

# US-India Relations in the Wake of China's Rise

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## Abbreviations

A2D2:	Anti-Access and Area Denial
AIIB:	Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank
ASEAN:	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BCIMEC:	Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor
BECA:	Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement
BRI:	Belt and Road Initiative
BJP:	Bharatiya Janata Party
BRICS:	Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa
CPEC:	China-Pakistan Economic Corridor
COMCASA:	Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement
DTTI:	Defence Technology and Trade Initiative
FONOP:	Freedom of Navigation Operation
G2:	Group of Two (the US and China)
GDP:	Gross Domestic Product
IOR:	Indian Ocean Region
IMF:	International Monetary Fund
IR:	International Relations
LEMOA:	Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement
NM:	Nautical mile
NATO:	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OECD:	The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PLA:	People's Liberation Army
PPP:	Purchasing Power Parity
SCS:	South China Sea
SIPRI:	Stockholm International Peace Research Institute
UNSC:	United Nations Security Council
UNCLOS:	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
US:	United States of America
USD:	United States Dollars

## Abstract

The US-India relationship is an interesting and current topic to comprehend in regard to the international system and the contemporary transition of power. The strongest power, the US, and the second most populous state and an emerging power, India, have in the last two decades developed a closer relationship. The US-India relationship in the Cold War can be defined as an uneasy relationship because of multiple factors e.g. India's non-alignment or the close relationship between the US and Pakistan. After the Cold war and India's economic reforms in 1991 the relationship has experienced a rapprochement, and since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century the relationship has developed diplomatically and militarily. Prominent scholars within the field of social science and IR have extensively analysed the current power transition that is occurring in the international system e.g. China's rise.

This thesis will examine external factors in order to explain why the US and India have decided to initiate a closer relationship in the last two decades. An excerpt of the existing literature on the US-India relationship attempts to focus on internal variables e.g. changes of government in the US and India and state perception of power for explaining the rapprochement. Other literature argues that external factors have necessitated the relationship. This thesis will establish that the power transition in the international system, the relative decline of the US and the rise of emerging powers, most notably China, is a primary explanation behind the rapprochement, by applying defensive realism. China's rise constitutes a geostrategic challenge to both the US and India. However, the rise of China has not necessitated that the relationship has developed into a formal alliance, despite adjoined concerns about China. The US-India relationship is defined as a strategic partnership or a quasi-alliance, as it is referred to in this thesis. The thesis will subsequently examine why the US and India have not developed a formal treaty-based alliance. The core assumptions of defensive realism e.g. state behaviour and the security dilemma will be used to examine possible factors for the decision not to develop a formal alliance. India's gap of capabilities in relation to China and the relative decline of the US have instigated that offensive foreign policies towards China might be counterproductive to the national interest of the US and India.

According to defensive realism, states in the international system behave in a self-help manner because of the structures of the system; they seek to maximize their security rather than maximize their power. A formal US-India alliance could be interpreted as an attempt to maximize their powers at the expense of China and initiate a regional and global security

dilemma in which China needs to enhance its security by internal or external efforts. Therefore, it is a modest foreign policy by the US and India to develop a quasi-alliance instead of a formal alliance. This thesis will examine this aspect of the US-India relationship.

## 1. Introduction

President Barack Obama mentioned in a speech to the Indian Parliament that: “(...) it is my firm belief that the relationship between the United States and India, bound by our shared interests and our shared values, will be one of the defining partnerships of the 21<sup>st</sup> century” (The White House 2010). Bilateral relations between the United States of America (US) and India have experienced a significant development in the last decades in terms of trade, energy, defence cooperation etc. During the Cold War the relation was often distant and uneasy. India's foreign policy of Non-Alignment left the US apprehensive about India. Meanwhile during the Cold War, the US had a close relation to Pakistan, India's rival in South Asia, which made India suspicious of the US. However, since the end of the Cold War there has been a rapprochement in the bilateral relationship between the two largest democracies in the world. India has benefitted from the institutional order that the US has created. After India's economic reforms in 1991 it has had sustained periods of high economic growth (Heginbotham & Gilboy 2012: 211). From 1991 to present time, the relationship between the US and India has developed, even though there have been periods of diplomatic difficulties, the relationship has continued to progress.

This development should be comprehended within the context of the rise of China in which most International Relations (IR) scholars argue that a structural change is beginning to occur in the international system. Considerable academic literature evolves around the rise of China and the relative decline of the US. China's rise can be examined in multiple categories e.g., economy, trade, military build-up etc. According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) China's share of the world's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) based on Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) rose from 2.39% in 1981 to 18.72% in 2018 (IMF 2019). It is discussed that the US-led world order is in a crisis, which can be interpreted by examining multiple variables e.g. lack of legitimacy, financial crisis and the capabilities of global institutions like IMF (Christensen & Xing 2016: 6). Thus, the unprecedented growth of China and the relative decline of the US in world politics have attracted a lot of attention from academics.

Like China, India has developed and emerged within the US-led world order, in which e.g. trade liberalization was advocated, and security guaranteed by the US. With China's rise, the US, India and many other influential Asian states e.g. Indonesia, South Korea, Japan, Vietnam etc. are concerned about the eventuality that Asia will be dominated by China. China has in the last decade increasingly been assertive towards its regional neighbours, in regard to border

disputes, behaviour in the South China Sea (SCS) etc. China is in the process of converting its economic development into military capabilities. India is concerned about the challenges that China's rise presents and the border disputes at the Himalayan border between India and China which have been ongoing since the 1960's. Also, the growing presence of the Chinese navy in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and China's expansion of relations with other south Asian states has made India uncertain about China's intentions. The capability gap between India and China, in favour of China, has compelled India to conduct a more active foreign policy in recent decades and to develop closer bilateral ties with other Indo-Pacific states and the US. The foreign policy decision of the US in 2011, the "Pivot to Asia", was an attempt to balance the rise of China and its subsequent behaviour in the region and to assure its allies of the US' commitments to the region. Not a formal ally of the US, India was still perceived as an important strategic partner of the pivot, because of India's proximity to China in key figures e.g., population, military, diplomacy and economy. The rapprochement between the US and India in the beginning of the century, however, has not been without disruptions. India's decision to have a foreign policy that is strategic autonomous, a legacy of the policy of Non-Alignment, together with apprehension about the US's assurances and capabilities to conduct a pivot to Asia, might have implications for further developing the bilateral relations between the US and India.

The decision of the US and India to initiate a closer relationship in the beginning of the century opens up for a variety of questions. Which factors have caused them to develop a closer partnership and how should their relation be examined in the wake of China's rise and behaviour in Asia. It is equally important to examine why the relationship has not developed from a quasi-alliance to a formal alliance. With these questions it has led the author of this thesis to ask the following question as the problem formulation:

*Why have the US and India developed a quasi-alliance in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?*

## 2. Literature Review

Various existing literature in the past two decades have analysed the relationship between the US and India. This section will reiterate what kind of research that has been conducted in the area of US-India relations to be a support for the reader to understand what has been written and how this thesis contributes to the field. US-India relations after India's independence in 1947 have experienced both a close and constrained relationship. From a very uneasy relationship during the Cold War to a rapprochement in the post-Cold War period. From 1991 to present time the relationship cannot be characterized as a straightforward development, it has experienced highs and lows. The literature presented in this section will give account of this development as well as examining literature on India's and the US' foreign policy in the Indo-Pacific area and how this has had an impact on their relationship.

Carina van de Wetering gives a historical account of the development of US-India relations through the Cold War and the post-Cold War period. She examines how the US-India relations have developed since the Cold War, especially with focus on three different US-administrations; the Clinton, the Bush and the Obama administration. Wetering's outline of the relationship implies that it has observed periods of diplomatic difficulties. After the end of the Cold War and India's economic reforms in 1991, the relationship saw a crisis in 1998 where India conducted five underground nuclear tests (Wetering 2016: 92). However, Wetering argues that the US security policy towards India after the 1991 and during the Clinton administration changed, despite different opinion to situations e.g. Kargil crisis and the nuclear testing (Wetering 2016: 112). During the Bush administration, the relationship developed further and became closer in terms of counter-terrorism and the nuclear cooperation. The most consequential development between India and the US, in this period, happened when the two states began: "the unprecedented move to set up an US-India nuclear agreement" (Wetering 2016: 119). At the start of the Obama administration there lacked an idea that could define US-India relations. Harsh V. Pant and Yogesh Joshi argues similar, that the relationship between the US and India deteriorated in the beginning of the Obama administration. In the article, *Indo-US relations under Modi: the strategic logic underlying the embrace*, Pant and Joshi mentions that the Obama administration, after taking office, began to outline an idea of a G2 (Group of Two) between China and the US. The intention of creating an exclusive great power condominium to manage global affairs were contested by India (Pant & Joshi 2017: 135). After



the change of government in India in 2014 and the election of Modi the relationship experienced a new revival, reiterates Wetering (Wetering 2016: 154).

K.P. Vijayalakshmi argues in the article, *India-US Strategic partnership: Shifting American Perspectives on Engaging India*, that during the Bush administration the US increasingly perceived India as a potential valuable partner to balance China's rise (Vijayalakshmi 2018: 47). The argument that China's rise is a contributing factor for the rapprochement of US-India relations is reiterated in the existing literature. Cara Abercrombie, a former US deputy assistant secretary of defence for South and Southeast Asia, asserts in the article, *Realizing the Potential: Mature Defense Cooperation and the U.S.-India Strategic Partnership*, that China's assertive actions in Asia has advanced the idea of the US and India to develop a closer relationship (Abercrombie 2019: 121). Rajesh Rajagopalan offer a similar explanation for understanding the development of US-India ties in his article, *U.S.-India Relations under President Trump: Promise and Peril*. "(...) the primary driver of the U.S.-India strategic partnership is the challenge posed by China" (Rajagopalan 2017: 42). Abercrombie examine the defence and security cooperation aspect of the relationship between the US and India. Abercrombie outline how the relationship between the US and India can be comprehended and conclude that the relationship is developed around defence and security cooperation, more specifically in terms of interoperability in maritime security, defence technology cooperation etc. (Abercrombie 2019: 127).

In line with the literature arguing that China's rise is a contributing factor some authors e.g. Pant & Joshi and Stephen Burgess focus on the US-India relationship in retrospect of the US decision to refocus its diplomatic and military attention with its Pivot to Asia-strategy. Pant and Joshi argues in, *"The US pivot and Indian Foreign policy: Asia's evolving balance of power"*, that the decision of the US in 2011 to make a strategic rebalancing to Asia made India an important strategic partner (Pant & Joshi, 2016: 4). They argue that India is a natural strategic partner for the US, because of its comparable size to China and that the US and India shares similar values e.g. democracy. The Obama administration perceived India as an important strategic partner in its Pivot to Asia-strategy (Pant & Joshi, 2016): 5. This is a continuation of what Vijayalakshmi reiterated that the Bush administration began to perceive India as an important partner. Hence, it is possible to see a depiction of India's growing importance for various American administrations. The rebalancing of the US to Asia, and what it entails for US-India relations is argued, by some literature, that India has been conflictual in its approach to this new foreign policy by US. Stephen Burgess argues in his article from 2015,

*the U.S. pivot to Asia and renewal of the U.S.-India strategic partnership*, that India's foreign policy doctrine of Strategic Autonomy has made India careful not to fully pledge itself to any state, by formally forming an alliance. Burgess then argues that India is cautious about adopting a more assertive policy of balancing against China, by joining the US, and that India at the moment will continue a soft power approach towards China and its assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific region (Burgess 2015: 371).

Frédéric Grare examine in the book, *India turns East: International Engagement and US-China Rivalry*, that there is significant difference of opinion, in US-India relations, about how to deal with regional issues in Asia e.g. China's rise. This coincide with the literature from Pant & Joshi and Burgess about the intention of the US to designate India as a primary partner for the strategy and India's reluctance to be seen as a formal ally to the US. Grare argues that this derive from the capabilities gap between the US and India, and that India does not want to be caught up in a zero-sum scenario between the US and China: "significant perception gaps persists between the two states linked to their asymmetry of power as wells as geographical locations. India does not want to be caught in a zero-sum game between China and the United States and remains uncertain about the willingness of the United States to act as a security provider" (Grare 2017: 47). Grare reiterates that the Indian-US relations is complexed, especially concerning geo-strategic issues in Asia, most notably the rise of China. He argues there is an implicit understanding between the US and India about the asymmetry of power and the geographical locations of the two states vis-à-vis China (Grare 2017: 48).

Besides literature that focus on the development of US-India relations, supplementary literature focus on India's foreign policy and how it is being executed, especially after the election of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2014 from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Thus, this literature examines whether an internal variable e.g. a new leader has had an effect on India's foreign policy. Sumit Ganguly examines in the article, *Has Modi truly changed India's foreign policy*, whether Modi has made any incremental changes to Indian foreign policy. "Modi has made important departures in some areas, in others he has mostly deepened and broadened existing ties" (Ganguly 2017: 132). Ganguly argues that Modi has changed India's foreign economic policy towards the East and South East Asian region. He has expanded India's doctrine of "Look East" policy to an "Act East" policy, and the changes have been more essential than just a change of semantics, reiterates Ganguly (Ganguly, 2017: 136). This was also argued by Wetering as examined earlier. In the article, *China-India Relations under Modi: Playing with Fire*, Prem Shankar Jha argues that during Modi's tenure the relationship between

China and India have become more fractious because of Modi's decision to engage more comprehensively with the US. The development of US-India relationship has put India in a complicated situation and India would not necessarily benefit from distancing themselves from China (Jha 2017: 170). Contrary to Ganguly, Jha argues that Modi has changed India's foreign policy and it is not just a continuation of previous Indian administrations foreign policies (Jha 2017: 158).

Pant and Joshi presents an understanding of India's foreign policy in their analysis of the Pivot to Asia and its subsequent effect on US-India relations. They argue that in the wake of the strategic rebalancing of the US, India is adopting a three-pronged strategy in their foreign policy, which they call a hedging strategy. "First, New Delhi is developing a close strategic partnership with the US. Second, it is trying to stabilize its relationship with Beijing. Third, it is opening up to a more localized form of balancing by increasing defence partnerships with other regional powers" (Pant & Joshi 2016: 5).

