

INDIA AND THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD ORDER: RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT

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ABSTRACT

The contemporary world order is highly fluid and rife with uncertainties. Due to these shifts, the author's main goal is to critically analyse the trajectories of the development of the contemporary world order and India's place and role within it. Geopolitically, the world has undergone a massive metamorphosis. The old bipolar world order has given way to a new multipolar world order. The East-West conflict has paved the way for a new North-South conflict. Even though the US still remains the only superpower, especially from a political and military perspective, its supremacy has faced increasing challenges with the rise of China's economic power. Both China and Russia have challenged the Western rule-based liberal international order. A clear demonstration of this is the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, which began on February 24, 2022. At the same time, there is a perceptible shift from geopolitics to geoeconomics. Due to changing global circumstances, India has aligned itself with Western groupings like the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, or the Quad, whose member countries are the US, Australia, Japan, and India. In this paper, the author has examined and critically forecasted India's futuristic role, albeit acknowledging its somewhat subservient role in the contemporary world order. .

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Introduction

The beginning of World Order Studies can be traced back to the Peace of Westphalia in 1648. This pivotal historical event marked the inception of the concept of a state system, or more precisely, the idea of sovereign and independent states operating both internally and externally within the global system. Over the centuries, the preoccupation with world order has manifested in various historical epochs, such as the Habsburg Empire under Austria (1618-

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1648), the era of Napoleon (1795-1815), the Concert of Europe (1815-1914), the First World War (1914-1918), the Second World War (1939-1945), the bipolar world order (1945-1991), and subsequently, the Post-Cold War world order (from 1991 until the present day). This contemporary era can be characterised as either a unipolar or multipolar world order. What is evident across all these world systems is a consistent realist element characterised by intense power struggles and dominance among the major powers of each respective period.

This paper aims to examine the various trajectories through which the world order has passed in the post-Second World War period. Additionally, it seeks to unravel India's place and role during both the Cold War and the post-Cold War periods, as well as in the contemporary world order. It emphasises the necessity of contextualising World Order Studies within the historical and geographical perspective of the respective periods. The central argument of this paper is that since 1947, India's perspectives on the world order have been shaped by its national interests and the geopolitical and geoeconomic imperatives of the period in question. During the colonial period, India lacked an independent perspective on the nature of the world order. However, the post-colonial Indian state marched ahead to assert and establish its own sovereign perspective on the world order. The aftermath of the World War marked the onset of the Cold War between the two superpowers, the United States (US) and the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). India was determined not to be engrossed in the Cold War and the ensuing bipolar politics during that period. The post-colonial Indian state under its first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, strived hard to transform India into a developed country through gigantic and monumental developmental rhetoric as well as through India's unequivocal advocacy of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Panchsheel Agreement in the immediate aftermath of gaining independence. It was also during the Cold War period that India became a global advocate of the notion and spirit of Third Worldism, as opposed to the first world (the US) and the second world (the former USSR). Successive Indian Prime Ministers, Indira Gandhi (1966–1977 and 1980–1984) and Shri Rajiv Gandhi (1984–1989), further continued India's own independent perspectives on the world order and thus carried on the rich Nehruvian legacy even after Nehru's demise in 1964.

However, a paradigm shift in India's thinking about the world order occurred around 1991, when the Soviet Union disintegrated, the Cold War ended, and the world became a unipolar world order, with the US as the only superpower. In alignment with the international community, India, in 1991, adopted the policies of Liberalisation, Privatisation and Globalisation (LPG) as opposed to the time-tested welfare state policies adopted by the Indian state from 1947 to 1991. The successive ruling regimes in India have consistently pursued the

policies of liberalisation and globalisation. This has evolved into a well-entrenched phenomenon, often described as “aggressive globalisation” under the present dispensation of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) led by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government (May 2004–2014), even while continuing with the globalisation hypothesis, introduced various social welfare policies and programmes in India. Examples include the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA), the Right to Education Act, the Right to Information (RTI) Act, etc. These social welfare policies greatly helped in alleviating the disparities and inequalities existing in India at the socio-economic level.

In contemporary times, India has tried to build up a grand alliance with the US while maintaining ties with Russia. Engaging through groupings like the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa), the Quad (the US, Australia, Japan, and India), and the IBSA (India, Brazil, and South Africa), India strives hard to play an important role in the contemporary world order without much success. This is essentially because India lags behind most developed countries and even smaller South Asian countries, particularly when we take into account different human development indicators (HDI).

Due to the many open questions and dilemmas that India is facing in turbulent geopolitical times, the main research questions explored in the four chapters and the conclusion of this manuscript are - what are the main trajectories of the development of the contemporary world order, and what is India's place and role within it? The author used the unipolarity vs. multipolarity approach to gauge past and current circumstances and to give predictions about future trends and developments.

Bipolarity, Decolonization, Third World Solidarity, and the Non-Aligned Movement: The Indian Perspective

As the curtains of the Second World War were pulled down in 1945, the world community witnessed the beginning of another war that dawned across much of Europe, more specifically between the two superpowers, the US and the former USSR. This war was referred to as the Cold War between the first world, namely the US, and the second world, i.e., the former USSR and its allies in the Communist bloc. While the US had the countries of Western Europe as its allies, the former USSR had the countries of Eastern Europe as its allies. The Cold War was at the same time a political, economic, military, and ideological war. Political war means that both superpowers were vying for political supremacy in the then-world. This essentially symbolised a bipolar world order. Both the US and the former USSR formed their own economic groups and alignments. In 1946, the US established the Bretton Woods institutions, including the

International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank Group (WBG), and the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT), the forerunner of the current World Trade Organisation (WTO). All these institutions were expected to uphold and maintain the capitalist model of economic development, which is based on the Western liberal economic paradigm. In contrast to the Western model, the former USSR established its own economic grouping, i.e., the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA). Regarding the military pacts, the US concluded three military pacts: the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) in 1949, the South-East Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO) in 1954, and the Central Treaty Organisation (CENTO) in 1955. In response to the Western military pacts, the former USSR established the Warsaw Pact in May 1955. Therefore, the Cold War also represented an ideological rivalry between the two rival superpowers. While the US professed capitalist ideology, the former USSR embraced communist ideology. Thus, the world was divided into two competing blocs, both striving to establish their hegemony in the then-bipolar world.

