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PANEL DISCUSSION:

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BRUCE JONES: Good morning. Good afternoon. Good evening. Depending on your time zone. Thank you for joining us. I'm Bruce Jones. I'm at the Brookings Institution, where I'm part of the Strobe Talbott Center on Security Strategy and Technology. And it's my distinct pleasure to host us today for a discussion on India's role in the changing international order. This event is timed to coincide with the wrap up of India's participation in the G7 summit in Hiroshima, as well as the planned quad summit didn't quite take place given Biden's unexpected detours. But India's participation in two mechanisms that I've come to indicate or to reflect a growing partnership between India and the West on some key strategic questions. But it also comes after a year in which there's been a lot of debate and a lot of confusion about India's posture on international order and its role on the world stage, in particular, arising from confusion, even consternation in the United States and Europe over India's posture views v Russia during the Ukraine war. To help us understand how India actually sees its role in the international order, we have a terrific panel to discuss the issue. I'll introduce each of them as we go along. We'll cover a range of topics and bring in some questions from the audience which were received by email. I want to start with Raja Mohan. He is a senior fellow at the Asia Society Policy Institute, was the director of the Institute for South Asian Studies. If you can find a highly credible think tank, Raja has worked there. If you have had a thought on Indian ground strategy, he's written a book about it. One of the most accomplished scholars and author is on Indian ground strategy and Indian foreign policy. So, Raja, let me ask you first to help us understand how India sees itself in this wider debate around international order. And one of the themes that's constantly in the discussion is this notion that India is looking for some form of strategic autonomy or updated non-alignment within this kind of wider terrain. And perhaps you could give us your thoughts on how you see that sort of issues. Don't forget to unmute. Raja, you're muted, So.

C. RAJA MOHAN: Okay. Is it? Can you hear me now?

BRUCE JONES: Yeah.

C. RAJA MOHAN: Sorry, I was saying thank you for inviting this conversation into this important discussion about India and the international order. When you asked me about strategic autonomy as some kind of a defining feature of India's engagement with the world. But I think that tends to be a mystification of this concept. The way the discourse takes place in India and how the rest of the world reacts to it. I would say that essentially three elements to this idea of strategic autonomy. One is a fairly mundane one, which is all countries, all sovereigns in the international system seek to maximize their autonomy. I think that's the essential feature of international system of multiple sovereigns. So there I think there's nothing special about it. But I think as a large country with the major power ambition of its own. I think the emphasis on India, in India, on independent decision making, we had that in the US, which is the most powerful nation in the world, often says, look, we don't want to take orders from the UN or some kind of a committee that wants to run my board. So my nature of my politics. So I think that it's very similar to what the US thinks, that it needs an independent decisions of its own consultants. Second, I think, which is the post-colonial India, that India won its independence after prolonged colonial rule. Therefore, prediction of independent judgment in foreign policy became one of the key features that it was simply not going to cede that choice of judging the world politics to some other centers of power. So that is the second, second feature. And I think what we've seen in India is somewhat deploying the concept of strategic autonomy. In the last 30 years, largely against the West. Because I think post 1991, the U.S. and the Western policies of intervention are in the internal affairs of other states. I think that produced a reaction, apprehension. So partly I think the emphasis on strategic autonomy was to defend against that kind of interventionism in the West. And I think today the self-reflection in the West itself, the benefits and costs of of such intervention. A third aspect, I think, which is really the the imperatives of nation building. The imperatives of state formation of economic development often put India at odds with the presumed norms and demands of the developed states. I like if India does what it what the U.S. has actually done of putting stitching together a state through violence. I mean, violence is endemic. State makes law. What makes it. That's common to every single modern state's history? Well, I think there's a tendency to be judgmental in the West often how the state formation is taking place in India. And I think that creates a whole range of problems where I think that wants to be it can secure its own state building off from the interference and the attempt by the others to set the agenda. But I would conclude with one important thought The emphasis on strategic autonomy does not rule out alliances, coalitions and partnerships. So I think often there's a tendency to conflate the two. After all, it was Nehru who invented non-alignment and turned to the US after after China attacked India in 1962. India done to Soviet Union in 1971.

When the US and China seem to be supporting Pakistan's repression in Bangladesh. And now Mr. Modi has brought India very close to the United States to deal with the the challenges from China that it faces. So so I think it must be important to remember whether we talk about strategic autonomy or multipolarity. Indian State responds to the threats and circumstances. So the ideology is adapted to the need and not the other way around. The actions are not defined by ideology, but the actions that the state needs to take will be justified by modifying the ideology.

BRUCE JONES: That's extremely helpful. It's also subtle, which means it's incapable for Washington to relate to but will come. We'll come to that in due course. Garima, you work at the German Marshall Fund in Brussels. You run the India Trilateral Forum. You've written a great deal about Europe's relations, India and vice versa with the EU for a while, as well as GPI in Berlin. Can you give us your thoughts on how this looks from Europe and how you see Europe fitting into India's overall approach to international order and grand strategy?

