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**INDIA'S GRAND STRATEGY:  
AMBITIONS AND CAPACITY**

by

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**INDIA'S GRAND STRATEGY: AMBITIONS AND CAPACITY**

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## **ABSTRACT**

There currently exists a critical consensus that India's leaders lack a grand strategy to direct internal and external policies. Recent literature focuses increasingly on this issue to address the question of India's ability to counter China's rising influence in South Asia and the Indian Ocean Region. This thesis analyzes the ideological and historical factors that have contributed to India's grand strategy policy-making process. Specifically, the research focuses on two primary schools of strategic thought in India's rich history: the Indira Doctrine and the Gujral Doctrine. This study builds on George Tanham's mandala system of strategic thinking, which places India's spheres of influence into three concentric circles: the core, periphery, and extended neighborhood. Using this analytical framework, this thesis tests the Indira and Gujral Doctrines for their ability to resolve India's strategic concerns in each sphere of influence. The study concludes that India will not be able to counter China's influence or project its own global power until strategic issues in the core and periphery are resolved. In light of India's desire to wield great power, this thesis suggests that India's leaders draw on the policies found in the Indira and Gujral Doctrines to devise a coherent grand strategy.

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
CPEC	China Pakistan Economic Corridor
CDP	Composite Dialogue Process
IO	Indian Ocean
IOR	Indian Ocean Region
IN	Indian Navy
IPKF	Indian Peacekeeping Force
LoC	Line of Control
NAM	Nonaligned Movement
PM	Prime Minister
SLOC	Sea Line of Communication
TNW	Tactical Nuclear Weapons

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# I. INTRODUCTION

## A. MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION

India's security strategy has become increasingly more important to the international community given China's rising influence across Asia. However, experts around the world have also begun criticizing New Delhi due to its inability to lay out a coherent, achievable grand strategy. Critics worry that the largest democracy in the world is unable to wield a global presence strong enough to counter China's rising dominance. India desires parity with China in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and hopes to project global strength, but its inability to modernize and build up its military have made these dreams increasingly difficult to achieve. Rooted in a historical commitment to maintaining India's strategic autonomy, leaders in New Delhi remain reluctant to establish foreign alliances to fill the gaps in their nation's capacity. With these factors in mind, this research explains what India's current strategic goals entail and whether the nation has the capacity to achieve them. In short, does India have the wherewithal to achieve its grand strategy?

## B. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH QUESTION

In expert literature today, critics debate the foundations and future of India's grand strategy. Some experts like John Gill believe that India's main concern in the years to come centers on its lack of a coherent grand security strategy.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, such pessimists as Shivshankar Menon cite certain domestic issues like weak institutions and poor civil-military relations as the main obstacles that hold India back from developing a far-reaching grand strategy.<sup>2</sup> Others are more optimistic and insist that India does have a grand strategy, but that it is articulated in sets of speeches and debates rather than in a comprehensive strategy document. Such experts as George K. Tanham adopt this perspective and claim

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<sup>1</sup> John H. Gill, "Challenges for India's Military Strategy: Matching Capabilities to Ambitions?" in *Power, Ideas, and Military Strategy in the Asia-Pacific*, ed. Ashley Tellis et al. (Washington, DC: National Bureau of Research, 2017), 140–172.

<sup>2</sup> Shivshankar Menon, *Choices: Inside the Making of India's Foreign Policy* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2016), 134.

that this difference in strategic policy writing makes understanding Indian motives and procedures all the more vital to foreigners.<sup>3</sup>

Ample literature acknowledges that Indian power as it stands would be inadequate to respond to a major threat, especially a two-front war, so Indian leaders must adapt their strategy to improve capabilities.<sup>4</sup> Many experts advise for the possibility of formal or informal alliances with such stronger powers as the United States.<sup>5</sup> However, the United States and other countries have struggled to understand Indian perceptions of strategy and how to best come to successful compromises on cooperation. Therefore, a greater understanding of Indian motives and the foundation of its strategic thinking is needed in order to educate the international community about how best to prop India up as a counter to Chinese influence.

## C. LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review identifies the progression of Indian grand strategy since independence up to current day. The review first analyzes the factors that have had the most significant influence on Indian strategic thinking since independence. This section will also set the stage for how current leaders assess India's power and potential through the lens of different expert opinions. The second section will examine how various authors have articulated India's grand strategy and conceptualized its place in the world.

### 1. Key Factors in Determining Strategic Thought

George Tanham's ideas relating India's strategic influences to the mandala system have permeated expert discourse from the 1990s until today. Tanham argues that Indians

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<sup>3</sup> George Tanham, "*Indian Strategic Thought*," (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1992), v, <https://www.rand.org/pubs/reports/R4207.html>.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example: Abhijit Singh, "In the Far Seas: Projecting India's Naval Power" in *India's Naval Strategy and Asian Security*, ed. Anit Mukherjee and C. Raja Mohan (New York: Routledge, 2015), 65–85; Timothy D Hoyt, "India in the U.S. naval strategy" in *India's Naval Strategy and Asian Security*, ed. Anit Mukherjee and C. Raja Mohan (New York: Routledge, 2015), 127–143.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example: Hoyt, "India in the U.S. naval strategy," 127–130; S. Kalyanaraman, "India's Defense and Security Priorities," *Institute for Defense Studies and Analyses*, May, 24, 2018, 6–10, <https://idsa.in/system/files/policybrief/pb-indias-defence-and-security-priorities-skalyanaraman.pdf>.

see the world through the lens of certain strategic circles.<sup>6</sup> He explains that Delhi’s strategic community puts the entire subcontinent in the first circle because it sees the region as a single strategic unit sharing geography, history, and a common culture.<sup>7</sup> In this way, India’s primary security concerns extend to the entire subcontinent. Tanham goes on to write that the second circle includes India’s smaller neighbors—Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bangladesh, and the Maldives—while larger neighbors like Pakistan and China hold a place between this periphery and extended neighborhood.<sup>8</sup> In the next circles of influence, India faces strategic concerns in the Indian Ocean and greater global community.<sup>9</sup> Such other experts as Cohen assert that Indian leaders still root their security strategy in this mandala framework.<sup>10</sup>

Indian scholars have also weighed in on the ample factors which influence India’s strategic thought. Such experts as Menon cite India’s “strategic culture” as a major factor in the progression of Indian strategy.<sup>11</sup> Several authors claim that India’s geography, history, and culture all impact the development of India’s strategy and continue to influence its leaders today.<sup>12</sup> Overall, most experts agree that India’s “strategic culture” guided earlier policies and convinced Indian leaders to consolidate and build power on the subcontinent.<sup>13</sup> However, critics continue to debate the degree to which the “strategic culture” continues to influence India’s grand strategy today.

India’s geographic position in the subcontinent has also influenced leaders in New Delhi that their strategy should center around their dominance in the region. George

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<sup>6</sup> Stephen Cohen, *Emerging Power India* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1978), 10.

<sup>7</sup> Tanham, 23.

<sup>8</sup> Tanham, 23–34.

<sup>9</sup> Tanham, 23–24.

<sup>10</sup> Cohen, 10–13.

<sup>11</sup> Menon, 131.

<sup>12</sup> Tanham, 1–5; W. P. S. Sidhu, “Of Oral Traditions and Ethnocentric Judgements,” in *Securing India: Strategic Thought and Practice*, ed. G. K. Tanham, K.P. Bajpai, and A. Mattoo (Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1996).

<sup>13</sup> See, for example: Rodney W. Jones, *India’s Strategic Culture*, (Defense Threat Reduction Agency, Advanced Systems and Concepts Office, October 2006), 1, <https://fas.org/irp/agency/dod/dtra/india.pdf>.

Tanham states that India's location, size, and population have all come together to create the idea of India's preeminence in the Indian Ocean region and its inherent global importance.<sup>14</sup> India's greater size compared to its smaller neighbors created the idea of the Indian subcontinent as a single entity that Indian leaders should rightfully dominate. Tanham explains how India's geography also led to feelings of insecurity because certain northwest passages historically allowed invaders to reach India.<sup>15</sup> He claims that these fears of being invaded and dominated permeate Indian strategy even today. Stephen Cohen concurs, though he focuses less on the land features and more on the ideological influence.<sup>16</sup> In his opinion, Indian leaders have always wanted India to be a regional security provider, but that they have historically relied on partnerships with such other strong regional states as China and the Soviet Union to achieve this goal.<sup>17</sup> These opinions combined suggest that current Indian strategy remains influenced by both historic notions of India's great power in the region and an obsession with maintaining security from outside invaders.

The legacy of Indian history has also influenced strategists to believe in India's inherent greatness and responsibility to oversee the South Asian region. Cohen explains how India's primary strategic goal of unifying the subcontinent and protecting from outside powers started as early as 2,000 years ago.<sup>18</sup> Tanham also explains how Indians continue to believe in an "Indianness" that spreads across the continent and abroad regardless of language or religion.<sup>19</sup> Both authors agree that this "Indianness" influences modern perceptions that India is a progressive state and should spread its ideas across Asia and the globe.

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<sup>14</sup> Tanham, 3.

<sup>15</sup> Tanham, 6.

<sup>16</sup> Cohen, 7–8.

<sup>17</sup> Cohen, 25.

<sup>18</sup> Cohen, 10.

<sup>19</sup> Tanham, 12.

The historical impacts of the British Raj also affected Indian strategic thought because this legacy both encouraged India's great power aspirations and hindered its ability to achieve them. Tanham cites how the British colonial leaders were the first to develop India's defense strategy and centered their policies on denying other powers easy access to the Indian continent.<sup>20</sup> Indian leaders adopted these policies from the British after independence and expanded them to fit their idea of India's greatness. In Tanham's words, "British efforts to develop a unified colony laid the foundations for Indian unity," and later influenced the desire of Indian leaders to maintain their dominance in the subcontinent.<sup>21</sup> Shyam Saran writes, "there is a political consensus in India that the country must never again allow the subordination of its people to alien rule or domination,"<sup>22</sup> which clearly illustrates the legacy of India's focus on maintaining autonomy.

However, the legacy of the British Raj has also hindered India's ability to modernize and achieve a greater influence outside the subcontinent. British colonialism negatively affected India in that it contributed to an army-centric military strategy and a shaky civil-military relationship.<sup>23</sup> The British military used Indian natives as soldiers but limited their naval build-up. Once India achieved independence years later, the nation still contained this large army force and lack of naval power. Rather than break down the military as it stood and build it up again, such authors as Gill argue that Indian officials decided to utilize the manpower strength and maintain a large army as the prominent military strategy.<sup>24</sup> Additionally, under the Raj, India was governed by a bureaucratic-military establishment, which was efficient in maintaining a strict order, but oppressive against the Indians. Experts agree that this influence persists because the current civilian and military leaders do not work effectively in the Indian policy-making process.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Tanham, 19.

<sup>21</sup> Tanham, 19.

<sup>22</sup> Shyam Saran, *How India Sees the World* (New Delhi: Juggernaut Books, 2017), 30.

<sup>23</sup> Gill, 148; M.S. Rajan, "The Impact of British Rule in India," *Journal of Contemporary History* 4, no. 1 (January 1969): 90, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/259793>.

<sup>24</sup> Gill, 148.

<sup>25</sup> Angus Maddison, *Class Structure and Economic Growth: India & Pakistan Since the Moghuls* (New York: Routledge, 1971), 35–37, [http://www.ggd.net/maddison/articles/moghul\\_3.pdf](http://www.ggd.net/maddison/articles/moghul_3.pdf).

Overall, many authors concede that all of these factors have provided both benefits and consequences for contemporary Indian strategic thought. On the one hand, the historical and cultural influences have allowed India to mobilize its people around a unique set of values and ideas.<sup>26</sup> The idea of “Indianness” generated through the common experiences of people on the Indian subcontinent continues to impact strategic thinking and expand Indian goals into desiring a greater global influence. On the other, the different perceptions of India’s history has arguably left to an “arming without aiming” situation in which leaders base their goals more on ideological perception and not as much on their true capacity.<sup>27</sup> In this way, India’s historic aspirations continue to lack a clear grand strategy.

## **2. Evolution of Indian Grand Strategy**

Since independence, India’s grand strategy has changed and progressed based on the nation’s experiences in many key events. C. Raja Mohan writes that “nonalignment...has been widely seen as the singular feature of India’s foreign policy since Independence,” and experts continue to debate the role this core ideology should have on Indian strategy today.<sup>28</sup> Ample experts, including the respected Henry Kissinger, have applauded this tactic as a wise choice that allowed India to wield greater influence than it would have as a secondary ally on either superpower’s side.<sup>29</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru conceived of the nonalignment policy, and Tanham argues that he pursued this idea to avoid entrapment in the great-power rivalries.<sup>30</sup> Mohan expands nonalignment’s importance even further in that he argues it offered India the best avenue to promote its diplomatic stance on the world stage.<sup>31</sup> As the policy of nonalignment progressed into the international

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<sup>26</sup> Cohen, 8.

<sup>27</sup> Stephen P. Cohen and Sunil Dasgupta, *Arming Without Aiming* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institute Press, 2010).

<sup>28</sup> C. Raja Mohan, *Crossing the Rubicon* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), xv.

<sup>29</sup> Henry Kissinger, *World Order* (New York: Penguin Press, 2014).

<sup>30</sup> Tanham, vi.

<sup>31</sup> Mohan, 37.

nonaligned movement (NAM), India grew into the position of leading newly decolonized nations and raising their collective interests against former colonial powers.<sup>32</sup>

India's leadership in the NAM combined with certain regional military successes led to an increased confidence and expanded desire to wield greater influence in foreign affairs. India's role in the NAM achieved its historic goals of influencing other developing nations and serving as the leading voice for their interests.<sup>33</sup> Additionally, India's ability to successfully spread the NAM also aligned with its desire to spread "Indianness" to the rest of the world. For example, in 1946, Nehru stated, "whatever happens, it will be well for the world if India can make her influence felt...for that influence will always be in favour of peace and against aggression."<sup>34</sup> Here, the idea of spreading "Indianness" had manifested into the idea that India's leadership in the nonaligned strategy would benefit the world at large.

However, simply serving as the mouthpiece for the Third World did not automatically give India the status of a world power. In fact, India's experience as the leader of the NAM showed Indian leaders that they wanted to serve as a writer of the regional order. While Mohan goes on to argue that the NAM gave India only ideological success rather than tangible benefits, S. Keethaponcalan argues that the NAM still holds prominence in the international order of third world states, but their declared objectives have now shifted after the Cold War.<sup>35</sup> Additionally, India's success in helping divide its historic rival Pakistan in the 1971 war over East Pakistan also reaffirmed the belief that India should be the preeminent regional power. Sisson and Rose argue that the victory in Bangladesh serves as one of the most obvious examples of the manifestation of India's greater strategic goals because Mrs. Gandhi wanted India to be recognized as a "major

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<sup>32</sup> Mohan, 37.

<sup>33</sup> Rajen Harshe, "India's Non-Alignment: An Attempt at Conceptual Reconstruction," *Economic and Political Weekly* 25, no. 7/8 (February 1990): 399–401, [https://www.jstor.org/stable/4395968?seq=1#metadata\\_info\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/4395968?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents); Mohan, 29–33.

<sup>34</sup> Jaswant Singh, *Defending India* (Bangalore: MacMillian India LTD, 1999), 46–47.

<sup>35</sup> Mohan, 31; S. I. Keethaponcalan, "Reshaping the Non-Aligned Movement: Challenges and Vision," *Bandung: Journal of the Global South* 3, no.4 (October 2016) <https://bandungjournal.springeropen.com/articles/10.1186/s40728-016-0032-3>.

Asian power—not just a South Asian power—and a victory over Pakistan was seen as a contribution to this objective.”<sup>36</sup>

Overall, expert opinion concludes that the nonaligned strategy has both positively and negatively affected Indian strategy today. Mohan argues that leaders after Nehru skewed the idea of nonalignment into being too idealistic and calling for a bloc of Third World nations where were nonaligned.<sup>37</sup> He states that this idea directly went against Nehru’s vision of India committing to nonalignment and not belonging to a part of a bloc at all.<sup>38</sup> Several experts now write that certain Indian leaders have let the legacy of nonalignment hold them back from a more progressive strategy better geared towards India’s current position and potential.<sup>39</sup> In fact, some write that the influence of nonalignment drove a substantial divide through Indian politicians.<sup>40</sup> Mohan writes that Indian officials struggled to improve the nonalignment policy due to the conflicting coalitions in domestic politics. Opposing political groups consistently claimed that India was “deviating from its past foreign policy benchmarks” each time someone would suggest a new strategy moving forward.<sup>41</sup>

After the Cold War, Indian leaders faced a major shift in the international order as the breakdown of bipolar power competition seemingly dissolved the importance of the NAM. Mohan states that fundamental changes in foreign policy “take place only when there is a revolutionary change either at home or in the world,” which is exactly what India faced with the fall of the Soviet Union.<sup>42</sup> With its strongest partner now in shambles, India

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<sup>36</sup> Richard Sisson and Leo F. Rose, *War and Secession: Pakistan, India, and the Creation of Bangladesh* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 208.

<sup>37</sup> Mohan, 39.

<sup>38</sup> Mohan, 39.

<sup>39</sup> See, for example: Sumit Ganguly, “India After Nonalignment,” *Foreign Affairs*, September 19, 2016, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/india/2016-09-19/india-after-nonalignment>; Raju G. C. Thomas, “Nonalignment and Indian security: Nehru’s rationale and legacy,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 2, no. 2, (January 2008): 153–171, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402397908437019>.

<sup>40</sup> Ganguly, “India After Nonalignment.”

<sup>41</sup> Mohan, 32.

<sup>42</sup> Mohan, xiii.

needed to make a new strategy to maintain its power without completely rejecting its commitment to nonalignment and its position in the NAM.<sup>43</sup> Shyam and Mohan agree that after the Cold War, the major players in Indian policy remained divided on whether they thought the nonalignment policy should change or stay.<sup>44</sup> Across the board, Indian leaders realized that nonalignment would no longer cover India's strategic concerns, but they struggled to devise a suitable alternative.

