connectivity between India and ASEAN (OBSERVER RESEARCH FOUNDATION 2017).

The Act East policy seeks to assimilate the people of Northeast India with Southeast Asia particularly Myanmar and Thailand for their economic development (OBSERVER RESEARCH FOUNDATION 2017). The trade between India and Thailand amounted to USD 7.72 billion in 2016 however it is still below potential (Embassy of India in Thailand 2018, OBSERVER RESEARCH FOUNDATION 2017). Thai products have benefitted from tax reduction through India-ASEAN Free Trade Agreement (FTA) in

Goods that became operational from 2010 and India remains an attractive destination for Thai investors (Embassy of India in Thailand 2018). Even so, Thailand wants India to accelerate its decision on the proposed FTA for increasing trade and investment flows (Sen 2017). However, India wants to know the outcome of the proposed Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) — a pact between the ASEAN (including Thailand), India, China, Japan, Australia and New Zealand before entering into an FTA with Thailand as RCEP would be less ambitious of the two (CNN 2017, Sen 2017). RCEP seeks to create one of the world's largest free-trade zones (CNN 2017).

Tourism is another area that has the potential of increasing social and economic linkages between India and Thailand (OBSERVER RESEARCH FOUNDATION 2017). Indian tourists visiting Thailand number more than 1.1 million whereas about 100,000 Thai tourists visit India every year (OBSERVER RESEARCH FOUNDATION 2017). India has switched to more liberal visa regime for Thai nationals (OBSERVER RESEARCH FOUNDATION 2017). India needs to work on improving air and road connectivity as well as tourist infrastructure particularly Buddhist sites (OBSERVER RESEARCH FOUNDATION 2017). The large and productive Indian diaspora in Thailand is an important factor in bringing the two countries closer (Embassy of India in Thailand 2018).

India and Thailand also need to harness economic opportunities in The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), which is a useful instrument for regional integration (OBSERVER RESEARCH FOUNDATION 2017). BIMSTEC comprises seven member states namely; Myanmar and Thailand, India, Nepal, Bhutan, Srilanka and Bangladesh situated in the littoral and adjacent areas of the Bay of Bengal (BIMSTEC 2018). BIMSTEC is an integral part of Thailand's policy of forging close economic links with its neighbours in South and West Asia (Devare 2006).

India-Thailand defence relations were largely underdeveloped before 2012 (Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses 2015). Nevertheless, India and Thailand signed the Defence cooperation agreement in 2012 due to changing power and security dynamics in Asia (Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses 2015). The Defence cooperation agreement included joint exercises, defence dialogue and joint patrol (Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses 2015). India and Thailand share a maritime boundary in the Andaman Sea (Embassy of India in Thailand 2018). Thailand has hosted ships of the Indian Navy and the Indian Coast Guard on several occasions in recent years (Embassy of India in Thailand 2018). Both sides are discussing to constitute a Joint Working Group on Strategic Connectivity (OBSERVER RESEARCH FOUNDATION

2017). Moreover, the two sides are also planning to develop deep-sea ports and new special economic zones in Dawei in Myanmar and Pak Bara in southern Thailand that will connect the eastern seaboard of India with Thailand and beyond (OBSERVER RESEARCH FOUNDATION 2017). The development of the East-West and North-South corridors by Thailand and linking of these transport-related projects is expected to further consolidate trade and connectivity with India (OBSERVER RESEARCH FOUNDATION 2017).

India is already conducting joint patrolling exercises with Thailand and Indonesia, and has offered to cooperate with the littoral states in the implementation of the “Eyes in the Sky” programme for patrolling the piracy-infested Straits of Malacca (OBSERVER RESEARCH FOUNDATION 2017).

India and Indonesia are working to deepen their defence partnership following Indonesian President Joko “Jokowi” Widodo’s visit to India in December 2016 (Parameswaran 2017). The diplomatic phrases like freedom of navigation, reference to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) used in India-Indonesia joint statement was similar to the language used in the US-India joint statement of 2015 when Obama visited India (FIRSTPOST 2016). PM Modi and President Widodo recognised the importance of freedom of navigation and overflight on the high seas, unimpeded lawful commerce, as well as resolving maritime disputes

by peaceful means (FIRSTPOST 2016). Modi and Widodo pledged to hold regular sessions of their Defence minister's dialogue and joint Defence cooperation committee (Parameswaran 2017, FIRSTPOST 2016). India and Indonesia are already conducting a range of drills such as army exercise Garuda Shakti and the Bilateral Maritime Exercise although the India-Indonesia air force official regular dialogue is in the planning stages and the defence industry collaboration is in need of a jumpstart (Parameswaran 2017, FIRSTPOST 2016). The partnership between India and Indonesia will also include combating terrorism, organised crime, drugs and human trafficking (FIRSTPOST 2016). It is clear that all Asian countries including Indonesia, which does not have a maritime dispute with China, are concerned about China's growing assertiveness in the East and SCS and the Indian and Pacific Ocean region (FIRSTPOST 2016). Even so, Indonesia had been affected by China's maritime incursions into its waters off Natuna Islands (India-Indonesia trade to reach USD 50 billion: Experts 2016). Therefore, Asian nations are forming maritime alliances among themselves and had welcomed Obama's pivot to Asia (FIRSTPOST 2016). India is also building maritime cooperation with all its Indian Ocean neighbours such as Seychelles, Sri Lanka and Mauritius besides the Asia-Pacific countries such as Indonesia (FIRSTPOST 2016).

Odisha, an Eastern Indian state has long had historical ties with Indonesia (Maini 2017).

“Bali Yatra” is celebrated to commemorate the voyages of traders from Odisha to Bali, Java, Sumatra, and Sri Lanka for trade every year in November (Maini 2017). The Indonesia-Kalinga dialogue organised in 2016 aims to rekindle the historical links between India and Indonesia (Maini 2017). The participants of the Indonesia-Kalinga dialogue highlighted the need of greater air and sea connectivity between India and Indonesia for strengthening economic links (Maini 2017).

The India-Indonesian bilateral trade stood at USD 17 billion for 2016-17 making Indonesia the largest trading partner of India in ASEAN (Embassy of India in Indonesia 2018). However, the volume of bilateral trade is projected to touch USD 50 billion with two-way investment of USD 50 billion by 2025 according to a vision document (India-Indonesia trade to reach USD 50 billion: Experts 2016). The vision document further proclaimed that the India-Indonesia partnership shall assist in making Asian order more durable, peaceful and trustworthy by 2025 (India-Indonesia trade to reach USD 50 billion: Experts 2016). Even so, the defence relationship between India and Indonesia is less mature in comparison to India-Singapore defence ties (Parameswaran 2017).

India and Singapore share close political, defence and economic ties (Ganapathy 2017). Singapore has facilitated closer ties between ASEAN and India (Ganapathy 2017). India and Singapore have been deepening their defence cooperation in the wake of

common concerns over threats of terrorism and the need for tackling military challenge faced from China (NDTV 2017, Ganapathy 2017).

India and Singapore inked naval cooperation agreement in 2017 aimed at protecting sea-lanes increasingly dominated by the Chinese Navy (Ganapathy 2017). The India-Singapore naval cooperation agreement entitles the Indian Navy ships sailing through the SCS or in the eastern waters of the Andaman Sea to refuel, restock and rearm, if needed, at Singapore's Changi Naval base (NDTV 2017). Similarly, Indian Navy would provide the logistics support to the Singaporean vessels when they operate in Indian waters in the Andaman Sea and elsewhere (NDTV 2017). The Chinese Navy has been deploying regularly into the Indian Ocean since 2012 (NDTV 2017). The Chinese deployment involves nuclear-powered attack submarines, which is an issue of concern for the Indian Navy (NDTV 2017). The US has been providing real-time inputs to the Indian Navy on the Chinese warships and submarines movement towards the Indian Ocean (NDTV 2017). The Chinese submarines have to cross through the Malacca straits off Singapore or the Lombok, Sunda or Ombai Straits in Indonesia to break into the Indian Ocean (NDTV 2017). The Indian Navy recently decided to deploy warships on a steady basis at the critical points to ascertain the movement of Chinese vessels (NDTV 2017). The availability of Changi Naval Base will provide the Indian Navy extra flexibility to field its warships in the region throughout the year (NDTV 2017).