The three pronged-strategy that Pant and Joshi introduce is also argued by Ian Hall in the article, *Multialignment and Indian foreign policy under Narendra Modi*. Hall give accounts of India's multialignment in foreign policy, and similar to what Pant and Joshi argues about India's three pronged-strategy. Hall talks about three elements to India's multialignment in their foreign policy: "membership of regional organisations and other groupings, such as the BRICS; bilateral strategic partnerships; and normative hedging" (Hall 2016: 281). Besides this conceptualization of India's multialignment, Hall argues that in a power shifting Asia, it might be inevitable for India to re-examine its foreign policy and its decision of multialignment, because it might signal a lack of commitment in a time where rules and norms in the international system are being reinterpreted.

Jørgen Dige Pedersen argues in the article, *India as an emerging power in the global order: on geopolitics and geo-economics*, that India has a balance strategy towards both China and the US. Pedersen argues: "the rise of China has presented a clear dilemma for India; one that India has tried to deal with in a manner similar to its reactions to the USA, i.e. a combination of balancing on the one hand, and collaborating, on the other" (Christensen & Xing 2016: 122-123). This was also examined by Pant & Joshi and Hall. India attempts to balance its relation both the US and China, in order not to jeopardize its relations with both states, coincide with the doctrine of Strategic Autonomy.

This section has given a review of the existing literature about the subject of the relationship between the US and India, especially with the focus on the Indo-Pacific area and the rise of

China. Having reviewed the literature it can be stated that this thesis will provide additionally understanding of the US-India relationship. The notion of China's rise as an explanatory factor behind their decision is already existing in the literature. The argument re-emerges in the literature, that the relationship is influenced by the power transition in Indo-Pacific area, most notably the political, military and economic rise of China. Thus, it will be the objective of the author to demonstrate why China's rise can be analysed as a factor the rapprochement of the US-India relationship in line with defensive realism and its underlying assumptions. This thesis will contribute to the existing literature by examining why the US and India only have developed a quasi-alliance and the reasons behind this choice in accordance with defensive realism. It can be argued that the existing literature in the US-India relationship has not used defensive realism and its subsequent theoretical assumptions to understand the quasi-alliance of the US and India. Hence this thesis will add to the additional literature by apply defensive realism to comprehend their quasi-alliance in the last two decades.

### 3. Methodology

It is important for the validity of this thesis to reflect on certain questions in the methodology chapter e.g., why it is important to carry out a research about US-India relations in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, how will it be carried out and what methods, theories and limitations applies to this thesis. It is critical to explain the logic and approach of this thesis; thus, it would be possible for other researchers to be able to replicate the research and be able to give an identical conclusion (Bhattacharjee 2012: 5). According to Anol Bhattacharjee a research design should include: "Selecting a research method, operationalizing constructs, and devising an appropriate sampling strategy" (Bhattacharjee 2012: 22). A research design is therefore a blueprint of the measures taken to answer the problem formulation and this section will outline this process.

The focus of the analysis will be to examine why the US and India have developed a quasi-alliance. There is an ambiguity to the problem formulation, first there is the question about why they have developed a closer relationship and secondly why have the relationship not progressed into closer bilateral cooperation e.g. a formal treaty-based alliance. The core assumption of the thesis is that China is a primary factor for the development of US-India relations. Hence, the thesis will examine in combination with the theory why China is the primary factor behind the rapprochement. However, it is not the intention of the thesis to discard other possible explanations but given the theoretical assumptions of the theory chosen for the thesis and the findings in the analysis, it can be argued that China is a primary factor. To answer the research question the thesis will apply defensive realism and examine whether defensive realism can explain the rapprochement of the US-India relations and challenges for further development of their relationship. As will be clarified in this chapter and the theory chapter, the selection of the theory has some limitations. The conclusion of this thesis will give possible explanations for the development of the US-India relations and the lack of a formal alliance. It is not the intention to argue that the explanations given in this thesis are the only explanations, however, given the theoretical framework of the thesis the conclusion will present possible explanations in line with the theory. Furthermore, it is not the intention of this thesis to predict the future geostrategic relationship of the US and India.

### 3.1: Qualitative research

The aim of this thesis is to examine the relationship between the US and India in the Indo-Pacific area since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and why they have developed a quasi-alliance. It has been chosen to make use of a qualitative research approach for analysing this social phenomenon. This type of research approach entails a researcher to understand underlying reasons, opinions and motivations (Sinaga 2014). A qualitative analysis is an in-depth approach for understanding a specific chosen phenomenon. As the purpose of this thesis is to understand and explain an international outcome e.g. US-India relations, a qualitative approach is valid to apply in this regard. Contrary to a quantitative approach where the aim is to quantify a problem and give general assumptions, a qualitative approach is applied to analyse a problem in-depth (Wyse 2011). The aim is to make use of a qualitative research approach to be able to analyse what have caused the US and India to develop a closer relationship and why it only has developed to the level of a quasi-alliance. Together with the empirical data and theory, which will be elaborated on in the next sections, it will be possible to give an understanding of the reasons as well as offering a possible explanation for the motivations behind this geostrategic relation. However, it is important to recognize that the aim of this thesis is not to predict the future relationship between the US and India, only understanding possible motivations, in accordance with the theory chosen, within the given timeline. As Bhattacharjee argues: “(...) qualitative analysis is “sense making” or understanding a phenomenon, rather than predicting or explaining” (Bhattacharjee 2012: 113).

According to Bhattacharjee three approaches can be used when conducting a research: exploratory, descriptive and explanatory research (Bhattacharjee 2012: 5). According to Bhattacharjee, research often tends to use the explanatory approach: “most scientific research tends to be of the explanatory type in that they search for potential explanations of observed natural or social phenomena” (Bhattacharjee 2012: 10). However, this is not the case for this thesis since the chosen approach is a qualitative analysis, therefore it cannot be an exclusive explanatory approach. A qualitative analysis allows the author to explore possible explanations for the research problem and not give definitively explanations. Hence the approach of this thesis follows an exploratory approach, in which it is possible to generate some initial ideas and assumptions about the phenomena that is being researched. Combined with the chosen theory and method for approaching this thesis it is only possible to give possible explanations of the development of the US-India relations in the Indo-Pacific area. However, it should be mentioned that a scientific research does not need to be divided and comprehended as a one-

dimensional and rigid process. Bhattacharjee himself argues that research often tends to include a variation of all three approaches (Bhattacharjee 2012: 6). Hence this thesis will apply some explanatory aspects to the research. The typical questions asked in an explanatory approach e.g. why and how types of questions, are used for this thesis in regard to the problem formulation. Furthermore, an explanatory approach allows the researcher to identify causal factors of a social phenomena that is being researched. This thesis will identify causal factors for the development of the US-India relations and what constitutes the challenges for further development of the bilateral relationship. Though, as argued the thesis will only be able to explore possible explanations in combination with the chosen theory.

### 3.2: Empirical data

Since the chosen methodological approach to answer the research question is a qualitative analysis, to answer the problem formulation for this thesis qualitative data will be applied. More specifically the empirical data included in this thesis will mostly comprise of secondary data e.g. existing academic literature, that will assist in explaining the factors behind the rapprochement of US-India relationship in the Indo-Pacific area. Though some primary data will also be included e.g. official government documents from bilateral meetings between the US and India. This will be used to further emphasize the findings from the secondary data to comprehend the decision by the US and India to develop a closer relationship.

However, it is relevant to assert that a certain amount of quantitative data will be used as well. To understand the rapprochement between the US and India it is important to examine the exact context in which this rapprochement has occurred. As already mentioned, the observation before the process of writing this thesis, was that China could be a factor for the rapprochement as well as why the relationship between the US and India have not developed beyond a quasi-alliance. To examine this, it is important to include quantitative data to support the qualitative data. Quantitative data e.g. economic growth, trade volume and military expenditure can assist in explaining the international context in which this rapprochement has occurred. Sources from the World Bank, IMF and Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) will assist in understanding the international context in which China's rise can be argued as a factor that shape the relationship of the US and India.

### 3.3: Selection of Case

It is important to reiterate the rationality behind the choosing of the topic and why it is valid to make a research about it and how what it can contribute to the existing field. As argued in the literature review, the section should indicate whether the area of interest has already been examined, which would make this thesis unnecessary (Bhattacharjee 2012: 21). Two explanations will be given in this section to answer the question of the reason to conduct a research, concerning US-India relations and what factors have affected their relationship, with attention on China.

First, even though there is pre-existing literature about US-India relations, however, much literature in IR regarding the geopolitics in the Indo-Pacific area is extensively focused on US-China relations. Philippe Schmitter argues that a topic or subject is chosen because the society or polity cares about it (Schmitter 2008: 266). It is not the intention to undervalue the topic for this thesis, but it could be argued, retaining Schmitter's argumentation, that US-China relations in the field of IR is the most influential social and political phenomena to research at the moment. The rise of China and the relative decline of the US in international politics is a valid argument for that. However, besides the relationship between the US and China, the term "Rise of the Rest" is also important. It should be understood as the rise of other significant regional states in the Indo-Pacific area that are growing simultaneously with this structural change in the international system between the US and China (Pant & Joshi 2016: 4). Among them it can be argued that India is one of the most significant states because of its military, economic and political size. Pant and Joshi assert that these states, including India, in the Indo-Pacific region, will have an influential impact on the balance of power in Asia. "They area also called 'swing states' because of the unknown nature of their ultimate intentions and also because their eventual choice could tilt the balance in one way or the other" (Pant & Joshi 2016: 4). Therefore, it is valid to research the relationship of the US and India in terms of geostrategic cooperation. Particularly when this relationship has developed and seen a rapprochement in the last two decades. Therefore, it can be asserted that this topic is a prominent subject within IR, and as Schmitter argues; "Rarely does one come across designs explicitly focused on explaining social or political phenomena that are mediocre or inconsequential" (Schmitter 2008: 266).

The second reason for conducting a research on this topic relate to the choice of theory for answering the problem formulation. The conceptualization and introduction of the theory itself will be clarified in the theory chapter. Thus, this section will elaborate on why the chosen



theory, makes this thesis a contribution to the already existing literature of the topic. As already mentioned the chosen theory for this thesis is defensive realism. Defensive realism is founded from the work of Kenneth Waltz in his book *Theory of International Politics* from 1979. From the review of previous literature of the subject, it can be argued that defensive realism has not been used comprehensively to analyse the relationship of the US and India in wake of China's rise. Concepts e.g. security dilemma and balance of power, can be used to explore why the US and India have not developed a formal alliance.

### 3.4: Choice of Theory

One component that is critical for research on social science is the selection of theory, which can assist the researcher in answering the problem formulation. It is particular crucial to argue why one has chosen a specific theory and outline the reasons for discarding others, which also could have been used for the research. One consideration which is crucial to be aware of is that theories, even though they provide explanations for social or natural phenomena's, are not a permanent truth. As Bhattacharjee argues: "(...) it is important for researchers to understand that theory is not "truth", there is nothing sacrosanct about any theory, and theories should not be accepted just because they were proposed by someone" (Bhattacharjee 2012: 14). Furthermore, theories do have limitations and therefore it is important when applying a theory to a research, to be aware of these limitations and the critiques of the chosen theory. For this section the focus will be on the argumentation for why defensive realism has been selected contrary to other influential IR theories.

As already mentioned, for this thesis it has been chosen to apply the theory of defensive realism for analysing the phenomena of the development of US-India relations in the Indo-Pacific area. The problem formulation of this thesis examines why the US and India have developed a quasi-alliance since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The initial observation before the start of the thesis was that China's rise in the international system and its assertive behaviour in Asia, could be an explanation for the rapprochement between the US and India.

The rationality behind selecting defensive realism contrary neoclassical realism is that this thesis aims at explaining an international outcome instead of explaining why individual states pursue certain kind of foreign policy. "(...) neorealism seeks to explain international outcomes, such as the likelihood of major war, the prospects for international cooperation and aggregate alliance patterns among states. Neoclassical realism, on the other hand, seeks to explain the foreign policy strategies of individual states" (Taliaferro 2001: 132). Obviously, there is a more

in-depth difference between neorealism (defensive and offensive realism) and neoclassical realism, but that will be reviewed in the theory chapter. However, it can be asserted that the purpose of this thesis is to explain an international outcome e.g. the rapprochement of US-India relations in the wake of the rise of China, instead of focusing on domestic factors such as a state's decision to pursue a specific foreign policy. The decision not to choose offensive realism over defensive realism should be found in their different understandings of how states in the international system best can obtain security. Offensive realism argues that states need to maximise their powers to obtain security, while defensive realism argues that states will maximise their security through self-help and balancing. The underlying assumptions of this thesis is that India and the US have developed a closer relationship in the wake of China's rise, their rapprochement can be seen as a defensive strategy or balance of power against China, hence defensive realism would be more valid to apply.

Theories within the school of liberalism e.g. neoliberal institutionalism have not been selected for the reason that this thesis is focusing on the bilateral relationship between the US and India. Institutionalism's core assumption is: "that a high level of institutionalization significantly reduces the destabilizing effects of multipolar anarchy" (Jackson & Sørensen 2013: 112). Thus institutions, according to the adherents of this theory, is an actor in the international system. However, for this thesis it is the bilateral relationship between the US and India that is point of analysis, which exemplify that institutions in regard to US-India relations is not sufficient to explain this rapprochement.

### 3.5: Limitations

Finally, it is relevant to mention and reflect on which limitations that exist in regard to this thesis and the process of writing it. Since this thesis has chosen to make use of a qualitative analysis, which allow the research to explore possible factors for the social phenomena that is being research, this thesis will conclude plausible explanations. Together with the chosen theory of defensive realism which is a theory that aims to explain international outcomes, which imply that its objective is not to explain specific foreign policy of states in a specific given time as neoclassical realism attempts to do. This combination of the methodological and theoretical approaches imply that this thesis may be lacking other aspects for comprehending the relationship between the US and India. Some aspects, that might also be contributing factors for explaining US-India relations, are omitted because of the scope and theoretical framework of the thesis. However, the author is aware of the limitations of the chosen theory and has

elaborated on the rationality behind choosing defensive realism. Furthermore, the author is also conscious about that there is nothing sacred about the theory and that the theory may not explain all factors of the relationship between the US and India. Further research on this topic could examine other aspects and apply other theories to explain the relationship between the US and India.