The third block, i.e., the Third World countries, stood in opposition to the two dominant blocs. Many of the Third World countries were former colonies of the three main colonial powers: Britain, France, and Portugal. What united them were their common socio-economic conditions. Most were poor, developing and underdeveloped countries that aspired to retain their own political and economic sovereignty. They were faced with daunting challenges such as nation-building, modernization, and socio-economic development.

India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, was one of the main voices in articulating the spirit of Third Worldism. India, under Nehru, became a primary advocate for the collective strength of post-colonial countries in their struggle against colonialism and racialism. Nehru was resolute that India, along with other post-colonial countries, should not be a mere appendage or pawn of Western countries but should assert its distinct identity and retain its hard-earned sovereignty in world politics and economy. These considerations weighed heavily on Nehru's articulation of India's development strategies, exemplified through the prisms of his espousal of the "Nehru-Mahalanobis model". This model eulogised the development of both the public and private sectors, with a particular emphasis on the development of the public sector. This emphasis aimed to stimulate the development of basic industries, enabling India to transform its nascent economy into a viable indigenous model that could serve as an example for all post-colonial countries. The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre were some of the major public-sector institutions established by Nehru in this regard. Further, in order to develop the private sector, Nehru roped in two prominent industrial families, the Tatas and Birlas. These families contributed enormously through the establishment of world-class institutions in Mumbai,

such as the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR) within the domain of physical sciences and the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) in social sciences. The Birlas also established a leading institution, the Birla Institute of Technology and Science (BITS), in Pilani, Rajasthan. The academic and research output of all these institutions played a crucial role in the development of India as a science and technology hub. A renowned political scientist, Bhupinder Brar, noted that the Nehruvian state had taken several strong and visionary steps to build India's nascent society and economy. Some of these prominent steps are "planning, nationalisation, the public sector, land reforms, laws against caste and gender discrimination", along with "reorganisation of the provincial boundaries and the creation of new provinces to allow substantial autonomy and initiative for language-based communities, a special status for the people of Jammu and Kashmir, separate civil laws for religious communities, and the Panchayati Raj system" (Brar 2005, 224). Thus, Nehru essentially created a socialistic model of development.

Soon after he became the first Prime Minister of India in 1947, Nehru unveiled his foreign policy agenda. Together with leaders like Nasser of Egypt and Tito of Yugoslavia, he articulated the concept of non-alignment. This concept primarily rested on two key principles. Firstly, non-alignment signified disassociation from military alliances and bloc politics orchestrated by the two superpowers, the US and the former USSR. In other words, the Third World or the post-colonial states committed to refraining from becoming members of the US-led military alliances (NATO, SEATO, and CENTO) or the former USSR-led military alliance, the Warsaw Pact. Thus, the Third World countries would be able to contribute to world peace, avoiding becoming mere pawns in the bipolar politics of the Cold War. Secondly, non-alignment called upon the Non-Aligned countries to pursue an independent foreign policy, steering clear of becoming extensions of the two superpowers. It is pertinent to mention here that non-alignment did not remain merely a theoretical posture but, over the years, had grown into a full-grown movement, i.e., the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). Along with the Non-Aligned Movement, another crucial theoretical foundation of Nehruvian foreign policy was the "Panchsheel" or "Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence", outlined in 1954 during negotiations with China. The main principles of the Panchsheel are: "mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, mutual non-interference, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence" (McLean and McMillan 2009, 388). At the same time, Nehru also floated the concept of an "Asian Union", when he organised the non-political Asian Relations Conference in New Delhi in 1947.

It was the Non-Aligned countries that strived consistently for the creation of a New International Economic Order (NIEO). They argued that the old Bretton Woods model of the international economic order was unequal, unjust, and

designed to maintain Western supremacy over the world. The Third World and Non-Aligned countries tried to pursue their own independent foreign policies and put forward proposals for a NIEO that would recognise all countries as equal partners in the then-world order. This argument was reflected in the work of distinguished political scientist Bhupinder Brar.

“As a foreign policy framework, Nehru’s non-alignment was no more than an extension, or perhaps extrapolation, of his ‘national’ project at home: combining the ideals of the modern democratic state and civil society into a transformative vision for the modernising state... He seems to have believed that, in all colonies, colonialism has bred nationalism. He believed that this nationalism had produced the welding of the state-civil society relationship in other post-colonial societies as much as it had done in India. He believed that these welded ideals provided the platform for a collective emancipatory foreign policy framework for all third-world ‘nation’-states (Brar 2005, 224-225).”

These reflections encapsulate the vision of India’s first Prime Minister, Nehru, who essentially eulogised the essence of a strong and interventionist state, aspiring for India to play a major role in world affairs. It can be stated that Nehru played a pivotal role in shaping the Third World and the Non-Aligned Movement. The Third World countries were major and staunch advocates of anti-colonialism, anti-racialism, and anti-imperialism. For instance, India was a vocal votary of the decolonization movement taking place in several countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. India supported indigenous nationalist movements and their claims for sovereignty in various parts of the Third World. By adopting such progressive policies, the Non-Aligned countries contributed to world peace and security. Remaining non-aligned and abstaining from joining either alliance, the Non-Aligned countries contributed to stability in a bipolar world. India under Nehru, as one of the leading leaders of the Third World, significantly strengthened the Non-Aligned Movement and set out to chart its own independent and sovereign status, along with foreign policy priorities, in an increasingly polarised world.

