

# Putin's India Deal SHOCKS USA | Prof. Anuradha Chenoy

Multipolar deals are here. India's most recent pragmatic foreign policy toward Russia defies the Western dictate. Professor emeritus Anuradha Chenoy from Jawaharlal Nehru University joins to discuss India's foreign policy shifts: Putin's India visit, US tariff and oil pressure, Modi's Israel and Iran stance, BRICS, China, and how India tries to keep strategic autonomy while balancing the US, Russia, and the Global South. Links: Economic and Political Weekly: <https://www.epw.in> Neutrality Studies substack: <https://pascallottaz.substack.com> (Opt in for Academic Section from your profile settings: <https://pascallottaz.substack.com/s/academic>) Merch: <https://neutralitystudies.com/shop> Donation: <https://neutralitystudies.com/donate> Timestamps: 00:00:00 Intro and Russia Visit 00:07:11 Tariffs and Investment Pledges 00:11:30 Israel Visit and Iran Fallout 00:14:13 India's Split Foreign Policy 00:24:07 Russia, China, and US Power 00:29:40 Regime Change and Domestic Stability 00:31:39 Iran, BRICS, and Gulf Tensions 00:36:37 BRICS, Currency, and China 00:44:12 Europe and the Iran War

## #Pascal

Welcome back, everybody, to Neutrality Studies. Today, again, with my dear guest, Anuradha Chenoy, a professor emeritus from the Jawaharlal Nehru University. Anuradha, welcome back.

## #Anuradha Chenoy

Hi, Pascal. Delighted to be on your channel, which does such incisive analysis of international politics.

## #Pascal

Thank you very much. So kind of you. And you too, you write a lot, actually, a lot of analysis about India's foreign policy. And you're, of course, also a Russia expert. You've looked very deeply at Indian-Russian relations. We've talked about this several times. And actually, a lot of things have been happening in Indian foreign policy just over the last 10 days. Can you catch us up with the different events?

## #Anuradha Chenoy

Sure. Well, I think a good starting point is that there was a Putin visit. President Putin visited India, and the press didn't give it a very high-profile kind of status, but he did sign several important agreements. For example, and I'll give you one outstanding example, India and Russia signed a maritime logistics exchange agreement by which Russian ships can anchor in Indian ports, and this

gives them more access to the Indian Ocean. Of course, India has signed a similar agreement earlier with the Americans, the Logistics Exchange Memorandum, which gives American naval ships a similar facility. So you can see that was one important kind of development.

## **#Pascal**

Are they equal? Is it basically equal rights for the Russians as for the Americans? So, a copy-paste effort?

## **#Anuradha Chenoy**

It's not exactly copy-paste, but it does give them rights. And the thing is, the American agreement became very controversial because, you know, India doesn't want to be—at least so far, it has not wanted to be—part of any American adventure or containment against China, which it doesn't see with Russia. And it gives Indian ships access to the Arctic. So it's a much more equal agreement than that with the Americans. Now, Indian ships don't really have an interest to go to U.S. ports—the naval fleet doesn't have an interest to go to U.S. ports—but they do have an interest in the Arctic and Russian ports on its east coast, Vladivostok onwards, upwards to the Arctic. So that was one important thing. Then nuclear plants, increase in trade.

The whole issue is that the Americans have put so much pressure on India not to take Russian oil. So in a way, while India wants to have—and they are—a strategic partner of the U.S., a lot of people can see that the relations are so asymmetrical with the U.S. compared to those with Russia. The U.S. dictates terms to India. They said, for example, we will allow you or not allow you to buy Russian oil. That was a statement from Scott Besant, repeated several times, that you're not allowed, or we allow you to buy Russian oil for one month. We give a sanctions waiver, and this has been extended by another month to manipulate oil prices, which the U.S. does. So they want that flow to continue. And again, Blinken has been in town—that is, the U.S. Secretary of State.

He was in town the last two days to attend a Quad meeting in India, the Quad foreign ministers' meeting, in which, again, his whole agenda was to sell Indian oil in the bilateral that he had directly with the prime minister, and even not directly with the foreign minister. He just walked into the prime minister's office. So you can see how unequal those relations are, where the whole assertion is of U.S. power over India. And then India has promised to invest 500 billion U.S. dollars in the American economy to buy American goods. Now, even the British Financial Times, which is a conservative paper, called this bizarre in its headlines, that, you know, India needs every bit of its foreign exchange, and here it's doing foreign direct investment in the U.S.