Narasimha Rao led the deconstruction of the old world of nonalignment despite the opposing nostalgia of the past. Although Mohan praises his work in leading India toward a better future, he adds that leftists still criticized the change in foreign policy as departing the days of consensus on nonalignment.<sup>45</sup> This opposing side also believed getting closer with the West would show imperialist tendencies and touted the prior relationship with the Soviet Union as more progressive and independent.<sup>46</sup> The special relationship with the Soviet Union was not a formal alliance and therefore maintained India's strategic autonomy while also granting them major material benefits.<sup>47</sup> Rajagopalan explains how Indian officials today worry that such a relationship would not be possible with Western powers who would not be as willing to compromise.<sup>48</sup> For example, certain Indian experts recognize that their capacity to increase power would benefit from a special partnership with the United States, but they warn that American and Indian interests differ too much to come to such an agreement.<sup>49</sup> In this sense, Indian leaders will not give up aspects of their own autonomy in order to engage in these mutually beneficial partnerships.

India's economic globalization in the 1990s and nuclear transition also precipitated major changes in strategy and foreign policy. Saran explains how India's closed economy

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<sup>43</sup> Mohan, 33.

<sup>44</sup> Saran, 31; Mohan, 38.

<sup>45</sup> Mohan, 33.

<sup>46</sup> Mohan, 33.

<sup>47</sup> Saran, 33; Ramesh Thakur, "India and the Soviet Union: Conjunctions and Disjunctions of Interests," *Asian Survey* 31, no. 9 (Sep. 1991) 826–830, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2645298>.

<sup>48</sup> Rajesh Rajagopalan, "India's Strategic Choices: China and the Balance of Power in Asia," *Carnegie India*, September 14, 2017, 10, <https://libguides.nps.edu/citation/chicago-nb#magazine>.

<sup>49</sup> Rajagopalan, 11–13.

after independence had hurt relations with the surrounding region, but that the opening of trade and relations in the 1990s opened up new avenues for stronger relationships and gave Indian leaders greater political confidence overall.<sup>50</sup> Cohen outlines how acquiring economic power allowed India to begin a major military buildup as well.<sup>51</sup> Mohan argues that the economic liberalization helped India see the benefit of increased partnerships.<sup>52</sup> He states that India saw certain partnerships as a means to improve its “global positions and [gain] leverage in its relations with other great powers.”<sup>53</sup> Mohan goes on to explain that India’s pursuit and success of developing nuclear weapons successfully shifted the internal political balance in favor of realists and ended the supremacy of Nehruvians who still held onto the legacy of nonalignment.<sup>54</sup>

As India has progressed into the 21st century, the main strategic concern has centered on maintaining preeminence in the subcontinent by countering China’s rising influence and resolving the ongoing Pakistan problem. Authors like Richard Wu write that India is greatly concerned with Chinese encroachment in the Indian Ocean with the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) that has opened up market and transport systems to India’s neighbors.<sup>55</sup> Saran writes that India cannot compel its neighbors or China to cease such deals, but that it must build a counter presence superior to China’s.<sup>56</sup> He hypothesizes that India’s security concerns both with China and Pakistan can be resolved if India encourages its neighbors to have a stake in India’s interest and capabilities.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Saran, 45.

<sup>51</sup> Cohen, 6.

<sup>52</sup> C. Raja Mohan, “India and the Balance of Power,” *Foreign Affairs* 85, (Jul.-Aug., 2006), <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/asia/2006-07-01/india-and-balance-power>

<sup>53</sup> C. Raja Mohan, “India and the Balance of Power.”

<sup>54</sup> Mohan, *Crossing the Rubicon*, 27.

<sup>55</sup> Richard W. Hu, “China’s ‘One Belt One Road’ Strategy,” *China Report* 53, no. 2 (May 2017: 107–109), <https://doi.org/10.1177/0009445517696619>.

<sup>56</sup> Saran, 45.

<sup>57</sup> Saran, 45.

#### **D. POTENTIAL EXPLANATIONS AND HYPOTHESES**

The primary hypothesis draws on Tanham's work who hypothesized that Indian leaders do indeed have a grand strategy based on a modern perception of the mandala system.<sup>58</sup> Specifically, this project analyzes India's grand strategy through the framing of two schools: the Indira Doctrine and Gujral Doctrine. Current analysis of the Indira Doctrine suggests that India projects its power focus on strategic outreach and ignores relations and instability in its core and immediate neighborhood. A grand strategy based in the Gujral Doctrine hypothesizes that in order for India to achieve strategic outreach beyond its borders, its leaders should give equal weight to conflict resolution and develop trust with neighbors to assume regional leadership. This research tests these hypotheses about India's capacity to achieve its strategic goals against Tanham's strategic mandala system.

#### **E. RESEARCH DESIGN**

This project analyzes the two discourses of grand strategy explained above by analyzing how they address India's strategic concerns in each circle of its Tanham's mandala system. Through research of India's strategy and capacity with regards to the strategic circles, this thesis concludes whether India is on track to become a great power and will continue its emergence or if it will remain clouded by obstacles.

This project focuses on the articulation of Indian strategy, its primary influences, and the strategic challenges. The research provides a qualitative analysis of existing literature and synthesizes expert opinions regarding whether India can achieve its foreign policy goals. This research compares the articulated strategic goals as they relate to the different strategic circles. These goals are then compared to India's material strength and institutional capacity to achieve them. The answers given by this research will be key in educating any country that has an interest in the security of South Asia and the Indian Ocean Region.

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<sup>58</sup> Tanham, 24; Cohen, 9–13.

## **F. THESIS OVERVIEW AND CHAPTER OUTLINE**

Each chapter of this research builds to the conclusion and explains the best grand strategy for India to take today. The second chapter sets up the strategic conundrum this nation and its leaders currently face given recent geopolitical and socioeconomic factors. The third chapter analyzes the Indira Doctrine in each circle of Tanham's strategic spheres of influence to see how this strategy positively and negatively influenced India's foreign policy. The fourth chapter tests the Gujral Doctrine in the same analytical framework using each of Tanham's strategic circle. The fifth chapter analyzes India's current strategic concerns in each strategic circle and outlines how policies in both the Indira and Gujral Doctrines play a role in devising the best grand strategy for India. In this way, the research serves as a modern take on India's interests and obstacles in all circles of its grand strategy. By looking at the interests and obstacles of each strategic sphere of influence, this thesis concludes with an informed analysis of whether India has the wherewithal to achieve its goals and the role potential strategies play in its success.

## II. STRATEGIC CONUNDRUM

Indian leaders face a key strategic conundrum. As India's power has risen since independence, the nation's capabilities have also increased and allowed the nation to achieve dominance in the region and set its sights towards achieving global power. In this way, Indian leaders have much to celebrate. The globalization of the economy, expansion of the military, and forward-thinking initiatives of certain leaders have propelled India into the international spotlight. However, this progressive nation still suffers from certain key strategic dilemmas. Indian leaders have articulated the desire for their nation to have global power, but continue to struggle to deal with issues domestically, regionally, and internationally. In the face of rising power and strategic dilemmas, critics have chastised Indian leaders for failing to devise a coherent grand strategy to accomplish its overarching goals.<sup>59</sup> Although Indian capabilities have improved, leaders in New Delhi struggle to find a way forward that will overcome strategic obstacles and achieve foreign policy goals.

Colonial rule placed certain obstacles on India that initially inhibited growth, but since independence, leaders in New Delhi have found ways to overcome many of these challenges. C. Raja Mohan states that India faced three key strategic dilemmas at the end of the 20th century: a closed economy, consequences of the nonalignment strategy after the Cold War, and the negative legacies of Partition.<sup>60</sup> Altogether, the closed economy and strategy of nonalignment hindered India's ability to forge strong relationships with the great powers of the world. The consistent tension with Pakistan dating back to Partition also kept Indian leaders mired in territorial conflicts in such areas as Kashmir and the Siachen Glacier. India's ability either to remedy or to adapt to these issues has directly affected its potential to rise as a great power. This chapter outlines how the nation has responded to these challenges and explains what obstacles remain for India's strategy.

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<sup>59</sup> See, for example: Ashley J. Tellis et al., "Nonalignment 1.0: A Foreign and strategic Policy for India in the Twenty First Century," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, March 12, 2012, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2012/03/12/nonalignment-2.0-foreign-and-strategic-policy-for-india-in-twenty-first-century-event-3587>.

<sup>60</sup> Mohan, *Crossing the Rubicon*, i.-12.

First, India's ability to transition from a closed to open economy in the 1990s introduced the country to greater globalization and elevated its foreign policy goals. During this era, India was able to overcome many of the economic challenges it faced after independence. Following British rule, state socialism dominated the Indian economy which both stunted its growth and hurt relations with the surrounding region.<sup>61</sup> India's economy during this time accounted for 0.1 percent of world trade in the 1980s, which gave the nation zero maneuverability in the international system.<sup>62</sup> A closed economy shielded newly independent India from a reliance on foreign partners but simultaneously left the country out of key global markets. After an economic downturn in 1991, Indian leaders shifted to a liberal capitalist system, and the positive results are irrefutable. Annual growth rates increased from 4.4 percent in the 1970s and 1980s to 5.5 percent in the 1990s–2000s and then later to 7.1 percent after 2010. The open economy also provided India the opportunity to globalize its relations.<sup>63</sup>

As India entered foreign markets, the nation simultaneously gained new avenues for stronger relationships with countries near and far.<sup>64</sup> For example, Mohan argues that Sino-Indian increased bilateral trade in the 1990s served as a major factor behind improved relations with China.<sup>65</sup> Overall, the open economy elevated India's position in the world and facilitated stronger relationships as its economic power increased. With a more powerful position in the global community, Indian leaders began to set their sights on increasing their power even more.<sup>66</sup> However, they then faced the dilemma of how exactly to use this increasing wealth to expand international influence. Hoyt explains how India's economic growth in the 1990s and increased military strength positioned it to be a major

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<sup>61</sup> Mohan, xvi.

<sup>62</sup> Mohan, 260.

<sup>63</sup> Poonam Gupta and Florian Blum, "India's Remarkably Robust and Resilient Growth Story," The World Bank, last modified April, 2018, <http://blogs.worldbank.org/endpovertyinsouthasia/india-s-remarkably-robust-and-resilient-growth-story>.

<sup>64</sup> Mohan, xvi.

<sup>65</sup> Mohan, "India and the Balance of Power."

<sup>66</sup> Mohan, *Crossing the Rubicon*, 37–38; Mohan, "India and the Balance of Power," 18–21; Cohen, *Emerging Power India*, 25–34.

actor in the international system at the turn of the 21st century.<sup>67</sup> However, he goes on to explain that the drivers of change may be many, “but it remains to be seen which tips India from passive regional power to a more assertive global one.”<sup>68</sup>

The military buildup during the late 1900s also gave New Delhi the confidence to expand the nation’s foreign policy goals.<sup>69</sup> However, India’s military modernization has not been a smooth process. On the one hand, shifting national security priorities facilitated a military expansion in the 1970s and 1980s that augmented India’s military capabilities. Although the 1990s brought new wealth, national security threats along India’s borders had warranted a heightened focus on the military even before India boomed economically. Specifically, after India suffered embarrassing military defeats to the Chinese on the northern border in 1962 and then Pakistan tested territorial claims in Jammu and Kashmir only three years later, then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi started on a long military improvement process.<sup>70</sup> In total, the military’s annual budget increased from U.S. \$9 billion in 1970 to U.S. \$12 billion in 1980.<sup>71</sup> The expanded budget brought about new tanks, artillery, missiles, and air defense systems among other technological advances.<sup>72</sup>

By the end of the 20th century, the Indian military had grown into a globally respected force, but despite these successes, India’s defense structure has been strongly criticized for its inefficient acquisitions process and flawed domestic production system. In terms of devising a grand strategy, inconsistent military modernization processes present a major issue. For example, military officials have stated that the Indian government is inefficient in improving military capability because political leaders lack a coherent

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<sup>67</sup> Timothy D. Hoyt, “India’s Grand Strategy: Some Preliminary Thoughts,” *SITC-NWC 2012 Policy Briefs*, (January 2012): 1, <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/42g7h9zc>.

<sup>68</sup> Hoyt, 1.

<sup>69</sup> Mohan, “India and the Balance of Power;” Cohen, “Emerging Power India,” 58–61.

<sup>70</sup> Rajat Ganguly, “India’s Military: Evolution, Modernisation and Transformation,” *India Quarterly*, 71, no.3 (August 2015): 187–205, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0974928415584021>.

<sup>71</sup> “SIPRI Military Expenditure Database” Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), accessed January 15, 2019, [http://www.sipri.org/research/armaments/milex/milex\\_database](http://www.sipri.org/research/armaments/milex/milex_database).

<sup>72</sup> Ganguly, 193.

strategy to guide the acquisitions process.<sup>73</sup> To make matters worse, military officials are rarely if ever involved in the government's strategic planning, which renders adequate budget and acquisitions difficult to achieve. Due to the disconnect between policy makers and military officials, the Indian defense budget has been criticized as "arming without aiming" in that the nation's increased capital may be used for military goods, but not the materials that military officials feel are necessary for India's security and power projection.<sup>74</sup> Stephen Cohen and Sunil Dasgupta, describe the improvements and problems that persist in the Indian military best when they state:

The Indian government has been more successful in expanding the military, creating new commands, agencies, and positions, and streamlining procurement; it has not been able to change spending priorities, ensure coordination across agencies, alter deep-seated attitudes toward private participation, and deliver transparency in decision making.<sup>75</sup>

Several experts have argued that India's desire to serve as the peacekeeper in the Indian Ocean region has driven the military modernization process.<sup>76</sup> While leaders in New Delhi may claim they want peace in the region, their actions have also shown that they will intervene in affairs with smaller neighbors when it is within Indian interest.<sup>77</sup> Hagerty argues that in the second half of the 20th century, India did not want external influences in South Asia and that a request for outside help by a South Asian state would be seen in New Delhi as inherently anti-Indian.<sup>78</sup> Jean-Alphonse Bernard argues that India's approach to regional conflicts represented a sort of Monroe Doctrine in the area.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> "Growing pains: India's drive for modernisation makes slow progress," *Janes Defence Weekly*, 2018, [https://www.janes.com/images/assets/022/78022/Growing\\_pains\\_Indias\\_drive\\_for\\_modernisation\\_makes\\_slow\\_progress.pdf](https://www.janes.com/images/assets/022/78022/Growing_pains_Indias_drive_for_modernisation_makes_slow_progress.pdf)[https://www.janes.com/images/assets/022/78022/Growing\\_pains\\_Indias\\_drive\\_for\\_modernisation\\_makes\\_slow\\_progress.pdf](https://www.janes.com/images/assets/022/78022/Growing_pains_Indias_drive_for_modernisation_makes_slow_progress.pdf)

<sup>74</sup> Gill, 158.

<sup>75</sup> Cohen and Dasgupta, 29.

<sup>76</sup> For example, see Tanham, vii.

<sup>77</sup> Devin T. Hagerty, "India's Regional Security Doctrine," *Asian Survey* 31, no. 4 (1991): 358. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2645389>.

<sup>78</sup> Hagerty, 351.

<sup>79</sup> Jean-Alphonse Bernard and Michel Pochoy, *L'ambition de L'Inde* (Paris: Foundation pour les etudes de defense nationale, 1988), 32.

Indian actions in certain regional conflicts have supported the idea that its leaders consider their nation to be the predominant force in the subcontinent. For example, India's direct support of the new state of Bangladesh in 1971 served as a keystone event in India's ability to shape regional outcomes based on its interests. Sisson and Rose argue that then-Prime Minister Indira Gandhi wanted India to be recognized as a "major Asian power" not just a South Asian power and that a "victory over Pakistan was seen as a contribution to this objective."<sup>80</sup> Additionally, India sent troops into Sri Lanka to intervene in a sectarian civil conflict in the 1980s. Although Indian officials maintained an advising role at first due to domestic ethnic sympathies for the Tamil movement, Indian troops eventually deployed to Sri Lanka to keep the peace for a span of three years.<sup>81</sup>

Overall, BJP political leader Jaswant Singh summarizes India's military involvements and their consequences best when he argues that India was "inexpertly steered" in the 50 years after independence due to the lack of forward thinking among its leaders.<sup>82</sup> However, he makes an important point that India engaged in 32 military operations over 50 years, which would test the capabilities and resolve of any country.<sup>83</sup> Although he applauds the resilience of the nation in surviving these tests, he notes that throughout this time, India's leaders erred in that "national interests were often not subserved, quite often not even properly assessed."<sup>84</sup> Singh's arguments show that Indian leaders developed a heightened sense of confidence after surviving so many hardships as a young independent nation, but that a lack of strategy has substantially hindered the nation's potential growth.

India's development of nuclear weapons added a significant dimension to the development of a grand strategy. Nuclearization for India came as a blessing and a curse. Before developing nuclear weapons, Mohan argues that India remained trapped in a

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<sup>80</sup> Sisson and Rose, 208.

<sup>81</sup> Jaswant Singh, *Defending India* (London: Macmillan Press LTD, 1999), 195–200.

<sup>82</sup> Singh, 144.

<sup>83</sup> Singh, 144.

<sup>84</sup> Singh, 144–145.

subcontinental box because the Pakistanis were also developing nuclear weapons.<sup>85</sup> To make matters worse, China also supported Islamabad in its nuclear endeavor. Therefore, nuclear weapons allowed India to minimize the power gap between New Delhi and Beijing and simultaneously continue a power dominance over Pakistan.<sup>86</sup>

New Delhi's ability to acquire nuclear weapons also elevated its position in the global community and greatly affected its strategic outlook. For example, the United States had opposed India's nuclear tests, but after New Delhi defied American wishes and successfully tested in Pokhran, Washington treated India more seriously. For example, Strobe Talbott claims that the Indians intentionally did not compromise when the U.S. denounced Indian nuclear tests in order to prove their resolve and boost their national self-esteem and importance.<sup>87</sup> Overall, Mohan claims that "post-Pokhran diplomacy ended India's extended reluctance to discuss difficult security issues with major powers" and brought much-needed self-assurance to India's foreign policy.<sup>88</sup> Nuclear weapons may have increased tensions among the South Asian powers, but they also brought a higher level of legitimacy to India's strategic goals.