The number of warships and submarines deployed by India and Singapore are inferior to what China has been able to deploy in the last two decades (NDTV 2017). However, India-Singapore cooperation could create synergies in land, air and sea defence, which could make them a formidable force against any opponent (NDTV 2017).

The Indian and Singaporean Air Force have been holding joint annual exercises for more than a decade at the Indian Air Force's Kalaikunda Air Force base in West Bengal (NDTV 2017). The exercises are important for both India and Singapore (NDTV 2017).

The Indian Air Force gets an opportunity to train with Singaporean Air Force F-16s jets over its own skies, which could prove useful in the event of war between India and Pakistan since Pakistan Air Force operates the same fighter jets (NDTV 2017). The Singapore Air Force finds Indian airspace useful for it operates under severe airspace restrictions around the city-state (NDTV 2017).

India and Singapore have signed an FTA in 2005 named Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) (High Commission of India in Singapore 2018). CECA covers trade in goods and services besides investment protections and other features (CHANNEL NEWSASIA 2017). The FTA is India's first ever CECA and its first review was completed in 2007 (CHANNEL NEWSASIA 2017, High Commission

of India in Singapore 2018). The 2010 second review of CECA, which sought to explore ways for expansion of the agreement has reportedly been put on hold by the government of India although Singapore has not received any official notification from the Indian government in this regard (CHANNEL NEWSASIA 2017). The reported Indian move is supposedly in response to the Singapore government decision to restrict the movement of Indian software professionals, which constitutes a violation of the trade pact (CHANNEL NEWSASIA 2017). Singapore is among India's largest trade and investment partner in ASEAN and accounted for 22.13% of India's overall trade with the ASEAN in 2014-15 (High Commission of India in Singapore 2018). It is the second largest investor in India with a share of 16% of the total FDI received by India during April to December 2015 (High Commission of India in Singapore 2018). The bilateral trade between India and Singapore stood at USD 16.9 billion in 2014-15 (High Commission of India in Singapore 2018).

The Southern state of Andhra Pradesh in India has been actively building ties with Singapore for the construction of Amaravati, the planned state capital (Ganapathy 2017). Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister (CM) Nara Chandrababu Naidu has been promoting Vishakhapatnam as an IT, educational, and tourism hub to the Singaporeans (Maini 2017). Moreover, Naidu has been working to make the stretch from Vishakhapatnam to Kakinada in Andhra Pradesh as a logistics hub (Maini 2017). Andhra Pradesh has three

functioning ports in the region – Visakhapatnam, Gangavaram and Kakinada (Maini 2017). Nonetheless, another port is being built in the East Godavari district near Kakinada and yet another is being planned at Nakkapalli in Visakhapatnam district (Maini 2017). The Western Indian state of Rajasthan is gaining expertise in skill development and tourism from Singapore (Rajasthan inks deal with Singapore to boost tourism 2016). The CM of Rajasthan, Vasundhara Raje inaugurated Centre of Excellence for Tourism Training (CETT) in 2016 in the presence of the Singapore PM, Lee Hsien Loong at Udaipur's Sukhadia University in Rajasthan (Maini 2017, Rajasthan inks deal with Singapore to boost tourism 2016). CETT has been functioning with Singaporean technical and financial assistance (Maini 2017). Southern India has enjoyed historical trade and maritime links with Southeast Asia since ancient times (Maini 2017). These ties have been strengthened by the presence of a strong Indian diaspora, as well as efforts by southern Indian states like Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, and Karnataka to strengthen ties with Southeast Asia, especially Singapore and Malaysia (Maini 2017).

India and Malaysia share a strategic relationship, which was enhanced during an official visit of PM Modi to Malaysia in 2015 (rediff.com 2017). Malaysian PM Najib Razak visited India for six days in 2017 to commemorate the completion of 60 years of India-Malaysia diplomatic relations and 25 years of India-ASEAN ties (The Dialogue 2017).

During the visit, Razak and Modi decided to enhance industrial, defence and security, socio-economic, tourism and cultural activities between the two countries (The Dialogue 2017). They committed to cooperate for maintaining peace, prosperity, and security in the Asia-Pacific region (The Dialogue 2017, rediff.com 2017). Both sides agreed to check terrorism given that the Asia-Pacific region is going through a period of strategic uncertainty, with the US changing its approach towards the region or at least not defining it (The Dialogue 2017, rediff.com 2017 & India-Japan Strategic Cooperation and Implications for Washington and Beijing 2017). The Malaysian government is concerned about the Chinese incursions in Malaysia's maritime exclusive economic zone in the SCS although China has become the largest trading partner of Malaysia (ASIA & THE PACIFIC POLICY SOCIETY 2017). Hence, Malaysia has supported India's Look East policy and has intensified its cooperation with India at the bilateral, regional and international level (The Dialogue 2017).

Seven percent of the total population of Malaysia consist of Indians of which majority belong to Tamil Nadu (rediff.com 2017). During his visit to India in 2017, PM Razak met with the Tamil film star Rajnikanth in Chennai reiterating strong ties between Tamil Nadu and Malaysia (The Dialogue 2017). India's state of Andhra Pradesh is also actively building partnership with Malaysia as part of India's Look East policy (Maini 2017). Andhra Pradesh Economic Development Board signed an MOU with MIGHT

Technology Nurturing Sdn. Bhd (MTN) for building a technology park during the visit of the Malaysian PM to India in 2017 (Maini 2017). Similarly, the CM of Telangana, a Southern Indian state visited Malaysia on his first foreign visit in 2014 where he sought investment for infrastructure development from Malaysia (Maini 2017). Moreover, a delegation Malaysia's Penang province visited Telangana and offered support in areas like manufacturing and skill development (Maini 2017). Malaysia has become the pivot of India's Look East policy (The Dialogue 2017). However, concerns regarding the socio-economic marginalisation and religious persecution of Indian diaspora in Malaysia persists (The Dialogue 2017). Malaysia is the third largest trading partner of India among ASEAN (The Dialogue 2017). The India-Malaysia trade stood at USD 12.79 billion in 2015-16 (rediff.com 2017).

India is providing impetus to its Look East policy through bilateral and multilateral engagements with the smaller regional powers and ASEAN countries (Khandekar & Gaens 2018). PM Modi has invited leaders from the ten ASEAN countries to attend India's Republic Day celebration of 2018 as the chief guests in an apparent boost for India-ASEAN relations (Ganapathy 2017). The US is still the most important player in the Asia-Pacific although India and Japan partnership will provide a boost for the US pivot in balancing China (Khandekar & Gaens 2018).

Japan and India's partnership is the fastest growing strategic relationship in Asia (India-Japan Strategic Cooperation and Implications for Washington and Beijing 2017). PM Abe of Japan paid a successful official visit to India in September 2017 where he announced a ¥190 billion low-interest loan for the Mumbai-Ahmedabad bullet train and other infrastructure projects in the presence of PM Modi (Thakur 2017). Abe and Modi also welcomed the India-Japan civilian nuclear cooperation agreement that came into force in July 2017 and agreed to promote defence and technology cooperation (Thakur 2017).

India and Japan are both liberal democracies believing in the rule of law and free speech (Khandekar & Gaens 2018). India and Japan also complement each other in economics and demographics (India-Japan Strategic Cooperation and Implications for Washington and Beijing 2017). India is a developing country, which requires huge volumes of FDI to create jobs for its swelling young work force (Thakur 2017). Japan is in a good position to meet India's investment and technical needs being a capital surplus country however, that will be advantageous for Japan (Thakur 2017).