## **#Pascal**

And is that in relation to the tariff threat, or is that something else?

## **#Anuradha Chenoy**

It is in relation to the tariff threat, which we had discussed—I think you and I had discussed. But the thing is that India has not pushed back sufficiently. And while the tariffs imposed by the U.S., which had gone up first from 25% to 50% if they continued taking Russian oil, then India decreased taking Russian oil. And the talks which took place are not still very open. We still, you know, the documents haven't emerged. But in the meantime, the U.S. Supreme Court annulled some of the tariffs, but they do stand to some extent. And I think what I've seen written by many Indian economists is that these have not gone in favor of Indian farmers or the Indian economy, though the government has denied that.

But this figure, which India has repeated several times, as has the U.S., that India would invest 500 billion U.S. dollars in the next five years, has actually stunned everyone. That is, you know, India is not that big an economy that it can do this kind of investment. In fact, India is trying to welcome foreign direct investment in India, not the reverse. So this kind of, you know, reverse investment, which India has agreed to, shows a kind of leverage that the U.S. is putting on India, besides the fact of pretty high tariffs on Indian goods. So India assists in American reindustrialization, in a sense. But we don't know what India gets in return, really.

## **#Pascal**

Hey, very brief intermission because I was recently banned from YouTube. And although I'm back, this can happen anytime again. So please consider subscribing not only here, but to my mailing list on Substack. That's [pascallottaz.substack.com](https://pascallottaz.substack.com). The link's going to be in the description below. And now, back to the video. I mean, a lot of countries pledged this kind of investment, right? Also the Japanese. But the point is, a lot of Japanese companies actually have plants in the United States, and they sell to the U.S., so they earn U.S. dollars. And basically what this pledge is, is to reinvest those dollars into the economy over there. But you need to put the money somewhere anyhow, right? But for India, I think it's a different game, because do we have a lot of Indian companies that are directly engaged in the U.S. market to make USD?

## **#Anuradha Chenoy**

Well, the thing is that the trade is pretty good — the India-U.S. trade, where India has had a surplus. So it's something like \$10 billion yearly trade between the two, where they have a large surplus. But there are not that many Indian companies, though large Indian companies like the Adanis now have promised to, you know, start their companies in the U.S. because of different kinds of pressures that they have faced. And you can see the same thing happened with South Korea. You know, South Korea was the most advanced in shipbuilding, and now they have committed to invest 150 billion U.S. dollars in American shipbuilding.

So what the U.S. is doing both in, I think it's part of their foreign economic policy, their geoeconomics, where they're doing burden sharing, just like they put pressure on NATO for burden sharing — that they buy U.S. weapons, invest in the military-industrial complex — and there's a deindustrialization, which I can see, for example, in Germany, etc. I've seen it being discussed on your channel. Similarly, that process has started in Asia, and it was evident in the Quad meeting, which happened — the Quad Foreign Ministers meeting. The kind of pressure that the U.S. is putting on Asian countries is to do burden sharing. So it's not just that they will have U.S. bases. Of course, India does not have any U.S. bases, but Japan, the Philippines, South Korea, and others do.

So they're not just going to be bases, but they're integrating them with their supply chains and American reindustrialization. So they're going to be key. The network, economic networks, I think I can see from what I read — and I read the original documents signed in these bilateral arrangements — where the U.S. now is not just using them as forward bases. Of course, they will, in their struggle and conflict with China, but they want to integrate them and make them into kind of defense hubs for the U.S. military. Of course, they were there earlier also importing military and weapons from the U.S., but also with economic supply chains where they will invest in the U.S. and the U.S. will sell their goods here. So it's that kind of, I could call it, some new form of neocolonialism, really. And the governments and the regimes are accepting it quite willingly.

## **#Pascal**

This is kind of fascinating that India went along with it. I mean, pressure is one thing. But on the other hand, we've seen that the government of Mr. Modi has been very willing to go along with a lot of things. And of course, there was also this very unfortunate timing coincidence that he went to visit Israel basically like five days or so before Israel and the U.S. started their sneak attack on Iran. But ever since then, on the one hand, I think India is not very happy with the Iran war. On the other hand, Mr. Modi has been very silent about it. Yet the impact also of the oil must be there. I mean, how does the closure of the Strait of Hormuz now impact India?