Nuclearization added a new dimension to India's defense posture and increased the need for a strong grand strategy for how to implement these new weapons. Ganguly criticizes several key works on India's nuclear strategy and writes that "the lack of systematic defense planning for the acquisition of a nuclear weapons capability is not out of step with India's overall record of formulating a viable national security strategy."<sup>89</sup> Here, Ganguly criticizes India's "haphazard quest" for nuclear weapons and compares India's path to nuclearization to the "chaotic features of its political system and decision-making process."<sup>90</sup> These issues also partly derive from the flawed civil-military

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<sup>85</sup> Mohan, *Crossing the Rubicon*, 12.

<sup>86</sup> Mohan, 12.

<sup>87</sup> Strobe Talbott, *Engaging India* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2004), 5.

<sup>88</sup> Mohan, 27

<sup>89</sup> Sumit Ganguly, "Explaining Indian nuclear policy," *Current History*, (December 1999), 439.

<sup>90</sup> Ganguly, 439.

relationship in India's strategic planning system. However, the core problem lies in India's overall inability to develop a coherent strategy to utilize its capacity and project power. Nuclear weapons added more complexities to the strategic dilemma in that New Delhi now possessed weapons indicative of a great power but lacked a grand strategy for how to use them.

Despite ample criticisms, Indian leaders have started to take steps to outline a more forward-thinking foreign policy and grand strategy for the nation. Specifically, Indian leaders have begun engaging more with Western powers, which demonstrates a progression past nonalignment. Tanham and other scholars argue that India will enter closer partnerships when its interests necessitate it, like when India collaborated with the Soviet Union during the Cold War.<sup>91</sup> As India's influence has risen, Mohan claims that India's political choices now have "global consequences" and that "alliance formation and balancing are tools in the kits of all great powers."<sup>92</sup> These assertions would lead critics to believe that as India's power rises, its leaders would become more open to the potential benefit of engaging in alliances. In the 1990s, after economic globalization and successful nuclear tests, Indian leaders started opening up to the idea of multilateral diplomacy, just as Tanham hypothesized.<sup>93</sup> Mohan concurs that as India began calling for a multipolar world and stronger international relations, this reformed policy "seemed in many ways to replace the past emphasis on nonalignment as the core concept of Indian foreign policy."<sup>94</sup>

In 2012, Indian leadership published the Nonalignment 2.0 policy and Ashley Tellis and other experts have argued that this document defines a new version of nonalignment that includes active engagement with other powers. This new conception of nonalignment seeks to "[enhance] [India's] strategic autonomy in an uncertain world."<sup>95</sup> One notable

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<sup>91</sup> Tanham, 42–43.

<sup>92</sup> Mohan, "India and the Balance of Power."

<sup>93</sup> Mohan, *Crossing the Rubicon*, 47.

<sup>94</sup> Mohan, 52.

<sup>95</sup> Ashley J. Tellis et. al., "Nonalignment 1.0: A Foreign and strategic Policy for India in the Twenty First Century," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, March 12, 2012, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2012/03/12/nonalignment-2.0-foreign-and-strategic-policy-for-india-in-twenty-first-century-event-3587>

example of India's engagement with the West includes the three foundational agreements proposed between India and the United States. These agreements successfully increase logistics coordination and communications between the two militaries without a formal alliance.<sup>96</sup> Indian leaders have signed all three agreements which shows current officials are becoming more willing to compromise.

Despite improvements in both global and regional policies, many experts cite the lack of a strategy with Pakistan as a major obstacle to India's grand strategy. Mohan explains how India has progressed substantially in two of its primary strategic obstacles by globalizing the economy and reaching out to new partners rather than remain nonaligned.<sup>97</sup> However, he and other scholars concur that Indian leaders continue to face a key strategic problem of how to deal with Pakistan.<sup>98</sup> The unresolved Pakistani dispute continues to threaten India's existence and distracts New Delhi from formulating a sound grand strategy. The two nations have yet to agree on a concrete border in the Kashmir province where a Line of Control (LoC) currently exists, and arms exchanges along the debated border in the Siachen glacier region are common as well. Indians continue to suspect Pakistan of sponsoring terrorist attacks in Indian lands, but Islamabad's development of tactical nuclear weapons (TNWs) complicates the development of a sound Indian response to these attacks. Experts concur that India has no viable response to Pakistan's use of proxy warfare under the shadow of nuclear weapons.<sup>99</sup> India has leaned toward a "Cold Start" doctrine where military leaders have increased conventional weapons capability in order to quickly seize parts of Pakistani territory without crossing the nuclear threshold.<sup>100</sup> In

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<sup>96</sup> For more information, see: Mark Rosen and Douglas Jackson, "The U.S.-India Defense Relationship: Putting the Foundational Agreements in Perspective," CNA, February 2017, [https://www.cna.org/CNA\\_files/PDF/DRM-2016-U-013926-Final2.pdf](https://www.cna.org/CNA_files/PDF/DRM-2016-U-013926-Final2.pdf).

<sup>97</sup> Mohan, *Crossing the Rubicon*, xvii–xxii.

<sup>98</sup> Mohan, "India and the Balance of Power," 17–32.

<sup>99</sup> Manjeet Pardesi, "India's Conventional Military Strategy," in *Oxford Handbook of India's National Security* ed. Nicolas Blarel, Sumit Ganguly, and Manjeet Pardesi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018). 2.

<sup>100</sup> Zafar Jaspal, "Tactical Nuclear Weapon: Deterrence Stability Between India and Pakistan," US-Pakistan Strategic Partnership: A Track II Dialogue, September 18–19, 2011, <https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=709853>.

this way, Indian leaders would use their conventional military superiority to punish Pakistan if they were to sponsor an attack in India without resorting to an all-out nuclear war. Overall, India's obsession with regional superiority and Pakistan's status-quo oriented tactics inherently counter each other and result in consistently high tensions in the region.<sup>101</sup>

In the early 1990s, George Tanham recognized critics' claims that India lacked a coherent grand strategy, but instead suggested that its leaders are indeed formulating a path forward based on concentric spheres of influence. In this way, he believes Indian officials conceptualize India's strategic concerns in terms of varying levels of circles that emanate from the state itself. Tanham draws on the traditional mandala system derived from early Indian history to further illustrate this way of thinking about Indian strategy. In the core of this strategic model lies the Indian subcontinent itself and includes domestic concerns and border issues.<sup>102</sup> The next circle of strategic concern is known as the periphery and encompasses the region surrounding India, which includes Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, China, and others. The farthest circle of the mandala system includes the extended neighborhood and global concerns, especially major world powers. Using this method, Tanham suggests that Indian leaders should analyze Indian strategy by first looking at issues domestically, then in the immediate neighborhood, and lastly in the larger global international system.<sup>103</sup> However, simply addressing problems in each of these areas does not generate a coherent grand strategy for India.

In this context, two prominent schools of thought emerged in India's history that addressed these strategic concerns in different ways. As explained throughout this chapter, Indian leaders face a strategic conundrum where they desire global power and parity with China, but struggle to overcome regional disputes and an obsession with Pakistan. One school of thought, originated under Indira Gandhi, suggests that India should prioritize projecting its global power over solving regional disputes as a means of confronting China

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<sup>101</sup> Jaspal, "Tactical Nuclear Weapon: Deterrence Stability Between India and Pakistan."

<sup>102</sup> Tanham, 23–34.

<sup>103</sup> Tanham, 23–24.

and achieving power parity. To pursue this goal, the Indira Doctrine also prescribes a harsh consolidation of power at the core. The other school of thought, known as the Gujral Doctrine, calls for a strategy that resolves issues with neighbors first so that they have a stake in India's rise to global power. Both schools of thought provide constructive aspects for India's grand strategy and contain important implications for India's future. These strategies help educate current strategists in New Delhi, and their key weaknesses in addressing contemporary strategic concerns are addressed in the following chapters.

### III. INDIRA DOCTRINE

In order to progress past India's strategic conundrum, leaders in New Delhi have historically sought out different plans to increase their nation's power. Although contemporary literature suggests several schools of thought regarding potential Indian strategies, this chapter focuses on the strategy known as the Indira Doctrine.<sup>104</sup> Formulated through Indira Gandhi during her time as Prime Minister, this doctrine summarizes how her strategic policies could achieve global power status for India. In short, the Indira Doctrine projects a realist strategy and seeks to increase India's power into the extended neighborhood and beyond.

During Mrs. Gandhi's time, the doctrine guided her ability to solidify India's hegemonic position in South Asia.<sup>105</sup> The Indira Doctrine represented a way of conceptualizing India's power not only under Mrs. Gandhi's leadership, but also during her son Rajiv Gandhi's premiership. The doctrine overall maintained significance through different governments and facilitated India's ability to increase power over multiple generations. However, some experts have also criticized the heavy-handedness of certain policies adopted during Indira Gandhi's time because these actions mishandled domestic issues and alienated India's closer neighbors.<sup>106</sup> Given the lasting importance of the Indira Doctrine, this chapter will analyze this strategy to determine its continued relevance for India's grand strategy today. Such research is significant because exploring the ways that specific strategies have guided Indian actions in the past can reveal how New Delhi is currently formulating its strategy today.

Despite the critical consensus that New Delhi has lacked a coherent grand strategy, the Indira Doctrine presents a viable starting point given that many of its policies were

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<sup>104</sup> For more information on strategic schools of thought, see Kanti Bajpai, Sair Basit, and V. Krishnappa, *India's Grand Strategy History, Theory, Cases* (New Delhi: Routledge, 2014), 1–10.

<sup>105</sup> "Indira Gandhi and the Nation Building," Indian National Congress, November 28, 2016, <https://www.inc.in/en/congress-sandesh/tribute/indira-gandhi-and-the-nation-building>.

<sup>106</sup> "Indira Gandhi: Elections and Domestic Policy," [http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/133087/7/07\\_chapter%202.pdf](http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/133087/7/07_chapter%202.pdf)

indicative of an overarching strategy. Such experts as Raju G. C. Thomas criticize the Indian policymaking community for failing to direct efforts around a central grand strategy, but he also agrees that policies under the Indira Doctrine substantially contributed to a potential solution. Thomas writes, “changes in the Indian strategic environment over the last thirty years have produced significant shifts in Indian defense policies....however, these changes have rarely, if ever, been officially assessed and communicated through strategic doctrines.”<sup>107</sup> Despite his criticisms, Thomas suggests that in the past, the Indira Doctrine represented a central strategy and therefore the lessons learned from Indira and Rajiv Gandhi’s actions serve as an important place to start when looking at potential strategies to guide India today.

This chapter outlines how the Indira Doctrine and its realist tendencies addressed India’s strategic concerns. The research analyzes the Indira Doctrine’s strengths and weaknesses in each circle of Tanham’s strategic mandala system: the core, periphery, and extended neighborhood.<sup>108</sup> This information reveals whether this doctrine presents a viable grand strategy for India given the current challenges the country faces. The chapter begins with the background of the Indira Doctrine and then outlines how this strategy influenced Indian actions in each strategic sphere of influence.

## **A. BACKGROUND**

When Indira Gandhi first became the prime minister of India in 1966, she assumed office with a hard-handed, realist stance towards grand strategy. She recognized power as the crucial determinant in international relations and took a pragmatic approach to increase the tangible aspects of India’s power.<sup>109</sup> Mansingh explains how a realist grand strategy considers the state the basis of analysis, focuses national interest on increasing power, and believes that actors make rational choices based on their state’s place in an anarchic international structure.<sup>110</sup> In a similar tone, John Mearsheimer explains that international

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<sup>107</sup> Thomas, 14.

<sup>108</sup> For more information, see Tanham, iv–v.

<sup>109</sup> Surjit Mansingh, *India’s Search for Power* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1984), 34.

<sup>110</sup> Mansingh, 2.

relations center around a continuing struggle for power where a state maintains security by becoming the most powerful actor in a regional or global area.<sup>111</sup> With these two variations of realist strategy in mind, Mansingh argues that Indira Gandhi embodied a certain type of “hard realism” in which she prioritized the role of tangible power and underestimated the importance of institutions and ideas.<sup>112</sup> Above all else, she sought to increase her nation’s power in the region in order to enhance India’s international status.

Indira Gandhi developed her realist policies in response to the security situation her country faced. In this way, she furthered Indian strategic thought past the historic reliance on Nehru’s nonalignment so that she could adequately respond to changing world power dynamics. Ganguly writes about the plethora of domestic problems Mrs. Gandhi faced when she assumed office, including drought, famine, national debt, ethnic violence, and decreased industrial output.<sup>113</sup> Additionally, she confronted an ever-increasing Pakistani threat and rising Chinese influence. In fact, “growing strategic ties between China and Pakistan also meant that India had to be militarily prepared to fight a joint Sino-Pak offensive,”<sup>114</sup> so Mrs. Gandhi dealt with ample domestic problems in India’s core while simultaneously confronting security threats along the border. Additionally, Mrs. Gandhi drew on India’s legacy of using military means to settle internal issues. After Partition, Indian officials utilized the Indian Army to facilitate Partition in three princely states—Hyderabad, Junagadh, and Kashmir.<sup>115</sup> Although Hyderabad and Junagadh were eventually absorbed into India, Kashmir continues to simmer with separatist desires now 70 years after Partition and only becomes more complicated as Islamabad fuels the

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<sup>111</sup> Surjit Mansingh, “Indira Gandhi’s Foreign Policy: Hard Realism?” *The Oxford Handbook of Indian Foreign Policy*, July 2015, 2, <https://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198743538.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780198743538-e-8>.

<sup>112</sup> Mansingh, 8.

<sup>113</sup> Rajat Ganguly, “India’s Military: Evolution, Modernisation and Transformation,” *India Quarterly* 71, no. 3 (August 2015), <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0974928415584021>.

<sup>114</sup> Ganguly, “India’s Military: Evolution, Modernisation and Transformation.”

<sup>115</sup> Daniel P. Marston, “The Indian Army, Partition, and the Punjab Boundary Force,” *War in History* 16, no. 4 (November 2009): 469–505.

separatist sentiments.<sup>116</sup> Overall, Indira Gandhi utilized the Indian military and hard-handed domestic policies to continue India's consolidation of internal power.

The Indira Doctrine influenced Indian strategic thought during India Gandhi's time as Prime Minister and decades after. Though never officially announced as the grand strategy for India, certain key policies and events demonstrate the doctrine's role in India's strategic actions in the core, periphery, and extended neighborhood. Mrs. Gandhi's policies have continued to influence Indian strategic thinking because they were realist in nature and focused on increasing India's relative power position both in the region and the greater international community. Mrs. Gandhi's strategic goals relate to Tanham's assertions in that she prioritized India's rise to global power in the farthest circles of the mandala system over solving issues in the core and periphery.

## **B. CORE**

Mrs. Gandhi sought to increase India's power in order to influence global politics in the farthest circle of Tanham's model. To accomplish this long-term goal, Mrs. Gandhi's strategy involved the consolidation of India's domestic power in the core of its strategic sphere of influence.<sup>117</sup> This "urge for concentration of power" resulted in increased government control in the closest circles of Tanham's mandala system: the Indian subcontinent and its closest neighbors.<sup>118</sup> Under this strategy, she adopted harsh domestic initiatives. Specifically, she based her internal actions on an "assertive nationalism" which she adopted "as an ideology to mobilise [sic] and contain the emerging mass force" of ethnic groups throughout India.<sup>119</sup> She embodied a "no nonsense" attitude towards both foreign powers and ethnic and religious minorities in India.<sup>120</sup> Her high-handed policies

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<sup>116</sup> Marston, 495–505.

<sup>117</sup> Balraj Puri, "Era of Indira Ganhi," *Economic and Political Weekly* 20, No.4 (January 1985): 148, <https://www-jstor-org.libproxy.nps.edu/stable/i401788>.

<sup>118</sup> Puri, 148.

<sup>119</sup> Puri, 149.

<sup>120</sup> Puri, 149.

were geared towards increasing India's power overall, but they generated mixed success and in some instances incited separatist movements.

In order to consolidate power, Mrs. Gandhi put down ethnic and religious insurrections in India with a heavy hand. Beginning in the late 1960s, she responded to a Naxalite uprising in West Bengal with a military response. At the time, the Naxalite movement had gained support as a local Communist Party leader opposed Mrs. Gandhi's economic policies and called for a redistribution of land to the peasants.<sup>121</sup> Many people in West Bengal believed the Indian government had not fairly distributed wealth in the region as the lower castes were forced to give up land to wealthy prospectors from central India.<sup>122</sup> These unsatisfied citizens joined the Communist cause and began killing landowners across the region. Indira Gandhi responded by sending in the Indian Army to crush the Naxal uprising.<sup>123</sup> Mrs. Gandhi's response reflected her willingness to use violence and swift actions to put down domestic issues and maintain central power.

Although Mrs. Gandhi used the military to suppress the Naxalite uprising, anti-government sentiments remained in the region. This trend reveals the weakness in such a heavy-handed attempt at consolidating power. The Naxalite movement turned into a prolonged insurgency into what is now known as the "red corridor" where communist ideology remains.<sup>124</sup> Many years later in 2010, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh cited that the greatest threat to India at that time would come from the Naxalites.<sup>125</sup> The counter productivity of harsh domestic policies not only failed to stop the Naxalite movement but also facilitated its dangerous growth over time.

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<sup>121</sup> Fred Burton and Ben West, "A Closer Look at India's Naxalite Threat," *Stratfor Worldview*, July 8, 2010, <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/closer-look-indias-naxalite-threat#/home/error>.

<sup>122</sup> Burton and West, "A Closer Look at India's Naxalite Threat."

<sup>123</sup> "Indira Gandhi used Army to break Naxals: Retired General," *NDTV*, June 10, 2010, <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/indira-gandhi-used-army-to-break-naxals-retired-general-420397>.