The examination of why China is a primary factor for the development of US-India relations examines multiple cases from the perspectives of the US and India of why China's rise is a factor. These cases will be applied to the theory, however the introduction of them is concise. The scope and purpose of this thesis is not to analyse in-depth each individual case, but rather to demonstrate that the rise of China and its subsequent behaviour is a principal factor. Therefore, all the cases introduced, concise as they are, will be essential in understanding the decision made by the US and India to develop a quasi-alliance. Since the focus of the thesis is on the relationship between the US and India and how the rise of China has affected this, it is not the intention of this thesis to argue that neither the US nor India have begun to develop strategic partnerships with other states in regard to China. The author is furthermore aware of the issue of China's rise, the relative decline of the US and what it constitutes for other states in regional and global geopolitics. It is not definitely an issue about the relationship of the US and India, the issue is more complex with additionally states operating. However, the focus of this thesis is on the US and India and their bilateral relationship because of the arguments given in this chapter.

## 4. Theory

This chapter will introduce the theory that has been chosen for this thesis to analyse the bilateral relationship between the US and India. This chapter will be divided into two sections. First it will give an account of how defensive realism has evolved from its theoretical predecessor, classical realism, and how it has expanded upon some of the core assumption of classical realism. Within the first section there will be two sub-sections, the first will focus on the core assumptions of defensive realism, the second will elaborate on two crucial concepts within defensive realism, balance of power and the security dilemma. These two concepts will be examined because they are relevant in order to answer the problem formulation for this thesis. The last section will focus on the critique of defensive realism and its limitations both within the school of realism but also in regard to other theories in IR. It is important to comprehend how defensive realism diverge from other theories that is related to classical realism e.g. offensive realism and neoclassical realism. This has already been mentioned briefly in the choice of theory section, however it will be expanded on in this chapter.

There is a prevalence of theories and sub-theories in IR, which aim to understand and explain the international system and states interaction e.g., behaviour of states in the system, the possibilities for conflict or cooperation. Realism and liberalism is the two principal grand theories within IR, and many sub-theories have either expanded on the initial assumptions of these two theories or criticised them and developed new theories. For this thesis it has been chosen to apply defensive realism to the analysis.

### 4.1: Neorealism (Defensive Realism)

First it is relevant to give an account of the various terms that have been applied to defensive realism, as to comprehend the concept of defensive realism and avoid possible misunderstandings. The concepts of neorealism, structural realism and defensive realism are the same concepts with more or less the same assumption for explaining the international system and states' behaviour. First, neorealism is coined by Kenneth Waltz and is particular attributed to his book; *Theory of International Politics* (1979). Waltz seeks to give a scientific explanation of the international political system. Contrary to classical realism, which can be characterized as a normative approach for explaining the international system, neorealism and Waltz's purpose was to depart from this normative approach and give a scientific account of international relations: "Waltz wants to present a scientific *explanation* of international politics

which is a big step beyond the political and moral theories of classical realism” (Jackson & Sørensen 2013: 82).

Classical realism is often associated with historical intellectuals e.g. Thucydides, Niccolò Machiavelli and Thomas Hobbes, but for the purpose of this section the contributions of Hans Morgenthau to classical realism in the 20<sup>th</sup> century will be examined. According to Morgenthau the behaviour of states in international politics should be examined with the assumption that they operate like human nature. He argues that there is a lust for power in human beings; “(...) men and women are by nature political animals: they are born to pursue power and to enjoy the fruits of power” (Jackson & Sørensen 2013: 72). Hence, according to Morgenthau, states have an insatiable lust for power. Furthermore, Morgenthau asserts that states are the principal actors in world politics and they are operating within a world of anarchy, where there is no international central government or authority in which states can ask for help if they are the recipient of aggressive behaviour from other states. A dispute between classical realism and neorealism is how to understand the role of domestic and internal variables for states behaviour in the international system. Classical realism and Morgenthau argues that ethics of statecraft and the human nature is a variable that influence a state's decision to opt for specific foreign policies. Neorealism and Waltz assert that the structures in the international system forces states to act similar with no regards to any domestic variables, hence the reason why neorealism sometimes is termed structural realism (Jackson & Sørensen 2013: 79).

Neorealism can be divided into two camps, defensive and offensive realism. Before explaining the core assumptions of neorealism and defensive realism, the difference will briefly be described between the two versions of neorealism. Defensive realism is again attributable to the work of Waltz and it was John Mearsheimer when he began to develop the theory of offensive realism, that he termed Waltz's approach as defensive realism (Jackson & Sørensen 2013: 84). The main difference between defensive and offensive realism are their argument about state behaviour in regard to how states can best obtain security. One of the core elements of the whole realist school of thought is the concept of state survival: “In the realm of foreign policy, the most important interest is securing the physical survival of the state” (Baylis et al. 2017: 107). Both agree that the international system is anarchical but defensive and offensive realists observe different approaches for states to secure their survival in this anarchical international system. Offensive realists e.g. Mearsheimer argues that states need to maximise their power, because in an anarchic international system where states are uncertain about each other's intentions one can only be secure of its own survival if it is the strongest state in the

system and its aim is to be a hegemon. Mearsheimer argues: “(...) aware that they operate in a self-help system, states quickly understand that the best way to ensure their survival is to be the most powerful state in the system” (Mearsheimer 2001: 33). Hence, according to offensive realists, state survival is best obtained with an offensive approach in which to power maximise. Instead of attribute states to be power maximisers in the international system, defensive realists and Waltz argue that they are security maximisers. Power is the means to an end, and according to defensive realism the end is security. Contrary to Mearsheimer, Waltz asserts that power maximization is counter-productive, and it can trigger a counter-balancing coalition of states (Baylis et al. 2017: 108). Thus, it can be asserted that in regard to the question of how much power a state wants in regard to security, defensive realism argues that states do not want an excessive preponderance of power than they already possess. Instead they focus on maintaining the balance of power. Offensive realism argues that states will do all they can to maximize their powers with hegemony as their ultimate end goal, defensive realism argues that security is plentiful, contrary to offensive realism that argues security is scarce (Rose 1998: 149). This is the difference between the two sub-categories of neorealism and why Mearsheimer classified Waltz as a defensive realist.

Having outlined how neorealism, structural realism and defensive realism are combined within the same theoretical framework and giving an account of the debate between defensive and offensive realism the core assumptions and elements of defensive realism will now be explained.

#### 4.1.1: Core Assumptions of Defensive Realism

As already mentioned in the previous section, defensive realism and Waltz have taken some elements of classical realism as a starting point e.g. that states are the primary actors in the international system and they are operating within an anarchic international system. Defensive realism departs from classical realism by ignoring the ethics of statecraft and rejects the possibility of human nature to have any impact on states' behaviour in the international system. Waltz wanted to create a structural theory for international politics in which the structure of the system and its interacting units were defined (Waltz 1979: 79). For defensive realists it is the structures in the international system that are the central analytical focus. Hence, defensive realists assert that security competition, inter-state conflict and the dilemma in attaining international cooperation should be found in the structures of the system. A system that is anarchic is where no central authority exists. According to Waltz: “A system is composed of a

structure and of interacting parts” (Waltz 1979: 79). Waltz defines the structures within the international system by using three elements; 1) ordering principles, 2) the character of the units and 3) the distribution of capabilities.

The first assumption, ordering principles, Waltz argues that the: “International systems are decentralized and anarchic” (Waltz 1979: 88). Waltz mentions two basic approaches an international system can be structured and in which the actors operate: a hierarchically or an anarchically. Neorealists argue from the premise that a system is anarchic because there is no central authority that can guarantee the safety of individual states. The concept of a hierarchically international system outlines that there is a central government with superordinate power with the monopoly of power to protect states (Waltz 1979: 88).

Second assumption, Waltz asserts that states cannot be differentiated from each other calling them “like units”. With the argument of the international system being anarchic states cannot submit themselves to behave differently than other states, because as already mentioned, neorealists argue that the ultimate goal for states are survival and security. Waltz asserts: “States are alike in the tasks that they face, though not in their ability to perform them” (Waltz 1979: 96). It is important to mention that Waltz do recognize that states vary in categories e.g. size, power, wealth and form, however difference between these variables do not change the behaviour of states in an anarchic international system where the goal for states is to survive and to be secure. Thus, states are undifferentiated in the sense that they have similar tasks to perform which is the survival of the state, for example: “Each state has its agencies for making, executing, and interpreting laws and regulations, for raising revenues, and for defending itself” (Waltz 1979: 96). How states can achieve these tasks is what differentiate them from each other.

Third assumption is the distribution of capabilities within the international system. Having just outlined that the units in the international system, the states, according to neorealists are undifferentiated in terms of the tasks they perform, what differentiates them is their abilities to execute those tasks and the capabilities at their disposal. It does not matter whether the state is democratic or authoritarian, defensive realism abstracts every attribute of states except their capabilities to perform the tasks securing the state itself in an anarchic international system (Waltz 1979: 97). The distribution of capabilities within the international system is the power relation between states (Schieder & Spindler 2014: 42). Every state has certain capabilities, not only in term of military capabilities but also in terms of economic and social capabilities. Niklas Schörnig argues: “(...) determining the power of a state is not a simple matter of counting up

its weapons systems and soldiers. Economic and even social factors are also components of state power” (Schieder & Spindler 2014: 41). As a consequence of the distribution of capabilities between states in the international system it is also this element, according to defensive realists, that explains changes in the international system. “The structure of a system changes with changes in the distribution of capabilities across the system’s units” (Waltz 1979: 97). In line with the argumentation of defensive realism it can be asserted that according to the theory, the international system will observe a change when some states begin to obtain more capabilities than others and thereby altering who is the strongest unit in the system. The school of realism acknowledges that the states who matters in their analysis of international politics are great powers. It is the variations in number of great powers, which mean the capabilities at their disposal, which is a factor for explaining changes in the international system according to defensive realism.

Consequently, according to Waltz and defensive realism the international system is anarchic, with no world government and in which states are uncertain about each other’s intentions. States are “like units” in the sense that they have similar tasks primarily the survival of the state, and finally states differs in the capabilities at their disposal for achieving that goal. These three elements are how defensive realism defines the structures in the international system and this subsequently leads to states having a particular behaviour in the international system. Defensive realists define the behaviour of states in the international system as a “self-help” approach. Situated in an uncertain and anarchic system in which states have similar objectives e.g., state survival, and with certain capabilities to execute these tasks, states need to apply the policies that best serve their interests, therefore the notion of self-help. States must take into account that other states are potential aggressors and want to expand which makes them a threat for their own survival. Waltz argues: “To achieve their objectives and maintain their security, units in a condition of anarchy (...) must rely on the means they can generate and the arrangements they can make for themselves. Self-help is necessarily the principle of action in an anarchic order” (Waltz 1979: 111). States need to observe the structure of the international system and constantly compare their capabilities with other states and determine the best course of action. In a self-help system each state should spend considerably efforts in attaining the means necessary for protecting themselves, according to Waltz (Waltz 1979: 105). If a state observes a power shift in the system, where another state act aggressively and perhaps has more capabilities at its disposal, defensive realism argues that states can compensate this, in line with the notion of self-help, through either expanding its own capabilities or by



balancing (Schieder & Spindler 2014: 43). Though defensive realism vividly emphasizes the notion of anarchy and uncertainty in the international system, cooperation in the form of e.g. alliances is possible if states observe this as the best policies pursued regarding the structures of the system. Charles L. Glaser argues that the anarchy in the international system should not be comprehended solely as there is no room for cooperation. If states best can achieve their goals of security through cooperative rather than competitive policies, then states often choose to cooperate (Elman & Jensen 2014: 157). However, states observe and are worried about the division of possible gains when opting to cooperate. Defensive realism operates with the concept of relative gains contra absolute gains. States will examine the prospect of cooperation through relative gains which mean that they will see how much they gain versus the other state that they are cooperating with. Waltz argues: "Even the prospect of large absolute gains for parties does not elicit their cooperation so long as each fear how the other will use its increased capabilities" (Waltz 1979: 105).

#### 4.1.2: Balance of Power and Security Dilemma

Within defensive realism it is important to understand the concept of "balance of power", because as just examined states in the international system operate with a self-help mentality. "Self-help is necessarily the principle of action in an anarchic order" (Waltz 1979: 111). This self-help behaviour can come in the form of balance of power, in which states align themselves with other states to balance a threat from a third state. Since the structures of the international system are anarchical, in which there is no central authority, states are uncertain about other states intentions, and therefore they can choose to face a potential situation of violence against them by aligning themselves with other states. "If force is used by one state or its use is expected, the recourse of other states is to use force or be prepared to use it singly or in combination" (Waltz 1979: 113). Hence, states do choose to cooperate in an international system of anarchy if they expect to be the prospect of violent behaviour of another state. According to Waltz the balance of power-theory aims to explain: "the results of states' actions, under given conditions" (Waltz 1979: 118).

As examined in the previous section, security and survival of the state are the most important tasks for the state in an international system that is anarchic. According to defensive realism, states behave through self-help in the international system, to be able to secure themselves, and this can occur through internal and external efforts. Internal efforts imply the measures a state takes by e.g. increasing military and economic capabilities. External efforts are when states

strengthen or enlarge its cooperation or alliance with other states (Waltz 1979: 118). Defensive realists do not believe that states need to maximize their powers to obtain security, as it is argued by Mearsheimer. As defensive realism argues that states should make modest policies in the international system, rather than expansionist policies which is counter-productive for the states security, the security dilemma is a concept that offer further distinction between defensive and offensive realism. Defensive realists argue that it is counter-productive for states to maximise their powers, because it would lead to a coalition of other states against you. Therefore, states must be aware of the security dilemma when operating in the international system and performing the task of securing state survival.

The core assumption of the security dilemma is: “an increase in one state’s security decreases the security of others” (Elman & Jensen 2014: 136). In an uncertain and anarchic international system, a state’s increase in internal or external efforts e.g. increase military spending or enlarge alliances for the purpose of its own security, decreases the security of other states. Thus, this nexus between expanding one’s own defensive capabilities, which may be perceived as offensive capabilities by other states, creates a spiral which can lead to unintended conflicts: “Pairs of states may pursue purely security-seeking strategies, but inadvertently generate spirals of mutual hostility or conflict” (Taliaferro 2001: 129). Security dilemma should not solely be understood as a concept of military build-up that makes one’s adversaries insecure, but development of alliances as well can foster this insecurity and thereby contribute to the security dilemma. Glaser argues: “(...) both military build-ups and alliances can change the adversary’s beliefs about the state’s motives, thus convincing the adversary that the state is inherently more dangerous than previously thought” (Taliaferro 2001: 136). This is relevant to note in regard to this thesis. The security dilemma is not necessarily a one-dimensional concept which only focuses on how many bullets or other military hardware which makes the security dilemma inescapable, but also geostrategic relationships with other states contributes to this dilemma.