## **#Anuradha Chenoy**

It's impacted India very negatively. And I link it up to what you said about Mr. Modi's visit to Israel. It was planned at a time when Israel has been so isolated. For the first time, many European countries see it as a pariah state. The whole International Court of Justice, which calls this a plausible genocide and has said that countries should not give it military assistance or have military relations, both of which India has violated, you know, by going there and continuing with military and economic ties with Israel. And in a sense, this alienates at least the Muslim Arab population.

Though the Arab regimes, many of them, are also complicit in this, except for Iran. And Iran has had very old and significant relations with India for decades. And to do this at this time, when everyone knew that the negotiations were not working, and this is the second time that the U.S. and Israel

were going to bomb Iran, it was a unilateral aggression of choice. It was against the United Nations, every convention of the United Nations. And yet the prime minister went to show his relationship with Israel and almost endorsed Israel's policies by using terms in the Israeli Knesset, by saying, "If India is the motherland, Israel is the fatherland."

Now, how can you say such a thing for a country which is committing genocide against the Palestinians, a cause for which India has been one of the first countries since the 1940s and 1950s to recognize the Palestinians' right to self-determination, which, again, by the way, India, as a member of the Non-Aligned Movement, as a member of the BRICS, reiterates in these huge forums, in multilateral forums. They support it in the United Nations. But in this bilateral kind of relationship, they display this contradiction, which really shows a kind of hypocrisy.

## **#Pascal**

Do you read that as India just having these two hearts in its chest that beat on different rhythms? One being the anti-colonial one and one being now the right-wing government one? Or is it something that is just particular to the Modi government? And if so, do you expect this will fall back on him? Or is his support growing? Is it decreasing? What are your expectations about the Modi government's lifeline in the future?

## **#Anuradha Chenoy**

Well, look, I think this shift coincides with India's adoption of neoliberal economic policies since the 1990s, the urge to be a great power, and to build strategic relations with the United States, which actually started at the Manmohan Singh–Clinton time, when Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, the Congress was in power, and they signed a nuclear deal with the United States, where the United States lifted the sanctions they had imposed on India. But the Modi government has increased this tempo greatly, projecting India as a medium-level important power with global aspirations. And to do this, they feel that large sections of the—there is a division, but sections of the strategic community feel that the way ahead should be by linking up with the United States.

But at the same time, they have had a very time-tested relationship with Russia. A lot of the development you see in India is on account of the boost that the public and state sector gave to the private sector, to the capitalist sector, to that mixed economy. But with this transition, there has been that privatization and a growth of the Indian capitalist class, in a sense, who have commitments both with Russia and with the US and with Europe. That is why they call it, you know, their rhetoric is that there are four aspects of the conceptual framing of Indian foreign policy. One, of course, is strategic autonomy to link with a multipolar world.

They are committed to multipolarity because they have gained with multipolarity. They've gained with globalization. This is a period where you can associate India's rise with this transition from unipolarity to multipolarity, the opening up of the Indian economy. So that's one, their commitment

to multipolarity. Second, strategic autonomy, where India should decide its path of development. And you can see that increasingly in many of the Global South countries that are reaching a point of, let's say, takeoff. If you want to use Rostow's theory of 5%, you know, then it takes off. But their strategic autonomy is therefore very important.

The third aspect is that they would always be associated with the Global South, and they see themselves as one of the leaders—not the leader, because it is a collective, it's informal—but they see themselves as one leader of the Global South. They have that vision. And the fourth is its support for multilateralism and the United Nations and its charter, the humanitarian codes, etc. And in a lot of these, by supporting just this one thing of Israel, I think they violate all four of these conceptual goals. In their urge to become closer to the U.S., it seems like they want to go through the Jewish lobby or AIPAC, as Mearsheimer and others call it, the lobby. That's a possibility, because they have not been able to get the kind of strategic ballast from the U.S. as others have.