<sup>124</sup> Ayush Manandhar, "The Rise, Fall, and Triumph of South Asian Insurgencies: Part III-India," *Georgetown Public Policy Review*, March 21, 2019, <http://gppreview.com/2019/03/21/rise-fall-triumph-south-asian-insurgencies-part-iii-india/>.

<sup>125</sup> Headlines Today Bureau, "Naxalism Greatest Threat to Internal Security: PM," *IndiaToday*, February 7, 2010, <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/naxalism-greatest-threat-to-internal-security-pm-66750-2010-02-06>.

Mrs. Gandhi took a similarly tough stance in her response to the Sikh uprising. Throughout the 1970s, the Shiromani Akali Dal political party in Punjab gained support among Sikhs and called for an autonomous state separate from India.<sup>126</sup> Mrs. Gandhi dismissed the Akali-led government in 1980 and rejected their separatist demands.<sup>127</sup> In 1984, the conflict escalated when a group of Sikh extremists took over the holy Golden Temple in Amristar.<sup>128</sup> In response, Mrs. Gandhi sent in troops to take the temple back by force, but the conflict turned violent and ended in hundreds of Sikh deaths.<sup>129</sup> Although the military secured the temple, Mrs. Gandhi's actions failed to establish peace and the Sikh uprising only continued and grew in strength.<sup>130</sup> The Sikh population remained enraged with Indira Gandhi's inability to integrate ethnic minorities into the government. The unrest among the Sikh population culminated in the assassination of Mrs. Gandhi herself when her own Sikh bodyguards took her life in 1984.<sup>131</sup>

Although Mrs. Gandhi's assassination held a direct connection to her mishandling of the Sikh crisis, many other Indians were dissatisfied with her actions as well. In 1975, Mrs. Gandhi called the first state of emergency in India's history and subsequently suspended civil liberties and jailed political opponents.<sup>132</sup> Prior to this move, Mrs. Gandhi was criticized for corruption and asked by her opponents to leave office.<sup>133</sup> Once again, in a move to maintain power, Mrs. Gandhi declared the emergency and tried to rid the political realm of her major dissidents. The state of emergency inherently violated India's democratic ideals and further alienated Indians in the nation's core.

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<sup>126</sup> "Akali Sikh Movement," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Akali>

<sup>127</sup> Puri, "Era of Indira Gandhi," 150.

<sup>128</sup> "Indira Gandhi," History.com, August 21, 2018, <https://www.history.com/topics/india/indira-gandhi>.

<sup>129</sup> History.com, "Indira Gandhi"

<sup>130</sup> "Indira Gandhi"

<sup>131</sup> "The Prime Minister of India is Assassinated," History.com, December 13, 2018, <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/the-prime-minister-of-india-is-assassinated>

<sup>132</sup> History.com, "The Prime Minister of India is Assassinated."

<sup>133</sup> "Indira Gandhi convicted of election fraud," History.com, last modified February 26, 2019, <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/indira-gandhi-convicted-of-election-fraud>.

All of these examples combined demonstrate the consequences of Indira Gandhi's heavy-handed policies in India's core. She sought to increase India's total power, but her actions have had a negative effect on India's internal issues over time. One expert explains, "her amoral and undemocratic actions in Kashmir [and] Sikkim were plainly defended on the grounds of national interest."<sup>134</sup> In this way, she "contrasted opposition concern over the threat to democracy with her concern over the threat to national unity," which explains that she prioritized consolidation of power at the core in order to project power outward overall.<sup>135</sup> Her son, Rajiv Gandhi, is even reported to have said, "national unity was more important than drinking water."<sup>136</sup>

Although Indira Gandhi's aggressive domestic policies alienated certain ethnic groups, her strategy did grant her the freedom to exercise nearly complete control over foreign affairs. In this sense, her consolidation of power at India's core increased her ability to project power outward. One expert states that "with Mrs. Gandhi's return to office in January 1980, foreign policy shifted back firmly into the hands of the prime minister," given that her ability to stifle domestic conflicts was done in such a swiftly aggressive manner.<sup>137</sup> However, the harsh domestic policies still contributed to the escalation of ethnic conflicts for years to come. In this way, the Indira Doctrine weakened India's strength in the core over the long term.

### C. PERIPHERY

In order to increase India's power in the international hierarchy, Mrs. Gandhi also sought security through hegemony in the South Asian region.<sup>138</sup> The Indira Doctrine focused on increasing India's power position so that as a regional hegemon, India would achieve a greater strategic role in the next circle of Tanham's model. To achieve this status,

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<sup>134</sup> Puri, 150.

<sup>135</sup> Puri, 150.

<sup>136</sup> Puri, 150.

<sup>137</sup> Walker K. Andersen, "The Domestic Roots of Indian Foreign Policy," *Asian Affairs* 6, no. 3 (1983): 51, [https://www.jstor.org/stable/30172981?seq=7#metadata\\_info\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/30172981?seq=7#metadata_info_tab_contents).

<sup>138</sup> Mansingh, *India's Search for Power*, 5.

Mrs. Gandhi and her son Rajiv involved India in key regional affairs as a means of exerting Indian influence.

Mrs. Gandhi engaged in key actions to undermine Pakistan's power in the region so that India could continue to rise as the clear hegemon in South Asia. For example, in 1971, due to Islamabad's mistreatment of the Bengalis in East Pakistan, 10 million refugees poured into India.<sup>139</sup> Mrs. Gandhi exploited the situation to justify sending Indian troops into the area and forced the Pakistani troops into a surrender.<sup>140</sup> With Pakistani troops pushed back, India oversaw the creation of the independent state of Bangladesh, thus splitting archrival Pakistan in half. With the dismemberment of Pakistan, Mrs. Gandhi enforced India's primacy in the region and the world began to accept India as the predominant power in South Asia.

Despite this victory, Mrs. Gandhi remained hard-pressed in countering Pakistani power even after the war over Bangladesh. In 1984, Mrs. Gandhi approved of Operation Meghdoot which sent Indian troops to occupy the Siachen Glacier, an area left undemarcated north of the disputed LoC of the Kashmir region.<sup>141</sup> This operation demonstrated India's willingness to challenge any of Pakistan's claims on the disputed Kashmir territory. Islamabad responded by mobilizing its troops and deploying in the area. For thirty-five years now, thousands of troops have been deployed on both sides in incredibly harsh conditions.<sup>142</sup> Five years after Mrs. Gandhi's death, in 1989 a popular uprising began in Kashmir following a rigged election in the Indian-administered area of

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<sup>139</sup> Navine Murshid, "India's Role in Bangladesh's War of Independence: Humanitarianism or Self-interest?" *Economic and Political Weekly* 46, no. 52 (2011), 53–60, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41719989>.

<sup>140</sup> Murshid, 54–60.

<sup>141</sup> Paven Nair, "The Siachen War: Twenty-Five years On," *Economic and Political Weekly* 44, no. 11 (2009), 35–40, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/40278612.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3A3b85be63f22dd370b8f39560850e8202>.

<sup>142</sup> Awais Saleem, "Siachen conflict between India and Pakistan: How politics and national security trumps environmental conditions," *IECA*, June 11–14, 2015, [https://theieca.org/sites/default/files/conference-presentations/coce\\_2015\\_boulder/saleem\\_awais-1035463731.pdf](https://theieca.org/sites/default/files/conference-presentations/coce_2015_boulder/saleem_awais-1035463731.pdf).

Kashmir.<sup>143</sup> While tensions in the Siachen Glacier and along the LOC continued, the Kashmir uprising provided Pakistan an opportunity to launch a “full-scale proxy war in Kashmir.”<sup>144</sup> Islamabad supported Kashmiri separatists and diverted well-trained guerilla fighters from the Afghan War into Kashmir which turned the insurgency into a popular uprising.<sup>145</sup> Mrs. Gandhi’s decision to send troops along a disputed border with little to no economic or tactical benefit helps show her over-focus on taking any action possible to increase India’s power.

While the Sikh insurgency in Punjab and the Siachen Crisis along the border were in full swing, the Indira Gandhi administration began supporting the Tamil minority separatists in Sri Lanka that led to the Sri Lankan Civil War over the course of 30 years. When Mrs. Gandhi’s son Rajiv Gandhi took office, the conflict spiraled out of control and the very minority India had supported became violent and opposed to India.<sup>146</sup> In the late 1980s, Rajiv Gandhi forced Sri Lanka to accept the Indian Peacekeeping Force (IPKF) in Sri Lanka to help put down the insurgent Tamil rebellion.<sup>147</sup> The objective of IPKF was twofold. First, Rajiv Gandhi wanted to subdue the Tamil revolt so that the sizeable Tamil population in India did not become violent as well. Additionally, India feared that its reluctance to intervene would then have allowed larger powers like the United States to become involved in the conflict and gain a “geostrategic foothold” in the IOR.<sup>148</sup> Hagerty argues that India’s intervention served as a “forcible statement that any external forces prejudicial to India’s interests cannot be allowed to swim in regional waters.”<sup>149</sup> Indian involvement in the Sri Lankan affair backfired, and eventually the IPKF had to withdraw

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<sup>143</sup> Gurmeet Kanwal, “Proxy war in Kashmir: Jihad or state-sponsored terrorism?” *Strategic Analysis* 23, No. 1, (2008): 56, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/09700169908455030>.

<sup>144</sup> Nair, 36.

<sup>145</sup> Nair, 36.

<sup>146</sup> “Factbox—India’s role in Sri Lanka’s civil war,” *Reuters*, October 2008, <https://uk.reuters.com/article/idUKCOL223047>.

<sup>147</sup> “Factbox—India’s role in Sri Lanka’s civil war.”

<sup>148</sup> James R. Holmes and Toshi Yoshihara, “India’s ‘Monroe Doctrine’ and Asia’s Maritime Future,” *Strategic Analysis* 32, no. 6 (2018): 1000. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09700160802404539>.

<sup>149</sup> Hagerty, 355.

from Sri Lanka and terminate its peacekeeping missions. Like the tragic assassination of his mother, Rajiv Gandhi was killed in a suicide terror attack by a Tamil extremist in 1991.<sup>150</sup> Both Indira and Rajiv Gandhi proved in this intervention their desire to display predominance in the region and increase India's power position in the international hierarchy. However, both of these leaders fell victim to the consequences of their harsh policies both inside and outside India.

In the late 1980s, Indian officials continued to show a preference towards the Indira Doctrine by engaging in actions that promoted their nation's image of regional hegemony. India continued to demonstrate that as South Asia's hegemonic power, it would intervene in its neighbor's affairs if they strayed from Indian interests. In another example, Indian leaders intervened and prevented an attempted coup in the Maldives. In November of 1988, 80–200 mercenaries, mainly from a Sri Lankan Tamil insurgent group, took control of key points in the capital of the Maldives.<sup>151</sup> Although President Abdul Gayoom escaped and requested military assistance from powers across the world including the United States, Britain, and others, Rajiv Gandhi was the first to respond by sending in Indian paratroopers and naval warships.<sup>152</sup> Experts write that New Delhi saw the conflict as "India's prerogative and its responsibility," and therefore felt India should be the one to intervene.<sup>153</sup> In letting India handle the situation alone, other major powers showed their acceptance of New Delhi's leading role in the South Asian region.<sup>154</sup> Here again, India was able to assert itself as the regional hegemon and even gain international recognition in this role.

Just a year later in 1989, Indian officials again demonstrated their willingness to intervene if their neighbors adopted policies against Indian interests. After Nepal sought

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<sup>150</sup> "Rajiv Gandhi," Encyclopedia Britannica, May 17, 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Rajiv-Gandhi>.

<sup>151</sup> David Brewster, "Operation Cactus: India's 1988 intervention in the Maldives," Routledge, April 18, 2014, [https://www.academia.edu/7992881/Extract\\_from\\_Indias\\_Ocean\\_-\\_Operation\\_Cactus](https://www.academia.edu/7992881/Extract_from_Indias_Ocean_-_Operation_Cactus).

<sup>152</sup> Brewster, "Operation Cactus: India's 1988 intervention in the Maldives."

<sup>153</sup> Brewster, "Operation Cactus: India's 1988 intervention in the Maldives."

<sup>154</sup> Brewster, "Operation Cactus: India's 1988 intervention in the Maldives."

closer military and economic ties with China, New Delhi blockaded trade and closed all but two border entryways.<sup>155</sup> As a land-locked country with the Himalayas in the North, Nepal relies heavily on supplies provided through Indian trade.<sup>156</sup> In this way, Nepal is virtually “India-locked.”<sup>157</sup> As a response to the Nepalese government’s purchase of Chinese weapons and increased tariffs on Indian goods, the Indian government ceased trade until negotiations could be resolved. The Nepalese economy and its citizens suffered greatly as a result of India’s actions.

In all of these instances, the Indira Doctrine supported actions to intervene in neighbors’ affairs when it served Indian interests and solidified India’s regional hegemony. Mohan explains how Indira Gandhi utilized foreign policy decisions like these to try to lessen the ideological constraints that had distorted Indian diplomacy.<sup>158</sup> Overall, these examples portray a realist strategy wherein the Indira Doctrine guided actions in other states to increase India’s power and achieve hegemonic status.

#### **D. EXTENDED NEIGHBORHOOD**

Some critics have also described the Indira Doctrine as “India’s Monroe Doctrine” because Mrs. Gandhi wanted to keep out external influences so that India could increase its power and exert influence into the extended neighborhood. Mansingh explains how the Indira Doctrine opposed any presence of external powers in the Indian Ocean or South Asian region and that New Delhi would consider foreign influences as “inimical to Indian national interests unless [they] acknowledged Indian predominance.”<sup>159</sup> Holmes and Yoshihara explain that this idea of India’s Monroe Doctrine served as the basis behind Indira Gandhi’s interventions in the Indian periphery.<sup>160</sup> Holmes and Yoshihara confirm

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<sup>155</sup> Niranjan Koirala, “Nepal in 1989: A Very Difficult Year,” *Asian Survey* 30, no. 2 (1990): 136–43, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2644891>.

<sup>156</sup> Koirala, 137.

<sup>157</sup> Koirala, 136.

<sup>158</sup> Mohan, *Crossing the Rubicon*, 261.

<sup>159</sup> Mansingh, “Indira Gandhi’s Foreign Policy: Hard Realism?” 7.

<sup>160</sup> Holmes and Yoshihara, 997.

other expert opinions in their argument that Mrs. Gandhi's strategy projected Nehru's "broad doctrine" beyond the Indian subcontinent in order to intervene not only with direct neighbors but also in the Indian Ocean region.<sup>161</sup> Looking at Mrs. Gandhi's grand strategy through a Monroe Doctrine lens suggests that she intervened in regional affairs mainly as a means of keeping out other external powers so that India could be *the* great power in the region. Mrs. Gandhi adopted this Monroe Doctrine way of thinking because she did not want foreign powers undermining Indian dominance. Through this grand strategy, India would not be challenged in its own region, therefore, it could rise to achieve global power and exert influence in the farthest circle of Tanham's model.

Overall, the Indira Doctrine revolved around the desire to increase India's power in the farthest circle of the mandala system and utilized a hard-handed realist approach to issues in the core and periphery in order to do so. Indira and Rajiv Gandhi both thus consolidated India's power domestically and intervened with smaller neighbors to solidify India's stance as the regional hegemon.

## E. CRITIQUES

The Indira Doctrine effected Indian foreign policy through its goal of bringing India to great power status, but critics have warned against adopting this strategy in the future due to its inability to maintain positive relations with neighboring states. As the architect of this strategy, Indira Gandhi showed she would stop at nothing to increase Indian power, even to the point where one critic claims she would "ally herself with the Devil if she thought it served her purpose."<sup>162</sup> While her ambition is admirable, this hubris cost her India's regional reputation. In this way, she failed to balance her desire to show India's strength without intimidating and alienating smaller neighbors. Mansingh explains this critique best when he writes that the Indira Doctrine ultimately "exacerbated fears" of smaller neighbors in that it guided Indira and Rajiv both to intervene when Indian interests were threatened. Such other experts as Moraes write that Mrs. Gandhi adopted the stance

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<sup>161</sup> Holmes and Yoshiara, 999; see also Mansingh, *India's Search for Power*, 34.

<sup>162</sup> A quote by Morarji Desai in Mansingh, *India's Search for Power*, 34.

that India would not be influenced by what its neighbors did but that they should be influenced by what India does.<sup>163</sup> Overall, Indira Gandhi's strategic mindset clearly sought a hegemonic dominance for India in the region and an unchallenged primacy over smaller neighbors. This strategy did not seek to accommodate India's neighbors, but rather to put them in their place under India's hegemonic grasp over the region.

## F. CONTINUED RELEVANCE

Holmes and Yoshihara's conclusions about the relationship of the Monroe Doctrine to the Indira Doctrine suggest that this grand strategy holds the potential to aid India's achievement of global power today. Although the United States and India are very different in terms of geopolitical and ethno-religious factors, the progression of the Monroe Doctrine in the United States reveals future projections for how this type of strategy could play out in India's future. Holmes and Yoshihara argue that as the United States remained committed to the Monroe Doctrine and consolidated domestic power, this policy evolved into a strongman strategy wherein "Washington wanted to...[underscore] its claim to regional hegemony."<sup>164</sup> These authors explain how in order for India to progress to the strongman phase of its version of the Monroe Doctrine, the military must dominate the Indian Ocean region in order to maintain regional hegemony.<sup>165</sup> In their words, India can only progress forward if they complete a "self-sufficient indigenous defense-industrial base" that would serve as the highest priority.<sup>166</sup> By increasing domestic production of military materials, India would minimize the need to rely on foreign powers while also increasing its relative power stance in the region.

Certain Indian actions since Indira Gandhi's time have demonstrated a preference towards a strategy based on the Indira Doctrine. For example, officials in New Delhi successfully completed nuclear tests at the turn of the century so that India could have a seat at the great power table. India's nuclearization directly influenced New Delhi's idea

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<sup>163</sup> Dom Moraes, *Mrs. Gandhi* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1980), 264.