#### 4.2: Limitations and Critique of Defensive Realism

This section will focus on examining the limitations that defensive realism has and how other theories have criticized it. As already mentioned in the methodology chapter a theory cannot always answer all aspects of a social phenomenon. Concerning this thesis, the author is aware that defensive realism has limitations and may not necessarily be able to explain all the factors that contribute to the development of the US-India relationship in the Indo-Pacific area in

regard to China's rise. It is possible to divide the criticism of defensive realism in two groups, those critics within the school of realism and those who follow other schools of IR-theories.

Neorealism and defensive realism have first and foremost been criticised on their foundation of being scientific and structural theories of international politics. As mentioned Waltz developed neorealism as critique of classical realism in regard to its normative approach. The critics argue, though, that Waltz's theory itself is grounded of this normative approach of classical realism and therefore he cannot avoid implying what is implicitly normative assumptions for his theory (Jackson & Sørensen 2013: 82). For example, Waltz's concept of state sovereignty has been criticized for employing a normative approach. Waltz defines state sovereignty as: "(...) a state is sovereign means that it decides for itself how it will cope with its internal and external problems" (Waltz 1979: 96). The critics argue that there are some implicitly norms and values that Waltz proscribed to state sovereignty e.g. independence, and that Waltz do not discuss these values and norms, unlike classical realism, but take them for granted (Jackson & Sørensen 2013: 81).

By now it has been examined how offensive realism differ from defensive realism. In regard to how far states pursue their policies towards security, defensive realists would argue that security is the state's top priority and power maximising is counter-productive to the end goal. Offensive realists argue that states do need to power maximise to be secure in an uncertain and an anarchical world. Furthermore, offensive realism criticizes defensive realism for not being able to explain why states opt to choose expansion, because in the theoretical foundations of defensive realism there are no incentives for such behaviour (Taliaferro 2001: 129-130). Neoclassical realism and its founder Gideon Rose differ from defensive realism by explaining state's foreign policy instead of international politics. They argue that domestic variables are relevant to apply when analysing state behaviour in the international system, though not as an independent variable but as a dependent variable. It is still the structures in the international system e.g. anarchy that affect state behaviour. However neoclassical realists argue that domestic variables still are relevant. Hence, they criticize defensive realism and Waltz to leave much of the interactions in international relations to be unaccounted for, such as domestic variables.

Liberalism is one of the influential critiques of the whole school of realism and therefore also defensive realism. As with realism, there also exist sub-theories within liberalism e.g. the theory of economic interdependence or neoliberal intuitionism. Contrary to the pessimistic perception of the international system by realists, adherents of liberalism have an optimistic

perception. The basic argument of the adherents of economic interdependence is that increasing economic interdependence between states discourages and reduces their intentions of resorting to violent conflicts (Jackson & Sørensen 2013: 106). Economic interdependence argues that the wars that occur today, is taken place in less developed countries because of lower levels of economic development between countries. Thus, in their perspective the states in the system are more inclined to pursue absolute gains than relative gains, the notion that if cooperation is beneficial between two states, they do not worry about how much they will gain from the cooperation. In realism states are more interested in relative gains, which mean that they will be concerned about how the gain will be divided when opting to cooperate (Waltz 1979: 105). Neoliberal institutionalism argues that institutions, together with states, are actors in the international system, contrary to defensive realism which argues that the state is the principal actor in the system. Adherents of this approach argue that: "international institutions help promote cooperation between states and thereby help alleviate the lack of trust between states and states' fear of each other" (Jackson & Sørensen 2013: 113). Though they do agree with defensive realism that the international system is anarchic, institutions can reduce the destabilising effects of the anarchical system. Institutionalism criticize neorealism for not being able to explain why after the Cold War, Europe did not have any major war and explain the persistence of institutions e.g. the European Union (Schieder & Spindler 2014: 37-38).

One substantial criticism of defensive realism and Waltz came from constructivism and Alexander Wendt and especially on the concept of the anarchical structures of the international system. Waltz argued that the structures of the international system are exogenous to states and that states behave the same way in the system, with no regards of domestic policies. Constructivism, contrarily, argues that: "structure is always a social element, which is crucially moulded, and endowed with meaning, by interactional processes between states but which in turn has a constitutive effect on actors" (Schieder & Spindler 2014: 51). Thus, Wendt and constructivism argue and criticize defensive realism and Waltz for disregarding social practices within states. A state's perception of its own position in the international system explains its interaction in the system, according to constructivists. Wendt does not consider that the relations between actors in the international system are predetermined, e.g. two states are not bound to compete with each other, they can reverse from this process and do not have to follow defensive realism assumption of a self-help system (Schieder & Spindler 2014: 51).

This section has given an account of some of the points of criticism that other theories apply to defensive realism. Though, it should be mentioned that these other theories themselves also

have been subjugated to criticism by theories within the school of realism. Aside from this debate between all the theories in international relations, it has been chosen to apply defensive realism for answering the research question, and the rationality for this choosing was given in the methodology chapter.

## 5. Analysis

Having outlined the methodological and theoretical framework to answer the research question, the analysis will explore and understand the motives behind the rapprochement of the US and India. However, since the problem formulation also indirectly emphasizes why they have developed a “quasi-alliance”, the analysis will also explore possible reasons, within the chosen theoretical framework, for why the US and India have not developed a formal alliance. A conceptualization of the term quasi-alliance will be given later in this chapter. The analysis chapter will be divided into four sections; the first will examine in what context the US-India relations have developed, focusing on the rise of China. Subsequently the next section will focus on why the rise of China is primarily a factor for the rapprochement of US-India relations in accordance with defensive realism. It will be analysed why the rise of China constitutes a challenge for them both. The third section will introduce concrete examples of how US-India relations can be comprehended in regard to increasing defence cooperation, diplomacy etc. The fourth section will examine why the US and India have not developed a formal alliance in the wake of China's rise.

### 5.1: China's Rise in the International System

As mentioned, it is relevant to analyse in what context this rapprochement has occurred. As has been reiterated, the underlying assumption of this thesis is that the rise of China is a primary factor for the development of the US-India relations. As mentioned in the literature review scholars e.g. Rajagopalan attributes the rise of China as a reason behind the US and India's closer relationship in the last two decades. Given the theoretical point of analysis of this thesis, the rapprochement of the US and India can be seen as a balancing towards the rise of China. By now the term “the rise of China” has not been defined or explained. Hence, it is important to conceptualize what is meant by the rise of China and what this respectively implies for India and the US. The rise of China can be comprehended through various premises perhaps most notably through quantitative data e.g. economic and military terms.

Figure 1: GDP growth (annual %) for China, India, the US and the World since 1980

	1980-1990	1991-2000	2001-2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
China	9.2	10.5	10.6	9.5	7.9	7.8	7.3	6.9	6.7	6.9
India	5.7	5.6	7.5	6.6	5.5	6.4	7.4	8.2	7.1	6.7
United States	3.0	3.4	1.7	1.6	2.2	1.7	2.6	2.9	1.5	2.3
World	3.0	2.8	2.8	3.2	2.5	2.6	2.9	2.9	2.5	3.1

Created from: World Development Indicators  
Series: GDP growth (annual %)  
Source: The World Bank 2019

Since China introduced its economic reforms in 1978, it has enjoyed unprecedented periods of high economic growth. It is possible with data from the World Bank, see figure 1, to see the periods of high economic growth that China has experienced compared to India, the US and the world. From 1991 to 2010 China experienced an average growth rate of over 10% while the world only experienced an average growth rate of under 3%. Even though China's annual growth rate of 2017 is less than the average growth rate between 1991-2010 it is still higher than the average GDP growth rate of the world and the US in 2017. This is one aspect to understand the rise of China in terms of economics. Examining the share of China's GDP compared to the world's GDP is another aspect to understand the rise of China. Looking at figure 2 (See p. 31). it is possible to observe that China's share of the world's GDP has expanded throughout the years from 2.19% in 1980 to 12.92% in 2009. As mentioned in the introduction China's share of the world's GDP based on PPP was in 2018 18.69%, thus it has increased in the period between 2009-2018. Applying this fact to defensive realism, it is possible to argue that China's economic development can be analysed as if the distribution of capabilities within the international system have and are changing. As defensive realism argues, the composition of the distribution of capabilities in the system, when changing, is an explanation for the alteration of the system. Furthermore, defensive realism argues that it is not only military capabilities that should be embedded when analysing the distribution of capabilities, but also economic capabilities. Hence China's economic capabilities have expanded since its economic reforms in 1978 and also in present time. This increase of economic capabilities has consequently also contemplated that China has expanded its military capabilities as will be reviewed. However, first it is relevant to understand with a concrete example of how China economically is changing the power structures in Asia. China has initiated several forums for infrastructure development, most notably the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The project was introduced by President Xi Jinping in September 2013 and its

core motive is to revitalize trade routes from Europe via Central Asia to China. The initiative can be divided into two categories; a land corridor and a maritime trade route (Blah 2018: 316). The initiative aims to construct huge infrastructure projects to be able to facilitate this vision of a new silk road in which China is in the centre. Montgomery Blah argues, for example, that: "OBOR will enable China to ensure energy security for itself by building supply lines from Central Asia, Russia and South East Asia's deep waters (...) Additionally, infrastructure development in other countries will help increase the demand for Chinese goods and services" (Blah 2018: 317). It is an enormous undertaking by China which can be comprehended by the fact that an initial development fund of 40 billion USD was allocated to finance initial projects. BRI is important to understand in regard to China-India relations because it is an area of apprehension between China and India, this will be elaborated on later. The reason to introduce the BRI now, is because it serves as an example of how China's economic development has enabled China to initiate large scale projects like the BRI. It would be inconceivable that China would have been able to launch a project with this magnitude, twenty years ago.

Figure 2: Share of region/country GDP as a percentage of global GDP in current purchasing power parity prices

Share of region/country GDP as a percentage of global GDP in current purchasing power parity prices

	1980	1990	2000	2005	2008	2009
<b>Advanced economies</b>	<b>69.10</b>	<b>65.49</b>	<b>62.89</b>	<b>58.69</b>	<b>54.75</b>	<b>53.39</b>
Japan	8.60	9.38	7.62	6.83	6.21	5.93
United Kingdom	4.29	3.87	3.59	3.41	3.17	3.03
United States	24.69	23.39	59	22.30	20.54	20.16
Euro Area	N/A	N/A	18.40	16.58	15.53	15.02
Newly Industrialized Asian Economies <sup>a</sup>	1.79	2.78	3.64	3.78	3.79	3.78
Other advanced Economies (excluding G-7 and Euro Area)	6.01	6.54	7.63	7.57	7.51	7.43
<b>Emerging and Developing Economies</b>	<b>30.89</b>	<b>34.51</b>	<b>37.11</b>	<b>41.31</b>	<b>45.24</b>	<b>46.61</b>
Central and Eastern Europe	3.89	3.25	3.35	3.54	3.60	3.49
Commonwealth of Independent states <sup>b</sup>	N/A	5.49	3.57	4.14	4.54	4.26
Developing Asia	8.02	10.50	15.20	18.39	21.39	23.03
• China	<b>2.19</b>	<b>3.67</b>	<b>7.14</b>	<b>9.47</b>	<b>11.01</b>	<b>12.92</b>
• India	<b>2.55</b>	<b>3.02</b>	<b>3.75</b>	<b>4.30</b>	<b>4.85</b>	<b>5.16</b>
Middle East and North Africa	5.07	4.12	4.19	4.63	4.78	4.92
Latin America and the Caribbean	11.30	8.91	8.81	8.40	8.60	8.51

Note: <sup>a</sup> Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan

<sup>b</sup> CIS are former Soviet republics including Russia.

Source: Dahlman 2012: 42

With China's economic development, it possesses the capabilities to enhance its military capabilities. According to the latest report from SIPRI on trends in military expenditure from 2018 it is possible to examine through the figures that China has increased its military capabilities. In 2018 China spent the second largest amount of USD on its military, around 250 billion USD, which is an increase of 87% of its expenditures on military from 2009. Even



though the spending as a share of GDP has dropped from 2.1% in 2009 to 1.9% in 2018 it has still, in terms of constant and current USD, spent more money (SIPRI 2019: 2). China's economic development, as was examined before, is a reason for this. When the Chinese economy has developed throughout the two decades, China has in absolute numbers spend more on military, even though its spending as a share of GDP has dropped in the period 2009-2018. This can also be examined when reviewing China's military expenditure in constant USD. In 2009 China's military expenditure was around 131 billion USD, whereas in 2018 it spent around 250 billion USD (SIPRI 2019). Examining the data from 2000 it furthermore showcases that China has increased its military expenditures since it spent around 41 billion USD. Though it should be mentioned that the data collected by SIPRI, in regard to China differ from its methodological approach of collecting and calculating other states military expenditure. SIPRI's primary source for data is official data provided by national governments and thereafter secondary sources. However, in the case of China, SIPRI estimates of Chinese military expenditure include sources that fall outside the official defence budget presented by China (SIPRI 2019). Hence, the figures for China is more of an estimation from the perspective of SIPRI, but it still represents a credible account for the military expenditures of China. Having said this, the data from SIPRI is still valid to use to understand the increased capabilities of China and how its economic development has to a certain degree subsided into a military development with an increased expenditure on its military.

To understand China's increasement of military capabilities, it is important to examine the figures of the US and India as well. The US still have the largest military expenditures globally. In 2018 it spent around 649 billion USD on military which was 3.2% of its GDP. The most interesting, regarding the US, is that between 2009-2018 its military expenditures dropped with 17%. In 2009 it spent around 764 billion USD which was 4.6% of its GDP. Even though that the US in 2018 still is the state with the highest military expenditure and spend more than double the amount of China. It is significant that it has decreased its military expenditures between 2009-2018, meanwhile China's expenditure has increased significantly. India has the fourth largest expenditures on military. In 2018 it spent 66.5 billion USD which was an increase of 29% from 2009. Therefore, India has also increased its military expenditures since 2009, though it is still behind China. However, India did spend more on military as a share of GDP opposite China in 2018. As a share of GDP India used 2.4% of its GDP on military contrary to China which used 1.9%. Besides examining these figures, it is also relevant to understand

concretely how China has spent its increases of military expenditures, in regard to its military hardware capabilities.