The Japanese companies could profit from doing business in India with rising consumer demand (Thakur 2017). India's middle class is expected to double to over half a billion people by 2025 (Brookings 2017). In addition, Japanese investment in India allows

disbandment of assets away from China, thereby decreasing the susceptibility of Japanese businesses (Oak 2016). Moreover, Japan has an aging and declining population and its dwindling labour force cannot indefinitely support the increasing number of elderly people (India-Japan Strategic Cooperation and Implications for Washington and Beijing 2017). India's vast and young population with proper skills could meet the Japanese work force requirements and efforts are underway in this direction (Sharma 2017). It is noteworthy that the Indian software professionals have created a name for themselves in the US Silicon valley and Japan would like to benefit from the dynamic Indian work force (India-Japan Strategic Cooperation and Implications for Washington and Beijing 2017). Furthermore, India and Japan do not share any historical baggage and their independent bilateral relations with the US work to boost the Tokyo-Delhi partnership (Thakur 2017).

India and Japan are tackling the Chinese assertiveness on the global stage through a triple hedge—defence partnership, economic partnership, and cooperation at multilateral forums (Oak 2016). The India Japan diplomatic engagement and joint declarations have seen a rise after 2008 clearly emphasising the apprehensions regarding the threat to freedom of navigation (Oak 2016). Lately, India and Japan are giving much more importance to the joint maritime exercises (Oak 2016). In 2015, Japan joined as a permanent partner in the annual Malabar naval exercise, which earlier

had only India and the US as participating members (India-Japan Strategic Cooperation and Implications for Washington and Beijing 2017). In addition, there has been a marked increase in cooperation between India and Japan at multilateral forums like the UNSC, East Asian Summit (EAS) and ASEAN (Oak 2016). The EAS established in 2005, is a forum to discuss political, security and trade related issues in East Asia (Modi conveys India's commitment to work with East Asia Summit 2017). The member of EAS includes India, China, Japan, Republic of Korea, Australia, New Zealand, the US and Russia besides the 10 countries constituting ASEAN (Modi conveys India's commitment to work with East Asia Summit 2017).

China has become increasingly assertive in its bilateral and regional relations (Thakur 2017). Japan has experienced Chinese assertiveness in its territorial disputes in East Asia; Indian army has recently experienced a 10-week tense standoff with the Chinese army at the tri-junction with Bhutan (Thakur 2017, India-Japan Strategic Cooperation and Implications for Washington and Beijing 2017). China has supported Pakistan in its efforts to limit India to the subcontinent; and both India and Japan have seen their UNSC ambitions obstructed by China (Thakur 2017, India-Japan Strategic Cooperation and Implications for Washington and Beijing 2017). India and Japan are best placed to withstand China's pressures in Asia and these two countries could provide cover of resistance for other Asian countries (Thakur 2017).

India and Japan have also pooled resources to launch Asia-Africa growth corridor, connectivity and infrastructure projects for Southeast Asia and Africa as a counter to China's OBOR (Thakur 2017). India will contribute USD 10 billion and Japan's share will be USD 30 billion in the growth corridor (Thakur 2017). Additionally, India, Japan and the US have recently agreed to develop strategically important ports and other infrastructure in the Indo-Pacific region collaboratively (Thakur 2017).

The US, India and Japan trilateral has been in place for the last few years to ensure peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region (India-Japan Strategic Cooperation and Implications for Washington and Beijing 2017). However, the trilateral has failed to move from symbolism to substance (Shah 2017). Critics question the relevance of the Obama Administration's pivot to Asia particularly when the US has withdrawn from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) under President Trump (Shah 2017). The TPP agreement was signed by twelve countries bordering the Pacific Ocean in February 2016, representing roughly 40% of the world's economic output (BBC 2017). The pact aimed at deepening economic ties and removing trade barriers between the signatory countries for creating a new single market such as the EU (BBC 2017). The US withdrawal from TPP has lowered the confidence of its Asian partners regarding their reliance on the US (India-Japan Strategic Cooperation and Implications for Washington and Beijing 2017). Even so, their hopes are pinned on President Trump's promise of

standing up to China's aggression (Shah 2017). A deeper economic engagement between India, US and Japan will help assert India's foreign policy stance in the region (Shah 2017).

The respective bilateral relationships need to be strengthened for the success of the trilateral arrangement between India, US and Japan (Shah 2017). The US and India should achieve their goal of USD 500 billion of bilateral trade from the current volume of USD 115 billion (Shah 2017, Brookings 2017). The US-India nuclear deal and FTA needs to be finalised for realising the trade potential between the two countries (Shah 2017). Modi government initiatives of expanding growth in the Indian manufacturing sector through Make in India campaign which seeks to turn India into a global manufacturing hub while simultaneously tackling India's infrastructure woes is an appropriate case for the US-India partnership (QUARTZ India 2016, Brookings 2017). The Trump administration should support Modi's goals by promoting US investment in Indian infrastructure and manufacturing sectors (Brookings 2017). The infrastructure sector in India offers a market opportunity of USD 1 trillion (The Future of the India-U.S.-Economic Partnership 2017). According to Nisha Biswal, former US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs, India has become top investment destination for the US companies (The Future of the India-U.S.-Economic Partnership 2017). Nonetheless, Ms. Biswal is privy to the challenges in the US-India trade and

investment cooperation such as India's tax liability law including retrospective tax where there is lack of clarity although good signals have been sent by the Modi government (The Future of the India-U.S.-Economic Partnership 2017). The US administration would also like to see better enforcement of IPR in India (QUARTZ India 2016). The questions of repatriation of profits and dispute resolution are also important for companies on both sides of the equation and solving these problems will help in building a strong US-India trade relationship (The Future of the India-U.S.-Economic Partnership 2017).

The Modi government has given momentum to the investment climate of India by focusing on improving India's ease of doing business by liberalising FDI policies in sectors such as aviation, pharmaceuticals, defence, and insurance, among others (QUARTZ India 2016). Dr. Ayres revealed that PM Modi's Make in India campaign is bearing fruits as India has entered the top ten automobile manufacturers of the world (Asia Briefing: India 2018). Dr. Ayres adds, a third of all small cars in the world are being manufactured in India (Asia Briefing: India 2018). India has also recently passed its biggest tax reform in 70 years, the Goods and Services Tax (GST), which will replace some 17 different taxes and bring them under one unified tax regime (QUARTZ India 2016). As Sunil Sanghai- MD and head of investment banking HSBC India explains that India is digitising its systems which will bring more transparency in dealing with

business issues such as taxation assessment (The Future of the India-U.S.-Economic Partnership 2017). The FDI from the US to India grew from USD 806 million in the 2014 fiscal year to USD 4.12 billion in the 2016 fiscal (QUARTZ India 2016). Similarly, India's total FDI grew from USD 36 billion in 2014 to USD 55.4 billion in 2016 at a time when there is a decline in investment flows globally (QUARTZ India 2016).

The Indian students contribute roughly USD 5 billion to the US economy on an annual basis and have the second largest international student population in the US (The Future of the India-U.S.-Economic Partnership 2017). Joel Hellmen- Dean, Georgetown University School of Foreign Service explains that this builds a remarkable foundation for economic, social and political relationships between the US and India but the visa restrictions imposed by the Trump administration have had a considerable impact on the Indian students coming to study in the US (The Future of the India-U.S.-Economic Partnership 2017). Dr. Hellmen advocates for a more liberal US Visa regime for India's H1-B professionals and the US University graduates (The Future of the India-U.S.-Economic Partnership 2017). He also emphasises the need of wider participation of Indian students across different subject areas for developing stronger cadre of Indian officials, global and multilateral players, which will strengthen India's leadership of the world (The Future of the India-U.S.-Economic Partnership 2017).