The late 1960s and early 1970s marked a period of ideological juxtaposition between two competing ideologies, capitalism and communism, significantly impacting the majority of the Third World population. This period witnessed the rise of the “New Left” movement in much of Latin America, which had a profound impact on the rise of Third World countries asserting themselves in the international arena and thereby influencing world politics. It also led to the formation of Communist parties in India and strengthened the narrative of socialist discourse in the country. The rise of the “New Left” had a profound impact on the development of the Marxist school of thought. The Marxist innovations could be seen in the works of Che Guevara and Herbert Marcuse and in a renewed interest in Antonio Gramsci’s writings. However, besides

Marxism, the rise of new left also had a deep impact on feminism, environmentalism, and Peace Studies (McLean and McMillan 2009, 366). Marcuse's concept of the "One-Dimensional Man" is a scathing attack on the hazards and pitfalls of capitalism. Capitalism exercises monopolistic control not only on production and distribution, but it also creates the desire and demand for commodities through a clear manipulation of the mass media. Proletarian individuals need to be made aware of their alienation, enabling them to realise their true and best selves.

Antonio Gramsci, an Italian Marxist thinker of the early twentieth century, was a pioneer in conceptualising "hegemony". Gramsci argued that hegemony is exercised by the state through a combination of political society and civil society. While political society is represented through structures of coercion, civil society is represented through structures of legitimation and consent. Gramsci focused on subtler forms of class domination, wherein consent for a particular social and political system was produced and reproduced. The ruling class often manages to disseminate its moral, political, and cultural values throughout society, prompting subordinate groups and classes to adopt these values as their own. Dominant ideologies got so entrenched in the institution of civil society, making it unlikely for subordinate groups to question their authority. Gramsci called such subtle forms of domination "hegemony" and believed that a "counter-hegemonic struggle" must be initiated to challenge the supremacy of the ruling class.

These developments had a profound impact on the growth and evolution of Communist parties in India. It also led to the proliferation of civil society groups and civil liberties associations, such as the People's Union of Civil Liberties (PUCL), the People's Union for Democratic Rights (PUDR), the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR), etc. On the foreign policy front, India, reflecting its socialist inclinations, entered into the "Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation" with the former USSR in 1971 for a duration of 20 years. India signed this treaty because of the Cold War compulsions, as both the US and China were supporting Pakistan. At a similar level, the 1971 Indo-Pak war was marked as a major military and diplomatic victory for India, with credit attributed to then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. This war led to the dismemberment of East Pakistan and the formation of a new state, Bangladesh. Subsequently, the Shimla Agreement was signed in 1972, reaffirming that all disputes between India and Pakistan should be settled bilaterally, without scope for any third-party mediation on this issue. In 1974, under Indira Gandhi's leadership, India conducted its first Peaceful Nuclear Explosion (PNE) at Pokhran. India reiterated that this weapons test was primarily for defensive purposes and had nothing to do with any kind of offensive action. This was followed by the Non-Aligned Movement's summit organised during Indira Gandhi's Prime

Ministership in New Delhi in 1983. This event essentially underscored India's growing status as a leader of the Global South, which would actively promote South-South cooperation. It also signalled the viewpoint that, despite being a smaller country in terms of military and economic power, India was determined to remain non-aligned and not become a pawn in the hands of superpowers and Cold War politics.

India and other Non-Aligned countries also made a forceful plea for the establishment of a New International Economic Order (NIEO), which is just and equitable. The third-world and Non-Aligned countries contended, as did World System theorists like Immanuel Wallerstein, Samir Amin, and Andre Gunder Frank, that the old international economic order—best exemplified by the Bretton Woods model—perpetuates US dominance and reinforces the exploitative nature of the global economy. The World System and dependency theorists argued that India and other third-world countries (including both developing and underdeveloped countries) have been subjected to unjust international trade and economic practices within the overall world economy. In this structure, the developing and underdeveloped countries (the bulk of which can be classified as periphery and semi-periphery) export raw materials and provide cheap labour while importing finished and manufactured goods. Conversely, the developed (core) countries import raw materials and export manufactured products to the vast markets of the periphery and semi-periphery. Thus, the Third World countries were actively being made underdeveloped by the developed countries (Jackson and Sorensen 2003, 57-58). There is a pressing need to alter this process to establish a more just, equitable, and humane world order.

The intense conflict between superpowers paved the way for détente between the US and the former USSR. The term “détente” had two significant connotations. Firstly, it meant a reduction of tension between the two superpowers. Secondly, it implied the induction of new means by which the two superpowers could coexist in peace. The signing of a series of nuclear non-proliferation agreements during the 1960s and 1970s testifies to our observation. The Partial Test Ban Treaty (PTBT) in 1963, the Geneva Hotline Agreement in 1963, and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1968, which came into force in 1970, were some of the major treaties concluded to control nuclear non-proliferation. However, developing countries like India opposed the NPT, as it legitimised and recognised only the five Nuclear Weapon States (NWS): Britain, America, France, the former USSR, and China. All other states, including India, were classified as Non-Nuclear Weapon States (NNWS) and were denied the right to acquire nuclear weapons and the technological know-how to manufacture them. India argued that these policies adopted by the five NWS were discriminatory and reflected their objectives to impose

hegemony over the NNWS. Moreover, since these five NWS were also the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, it greatly emboldened their superiority over the NNWS.

“New” Cold War, Neo-Liberal Economic Reforms, Globalisation, and the Changing World Order

The intricate and complex events discussed in the previous section ultimately led to the collapse of *détente* between the two superpowers in the late 1970s. Moreover, the ideological divide between them further escalated, especially following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. This marked the onset of the “New” Cold War, or the Second Cold War, between the two superpowers. Washington supported the Afghan mujahideen during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, some of whom later formed al-Qaeda and the Taliban either independently or with some Pakistani aid. The mid-1980s witnessed the rise of the Rightist forces, as demonstrated by Thatcherism in Britain and Reaganism in the US.

In India, Rajiv Gandhi succeeded Indira Gandhi as the Prime Minister (1984–1989), following her reigns from 1966–77 and 1980–1984. Rajiv Gandhi won the general election held in December 1984 by a huge margin, as the Congress Party got 48.1% of the votes and 415 out of the 517 seats in the Lok Sabha (Raghavan 2015, 117). He tried to mend India’s relations with the US while maintaining friendly relations with the former USSR. Rajiv Gandhi believed that “India’s modernization and economic development required greater and more adroit engagement with the world and that foreign policy had to be geared towards securing these objectives” (Raghavan 2015, 129).