And India is not that high in U.S. priorities. Of course, American priorities, as we saw in their National Security Strategy, which came out in December, and the Monroe Doctrine, etc., of the Western sphere and their regime changes and their interest in Latin America. Then this war in the Gulf, their attack on Iran, and balancing their relations with China. Now, that also is extremely important for India, because India thought that, I mean, their strategy was based on a conceptualization that if there are poor relations, which there have been, between the U.S. and China—an increased conflict and misunderstanding—if American companies leave China, they would come to India and maybe also Vietnam, which did happen to some extent with Apple and others, and now Google, all have huge bases in India.

But now with the Trump-Xi meeting, it's clear that China is an equal of the United States, that the U. S. has recognized it. Of course, it doesn't. And the key words in that, as you would have noted, were "constructive strategic stability" or "managed stability," competition in the Indo-Pacific. So where does it leave countries like South Korea, the Philippines, India, etc., who were hoping that with that, or even Japan, they would benefit? But at the same time, none of these countries—I don't know about Japan—but considering what the Prime Minister said about how much they want to be involved in any conflict over Taiwan, I know India does not. They want to have relations with China and Taiwan, etc.

But they've always had this one China policy. They are very clear on it. It hasn't shifted. Sometimes they're ambiguous—that is, it doesn't come out in their policy or their documents between India and China. And this led to a bit of an issue when Foreign Minister Wang Yi came to India. He wanted this written in the bilateral statement, but India did not write it. They left it ambiguous about India recognizing Taiwan as a province of China. But it also means that India will be downgraded to some extent because the United States does not need it in the same way. And that is why, when they had this Quad meeting of foreign ministers—of the four foreign ministers who were here: the Japanese, the Australian...

## **#Pascal**

The Quad is India, Japan, the United States, and Australia.

## **#Anuradha Chenoy**

That's right. Yeah. That's why it's called the Quadrilateral Forum. It was first begun in 2007, but didn't really take off. Then during Trump's second term in 2017, they again got a push. And recently, again, they've not had very important summit meetings. So I think the United States is reshaping its relations with the Quad in that way. You can see from the joint statement which came out of that meeting, the Quad gives the U.S. access, it focuses on critical minerals, enhances U.S. energy sales, and their main task will be boosting maritime surveillance and port infrastructure across the Indo-Pacific. Which means that the U.S. would use the Quad nations mainly for surveillance purposes, obviously against the Chinese, maybe even against the Russians, or even against their own coordination.

I mean, they'll encourage Australia to tell the U.S. what the Indian Navy is doing vis-à-vis the Russian Navy. Because a huge route—the Vladivostok–Chennai route—for Indian shipping, for Russian oil, and that gray shipping, etc. So this is what the U.S. is envisaging for the Quad. But India downplays it and keeps saying it's not a military alliance, it's not against anyone, any other third country. And both Rubio and the foreign minister said that their foreign policies are multi-vector. And I think Rubio said that because India is concerned about the U.S. supporting Pakistan in such a big way again, which I think Pakistan played a good role in the process—war as a mediator, as an interlocutor. But it has given Pakistan an in into the U.S. foreign policy establishment, which India does not have. And India sees its foreign policy a lot through its lenses of China and Pakistan.

## **#Pascal**

Right, but it's a dangerous game, isn't it?

## **#Pascal**

I mean, again, as the saying goes, countries don't have permanent friends, they only have permanent interests, right? And it's like, on the one hand, yes, there are worries about China and even border disputes and whatnot. Of course, the same with Pakistan. On the other hand, the United States is helpful in certain respects, and it's itself a threat to the Indian economy and Indian interests on the other. It seems to me that the only one that India, at the moment from your description, is not highly worried about is actually Russia.

## **#Pascal**

That's kind of, no, no, we are good buddies, and we are not really afraid of you, nor are you causing us any harm.

## **#Pascal**

Is that about the case?

## **#Anuradha Chenoy**

Yeah, well, first about, you know, this very used aphorism about permanent interests. Now, very often interests are not symmetrical. In the case of the United States, they do have permanent interests, but the interests are in favor of the U.S., and they would put pressure or use force to enforce their interests. And that's also well known. So sometimes it goes against a country's interests. Second, it may not be the entire country's interest. It might be in the interest of just the regime or just the companies or the corporations, but not in the interest of the people. And you can see that between India and the U.S. currently, where India is bending to U.S. interests as opposed to asserting its own interests. And you can see that—I can see that—in U.S. relations with a lot of countries.

## **#Pascal**

Yeah.