In the last two decades the most notably development of the Chinese military has been with its naval capabilities. Eric Heginbotham et al. argue that the Chinese navy since 1996 has experienced a rapid modernization and an increase of capabilities. They argue for example that China's surface fleet has experienced a remarkable modernization: "As late as 2003 only about 14 percent of its destroyers and 24 percent of its frigates might have been considered modern—capable of defensive and offensive operations against a capable enemy. By 2015, those figures had risen to 65 percent and 69 percent respectively" (Heginbotham et al 2015: 30). China is also expanding its program of aircraft carriers and is developing them internally (Pant & Joshi 2016: 66). In general, all sectors of China's navy have been modernized and its capabilities have been expanded whether it is China's naval surface fleets or its sub-surface fleet. It has expanded its capabilities of submarines and designed four new types of submarines; Type 094 Jin Class (a ballistic missile nuclear submarine), Type 093 Shang Class (a conventional attack nuclear submarine), Type 039A Yaun Class and a Type 039G Song Class (Pant & Joshi 2016: 66). The production and acquisition of these military capabilities is a factor that demonstrate the rise of China in the international system, and that China is developing its capabilities to project power.

This section has examined and outlined how to understand the rise of China in economic and military terms both through quantitative data and concrete examples of China's behaviour in Asia. The changes in the distribution of capabilities in the international system can explain the mobility in the system between the great powers as defensive realism and Waltz asserted. Therefore, China's increasement of its own capabilities, its economic and military development, and its subsequent assertive behaviour in Asia e.g. in the SCS and in the IOR, as will be elaborated on, might be observed by the US and India as a development in which China will dominate Asia. Hence, the US and India can have developed their bilateral relationship as a response to the rise of China in Asia and aiming to balance China. The following section will examine this and how China's rise challenges both the US and India and how this has instigated the rapprochement of US-India relations.

## 5.2: The Impact of China's Rise

As examined in the theory chapter, the ultimate goal of states is to survive in an anarchic international system. Thus, it is in the national interest of both the US and India that Asia is not dominated by China. Abercrombie argues that the US and India have converging national interest, one of them is to secure that no single power is able to dominate Asia (Abercrombie 2019: 121). As examined in the previous section, China is the only capable state with the economic and military capabilities to eventually be able to dominate Asia. Therefore, it is in the national interest of both the US and India to balance the power of China. In the last two decades there have been increased regional tensions between China and its regional neighbours and the US. Due to China's growing military capabilities and economic power, China has become more assertive in its foreign affairs (Li 2016: 251). China's behaviour has subsequently generated a closer relationship between other regional powers, like the case with the US and India will demonstrate. Defensive realism argued that power maximization would have a counterproductive effect on the ultimate end goal of states, which is to survive, and states who pursue power maximization would encourage other states to balance their power. This chapter will give examples of how the rise of China is a challenge to both the US and India, and thereby conclude that their rapprochement can be analysed as an attempt to balance the power of China.

### 5.2.1: The Impact of China's Rise on India

The purpose of this section is to give examples of why India is concerned about China's behaviour in the area and then subsequently has developed a closer relationship with the US. From the perspective of India, the rise of China constitutes a number of challenges. The rivalry between India and China can first be ascribed to their ongoing border dispute in the Himalayan territory, in the area of Kashmir and in the northeast of India, where they share a 2,520 miles-long border. "India-China border dispute is not only the largest territorial dispute in Asia but is also one of the longest running conflicts in the history of post-Second World War Asian politics" (Pant & Joshi 2016: 62). They fought a brief war in 1962 about those disputed borders and since then various bilateral negotiations have not been successful in settling the contested issues yet. According to Manjeet S. Pardesi, India follow an approach it agreed upon with China in 1988, in which they both recognized to postpone the border issues in favour of economic engagement. This pragmatic approach has been the doctrine of succeeding Indian governments, according to Pardesi (Pardesi 2017: 4). He further argues that because of the

asymmetry of capabilities in favour of China, India cannot necessarily be sure that it is in the interest of China to pursue a pragmatic approach anymore: "There is an implicit belief that the 1988 understanding of shelving contentious issues for the future suited China when the Sino-Indian military was on a more equal footing. This understanding has now come under assault because of the growing asymmetry in power between China and India" (Pardesi 2017: 15). As already reviewed, the Indian economy is smaller than the Chinese and China spends almost four times more on its military than India. Therefore, India is growing wary of China's intentions and this can be examined through the Doklam incident. This stand-off between India and China, which included Bhutan because the dispute was initial between China and Bhutan, exemplifies the growing Indian irritants of China's behaviour. In June 2017 the Bhutanese authorities observed presumably the People's Liberation Army (PLA) constructing a road at the Doklam plateau, which is a disputed area near the Bhutan-China-India tri-junction (Ganguly & Scobell 2018: 177). Bhutan which is lacking military capabilities to act against China turned to India for assistance, and within weeks the Indian and Chinese armies were in a stand-off and came close to confrontation. India even sent its troops across the border to stop the road-building and for the first time crossed into a territory in which they had no direct claim but honouring its treaty with Bhutan (Ahlawat & Hughes 2018: 620). Eventually China backed down, but this episode shows that the border issues between India and China are still open for direct confrontation between them and that India cannot be sure about China's intentions in hindsight of its economic and military development. Therefore, India must resort to internal and external efforts to counter China's growing power. India's internal and external efforts will be reviewed later, but first an examination of the challenges that China's rise constitute for India in South Asia and the IOR.

India is concerned and irritated of China increasing its maritime activity in the Indian Ocean, for example have Chinese submarines been operating in the Indian Ocean since 2014 (Ganguly & Scobell 2018: 182). With China's development of new sub-marine classes, it has also been able to project power in the IOR. As Pant and Joshi asserts: "Dockings by Chinese submarines in the Indian Ocean have now become regular feature: in September 2014 a Song class submarine docked in Colombo and in June 2015, for the first time ever, a Yang class submarine visited Karachi" (Pant & Joshi 2016: 66). Furthermore, China has actively invested in port facilities and it is seeking to establish its own naval bases in the region and the deep-water port in Gwadar, Pakistan, is being considered. Moreover, China has constructed its first ever naval base overseas in Djibouti in 2017, which is in proximity of India's neighbourhood. The base

in Djibouti is being argued to be the first strings of multiple bases around the IOR, the so-called “String of Pearls-strategy” (Ganguly & Scobell 2018: 183). All these factors have made India feel that China is aiming at containing or encircle India through its maritime capabilities. India is also worried that China is going to apply its naval strategy from the SCS; Anti-Access and Area Denial-strategy (A2D2), in the IOR (Burgess 2015: 372). This strategy has been implemented by China in the SCS as to “blunt the effectiveness of the U.S. navy and Air Force in East Asia and the Western Pacific” (Burgess 2015: 369). Therefore, India cannot be sure that China’s growing maritime presence in the IOR is not a policy that is aimed at containing India. Though if we were to look at the situation in the IOR from above, then the IOR is of geostrategic importance for both China and India in regard to shipping of resources. “Of eight important oil and gas reserves in the world, three reserves including Persian Gulf and its coast, coastal areas and continental shelf of Indonesia as well as northwest continental shelf of Australia, are distributed in the Indian Ocean, accounting for over 70% of the world’s total reserves” (Zhu 2018:3). Besides the energy sources the Indian Ocean is also estimated to be transporting 65% of strategic raw materials like uranium, gold, diamonds, tin, coal, iron ore, tungsten, manganese, copper and zinc (Zhu 2018:4). Considering that China needs to maintain its economic growth it needs to get a steady import of natural resources. It is projected that by 2035 30% of the global consumption of liquid fuels will be consumed by non-OECD Asian states, thereby including China. Furthermore, the states will double their consumption of natural gas from 10% in 2018 to 19% in 2035 (Cacères 2013: 74). Therefore, from the perspective of China it is vital to secure the maritime supply lines from Africa and the Persian Gulf which runs through the Indian Ocean. As Burgess asserts: “China is vulnerable in the Indian Ocean, as much of its energy and mineral supplies pass through its waters” (Burgess 2015: 372). Notwithstanding this, from an Indian perspective an increasement of Chinese naval activity in the Indian Ocean adds to its concerns about China’s intentions and whether it is a strategic encirclement by China (Selden & Strome 2017: 445). India is concerned about what it is observing as a maritime containment of them in the IOR and it furthermore exemplifies the geopolitical power transition in Asia. India cannot be certain about China’s present and eventual future intentions of its maritime presence in the IOR.

Serving as another example of India’s concerns about China, is China’s growing relationships with other states in South Asia, most notably Pakistan. Before it was referred to as China was aiming at containing India trough maritime presence in the IOR. In regard to South Asia, India has also perceived China’s behaviour as an encirclement. Pant and Joshi refer

to it as a strategic encirclement of India (Pant & Joshi 2016: 63). China and Pakistan have a close military relationship and China played a central role when Pakistan acquired nuclear weapons. India, furthermore, is aggravated about that China does not persuade Pakistan to stop supporting armed extremists' groups that conduct attacks in India (Ganguly & Scobell 2018: 183). Another contentious area in regard to the trilateral relationship between China, India and Pakistan is the BRI. The planned idea is that the BRI will be developed around various corridors and routes most notably in this regard is the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). In general India is taking a reserved position against BRI, but it is concerned about the planned corridors that are intended to be established in South Asia. Besides CPEC there is also planned a Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor (BCIMEC). Concerning CPEC the issue is that it is being built in Pakistan occupied Kashmir, which is a disputed area between Pakistan and India. India considers this as a part of India and therefore sees CPEC as a violation of sovereignty and an interference of territorial integrity (Blah 2018: 318). India is also concerned about the possibility that Pakistan's infrastructure would be developed and expanded as result of BRI and surpass India's in the areas close to the Indian-Pakistan border. Thus, it would be detrimental for India in terms of geostrategy and logistics in the eventuality of an armed conflict between Pakistan and India (Jha 2017: 165). Furthermore, CPEC would eventually end up in Gwadar, the deep-water port that China seeks as a naval base in the IOR, which is a reason for India's apprehension of the BRI. India's reluctance of joining the BRI, from a defensive realist point of view could be interpreted as India's accept of a Chinese dominated Asia, as Blah argues: "China is courting India to join the BRI for various reasons, the obvious one being that getting New Delhi on board will signify India's acceptance of Chinese supremacy in Asia" (Blah 2018: 318). A Chinese dominated Asia is not in India's national interest which follow the assumptions defensive realism, it would minimize India's security.

Given the facts that India has a gap of capabilities in relation to China combined with China's assertive behaviour in the SCS, its growing naval presence in the IOR, its development of relations with India's neighbours, BRI and the border issues, it can be stated that India is uneasy and uncertain about China's intentions. With the growing presence of the Chinese navy in the IOR and the BRI on land, India might observe the strategic encirclement of them as complete and cannot be certain that China has benign intentions with the BRI. The three core assumptions of defensive realism can be applied to India in this case. The system is anarchic, and India cannot be certain about China's intentions as the examples above showcase,

specifically when the distribution of capabilities is in favour of China. The ultimate goal of the state is security and survival, and India's security would be more threatened by Asia being dominated by China. Hence, India must act in self-help and since it cannot contain or challenge China alone, because of the aforementioned reasons, it must adopt policies to balance the power of China externally.

Defensive realism argues that states can balance through internal and external efforts and India has begun to make internal and external efforts to balance the power of China. India has made internal efforts by still increasing its military expenditures as was revealed when looking at the figures from SIPRI. India has between 2009-2018 increased its spending on its military with 29%, although in terms of share of GDP it has dropped from 2.9% to 2.4% in the same time period. It still spent more money on military in 2018 than in 2009, because of its economic growth as shown in figure 1 (See p. 30). In contrast to China, India's military expenditures as a share of GDP is higher, however China is still spending four times the amount than India. Notwithstanding this, it can be asserted that in regard to the military development, India has made internal efforts to balance the power of China by increasing its spending from 2009-2018, which has been made possible by its economic growth in the same period. Another indication that India is building up its military capabilities is that India is the second largest importer of arms according to SIPRI (SIPRI 2019: 2). Between 2014-2018 India had 9.5% share of the global arms imports and the US was India's third largest supplier of arms. Even though, India's global share of arms imports decreased with 24% from the period of 2009-2013 to 2014-2018, it still imports more arms than China, who is the sixth largest importer of arms with a global share of 4.2%.

The military development of India can be contextualized by examining its development of missile and naval capabilities. Ganguly and Scobell argue for example that the technological advances made by both China and India have made the inhospitable area of Himalayas surmountable: "dramatic innovations in weapons technology and qualitative advancements in the strategic capabilities of both India and China have rendered "the highest mountains in the world" no longer insurmountable barriers" (Ganguly & Scobell 2018: 180). Furthermore, both states possess missile capabilities of long range ballistic missiles that can be deployed with nuclear weapons, which can reach thousands of miles in a short time (Ganguly & Scobell 2018: 180). India is also starting to develop its naval capabilities to be able to project power in the IOR, as Burgess argues: "(...) the aircraft carrier *Vikrant* and the nuclear submarine *Arihant* should be operational by 2020" (Burgess 2015: 372). At the border in the Himalayan, India has

also begun to expand its military capabilities and attempts to upgrade its approach from a deterrence to a denial-policy. In 2013 the Indian government allocated 15 billion USD for infrastructure development, e.g. road building and upgrading airfields, and the creation of new mountain divisions. It furthermore deployed its advanced Su-30MKI aircrafts and BrahMos missiles at the border with China (Pardesi 2017: 16). Even though India has made internal efforts to balance China, it still lacks behind and there is a substantial asymmetry of capabilities between them. Therefore, in combination with China's behaviour in the Indo-Pacific region, internal efforts for balancing may not suffice to deter China because of India's proportional limited capabilities compared to China and thus India needs to enhance its external efforts to balance China (Pant & Joshi 2016: 7).