The job sector is another area of shared focus for India and the US (Brookings 2017). India needs to create 115 million new non-farm jobs by 2022 according to a McKinsey report (Brookings 2017). India and the US are both developing their manufacturing sector as one way forward (Brookings 2017). India is primarily focused on developing manufacturing jobs in parts of the supply chain compared to the US focus on the domestic manufacturing sector so their objectives are not at odds (Brookings 2017). Moreover, Indian companies have invested nearly USD 18 billion and created more than 113,000 jobs in the US (Indian companies create 113,000 jobs in US: CII report 2017). Amita Poole, CEO IIPPL USA, a wholly owned subsidiary of Infrastructure Leasing & Financial Services (IL&FS) Transportation Networks Limited (ITNL), a company based in India reveals the creation of 500 jobs in the US infrastructure sector in 2016 (The Future of the India-U.S.-Economic Partnership 2017). Ms. Poole proclaims that IL&FS has pioneered public private partnership in India and the US market can learn ways of innovation and methods of financing from IL&FS (The Future of the India-U.S.-Economic Partnership 2017). SpiceJet, an Indian airline company has placed an order for procurement of 100 aircraft from Boeing worth USD 22 billion (SpiceJet's aircraft order to create US jobs: Trump 2017). The order is expected to create 132,000 high-skilled jobs in the US (SpiceJet's aircraft order to create US jobs: Trump 2017). The Indian civil aviation sector has tremendous growth potential as it is growing at 25% annually when only 3 percent of India's population travel by air (The Future of

the India-U.S.-Economic Partnership 2017). Additionally, India's rising middle class will provide a new market for the US exports of manufactured products (Brookings 2017). Ms. Poole refers to the lessons learnt about the difficulties, triumphs and challenges of working in the US market similar to what the US companies face in India (The Future of the India-U.S.-Economic Partnership 2017). Marshall M. Bouton, Senior Fellow for India at Asia Society Policy Institute (ASPI) in the US, stresses that trade issues will become problematic for both the countries as the relationship evolves (The Future of the India-U.S.-Economic Partnership 2017). President Trump and PM Modi should establish a joint mechanism to address bilateral trade issues and this is something that Ms. Poole also recommends (Brookings 2017, The Future of the India-U.S.-Economic Partnership 2017). Moreover, finding common ground around the recognition of standards might also be a way of reducing trade friction over time (Brookings 2017).

The US should support India's membership to the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum (APEC) (Ayres 2017). APEC works through dialogue and action plans to collectively advance free and open trade and investment in the region and is not a binding negotiation forum (Ayres 2017). According to Mr. Bouton, APEC is a very important discussion group to learn about the ways and means of global trade for East Asian economies (The Future of the India-U.S.-Economic Partnership 2017). Mr.

Bouton adds that APEC is a process of knowing how the global value chains work and how national government and policies affect those value chains (The Future of the India-U.S.-Economic Partnership 2017). India is Asia's third largest economy yet it remains outside of APEC despite a membership request of over 20 years (Ayres 2017). India's inclusion in APEC would help offset the overwhelming Chinese influence while placing India in a forum that would push it toward further economic reforms (Ayres 2017). It would also send a strong message to the region about the US commitment to free and open trade at a time when the US has withdrawn from the TPP (Ayres 2017). Moreover, it would demonstrate the US commitment to help strategic partner India gain participation in global governance institutions (Ayres 2017). As Mr. Bouton states, India's participation in APEC will provide India access to global value chains that now define global trade and that will enhance India's participation in global trade (The Future of the India-U.S.-Economic Partnership 2017). Mr. Bouton elaborates that APEC also needs access to India's fast growing economy and labour force to boost its growth and contribution to global trade (The Future of the India-U.S.-Economic Partnership 2017).

On the energy front, India-US technical, economic and bilateral cooperation is becoming stronger with time (US DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY 2018). According to Dr. Ayres, India has signed two contracts for Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) exports

from the US and the first shipment went out in 2016 (Asia Briefing: India 2018). PM Modi and President Obama in their first bilateral summit in 2014, resolved to strengthen and expand their Partnership to Advance Clean Energy (PACE) initiative (US DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY 2018). PACE was launched in 2009 to provide momentum to inclusive, low carbon growth by supporting research and deployment of clean energy technologies (US DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY 2018). New activities were added under PACE when the two leaders met again in 2015 (US DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY 2018). India has revised its renewable energy target to 175 Giga Watt (GW) by 2022 (US DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY 2018). India's solar target was scaled up by five times reaching 100 GW by 2022 of which 40 GW is expected to come from solar rooftop (US DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY 2018).

PM Modi and French President Francois Hollande in Paris launched the International Solar Alliance (ISA) in 2015 (Why President of France Emmanuel Macron's visit to India was postponed until 2018; here is big setback 2017). The ISA project seeks to mobilise more than a trillion dollars by 2030 and bring together well over 100 solar-rich countries to deliver solar energy to some of the planet's poorest (ALJAZEERA 2017).

India is the world's third-biggest emissions generator (ALJAZEERA 2017). Moreover, half of the world's most polluted cities are in India (Carrington & Safi 2017). However, India is making concerted efforts to reduce carbon emissions (Carrington & Safi 2017). India will not need to build any new coal-fired power stations for at least 10 years and by that time it will be cheaper to supply new demand using renewable power (Carrington & Safi 2017). India's Supreme Court banned burning of crackers on Diwali festival in 2017 (Carrington & Safi 2017). There will be a ban on the sale of new petrol or diesel cars in India from 2030 (Carrington & Safi 2017). Ms. Biswal calls India the laboratory for developmental models, which could be replicated by the rest of the world (The Future of the India-U.S.-Economic Partnership 2017). Accordingly, India's rolling out of solar plants or super-efficient LED bulbs will prove helpful for the development of the rest of the world (Carrington & Safi 2017).

The US has withdrawn from the Paris agreement on tackling climate change in 2017 under the Trump administration arguing that it was detrimental for the US businesses (UN hails India, China for fighting climate change 2018). The Paris Climate Agreement is a pact within the UNSC Framework Convention on Climate Change dealing with greenhouse gas emissions mitigation, adaptation and finance starting in the year 2020 (UN hails India, China for fighting climate change 2018). According to the agreement, each country determines its action plan and regularly reports the contribution it should

make in order to mitigate global warming (UN hails India, China for fighting climate change 2018). India had joined the Paris agreement in 2016 and is still supporting it (UN hails India, China for fighting climate change 2018, ALJAZEERA 2017). The Modi government is working hard to change the composition of the power mix and is switching to a healthy mix of wind, solar and nuclear energy (Asia Briefing: India 2018).

Deepening the US-India trade and investment relationship will require unflinching resolve from both sides (Brookings 2017). The US and India need to view the economic relationship in a broader geopolitical context (Brookings 2017). In effect, India has forged strategic partnerships with Japan and the US that fall short of an alliance (Thakur 2017).

The current India-Japan bilateral trade is about USD 15 billion, which is much below potential and needs an upward push (Shah 2017). India and Japan are concerned at the nuclearisation of North Korea (India-Japan Strategic Cooperation and Implications for Washington and Beijing 2017). The joint statement between India and Japan signed during PM Abe's visit to India in September 2017 asserted the need of holding parties accountable that have supported North Korea's nuclear and missile programs in an indirect reference to Chinese and Pakistani complicity (Thakur 2017). India's diplomatic ties with North Korea could act as a channel of communication for the US

(India-North Korea ties could be ‘conduit for communications’: Rex Tillerson 2017).

Nonetheless, there is more negativity about China’s rise in the US and India compared to Australia (INSTITUTE OF PEACE AND CONFLICT STUDIES 2016).

Australia and India partnership could perhaps provide a model for effectively working in the Indo-Pacific region (INSTITUTE OF PEACE AND CONFLICT STUDIES 2016). The defence and strategic cooperation includes maritime cooperation on issues such as counter-terrorism, energy security and science and technology (INSTITUTE OF PEACE AND CONFLICT STUDIES 2016). The India-Australia civil nuclear cooperation agreement has become operational allowing for estimated 2,000 tonne of Australian uranium export to India every year once India’s new nuclear reactors come online (INSTITUTE OF PEACE AND CONFLICT STUDIES 2016). India and Australia are also building closer trade and investment links, including through negotiating a CECA (INSTITUTE OF PEACE AND CONFLICT STUDIES 2016). India is Australia’s fifth largest export market however there is still a big scope for trade between the two countries considering Australia’s trade with India is only one-tenth of its trade with China (INSTITUTE OF PEACE AND CONFLICT STUDIES 2016).