## **#Anuradha Chenoy**

Especially currently. Earlier, there was diplomacy and a bit more negotiation, but now under Trump, it's very blatant that everything has focused on making America great again, not about bilateralism, about how all these countries can serve American interests. And yes, to your second argument, this is a dangerous game. And I think the best option—of course, there are always multiple options—the best option would be to have engagement with China, which they're doing. The relations between China and India are definitely better than what they were till about 2024. They have many mechanisms from the military onwards where there is engagement.

A lot of tension points on the border have not really been resolved, but managed quite well. Both sides have moved away from direct conflicts. There's a lot of trade between India and China. A lot of India's trade with the rest of the world depends on precursor elements from China. Let's say, you know, it's often said that India is the pharmacy of the world. It exports a lot of pharmaceutical and electronic equipment. But a lot of small things for antibiotics or for chips come from China. So there is a kind of collaboration. And now India has opened—just recently they announced—that China will be allowed to invest in India.

## **#Pascal**

Right.

## **#Anuradha Chenoy**

In non-strategic sectors. So they're opening up to China. But their relations with Pakistan remain very poor, primarily because Pakistan has very often used terror in India—terrorism. They have used it because of the sensitivity of certain areas, and there's evidence for that. But no one in the world is really buying India's narrative that Pakistan should be isolated. So India has done it themselves. And it went into a war after the Pulwama attacks earlier this year. But they do need to talk to Pakistan. You cannot deny geography, and you need to reread. And both sides—I'm not saying just India or Pakistan—but both sides have to step back from this kinetic relationship which has developed on the border, where Pakistan uses an asymmetric strategy of using terror, and India then says they will use the military option. So that's very dangerous and alienating, really.

## **#Pascal**

Yeah, of course. And it's super dangerous, of course, because both of them are also nuclear weapon states, apart from the damage you can do with conventional weapons. But I remember that the first time we talked, you actually pointed out how a lot of countries right around India were recently regime-changed, from Bangladesh over to Sri Lanka. And who else did you have?

## **#Anuradha Chenoy**

Pakistan.

## **#Pascal**

Yeah, Pakistan, of course, in 2022. So, I mean, do you think that there's any fear also inside India that, you know, if India goes too far in one direction—like, let's say, if it moved away from Israel or something else—that something like that could be attempted? What is your assessment about the resilience of India when it comes to all of these NED projects and CIA-imposed kind of color revolution thingies? Is that a sort of demarche that's also above the head of the Indian government?

## **#Anuradha Chenoy**

Well, you know, I think India is too large and complex for an externally pushed regime change. But definitely the CIA, the Vassal, the NED, Soros are all active. But India does, you know, it is now a managed democracy because, you know, there have been a lot of moves in which, you know, many citizenship rights have been curbed through changes in electoral laws, etc. But it still remains—it does have democracy as a weapon, and it's too large for that kind of regime change.

But recently, for example, there has been a social media storm among the younger, what they call the Gen Z generation, saying that, you know, critiquing the education system, which is good. But right now, it's just on social media, not organized or on the ground. So there are pockets of dissent. And of course, it's very easy to blame the foreign hand. But I think given India's strategic partnership with the United States, I don't think India really wants to blame or point a finger at the United States currently as attempting regime change in India.

## **#Pascal**

Right, right. Okay. So, and the relationship with Iran—do we have any information on that? Were there any visits actually by Iranians to India?

## **#Anuradha Chenoy**

Yes. Yeah, Araghchi came for the BRICS foreign ministers' meeting, and he did request India to put forward, you know, in the BRICS, a resolution condemning the U.S.-Israeli war. But the UAE is also a member—the United Arab Emirates is also a recent member of BRICS. I mean, both of them have been included in BRICS. And the UAE wanted, in fact, a resolution against Iran. So there was a bit of an imbroglio, I think, within the BRICS meeting. It was evident because there was no resolution, there was no consensus resolution at the end of the meeting. Instead, what emerged from the foreign ministers' BRICS meeting was that India, as chair, issued an outcome document which recorded the differences between members based on their national positions.