Along with these developments, which were creating a metamorphosis in the conjectures of the world order, it was former Soviet Union President Mikhail Gorbachev’s policies of “Glasnost” and “Perestroika” that ultimately led to the collapse of the East European countries in 1989 and the disintegration of the USSR in 1991. While “Glasnost” eschewed an open and free market economy and a complete retreat of the state from its social-welfare functions, “Perestroika” entailed restructuring, particularly restructuring of institutions, in order to move from a centralised and socialist economy and polity to a capitalist and liberal democratic system. Thus, what Gorbachev pursued was a set of neo-liberal economic reforms and globalisation principles in the rapidly changing world order. India also acted in accordance with the global shift and liberalised its economy through its advocacy of the “New Economic Policy” and the “New Industrial Policy” in 1991.

However, it is pertinent to point out here that the ideology of “neo-liberalism” was formulated in the 1960s and 1970s by several Western theorists. The philosophical foundations of neo-liberalism were laid down by scholars like Isaiah Berlin, Friedrich Hayek, Milton Friedman, and Robert Nozick during this period. All these philosophers were supporters of a laissez-faire economy. Neo-liberals advocated for free markets, free trade, private property, and, most importantly, individual freedom of choice. Milton Friedman, in his book, “Capitalism and Freedom” (1962), argued that competitive capitalism promotes freedom. Quite persuasively, Robert Nozick, in his book “Anarchy, State, and Utopia” (1974), pointed out that all inequalities result from differences in individual talents and efforts, and it would be unjust to reduce these inequalities through redistributive transfers. Similarly, the economic underpinnings of neo-liberalism were elaborated long ago by two classical liberal economists, Adam Smith (1723–1790) and David Ricardo (1772–1823). Smith, for example, emphasised the “invisible hand of the market”. These neo-liberal policies coalesced into the emerging problematic, i.e., globalisation, which entered a new stage in the mid-1980s. As most of these policies were formulated in Washington, D.C., they are being referred to as the “Washington Consensus”.

According to the Human Development Report (The World Bank 1982), globalisation is a principle of “the widening and deepening of the international flow of trade, finance, and information in a single, integrated global market”. In the post-Soviet world, two grand narratives emerged in the West, supporting the globalisation discourse and the emergence of a unipolar world order. These are Francis Fukuyama’s “end of history” thesis and Charles Krauthammer’s “arrival of the unipolar moment”. Fukuyama argued that history had come to an end with the collapse of the socialist bloc and the triumph of liberal democracy and Western capitalism (Fukuyama 1992). Krauthammer, on the other hand, referred to this development as the “arrival of the unipolar moment”, signifying that the immediate post-Cold War world was no longer bipolar anymore but unipolar (Krauthammer 1990-91). Alongside globalisation and unipolarity/bipolarity, there are also terms like the New World Order and the New International Economic Order. These concepts are multifaceted and complex. One interpretation is reflected in President George W. Bush’s clarion call for a “New World Order”. Another, much older, is underscored by the proposals of developing countries to end economic colonialism, which led to the adoption of the *Declaration for the Establishment of a New International Economic Order* by the United Nations General Assembly.

The concept of globalisation encompasses several perspectives, including social, economic, political, cultural, and ideological. Taking a collective view, globalisation can be interpreted in terms of the globalisation of the economy, the globalisation of politics, and the politics of globalisation, as well as the

globalisation of ideas, knowledge, information, communication, networking, and culture (Lahiry 2015, 79). From a social perspective, we can contend that the world has become a “global village” (Kilminster 1997; Held et al. 1999). From a culturalist perspective, globalisation can be seen in the fact that we are now emulating Western culture, which is leading to cultural imperialism. Moreover, the globalisation of ideas is occurring through new means of communication, such as fax, email, and mobile phones (Bretherton 1996, 4-6).

As a consequence of the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Revolution, globalisation has increased interconnectedness and interdependence while also paving the way for the growing role of non-territorial actors and multi-national corporations (MNCs). However, in reality, globalisation has deepened the various forms of binaries, i.e., the “rural”-“urban” divide, as well as the binaries between “us” and “them”, “developed” and “developing/underdeveloped”, “Occident” and “Orient”, and so forth. More specifically, it has led to “neo-imperialism” and some sort of “Pax-Americana”. Applying the world-system theory of Immanuel Wallerstein, Lahiry argued that the post-colonial world is increasingly being pushed to the periphery (2015, 80).

Globalisation is leading to what some refer to as the “colonisation of the colonized”. In other words, most of the post-colonial states have been subjected to neo-colonialism and cultural imperialism by the US. The conflict zones of Rwanda, Somalia, Kosovo*², Iraq, Afghanistan, Darfur in Sudan, and Sierra Leone in Liberia show the asymmetrical nature of the contemporary world order system perpetuated by the dominant West, and especially the US. Because of the US’s unwavering support for Israel and Ukraine, the wars between Israel and Hamas and Russia and Ukraine are still raging today. The United States dominance has once again revived the core-periphery debate (Lahiry 2011, 224). In other words, globalisation has led to US imperialism. As Samir Amin argues:

“Modern imperialism has nothing to offer the large majority of people in Asia, Africa, and Latin America (75 per cent of the population of the planet). The continuation of the domination of capital over the totality of these peripheries.... requires the militarization of globalisation. This rules out any genuine democratisation or social progress for these peoples. The deployment of over 600 United States military bases distributed over the whole planet is intended to establish the domination of Washington over the whole world... (Amin 2009).”