GARIMA MOHAN: Sure. You Thank you very much, Bruce, for inviting me and making me a part of this discussion. I'll just pick up from where Raja ended. Talking about strategic autonomy, he mentioned in his second point that it was often used in a post-colonial context. And I think Europe is a case in point that illustrates his second point as well as his third point that strategic autonomy doesn't preclude having alliances or building coalitions. And the India Europe relationship is a extremely interesting example of that. So you can see a visible increase in India's outreach towards Europe as early as 2012 2014, which even predates the current downturn. And India-China ties it was. Since then, New Delhi has started crafting a policy for Europe's subregions, breaking away from the sort of Cold War era subdivisions of East and West Europe. That includes the Nordics, the Central Eastern European countries, Brussels, as well as the EU. Now, this sort of turn towards Europe and a way of looking at Europe beyond the post-colonial sort of lens, beyond the tensions that stemmed from this relationship, has been driven largely by a convergence around the question of how to deal with China. Now, everybody has sort of heard of the very famous 2019 European formulation of China as a partner, competitor and rival. What is less well known is a few months before that, in December 2018, Europe had a new strategy on India, calling it an essential partner in maintaining a multipolar Asia. So it's since then that sort of both India and in Europe started grappling with the question of how to deal with China and the consequences of China in their respective neighborhoods. That sort of these bridges between New Delhi and various European capitals started building. Another factor for India is, of course, in reaching out. Europe is developing national capacities needed to balance and respond to China. And so we see all the European Indian conversations focus on technology innovation, particularly 5G, AI, semiconductors, green tech on trade and investment, security and defense. Let's not forget, France is the second largest defense equipment partner for India after Russia. But also India is now intensifying cooperation with Italy, Sweden, the UK, etc.. So it sort of fits with the broader trend of increasing strategic engagement with the West. Then we will talk about the U.S. We know about the Quad countries, the G7. What I found really interesting was Minister Jaishankar spoke at the Black Forum in Slovenia and he spoke about the fact that all binaries, the West and East are not relevant anymore. Now, that's very interesting point coming from an Indian foreign minister. And since then, we've heard him talk about India being a south Western power, a bridge between the West and the global South, developing democracies, etc., which really sort of shows you how differently India is positioning itself from what we intuitively think of when we think of Indian foreign policy. Of course, the limits to this convergence and that became quite apparent with Ukraine. India's dependance on Russia has, of course, constrained its strategic autonomy in this case, and it has. India has found difficult to take positions as critical of Russia as its Western partners would want. Surprisingly, though, this hasn't completely derailed India Europe ties. In fact, we've seen more engagement from European member States in trying to understand Delhi's position. I think one reason for that is that post Ukraine, convergence on China has only deepened as Europe has learned crucial lessons on reducing dependencies on Russia. It's now applying them to China. Taiwan is discussed just like never before in in Europe. How difficult it was to build coalitions in Asia sort of has pushed Europe, Europe to think a little bit more about understanding the nature of China's an act as well. On the question of Russia-China alignment, I think Europe and India don't exactly have similar assessments of where that stands. But in the. Long term. Both understand that the consequences of Moscow dependent on China would would have consequences for the balance of power in both regions. I'd like to end with, since we're talking about strategic autonomy, I'd like to end with the European debate on strategic autonomy. And now that's very different from from the debate in Delhi. Europe sees itself caught between US-China competition, and not all European leaders

have this position, but influential ones like President Macron do and are thinking of looking at a middle path or, you know, a third way for Europe and how to sort of not be caught between these two blocks plainly. On the other hand, it seems the bigger question is China. That is the consequential challenge. And and for India, the idea is that all through foreign policy, relationships are seen through the lens of China who can help balance China. And they would rather see more engagement with the United States and the US in the Indo-Pacific. And so I think that is one big difference. Differences you had asked in the original question of where does India converge with the West and in this case with Europe. That's that's a crucial difference. And I found it interesting. I was speaking to a former official in D.C. yesterday, and I asked what is easier to work with the quad or the EU USB Type-c port? Hands down. Thank you.

BRUCE JONES: I'm just imagining that conversation. Yes, indeed. Let me turn to Tanvi Madan, who's my colleague at Brookings in the Center for East Asia Policy, also directs India Project at Brookings and the author most recently of the Fateful Triangle Looking at India U.S. China Relations. Tom Lee, you're also a close observer of U.S. India ties of the two plus two mechanism and of the quad. So I'd like to bring you in for your thoughts on on how this has unfolded over the last year and how you see India's posture in the international order at this juncture.

TANVI MADAN: Thanks, Bruce. And it's a great pleasure to be on a panel with Raja, Garima, and you and thanks to our colleagues, Hanna, Laura and Sophia to help put this together, as well as the communication and conference stuff. You know, I think the way particularly in I'll come at this from thinking about we're going to how India sees the U.S. And I think the fundamental difference you've seen, particularly from the seventies and eighties to where we have been in the last 20 years, is anything you largely saw in the Indian government, you largely saw society that the U.S. was seen as the spoiler, too, for India in the international order, largely whether that was the security, economic order, even technological. So in the security order, the U.S. was the country that was aligning with China and Pakistan at the and enabling them in many ways, including looking the other way at best. While China enabled Pakistan's nuclear program, for example, in the economic order, there really wasn't. You know, India was going through still a phase where, you know, it was looking at trade was starting to open up in the eighties. But nonetheless, other than kind of brief moments of alignment, these weren't countries that looked at openness in the same way. And then even in technology, India saw the U.S. as the country kind of blocking it. There were export controls after India's 1974 to a nuclear peaceful nuclear explosion, nuclear test, however you want to see it. And so it was largely seen. The U.S. was seen in antagonistic terms as the spoiler, as the blocker of India's ambitions and objectives. I think today it's almost diametrically opposite. If you look at the last few governments and their how they see the U.S. broadly, and I'll come to where the differences are, but broadly and generally, these governments now see the U.S. as the enabler or supporter of India's rise and its role in the international order. And you've seen this, for example, in terms of the security partnership where, you know, speaking to to Garima's point about the major challenge for China, India being China, the U.S. as a fundamentally fundamental partner in both being a balance of China and in shaping a favorable balance of power in showing you multipolar Asia, but also in terms of enhancing India's own capabilities. So in academic terms, both in external and in helping internal balancing for India as well. I think you've also seen in terms of the economic partnership after India is kind of opening up and liberalization, there's a lot left to be done. But nonetheless, post the 1990s, you really see kind of some more convergence. Now there are still differences on openness. Trade used to be kind of a subject of divergence. These days, the U.S. and India seem to be on the same page on trade, so perhaps somewhat differently, but nonetheless, even on things like economic security, discussion, strategic trade, you're you see a lot of convergence with the U.S. and it is seen as a partner as India tries to build its own resilience and reduce its vulnerabilities and exposure. So China, even in the economic space, that's true of technology as well. You know, us seen as a country that is going to help India's economic and technological transformation, perhaps the country that can most do that. And you've seen a technological partnership that's also going into innovation, partly because of, you know, the talent dimension and labor mobility and, you know, R&D facilities, for example, of American companies being set up in India. You see now this idea that whether in terms of defense technologies or non kind of defense or dual purpose technologies, commercial technologies, the U.S. seen as a partner. And and finally, you know, other than kind of seen as a secure in the security order, economic order, technological order even in the global order in in many ways you are start you have seen now India see the U.S. as the one along with perhaps France being the other country essentially. Really kind of help India in terms of both its interests and membership in international organizations, whether that, for example, is at the U.N. Security Council where while kind of sometimes in