India has in the last two decades made external efforts to balance China by developing and enlarging its cooperation with regional states, perhaps most notably the US. However, it is not the intention of this thesis to discard that India has initiated no other external efforts, besides its relationship with the US. India has also begun to enhance its bilateral relationship with Japan and Australia and it has in the last two decades set in motion to further develop its economic and military relationship with South East Asia through its Act East-policy. The Act East-policy is an attempt by India to develop commercial and security ties with the states in South East Asia (Ganguly 2017:136). India's Act East-policy can be argued to be partly motivated by China's growing economic, political and military role in Asia (Grare 2017: 25). These other efforts by India to develop closer relationship is of course relevant, however, as it was reiterated in the methodology chapter, the purpose of this thesis is to examine the relationship between the US and India. Before contextualizing how the US and India have developed a closer relation, it is essential to review the rise of China in the perspective of the US.

### 5.2.2: The Impact of China's Rise for the US

As the dominant power in the international system the US is also concerned about the rise of China in the Asian region. Popular as the phrase "the rise of China" is, it is equally often argued in IR that the US is in a relative decline. The post-Cold War period is often ascribed as the hegemony of the US (Christensen & Xing 2016: 32). In realism, hegemony is being understood as the dominance by one unit in the system and thereby having a certain amount of capabilities at its disposal to dominate interstate relations (Christensen & Xing 2016: 30). Thus, when speaking about the rise of China and the relative decline of the US, it should be comprehended as China's growing accumulation of capabilities which challenges the hegemony of the US.



Xing asserts that there are four pillars to understand the hegemony of the US in a post-Cold war period; a capitalist world economic system, a global or regional security cooperation among states, a global trade regime and a global value system of norm an ideology (Christensen & Xing 2016: 32). Looking aside the last factor about values and norms, which defensive realism would find obsolete, the other three factors are useful concepts for understanding the hegemony of the US. The Bretton Wood structure is a system where the US has established economic institutions e.g. the World Bank and the IMF to enlarge trade liberalization. The US has globally developed military alliance and security cooperation with other states e.g. in Asia and Europe. Finally, the US has encouraged a global trade network to enhance global trade among states (Christensen & Xing 2016: 32). China's rise in the international system does challenge the US on its role as the hegemon. The last two decades have demonstrated the boundaries of American power in the world. Pant and Joshi assert: "Two costly wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and a debilitating financial crisis has made Washington realize the limits of US power" (Pant & Joshi 2016: 12).

In 2017 the US was still the largest economy in the world measured in GDP according to the World Bank, and China was the second largest economy (World Bank 2019). However, China has surpassed the US as the largest economy if it is measured through GDP based on PPP valuation (World Bank 2019). Notwithstanding all these approaches to measure the economic capability of states it can be asserted that the Chinese economy is catching up to the American. Looking at figure 2 (See p. 31), the US share of the world's GDP based on PPP was 20.16% in 2009 but according to the IMF the US share in 2018 was 15.16% (IMF 2019). Thus, it exemplifies that the American economy in the last decade has been surpassed by the Chinese, whose share was 18.69% in 2018. Concerning military spending it was examined earlier that the US outspend China in its military budget, however the US spend 17% less on its military in the period from 2008-2018, meanwhile China in the same period has increased its spending with 83%. Even though the military budget of the US is comfortably larger than in China, there has been a gradual process from 2008-2019 in which China has increased its military capabilities.

Another aspect to understand how China challenges the US dominance, in terms of the economic system, is the construction of other financial institutions e.g. Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), BRI, New Development Bank etc. These are being created in addition to US led or backed financial institutions e.g. the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (Christensen & Xi 2016: 35). Although China has initiated several of the new financial

institutions in cooperation with other states, for example the AIIB which was started with other Asian and European states as founding members and the New Development Bank is co-created with the rest of the BRICS, it still demonstrates that China is challenging the US and its position in the international system. Concerning trade, another factor in understanding the hegemony of the US, the US and China are at the moment conducting a trade war with each other, which is of course an outcome of years of US accusations of China exploiting US in trade. In 2010 the US had a trade deficit reaching 273 billion USD with China. As Gilboy and Heginbotham argue "The Bilateral trade deficit with China is a source of considerable political friction between Washington and Beijing" (Heginbotham & Gilboy 2012: 222). According to the US office of Trade Representative, the trade deficit in 2018, in terms of goods, was at 419.2 billion USD - an increase of 11.6% from 2017 (US Trade Representative 2019). Thus, between 2010-2018 the American trade deficit with China has increased and the US started a so-called trade war with China in July 2018 by implementing increase tariffs on Chinese imports. This exemplifies another factor in which China has taken advantage of the system created by the US and asserted themselves. It also demonstrates the concerns by the US that China seeks to weaken the national security of the US (Liu & Woo 2018: 320). Thus, in terms of economics and trade it can be argued, given the brief examples presented, that the rise of China is a challenge for the US and the world order it has created.

Concerning the US-led security order, it can also be argued that China challenges that, especially in Asia. China's increased capabilities together with the decline of the US as a global power have exemplified a transition of power in Asia. China's behaviour in Asia the last two decades is being seen as an aggressive attempt to assert power in Asia by the US and other regional powers. China's attempt to unilateral claim islands and construct artificial islands in the SCS has raised concerns among regional states e.g. Vietnam, the Philippines, Indonesia etc. who also claim areas in the SCS. The US believes that China circumvent international rules on the freedom of navigation of the seas to their benefit e.g. the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) (Pant & Joshi 2016: 105). UNCLOS is important to understand because it for example mention that islands have a sovereignty zone of 12 nautical miles (nm). China has ascribed to UNCLOS, but the US believes that China violates UNCLOS when China is attempting to construct artificial islands (Wagner 2016: 138). According to UNCLOS, if islands only are visible at low-tide it cannot be territorial claimed and artificial constructed islands do not have 12 nm zone of sovereignty, but merely 500-meter security zone (UNCLOS 1982: 25). When creating artificial islands in the SCS and thereby arguing that the islands have

a 12 nm zone of sovereignty there is a possibility that China can control the SCS. One episode that demonstrates these issues happened on 27<sup>th</sup> October 2015 when the US missile destroyer USS Lassen conducted a legal Freedom of Navigation Operation (FONOP), as permitted by UNCLOS, and sailed within the limit of 12 nm of a Chinese claimed island (Wagner 2016: 138). This operation was a challenge to China's sovereignty in the SCS according to China and hence argued by China to be illegal in accordance with its interpretation of UNCLOS (The Diplomat 2015). Therefore, the unilateral annexation of various islands in the SCS e.g. the Spratly and Paracel islands combined with artificial constructed islands and China's interpretation of international rules on the limits of sovereignty from islands can eventually advance China as the controller of the SCS. This could diminish the position of the US as security-guarantor in the area as well as decrease its own security. With its actions in the SCS China is challenging the dominant position of the US and the US-led Asian security order (Burgess 2015: 371). Regional states e.g. Vietnam and the Philippines, which China has had disputes with over territories in the SCS, are close partners with the US. Hence the rise of China and its assertiveness in East Asia and the SCS confronts the world order which The US has created. Having outlined the transition of power in Asia in regard to the US, it can be argued that the power of the US is in decline. The last two decades are characterized by China's unprecedented development and its assertiveness in East Asia. Therefore, it can be argued that the relative decline of the US has forced them to make external efforts to balance the rise of China.

As a consequence of China's development and behaviour, in the last two decades, the US has aimed at strengthening existing alliances and developing new partnerships with regional states in Asia. In 2011 the Obama administration presented its new strategy called "Pivot to Asia" or "Strategic Rebalancing" which aimed at redeploying American military assets and renew diplomatic activity in the region (Pant & Joshi 2016: 5). This strategy is an external effort by the US to counter what it observes as a more assertive China in the region. Therefore, as with India, the US has made efforts to counter that fact. According to Pant and Joshi, India is actually a key component of the strategy even though the initial strategy firstly were contemplated as an Asia-Pacific strategy, it was changed to be understood as an Indo-Pacific strategy, which then included India as well (Pant & Joshi 2017: 39). India's comparable size in economy, military etc. and its own national interest regarding China, made India an eventual important partner for the US.

When applying defensive realism to understand why the US and India have begun developing a closer relationship, it can be assumed that China's rise in the international system is a primary factor. Therefore, the last two sections have examined the structures of the international system and the rise of China as a primary factor for their rationale of deciding to develop a closer relationship. India's proximity to China and China's behaviour in the IOR combined with India's asymmetry of capabilities in relation to China's has necessitated India to balance the power of China, through internal and external efforts. Though, lacking the capabilities to balance through internal efforts, India has resorted to develop new partnerships in the region. The US as the dominant power in the system has also observed the rise of China with unease, especially China's behaviour in the SCS. With its own relative decline of power, the US is enlarging its cooperation with states around the Indo-Pacific area to contain China. In this regard India is an ideal partner for the US to engage with because of similar concerns about China and because of India's proximity to China in terms of economy, population, military etc. compared to any other states in the Indo-Pacific area (Abercrombie 2019: 124). Hence, according to defensive realism it can be asserted that the distribution of capabilities, which is relatively changing in favour of China, combined with that the international system is anarchic, the US and India cannot be certain about China's intentions. Therefore, they have initiated external efforts to balance the power of China. Thus, the development of their relationship in the last two decades can be ascribed to the rise of China, because it is in the US and India's national interest that Asia is not dominated by China because it would be a challenge for their own development and security, which defensive realism argues is the primary objective for a state. Thus, it can be concluded now that a primary explanation for the development of a quasi-alliance between the US and India in the last two decades can be ascribed to the rise of China through the theoretical perspective of defensive realism.

### 5.3: US-India Quasi-alliance in the 21<sup>st</sup> century

This section will examine and contextualize the relationship between the US and India in the last two decades. Until now the thesis has only implicitly mentioned that the US and India have developed a closer relationship, but not presented concrete examples of their cooperation. Firstly, the examples given in this section will support the findings in the previous section, that the rise of China has advanced the relationship between the US and India, because their relationship is primarily defined through defence cooperation. Secondly, this section is relevant to outline because it will present another approach to the analysis of why the US and India only have developed a quasi-alliance.

As it was noted reviewed in the literature review the historical relationship between the US and India from World War II to the end of the Cold War was characterized as a strained relationship. As Wetering argues: “During and immediately after the Cold War, US-India relations could be characterized as estranged or as a cold peace” (Wetering 2016: 29) Without going into detail with the relationship between the US and India before the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it can be asserted that the relationship as Wetering argues, was estranged because of multiple factors e.g. the relationship between the US and Pakistan or India's foreign policy doctrine of Non-Alignment. With the end of the Cold War and India's economic reforms in 1991 the relationship between the US and India has developed, though with setbacks at times. The last two decades the relationship between the US and India can be comprehended through a security-defence, diplomatic and economic aspect.

#### 5.3.1: Civil Nuclear Agreement

A key moment for understanding the relationship between the US and India was the enabling of a civilian nuclear deal between the US and India with the signing of the *US-Indian Nuclear Cooperation Approval and Non-proliferation Act*, in 2008. The Bush administration did already announce its ambition to attain complete civil nuclear energy cooperation with India during a visit by the Indian Prime Minister, Mammohan Singh, in 2005 (Pant 2011: 1-2). This nuclear agreement would set about initiatives which would bring India into an accepted role as a nuclear power both in both civil and military terms. At that time, India was restricted in the nuclear section and it was not possible for other states to trade nuclear assets with India, because they were under global non-proliferation rules, as a part consequence of their nuclear testing in 1998 (Perkovich 2010: 33). By 2008 the US as the leader of the international non-

proliferation community accepted India as a legitimate nuclear state making it possible for the international community and the US to trade civilian and military nuclear technology with India. This nuclear deal is a significant event point in the relationship between the US and India. Pant argues: "It also symbolized a turning point in US-India relations with the two nations deciding to leave their suspicion ridden past behind and entering into what has been described as a strategic partnership" (Pant 2011: 1). It is a significant moment for the international standing of India as well. Prior this nuclear deal India was an illegitimate nuclear power and thus the recognition as a legitimate nuclear power by the US signal India's standing as an emerging power globally. However, India's recognition as a nuclear power has not designated it to be part of the non-proliferation regime e.g. a full member of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG). The NSG controls the global trade in nuclear material and technology and India is candidate for membership. China is the main actor who attempts to unilaterally block and sabotage the possibility of India becoming member of the NSG. This further demonstrate the frustration by India, that China repeatedly attempts to sabotage its emerging status, which also can be examined by China's reluctance to accept India's candidature as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). Though, concerning the NSG the US has pressured the rest of the members of the NSG to accept specific exemption to India (Pant & Joshi 2016: 65). Thus, the civilian nuclear agreement between the US and India can be seen as the start of their growing strategic partnership as Pant argued, and it is an important agreement to understand because it has facilitated the development of US and India's relationship in terms of security and cooperation (Wetering 2016:129).

### 5.3.2: Security and Defence Cooperation

Abercrombie asserts that since 2001 the strategic partnership between the US and India has remained consistent, arguing that: "With little variation, joint statements from 2001 to the present have pledged that the United States and India will work together to deepen defence cooperation, advance defence technology cooperation, enhance maritime security, combat terrorism, and promote stability in Afghanistan" (Abercrombie 2019: 125). This point is further highlighted with the fact that the US in 2016 designated India as a major defence partner, which is a status unique to India (Abercrombie 2019: 132).

Between 2005 and 2015 the US and India signed two bilateral framework agreements with specific focus areas of defence cooperation. The two militaries have regular exercises with their armies, air forces and navies which have led to familiarity between the two states'

militaries as well as improved information sharing and increased the dialogue (Abercrombie 2019: 128). Burgess define their relationship as an “exercise relationship”: “(...) the United States is keen to assist India to modernize its navy as well as air force and army and develop the “exercise partnership” and interoperability” (Burgess 2015: 373). After having renewed their framework agreement from 2005 in 2015 their interoperability has significantly developed and progressed and now India and the US have several yearly joint exercises (Burgess 2015: 368). India is training more with The US military than with any other states, however, compared to the engagement of the US with other states e.g. Japan, India and the US still need to increase their frequency of exercise programs, argues Abercrombie: “(...) whereas the U.S. Navy conducted only one exercise with India in 2017, it engaged in 28 major exercises with Japan” (Abercrombie 2019: 130). This point is essential to keep in mind when conceptualizing the reason behind arguing that the relationship between the US and India is a quasi-alliance, but this conceptualization will be elaborated on later.