Australia and India share common values such as democracy, rule of law and human rights (INSTITUTE OF PEACE AND CONFLICT STUDIES 2016). India and

Australia are both active members of EAS and the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) (INSTITUTE OF PEACE AND CONFLICT STUDIES 2016). The IORA formed in 1997, is an inter-governmental organisation comprising of coastal states bordering the Indian Ocean with an aim to promote regional economic cooperation (Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2018). India and Australia have provided an impetus to IORA as respective chairs by cosponsoring the IORA Declaration on Gender Equality and Women's Economic Empowerment (INSTITUTE OF PEACE AND CONFLICT STUDIES 2016). The two countries are further cooperating towards including counter terrorism and countering violent extremism in IORA for meeting the strategic challenges of this century (INSTITUTE OF PEACE AND CONFLICT STUDIES 2016). India and Australia are also considering engaging in small group diplomacy in the Indo-Pacific since every strategic issue might be unique and will require engagement with different countries (LOWY INSTITUTE 2017).

The US pivot to Asia has definitely increased Australia's interest in India (INSTITUTE OF PEACE AND CONFLICT STUDIES 2016). The India Australia partnership is being shaped by the increased business between India and Australia, the rise in the number of Indian students in Australian universities and the large Indian diaspora in prominent Australian cities (INSTITUTE OF PEACE AND CONFLICT STUDIES

2016). Australia is expected to become the world's largest exporter of LNG with the US support by 2020 (INSTITUTE OF PEACE AND CONFLICT STUDIES 2016). A sizeable part of the LNG will need to be transported through the Indian Ocean to the Asia Pacific (The Emergence of the Indo-Pacific 2016). India is already a rising naval power and its role will become crucial in securing the sea-lanes of the Indian Ocean and Asia Pacific. (Twining cited in Khandekar & Gaens 2018). Therefore, India-Australia partnership will grow from strength to strength in times to come (The Emergence of the Indo-Pacific 2016).

The US-Australia alliance remain an article of faith for the Australian strategic community despite China's emergence as a prominent trade partner for Australia (LOWY INSTITUTE 2017). In this context, Australia's relations with India and Japan assume great significance (LOWY INSTITUTE 2017). The US and Japan have been pushing for a deeper Indian role in the Indo-Pacific region (India, US, Japan, Australia hold 1st quad talks in Manila to counter China 2017). India, the US, Japan and Australia held their first quadrilateral coalition meeting in 2017 reiterating their resolve to cooperate in upholding a rules-based order and respect for international law in the Indo-Pacific region (India, US, Japan, Australia hold 1st quad talks in Manila to counter China 2017). The four countries committed to increasing cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region through the quadrilateral (India, US, Japan, Australia hold 1st quad talks

in Manila to counter China 2017).

India and the US have signed the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) in 2016 (QUARTZ India 2016). LEMOA provides access to each other's military facilities for fuelling and logistics support on reimbursable basis for carrying out mutually agreed activities (OBSERVER RESEARCH FOUNDATION 2016). These activities include joint military exercises, training, port calls and humanitarian missions (OBSERVER RESEARCH FOUNDATION 2016). The US currently uses Indian military bases and logistics on a case-by-case basis, which makes the process inconvenient (OBSERVER RESEARCH FOUNDATION 2016). However, the presence of LEMOA will streamline the process (OBSERVER RESEARCH FOUNDATION 2016). LEMOA will provide India easy access to US military bases in Djibouti and Diego Garcia doing away with case-by-case approvals (OBSERVER RESEARCH FOUNDATION 2016). The People Liberation Army's (PLA) logistical base at Djibouti not only caters to China's anti-piracy missions, but also provides for all year round naval presence in the Indian Ocean (QUARTZ India 2016).. LEMOA will increasingly be used to achieve a rules-based order in Asia (QUARTZ India 2016). The Indian Navy must act in close coordination with the US Navy to ensure an equitable regional security architecture (QUARTZ India 2016).

The logistical agreements empower the US partner states to invite the US Navy for critical military assistance during emergencies (QUARTZ India 2016). This leads to the achievement of a set of strategic objectives for Washington and its Asian partners such as India (QUARTZ India 2016). India is boosting its Act East policy by modernising its navy, which ranks amongst the top five navies of the world (Twining cited in Khandekar & Gaens 2018). India's navy exercises significant influence in IOR however, its influence is also growing in the Indo-Pacific as a response to the US pivot (Twining cited in Khandekar & Gaens 2018). Dr. Ayres explains that Indian navy wants to be seen as a net provider of regional security in IOR and the same thoughts have been echoed by the US Defence Secretaries about the role of India in the region (Asia Briefing: India 2018). Dr. Ayres adds that India thought of itself as a land power for a long time however, it is increasingly thinking itself as a maritime power (Asia Briefing: India 2018). Dr. Ayres states that Indian navy discourse of the seas have changed from using the seas to protecting the seas (Asia Briefing: India 2018). Dr. Ayres proclaims that India has one of the largest defence modernisation processes going on although it is not moving at a desired pace and the US-India defence relationship is one of the great leading edge aspect of overall bilateral relationship (Asia Briefing: India 2018). She adds that the US Congress has called India a major defence partner and this puts India in the league of the US closest allies and partners for defence technology transfers and defence platform agreements (Asia Briefing: India 2018). Dr. Ayres draws attention to

the number of ongoing defence initiatives between the US and India such as Defence Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI) that is focussed on co-development and co-production of new platforms including some very sophisticated ones (Asia Briefing: India 2018). For example, there is US-India working group on aircraft carrier technology (Asia Briefing: India 2018). Dr. Ayres elucidates that the US acknowledges India as a major defence partner and that the US and India will continue to partner closely (Asia Briefing: India 2018).

The American pivot is intended to reassure friends and warn competitors that the US retains both the resolve and the capacity to exercise strong leadership in the Asia-Pacific (YALE GLOBAL ONLINE 2012). However, the US ability to tackle domestic challenges will primarily determine its success or failure in the 21st century and the same holds true for India (YALE GLOBAL ONLINE 2012). Ashley Tellis, a former US India policy official, commenting on the US interest in India's economic growth said that India's "success as a powerful democracy would help to transform the greater South Asian region while serving as an objective constraint on growing Chinese power," (ALJAZEERA 2014). Modi's diplomacy might have a significant impact on India's role in the US-China relations however, it may be his economic performance that bears more heavily on the future of the region (ALJAZEERA 2014).

Ruchir Sharma, head of emerging markets and chief global strategist at Morgan Stanley explains that the world is deglobalising however, he adds that the influence of politics

on economics is not overwhelming and globalisation remains a significant phenomenon (Ruchir Sharma on the Asian Economy 2017). Ms. Biswal refers to President Obama's address to the Australian parliament in 2013 where he talked about how the US security and prosperity is increasingly going to be determined by how Asia grows in peaceful ways and in ways that create more opportunities for the US companies (The Future of the India-U.S.-Economic Partnership 2017). In that context, Ms Biswal reiterates, India remains a dramatic opportunity for the US (The Future of the India-U.S.-Economic Partnership 2017).

Ms. Biswal responds to the Trump administration America First policy question by stating that the US foreign policy has always been driven by advancing its national interest (The Future of the India-U.S.-Economic Partnership 2017). However, she stresses that the US foreign policy has always been about drawing that national interest in the broadest possible term (The Future of the India-U.S.-Economic Partnership 2017). She explains that when the US administration extend security and prosperity more broadly it create conditions that advance the US national interest in being able to secure its borders and advance its economic interests (The Future of the India-U.S.-Economic Partnership 2017). Furthermore, she cautions against narrowly drawn vision of America first that pits America's growth against opportunities of its friends and partners around the globe, which will create a much more antagonistic approach (The Future of the India-U.S.-Economic Partnership 2017).