the Indian public discussion are, you know, people still remember, oh, you know, the the Russians in this or the Soviets deployed used its veto for India. The last Soviet veto for India, Russia veto was in 1971. Russia's been bandwagon with India, with China, sorry, on some questions, or at least not as forward leaning about India in the last decade or so at the U.N. Security Council, it's been the U.S. and France, the U.S. helping enable India's waiver at the Nuclear Suppliers Group and going to bat for its membership. And so I think you find many such instances and now the U.S. and India working together, even in terms of coordinating this, was in the quad statement a few months ago, the ministerial statement about working together in international and regional organizations to think about the leadership of those organizations. So I think you've largely seen kind of India now seeing the U.S. differently, or at least the Indian government. Let me just kind of come to the the differences. Just very briefly, I think you where you see some of and this coordination taking place both bilaterally and kind of this this through these coalitions are many laterals and we can maybe come to a little bit about that later. But on the differences, I think, you know, it comes down to there's some principles that, you know, as Raja said, as a post-colonial country, you know, and actually the U.S. is also a post-colonial country, just, you know, has a lot more years of being post-colonial. But India sees the issue of, for example, sovereignty in a very different way. So it's a bit it's less so than it was perhaps 20 years ago, but a bit of a sovereignty hawk in terms of domestic issues. And so, you know, noninterference now, India has interfered in in other countries have all spoken out on Indian, other countries domestic development. So it's not that this is a hard and fast rule, but generally in terms of if you compare the U.S. and India, you see a lot less sensitive. If, say, somebody comments about what's happening here internally more and many people would actually agree and say, yes, you know, we do need to do more on X, we do need to do more on, you know, democratic strengthening our democracy in India. That comes comes across and not just with this government. This has been a general case where there is this there's this skepticism, if not suspicion of and pushback against countries, not just the U.S., but others commenting on India's internal developments. And this spills over into the sanctioned space where there is a sense that the U.S., too, has weaponized interdependence and used its power economically. So I think those are the differences. And then it comes down to this basic question of strategic autonomy. I think the Indian governments have now come to the conclusion that the U.S., for the reasons I said, is its role as an enabler in actually helps through perhaps through particularly its enhancement of India's capabilities and its other partnerships, through its other allies and partners, can actually help provide India space that it is trying to get is actually the bigger constraint on Indian strategic autonomy and not a not the U.S.. Having said that, there are still a number of folks in India, maybe not in government, but I think the view also exists in certain quarters of government that and whether this is because it's the U.S. policy of the U.S. happens to be the grand headroom on in the world. Is there is this reaction of saying among some who say, look, the U.S. is still the U.S. is the country that is constraining India's economy, I mean, India's autonomy and therefore India needs to be conscious of that. I think what the Indian government's view is, is, look, the U.S. can be helpful. It could possibly also constrain. But the way to actually deal with those, the US constraint on strategic autonomy is to build other partnerships, is to diversify India's partnerships, which is where Europe comes in, but it's also where Russia comes in for India. And so I think we'll see that role perhaps get more constrained as Russia-China relations deepen.

BRUCE JONES: Graphic. Very, very helpful. It's also a good segway to a question I want to ask each of you and you could answer in your own ways. We'll go in the same order as we initially did, which is around sort of major fault lines in the Indian debate to sort of where are those in this in this period, either inside government or between government and the wider community around the United States, around the economic order? What are the major issues that continue to drive debate in the in the Indian firmament? Raja.

C. RAJA MOHAN: Yeah. I mean, I think on the economic side, I mean, it's quite clear that it's often framed as, you know, us is for globalization or the West is for globalization or India is hesitant about it to raise that. As Tanvi mentioned or Garima mentioned, the US policy itself has changed. I mean, I think those of us who saw Jake Sullivan's speech at the Brookings Institution a few weeks ago, that the system, the question that how globalization has panned out. But has not been helpful to a large number of countries and sections of people within those within those countries. So I think much of the arguments about globalization today are going to be reframed. And I think as we do that, my sense is there is going to be a lot more convergence between India and the U.S. in terms of how do we build a new, resilient supply chain. Sought to limit weaponization by one country. Building trusted partnerships. Those kind of areas, I think today there's actually more convergence. But the key to this is, of course, how do you it's not just the Indian government