<sup>164</sup> Holmes and Yoshihara, 1004

<sup>165</sup> Holmes and Yoshihara, 1005.

<sup>166</sup> Holmes and Yoshihara, 1005

of their nation's place in the world. Mansingh writes that many Indian officials saw the nuclear tests as a "symbol of India's multifaceted strength demanding international recognition for India's enhanced scientific and technological capability."<sup>167</sup> The Indian military has since developed nuclear powered submarines, displayed an interest in amphibious warfare ships, and purchased military transports and other technologies from the United States.<sup>168</sup> Mohan explains how military capacity serves as the output of national power because it defines the coercive strength a country can use against an enemy.<sup>169</sup> Therefore, an Indian strategy under the Indira Doctrine would continue to support the military buildup and modernization already underway in India.

Rhetoric among military officials also supports the idea that the Indira Doctrine is guiding Indian strategy because these leaders are pushing for the ability for India to project power forward farther outside India's regional sphere of influence. In the 2007 Maritime Military Strategy, Indian officials write that India's geopolitical rise needs a "concomitant accretion of national power, of which the military power will be a crucial dimension."<sup>170</sup> These officials go on to specify that the primary goal of military power in India is to maintain national security and insulate the nation from "external interference."<sup>171</sup> Here, modern Indian rhetoric carries themes of the Indira Doctrine in that gaining power and projecting influence abroad serve as primary goals. Such experts as Singh elaborate on this strategy when he states that India lacks the ability to shape its strategic environment and needs to develop the capacity to advance national interests over distant littorals.<sup>172</sup> He goes on to write that if India wants to be able to counter Chinese encroachment, then officials must prioritize overseas bases and progress towards an "expeditionary" capability rather than hide behind India's strategic culture of restraint.<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> Mansingh, "Indira Gandhi's Foreign Policy: Hard Realism?" 8.

<sup>168</sup> Hoyt, 4.

<sup>169</sup> Mohan, "India and the Balance of Power," 7.

<sup>170</sup> Holmes and Yoshihara, 997.

<sup>171</sup> Holmes and Yoshihara, 998.

<sup>172</sup> Singh, 66.

<sup>173</sup> Singh, 67.

## IV. GUJRAL DOCTRINE

The Gujral Doctrine suggests an alternative grand strategy for India based on liberal foundations. Inder Kumar Gujral, the creator of this doctrine, greatly impacted the development of grand strategy in India through his liberal foreign policies as Prime Minister. Although he only served as prime minister from April, 1997 to March, 1998, Mr. Gujral entered office having served as the Minister of Information and Broadcasting under Indira Gandhi and Minister of External Affairs under two administrations in the 1990s before assuming the highest office himself.<sup>174</sup> During his long tenure in politics, Mr. Gujral developed the opinion that India's rise to power hinged on establishing good relations with its neighbors.<sup>175</sup> In this way, he believed that in order to increase India's power to the global level, the states in the periphery needed to have a positive stake in India's rise. If New Delhi could encourage its neighbors to trust India's power in the region, then the core of India could focus on projecting power outward. To create these positive relations and strengthen the bonds in the core and periphery, Mr. Gujral believed India needed to establish certain enduring principles, most notably the sovereign equality between states and universal non-interference in the South Asian region.<sup>176</sup>

The Gujral school of thought overall sought flexibility in India's position on conflict resolution with its neighbors rather than the pursuit of realist gains. This strategy utilized a soft-power approach and cultural commonalities in the area to give Indian leaders the ability to offer concessions to neighbors on cross-border issues. Through these cooperative arrangements and confidence-building measures, Indian leaders could consolidate their nation's power without alienating neighbors. Such a "neighbors-friendly"

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<sup>174</sup> "Inder Kumar Gujral," Encyclopedia Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Inder-Kumar-Gujral>.

<sup>175</sup> Rajiv Kumar Sharma, "Diplomat Prime Minister I.K. Gujral--His Foreign Policy and Gujral Doctrine," *Remarkings* 3, no. 1 (June 2016): 63, <http://www.socialresearchfoundation.com/upoadreserchpapers/5/106/1608010943211st%20rajiv%20kumar%20sharma.pdf>.

<sup>176</sup> Sharma, 63.

policy would facilitate India's leadership acceptance and positively influence India's power in the core and extended neighborhood.<sup>177</sup>

## A. BACKGROUND

Mr. Gujral's foreign policy doctrine served as the culmination of certain strategic factors leading up to his time as Prime Minister. In this way, the Gujral Doctrine served as a response to Mr. Gujral's analysis of the security situation in the South Asian region and presented answers to guide foreign policy actions. According to expert consensus, the primary security concern for the majority of the smaller South Asian countries revolves around their relationship with India.<sup>178</sup> In this way, South Asian states conceptualize their security dilemma around the fact that the region is "Indocentric."<sup>179</sup> Neighboring states therefore strive to maximize their security in regards to India while India has historically sought to maximize its security by promoting its hegemonic stance. Traditional thinking places a larger country with more territory, resources, and relative power in the center of the security picture in a region.<sup>180</sup> While this idea may raise India's power position in a realist sense, this dynamic also raises the security concerns of the smaller countries towards their more powerful neighbor.<sup>181</sup>

In the broadest sense, the Gujral Doctrine strives to improve the security picture first through mutual trust and cooperation in the region before the promotion of greater power for India on its own. Despite these more idealistic objectives, India still faced strategic threats in the periphery from the rising Chinese power and rival Pakistan. Mr. Gujral's strategy thus sought to contain the influence of Pakistan and China by forging peaceful relations with immediate neighbors in the periphery. This strategy would also

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<sup>177</sup> "The Gujral Doctrine," Stimson, January 20, 1997, <https://www.stimson.org/the-gujral-doctrine>.

<sup>178</sup> Nira Wickramasinghe, "Sri Lanka: The Many Faces of Security," in Muthiah Alagappa, *Asian Security Practice: Material and Ideational Influences* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 370.

<sup>179</sup> Wickramasinghe, 370.

<sup>180</sup> Tatyana L. Shaumian, "India's Foreign Policy: Interaction of Global and Regional Aspects," *Asian Survey* 28, no. 11 (November 1988): 1162, [https://www.jstor.org/stable/2644506?seq=2#metadata\\_info\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/2644506?seq=2#metadata_info_tab_contents).

<sup>181</sup> Shaumian, 1162.

maximize New Delhi's position in the region overall. Official definitions of security tend to lean towards a realist approach, focusing on the military-strategic perspective as was prevalent during Indira Gandhi's time.<sup>182</sup> However, Mr. Gujral assessed the security situation for India in a different light by prioritizing peaceful diplomatic relationships with smaller neighbors rather than seek hegemony through military force. In this way, if India faced unfriendly neighbors in the west and north, then establishing positive bonds with the surrounding states would ensure strong buffers for India overall.<sup>183</sup>

Several key authors support the Gujral Doctrine and agree that the key to facilitating India's rise to global power lies in the strength of India's core and periphery. This consensus supports the idea that India's best strategy forward is to catalyze positive relationships with its neighbors. For example, Shaumian summarizes the key security concerns best when she writes that stability in the region will depend on "mutual respect for the national interests of both the big and small countries of South Asia in the establishment of the principle of mutual security."<sup>184</sup> The Gujral Doctrine seeks to maximize this idea of mutual security. Shaumian goes on to clarify that New Delhi serves as the keystone in maintaining stability in the region and must persuade its smaller neighbors that India does not want to violate their sovereignty for its own gain.<sup>185</sup> Indian officials must make the message clear that they seek to respect the independence and territorial integrity of all.<sup>186</sup> By raising the security picture for all states in the region and strengthening the periphery, India can avoid being pinned down in its own neighborhood and focus on projecting influence outward. Sandy Gordon agrees when she writes:

If India can stabilize and consolidate its domestic and neighborhood environments, it will be more capable of meeting its own goal of strategic autonomy. If, on the other hand, it continues to remain mired in the problems of South Asia, its growth and stability will be impaired and its

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<sup>182</sup> Wickramasinghe, ,” 370.

<sup>183</sup> “Gujral Doctrine,” BYJU's, 2019, <https://byjus.com/free-ias-prep/gujral-doctrine/>

<sup>184</sup> Shaumian, 1162

<sup>185</sup> Shaumian, 1162

<sup>186</sup> Shaumian, 1162

strategic reliance on United States, especially vis-a vis China, will be greater. Its potential role in any Asian Order will likely be restrained.<sup>187</sup>

Certain key historical events and trends also influenced the development of the Gujral Doctrine. Several authors trace the origin of the movement toward more liberal foreign policies even back to Mrs. Gandhi, the mother of realist grand strategy herself. Gupta writes that Indira Gandhi did make some strides towards forging more friendly relations with India's neighbors which would indicate a liberal strategy. However, her failed realist policies ultimately overshadowed the attempts at liberal actions. For example, in 1972, Mrs. Gandhi gave Pakistan's Zulfikar Ali Bhutto peace with the Simla Agreement which ended the state of war between the countries and even ended violence in the contested Jammu and Kashmir regions for many years.<sup>188</sup> However, she later broke this agreement by authorizing the occupation of the Siachen Glacier in a strategic blunder meant to increase India's security position along the contested LOC.<sup>189</sup>

The lack of a coherent grand strategy to spread a liberal foreign policy in India became blatantly clear with continued failed realist policies in the 1980s and 1990s. In 1987, Rajiv Gandhi sent the Indian military into Sri Lanka to try to force a peace deal, and India became entrenched in this conflict for years.<sup>190</sup> Here, the interference with another nation's domestic affairs greatly hurt India's reputation in the region. One author writes, "the gambit ended in a chastising fiasco which convinced India to never leave India unless it did so under a United Nations mandate or if required to respond to a belligerent neighbor."<sup>191</sup> Rajiv Gandhi's successor, Chandra Shekhar, did not fare much better. Shekhar served as Prime Minister from November 1990 to June 1991 and has been strongly

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<sup>187</sup> Sandy Gordon, *India's Rise As An Asian Power: Nation, Neighborhood, and Region*, (Washington D.C: Georgetown University Press, 2014), xxiv.

<sup>188</sup> Bhabani Sen Gupta, "India in the twenty-first century," *International Affairs* 73, no. 2, (1997): 308–309, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/2623830.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3A411e68410dde458deb10be5b5a10133d>.

<sup>189</sup> Gupta, 308–309.

<sup>190</sup> C. Christine Fair "Waiting for Lord Curzon: India's Grand Strategy in the Long Shadow of Nehru," *SSRN Electronic Journal*, (January 2018), <https://www.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3271245>.

<sup>191</sup> Fair, "Waiting for Lord Curzon: India's Grand Strategy in the Long Shadow of Nehru."

criticized for failing to improve relations with India's neighbors due to tension over Kashmir which inevitably stalled improved relations in the region.<sup>192</sup> These examples combined highlight that regional cooperation in South Asia remains inhibited by "unresolved bilateral problems...and fear and mutual mistrust in relations among the countries in the region."<sup>193</sup>

Under this backdrop of failed realist policies and a recognition of the need for liberal cooperation in the region, Mr. Gujral reached the peak of his political career and formulated the Gujral Doctrine. He formally announced the policies of what would later become known as the Gujral Doctrine during his famous Chatham House speech in London in 1996. The doctrine arises "from the belief that India's stature and strength cannot be divorced from the quality of its relations with its neighbors."<sup>194</sup> This grand strategy for India sought to overcome the fears of India's smaller neighbors by generating a climate of "close and mutually benign cooperation in the region" where India's greater size would be seen positively by other countries as opposed to a threat.<sup>195</sup>

Mr. Gujral laid out five basic principles to achieve the goals of his foreign policy while he served as the Union Minister of External Affairs:

First, with the neighbours like Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives and Sri Lanka, India does not ask for reciprocity but gives all that it can in good faith and trust. Secondly, no South Asian country will allow its territory to be used against the interest of another country of the region. Thirdly, none will interfere in the internal affairs of another. Fourthly, all South Asian countries must respect each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty. And finally, they will settle all their disputes through peaceful bilateral negotiations. These five principles, scrupulously observed, will, I am sure, recast South Asia's regional relationship, including the tormented

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<sup>192</sup> Hagerty, 363.

<sup>193</sup> Shaumian, 1163.

<sup>194</sup> Padmaja Murthy, "The Gujral Doctrine and Beyond," *Strategic Analysis* 23, no. 4, (1999): 639, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09700169908455072>.

<sup>195</sup> Murthy, 640.

relationship between India and Pakistan, in a friendly, cooperative mould.<sup>196</sup>

In summary, these principles outlined a new liberal order that stated what India would do and what it expected its neighbors to do in return. The first principle, based in reciprocity, showed the smaller countries of the region that India would no longer expect certain concessions from its neighbors based on size and power differences. Historically, Indians have used their vast territory to exert influence over weaker states and extract certain concessions, but this first principle of the Gujral Doctrine eliminated these fears from the smaller nations. The second principle explains that no country in the region would allow its land to be used against the interest of another, thus instilling the idea of mutual respect. The third principle furthers the idea of respect in the region by outlining that all states will adhere to each other's internal sovereignty and agree to non-interference. Mr. Gujral's decision to include this non-interference principle is especially noteworthy considering India's mixed history of intervening with neighbors when New Delhi's interests were threatened.<sup>197</sup> Additionally, "sovereignty" as a concrete idea was also in limbo at the time given Indian and Pakistan's joint claims to certain areas in the Kashmir region. The fourth principle defines that mutual respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty would now define the interactions between states in South Asia.<sup>198</sup> Lastly, the doctrine concludes with the direction that any future disputes not covered by these principles will be solved peacefully and bilaterally.

## **B. CORE**

With regard to strategic concerns in India's core, the Gujral Doctrine seeks to keep the core stable so that internal issues do not spoil relations with neighbors. As outlined above, the Gujral Doctrine directs a strategic focus on improving relations in India's periphery first before attempting to seek influence in the extended neighborhood. However, one of the major domestic policies undertaken during Mr. Gujral's time and throughout the

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<sup>196</sup> Ashok Kumar, "What is Gujral Doctrine," Institute for Defense Studies and Analysis, accessed April 5, 2019, <https://idsa.in/askanexpert/GujralDoctrine%3F>.

<sup>197</sup> For examples, see Mohan, *Crossing the Rubicon*, 260–263.

<sup>198</sup> Murthy, 641.

1990s involved the economic liberalization in India. These revolutionary policies transformed the Indian economy from a closed, command economy to an open, liberal success.

The economic reforms of the 1990s aided the Gujral Doctrine policies because India's liberal economy established better economic bonds with its neighbors. Several authors have written about how augmented economic relationships have helped bring the South Asian states closer together.<sup>199</sup> These increased bonds are all the most important as South Asia does not contain a strong regional framework like the EU or ASEAN.<sup>200</sup> In 1985, states in the region created the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SSARC), but regional framework like these continue to depend on the direction of the largest power.<sup>201</sup> For India's sake in South Asia, leaders in New Delhi have struggled with how to best manage their asymmetry with the rest of the region while also achieving their own goals efficiently.<sup>202</sup> In this sense, the decision to open up the economy to international and regional connections in the 1990s both strengthened India's core strength and influence outside its borders.

### C. PERIPHERY

By outlining the principles found within the Gujral Doctrine, Mr. Gujral assured India's neighbors that his country did not harbor expansionist or ulterior motives on its foreign policy agenda.<sup>203</sup> Murthy suggests that these policies successfully generated a "climate of close and mutually benign cooperation in the region, where the weight and size of India is regarded positively and as an asset" by its neighbors rather than a threat.<sup>204</sup> The

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<sup>199</sup> Jabin T. Jacob, Review of *Does South Asia Exist? Prospects for Regional Integration*, by Rafiq Dossani, Daniel C. Sneider and Vikram Sood, *Journal of South Asian Development* 7, no.1 (2012): 65–79. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/097317411200700105>.

<sup>200</sup> Jacob, 71.

<sup>201</sup> "South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation," Encyclopedia Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/South-Asian-Association-for-Regional-Co-operation>.

<sup>202</sup> Jacob, 71.

<sup>203</sup> Murthy, 641.

<sup>204</sup> Murthy, 640.

Gujral Doctrine provided a sense of direction and purpose that guided India's foreign policy interactions throughout Mr. Gujral's term as Prime Minister and into the following decades.<sup>205</sup>

After Mr. Gujral outlined his foreign policy principles, Indian leaders in the following years followed suite in forging positive relationships with India's neighbors. These examples show that the Gujral Doctrine quickly assumed a key role in Indian grand strategy. To begin with, in January of 1996, Mr. Gujral signed the Treaty on Sharing of the Ganga Waters at Farakka with Bangladesh. Expert Gupta writes that the two countries had not signed a treaty of any form since 1988.<sup>206</sup> The strained relations leading up to Mr. Gujral's time greatly hurt the Bangladeshis given that they relied on India to provide water from the Ganga River for their rice fields.<sup>207</sup> Gupta goes on to explain how the treaty of 1996 took South Asians by surprise because Mr. Gujral did not ask for reciprocity.<sup>208</sup> Instead, he facilitated this treaty in good faith for the benefit of Bangladesh and the region as a whole. Later in 1996, Mr. Gujral also renewed the Indo-Nepal Treaty for five years which allowed for Nepalese manufacturing firms to trade on the Indian market without harsh restrictions.<sup>209</sup> Gupta writes that this treaty met Nepalese interests and went "a long way to remove from the Nepali mind the deep-planted image of India as the South Asia hegemon."<sup>210</sup> In this way, not only did Gujral Doctrine principles guide Indian actions, but they also successfully began to change the psyche of surrounding neighbors to help them realize the benefit this strategy could hold for the entire region.

Additionally, the Gujral Doctrine inspired major improvements in the Indo-Pak relationship. When considering strategic concerns in the periphery, Pakistan represented India's most problematic immediate neighbor. The idea of meeting neighbors' expectations without reciprocity did not include Pakistan, as Pakistan was explicitly excluded from the

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<sup>205</sup> Murthy 651.