On the other hand, India lacks the internal capacity to tackle China and that has left it with the only other option of external balancing with the US (Oak 2016). India might not like to become a linchpin of the US pivot yet it cannot remain oblivious of the developments in East Asia considering its strategic and economic interests (Khandekar & Gaens 2018). The US pivot presents an excellent opportunity for India to grow easily with China's rise (Oak 2016). India will protect its national interests by following an interests-based policy instead of being drawn into a strategic competition with China or becoming a security provider on behalf of the US (Khandekar & Gaens 2018). Nevertheless, India and the US strategic interests are converging in the Indo-Pacific region (Oak 2016). Rex Tillerson, US Secretary of State in his speech at CSIS pointed to China's less responsible rise on the world stage in comparison with India (Defining Our Relationship with India for the Next Century: by U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson 2017). He laid emphasis on the need of collaborating with India to ensure freedom of seas, peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region (Defining Our Relationship with India for the Next Century: by U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson 2017). The US strategic goals in Asia will develop if it has the foresight to cultivate a prosperous, confident, and democratic India (Brookings 2017). In light of the aforesaid it is safe to conclude with the US Congressman Ami Bera remarks 'As the world's oldest democracy and the world's largest democracy, a strong US-India partnership is

vital for the 21st century' (Indian companies create 113,000 jobs in US: CII report 2017).

Conclusion

The Chapters 3 and 4 throw light on the immense utility of India for the US in the Af-Pak region and the Asia-Pacific.

India has been assisting Afghanistan in strengthening its nascent democracy through building Afghan parliament, cooperating closely with the Afghan democratic institutions in sharing best practices and training Afghan civil service officers (OBSERVER RESEARCH FOUNDATION 2016, COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS 2015). However, India needs to reinforce President Ghani's NUG government in undertaking democratic reforms in Afghanistan (OBSERVER RESEARCH FOUNDATION 2016). This Indian move will support the USAID work of strengthening democracy in Afghanistan (USAID 2017). India has already donated over USD 2 billion to Afghanistan for reconstruction efforts (Haidari 2015).

India has been helping Afghanistan in the areas of infrastructure building, engineering, training, and humanitarian needs (COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS 2015). The Salma Dam in Afghanistan has been built with Indian assistance (COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS 2015). India has also been training the Afghans in carpentry, plumbing, welding and microenterprise (COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS 2015). In addition, India has been offering generous scholarships to Afghan students for studying in India (Haidari 2015). Furthermore, India has been conducting training programmes for Afghan technocrats (Haidari 2015, Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation Programme 2015).

The Indian private sector has been playing an important role in developing commercial ties with Afghanistan and FICCI has become a point of contact among regional chambers of commerce under the Istanbul Process (COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS 2015). India's membership of APTAA will reinforce peace and stability in Western South Asia and advance regional economic integration (COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS 2015). India's inclusion in APTAA will also expedite the US New Silk Road initiative (COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS 2015). India and Afghanistan have recently inaugurated an airfreight corridor that will enable the two countries to trade goods (Bhattacharjee 2017).

On the security front, India and Afghanistan have signed SPA however; India has played a limited role in training Afghan forces always on Indian soil (COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS 2015). India has also chosen not to send security forces to Afghanistan except to protect its diplomatic facilities and construction teams to minimise the risk of a terrorist attacks on its assets from Pakistan based terrorists groups (COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS 2015). The US has high stakes in securing a stable future for Afghanistan and so does India (COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS 2015). Therefore, India must not hesitate in providing military support to Afghanistan because of Pakistan's paranoia although India had supplied Afghanistan four Mi-25 gunships in 2015 (Snow 2016, OBSERVER RESEARCH FOUNDATION

2016). The US should counsel Pakistani officials on the benefits of Indian involvement in Afghanistan across civilian security areas (COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS 2015). India and the US must seek new avenues of cooperation in providing security assistance to Afghanistan (OBSERVER RESEARCH FOUNDATION 2016, COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS 2015).

India has recently launched a SAARC satellite for catering to the communication needs of all SAARC countries except Pakistan which chose not to join the project ('India calls satellite 'gift to South Asia', Pakistan says no thanks' 2017). However, India needs to play a proactive role in international forums such as SCO and the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process for developing peace and prosperity in Western South Asia perhaps through working with China (COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS 2015, OBSERVER RESEARCH FOUNDATION 2016).

India and the US share similar positions on CPEC and OBOR (moderndiplomacy 2016, Quartz 2017). Nonetheless, TAPI gas pipeline could perhaps act as a stabilising factor for Western South Asia because of its economic benefits to the region (Identities in conflict: India, Afghanistan and Pakistan, 2016). India is establishing trade connectivity to Afghanistan and Central Asia by developing Iran's Chabahar port, which might prove useful to the US in the future (OBSERVER RESEARCH FOUNDATION 2016, Fair 2015). The Chabahar port could also prove to be helpful for regional counter-terrorism and counter-narcotics efforts since it is the only Iranian port with direct access to the Indian Ocean (Tanchum 2014, OBSERVER RESEARCH FOUNDATION 2016).

The US could facilitate greater interaction among Western South Asia through encouraging more people-to-people contact in the form of cultural exchange programmes, parliamentarians meeting and medical tourism (CENTER FOR STRATEGIC & INTERNATIONAL STUDIES 2012). However, the impact of the Trump administration's new regional strategy for Afghanistan remains to be seen although it is hoped that India will continue to play a leadership role in bringing peace and stability to Western South Asia (George 2017, Asia Society Policy Institute 2017 & Olson 2018).

India has implemented its Act East policy in the Asia-Pacific (Ramabadran 2017). The US pivot to Asia and India's Act East policy are complimentary and create synergies (Mishra 2016). India's Look East policy is already harnessing economic partnerships in the Asia-Pacific (Ramabadran 2017). The Look East and the Act East policies are devised to make India a leading power in the region (Asia Briefing: India 2018). The 2015 US-India Joint Strategic Vision document called for intensive engagement between the two countries in the Asia-Pacific and IOR for sustainable inclusive development and enhanced regional connectivity (THE WHITE HOUSE 2015).

The Act East policy begins from Bangladesh where India is working on joint power projects, increasing two way trade, investment and enhancing regional connectivity (Patel 2018, WORLD BANK 2017 & Bagchi 2017). The Indian government has made concerted efforts to improve infrastructure in India's Northeast states that has resulted in increasing India-Myanmar trade (Maini 2017). The IMT highway will connect Northeast India with ASEAN through Thailand and the Greater Mekong region (Oxford Business Group 2016). The completion of IMT highway will be another milestone in enhancing regional connectivity and trade besides tackling the issues of job creation and social mobility between the IMT countries (Iyer 2017, Oxford Business Group 2016). India has also proposed setting up of a Joint Task Force for extending the IMT highway to Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam (OBSERVER RESEARCH FOUNDATION

2017). India's engagement with the Southeast Asia includes cooperation with CLMV and Thailand as a strategic priority (Cook & Singh 2016).