So they recorded the position of Iran and the UAE, and overall they condemned, they said that there should be peace, there should be a negotiated settlement, an early resolution of the conflict, as they put it, in accordance with international law. And India's statement said there should be an unimpeded flow of maritime commerce through international waterways and protection of civilian lives and infrastructure. So really, but on other things, the BRICS meeting, I think, had some important resolutions. For example, on Gaza, they affirmed that the South African case against Israel in the International Court of Justice should be followed, and the legal obligations, that there should be unobstructed humanitarian assistance. They urged all parties to allow humanitarian assistance. And they also called for that old position that the Gaza Strip be unified with the West Bank and that Palestine have the right to self-determination. And they also had it.

## **#Pascal**

Yeah, that was done with the consent of the UAE.

## **#Anuradha Chenoy**

The rest was all consensus. It was on this that they couldn't have a consensus, so there was just a joint outcome declaration by India. But they didn't say there was no consensus on this. Even on

Lebanon, they said they condemned Israel's attacks on UNIFIL. They called for a ceasefire in Lebanon, Syria, and Sudan. They opposed unilateral economic measures, that is, sanctions, which is an old Indian position. They expressed concern on the issues of terrorism. And they also supported that the New Development Bank, the NDB, which is the main BRICS economic institution, runs on the basis of being member-led and demand-driven.

So it's different from the IMF and World Bank. They called for its strengthening and its expansion. But the main BRICS meeting will be in September, where a lot of India's rhetoric on strategic autonomy, etc., will be on display there. Whether BRICS has gone forward, whether in this year where India is the chair and hosts the meeting, whether it stagnates and doesn't get any new resolution, etc. So that will be the September meeting, where it will be a meeting of heads of state. Of course, India would like Mr. Putin and Xi Jinping to come, but it's not clear who will come. You know, they haven't announced yet.

## **#Pascal**

Right, right. But that's something to look forward to and keep an eye on. Also, because BRICS at the moment is again at one of these points — they had a lot of backwind, right? And it was, up until Kazan, I would say, a lot of positive comments. And recently, there are all these voices wondering, can this go on, or is the Iran war, and are the others — is the United States now successfully throwing a wrench into this process? On the one hand, with the threats they're making; on the other hand, with the kind of carrots they're trying to put out. What's your gut feeling when it comes to India? Because one thing we know is that the Chinese-Russian relationship is at an all-time high. I mean, difficult to get any better, but it's like, you know, they are now firmly cooperating, and probably China even changed its stance on what Russia should or should not do when it comes to Ukraine. Where do you see India fitting into, let's say, the core five of the BRICS?

## **#Anuradha Chenoy**

Well, one, I think if you see the trajectory of all international organizations, it's never unilinear. It will go up and down. And yes, there is pressure both on Brazil and on India by the United States to be sensitive to American sensitivities on multipolarity.

## **#Pascal**

Yeah, on American neocon snowflakes, who, when you talk about multipolarity, start crying and say, like, no, my feelings are hurt now. What about my hegemony?

## **#Anuradha Chenoy**

Right. So they really see BRICS as a major, as a kind of roadblock to U.S. hegemony. And they do not want multipolarity, though they are being forced to recognize it. Because even small states like

Iran have shown agency and resistance, even at great cost. So you cannot humiliate these small states. So I think there's a lot of power in small states currently. Second, Russia and China are definitely leading the BRICS. They're pushing it, but they want to take everyone along. It's a very important platform. Sometimes it can take a step back, you know, one step forward, one step backward, and two steps forward kind of thing. They understand these long-term philosophies better.

And all of China's philosophies of hide your capability, bide your time, etc. They use all that. You can see it in the BRICS negotiations also. But yes, India may not want BRICS to move that fast, especially on currency. But you can see, India benefited a lot from bilateral trade in local national currencies, like the rupee-ruble trade on oil benefited India. And they've had similar agreements with a lot of Southeast Asian countries. It's kind of a currency swap, a national currency swap. And they have agreements on that. And the Reserve Bank of India has allowed that these countries can have a Vostro account, meaning they can buy in Indian rupees and India could buy in their local currencies.

But the U.S. doesn't. They want all trade only in dollars. So they don't want this to go forward, really. And India might go a bit slow compared to what they were doing before the sanctions and trade measures, tariffs started. Because the U.S. now is doing these secondary sanctions on all countries that do not trade in dollars. So there would be some issues about BRICS, but Russia and China have decided not to obey sanctions. You saw, I think it was April 14, their new law, which ordered Chinese companies to bypass any American sanctions and just take Russian and Iranian oil.