With India's designation as a major defence partner for the US in 2016 and their development of military interoperability, the US and India have also in the last two decades increasingly engaged in defence technology cooperation. In 2012 the US and India established the Defence Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI), which were aiming at increasing coproduction and development of defence technologies (Abercrombie 2019: 131). Even though, DTTI has not materialized yet with the primary objective of collectively producing and developing defence technology, it still represents a trend in which the US and India are attempting to develop a closer relationship, thereby making external efforts to balance the rise of China. It also presents an example on their relationship moving beyond India's necessity to buy weapons and technology from the US. Since 2001 India's import of arms from the US has approximately reached the amount of 18 billion USD (Abercrombie 2019: 131). Furthermore, the US is the thirds largest supplier of arms to India, according to SIPRI, and it supplies 12% of India's arms import (SIPRI 2019: 6). The amount spent by India in buying US military equipment since 2001 together with the US's position as the third largest arms exporter to India, is a further indication of the development in their strategic partnership during the last two decades. Besides DTTI, India and the US have both agreed upon other agreements in regard to deepen their defence and security partnership. Agreements e.g. the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA), which was signed in 2016 and the Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA), signed in September 2018 (Vijayalakshmi 2017: 53). Moreover, negotiations about the Basic Exchange and

Cooperation Agreement (BECA) is still yet to be agreed upon (Abercrombie 2019: 130). Concerning concrete examples of maritime cooperation, it can be mentioned that in 2015 the US and India provided a joint framework for maritime security cooperation called "U.S.-India Joint Strategic Vision for the Asia-Pacific and India Ocean Region". Abercrombie argues that this framework should be understood in the context of China's activities in the SCS: "(...) maritime security cooperation has been energized against the backdrop of rising tensions over territorial disputes and Chinese land-reclamation activities in the South China Sea" (Abercrombie 2019: 133). The naval forces of the US and India is expanding its scope of cooperation in the IOR and the Pacific and are conducting naval exercises together (Pant & Joshi 2017:142). All these different agreements demonstrate the growing development between the US and India in terms of security and defence cooperation.

### 5.3.3: Diplomatic and Economic Relationship

Besides defining their relationship through increased military and defence cooperation and interoperability etc., it can also be viewed in a diplomatic perspective. The US President and the Indian Prime Minister meet annually, and they have multiple cabinet-dialogues between them, most notably the first ever 2+2 meeting between the US Secretaries of State and Defence and Indian Ministers for External Affairs and Defence, which was held in September 2018 (Abercrombie 2019: 126). The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the strengthening strategic, security and defence cooperation between the US and India in the Indo-Pacific area. The Indian minister for external affairs, Sushma Swaraj, said in her closing remarks for the meeting: "(...) we have a growing convergence of views between our countries on the Indo-Pacific". She further argued: "We see the Indo-Pacific region as a free, open, and inclusive concept with ASEAN centrality at the core and defined by a common, rules-based order that both our countries are pursuing" (U.S. Department of State 2018). This indicates first and foremost that India and the US have similar national interest in the Indo-Pacific region, most notably China's behaviour. When she mentions that they have a growing convergence of view, it can be seen as a way of saying that both have observed the power transition in Asia, and they both have a national interest of Asia not being dominated by China. Therefore, this citation by Swaraj supports the examination, given earlier in the chapter, of why the US and India have chosen to develop a closer relationship in the last two decades. This is furthermore implied when reviewing what the Secretary of State, Michael R. Pompeo said in his closing remarks: "We had many productive and forward-thinking conversations on our bilateral relationship,



our shared future, and how we can cooperate in promoting a free and open Indo-Pacific” (U.S. Department of State 2018). This 2+2 meeting signifies the extent to which India and the US have developed their partnership and shows that talks at the highest ministerial level is taking place and is just another example of the rapprochement of US-India relations.

By examining their economic and trade relation it is also evident that the US and India have developed a closer relationship in the last two decades in that sense. The US is India's largest trading partner in goods and services combined (Ministry of External Affairs 2018). From 2008-2018 there has been an increase of 87.3% of US goods exported to India which amount to 33.1 billion USD, meanwhile India is the US' 9<sup>th</sup> largest trading partner (U.S. Trade Representative 2019). In terms of goods and services the total trade between them amounted to 142.1 billion USD, in which the US imported for 83.2 billion USD and exported to India for 58.9 billion USD, which means that the US has a trade deficit with India of 24.2 billion USD (U.S. Trade Representative 2019). As seen with the trade relation between China and the US, an American trade deficit with India can perhaps have consequences for their relationship. The current Trump administration and its policy of protectionism can affect the relationship between the US and India because of the American trade deficit with the US. The US did, for example remove India's special status that exempted Indian exports to the US for tariffs (The New York Times 2019). Whether the American trade deficit affects the relationship between the US and India, in terms of China's rise, is perhaps questionable. They both still have similar interests when it comes to the power structures in Asia.

This section has given examples of how to understand and contextualize the relationship between the US and India in the last two decades. It has given examples from defence and security, diplomatic and economic cooperation to give an understanding of their current relationship and how it has developed in the last two decades. Given the fact that the national interest of both the US and India is to not have a Chinese dominated Asia, this developing partnership between them can be argued to be in a form of external efforts to balance the power of China. As mentioned earlier, India is not capable of balance the power of China only through internal efforts; its asymmetry of capabilities with China forces it to make external efforts. The US also has to make external efforts, even though it is the strongest unit in the system. It would still be easier to balance the power of China with other states that have similar concerns of China, in this regard India. Even though the US still could be argued to be the strongest unit in the system, it is still observable to see the relative decline of the US in the last two decades. Given that the relationship in the last two decades has evolved around defence and security

cooperation it just further indicates that China is the primary factor for them to develop a strategic partnership. This can be examined, as already mentioned, in their framework for maritime cooperation from 2015, in which Abercrombie argued that the behaviour of China in the SCS should be seen as a factor for the US and India to further formalize their relationship. In regard to defensive realism, defence and security cooperation is an indication that they aim towards developing their bilateral ties, with the purpose of being able to balance a shift of power in the Indo-Pacific region. Thus, this chapter has provided a contextualization of their quasi-alliance.

#### 5.4: Factors shaping US-Indian Quasi-Alliance

By now the term “quasi-alliance” has been used and referred to without any conceptualization of what is specifically meant by the term. Hence, this section will explain how and why this term is being used in this thesis. As examined in the last chapter, the relationship between the US and India has developed since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Though the relationship can be characterized as a very informal relationship, and as demonstrated the relationship is defined by its predominately focus on security cooperation, hence this informal relationship can ultimately be argued to be an informal security relationship. As Selden and Strome argue: “There is no treaty or explicit security commitment in place between the two states, but they have developed a striking level of security cooperation” (Selden & Strome 2017: 440). It was established that the relationship is defined as a security cooperation in the previous chapter, because much of their cooperation is e.g. joint military exercises, defence technology cooperation, arms imports etc. The relationship lacks the institutionalized structures in which you would be able to argue that the US-India relationship is a formal treaty-based alliance like NATO (Selden & Strome 2017: 440). For the purpose of this thesis the meaning of ascribing the relationship between the US and India as a quasi-alliance was to capture the fact that the US and India have set in motion policies in which they have and can expand their bilateral relationship, but currently they have still not developed a formal treaty-based alliance. That is why the term quasi-alliance has been used in this thesis to underscore the reality that the US and India have developed a strategic partnership in the wake of China’s rise. A strategic partnership can be described as an arrangement in which two units cooperate to make it easier to achieve the goals that they want to accomplish (Abercrombie 2019: 123). This can be argued to assent agreeably to the assumptions of states behaviour according to defensive realism and the examination of the US and India’s action in the wake of China’s rise.

##### 5.4.1: Avoidance of Escalating the Security Dilemma

States in the international system act according to a self-help behaviour because of the structures in the system. As it has been argued, both the US and India are concerned about China’s behaviour and their national interest is that Asia is not dominated by China because it would threaten their own security. As a result of the distribution of capabilities that have seen a change in favour of China the last two decades, both the US and India need to act in self-help by balancing the power of China. Both have resorted to external efforts to balance the power

of China by enlarging their cooperation with other states, most notably between themselves because of their joint goal of balancing the power of China. Therefore, they have developed a strategic partnership or as in this thesis, a quasi-alliance, to contain China. Having established the rise of China as a primary factor for the decision of the US and India to initiate a closer relationship, the second prospect of the research question needs to be examined. Even though they have conjoined concerns and national interest about the current power transition in Asia, why have their relationship not developed further from an informal strategic partnership to a formal alliance.

According to defensive realism states in the international system should make modest policies so they do not appear as offensive or aggressive units in the system. As mentioned in the theory chapter, it is argued by Waltz that an offensive behaviour in which a state seeks to maximize its powers is counter-productive to the ultimate goal a state needs to achieve; survival of the state. Hence, it can be argued that if the US and India had to a greater extent developed a formalized relationship, with alliance entanglements, it would have been detrimental to the national interests of both, to keep China from dominating Asia. It is important to understand the security dilemma in this case. A formalization of the relationship between the US and India would have created a security dilemma for China, and thereby initiate a regional security dilemma. As Robert Jervis argues: "The security dilemma is at its most vicious when commitments, strategy, or technology dictate that the only route to security lies through expansion" (Elman & Jensen 2014: 137). Hence, an expansion of commitment, e.g. enlargement of a state's own alliance, would be detrimental to the other state's security. Consequently, a formal alliance between the US and India, even though it would perhaps increase their security, would decrease China's security and therefore China needs to enhance its own capabilities and commitments and thus a security dilemma would start, according to defensive realism.

It can be argued that India has been aware of not aligning itself with the US, through a treaty-based alliance, for the purpose of creating counter-productive incidents. India's reluctance to sign various military agreements e.g., LEMOA, COMCASA and BECA, can be examined as India's comprehension of what a formal entanglement with the US would create (Abercrombie 2019: 130). Even though India has signed these military agreements after its initial hesitation, the reluctance still demonstrates that it is aware of what it would commence to start developing a formal alliance with the US. The US and India are also careful about how their rapprochement is being interpreted and comprehended by other states e.g. China. After

the 2+2 dialogue in September 2018, the American and Indian Secretary of State and Foreign Affairs, in their final remarks, do not mention China one time. It is noteworthy, as examined earlier, that they refer to this meeting as them having a convergent interest in regard to the Indo-Pacific region. Furthermore, it can be argued as reiterated through the whole thesis that the rise of China is a primary factor for their strategic partnership. Hence, it is significant that in their final remarks there is no mentioning of China. Secretary of State, Pompeo even mention that they have discussed “(...) pressing regional and global issues, including Afghanistan and North Korea” (U.S. Department of State 2018). It should be mentioned that of course there is a high probability that China was discussed in their meeting, their remarks just demonstrate the fact that their developing relationship is being observed by China. Thus, they are aware of that a formal alliance with the current power transition in Asia would have a disadvantageous effect on their convergent interest in the region. Despite that this example might appear to be a constructivist argument, that the US and India are aware of how their relationship is being perceived and therefore might be comprehended within the field of norms and values, it is still valid to use for this thesis in regard to defensive realism. The example is being used to ascribe the fact that the US and India are aware, that if they want to balance the power of China, a formal treaty-based alliance would be seen as an aggressive behaviour by China and an attempt for the US and India to maximize their powers. This point is also stressed by Selden and Strome: “India still pursues its Strategic Autonomy and is careful to avoid being pulled into an alliance with the United States, particularly one that can be seen as designed to contain China” (Selden & Strome 2017: 443).

In January 2019 at the Raisina Dialogue, which is a multilateral conference for discussing the challenges facing the global community, the commander of the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, Navy Admiral Philip S. Davidson, and the chief of India's naval staff, Navy Admiral Sunil Lanba, were participating in a discussion about the Indo-Pacific region. Both Davidson and Lanba reiterated that the strategic partnership between the US and India should not be seen as a containment strategy for China and that there was no formal military partnership between the US and India (U.S. Department of Defense 2019). It demonstrates again the consciousness of the US and India in how their relationship is being interpreted by China for not initiating a regional security dilemma. The examples, in this section, can be used to explain why the US and India have not developed a formal alliance. A relationship that would develop to a formal treaty-based alliance between the US and India would be detrimental for the security of China and thus trigger a security dilemma. As it was mentioned in the theory

chapter, a security dilemma should not only be comprehended as a state increasing its capabilities internally e.g. how many bullets is at its disposal, but also external efforts are relevant. "(...) both military build-ups and alliances can change the adversary's beliefs about the state's motives, thus convincing the adversary that the state is inherently more dangerous than previously thought" (Taliaferro 2001: 136). Therefore, it can be argued that the US and India avoid developing a formal alliance because it would make them inherently more dangerous from the perspective of China and thus the US and India attempt to reiterate that their relationship is not a formal alliance.

#### 5.4.2: India's Non-Alignment Policy

As it has been argued, a formal alliance between the US and India might create a security dilemma in which China needs to make external and internal efforts to balance this alliance and may be a reason for why the US and India have not developed a formal alliance. Though, India's reluctance might also derive from its foreign policy-doctrine of "Strategic Autonomy" or Non-Alignment. This policy is essentially for India's decision to pursue its interests with minimal influence from other major powers (Hall 2016: 273). The Non-Alignment policy is a remnant from the Cold War and was adopted by Nehru after India's independence. It mainly entailed a vision in which India should not be military or diplomatic entangled to any of the great powers, at that time the US or the USSR. The idea was that India would maintain a neutral relationship with the US and USSR and promote causes e.g. decolonisation, because at that time India felt it was too weak in geostrategic terms and it would be better to make no alignment for its own development (Hall 2016: 272). This policy is now being referred to as Strategic Autonomy, which is a policy that essentially follow the same assumptions as the Non-Alignment policy, which is that India wants to pursue its national interest without the entanglements to other major states e.g. the US (Hall 2016: 373). This is a strategy that India has applied both in regard to China and the US. Pedersen argues: "the rise of China has presented a clear dilemma for India; one that India has tried to deal with in a manner similar to its reactions to the USA, i.e. a combination of balancing on the one hand, and collaborating, on the other" (Christensen & Xing 2016: 122-123). Thus, the policy of Strategic Autonomy or Non-Alignment is a factor that can explain India's reluctance to develop a formal treaty-based alliance with the US. As Burgess argues: "An alliance with the United States would run against India's attachment to Strategic Autonomy and put India in confrontational position with China" (Burgess 2015: 374). Thus, from the perspective of India, its legacy of Strategic Autonomy can

be argued to be an explanation for its decision not to develop a formal alliance with the US and being entangled to formal alliance commitments. As Burgess noted that it would put India in a confrontational position with China, meaning that the geographical position of China combined with the asymmetry of capabilities between India and China force India to be careful not to conduct offensive foreign policies. Even though the US and India have developed a closer relationship and the US in general have attempted to direct its diplomatic and military focus towards East Asia through its Pivot to Asia-policy, the relative decline of the US can therefore be argued to affect India and the fact that it cannot necessarily be sure about the intentions and capacity of the US.