China has been gaining political and economic influence in CLMV countries (Cook & Singh 2016). However, India is helping Vietnam build its maritime defence (Baruah 2016). Vietnam has clashed twice with China over the SCS dispute (BBC 2015). India has called for a peaceful resolution of the SCS dispute and an early conclusion of SCS Code of Conduct (Chaudhury 2016). The Indian oil firm, OVL is supplying oil to Vietnam from the oil blocks awarded by Vietnam to India in the SCS despite Chinese objections (CENTER FOR STRATEGIC & INTERNATIONAL STUDIES 2012, Chaudhury 2016). India is looking at enhancing its exploration activities with Petro Vietnam for increasing trade opportunities since Vietnam holds second largest crude oil reserves in East Asia (Chauhan 2016, rediff.com 2014). India-Vietnam trade has been growing at a fast pace and both countries have set a trade target of USD 15 billion for 2020 (Chauhan 2016). India and Vietnam share common apprehensions with regard to the maritime security and Chinese rise (Thayer, cited in Fels & Vu 2016). Vietnam has formally asked India to play a greater role in the SCS however India's involvement in the SCS is in coherence with its Act East policy (Baruah 2015, ASIA TIMES 2017). The US-India maritime security cooperation agreement considers building third party capacity as an asset for countering maritime threats such as piracy and terrorism

(rediff.com 2014). Both India and Vietnam have been victims of piracy and the 2008 Mumbai terrorist attacks began as a maritime operation (rediff.com 2014). The US-India partnership over geopolitical approaches in Indo-Pacific will assist Vietnam in its efforts to resist Chinese assertiveness in the SCS (Chauhan 2016).

PM Modi has reinvigorated Buddhism ties between India and CLMV countries by using cultural diplomacy to further India's interests (OBSERVER RESEARCH FOUNDATION 2017). The trade between India and CLMV nations has crossed to over USD 10 billion in 2015-16 (OBSERVER RESEARCH FOUNDATION 2017). However, there exist a potential of USD 100 billion of additional Indian exports to CLMV countries (Trade between India, CLMV can be much better: Nirmala Sitharaman 2016). India is taking a number of initiatives to increase its economic presence in the CLMV countries (OBSERVER RESEARCH FOUNDATION 2017).

The Act East policy seeks to assimilate the people of Northeast India with Southeast Asia particularly Myanmar and Thailand for their economic development (OBSERVER RESEARCH FOUNDATION 2017). The trade between India and Thailand amounted to USD 7.72 billion in 2016 however it is still below potential (Embassy of India in Thailand 2018, OBSERVER RESEARCH FOUNDATION 2017). India is also working with Thailand to conclude the FTA for increasing trade and investment flows (Sen

2017). However, India is also interested to know the outcome of RCEP that seeks to create one of the world's largest free-trade zones (CNN 2017, Sen 2017). India and Thailand are making efforts to increase two-way tourism (OBSERVER RESEARCH FOUNDATION 2017). Even so, India and Thailand need to exploit economic opportunities in BIMSTEC, which is a useful instrument for regional integration (OBSERVER RESEARCH FOUNDATION 2017).

India-Thailand are developing their defence relations after signing the Defence cooperation agreement in 2012 (Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses 2015). Moreover, the two sides are also planning to develop deep-sea ports and new special economic zones that will further consolidate trade and connectivity between India and Thailand (OBSERVER RESEARCH FOUNDATION 2017). India is already conducting joint maritime patrolling exercises with Thailand and Indonesia (OBSERVER RESEARCH FOUNDATION 2017).

India and Indonesia are working to deepen their defence partnership following Indonesian President Widodo's visit to India in December 2016 (Parameswaran 2017). India and Indonesia recognise the importance of freedom of navigation and overflight on the high seas, unimpeded lawful commerce, as well as resolving maritime disputes by peaceful means (FIRSTPOST 2016). India and Indonesia are already conducting a

range of army and maritime exercises although more needs to be done with regard to air force manoeuvres and the defence industry collaboration between the two countries (Parameswaran 2017, FIRSTPOST 2016). The partnership between India and Indonesia will also include combating terrorism, organised crime, drugs and human trafficking (FIRSTPOST 2016). India is also building maritime cooperation with all its Indian Ocean neighbours such as Seychelles, Sri Lanka and Mauritius besides the Asia-Pacific countries such as Indonesia (FIRSTPOST 2016).

India and Indonesia are exploiting their historical ties to enhance regional connectivity and strengthen economic links (Maini 2017). Indonesia is the largest trading partner of India in ASEAN with a bilateral trade of USD 17 billion for 2016-17 (Embassy of India in Indonesia 2018). However, the volume of bilateral trade is projected to touch USD 50 billion with two-way investment of USD 50 billion by 2025 (India-Indonesia trade to reach USD 50 billion: Experts 2016). It is noteworthy that all Asian countries had welcomed Obama's pivot to Asia policy because of their concerns regarding China's growing assertiveness in the region (FIRSTPOST 2016).

India and Singapore share close political, defence and economic ties (Ganapathy 2017). India and Singapore have been deepening their defence cooperation (NDTV 2017, Ganapathy 2017). India and Singapore inked naval cooperation agreement in 2017

aimed at protecting sea-lanes increasingly dominated by the Chinese Navy (Ganapathy 2017). The Indian and Singaporean Air Force have been holding joint annual exercises for more than a decade (NDTV 2017).

India and Singapore have signed an FTA named CECA in 2005 (High Commission of India in Singapore 2018). The FTA is India's first ever CECA with any country (CHANNEL NEWSASIA 2017, High Commission of India in Singapore 2018). Singapore is among India's largest trade and investment partner in ASEAN and accounted for 22.13% of India's overall trade with the ASEAN in 2014-15 (High Commission of India in Singapore 2018). Singapore is the second largest investor in India with a share of 16% of the total FDI received by India during April to December 2015 (High Commission of India in Singapore 2018). The bilateral trade between India and Singapore stood at USD 16.9 billion in 2014-15 (High Commission of India in Singapore 2018).

Southern India has enjoyed historical trade and maritime links with Southeast Asia since ancient times (Maini 2017). These ties have been strengthened by the presence of a strong Indian diaspora, as well as efforts by southern Indian states like Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, and Karnataka to strengthen ties with Southeast Asia, especially Singapore and Malaysia (Maini 2017).

India and Malaysia share a strategic relationship, which was enhanced during an official visit of PM Modi to Malaysia in 2015 (rediff.com 2017). Malaysian PM Najib Razak visited India for six days in 2017 to commemorate the completion of 60 years of India-Malaysia diplomatic relations and 25 years of India-ASEAN ties (The Dialogue 2017). During the visit, Razak and Modi decided to enhance industrial, defence and security, socio-economic, tourism and cultural activities between the two countries (The Dialogue 2017). They committed to cooperate for maintaining peace, prosperity, and security in the Asia-Pacific region (The Dialogue 2017, rediff.com 2017). Malaysia has become the pivot of India's Look East policy (The Dialogue 2017). However, concerns regarding the socio-economic marginalisation and religious persecution of Indian diaspora in Malaysia persists (The Dialogue 2017). Malaysia is the third largest trading partner of India among ASEAN (The Dialogue 2017). The India-Malaysia trade stood at USD 12.79 billion in 2015-16 (rediff.com 2017).

India is providing impetus to its Look East policy through bilateral and multilateral engagements with the smaller regional powers and ASEAN countries (Khandekar & Gaens 2018). The US is still the most important player in the Asia-Pacific although India and Japan partnership will provide a boost for the US pivot in balancing China (Khandekar & Gaens 2018).

Japan and India's partnership is the fastest growing strategic relationship in Asia (India-Japan Strategic Cooperation and Implications for Washington and Beijing 2017). India and Japan are cooperating in the civilian nuclear energy, defence and technology sector (Thakur 2017). India and Japan complement each other in economics and demographics (India-Japan Strategic Cooperation and Implications for Washington and Beijing 2017). India and Japan are tackling the Chinese assertiveness on the global stage through a triple hedge—defence partnership, economic partnership, and cooperation at multilateral forums (Oak 2016). Lately, India and Japan are giving much more importance to the joint maritime exercises (Oak 2016). In 2015, Japan joined as a permanent partner in the annual Malabar naval exercise, which earlier had only India and the US as participating members (India-Japan Strategic Cooperation and Implications for Washington and Beijing 2017). In addition, there has been a marked increase in cooperation between India and Japan at multilateral forums like the UNSC, EAS and ASEAN (Oak 2016).