## **#Pascal**

I was just about to ask about that. I mean, that's the first time that China actually forbade its own refineries from following U.S. sanctions. Do you see any chance that at some point India might copy some of this and say, like, guys, no, I mean, we are not going to subject our companies to these foreign sanctions laws? Or is the structural leverage of India too small for that one?

## **#Anuradha Chenoy**

It's too small, and the regime's interest in the U.S. is too large. And, for example, now the Venezuelan president is going to be coming to India in a day or so for Venezuelan oil, which is dictated by the U.S. In fact, Rubio announced it, not our own External Affairs Ministry. Rubio announced the visit. So we really don't know because the Indian ministry did not announce this. So India is worried about American sanctions, though there are some indications that the economy is having problems because of the fuel crisis, as they call it. The fuel, the foreign exchange, and, you know, these two are going into crisis. The rupee versus the dollar is at an all-time low, and oil prices are at an all-time high, and this is impacting the economy.

And like many other Global South countries, the government is saying, you know, work from home for two days a week to cut down fuel costs, which are all indications of some kind of high inflation

and unemployment and other things, though it has not been termed like that officially. Because if you're giving up on buying cheap Russian oil, discounted Russian oil, which favored the Indian economy—and India is a completely oil-dependent economy—we do not have our own oil like much of Southeast Asia. So it's all imported, and you're getting discounted oil from both Russia and Iran, and that has been tempered to some extent. It's decreased.

## **#Pascal**

The flow from Russia continues, right?

## **#Anuradha Chenoy**

It continues, but it's decreased compared to earlier. And the flow from the U.S., American oil, which comes another thousand kilometers away, has increased. So it's much more expensive. And it's expensive oil. It's fracked oil. But the U.S. is putting pressure, and, you know, they're kind of declaring that it's a win for their midterm elections—that India will now buy more American oil, more American weapons, and invest in America and make America great again. So that is the U.S. rhetoric, whereas I, for example, don't see it really in India's interest to go this far. I'm not opposed to, you know, strategic relations with all countries, but they should have a level of equality, which only China has achieved with the U.S. Every other country has asymmetric relations. And that's what the U.S. wants for its kind of at least stemmed-down hegemony. So what they're trying with Quad and India, et cetera, is burden sharing and a low-cost hegemony.

## **#Pascal**

Low-cost hegemony. I like that expression. It's like, okay, we don't want to spend all these resources anymore on you guys, but you still do as we say. And I think this is kind of the mindset, right? Going abroad and telling everybody what's going to happen. Look, we're here now. Whereas I think, in my perception, the Russians, but also the Chinese, actually come with proposals like, shall we do this? What about that one? Yeah. What about the Europeans? Because the Europeans, too, talk down on everybody. But they're like a joke version of the United States because they have nothing to prop it up. How is the relationship with Europe developing?

## **#Anuradha Chenoy**

Look, India now has a free trade agreement with Europe. They have good relations with Europe. Of course, Europe is, you know, earlier they used to lecture India a lot on human rights and democracy and dissent. But that really has been exposed after they supported and were quite complicit in the genocide in Gaza and against the Palestinians. And really, so their main interest is trade. They have gone low on it, though the Europeans always have these social clauses in their trade agreements. The social clauses meaning that there should be green industry, which they can only import goods which have a green tag, which is, I suppose, okay.

But the Indians resisted that. So there have been compromises. That is why the European-Indian Free Trade Agreement took something like 12 years to be negotiated. But it has been negotiated. At the same time, India does want European investments. So it's actually a conflict-free relationship and much more symmetric than the one with the U.S. Also, I think India is quite aware of the kind of bureaucratization you have to deal with in the EU. So they have bilaterals with the UK, with Norway, with Belgium, etc. That's easier than having some kind of agreement with the EU. But the relations with Europe, I would say, are fairly positive, yeah, and helpful for both sides.

Of course, there are issues of visas. Even with the U.S., they're really clamping down on visas for Indians and not treating them very well. But I think Indians still, I mean, the Indian elite has one foot in the U.S. You'll see most of them going there for education, and all that benefits the U.S. education sector. But now there has been this clamping down on liberal education in the U.S., as there has been in India, and that's what the rise of the right does. And the U.S. wants, of course, Europe to have more right-wing governments. We can see that with Rubio's statements, and they're really intervening on that. So...