In other words, globalisation has deepened economic and wealth inequality and the economic divide between the rich North and the poor South. As long

² This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSC 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

as capitalism continues to exist in this form, further marginalisation of the marginalised will continue to prevail. Nasrullah Mambrol (2018) provides a succinct critique of the World System Theory. He argues that this theory:

“...does not explain, nor is it interested in, human subjectivity, the politics of colonisation, the continued dominance of certain discursive forms of imperial rhetoric, nor the particular and abiding material consequences of capitalism in individual societies. It offers no place for individual political agency, nor is it concerned with the local dynamics of cultural change, nor even with the operation of ‘societies’, all these things being subsidiary to the broad structural forces of the world system”.

Similarly, Jan Nederveen Pieterse’s (1988) notes:

“...critique focuses on conceptual dimensions of world system theory and on the relationship between its conceptual structure and the way it theorises social change and action. World system theory is a theory of the world system without a system theory. Its actual conceptual units are ‘social systems’, one of which is the ‘modern world system’. The assumptions that define these need to be explained, as well as how they are thought to relate to one another and how one changes into another. This is one of the fundamental conceptual problems of the world system theory.”

On the other hand, liberal and neo-liberal scholars believe that the world has now become a global village (Bretherton 1996; Friedman 2006; Fukuyama 1992; Ohmae 1993; Scholte 2001). However, in this article, a contrary view of the liberal and neo-liberal perspectives on the world order is presented, and it asserts that the global community needs to resist globalised imperialism and frame alternative economic policies. This notion of alternative economic development needs to be mapped out from the “subaltern” and neo-Marxist perspectives (Lahiry 2011, 231), as also pointed out by the World System theorists. This is essentially because it provides a structural analysis of the world-order narrative.

Bearing in mind everything previously stated, it would be beneficial for the Indian state to develop basic and heavy industries and promote industrialization on a massive scale. At the same time, the Indian state needs to reduce its dependence on consumer products, which is currently responsible for India’s dependency status on the developed countries. This will lay the foundation of an alternative economic policy, which will help India build its image as a strong power and as self-reliant and indigenous. Globalisation did not prove to be a boon for the poor and marginalised sections, but it essentially works for the rich and corporate elite in a developing country like India. It has propelled the growth of a crony capitalist class in India, which works for a tiny minority of the population in India. Therefore, there is a dire need to bring the interventionist state back in and rejuvenate the social welfare policies and programmes in India.

India's Response to New Global and Domestic Challenges

During 1990s and onwards, several major global political shifts happened. Due to these circumstances, India had to change its orientation and policies. In the post-Cold War period, India tried to repair its relations with the major powers, particularly with the US, without renouncing the Russia connection. This was primarily done because the US had emerged as the undisputed superpower following the disintegration of the USSR in 1991. At a subregional level, India also tried to improve its relations with its South Asian neighbours and the extended neighbourhood in Asia, Africa, and even China. The P.V. Narayana Murthy Venkata Narasimha Rao government (1991-1996) broadly operated within this foreign policy orientation. Later, Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral introduced the notion of "Gujral Doctrine", which emphasised the Indian state's building up of peaceful and cooperative relations with its neighbours. This was actually a reiteration of the doctrine of "Panchsheel", which was long ago enunciated by Jawaharlal Nehru. In May 1998, Atal Bihari Vajpayee's BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) conducted nuclear tests at Pokhran, which was reciprocated by Pakistan in May 1998. It must be pointed out here that the development of a nuclear bomb has been one of the fundamental objectives of the Hindu nationalist BJP.

The nuclear tests increased the possibility of a nuclear war on the South Asian subcontinent. Nevertheless, Western powers, including the United Kingdom, the US, and France, expressed their disillusionment with Vajpayee and Nawaz Sharif's actions, imposing military and economic sanctions upon both countries. Vajpayee's regime (1999-2004) tried to mend its relations with the US following the sanctions. Vajpayee also tried to introduce the process of dialogue between India and Pakistan by visiting Lahore, but he failed as Pakistan started the Kargil War with India in 1999. Meanwhile, the chief of the Pakistani army, Pervez Musharraf, captured power through a military coup on October 10, 1999, replacing the civilian leadership of Nawaz Sharif. The Kargil War was followed by the Agra Summit, which failed to make any breakthrough in resolving the India-Pakistan conflict.

The NDA regime was succeeded by the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) regime (2004-2014), wherein Manmohan Singh became India's Prime Minister and Sonia Gandhi became the UPA Chairperson. Manmohan Singh tried to forge an alliance with the US through the passage of the Indo-US Nuclear Deal. At the same time, the UPA government introduced various social welfare policies and programmes in India, like the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA), the Right to Information Act (RTI), and the Right to Education Act.

The Congress-led UPA government was succeeded by the BJP-led NDA regime (from 2014 onwards), and Narendra Modi became the Prime Minister of India. Soon after coming to power, the Modi government unveiled the policies of hardline Hindutva and was also accused of Islamophobia. The Modi government tried, but failed, to remove the terms “secular” and “socialist” from the Indian Constitution amid stiff opposition from the Congress party. On the international front, the Modi government cultivated its growing ties and bonhomie with the US without totally abdicating the concerns of the Russian Federation. On August 5, 2019, the Modi government abrogated Article 370 and Article 35A of the Indian Constitution. Article 370 granted Special Status to the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir, and Article 35A protected property and land rights exclusively for valid residents of Jammu and Kashmir. The Modi government scrapped the statehood status of Jammu and Kashmir and converted the state into two Union Territories—the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir and the Union Territory of Ladakh. This was done with the objective of changing the Muslim-dominated demography of Kashmir. Subsequently, the Modi government put the mainstream leaders, civil society activists, journalists, and even prominent civilians of Jammu and Kashmir under house arrest, detention, and even imprisonment. Later on, they were released, and some of them formed the Gupkar Alliance.