India and Japan have also pooled resources to launch Asia-Africa growth corridor, connectivity and infrastructure projects for Southeast Asia and Africa as a counter to China's OBOR (Thakur 2017). India, Japan and the US have recently agreed to jointly develop, strategically important ports and other infrastructure in the Indo-Pacific region

(Thakur 2017). The US, India and Japan trilateral has been in place for the last few years to ensure peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region (India-Japan Strategic Cooperation and Implications for Washington and Beijing 2017). Nevertheless, the respective bilateral relationships need to be strengthened for the success of the trilateral arrangement between the US, India and Japan (Shah 2017).

The US and India should achieve their goal of USD 500 billion of bilateral trade from the current volume of USD 115 billion (Shah 2017, Brookings 2017). The US-India nuclear deal and FTA needs to be finalised for realising the trade potential between the two countries (Shah 2017). The US should support Modi government's Make in India campaign (QUARTZ India 2016, Brookings 2017). However, India needs to be clearer about its tax liability law including retrospective tax (The Future of the India-U.S.-Economic Partnership 2017). The US government would also like to see better enforcement of IPR in India (QUARTZ India 2016). The questions of repatriation of profits and dispute resolution are also important for companies on both sides of the equation and solving these problems will help in building a strong US-India trade relationship (The Future of the India-U.S.-Economic Partnership 2017). The Modi government has given momentum to the investment climate of India by focusing on improving India's ease of doing business by liberalising FDI policies in sectors such as aviation, pharmaceuticals, defence, and insurance, among others (QUARTZ India

2016). India has also recently passed its biggest tax reform named GST (QUARTZ India 2016). The FDI from the US to India grew to USD 4.12 billion in the 2016 fiscal (QUARTZ India 2016). Similarly, India's total FDI grew to USD 55.4 billion in 2016 at a time when there is a decline in investment flows globally (QUARTZ India 2016).

The Indian students contribute roughly USD 5 billion to the US economy on an annual basis and have the second largest international student population in the US (The Future of the India-U.S.-Economic Partnership 2017). Nonetheless, the visa restrictions imposed by the Trump administration have had a considerable impact on the Indian students coming to study in the US (The Future of the India-U.S.-Economic Partnership 2017). There is a need for a more liberal US Visa regime for India's H1-B professionals and the US University graduates (The Future of the India-U.S.-Economic Partnership 2017).

Indian companies have invested nearly USD 18 billion and created more than 113,000 jobs in the US (Indian companies create 113,000 jobs in US: CII report 2017). The Indian civil aviation sector has tremendous economic potential for the US companies (The Future of the India-U.S.-Economic Partnership 2017). The Indian civil aviation sector is growing at 25% annually when only 3 percent of India's population travel by air (The Future of the India-U.S.-Economic Partnership 2017). The trade issues might

become problematic for India and the US as their relationship evolves (The Future of the India-U.S.-Economic Partnership 2017). However, establishing an India-US joint mechanism might prove to be helpful in addressing bilateral trade issues (The Future of the India-U.S.-Economic Partnership 2017).

The US should support India's membership of APEC to offset the overwhelming Chinese influence while placing India in a forum that would push it toward further economic reforms (Ayres 2017). This would also send a strong message to the region about the US commitment to free and open trade at a time when the US has withdrawn from TPP (Ayres 2017). APEC also needs access to India's fast growing economy and labour force to boost its growth and contribution to global trade (The Future of the India-U.S.-Economic Partnership 2017).

On the energy front, the US-India technical, economic and bilateral cooperation is becoming stronger with time (US DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY 2018). India has signed two contracts for LNG exports from the US and the first shipment went out in 2016 (Asia Briefing: India 2018). India and the US are working on the PACE initiative (US DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY 2018). India and France have also launched ISA in 2015 to deliver solar energy to some of the planet's poorest (ALJAZEERA 2017). India is the world's third-biggest emissions generator (ALJAZEERA 2017). However, India

is making concerted efforts to reduce carbon emissions even when the US has withdrawn from the Paris agreement (Carrington & Safi 2017, UN hails India, China for fighting climate change 2018).

The US and India need to view their relationship in a broader geopolitical context for sustainable development (Brookings 2017). India has forged strategic partnerships with the US and Japan that fall short of an alliance (Thakur 2017).

The current India-Japan bilateral trade is about USD 15 billion that is much below potential and needs an upward push (Shah 2017). India and Japan are concerned at the nuclearisation of North Korea (India-Japan Strategic Cooperation and Implications for Washington and Beijing 2017). India's diplomatic ties with North Korea could act as a channel of communication for the US (India-North Korea ties could be 'conduit for communications': Rex Tillerson 2017). Nonetheless, India-Australia partnership could perhaps provide a model for effectively working in the Indo-Pacific region (INSTITUTE OF PEACE AND CONFLICT STUDIES 2016).

The India-Australia defence and strategic cooperation includes maritime cooperation on issues such as counter-terrorism, energy security and science and technology (INSTITUTE OF PEACE AND CONFLICT STUDIES 2016). The India-Australia

civil nuclear cooperation agreement has become operational allowing for estimated 2,000 tonne of Australian uranium export to India every year once India's new nuclear reactors come online (INSTITUTE OF PEACE AND CONFLICT STUDIES 2016). India and Australia are also building closer trade and investment links, including through negotiating a CECA (INSTITUTE OF PEACE AND CONFLICT STUDIES 2016). India and Australia are both active members of EAS and IORA (INSTITUTE OF PEACE AND CONFLICT STUDIES 2016). India and Australia are also considering engaging in small group diplomacy with different countries in the Indo-Pacific (LOWY INSTITUTE 2017). The US pivot to Asia has definitely increased Australia's interest in India (INSTITUTE OF PEACE AND CONFLICT STUDIES 2016). The India-Australia partnership is being defined by the increased business between India and Australia, the rise in the number of Indian students in Australian universities and the large Indian diaspora in prominent Australian cities (INSTITUTE OF PEACE AND CONFLICT STUDIES 2016). Australia is expected to become the world's largest exporter of LNG by 2020 and Indian navy is supposed to play a crucial role in securing the transport of LNG through sea-lanes of the Indian Ocean and Asia Pacific. (Twining cited in Khandekar & Gaens 2018, INSTITUTE OF PEACE AND CONFLICT STUDIES 2016). Therefore, India-Australia partnership will grow from strength to strength in times to come (The Emergence of the Indo-Pacific 2016).

India is cooperating with the US, Japan and Australia in a quadrilateral arrangement, formed for upholding a rules-based order and respect for international law in the Indo-Pacific region (India, US, Japan, Australia hold 1st quad talks in Manila to counter China 2017).

India and the US have signed LEMOA in 2016 (QUARTZ India 2016). LEMOA provides access to each other's military facilities for fuelling and logistics support on reimbursable basis for carrying out mutually agreed activities (OBSERVER RESEARCH FOUNDATION 2016). LEMOA will be used to achieve a rules-based order in Asia (QUARTZ India 2016). India is boosting its Act East policy by modernising its navy, which ranks amongst the top five navies of the world (Twining cited in Khandekar & Gaens 2018). India's navy exercises significant influence in IOR however, its influence is also growing considerably as a response to the US pivot in the Indo-Pacific (Twining cited in Khandekar & Gaens 2018). The US-India defence relationship is one of the great leading edge aspect of overall bilateral relationship (Asia Briefing: India 2018). The US Congress has called India a major defence partner (Asia Briefing: India 2018).

India lacks the internal capacity to tackle China and that has left it with the only other option of external balancing with the US (Oak 2016). The US pivot presents an excellent opportunity for India to grow easily with China's rise (Oak 2016). The US is

interested in collaborating with India to ensure freedom of seas, peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region (Defining Our Relationship with India for the Next Century: by U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson 2017). India and the US strategic interests are converging in the Indo-Pacific and this will make the US-India partnership vital for the 21st century (Indian companies create 113,000 jobs in US: CII report 2017, Oak 2016). However, there exist a scope of further research on the significance of India in the US pivot to Asia in a decade or so considering that the Trump administration has recently unveiled its India policy (Defining Our Relationship with India for the Next Century: by U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson 2017).

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