## **#Pascal**

Yeah, but it's quite interesting. I mean, in a sense, what comes out of this discussion is that with a multi-vector foreign policy also comes a multi-challenge foreign policy, right?

## **#Anuradha Chenoy**

Absolutely. And more challenges for peace because you're getting away with, you know, earlier... Of course, the Americans were a factor in the India-Pakistan war, though the resolution was primarily India — it's the one who decided, OK, you know, after four days, that's enough. It was a very limited war. But then President Trump almost a hundred times said that he was the main negotiator. And it's part of his string of resolutions, as part of his claim for the Nobel Peace Prize. So there is this challenge. All the challenges remain. And let's see.

## **#Pascal**

Yeah, let's see. I mean, there's nothing left to do. Just on the last note, you know, if there are two kids in some schoolyard fighting here in Japan and they stop, then Donald Trump will probably claim that he stopped it. It's like, at this point, you know, anything that can get him a Nobel Peace Prize, he will claim. But anyway, maybe, maybe very last point — how do the Indians and the media look at the Iran war? Is it something that also in the public perception is relatively clear? I mean, this is just the United States and Israel going berserk. Or are there differences in perception of what's happening in Iran?

## **#Anuradha Chenoy**

I think as far as Indian people and media are concerned, they have portrayed the war as it is — that there was aggression in the middle of negotiations. This was the second aggression. But the Indian government has not condemned it, has not condemned the U.S. and Israel in the words that they should have, like Russia or China or even Pakistan or other Global South countries, and South Africa particularly, did. And that is because they feel they're prioritizing their relations with the U.S. and Israel to such an extent that they feel you cannot criticize even a friend. Of course, if a friend does something wrong, you should be free to criticize that. But they're not doing that, which has not gone down very well with a lot of the Indian public.

## **#Pascal**

And not even after the sinking of that Iranian Navy ship that was in Indian waters on an invitation, right? I mean, that must have been quite a bit of a shock. And I had a former Indian foreign minister actually on my channel to talk about this, and he was quite surprised. He was quite angry — Mr. Sibal. He was angry about that. But it seems that the current government at this point, they just remain silent in order not to pick a fight where they don't need it, in a sense.

## **#Anuradha Chenoy**

Yeah, and I think the former foreign secretary, Sibal, on your channel was very good on this, and he was unequivocal. And I have a similar position that India was in the wrong, but the Indian government did not critique it. And the Indian media is an echo chamber of the government today.

## **#Pascal**

Any media anywhere in the world.

## **#Anuradha Chenoy**

It's a controlled media now, synthetic controlled media. You can call it anything. You can call it controlled, or some people call it note-takers or whatever, but that's what it is. But it doesn't reflect what the feelings of a lot of Indian people are. Of course, Indian people are polarized, and a lot of people don't even know, given the level of... There's not that much debate on international issues, but on Iran, overall, there was an underlying critique of American-Israeli aggression and the impact it had on India's fuel, fertilizer, and finance — as one newspaper called it, the three Fs.

## **#Pascal**

Yeah. Okay, good. I mean, political science, we all call it path dependence, right? Countries are where they are because they have a history. And well, India is obviously also balancing its way through. Anu, people who want to follow your writing, where's the best place to read you?

## **#Anuradha Chenoy**

See, I write a lot for Economic and Political Weekly and for these kinds of academic journals, and that's quite available. If you Google me — I haven't got a Substack yet. Maybe I will and put it all there. But I've been so busy writing and reading. There's so much you have to read just to keep up that, I mean, it's amazing how you do everything. I'm a great admirer of this.

## **#Pascal**

I ask people like you, who do all the reading, and then you tell me. So thank you for that.

## **#Anuradha Chenoy**

But if they Google my name and the articles I've written, which are on all these issues, from BRICS to U.S. policy to national security, they mostly come out in the Economic and Political Weekly, where I write.

## **#Pascal**

And your books are also a wonderful read, everybody. Please Google Anuradha Chenoy. Get one of her books, read some of her articles, follow her wherever you find her. We will also have her back here on the channel. Anuradha Chenoy, thank you so much for your time today.

## **#Anuradha Chenoy**

Thank you, Pascal. See you again, and best wishes for Neutrality Studies.

## **#Pascal**

Thank you.