Emerging Trends in the Contemporary World Order and India’s Reaction

Although numerous trends can be observed in the evolving global landscape, for the purpose of this analysis, we will focus on a few key developments. Firstly, the US still remains an indomitable power in the contemporary world. It maintains its superior position through a calibrated mixture of UN resolutions, international law, and participation in multilateral organisations such as the IMF (International Monetary Fund), the World Bank, and the WTO (World Trade Organisation). “It separates democracies from authoritarian regimes, and strategies on inclusions, exclusions, interventions, regime changes, sanctions, etc. It safeguards American exceptionalism and protects privilege through neo-imperialism” (Chenoy 2022). Western countries support a rule-based liberal international order based on “independence, equality, and the rule of law” (Bajpai and Lakshmana 2023, 1373). John Ikenberry (2018, 11) has listed “five key regulatory norms and institutions: 1) openness in trade and various forms of exchange; 2) multilateralism, or a loose set of rules that govern inter-state relations; 3) cooperative security, which entails that “states within the order affiliate in ways designed to increase their security”, including but not restricted to alliances and collective security; 4) reformism,

or the expectation that “(p)ower politics can be tamed—at least to some extent”; and 5) political progressivism towards liberal democracy as a widely accepted form of social organisation” (cited in Bajpai and Laksmana 2023, 1373). The liberal international order (LIO) is a parallel move to create a socialist model of the world order as constructed by China, Russia, North Korea, Cuba, Brazil, Venezuela, and numerous smaller countries in Africa, especially Sub-Saharan Africa. These countries vehemently oppose the LIO and seek to undermine and replace it. They are particularly dismayed over the unnecessary importance given to “political liberalism and the acceptability of the US alliance” (Bajpai and Laksmana 2023, 1377). All these states unequivocally advocate for a multipolar world order, wherein China and Russia can be classified as aspiring great powers ready to take on the challenge posed by the US, which is essentially a formidable power. China, for example, advocates “for a more pluralistic model of governance” (Liu and Yang 2023, 1397).

Secondly, there is a gradual tectonic shift from geopolitics to geoeconomics. While geopolitics remains an important parameter in outlining the foreign policy of any country, there has been a steady rise of developmental and economic issues becoming the main and standalone parameter in the contemporary world order. For example, regional organisations vying for free trade within a particular region have been one of the most discernible trends in the contemporary world. This perspective has two main objectives. Firstly, there is a tacit acceptance among many states that regional organisations can be regarded as a counter-current to globalisation. We can cite examples from various regions in this regard. Many regional organisations, such as the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), the South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA), the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the Latin American Free Trade Association (LAFTA), the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), demonstrate that free trade remains the basic guiding principle in the different regions of the contemporary world. However, it is still a desired but unaccomplished goal.

Thirdly, we can also argue that the contemporary world order is a multipolar world order when we look at it from an economic perspective. On the other hand, the opponents of this view argue that the contemporary world order is essentially a unipolar one since the US remains the dominant military power, as exhibited by the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and its gradual eastward expansion. This is a contested notion because China has emerged as a significant power, posing a major challenge to US hegemony. The 21st century has been referred to as the “Chinese century” because China has now become the second largest economy and possesses a vast array of structural and military power (Heywood 2014, 541). It is estimated that China’s military and economic

power will surpass the US by 2049 (Alison, Kiersznowski, and Fitzek 2022; Morrison 2019; Scobell et al. 2020). China's "Belt and Road" Initiative (BRI) is a major transnational project aimed at strengthening the Chinese economy and establishing its hegemony over the US and the wider European world. China is a major supporter of Russia and Pakistan. Additionally, it has consistently opposed the Euro-centric world. This policy is evident in China's decision not to condemn Russia's conflict with Ukraine, which was launched on February 24, 2022.

The Russia-Ukraine war has opened old wounds, becoming a proxy war between the united West and Russia. It is a reminiscence of the earlier Cold War transformed into a new avatar. The collective West believes that Russia's invasion of Ukraine is an unprovoked aggression and a violation of the rule-based liberal international order. In response, the US and the European Union have imposed a number of economic and military sanctions on Russia. The European Union has imposed a curb on Russia's indigenous energy security by fixing 60 dollars per barrel on Russian oil. However, Russia remains unfettered by this development and argues that it will not sell oil below prevailing market prices. Russia believes that the US is leveraging Ukraine to contain Russia. Furthermore, Russia is very much against the eastward expansion of NATO, asserting that Ukraine's inclusion in NATO would seriously endanger and threaten Russia's security architecture. Anuradha Mitra Chenoy (2022) has elucidated two fundamental assumptions inherent in this confrontational geopolitical context.

"Russia's demands were: first, NATO should not expand to their border, and Ukraine's inclusion in NATO is a red line because it threatens Russian security assets in the Black Sea; second, the protection of Russian ethnic minorities that face persecution in the post-Soviet republics. The US has supported regime change and the civil war in the Donbass region of Ukraine since 2014. The failure of the Minsk 1 and 2 agreements forced Russian hands (Chenoy 2022)".

It seems that Russia's defence of its protectionist policies in Ukraine and its emancipatory approach is an appropriate critical response to the US and the collective West. Therefore, Russia is a strong supporter of a multipolar world order and acts as a counter-hegemonic force to US dominance and hegemony. India has adopted a middle-path policy in this endemic crisis between Russia and Ukraine, on the one hand, and Russia and the West, on the other hand. It refrains from taking a fully pro-active policy in favour of Russia and instead advocates for a diplomatic solution to the ongoing war. However, despite these geopolitical configurations unfolding in the contemporary world, India maintains a steady and buoyant relationship with Russia, "with Moscow supplying New Delhi with over \$ 44 billion worth of weapons from 1992 to 2021, 65% of all India's military imports during this period (Ogden 2022)".

The Russia-Ukraine war has led to a crisis of food, fuel, and energy. The energy crisis has become a major bone of contention between the West and Russia. India, however, has struggled to formulate the right approach in response to these challenging and vexing issues. In an attempt to navigate this complex situation, India has pursued a calibrated approach aimed at appeasing both the US as well as European countries, as well as Russia. This strategy involves bolstering globalisation efforts and opening the market for free trade. Suffice to add here that India has become a dumping ground for second-hand military equipment and economic imperialism from both the US and European countries.