that's supposed to, you know, opening up its market. It's really the Indian capital. After all, Indian capital has its own interests. And I think unlike in many countries in Asia, India had a developed capital by the time of independence, and this developed capital wants to safeguard its own market. And that's where I think great collaboration over a period of time might open up new possibilities and not see it as a merely somehow India is some kind of a antediluvian when it came to the logic of globalization. Second, I think on the larger question of international security, my sense is for a long time in the nineties, I mean, we thought the U.S. was the problem, and that's the reason why, you know, the U.S. said, look, we want to take your nuclear weapons to be we want to, you know, maybe fix the Kashmir problem. We prefer what we think what the Pakistani saying is right. Then India tried to, you know, balance that by talking about a multipolar world of risk and BRICS and those kind of areas. But today it is China that is blocking India's nuclear aspirations. This China that messes around in the big question this China the difference Pakistan on the question of terrorism. Therefore, I think the logical lead today as the contradictions with China become the principal problem for India, India's capacity to do unwillingness to do more things with the U.S. have dramatically grown. And the third aspect, I think my sense is if you look at the larger questions of economic growth this year in the US, trade is over $90 billion. With a bit of surplus for India and the potential for this trade the or overwhelms anything we can think of vis a vis China or with Russia for that matter. Russia has really lost them. It's seen some surge, but otherwise the trade with Russia in 2021 was just $9 billion. And then we have this Indian diaspora in the US, which is really and the West as a whole in the English speaking world, the Anglo-Saxon world, if you will, where the Indian diaspora is number. Also, I think there's a number of connections that we have today with the West are beginning to produce, I think, a new template in which ingenuity and India and the West will have differences. But today there's a lot more common between them to manage those differences. And I would say that the West still needs, as we saw the G7 shared in the global GDP is coming down and U.S. wants to retain kind of any kind of leadership in the international system. It needs to find a way to accommodate India into the larger Western coalition, into the global hierarchy of power. So therefore, the U.S. needs India, too. And I think this is not what is not understood by leading, but an Indian debate in the U.S. debate. And that's one reason why people accuse the U.S. Why is it being so soft on India? Because I think U.S. is looking at this over the longer term that amidst the rise of China and the challenges that it presents, that India being part of the Western coalition, will make the prospects for the coalition to succeed higher. And for India, which faces its main contradictions from China working with the US and the West gives them the security. So I would say we're really at a historic moment where for the first time since India's independence, India and the US, India and the West can actually collaborate. Introducing a better order and the terms of that endearment will have to be negotiated. It's not that the U.S. government 2 billion in guys. This one here was a checklist. Are you signing off? I'm not the one that actually the terms of engagement, the terms of engagement will have to be negotiated. And I think there is open.

BRUCE JONES: That's very, very helpful. And it's interesting, you know, when the Biden administration took office, there were some who were exploring G-7 expansion. But very striking to me that in their mind did not include India, which I thought would have been a major mistake to have gone for a round of G-7 expansion and not including India. It struck me as a very unwise move. I want to come back to the question of how it might be that the United States and Europe, which would have to be part of this, too, can have that negotiation and find the right structures in which to accommodate and negotiate over India's participation in the order. So that's also then a segue, Ahmed, to you, how you see some of these fault lines or picking up on on Russia's point and how Europe ratchet up? Because, of course, one way to think about the changing dynamics of order is that European power has diminished somewhat in terms of its share of GDP or the U.S. has been relatively constant in share of world GDP. And in some of the key institutions where India would have a stake and helping set the terms of order, Europe would have to give some ground for that to happen. So, Garima.

GARIMA MOHAN: Yeah. So on the on the question of Faultlines, I think particularly in the Europe India Partnership is won on the question of economic policy. And I think a lot of European engagement with India rests on the promise of India as an economic partner for, for a lot of European member states who are looking to reduce dependance on China, move towards a China plus one model in terms of moving supply chains away from China, companies who are looking to invest away from China. They are sort of rediscovering India and hope that India lives up to the economic potential. And I think they hear the right sounds from the Indian government when when they reach out. But perhaps that's not quite met, when when they actually go to India and try to work both with the state level and the federal level. So in terms of

delivering on the economic promise, I think that is that is a challenge also for India to ensure that the promises and the the aspirations of its government are met by other institutions and agencies within the country that make this sort of diversification that Europe longs for easier and sort of facilitates that. I think that is still that is still an issue. Another issue particularly, I mean, when I work on Europe, so I would be remiss if I didn't pick it up. I think then you brought up, in the case of US-India relations as well, this general suspicion of the West, and it often feels like the Europe India partnership will be easily derailed with one or the other, you know, areas where they don't agree or even when it comes to convergence on China, if they're not speaking exactly in the same terms, if they're not fully like minded, then it feels that there are many constituencies in Delhi and beyond who would like to sort of right off the ship with Europe. So I think that's that's another fault line that sort of needs to be managed. However, as Raja mentioned, the need India really needs other partners and the need to develop partnerships with Europe is also to diversify, not just have dependance on one, the United States or the other countries. And then finally, I think India's relationship with Russia and how that develops will of course, also be a factor that largely impacts the European relationship. And I think many in Europe are trying to understand our understanding also. I mean, New Delhi has been very candid about its constraints when it comes to the Russian relationship with European interlocutors. So I think they do understand where India stands, however, how this relationship will develop. That's that's a question mark. And I think, as you mentioned, for Europe, Russia is the primary challenge. It is how Ukraine unfolds will have quite a few consequences in terms of Europe as a geopolitical actor, how much weight it has not only in its own neighborhood, but also in the Indo-Pacific. So I think in in those terms, there are definitely voices in Europe that still don't understand what is India's position on Russia, How is this relationship going to develop? What does that mean? Does it have a veto power on how much India engages with Europe, etc.?

BRUCE JONES: I'm just say that from my own observation. The first phase of the Ukraine war, I thought there was some validity to Europeans criticisms of of India on its view on boats, but also some some pretty bizarre positions, for example, criticizing India for buying oil when the Europeans were still buying vast amounts of of Russian gas. So, you know, these things are are not straightforward. Tanvi.

