

## Realignment of World Order: RSTV – India's World

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### Larger Background:

- A variety of shared geopolitical interests have brought New Delhi and Washington closer together than ever before.
- Both countries have several common interests and are concerned about the rise of China in the Indo-Pacific.
- The change in Geo-political dynamics and estranged ties with America also seems to have brought China and Russia closer together.
- In the midst of its trade war with the US, China has been working to strengthen its ties with Russia in multiple spheres.
- Given extended US and European Union sanctions against Russia for its annexation of Crimea from Ukraine, Russia also has reason to forge closer ties with China.
- But some experts believe the scale of cooperation remains limited.
- Other analysts believe that if India has to be a global power, New Delhi needs to focus on a few countries, like US, Japan, Israel, Germany and France.
- This episode of India's World will analyse if there is a realignment in the world order.

### Current Geopolitics:

- The process that was started after India's nuclear tests in 1998, towards building a healthier relationship with the U.S. has accelerated.
- Prime Minister Vajpayee signaled the closeness of relations with his memorable phrase, **“natural allies”**. He described the links between India and the U.S. as “natural allies”.
- President Trump's daughter, Ivanka Trump, in a recent tweet, described India as a “critical ally”. However, what is important is to lend more substance to the relationship. It is alright to use phrases such as “natural allies”, and “critical allies”- as this provides a feel-good effect. **But, it is important to add new content to the bilateral relationship between the two countries.**
- Perhaps new content is being added only to the India-Russia relationship contrary to the general perception that Russia is a declining power, or that India-Russia relations are stagnant.
- There are limits at the moment with what India can do with Europe- this is because Europe is caught up in its own problems. Further, the United States of America, with an erratic President such as Donald Trump, imposes certain limits on the relations between India and the U.S.
- However, with Russia, new opportunities are opening up for India to pursue. Unfortunately, what happens with Russia doesn't get much publicity by India's media.

### India's Engagement with Eastern Russia:

- India's Prime Minister is due to go to Vladivostok in September 2019 which is in eastern Russia.
- So, we are opening a new frontier in our relations with Russia in the eastern region.
- The eastern part of Russia has unlimited potential in oil, minerals, etc.
- As a matter of fact, **there is a possibility that we can merge our “Act East Policy”, with Russia's eastern region.**
- This is also the first time in recent memory that an Indian Prime Minister is visiting Vladivostok. Thus, with Russia, new frontiers are opening up. India needs to pursue these new frontiers with Russia.

- As a matter of fact, Russia with its immense resources, is a new frontier which India needs to explore.
- With the U.S. trying to isolate Russia and with parts of western Europe trying to keep a distance from Russia, this is a relationship that opens immense opportunities and India needs to exploit it.
- India's relations with the U.S. have been growing in strength ever since the sanctions were imposed on India in 1998 after the nuclear tests. These relations are currently at a very good stage.
- **The U.S. is India's largest trading partner and India has close collaboration with the U.S. even in areas such as defence which didn't take place earlier.**
- However, the fact remains that while the international order has changed, and some of it not to India's advantage, **today the world is far more multipolar than it ever was in the past.**
- Thus, India would have to look at the world in that light.
- Also, India must keep in mind that she herself is a major power- and thus instead of seeking to align herself with one or the other major powers permanently, as she perhaps did in the 1970's with the Soviet Union (this was done largely because the China-Pakistan axis had become very strong and there was a threat to India's security), India must work towards developing her 'strategic autonomy'.
- We are no longer living in a bipolar world, and although the China-Pakistan axis remains, we observe that Russia has also to an extent joined this axis, largely because of its close relations with China. These are factors due to which the Russia-Pakistan relationship has also improved in recent times.
- It is also important to note that India's relationship with China as well is full of opportunity, although the relationship between the two countries has been largely adversarial in the past.
- We must remember that countries like Japan and South Korea have recently held meetings with China on a free trade agreement. There are also negotiations going on with the RCEP.
- Thus, the center of power has moved eastwards and China is an important country in this. India would be losing an opportunity if she were to completely cut herself off from China. Although from a security point of view, one must keep in mind that China poses a certain threat to India.
- To that extent, keeping good relations with America is useful. One believes that the China-U.S. trade war has opened opportunities for India. It has enabled India to negotiate far more from a position of strength with China- as a matter of fact, India's exports to China have improved during this period.
- China is much more mellowed towards India currently. Thus, in the current context that India finds itself in, she has to learn how to play one country against the other, until she herself becomes strong enough both economically and militarily to be able to become a pole in its own right rather than joining any other group of countries for its own national security needs.

#### **Factors contributing to the growing India-U.S. ties:**

- India and the U.S. realized that in the world that we live in today (post the cold war and post Pokhran), both India and the U.S. have a convergence of interests.
- Countries come together not out of emotions. Countries come together because they share values and they share interests. On both these factors, Mr. Atal Bihari Vajpayee at the Asia Society in New York said that India and the U.S. are "natural allies". His message acknowledged the need for the U.S. and India to work closely together despite the differences that exist between them.
- The Clinton administration thought that the rise of China would be very "benign". They thought that China would evolve as any other country would- where democracy, the rule of law, the philosophy of playing by certain international rules, etc. would be followed; but the rise of China that one has seen in the first decade of the 21st Century, and subsequently, has shown that China is challenging the status-quo at every point. However, China is pursuing its own national interest.
- Both India and the U.S. want an open "Indo-Pacific" region. Both countries do not want wars and conflicts. Currently, India and the U.S. are working together despite their differences.
- China still remains a threat to India. Over the past, China has prevented India's membership into the NSG.
- Keeping all this in view, working closely with the United States of America, makes a lot of sense for

India.