<sup>206</sup> Gupta, 310.

<sup>207</sup> Gupta, 310.

<sup>208</sup> Gupta, 310

<sup>209</sup> Murthy, 647.

<sup>210</sup> Gupta, 310.

first principle of the doctrine. However, Mr. Gujral still sought to increase the people-to-people contact between the two rival states and engaged in “confidence building measures” including Foreign Secretary-level talks in June 1997.<sup>211</sup> As another sign of good faith, in May of 1997, Mr. Gujral and his Pakistani counterpart Nawaz Sharif initiated bilateral peace talks known as the Composite Dialogue Process (CDP).<sup>212</sup> These talks successfully identified eight areas for negotiation between the two countries, which clearly adhered to Mr. Gujral’s goal of solving regional disputes through peaceful negotiations. The negotiations even included discussions of Jammu and Kashmir, which had been hotly debated on both sides since Partition.<sup>213</sup> Other experts also cite these peace talks as a sign that both leaders sought increased relations during this time.<sup>214</sup>

Lastly, Mr. Gujral utilized his strategic doctrine to augment relations with the Chinese as well. In 1996, India and China engaged in confidence building measures, which improved bilateral relations and froze the long-contested border dispute.<sup>215</sup> Gupta writes that the border was “significantly demilitarized and its tranquility reconfirmed by withdrawal of an Indian brigade in mid-February 1997.”<sup>216</sup> Both President Jiang Zemin of China and I.K. Gujral of India showed good faith in improving these relations and an approval of the Gujral policies overall.

#### **D. EXTENDED NEIGHBORHOOD**

The Gujral Doctrine sought to establish India’s power in the extended neighborhood by augmenting regional relations. Mr. Gujral hoped to increase India’s status on the global scale by establishing this nation as a positive power in the South Asian region. Successfully achieving this strategy would remedy years of fearful coexistence between a

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<sup>211</sup> BYJU’s, “Gujral Doctrine.”

<sup>212</sup> Sajad Padder, “The Composite Dialogue between India and Pakistan: Structure, Process, and Agency,” (working paper, South Asia Institute, 2012), 1, [http://archiv.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/volltextserver/13143/1/Heidelberg\\_Papers\\_65\\_Padder.pdf](http://archiv.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/volltextserver/13143/1/Heidelberg_Papers_65_Padder.pdf).

<sup>213</sup> Padder, 1.

<sup>214</sup> Murthy, 647.

<sup>215</sup> BYJU’s, “Gujral Doctrine.”

<sup>216</sup> Gupta, 310.

substantially larger Indian power and smaller neighbor states. As explained above, Mr. Gujral considered India's rise as inherently tied to the region as a whole; therefore, the strategic concerns in the periphery and extended neighborhood were unavoidably linked. In order to give India the ability to wield power on the global scale, the Gujral Doctrine built trust in the region so that India could rise as the mouthpiece and protector of South Asia with legitimate, voluntary backing from its neighbors rather than rise as the dominant force due to power imbalances alone.

In general, the Gujral Doctrine represented a grand strategy with liberal foundations to give India a global power status. However, rather than establish institutions to bring the whole region together, this strategy pursued more bilateral negotiations as explained in the section above. Critics at the turn of the century have cited the lack of a strong regional framework in South Asia.<sup>217</sup> Without a strong regional identity or institution, smaller states remain more vulnerable to external influences. Although the Gujral Doctrine outlines a strategy for India to rise as the benign force in the region, the most significant obstacle to regional cooperation lies in the continued Indo-Pak tension. The two sides have failed to successfully settle territorial issues, and the entire region has suffered as a result. India's inability to reconcile differences with Pakistan continues to hold New Delhi back from projecting influence outside the region. The Gujral Doctrine may have facilitated better relationships with neighbors, but New Delhi's inability to fully commit to the doctrine's ideals has caused the failure to translate the strategy into success in the extended neighborhood.

## **E. CRITIQUES**

Several experts have weighed in with criticisms on the Gujral Doctrine. Specifically, these authors debate both the language of the doctrine itself and its ability to have a positive effect on relations in South Asia since its inception. A. G. Noorani criticized

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<sup>217</sup> See, for example: Tom Kirk, "South Asia: How Regional Cooperation Could Bring Stability to the Region," *Global Policy*, October 1, 2018, <https://www.globalpolicyjournal.com/blog/01/10/2018/south-asia-how-regional-cooperation-could-bring-stability-region>; Jacob, Review of Does South Asia Exist? Prospects for Regional Integration.

the policies overall because the language is overall too flowery and idealistic.<sup>218</sup> He specifically cites how the first policy of non-reciprocity fails to include Pakistan.<sup>219</sup> Therefore, he argues this policy was not directed at building trust with all of India's neighbors, but rather a select group.<sup>220</sup> Although this criticism may be true regarding the language of the policy, both Mr. Gujral and his successor Mr. Vajpayee's efforts to improve Indo-Pak relations throughout the 1990s disproves the idea that Pakistan was not considered in the Gujral Doctrine.

Critics also point to certain events between India and Pakistan and within Pakistan itself as hindering the progression of the Gujral Doctrine. Ghosh argues that the arms exchange in 1997 across the LoC between India and Pakistan represents a "negative development for the operationalization of the so-called Gujral doctrine."<sup>221</sup> Although this small arms fire did indeed present a setback for the Gujral Doctrine, the Lahore Declaration less than two years later provided far greater steps forward in Indo-Pak relations. This same critic goes on to state that to "improve Indo-Pak relations significantly...is beyond any Pakistani Prime Minister and, for that reason, beyond Mr. Gujral as well."<sup>222</sup> The ability of the Gujral Doctrine to continue influencing Indian policymaking through multiple administrations shows the joint effort Indian leaders have made to institutionalize this strategy. In this way, Ghosh's critical statement only supports the idea that such foreign policies as the Gujral Doctrine must be ingrained in Indian psyche in order to increase India's regional relationships and achieve greater power over time.

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<sup>218</sup> A. G. Noorani, "The Truth about the Lahore Summit," *Frontline* 19, no. 4 (February 2002): 1, <https://frontline.thehindu.com/static/html/fl1904/19040850.htm>.

<sup>219</sup> Noorani, 1.

<sup>220</sup> Noorani, 1.

<sup>221</sup> Sekhar Ghosh, "India-Pakistan Relations: Limitations of the Gujral Doctrine," *Jadavpur Journal of International Relations* 3, no. 1 (June 1997):121. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0973598497110010>.

<sup>222</sup> Ghosh, 122.

## F. CONTINUED RELEVANCE

Once the Vajpayee government assumed power after Mr. Gujral's time in office, many people worried that the Gujral Doctrine principles would no longer guide Indian actions.<sup>223</sup> However, Mr. Gujral's successor developed policies that continued to align with a Gujral Doctrine strategy. In this way, the BJP government moved towards better relations with India's neighbors. For example, at the end of 1998, Mr. Vajpayee invited Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga to India, and through bilateral talks, they signed the Indo-Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement.<sup>224</sup> This negotiation symbolized an important step in that it would "serve as a pacemaker for regional cooperation in South Asia."<sup>225</sup> Mr. Vajpayee also facilitated the visit of the King of Nepal to India in January in 1999, which again showed that India desired a better, more welcoming relationship with its neighbors no matter their size.<sup>226</sup> After India tested nuclear weapons in 1998, the response from the small South Asian neighbors also demonstrated that the Gujral Doctrine had instilled better trust in the region. Murthy argues that even though India's smaller neighbors were worried about the nuclear tests, they did not outright state anything that went against India due to the positive atmosphere that had been created in the subcontinent.<sup>227</sup> He credits this improved environment to successful implementation of Gujral Doctrine policies."<sup>228</sup>

Most notable in the continuation of the Gujral Doctrine in Indian foreign affairs was Mr. Vajpayee's treatment of Pakistan. In 1999, the Prime Minister journeyed to Lahore to build on the bilateral talks initiated by Mr. Gujral. The two states then agreed to the Lahore Declaration in February of 1999 which outlined their nuclear relationship.<sup>229</sup> In this agreement, both sides laid out policies to avoid accidental or unauthorized use of

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<sup>223</sup> Murthy, 647.

<sup>224</sup> Murthy, 647.

<sup>225</sup> Murthy, 647.

<sup>226</sup> Murthy, 647.

<sup>227</sup> Murthy, 648.

<sup>228</sup> Murthy, 648.

<sup>229</sup> "Lahore Declaration," NTI, October 26, 2011, <https://www.nti.org/learn/treaties-and-regimes/lahore-declaration/>.

nuclear weapons.<sup>230</sup> Specifically, the two states agreed to find a peaceful resolution to the contested Jammu and Kashmir regions.<sup>231</sup> Various experts celebrate Mr. Vajpayee's bus journey to Lahore to engage in these talks, because it showed that India was willing to go the extra mile to establish good relations, just as the Gujral Doctrine prescribes.<sup>232</sup> In short, Murthy summarizes Vajpayee's ability to continue the Gujral Doctrine strategy best when he states, "it is evident that Vajpayee has not only been able to build on the gains of the Gujral Doctrine by strengthening ties with the smaller neighbours but, through his bus diplomacy, tried to make a dramatic change in conducting relations with Pakistan."<sup>233</sup>

As the years went on, the Gujral Doctrine continued in varying shapes and forms towards the end of the Vajpayee administration (1999-2004) and into the Manmohan Singh years (2004-2013). Overall, the peace process with Pakistan became derailed and thus distracted away from a successful Gujral Doctrine strategy. For example, in 1999, Pakistani soldiers and Kashmiri militants infiltrated areas on the Indian side of the LoC and sparked an Indian conventional response backed by international support.<sup>234</sup> Such experts as Tellis conclude that this crisis showed Indians that Pakistan is a "reckless...risk-acceptant, untrustworthy state," and forced New Delhi to reconsider engaging with Pakistan diplomatically on the Kashmir conflict at all.<sup>235</sup> Just two years later in 2001, five militants suspected of Pakistani-backing attacked the Indian Parliament and killed nine security personnel.<sup>236</sup> Prime Minister Vajpayee labeled the attack an "act of war" and mobilized over 500,000 Indian troops along the border with Pakistan.<sup>237</sup> By the end of April, Pakistan

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<sup>230</sup> NTI, "Lahore Declaration."

<sup>231</sup> NTI, "Lahore Declaration."

<sup>232</sup> Murthy, 651.

<sup>233</sup> Murthy, 651.

<sup>234</sup> "Kargil War" New World Encyclopedia, Accessed May 10, 2018, [https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Kargil\\_War](https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Kargil_War).

<sup>235</sup> Ashley J. Tellis, C. Christine Fair, Jamison Jo Medby, *Limited Conflicts Under the Nuclear Umbrella* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2001), [https://www.rand.org/pubs/monograph\\_reports/MR1450.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/monograph_reports/MR1450.html).

<sup>236</sup> Prakhar Gupta, "To the Brink: 2001-02 India-Pakistan Standoff," *Indian Defense Review*, June 22, 2016, <http://www.indiandefencereview.com/spotlights/to-the-brink-2001-02-india-pakistan-standoff/>.

<sup>237</sup> Gupta, "To the Brink: 2001-02 India-Pakistan Standoff."

had mobilized 300,000 troops on its border as well and threatened to escalate the conflict to a nuclear dimension.<sup>238</sup> U.S. officials were eventually able to secure Pakistani commitment to crack down on anti-Indian extremists and de-escalate the conflict, but diplomatic relations remained incredibly tense between India and Pakistan.<sup>239</sup> In 2008, yet another Pakistani-backed terrorist organization attacked India on its own soil. Terrorists of the Lashkar-e-Taiba group, believed to be Pakistani-backed, attacked several areas in Mumbai and killed 174 people.<sup>240</sup> Although Prime Minister Singh showed a restrained response in that he did not order a military retaliation, then Indian foreign secretary Shivshankar Menon stated he had “never seen levels of anger like this” among the Indian people following the attacks.<sup>241</sup>

All of these events have caused Indians to lose trust with their Pakistani counterparts. Tensions between the two states have continued and even escalated to the point where Indian Army chief General Bipin Rawat stated Pakistan’s goal is to “bleed India with a thousand cuts.”<sup>242</sup> Additionally, the Indian media and political rallies have used the Pakistan problem as a point of emphasis, which has also increased public anger. Since Prime Minister Narendra Modi came to power in 2014, his Bharatiya Janata Party (B.J.P) has furthered Hindu policies and pushed Muslims farther out of the political picture.<sup>243</sup> Between the Pakistani aggression and rise of Hindu nationalist policies in India, these two nations have drifted further and further apart.

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<sup>238</sup> Gupta, “To the Brink: 2001–02 India-Pakistan Standoff.”

<sup>239</sup> Gupta, “To the Brink: 2001–02 India-Pakistan Standoff.”

<sup>240</sup> Shanthie Mariet D’Souza, “Mumbai Terrorist Attacks of 2008,” Encyclopedia Britannica, April 3, 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Mumbai-terrorist-attacks-of-2008>.

<sup>241</sup> “Revisiting India’s Restraint in Response to Mumbai,” Belfer Center, December 4, 2013, <https://www.belfercenter.org/node/89264>.

<sup>242</sup> “Pakistan has decided to bleed India with thousand cuts: Army chief,” *The Times of India*, September 23, 2018, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/pakistan-has-decided-to-bleed-india-with-thousand-cuts-army-chief/articleshow/65923470.cms>.

<sup>243</sup> Isaac Chontiner, “An Indian Political Theorist on the Triumph of Narendra Modi’s Hindu Nationalism,” *The New Yorker*, May 24, 2019, <https://www.newyorker.com/news/q-and-a/an-indian-political-theorist-on-the-triumph-of-narendra-modis-hindu-nationalism>.

The current isolation of Pakistan represents a major disengagement from a Gujral Doctrine strategy and simultaneously opens India up to a dangerous security environment. By not moving towards better relations with Pakistan, India has now left its neighbor to grow increasingly closer to China. Pakistan and China celebrate a “sweeter than honey” relationship where Pakistan is strongly embedded in Beijing’s grand economic Belt and Road Initiative.<sup>244</sup> At the same time, New Delhi’s failure to abide by Gujral Doctrine policies has influenced its smaller neighbors to begin hedging towards China as well. Sri Lanka and Bangladesh have both accepted Chinese investment through the BRI which has brought Chinese influence ever closer to India’s desired sphere of influence. Clearly, the current lack of a strategy to strengthen India’s position in the periphery has hurt New Delhi’s power position both regionally and globally.

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<sup>244</sup> AFP, “China-Pakistan friendship ‘sweeter than honey’ says Nawaz Sharif,” *The Telegraph*, July 5, 2013, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/pakistan/10161516/China-Pakistan-friendship-sweeter-than-honey-says-Nawaz-Sharif.html>.

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## V. ANALYSIS

Indian leaders want their nation to wield global power, but fail to devise a grand strategy to achieve this goal. For India to achieve great power status, its leaders must be able to resolve issues in each of the lower circles of Tanham’s mandala model. Such critics as Menon write that India has “consistently underperformed and has consistently declined as an independent player in the international arena” due to New Delhi’s inability to resolve issues in each sphere of strategic influence.<sup>245</sup> The setbacks in these two smaller strategic circles continue to inhibit India’s ability to project influence in its extended neighborhood and global arena.

New Delhi’s inability to devise a strong grand strategy holds important implications because the international community is looking for India to embody an influential stance in Asia. In this sense, the great powers in the extended neighborhood are already convinced that India serves as the power fulcrum in Asia. The United States—which wields the global power that New Delhi hopes to achieve—continues to point to India as a vital partner in Asia. For example, the U.S. military establishment recently changed the title of its strategic command in Asia from “Asia-Pacific” to “Indo-Pacific” to reflect the elevated significance of India in the region.<sup>246</sup> Moreover, The United States, Japan, and Australia have entered into a quadripartite (“Quad”) coalition with India to patrol the Indian and Pacific Oceans together as a means of “stifling China’s growth.”<sup>247</sup> The United States has also recently added India to its Strategic Trade Authorization Tier-1 license category, which will open up the two nations to increased bilateral trade opportunities.<sup>248</sup>

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<sup>245</sup> Menon, “India Will Not Become a Great Power by Loudly Proclaiming its Intentions.”

<sup>246</sup> Cary Huang, “US, Japan, India, Australia...is Quad the first step to an Asian Nato?” *This Week in Asia*, November 25, 2017, <https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/opinion/article/2121474/us-japan-india-australia-quad-first-step-asian-nato>.

<sup>247</sup> Huang, “US, Japan, India, Australia...is Quad the first step to an Asian Nato?”

<sup>248</sup> “U.S. Elevates India to Strategic Trade Authorization Tier 1 Status, Easing Future Dual-Use Exports,” Hughes Hubbard & Reed, August 2, 2018, <https://www.hugheshubbard.com/news/u-s-elevates-india-to-strategic-trade-authorization-tier-1-status-easing-future-dual-use-exports>.

Despite India and other states' desire for India to wield great power, this nation continues to fall short of effectively devising a strategy to achieve this goal. However, the doctrinal chapters of this thesis have revealed that India has in fact been guided by key strategies that directed foreign policy actions over certain time periods. Despite the fact that India has not formulated an effective grand strategy, it does have historical strategic resources that it can draw upon. The Indira Doctrine and Gujral Doctrine, though different in their strategic focus, both guided policy formulation during crucial eras in India's history. They effectively increased India's power and augmented relationships in the region with their respective policies. Therefore, these schools of thought do represent a form of grand strategy in India's history and should serve as the basis for strategic thought today. Officials in New Delhi should call on the roots of India's strategic thought to help their nation grow into the global power they desire. Only through resolving strategic issues through an effective balance of the Gujral and Indira Doctrines in the core and periphery can this nation realistically extend its power far beyond its borders.