In a report from 2012 called “Non-alignment 2.0” by Indian strategic thinkers it was argued that India should be vigilant not to adopt a foreign policy that could be perceived as a threat to China. “The challenge for Indian diplomacy will be to develop a diversified network of relations with several major powers to compel China to exercise restraint (...) while simultaneously avoiding relationships that go beyond conveying a certain threat threshold in Chinese perceptions” (Centre for Policy Research 2012: 14). This supports the argument that a formal alliance with the US would be seen as a threat to China and thereby a security dilemma for China, meaning that it would have to make internal and external efforts to counter this rapprochement. From an Indian perspective, it is concerned about the growing relationship between China and other regional states e.g. Russia. India is, for example, concerned about the growing diplomatic tensions between Russia and the West (US and Europe) and that these tensions will force Russia to move towards China, according to Rajagopalan (Rajagopalan 2017: 42). Hence it can be asserted that an expansion of US-India relations would force China to expand its external efforts by developing closer relationship with regional states e.g. Russia. Therefore, an informal strategic partnership can be argued to be a modest policy by the US and India and is not necessarily a decrease of China's security as a formal alliance would have been.

#### 5.4.3: Uncertainty about the Capacity of the US and India

As it was demonstrated, both the US and India cannot be certain about China's intention, and therefore act in self-help. Therefore, if they cannot be certain about the intention of China because of the anarchic structures of the system, it must inevitable also imply that the relationship between the US and India should be comprehended in the same manner. Even though the civilian nuclear deal, agreed in 2008, was a moment when the US and India could

leave their suspicious past behind, as Pant argued. according to defensive realism states is always uncertainty because of the structures in the system. In an anarchic system India and the US cannot depend on a global authority that can enforce agreements that have been agreed upon. Thus, the US cannot be sure about India's intentions to adhere to the entanglements of formal alliance and vice versa.

It can be argued that there is an uncertainty from both states about the other's willingness and capacity to be able to balance against China. From the perspective of India, it can be seen in the US's decision to concentrate its diplomatic and military focus in Asia, with its Pivot to Asia-policy, and whether it has the capacity to confront China. It can be argued that the US' economic situation and fatigue of ongoing wars in the Middle-East will pressure its ability to begin offensively balancing China. As Pant and Joshi assert: "(...) its dire fiscal situation and given that economic health drives military ability, America's capacity to wage war in distant lands will come under immense pressure" (Pant & Joshi 2016: 14). This can be analysed in two ways concerning defensive realism; firstly, the US itself may be aware of its own relative decline of capabilities and therefore not incline to maximise its power by developing a formal alliance with India. It might be counter-productive to its interest and that the US economically and militarily is not ready to undertake such a policy. A strategic partnership with India is a less power maximizing measure to take and it is more adjoined with the national interest of the US.

Secondly, it can also be comprehended through the scope of uncertainty from the perspective of India. The decline of the US also create uncertainty about the assurance of the US to balance China. As a global power the US is engaged in global affairs around the world, but the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and an aftermath of a financial crisis it creates doubt about the capacity of the US to manage global affairs. "The US is struggling to cope up with requirements under strategic rebalancing as it remains engrossed in multiple conflicts across the globe stretching its military resources further" (Pant & Joshi 2016: 106). This point can further be comprehended by the decision by the US to withdraw from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) in 2017 by the Trump administration. The TPP, which initially was conceived by the US, is a free-trade deal between 12 states from the Pacific which covered 40% of the global economy. The TPP is designed to enhance trade and cooperation between signatories, though it is also argued that the TPP should be understood as a means to counter China's growing power in Asia. "As for the TPP's geostrategic value, the Obama administration argued that it would bolster U.S. leadership in Asia and strengthen its alliances



in the region” (Council on Foreign Affairs 2019). For the US to withdraw from its own contrived partnerships to balance China, it leaves behind other states in the system uncertain about the capacity of the US to balance against China or the measures to do it. Thus, it can be asserted that India would not risk entering into a formal alliance with the US if there is uncertainty about the power of the US and its ability to act upon its role as the strongest state in the system. Hence if there is uncertainty about the capacity, and perhaps willingness, to balance China, it may be more favourable to develop a less formalized partnership instead of a formal alliance with treaty-based commitments.

In 2009 the Obama administration began to consider the idea of a G2, an idea of great power condominium between the US and China to manage global affairs (Pant & Joshi 2017: 135). It is not in the interest of India that an arrangement between the US and China, to manage global and regional affairs, should be developed. Therefore, this idea made India worried about its own strategic vulnerability. The idea of a G2 was rejected by the US and it adopted an assertive foreign policy in the wake of China's aggressive behaviour in Asia. Though, it still exemplifies a notion of uncertainty about the intentions of the US and that India cannot be sure about what the US eventually will do in a future situation concerning China. “(...) the possibility of a great power condominium between the US and China cannot be completely ruled out by the regional states” (Pant & Joshi 2016: 106). Hence from the perspective of defensive realism and the security dilemma, it would be irrational to initiate a security dilemma with China by joining the US in a formal alliance if there is doubt about the US. Since India is aware of its power gap to China it cannot necessarily expand its cooperation with the US further. It is the national interest of India to keep China from dominating Asia. A formal alliance with the US would be an offensive foreign policy to conduct and therefore, as defensive realism argues, it would be counterproductive. The fact that India has an asymmetry of capabilities with China, means that it is also in the national interest of India to develop and keep developing to reduce the power gap. This is another example where India's policy of Strategic Autonomy is exemplified. It has national interest in further developing its capabilities and a formal alliance with the US would imply that its Strategic Autonomy would be diminished. As Grare argues: “Indian decision-makers are deeply aware of the power gap with China and remain unwilling to sacrifice their development objectives and their freedom of action to attain still-uncertain benefits from a closer relationship with the United States” (Grare 2017: 58).

The US also cannot be sure about India's intentions and capacity to balance against China, through a formal alliance. “Washington cannot be certain that New Delhi would be willing to

balance more forcefully against Beijing” (Burgess 2015: 371). As India cannot be sure about the assurances from the US about balancing China, the US can perhaps not be certain about India’s either when examining the current power gap and context of India-China relations. As the distribution of capabilities is in China’s favour and with a strategic encirclement by China in the IOR, from an Indian perspective, leaves India with the challenge of manoeuvring around without adopting offensive foreign policies, that could be counterproductive to its national interest. Even though India is perceived by the US and other regional states to be the logic candidate to cooperate more extensively with to balance China (Grare 2017: 57). It’s policy of Strategy Autonomy might also leave the US with uncertainty about its intentions to balance more assertive against China. The remnants of Non-Alignment might signal a lack of commitment to international challenges, which China’s rise constitutes for the US (Hall 2016: 282). Therefore, it can be argued that it would not be rational for the US to initiate a regional security dilemma by developing a formal alliance with India when there is uncertainty about India’s capacity and willingness. It can also be argued that the US is also concerned about what a formal alliance would necessitate and how it would affect India’s development. “Both sides are motivated by the shared belief that a strong India is in the United States’ interest” (Abercrombie 2019: 121). To balance China the US needs India to be a peer competitor with China and therefore needs to reduce the asymmetry of power with China by keep developing its economic and military capabilities. Grare argues that there is an implicit understanding between the US and India about the asymmetry of power and the geographical locations of the two states vis-à-vis China. “The United States is therefore officially willing to contribute to the modernization of India’s armed forces without a reciprocal Indian commitment that the United States does not need and India does not want” (Grare 2017: 48). It can be argued that if India and the US joined in a formal alliance this national interest of developing India’s capabilities would be at stake, because of the actions it would necessitate from China. Thus, defensive realism and the security dilemma can explain why the US and India only have developed a quasi-alliance. A formal alliance would be an offensive move to make by the US and India and would be counterproductive to their national interest. Therefore, defensive realism asserts that states should adopt modest foreign policies, and in this case, a moderate development in the relationship between India and the US through informalized cooperation is in their interest.

This thesis has mostly been concerned with what the rise of China means for the relationship between the US and India from the perspective of defensive realism. It is not the intention of this thesis to argue that the rise of China is the only reason, that a formal alliance have not been

developed; there could also be other explanatory factors. However, it can be argued, as examined, that China is a primary factor for their decision to develop a closer relationship, and therefore the focus of the analysis has subsequently been on China for exploring factors that would explain the lack of a formalized relationship. In global affairs, besides their growing mutual opinion about China, there is also other global issues, that differentiates the US and India them and would be an obstacle for a formal alliance. They have different opinions about how to approach relations with Pakistan, Russia and Iran, and Abercrombie argues that it might be that one of these relations could complicate further development in their relationship in the future (Abercrombie 2019: 138). However, as mentioned the focus of this thesis has been on China's rise and what it constitutes for the relationship between the US and India analysed through the perspective of defensive realism. If China's rise is a primary factor behind the relationship of the US and India it could also be argued that its rise is a primary factor for the lack of formalization because of what it would necessitate e.g. a regional and global security dilemma.

## 6. Conclusion

This thesis has examined why the US and India in the last two decades have developed a closer relationship, what this thesis has referred to as a quasi-alliance. In IR the nexus between the rise of China and the decline of the US is a prominent topic to analyse, but there is a whole category of emerging states which are also relevant to analyse to understand the transition of power that is occurring in the world. The methodological and theoretical approaches applied to this thesis have allowed the author to explore possible factors for answering the research questions. Applying defensive realism to understand the reason behind the closer relationship between the US and India allows the phenomena to be comprehended from a geostrategic point of view. This thesis has examined that the rise of China in terms of an increase of economic capabilities and military power is a challenge for both the US and India. Defensive realism argues that states act in self-help according to the structures of the system. The uncertainty and anarchy of the system combined with certain capabilities that every state possess have necessitated the US and India to make external efforts to balance the growing power of China.

This thesis has given examples of how the rise of China has constituted a challenge for the US and India. India feels threatened by China's behaviour in the IOR, both by its military and diplomatic presence, what is considered a strategic encirclement by China. India has observed how China operates in the SCS and is therefore uncertain about its presence in the IOR. It can be argued that India's current asymmetry of capabilities in relation to China has left India with the choice of making external efforts to balance China. It can be asserted that it would be inadequate for India to balance China through internal efforts alone. Therefore, in the last two decades India has attempted to extend its security cooperation with other states. The US as the strongest unit in the system is concerned about its own standing in the system contrary China's. With its relative decline, it can be argued, that the US is not in a position to balance China unilaterally and therefore has increased its efforts to cooperate with other like-minded states in the system. Waltz argued that states do choose to cooperate under given circumstances if states were uncertain about a third state's possible aggression. Hence, a primary reason behind the decision of the US and India to develop a closer relationship can therefore be ascribed to the rise of China because of an adjoining national interest regarding Asia. The context in which they have decided to cooperate support the fact that China is the primary reason. Their cooperation in the last two decades has been facilitated in terms of security and defence cooperation. Thus, it presents another example of China's rise as a primary factor behind the

relationship of the US and India. Thus, it can be concluded that the US and India have decided to develop a quasi-alliance in the last two decades because the international system has seen a shift of distribution of capabilities in favour of China and subsequently China's behaviour has become more assertive. It should be argued that even though this thesis concludes that China's rise is a primary reason, it is not the intention to argue that it is the only reason. However, the author chose to apply defensive realism to analyse US-India relations in contrast to China's rise. Hence, the change of distribution of capabilities with China's rise, is a main factor to explain the rapprochement between the US and India in the last two decades.

Having established the reason behind the geostrategic relationship between the US and India, the thesis has also examined why the US and India only have developed a quasi-alliance. Defensive realism argues that states do not want to maximize their powers but rather maximize their security. It can be argued, considering the power gap between India and China and the relative decline of the US, that developing a formal alliance between the US and India would be an attempt to maximize their powers against China. This would be counterproductive to their national interest and it could be argued that if the US and India developed a formal alliance it would initiate a security dilemma. A formal US-India alliance would increase their security but decrease the security of China. Thus, China would need to expand its capabilities and enlarge its cooperation with other states. India is interested in continuing its own internal development, thus a security dilemma and a more aggressive China could be detrimental to that. However, India is also not interested in China dominating Asia. Hence India needs to adopt a foreign policy that is modest. An informalized framework of cooperation with the US allows India to continue its own development and simultaneously join an informal relationship to counter China. It can further be asserted that because of the relative decline of the US, India is uncertain about the capacity of the US to act upon its commitments and it would be imprudent to initiate a security dilemma in Asia, by joining a formal alliance with the US if there is uncertainty about the role of the US. The US has a similar national interest, that Asia should not be dominated by Asia because of what it would imply for its security and status. The US is however aware of its own capabilities and is interested in India developing and reducing the power gap between India and China. Initiating a security dilemma in Asia is not benefitting the US either since it can be argued that the US is not necessarily ready to face an aggressive China.

As China's rise was argued to be a main factor, not the only one, behind the development of US-India relations the same can be argued about the factor behind the relationship and the fact that they have only developed a quasi-alliance. It can be asserted that in accordance with

defensive realism, the US and India have observed the structures of the international system and have determined that their best course of action is to develop a quasi-alliance rather than a formal alliance. As already mentioned, it is not the intention of this thesis to ascribe China's rise as the only factor that has forced the US and India to only develop a quasi-alliance. There could also be other explanatory factors, which this thesis has not examined thoroughly because of the scope and length of the thesis. However, since China's rise can be argued to be a primary factor behind the rapprochement of US-India relations, it can also be argued that it is a primary factor behind the decision not to develop a formal treaty-based alliance. Thus, it can be concluded that the context in which China's rise has occurred, with the relative decline of the US and India's gap capabilities in relation to China, is a factor behind the decision to only develop a quasi-alliance, when applying defensive realism and the security dilemma to the analysis.

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