### Would the India-U.S. alliance make Moscow uncomfortable?

- Russia is no longer a superpower, but it still remains a great power. Russia is militarily a big power- it is also a big oil and gas power. It also boasts of a great civilization. Russian diplomacy is also in a class of its own.
- One does not believe that Russia's policy towards India or Pakistan is determined solely with India's relationship with the United States of America.
- A great power doesn't run its foreign policy as a zero-sum game (which means that the gain from one relationship is equal to the loss from another). Russia doesn't conduct its foreign policy like that.
  - - Russia would certainly like the relationship to improve with India. This sentiment is shared by India as well.
    - Having said this, given the nature of the two economies, and given the nature of the bilateral interactions between the two countries, defence has come to define the relationship.
    - Currently, India is looking at the Russian Far East to diversify the relationship that it has with Russia. Thus, if there are any shortcomings in the relationship, it would be because of the circumstances and the nature of the relationship itself.
    - Thus, it would be a grave mistake to think that because India has become close to the United States of America that India's relations with Russia is taking a back seat.
- Also, it is important to note that one of the few countries who are de-facto contributing to the 'Make in India' programme is Russia. **Russia is manufacturing military trucks in Karnataka to be exported to third country markets in Asia.**
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi also has a special interest in the Astrakhan province where a large number of Gujarati families migrated to in the 15th and 16th Centuries. As a matter of fact, when Mr. Narendra Modi was the Chief Minister of Gujarat, he had once come to Moscow and he signed an agreement between Gujarat and Astrakhan. Thus, there are underlying elements to the relationship which do not attract enough publicity. However, the relationship is strong.

### India's relationship with other countries:

- India's relationship with countries such as Israel, France, Germany, Japan have been very close over the last 5 years, and have also been steady.

- There is also a commonality of interest towards keeping the South China Sea open for shipping that both these countries share.
- Thus, when India looks at the geopolitical situation in the eastern part of Asia, especially in the context of China, then Japan looms large and looms importantly.
- Also, in Africa, the Japan-India combination works well.
- India is working together with Japan and Germany for the permanent membership of the UNSC (United Nations Security Council). On the issue concerning Iran, India has commonalities of interest with Japan, and Germany. This is because these are countries that want stability in the region. Iran is a big market for German goods as well. Similarly, Japan sources a lot of its oil from the Gulf region. Thus, these are countries with which India must increase its diplomacy and thus put pressure upon America in an effort to ensure that the region doesn't blow up.
- India's collaboration with Germany in high-technology areas and as a market for Indian goods is extremely important.
- Then of course, there are other countries such as Vietnam with which India needs to engage with actively. India's relationship with Vietnam is important in the larger context of India's engagement with China. This is because India needs to strengthen its cooperation in the field of security with countries such as Vietnam. Thus, in case India has a confrontation with China, India must have allies in the region.
- With Japan in particular, India has a very strong relationship. Although, there was a bit of a hitch when the nuclear tests took place, but the relationship has picked up pace again. There is also a commonality of an adversarial relationship with China that is shared by both India and Japan.
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### RIC Grouping: India sandwiched between Russia and China?

- India is not looking for adversarial relationships anywhere. Prime Minister Modi in his speech at the Shangri-La dialogues made it clear- that when we talk about the Indo-Pacific region, India's plans are not directed against anyone in particular. Thus, India aims to be friendly with America, i.e. to develop a closer relationship with America, Israel, etc. and to work and cooperate with Russia and China.
- Russia has been India's largest provider for arms and ammunition for a very long time. Although India has diversified its defence imports, still, Russia remains a very important supplier. If we look at only trade in goods and not trade in goods and services, one finds that China is right at the top. Also, China is active in India's neighbourhood- thus the two countries must be ready to talk to each other all the time.
- India's isn't really sandwiched between Russia and China. Security-wise, Russia is a very strong power. However, the Russian economy over the past 15-20 years has not been doing well. Also, the Russian population has been falling. Thus, Russia is not in a position to give some of the technologies that India wants.

### Concluding Remarks:

- Overall, India's foreign policy is in good shape.
- Also, it is in good hands with the induction of a professional diplomat into the cabinet and the role of Minister for External Affairs being given to him.
- However, what we must bear in mind is that every country looks after its interests. There is no room for sentiment.
- Earlier, India used to be sentimental with respect to its foreign policy. An example that one can cite here is that of Israel. India established full diplomatic relations with Israel and since then the relationship between India and Israel has grown by leaps and bounds.
- If India maintains her '**strategic autonomy**', she has options. Also, given its geography, one finds that India has more options to leverage its 'strategic autonomy' than even perhaps the United States of America.
- Also, much of the last 70 years were spent in pointing out the flaws in the American international order. Now with the rise of China, one needs to prepare for a China-based international order where India may or may not have the same position that it had in the earlier international order.
- One also needs to prepare for the fact that China-based international organizations would gain in strength. This may not be to India's best advantage although India needs to continue to work with such a reality. However, given India's development today- both in the field of technology and economy, India needs to understand that her best course of action would be to lie low and strengthen its economy and technology such that she can emerge as a major player herself rather than seeking to join any other group as she has been doing in the past.
- Finally, India has realized that there is a very strong link between its domestic growth and its international policies. Earlier, India only thought of international relations in power terms. Today, in the realm of international relations, it is important to bring economics and trade into the relationship.
- Lastly, India should work with China in such a manner that the economic benefits of its relationship with China accrue to the people of India.