On the other hand, India has a lingering border dispute with China, which is emerging as one of the strongest superpowers in the contemporary world. This dispute got aggravated in June 2020 when India ceded a significant portion of its territory to China. Furthermore, China maintains an all-weather friendship with Pakistan, establishing a strong alliance that serves as a strong deterrent and challenge to India's ruling elite and diplomacy.

India-China relations have remained entangled within the prisms of border conflict since June 2020, as China continues to control 300 square kilometres of Indian territory. In order to circumvent China, India, along with the US, Australia, and Japan, formed the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, commonly known as the Quad. The leaders of the Quad gave primacy to "the rule of law, freedom of navigation and overflight, peaceful resolution of disputes, democratic values, and territorial integrity (The White House 2021)". In other words, we are witnessing that India is gradually aligning itself with the US to achieve strategic, military, and economic objectives. The US, Australia, and Japan want to establish their monopoly and neo-colonial dominance over India with the help of this grouping called the Quad (Lahiry 2021). Achin Vanaik, a distinguished political scientist, provides a very substantive analysis of the emerging trends in the contemporary world order.

"...it is US behaviour and initiatives that have basically determined the unfolding trajectory of the respective Russian and Chinese relationships with the US. This is not to deny the role played by their own respective ambitions in influencing their bilateral relationship with the US, but the main strategic driver has always been what the US thinks and does. Today, Russia, and especially China, are bureaucratic capitalisms with a basic imbrication of the ruling class and the state that is quite different from the relationship between the ruling class and the state in the advanced capitalisms of the West and even in Japan. They will do their best not to become politically subordinate to the US, hence the relative durability of tensions between the US, China, and Russia. Fourth, the US is still the super-imperialist power vis-à-vis Europe (West and East) and Japan, as well as with regard to other emerging/aspiring regional imperialisms (or sub-imperialisms) like Brazil, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, India, South

Africa, possibly Indonesia, and certainly Israel. These latter countries are not going to seriously challenge the US or make alliances against it, whatever the differences on this or that issue or policy (Vanaik 2020)".

The US continues to maintain its dominant position in the contemporary world order, exercising control over major international financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank (WB), and the World Trade Organisation (WTO). On the other hand, China also continues to assert itself through its major initiatives, including the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), and the Asia Infrastructural Investment Bank (AIIB) (Vanaik 2020). In September 2021, the formation of the UKUS by Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States added further strain to US-China relations. Additionally, the Biden administration made a complete U-turn on the former Trump administration's resolve to withdraw from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) in order to maintain a free Indo-Pacific. This shift has become a major bone of contention between regional powers such as India and the ASEAN, each vying for global status and recognition.

In 2021, Indo-US relations received a setback due to their differences "over trade, immigration and H1-B visas, as well as Indian purchases of Russian military hardware, especially the S-400 surface-to-air missile system (Roehrig 2022, 11)". Simultaneously, the US raised domestic issues in China during major multilateral fora, leading to intense and highly volatile opposition from China. The US voiced objections to China regarding the repression in Hong Kong. However, what led to the US-China standoff was Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan in 2022, which resulted in acrimonious relations between the US and China (Roehrig 2022, 2). Moreover, in December 2022, China accused the US of abusing export control measures, violating basic economic laws, and imposing sanctions on China, which amounts to pursuing unfair trade practices in the contemporary world order.

In order to shape a much more benevolent world order, China, along with the other southern countries, should advocate for the de-dollarization of international finances. The BRICS initiative to have its own "New Development Bank" (2015) and intensify the exchanges in its own currencies, as well as to accept new members under the BRICS+ framework, could be instrumental in calibrating cooperation among the countries of the Global South. It is only then that the global community could achieve a more just, equitable, and non-hegemonic world order. Only then will India be able to exercise its strategic autonomy and sovereignty in a more nuanced manner.

At a comparable level, India must continue to develop its indigenous model of economic development. This cannot be ensured solely through the import of certain tanks, missiles, and obsolete technology from the Western powers such as the US and the UK. India needs to reintroduce, at a very rudimentary

level, the notion of “de-globalization” and reinstate the welfare state back to action. The notion of “Social Democracy”, as envisioned by the evolutionary socialists, should be revived, which will certainly help India in alleviating many of her endemic problems, including poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, hunger, malnutrition, and others. Furthermore, India should initiate the process of “industrialization” in major structures of her economy, particularly in basic and heavy industries. Simultaneously, the Indian state should refrain from actively seeking foreign direct investment (FDI) in the consumer goods and should reduce the emphasis on a “consumerist culture”. This strategic approach is essential for India to shape a more self-reliant and sustainable economy.

The promises of globalisation, which promised rapid growth for India, have indeed proven to be shallow and empty. This can be reflected in the wider disparities in the different Human Development Index (HDI) indicators between the Western-led liberal international order and a subverted India. It is ironic that, even in the 21st century, India lags behind the HDI indicators not only in comparison to the West but also when compared to a majority of South Asian countries.

The “discontents of globalisation”, as used by Joseph Stiglitz (2002), are quite obviously depicted in the various human development index indicators with regard to India. Table 1 depicts the Human Development Index indicators, such as life expectancy at birth, expected years of schooling, mean years of schooling, and Gross National Income (GNI) per capita for the year 2021. It also elaborates on the difference in rankings by HDI value and gross national income per capita, as well as the rank on the 2020 HDI. The HDR (Human Development Report) 2021-2022 divides the countries into very high human development, high human development, medium human development, and low human development. India stands at HDI Rank 132 and is placed as a country with medium human development.

Table 1: Human Development Index – 2021

HDI Rank	Human Development Index (HDI) Value – 2021	SDG 3 Life Expectancy at Birth (years) 2021	SDG 4.3 Expected Years of Schooling (years) - 2021	SDG 4.4 Mean Years of Schooling (years) 2021	SDG 8.5 Gross National Income (GNI) per capita (2017 PPP\$) 2021	GNI per capita rank minus HDI Rank 2021	HDI Rank 2020
18 – United Kingdom	0.929	80.7	17.3	13.4	45,225	9	17
21 – United States	0.921	77.2	16.3	13.7	64,765	-14	21
52 – Russian Federation	0.822	69.4	15.8	12.8	27,166	-1	49
73 – Sri Lanka	0.782	76.4	14.1	10.8	12,578	21	75
79 – China	0.768	78.2	14.2	7.6	17,504	-8	82
127 – Bhutan	0.666	71.8	13.2	5.2	9,438	-15	125
129 – Bangladesh	0.661	72.4	12.4	7.4	5,472	4	128
132 – India	0.633	67.2	11.9	6.7	6,590	-6	130
143 – Nepal	0.602	68.4	12.9	5.1	3,877	10	144

Source: United Nations Development Programme 2022.