TANVI MADAN: So I think, you know, I will say and I'll talk about some of the fault lines. I see I will say to something you said, Bruce, that I actually think official Washington now gets some of this nuance. And to your point, too, government can have differences over the kind of Russia question. You also there's learning going on and I think you've seen even in the last year when it comes to the U.S. and India learning on both sides. I think the the fundamental kind of fault line through which a lot of the others flow when it comes to I think India's thinking about the international order is this question of how open to be to the world. And that is, again, this is it's not that it's not understandable. India has been subject to sanctions before. India has been subject to its partners. And that's not just the U.S., it's the Soviets as well, changing their mind. So there's it's understandable that India is concerned about dependance, about exposure, that vulnerability. But I think there's frankly sometimes in the public debate more concern about what the world can do to India and not enough discussion about what the world can do for India. And that can sometimes lead to missed opportunities. And so even when it comes to the U.S., it's not there isn't really to me, you know, when people say, where will India stand in US-China competition? I think the one India's primary, you can presume, is not US China competition, it's India's China chance. But nonetheless, India can't take the same position it did in the Cold War with the U.S. Soviet competition is just fundamentally different for India. The debate in India, to me, is not going to that. India will. It's up to us versus China. I think India does still do does align. And in this it's aligning very much with the U.S. and other countries that are concerned about China's actions and intentions. The the debate is between how close to get how far and fast. I don't think there's a China debate anymore in India. It's how far the debate is. How far and fast do you partner with countries like the U.S. and particularly the U.S.? Because I think the debate is about how much do you open yourself to these partnerships versus how much you do go it alone. And I think the the the thing that eventually I think the government realizes is that actually even to eventually building your own capabilities to be able to go it alone when it wants to, those partnerships are inherently inherently important to build India's capabilities. It will it will be faster for India rather than trying to go it alone. So I think the the fault line being is there's a spectrum when you think about if India wants to build resilience and power, it is the spectrum is self-sufficiency versus kind of this diversification approach. And I think that's the spectrum. And people, you know, come down on different sides. What does self-reliant, resilient reliance mean? For some, it means they want to be self-reliant, very self-sufficient, and for others it means self reliance in the sense of a kind of a more resilient sort

of thing where you do have your own capabilities and power and influence, and that actually gives you some space, even with that diversified portfolio of partners. I think there's a couple of others. I think something Ghahraman mentioned, which is kind of the Russia question, because for India, Russia does has traditionally whether in terms of enhancing India's capabilities or being a strategic balancer to China, it Russia is very much been part of that diversified portfolio of partners. And I think, you know, this is a fault line. I think people now to some extent understand it might not like it in the U.S. and Europe, but have a better understanding of it. The question, I think, is, you know, India still wants to to kind of have China, Russia as a balancer, but as Russia, the contradiction is as Russia, China relations become closer, this is posing you know, this is going to be a fault line for India with Russia, and it will have to sit and grab, you know, figure out how to grapple with it. I think the many in India who convinced it Russia and China will there'll be another Sino-Russian split as there was during the Cold War. But as then, it's true today as well. Yes, it might happen. The the thing is about timing. And right now they're getting closer. They're not splitting. And right now is when India is facing this challenge from China. So I think that's the kind of other fault line, but it's one that's in play, I think. And I think finally, there is this aspect of I don't think the two I think the U.S. and Indian governments, for example, when it comes to this international order, if you want to break them down, security order, economic order, even then, they are cooperating. They're managing differences. I think the governments are actually engaging. Well, I what I would say, though, is I think they need to do more to take the. Along for the reasons Raja said. The U.S., the Indian public is a is true societal, economic, other links connected to the US. But you see, even in the Indian kind of government, you know, government discussion, this is perhaps the most open to the to the West government we've ever seen in India. But the public discourse, what is going out on WhatsApp channels, what is being discussed on primetime TV, is kind of how the West is the foreign hand that's out to constrain India. And this is not this is totally disconnected with the government's official approach. And I think there's a sense that you can continue to do both those things, and it'll be fine. But it speaks to something that I think needs to be addressed, which is this idea that this relationship with the U.S., with the West is natural, the reasons for it evident and this mirrors in the U.S. that, you know, where is the case being made other than kind of Indian media channels or in the you know, an Indian prime minister will come to the U.S. and talk about why is the U.S. important to India? When do the governments make the case about why they are actually aligning with each other? And you just don't hear that. So, you know, they'll sometimes be criticism or, you know, track one is moving along, Track two is behind. Well, the governments need to make the case this is it might be a natural partnership. Natural allies is, as Prime Minister Vajpayee put it, but it needs a lot of nudging and it needs communications to the publics about why and stopping hiding the fact that these are important countries for each other.

BRUCE JONES: Good. And, you know, as you said, I do think there is a new degree of subtlety in official Washington's understanding of this issue. You and I have talked about this a little bit. It's one of the sort of silver linings in a way, or the fault line sort of debates on Ukraine at the U.N. is it has raised awareness and understanding of some of these questions and in in official circles and, as you say, maybe a little less so. And in the commentary. And what I want to do at the stage is two things. At the same time, I want to bring in some questions from the audience and have you respond to them. You don't each have to respond to everyone. Feel free to pick and choose, but I'm going to structure it based on a remark that can be made because one of the things you did today in your opening was you talked about different dimensions of the order, the nuclear, the economic, the security, the political, etc. And it seems to me that that's often missed in discussions of the international order. There's one international order in terms of the balance of power, but there are major domains or major topics and major institutions of order, and a country can have differential relations to those. So I'd like to move through some of those topics. I also want to come to the the formulation that Obama mentioned of India or some in India thinking of itself as a bridge to the global south. And I want to kind of come to that one of the most. Sorry, let me rephrase that. We've got a lot of questions from the audience. The topic that was in most of them was the Security Council and the question of the lack of an Indian permanent seat for the Security Council. We saw Biden this year at the U.N. or sorry, last year at the UN. Talk about sort of leaning into this. We've seen the U.N. ambassador engage in this. You know, I would say with a kind of mixed degree of enthusiasm, but nonetheless an openness. Is this something that India still cares about in a deep way? Is it just the Ministry of External Affairs cares? Does this matter to India? How would you all see that? And just volunteer if you want to jump in?