This chapter analyzes how the Indira Doctrine and Gujral Doctrine can address India's contemporary strategic concerns and potentially provide a grand strategy moving forward. This research outlines these current strategic concerns using Tanham's model of the core, periphery, and extended neighborhood and explains how India's historic strategies play a role in shaping current strategic planning. India's most pressing strategic threat is China's increasing power in the region and in the global arena: India's desired level of influence in the extended neighborhood is becoming more difficult to achieve given China's strong power and encroachment into India's neighborhood. China's desire to increase its own influence inherently undermines India's ability not only to rise as a global power but also to continue as the predominant force in the region. That said, as much as Indian officials may want to extend their nation's power to compete with China, they remain distracted by unresolved issues in the core and periphery. Most notably, India's continued lack of a strategy to deal with Pakistan forces New Delhi to focus on territorial and border conflicts rather than issues of global power. This chapter determines the ability of the Indira and Gujral Doctrines to remedy these strategic concerns in the core, periphery, and extended neighborhood to assess how India can best rise to global power status.

## A. CORE

India must adopt a grand strategy for its core strategic interests that contains an appetite for power along the lines of the Indira Doctrine but the Gujral Doctrine's means to achieve it. In this way, India's current strategy must maintain a desire to accumulate power but avoid the failures of the Indira Doctrine's heavy-handed domestic policies. Therefore, leaders should formulate policies around the liberal foundations in the Gujral Doctrine. Specifically, Indian leaders must resolve certain domestic issues and bureaucratic obstacles. By strengthening India's core first, New Delhi will build a solid base from which to project power into the father spheres of influence. However, as shown in the previous chapter, Modi has begun to exhibit a Hindu-centric domestic policy that pushes ethnic minorities further away and breeds discontent. Additionally, Mr. Modi remains committed to maintaining India's "strategic autonomy" and therefore focuses on domestic production of important military goods, which slows India's modernization process. To remedy these issues, contemporary strategy must move towards the Gujral Doctrine and seek positive relations with minorities and closer relations with foreign partners. Such improvements will allow India to bolster its military capabilities and counter increasing Chinese influence.

Indian officials continue to remain focused on increasing India's power to wield global influence, but they ignore key strategic problems in their nation's core. The most important strategic concerns in the core involve Modi's obsession with "strategic autonomy" that has led to India's over-reliance on domestic production and a flawed civil-military institution. Additionally, ethnic conflicts continue to threaten India's internal security. As Indian leaders set their sights on the farther circles of strategic influence, domestic issues are left to fester and spill over into surrounding countries in the periphery. Thus, India's grand strategy needs to address concerns in the core so that domestic issues are settled internally and do not lead to cross-border issues in the periphery.

As the largest democratic country in the world, India struggles to effectively include its vast minority populations in its policies.<sup>249</sup> A key concern of India's strategy in its core

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<sup>249</sup> Dhruva Jaishankar, "India rising: Soft power and the world's largest democracy," *Brookings*, July 17, 2018, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/india-rising-soft-power-and-the-worlds-largest-democracy/>.

therefore lies in dealing with ethnic strife. During her time, Indira Gandhi utilized a hard-handed approach with uprisings and let her obsession with the consolidation of power cloud her ability to devise long-term solutions to ethnic issues. For example, her mishandling of the Sikh uprising in Punjab ended in her assassination, and Rajiv Gandhi's failures in Sri Lanka resulted in his death as well.<sup>250</sup> Likewise, the Naxalite uprising during Mrs. Gandhi's time was fueled by Maoist influences, and Muslim extremists in Kashmir have also received support from actors in Pakistan.<sup>251</sup> More recently, India has been greatly hurt on its own soil by extremist groups of suspected Pakistani backing. Whether state-sponsored externally or not, ethnic extremists can still arise in India based on its own oppressive policies. Many of these groups cite economic marginalization as the impetus behind their secessionist claims.<sup>252</sup> India's inability to administer minority-dominated areas has led to resentment and uprisings that continue to threaten stability in the region.<sup>253</sup> Domestically, India needs to remain committed to its state-building narrative of inclusive and secular India rather than let strong Hindu sentiments rise and push out smaller minorities.

Leaders in New Delhi must therefore adopt Gujral Doctrine ideals because a strategy that fails to include minorities on the subcontinent will leave these groups vulnerable to outside influences from both China and Pakistan. If India can forge positive relationships with its Chinese and Pakistani neighbors, then these states will likely decrease their meddling with Indian internal ethnic conflicts. Domestically, Indian policymakers must prioritize conflict resolution so that ethnic issues do not grow outside its own borders and draw India into outside struggles. The Indira Doctrine strategy resulted in major domestic failures; the Modi government must progress past the harsh consolidation of power. In Gordon's words, "unless India can deal with dissonance and discontent, it will

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<sup>250</sup> Carin Zissis, "Terror Groups in India," Council on Foreign Relations, November 27, 2008, <https://www.cfr.org/background/terror-groups-india>.

<sup>251</sup> Moeed Yosuf, "Kashmir Policy Needs a Fresh Appraisal," *Brookings*, June 13, 2003, <https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/kashmir-policy-needs-a-fresh-appraisal/>.

<sup>252</sup> Zissis, "Terror Groups in India."

<sup>253</sup> Yosuf, "Kashmir Policy Needs a Fresh Appraisal."

remain vulnerable to cross-border disruption, will need to spend more on security, and will have less capacity to provide resources for economic development, education, health, and the acquisition of soft and hard power in the region and world.”<sup>254</sup> India’s ability to project power in any circle of Tanham’s spheres of influence remains inherently tied to its ability to effectively institute the Gujral Doctrine policies.

In addition to minority uprisings, Indian leaders also face economic issues in their core strategic sphere of influence. Specifically, Modi’s dedication to consolidating economic power with the indigenous production of military materials presents a flawed legacy of the Indira Doctrine. As a manifestation of economic consolidation, Modi has established the “Make in India” policy. He designed this policy to maximize domestic production of economic goods to help overhaul the diminishing Indian economy of 2013.<sup>255</sup> However, his preference for an Indira Doctrine strategy actually hinders India’s ability to increase its power. For example, the military acquisitions process under this indigenously focused program has been consistently inefficient. When military officials submit tenders for the materials they deem necessary, it is ultimately up to the Defense Research and Development Organization (DRDO) to decide what technologies to build. The DRDO heads the development of military goods; therefore, they can deny requests for military technology simply by claiming such technology would be too complicated for them to build.<sup>256</sup> Gill notes that this public sector defense establishment continues to deny foreign firms under the “mantra of promoting self-reliance and indigenization.”<sup>257</sup> Whereas other countries incorporate government and military officials to work together to seek foreign imports of such technologies, the Indian domestic producers have veto power and can halt this process completely.<sup>258</sup> India’s growth remains constrained by its commitment to produce goods domestically rather than seek innovation from outside sources as well. India should therefore utilize an approach more like the Gujral Doctrine to develop

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<sup>254</sup> Gordon, 177.

<sup>255</sup> “About Us,” Make in India, <http://www.makeinindia.com/about>.

<sup>256</sup> Gill, 158.

<sup>257</sup> Gill, 158.

<sup>258</sup> Gill, 158.

relationships with foreign powers that could provide the necessary goods that India is unable to effectively produce on its own.

India's core strategy also fails to translate its overall economic wealth to military strength due to the Indian military's lack of influence in policymaking. However, this issue has permeated the Indian policy-making process since independence, therefore, both the Indira and Gujral Doctrines would fail to address this issue. In response, Modi's administration must devise a grand strategy of its own to resolve this issue. Critics have described India's civil-military infrastructure as "ad hoc defense planning" that lacks a strategy to set priorities for acquisitions and growth.<sup>259</sup> The Indian government remains adamant about leaving military officials out of policymaking, which inherently hurts strategic planning. India's experienced military officers therefore do not have the opportunity to weigh in on how the nation can best utilize and strengthen its military capacity to achieve the long-term strategic goals. This civil-military disconnect has led to major budget problems where officials engage in "arming without aiming."<sup>260</sup> Officials attempt to modernize and increase the military, but they do not direct acquisitions around a coherent strategy given that the actual military leaders lack clear channels to explain what materials they need most.<sup>261</sup>

## **B. PERIPHERY**

Indian officials face a complex environment in the periphery given that two of its main rivals, Pakistan and China, are also its contiguous neighbors. Additionally, the South Asian region has been marred by ethnic strife and conflicts that have drawn India into other nations' internal affairs in the past. Many of these issues have not been fully resolved and threaten to divert India's attention away from its grand strategic goals if a strategy to resolve them is not achieved.

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<sup>259</sup> Gill, 157.

<sup>260</sup> Gill, 160.

<sup>261</sup> Gill, 160.

Under the Indira Doctrine, India's goal of gaining global power overshadowed its pursuit of building positive relationships with states in the periphery. Therefore, current strategic planning must implement the Gujral Doctrine's benign approach to regional relations both to maintain India's power and counter China's rising influence. Today, the Indira Doctrine potentially allows China to step in as the main influencer over the smaller South Asian states and thereby undermine Indian authority in their own backyard. By failing to develop strong relationships with neighbors, Indian officials leave the smaller states to invite in the very foreign powers New Delhi wants to keep out. Indian officials want to avoid external influences in the IOR and Indian subcontinent, but the Indira Doctrine's strong-handed approach to regional conflicts leaves the area at risk of foreign encroachment.

Such experts as Mansingh comment on the weakness of a strong realist strategy when he explains that realists overestimate the role of tangible power and underestimate the ability of institutions, ideas, and other means of soft power to establish better relations overall.<sup>262</sup> For example, he criticizes Indira Gandhi for succumbing to this trap by using military strength to subdue Pakistan in areas like Siachen and economic strength against Nepal in ways that "made no attempt to build an institutional structure around the cultural, economic, geographic, and historical factors" to bring together the different actors in South Asia.<sup>263</sup> Mansingh concludes by writing that certain realist actions exhibited by Mrs. Gandhi have led to a "raj complex" where smaller states fear being absorbed or overtaken by India, so they instead lean to the United States or China for support.<sup>264</sup> All of these critiques combined help show the danger of following an Indira Doctrine strategy to address concerns in the periphery today.

The Gujral Doctrine presents a more productive strategy in the periphery because its ideals effectively portray India's positive influence in the closest circles of the mandala system. To achieve this goal, the doctrine outlines policies to forge better relationships with

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<sup>262</sup> Mansingh, "Indira Gandhi's Foreign Policy: Hard Realism?" 8.

<sup>263</sup> Mansingh, 8.

<sup>264</sup> Mansingh, 9.

neighbors. India's ability to have a trustworthy yet powerful influence in this near neighborhood is vital when considering recent Chinese attempts to exert influence in those areas. However, rising Chinese influence among India's smaller neighbors threatens India's ability to successfully carry out a Gujral Doctrine strategy and maintain its regional dominance. In the macro sense, China continues to pursue its BRI initiatives, which seek to increase economic integration throughout Asia and beyond with a Chinese-focused center.<sup>265</sup> For example, in December of 2017, the Chinese assumed total control of the Hambantota port in Sri Lanka after the native government was unable to repay its debts to Beijing.<sup>266</sup> Sri Lanka lies strategically off the coast of India, and Chinese influence in the island nation undermines India's ability to serve as the overarching power for these smaller neighbors.

The Gujral Doctrine holds several other key benefits for strengthening India's strategy in the periphery. If Indian policymakers were to draw on the roots of the Gujral Doctrine, India would pursue a peaceful end to the hot border disputes with Islamabad and therefore decrease Pakistan's need for a special relationship with China. The idea that Pakistan could turn to India for the same quality of relationship that they have with China may be a stretch, but augmented ties could bring the region closer towards mutual cooperation and thus loosen Beijing's foothold in Pakistan. Although the Gujral Doctrine is based in non-reciprocity, an environment of trust would benefit India greatly because then officials would not need to worry about their neighbors turning to external powers for help to balance against Indian power. One expert during Gujral's time recognized that the Gujral Doctrine could guide Indian actions for years to come when he states, "it gave a direction and sense of purpose which will forever remain one of the objectives of the Indian foreign policy."<sup>267</sup> The ability for policymakers to implement the Gujral Doctrine into contemporary strategic thought holds key implications for India's future.

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<sup>265</sup> Scott Kennedy, "Building China's 'One Belt, One Road,'" *CSIS*, April 3, 2015, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/building-china%E2%80%99s-%E2%80%9Cone-belt-one-road%E2%80%9D>.

<sup>266</sup> Maria Abi-Habib, "How China Got Sri Lanka to Cough Up a Port," *New York Times*, June 25, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/25/world/asia/china-sri-lanka-port.html>.

<sup>267</sup> Murthy, 651.

Improving regional relations through the Gujral Doctrine would also help settle contended territories between India and Pakistan. New Delhi and Islamabad have disputed areas within the states of Jammu and Kashmir since Partition.<sup>268</sup> Troops from both sides remain stationed in the unforgiving Siachen Glacier region due to the contended LoC.<sup>269</sup> Mistrust and security concerns on both sides fuel this continued conflict, and soldiers are killed every year due to the harsh conditions. One critic writes that “disputed borders are both a cause and a symptom of tensions between big neighbours in South Asia,”<sup>270</sup> and India will continue to be marred in these tensions if these disputes remain unresolved. Additionally, the stronger Chinese neighbor could utilize these contested areas to challenge Indian predominance in the region which would continue to inhibit New Delhi’s larger strategic goals. A Gujral Doctrine grand strategy would bring India closer to resolving these issues in the periphery and give New Delhi the strength to project power in the extended neighborhood.

Experts have also weighed in on the importance of India’s strategy to deal with its stronger Chinese neighbor. These critiques highlight the benefits of the Gujral Doctrine because augmented relations between China and India could establish greater trust in the region and decrease the need to display shows of force in the IOR. For example, Rehman writes that India needs to be prepared to counter Chinese naval power projections in the IOR.<sup>271</sup> This assertion holds even greater importance today as Chinese submarines have already been reported near Indian waters on several occasions.<sup>272</sup> The Chinese have argued these vessels are deployed for “anti-piracy” duties, but the IN has increased efforts to monitor submarine movements as this increased presence poses a major security threat to

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<sup>268</sup> Yosuf, “Kashmir Policy Needs a Fresh Appraisal.”

<sup>269</sup> Nair, 35–37.

<sup>270</sup> “Fantasy frontiers,” *The Economist*, February 8, 2012, <https://www.economist.com/graphic-detail/2012/02/08/fantasy-frontiers>.

<sup>271</sup> Iskander Rehman, “Tomorrow or yesterday’s fleet?” in *India’s Naval Strategy and Asian Security*, ed. Anit Mukherjee and C. Raja Mohan, (New York: Routledge, 2016), 37–40.

<sup>272</sup> Anit Mukherjee and C. Raja Mohan, *India’s Naval Strategy and Asian Security*, (New York: Routledge, 2016), 4.

India.<sup>273</sup> These events represent only a handful of examples that symbolize the distrust between these two nations.

The Gujral Doctrine also presents a positive strategy for Sino-Indian relations because just as Gujral helped facilitate India's economic liberalization, so too could Modi adopt this strategy to utilize the economic cooperation between New Delhi and Beijing as a basis for augmented strategic relations. Currently, Indian leaders cooperate with China economically but compete strategically. China became India's largest trading partner in 2013 and has held this top position ever since.<sup>274</sup> Bilateral trade between these two nations continues to grow each year and both rely on each other for key markets and investment. Strategically, the two nations remain dissatisfied with their mutual claims along the disputed McMahon Line which has resulted in several conflicts over the years.<sup>275</sup> A decade ago, the Chinese began calling the area "South Tibet" which implied a Chinese claim to the territory despite Indian calls for sovereignty over the same area.<sup>276</sup> In response to these issues, the Gujral Doctrine would provide a strategy to bridge the promising economic relations with the tense diplomatic and strategic relations into a peaceful compromise.

Additionally, India's strategy in the periphery would be best served with Gujral Doctrine foundations as the increasing Sino-Pak relationship continues to threaten New Delhi's security picture. India's ability to conduct actions that increase its global power in international circles will face obstacles as the Sino-Pakistani relationship grows stronger. Without a clear strategy, these two states will continue to pose a threat in India's backyard and will force Indian officials to stay focused on the region rather than project a global influence. Rajagopalan argues that China is already trying to balance against India by

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<sup>273</sup> Shaurya Karanbir Gurung, "14 Chinese navy ships spotted in Indian Ocean, Indian Navy monitoring locations," *The Economic Times*, July 12, 2018, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/14-chinese-navy-ships-spotted-in-indian-ocean-indian-navy-monitoring-locations/articleshow/61882634.cms>

<sup>274</sup> "India-China Trade Relationship," *PHD Research Bureau*, (January 2018): 4, [https://www.phdcci.in/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/India-China-Trade-Relationship\\_The-Trade-Giants-of-Past-Present-and-Future.pdf](https://www.phdcci.in/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/India-China-Trade-Relationship_The-Trade-Giants-of-Past-Present-and-Future.pdf).

<sup>275</sup> "India-China Border Dispute," *Globalsecurity.org*, February 21, 2018, [https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/india-china\\_conflicts.htm](https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/india-china_conflicts.htm).

<sup>276</sup> "Fantasy frontiers."

supplying Pakistan with nuclear and missile technology.<sup>277</sup> To further prove their special relationship these two states have established the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), and China has funded the creation of Gwadar port on Pakistani soil to gain access to the Arabian Sea.<sup>278</sup> Mansingh weighs in on the issue as well when he writes that “India could not attain its oft-proclaimed goals of a peaceful region free of foreign military presences, unless Pakistan shared these goals,” especially given this special relationship between China and Pakistan.<sup>279</sup> Therefore, India’s strategy in the periphery needs to address the Pakistan problem first before seeking to achieve global power status.

### **C. EXTENDED NEIGHBORHOOD**

India’s ability to resolve issues in the periphery will directly affect its ability to increase power in the extended neighborhood. Indian officials remain rooted in their idea of India’s “strategic autonomy” and therefore mistakenly consolidate power domestically. However, India lacks the capacity to wield the global influence its leaders desire. Rising Chinese influence and continued Pakistani aggression will continue to cause issues in India’s core and periphery. Aspects of the both the Indira Doctrine and Gujral Doctrine would give India the strategy to achieve global power status.