While the UK, the US, and the Russian Federation are classified as countries with “Very High Human Development”, Sri Lanka and China are classified as countries with “High Human Development”. In contrast, Bhutan, Bangladesh, and India fall into a category of countries with “Medium Human Development”. Table 1 shows that India’s HDI Rank and HDI Indicators not only lag behind those of the UK, the US, Russia, and China but also trail behind most other South Asian countries, including Sri Lanka, Bhutan, and Bangladesh. India is only ahead of smaller states like Nepal. The data further highlights that India’s HDI rank declined from 127th in 2005 to 135th in 2014, and as of 2021, it stands at 132nd. This essentially shows that even though India’s growth rate has increased, the

basic parameters of human development such as education, health, and sanitation have dropped. Thus, this paper posits that globalisation has accentuated the difference between the rich and the poor, which essentially leads to more disparities and economic inequalities in India. At the same time, it must be acknowledged that in India, poverty, hunger, malnutrition, and unemployment have increased in contemporary times. For example, India ranks 107th out of 121 countries with a score of 29.1 in the Global Hunger Index (2022). Similarly, as of May 2023, India's unemployment figure stands at 7.7%, according to data provided by the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE), a private think tank. These statistical data question the Indian state's tall claims of ushering in development and becoming a \$3 trillion economy, revealing instead a picture of growing underdevelopment in India.

Conclusion

The contemporary world order has manifested in the formation of a new coalition of actors (or states), essentially pulling the strings in favour of many regional powers. These regional powers wish to be part of a new conglomeration of states that are challenging the mighty sole superpower in the contemporary world, i.e., the US. One such alliance is the BRICS. Within the BRICS, China emerges as one of the major powers in Asia, which can pose a significant level of threat to US hegemony. Therefore, Washington now needs to accommodate powers like China, Russia, and Iran and settle internal differences with them without extrapolation.

This brings us to the fundamental question of this research: What course of action should India take in an increasingly polarised world, divided between the US and China? One way to circumvent such polarisation is for India, alongside other developing countries, to revive the Nehruvian-era-founded Non-Aligned Movement. Rejuvenating the NAM could help India set forth an independent and autonomous foreign policy. Moreover, the contemporary world order appears to be moving towards a multipolar world order dominated by the US, the European Union, and China. What are the implications of the Russia-Ukraine war for India? Happymon Jacob provides a well-commented answer to this question:

“The US withdrawal from Afghanistan, its current focus on Russia and Ukraine, ...and Beijing's proactive outreach in the region with money and muscle will eventually lead to the end of Indian primacy in the region, accelerating a China-centric Asian geopolitical order. As a result, it is possible that when the Ukraine war is over, India will be relegated to a weaker position in the region than it was prior to the war (Jacob 2022)”.

By remaining non-aligned, India will be able to manoeuvre world politics in a truly emancipatory manner, which is what the critical theorist in International Relations seeks to achieve. This approach would help India forge a bond with other Southern countries and position itself as a global advocate for South-South cooperation. With a non-aligned position, India can calibrate its foreign policy based upon its dynamic national interests, which are not static but changing according to the changing political and economic scenario in the contemporary world order. The principle of non-alignment facilitates the formulation of a more pragmatic foreign policy, allowing India to be an ally to both the US and Russia without getting subverted by the politics of the great powers. Non-Alignment thus supports India in pursuing a free and independent foreign policy, positioning it as a votary and leader of the global South. However, since the principles of a vibrant economy determine political dynamics, as argued by renowned political economist Karl Marx, India, in the current conjecture, needs to build a sound and vibrant economy. It is crucial to understand that economic development is not solely measured by economic growth but by sustained development in various indicators of health, education, etc. Enhancing these human development indicators can reduce problems such as poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, and the various dimensions of structural violence, which are so endemic in Indian society, polity, and economy. As the centre of gravity has shifted from the East-West conflict to a North-South conflict since 1991, the time is ripe for India to play an important role from the perspective of the global South. It can contribute to reshaping the contemporary world order in a more humane direction.

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ИНДИЈА И САВРЕМЕНИ СВЕТСКИ ПОРЕДАК: РЕТРОСПЕКТИВА И ИЗГЛЕДИ

Апстракт: Савремени светски поредак је врло флуидан и пун непредвидивости. Због оваквих промена, главни циљ аутора јесте да критички анализира правце развоја савременог светског поретка и место и улогу Индије у њему. Геополитички посматрано, свет је претрпео огроман преображај. Стари биполарни светски поредак је уступио место новом мултиполарном. Сукоб Истока и Запада је утврдио пут новом сукобу Севера и Југа. Иако САД остају једина суперсила, посебно посматрано из политичког и војног угла, њихова доминација је све више суочена са изазовом успона кинеске економске моћи. И Кина и Русија су изазвале западни либерални међународни поредак заснован на правилима. Очигледна демонстрација тога јесте сукоб између Русије и Украјине који је почео 24. фебруара 2022. У исто време, уочава се померање од геополитике ка геоекономији. Услед мењајућих глобалних околности, Индија се сврстала уз западне групације попут Квадрилатералног безбедносног дијалога, односно Квада, чије су чланице САД, Аустралија, Јапан и Индија. У овом раду, аутор испитује и критички прогнозира будућу улогу Индије, имајући у виду њен донекле подређен положај у савременом светском поретку.

Кључне речи: Светски поредак; биполарност; униполарност; мултиполарност; сукоб Истока и Запада.