C. RAJA MOHAN: I mean, let me let me step in here as a realist. I would say, look, it's like a you know, I don't think it should. I mean, India wants to be in the U.N. Security Council, but it should know that it's not

going to happen anytime soon, that the Russians and the Chinese are not going to China, certainly not don't want another Asian country or they forget India. They don't even want Japan there. So I think the important thing for india is really not the formal membership of the u.n. But another becomes the third largest economy. Which is an India that works closely with its partners. But its net weight in the global offensive is going to grow. So I would put more emphasis on building a coalition with the Western powers on a range of global issues rather than depending on, you know, waiting for the U.N. Security Council gates to open. But I don't think you need that to actually perform the larger role in the international system, because I think our growing weight will give that possibility for India. Certainly the U.N. Security Council sitting there on the time gives you some diplomatic influence. But structurally, it is the nature of India's economic power and the kind of partnerships that it builds. And the coalitions that will build actually will increase India's impact. And my sense is that the U.S. is already marginal when it comes to security issues. It's largely marginal when it comes to economic issues. So so, you know, with the Security Council deeply divided, I don't think getting in at this point, they inhibit make so much difference to India's interests. I would say focus on India's focus on expanding global role in partnership with your close partner like minded countries, rather than just waiting for this something to drop from the Security Council. And I think our problem is, as I mentioned before, China is the principal obstacle to a large number of India's international aspirations. And I think if we deal with that in partnership with our friends in the West, a lot of issues will get sorted out automatically in terms of India's aspirations for a larger role in the international system. That is the goal. Security Council membership is only one element of getting there.

BRUCE JONES: Garima. Anything you want out of that.

GARIMA MOHAN: And just I agree with fully with what Raja said. Just I feel like sometimes the the issue of UNSCR membership and support for India's candidature becomes a good signaling device and is often used by partners, particularly in the West. So when France says it, when Germany sees that, it's an easy way of carrying points also in Delhi, signaling that you see India as an important international actor, acknowledging that international institutions as they exist need reform and perhaps are not the most, you know, favorably constructed. And I think it is it does carry some weight, particularly when coming from Europe, given the sort of historical baggage.

C. RAJA MOHAN: That you can't cash. I mean, you need a check. There's no bank that's ready to cash the check.

BRUCE JONES: Well, and if if it drives towards China and Russia blocking it, then all of the better are seen from Washington's perspective. But as you said, it just it's in a way a sort of cheap signal. Another question which came up frequently and I also want to ask more about and in a way I think builds directly Russia on your point is around the international financial order, the global economic order, and whether India needs a sort of official seat to the table or whether the economic weight is enough, does it need a membership in an expanded G7? Does it need expanded shares of the fund? Does it need leadership roles in the bank, etc.? To what extent do the institutional arrangements of the global economic and financial order matter? Or is it sufficient for India to grow and simply exert the weight that it increasingly has in international economic affairs? Everyone to chime in.

C. RAJA MOHAN: My sense is I just briefly I mean, I think the US is actually talking about reforming those institutions probably this time a lot more seriously given the larger crises that we have on the economic front. And I think these issues matter to India. And I think for the first time, really, we can engage with the U.S. and the West on these in a far more productive way. And then we have in the past merely criticizing these institutions to one of actually formally engaging in how do we reform multilateral lending institutions, global financial order. And I think it has been part of the G20 finance strike. It has been up engaged with us today on the record in other forums. I would say there is a lot of potential here and the agenda that the Biden administration has put again, going back to Jake Sullivan speech, there is a lot of they are wanting to do, and I think India has one of the large economies this time around will have a reasonable role to engage in a productive negotiation with the with the Western partners.

TANVI MADAN: I think here, you know, I would say it's it's kind of interesting where you again see some of the convergence and divergence, where I think on the one hand, you know, there's you've seen kind of

progress, especially in terms of these many laterals now. I mean, I remember when the CBD, then TPP, the Trans-Pacific Partnership, was first proposed. Part of the reason it was proposed is because the WTO, the World Trade Organization, was seen as kind of not being able to move, partly because, you know, the West said, oh, countries like India are blocking it. And so the TPP comes up, which India criticizes plurilateral, and that there should be kind of good old fashioned multilateralism. Today, you've seen kind of India become one of the innovators in terms of many lateral ism. I mean, so used plurilateral, but has is even in some of these economic issues, you know, the quad is a good example where you see a lot of these the same kind of dimensions. You are seeing the G7 discuss supply chains, critical infrastructure protection, document, critical minerals diversification, etc.. You're seeing some of these telecommunications. You're seeing some of these same issues being discussed. Thinking about standards, thinking about those issues, even in IPF. I mean, the much maligned Indo-Pacific Economic forum, you know, you do see India taking a more forward leaning approach even on some trade issues and having to think through, even if it's not in that bill, but through the supply chain pillar of that coming at some of these questions about imports, for example. So you're seeing some movement on that. But at the same time, you know, you also do still see and government could probably speak to the EU, India Trade and Technology Council as well, that that's a form of this and you see this in bilateral. But I do think, you know, there are still these issues and about the economic order where while India and the US and other partners are coordinating in the G-20, which is another forum, I think we've seen a lot of activity on issues like debt sustainability. You know, how do you issue get at the debt repayment issue bit restructuring rather than sustainability? How do you actually get to those issues? So there is that work, but I think there is still fundamentally some differences in India in terms of official, you know, the amount of weight and influence it has formerly in the World Bank and the IMF and the fundamental difference on the use of the U.S., use of the power of the dollar and the U.S. and Europe's use of sanctions, because India itself has been subject to sanctions before. So I think you largely seeing more cooperative than before. But there still are these areas where there are differences. And then, of course, you know, the U.S. and India these days are kind of more protectionist, are more focused on industrial policy than I would say a number of other European and Indo-Pacific partners of both countries are.