Considering the dynamic issues outlined in the core and periphery, New Delhi must utilize a middle ground approach between an Indira and Gujral Doctrine strategy in order to continue a realist accumulation of power while balancing positive relationships with neighbors. Only by properly implementing the ideals of both doctrines can India resolve issues in the core and periphery to exert influence in the extended neighborhood. The ideals of the Gujral Doctrine directly relate to India’s ability to forge worthwhile partnerships with stronger foreign partners. Just as the Gujral Doctrine was formed to establish trust among smaller South Asian nations, India needs to find a trustworthy partner to fill the gaps in its own capacity to counter Chinese power. India will not be able to achieve a global power position on its own because its current capacities fail to adequately counter Chinese

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<sup>277</sup> Rajagopalan, 13.

<sup>278</sup> Rajagopalan, 13.

<sup>279</sup> Mansingh, 189.

influence, especially considering India's internal bureaucratic issues. Indian officials must progress past the obsession with "strategic autonomy" and utilize the ideals already present in their history through the Gujral Doctrine. Such a strategy will facilitate India's ability to extend power into the global sphere rather than utilizing an exclusively realist strategy and over-extending on their own.

As a manifestation of this strategy, India has sought closer ties with the United States and increased certain partnerships to "expand its own freedom of action by seeking cooperative action with other second-tier powers in the international system."<sup>280</sup> Thanks to these actions, India has indeed increased its position in the international sphere and attracted the attention of the United States. Specifically, in 2002, the United States proposed three foundational agreements that would increase logistical support exchange between these two countries. Both nations have signed all three agreements as of September 2018.<sup>281</sup> Singh writes that logistical agreements like these serve as key steps in increasing India's presence abroad.<sup>282</sup> In the coming years, India's ability to strengthen ties within the "Quad" with the United States, Japan, and Australia will also indicate New Delhi's ability to expand the Gujral Doctrine strategy into the extended neighborhood. Forging worthwhile partnerships with these eager and powerful foreign powers can elevate India into the global role it desires.

When analyzing current Indian foreign policy actions, there is also evidence that Indian officials are exhibiting characteristics of an Indira Doctrine strategy. Overall, the desire to increase a realist assessment of power can also drive India to engage in foreign partnerships to elevate its power position overall. However, this transition will require Indian leaders to move past the obsession with "strategic autonomy" in order to step outside the inner strategic circles into the global sphere of influence. As Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi was able to steer India away from nonalignment and call for a multipolar world

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<sup>280</sup> Mohan, *Crossing the Rubicon*, 52.

<sup>281</sup> Ankit Panda, "What the Recently Concluded US-India COMCASA Means," *The Diplomat*, September 9, 2018, <https://thediplomat.com/2018/09/what-the-recently-concluded-us-india-comcasa-means/>.

<sup>282</sup> Singh, "In the Far Seas: Projecting India's Naval Power," 68.

where India would have a prominent role. Mohan argues that “the focus on multipolarity reflected the new self-consciousness about India’s potential to emerge as a major power in the international system,” and this newfound ability was due to Mrs. Gandhi’s focus on expanding India’s power in the global strategic sphere.<sup>283</sup> In regards to contemporary strategy, Modi’s administration can utilize this same realist fervor to progress India into the extended neighborhood by forging the strong partnerships it needs to adequately counter China’s rise. If India desires a preeminent role in South Asia and the IOR, it must solidify its stance as a powerful force and foreign partnerships provide the path to get there.

Indian officials have pursued other policies to increase their global power position, but critics write that their efforts so far still fall short. For example, Indian military leaders have successfully created a joint command center in the Andaman and Nicobar islands, but Gill explains how this command continues to lack key infrastructure that could enable India to project power farther abroad.<sup>284</sup> This forward base is also only one of India’s two joint commands, and inexperience among military officials in leading joint operations continues to hinder efficiency. Singh argues that India cannot shape its own strategic environment and expand its national interests over “distant littorals” because it lacks sufficient military capacity and experience.<sup>285</sup> If Indian leaders want to counter Chinese encroachment, they will need a more formidable presence in neighboring seas. Therefore, several areas of improvement remain for how India can best exert power in the extended neighborhood.

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<sup>283</sup> Mohan, *Crossing the Rubicon*, 52.

<sup>284</sup> Dhiraj Kukreja, “Andaman and Nicobar Islands: A security challenge for India,” *Indian Defence Review* 28, no.1 (January-March 2013). <http://www.indiandefencereview.com/news/andaman-and-nicobar-islands-a-security-challenge-for-india/>

<sup>285</sup> Singh, 66.

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## VI. RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

This study attempted to answer the question of whether India has the wherewithal to achieve its grand strategic goals of attaining global power. In the process, the research identified the primary factors which influence India's grand strategy both ideologically and historically. The study revealed ample discourse criticizing India for its failure to devise a coherent grand strategy. New Delhi's inability to effectively direct policy around a central plan worries the international community as India represents the strongest challenger to Chinese influence in South Asia and the IOR. Through this analysis, the research revealed the legacy of grand strategic thought in India through two primary schools: the Indira Doctrine and Gujral Doctrine. The study tested these schools of thought against George Tanham's strategic spheres of influence to determine their success as grand strategies both during their respective periods in history and in regard to the current security environment. Overall, the research found that the Indira Doctrine's realist desire to accumulate power would aid India's strategy today although this strategy needs to implement major improvements to the heavy-handed domestic policies. The Gujral Doctrine also promises to help contemporary leaders in that it provides direction to progress past India's obsession with "strategic autonomy" and forge stronger partnerships in the periphery and extended neighborhood. In this way, the combination of certain aspects of both doctrines offers to provide the current Modi government with valuable lessons and policies to achieve India's desired global power status.

Despite the history of important strategic doctrines, contemporary Indian leaders still struggle to devise a coherent grand strategy to effectively exert influence in the extended neighborhood and global arena. As Chinese capabilities, power, and influence continue to encroach on India's desired sphere of influence, the pressure only increases on New Delhi to devise a plan to maintain its predominance in the region. With all of these concerns in mind, this chapter makes several recommendations for the future of India's grand strategy in regard to each sphere of strategic influence.

## **A. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONTEMPORARY STRATEGY**

In order for India's leaders to devise an adequate grand strategy to achieve global power, they must resolve issues in each sphere of influence using the following recommendations. New Delhi must (1) prioritize the suggestions in the core, (2) reconcile disputes in the periphery, and (3) improve capabilities in the extended neighborhood. By building a strong foundation in the core and establishing a peaceful presence in the periphery, leaders in New Delhi will give India the strategic space needed to further its power in the extended neighborhood and global arena.

### **1. Core**

India's mixed strategy for how to best handle issues in its core has hurt its overall strength and hindered its ability to exert influence in the extended strategic circles. Without a strong domestic core and base of power, India will likely lose its stance as the preeminent power in the region because internal issues will distract New Delhi from countering Chinese influence. The failed realist policies under the Indira Doctrine revealed the danger of exerting a heavy hand over strategic concerns in the core. Conversely, the Gujral Doctrine effectively opened up India's core through economic liberalization, although this strategy disproportionately prioritized relations in the periphery. With these analyses in mind, New Delhi must make key adjustments to effectively strengthen the core and grant India the ability to progress its strategic focus outside its borders.

#### ***a. Improve Civil-Military Relationships***

The disconnect between military officials and policymakers in New Delhi has caused Indian leaders to overextend their strategic goals past what their nation's capabilities can realistically achieve. While leaders in New Delhi set their sights on global power, military officials cite the obsolescence of many resources and complain that the acquisitions process fails to equip the military with the goods it needs to both maintain security and project influence outward.<sup>286</sup> These bureaucratic issues continue to widen the gap between India's desired power stance and actual capabilities. Although India should

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<sup>286</sup> Singh, 65–69.

continue to pursue benign influence through economic and diplomatic measures as seen in the exercise of the Gujral Doctrine, the civil-military disconnect will hurt this country's power stance overall if it cannot successfully project its influence through military means outside its own borders. If military and political leaders are able to work in tandem, they will present the best possible future for an Indian grand strategy that implements all instruments of national power.

***b. Remedy Ethnic Discontent***

Ethnic discontent dating as far back as Indira Gandhi's premiership continues to haunt Indian domestic politics. Under the Indira Doctrine, Naxalite and Muslim extremist groups gained traction in response to Indira Gandhi's harsh initiatives, and these groups still hold influence within India's borders. More recently, extremist groups have carried out attacks on Indian soil during the shooting at the Indian Parliament and Mumbai bombings. Today, Modi's administration continues to move farther towards a Hindu-centric model and utilizes anti-Muslim sentiments during campaigns as a means of gaining support from the anti-Pakistani base. These polarizing methods only incentivize extremists and increase the likelihood of further attacks. Modi's government must therefore direct concerted effort on resolving ethnic minority issues. As explained in previous chapters, the inability to resolve issues in the core is likely to both hurt India's own internal security and inhibit its ability to direct resources to other spheres of influence.

***c. Reaffirm Commitment to Inclusive Indianness***

As Modi's BJP party continues Hindu-centric rhetoric, the issues in the core are only worsening. The current administration needs to reaffirm a commitment to India's historic state building narrative of inclusive Indianness rather than exclude and ostracize ethnic and religious minorities. India's idea of its great power comes from its size and legacy of the British raj, but current leaders must involve the minorities or they will fuel sectarian desires and break apart the nation's base of power. By committing to an inclusive idea of Indianness, New Delhi will envelop all Indian citizens into their desired rise to power, just as the Gujral Doctrine sought to connect smaller states in the periphery to India's rise as well.

## **2. Periphery**

The ability for leaders in New Delhi today to maintain positive relations with India's neighbors will likely affect the nation's rise to power in the extended neighborhood. To best strengthen the strategic concerns in the periphery, Modi's current government should adopt a Gujral Doctrine framework overall and resolve the border disputes that continue to distract India's strategic focus. Additionally, India must resolve disputes with its Pakistani and Chinese neighbors; otherwise, these states will continue to keep India hung up in its neighborhood.

### ***a. Revive Gujral Doctrine Spirit in Positive Neighbor Relations***

Indian leaders must utilize the foundation of the Gujral Doctrine in order to improve relations in the periphery. Specifically, the current administration needs to develop a strategy that includes Pakistan so that issues between these rivals are settled without military and nuclear escalation. Modi's tough stance on Pakistan may earn him a strong Hindu voting base, but isolating and pressuring Pakistan on the LoC only drives India's neighbor closer to rival China. Only through a universal inclusiveness can India show all its neighbors that it is truly committed to a peaceful rise.

The Gujral Doctrine sought to improve India's reputation in the region so that the surrounding states would have a stake in India's rise. This ideal is all the more important today considering that China is actively courting India's neighbors through the BRI. Now, Beijing presents smaller states in India's periphery with a viable alternative to balance against the historically dominant force in the subcontinent. To effectively counter this influence and maintain its power in the region, Indian leaders must revive benign negotiations and increase relationships with all its neighbors.

### ***b. Reconcile Territorial Disputes***

India's periphery remains mired in border disputes between India and China. Although a Gujral Doctrine strategy would promote better relations in the periphery in general, Indian leaders must direct careful attention to territorial issues with its two neighboring rivals. Simply succumbing to Chinese and Pakistani claims does not present a

viable solution because doing so could show weakness in a realist sense of power. Instead, Modi's administration needs to increase bilateral negotiations so that a compromise can be forged, at least along the Siachen Glacier and Himalayan region where opposing forces are currently deployed. Finding a solution to territorial issues would both align with the Gujral Doctrine's friendly neighbor policy and free up Indian military resources for more productive use elsewhere.

This research explained India's Kashmir problem and revealed how this area fuels territorial tension with Pakistan and ethnic minority discontent among Kashmiris. Experts like Mohan stand by the argument that India will continue to be mired by the legacies of Partition if it cannot resolve these long-standing disagreements.<sup>287</sup> Therefore, India's current administration must resolve the Kashmir issue on the best terms possible even if doing so requires granting concessions to Islamabad so that New Delhi can finally be freed from this obstacle in the periphery. Only by resolving these key issues in the periphery can Indian leaders realistically expect to exert worthwhile influence in the extended neighborhood.

*c. Adopt Consistent Military Strategy*

As stated previously in this research, India's nuclearization greatly impacted its military capacity, but Indian leaders have failed to devise a coherent strategy to define the relationship of nuclear weapons to conventional military means in India. A Gujral Doctrine regional policy and improvement of border disputes will hopefully decrease the amount of "hot" conflicts in India's neighborhood, but until a more peaceful environment is created, New Delhi needs to prepare its military options. A realist examination of the region shows that India's biggest rivals, China and Pakistan, both have nuclear weapons and their close relationship traps India between two nuclear-armed states. In this way, Indian leaders must decide how they will respond to future aggression from these states to avoid nuclear escalation while maintaining India's regional and international image. Without a clear

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<sup>287</sup> Mohan, *Crossing the Rubicon*, 1–12.

strategy and ability to minimize conflicts, India risks losing international partnerships if New Delhi shows it is unable to serve as the regional peacekeeper.

Indian leaders must engage Pakistan in constructive dialogue regarding terrorism and other causes of instability in the region. As recently as February of 2019, Indian officials demonstrated their inconsistent strategy on Pakistan in response to a suicide terrorist attack. Indian officials blamed Pakistan for backing suicide bombers in Indian Administered Kashmir (IAK). Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan announced he was willing to cooperate with Indian officials, but Modi authorized an attempted military strike as a response instead.<sup>288</sup> Indian fighters dropped a bomb on Pakistani soil in what they claim damaged a terrorist camp but ended up only downing a few trees in an uninhabited forest.<sup>289</sup> Although the conflict did not escalate into major arms exchanges, these misguided skirmishes still hold the potential to escalate in the future if Indian leaders fail to commit to negotiations and a solid military strategy overall.

### **3. Extended Neighborhood**

Indian leaders must remedy the issues in the smaller circles in the core and periphery before turning their sights to the extended neighborhood and global power arena. However, as the issues in the core and periphery are improved, Modi can then increase India's role in regional institutions and status in foreign partnerships to augment his nation's power position internationally.

#### ***a. Increase Influence in Regional Institutions***

If India hopes to project global power, then New Delhi needs to prove itself as the dominant regional actor. To achieve this stance, Indian leaders must step up their role in regional institutions to give themselves a reputable platform from which to speak in the global arena. Just as India served as the mouthpiece for the NAM and therefore garnered international respect, policymakers should tap into this same commitment in leading strong

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<sup>288</sup> George Steer, "From Suicide Bombing to Captured Pilot: A Timeline of the Latest Crisis in Kashmir," *Time*, February 28, 2019, <http://time.com/5541090/india-pakistan-2019-tensions-timeline/>.

<sup>289</sup> Steer, "From Suicide Bombing to Captured Pilot: A Timeline of the Latest Crisis in Kashmir."

regional institutions and raising South Asia's global influence. India's recent withdrawal from the 2017 SAARC meeting scheduled in Islamabad in 2017 represents the antithesis of India's stated grand strategic goals.<sup>290</sup> Here again, India's inability to resolve tensions with Pakistan in the periphery continues to hinder its progress as a strong actor in the extended neighborhood. By stepping up as a peaceful leader for such regional groups as SAARC, India will help strengthen peaceful institutions to deal with regional conflicts and thus free up its own strategic focus to continue rising to a global power.

***b. Develop Stronger Foreign Partnerships***

Indian leaders must progress past the obsession with "strategic autonomy" and forge worthwhile partnerships with stronger foreign powers, most notably the United States. Although the desire to maintain autonomy is noble, India risks its greater autonomy in the region by allowing its dominant role to wane in the face of increasing Chinese influence. As New Delhi resolves issues in the core, its capabilities will increase. However, in the meantime, key strategic gaps in India's capacity to exert power in the IOR and beyond still remain. Without the ability to remedy these weaknesses domestically, India must open itself up to closer relationships with foreign powers through increased trade and logistical agreements. India's membership in the Quad coalition and approval of three foundational agreements with the United States serve as positive steps forward. Moving ahead, leaders in New Delhi must take an honest assessment of how their capabilities stack up to their strategic goals and plan to utilize foreign partnerships accordingly.

**B. CONCLUSIONS**

In the face of such dynamic strategic issues in the core, periphery, and extended neighborhood, Indian leaders should seek to lead in the South Asian region rather than dominate. Such a strategy would undoubtedly upset several factions within New Delhi who maintain a tight ideological grip on India's legacy of preeminence in the subcontinent.

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<sup>290</sup> Observer Research Foundation, "An Impasse in SAARC," *Eurasiareview*, January 6, 2017, <https://www.eurasiareview.com/06012017-an-impasse-in-saarc-analysis/>.

However, the obsession with aspirations of the past risks clouding India's ability to maintain its stance as a strong actor in the region or achieve global power.

In short, Indian leaders must curtail their great power aspirations until they resolve disputes in the core and periphery. Settling issues in the lower circles of India's strategic concerns will give New Delhi the strategic space it needs to grow. India's leaders only have so many resources to divert towards strategic issues. The unresolved obstacles in the core and periphery are currently sapping India's energy to the point where there are not enough resources left for India to rise as a global power. The recommendations given above will help New Delhi slowly reconcile pressing issues and increase its reputation and power stance in the region. Indian leaders must draw on the successes of the Indira Doctrine and Gujral Doctrine and learn from their mistakes in order to develop a long-term grand strategy to achieve its great power goals.

### **C. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY**

This study recommends several approaches for further research. This thesis focused on an overview of India's grand strategy and key schools of thought, but further research could break down each aspect of India's grand strategy (e.g., military, diplomatic, and economic). This research touched on each aspect of grand strategy, but a more in-depth analysis of each section could reveal options to utilize each instrument of national power to achieve India's grand strategy.

Additionally, future studies could focus on the maritime dimension of India's strategy as SLOCs continue to dominate naval discourse. The IOR represents a hotbed of world trade. Therefore, an analysis of India's role in maintaining security in this region would benefit the international community as a whole.

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