BRUCE JONES: Things do. That goes to Raja's point earlier that this is not just a question of the United States saying, hey, okay, you can come and join that table as it currently exists. But actually in a negotiation about the terms of the international economic order going forward. I want to raise two other questions and suggest got another. You take a first run at them. In my mind, they're connected. Perhaps we don't see them as connected. And again, these are pulling in questions from the audience. One is about climate diplomacy, where India has played quite an important role over the last decade, decade and a half. One of the sort of shaping powers of the emerging climate regime occupying obviously a very different position than the United States and Europe in that debate. And in my mind, that's a little bit connected to the point you made about the possibility of India serving as a bridge to the global South. That I wanted you to unpack that a little bit because, of course, there are places and issues where the United States in the West is in a very different place from the large majority of developing countries. And India is in a sort of interesting position where it's both a major economic player and there's still a substantial developmental challenge ahead of it. So those two questions, any of you should feel free to pick either or both. But Garima wanted to start with you.

GARIMA MOHAN: Let me start with the second part of the question of the bridge between the the global South and the West. And it was interesting to have these formulations coming in from the from the Indian government side. And this sort of the first remark administration for made predated Ukraine. But I think in the wake of the Ukraine crisis and when it came to talking about the second order consequences of the war on a number of countries in the world, that we're already dealing with the consequences of the pandemic, the debt crisis, and sort of collating all of that in India's G20 presidency. I think we see this articulated the most clearly, where India mentioned, for example, in Bali that it played a role in making sure that the final language in Ukraine bridged some of the differences between its partners in the global south and what its Western partners wanted. So I think these are sort of some of the concrete examples by which India is trying to do. So it's really centering it as part of the G20 presidency in climate is is is yet another example of that, because India's discourse on climate diplomacy has shifted radically from a few years ago when it was a sort of development centered red before green that we we need to develop first and then we to deal with climate. And now it's it's it's very different in terms of looking at the climate challenge as an integral part of not just development but also economic policy, national policy, etc.. And I think in terms of rhetoric, at least India tries to put that forward. But I think not just on climate, but also on a number of other issues. For example,

the role that India can play in places like BRICS, for example, or in Shanghai Cooperation Organization, where the sort of Russia and China playing a certain role. And can India play a different sort of role, a more balancing role? Can it sort of bring in some of the conversations it's having with Western partners or have exert a different type of influence in these institutions? That would be something interesting and I would want to watch for that, how that develops.

BRUCE JONES: Raja, Tanvi, either of you want to come in on this?

TANVI MADAN: I mean, the only thing I'll say on this is, again, we've seen, you know, sometimes there's this view of India as a static. It is nonaligned, it's difficult. It doesn't do stuff with the U.S., It doesn't move. This is not a place where you've seen change and you've seen kind of in India go from saying, we didn't create this problem and we're not going to do anything about it. It's on you to saying, look, we this is going to affect us. And so we need to be part of the solution as well, even though we didn't contribute to making this a bigger problem. So another place where you actually seen this go from a kind of India versus West or in, you know, global south versus global north sort of discussion to a more. And this is where India and China actually used to, if you remember the Copenhagen summit, you know, in oh nine, it was kind of where India and China used to work together. But now you're actually seeing even in terms of the solutions where India is working with, you know, not just the global South countries, but also kind of the West for technology and finance would like to see them will do more on both these things in terms of transfer. But, you know, the prime example I'll give you is, you know, the single largest financing going to the the initiative of the U.S. Development Finance Corporation is financing a large, you know, solar panel manufacturing facility in India that will help not just India, but potentially others diversify away from, you know, dependance on China. So, you know, there are kind of these interesting dynamics that are also happening in kind of the climate space, which are, again, much more nuanced than you would see with some of the top line statements about where India stands on these questions of, frankly, you know, the cooperation or lack of it between the West and India.

BRUCE JONES: Good. We're getting close to the end. But I want to bring in another major question that came through from the audience, which is around human rights, human rights and quality of democracy. And obviously, both the United States and China, as are in India, have some some challenges here, human rights in particular. And on the Indian side, several of the questions were aimed at the topic of whether the United States should alter its perception of India because of human rights and quality of democracy issues. I will say that in my own observation, talking to the Brits when they had the G7 presidency, this administration, as they were thinking about G7 expansion, the human rights situation in India, it did bear on on their thinking about to to what extent there was going to be a kind of values alignment. I would say the Biden administration has not taken that approach. We've seen it, although it talks a lot about democracy in the international system, post-the the democracy summit, etc.. We haven't seen it being particularly occupied about human rights issues or democracy issues in India. But so anybody who wants to comment on how India sees this set of issues in relation to its posture and international order writ large and the.

C. RAJA MOHAN: Role rapidly is certainly doesn't worry me too much. The human rights debate, I think it's got the US domestic ideological arguments. But as someone who's followed the US foreign policy for a long time, I think it's it's a bit dog, you know I think it's a self-deception in the US debate that some of the US has always promoted democracy and human rights abroad, or the claim that human rights were integral to its international relations. That doesn't stand scrutiny. And I think given what the US has done in the region, I'm not blaming the US. I mean that's a record that when the US was in competition with the Soviet Union dying with the devil in most places, and if you remember there was a lady called Agen Patrick who said Patrick who said, quote, Patrick Doctrine was, As long as is my son of a bitch, it's fine now. But confronting the Soviet Union was the principal challenge for the US and not looking at the nature of the individual regimes that that that that you've got to decide your policies to them. So I think it's really a post 91 belief in Washington that somehow this is the central way of organizing in American international relations. Never. But it was tried during Caterpillar, didn't work initially during a period of limited. It didn't work. I don't see that working. And my sense is the Biden administration itself started in January 2021 as democracies in autocracies. And much of the US strategy since then has been to tone that down to adapt to the reality of a growing competition with China. Just one example of abuse in Saudi Arabia. January 2021. It didn't matter. So he was going to be made a pariah that February 22. He mattered a lot. He matters a lot. Not so. I think

look, I think the U.S. is realist and I understand U.S. has its own ideological debates, too, just like we have over non-alignment, strategic autonomy arguments. The U.S. has its internal debate on this. But I don't think it is consequential for foreign policy because in the end, U.S., like India, is a pragmatic state that will balance its interests between its economic interests, its security interests, its geopolitical interests, while continuing to talk about an ideology just as we do. So so I think that is the reality in which the U.S. has operated. I just conclude with this talk. I've seen the U.S. support the worst and the, you know, modernist groups like the jihadis in Afghanistan saying that these are freedom fighters. That was just 40 years ago. I'm not even going back in history. And now you come and see. All guns are corrupt and they don't know how to run the country. You begin to judge them. This, score them. Look, I think it's really it's I mean, it's really an internal argument in the Beltway, but I don't see it has any effect on U.S. foreign policy. We've already seen in the national security strategy a pertinent administration where the importance of contestation with China demands that you reach out to other people. And on the question of Indian democracy, I think you should leave it to the Indians. It's too big for you to come in and fix the problem. I mean, you can't. I think it's a battle that Indian civil society, Indian political parties have to fight, and I think they will fight. I mean, the assumption that some of these India's democracy is falling apart, I think this is really elevating, again, into serious headlines what is without understanding the complex processes that are going on. My sense is wait till 20, 24 elections in India. There will be a real battle right now for the soul of India. And I think you'll see that it's also to write off large countries and societies with with the stroke of hand, Indian abacus is dead. I'll give you a score of three out of ten. I mean, I think this is a ridiculous score making in the US, but it has really no effects on the on the ground, I think, on U.S. foreign policy to.

BRUCE JONES: Very good. Tanvi.

TANVI MADAN: I think, you know, there are a few things here. As you as you said, Bruce, the Biden administration has essentially reached me, which seems to me to go along the lines of what Raja said, that this is something Indians need to kind of Indians, the civil society and the political community needs to sort out themselves also. I think this idea that whatever concerns will be largely brought out, discussed privately. And third, that, you know, there is this question of would a public good public kind of discussion of this from the administration be effective or actually counterproductive. So I think they've made the judgment. I know there's some discussion in India that somehow there's this very coordinated, good cop, bad cop approach going on right now. Frankly, that assumes a certain amount of coherence that I'm not sure any Democratic government necessarily has, and that's exaggerated. But I would say there's there's there are a couple of things to keep in mind, which is that the it is where kind of India is different from all the examples that Raja pointed out. And yes, you know, as as somebody who is a historian, I can add to the cases that Raja pointed about about U.S. relationships and partnerships with its origins. One of the issues is that India itself is making the case for itself as a democracy and saying that, look, whether as a security partner, whether it's a trusted technology partner, whether as an alternative for companies, the reason that it is different from the country that shall not be named, that is China. What makes India differences is openness, its transparency, its democratic nature. So I think the thing is it will set expectations and there will be discussion in open societies then on that basis since India's put that metric out. The second thing is, I suspect what the concern here will partly also be and something that will India will have to grapple with in 1980s. India as a good example of this, as the US and other countries invest in India as a partner and invest in its rise. It's a think about it as a balance to China. Part of that is not, you know, the we've discussed a lot India's willingness to do these things with the West or for itself, but in partnership with the West. The question comes the other questions that have in the past been a stumbling block to this is India's ability to do it. And India has been most effective, effective in terms of its ability when it is kind of united. And it adds to India's power and strength and ability to do things for itself in partnership with others, but alone. And so that I think that question of internal stability and security, that is for Indians to decide. Yes. But I think it will affect potentially there will be discussions about what's going on in India. Can India play the regional and global role that it wants to that the West wants it to, if it is at in kind of argumentation with itself beyond a certain point?

BRUCE JONES: Terrific. Garima, you have the final word.

GARIMA MOHAN: I'll be quick because I know we are hitting the mark soon. The European Year Partnership in the past was seen primarily through this lens. Human rights, democracy. And a lot has changed since then. European Parliament resolutions on ABC problems in India used to get a lot of attention

and that was the dominant frame. And since then there has been a lot of introspection in Europe and there's been an understanding that this approach is not useful. Be seen as lecturing. See what leverage does Europe actually have to lead to internal change in India? But I do want to caution on one thing. I do want to bring it up because a lot of the criticism of China in Europe is based and rooted in the values speech, particularly what's happening in Xinjiang, human rights, Hong Kong. It is natural that other partnerships will also be evaluated through that lens. And as India invests more capital in in European member states, I think this is something that we'll have to grapple with that is just normal. This sort of scrutiny will will only increase going forward, particularly because a lot of the China question is rooted so much in the values speech. But I do want to want to mention that there's been a lot of pragmatism and a more pragmatic approach when it comes to this and limitations of what Europe can do and not wanting to be perceived as a sort of lecturing colonial partner.

C. RAJA MOHAN: Perfect. We are out of time. As we wrap, I want to thank Hanna Foreman. Laura, McGhee, Sophia Hart on our com team for putting us together. A particular thank you to our panel for joining us. One of the great privileges of this line of work is you are constantly being afforded an opportunity to learn, which is an astonishing privilege. Especially at my late advanced stage of life. And I could not think of a better team of people to help us understand these issues in front of us. I thought this was nuanced and rich and actually quite uplifting and quite optimistic, and that's increasingly rare. So my thanks to you all for your thoughts and for joining us at Brookings today.

C. RAJA MOHAN: Thank you, Bruce. Thank you.