

Transcript

00:00:00

Excellent, well let's.

00:00:00 Speaker 1

Get straight into the seminar then. Well, I'd like to thank Walter Lambert for joining us.

00:00:05 Speaker 1

Today he's a senior.

00:00:06 Speaker 1

Lecturer at International relations to the Department of War Studies at King's.

00:00:09 Speaker 1

College London

00:00:11 Speaker 1

An associate fellow in the Indo Pacific programme at RUSI.

00:00:15 Speaker 1

His research interests include South Asian security, US foreign policy, and, uh, regular warfare. His scholarly work has published in a number of has been published in a number academic journals include.

00:00:26 Speaker 1

But still, top ones are International Security journalist. She studies Asian survey among others, and his first book that forgotten front patient client relations encounter insurgency, was published in 2017 by Cambridge University Press that examines the often difficult relations between the US and local governments in sporting counterinsurgencies

00:00:45 Speaker 1

He is currently writing a book on.

00:00:47 Speaker 1

Indian defence policy.

00:00:48 Speaker 1

He's giving evidence to parliamentary committees and commented on international affairs at The Economist, the Washington Post, the Branch Times and BBC, and his opinion pieces appeared in number of newspapers such as the New York Times Wall Street Journal.

00:01:01 Speaker 1

He's had fellowships at the University of Virginia and the University of Pennsylvania and previously taught courses on insurgency, counter terrorism, and Cold War history at the University of Oxford and.

00:01:11 Speaker 1

The University, Cambridge.

00:01:12 Speaker 1

He received a BA from the University of Southern California and MPA from Princeton University and a PhD from here and University, Oxford.

00:01:20 Speaker 1

Walter, thank you so much for joining us today and we look very much.

00:01:22 Speaker 2

Looking forward to talk, thank you. Thank you all very much. There's quite a formal, full introduction. I'm pretty.

00:01:28 Speaker 2

Did it, and so I was. I was asked to speak about it on a topic related to India foreign policy or defence policy.

00:01:35 Speaker 2

I want to talk to you about a project that I currently have underway with one of my PhD students, so we need to cut the looking at some issues surrounding Indian foreign policy.

00:01:47 Speaker 2

But as was mentioned, I am also working on finishing a book on Indian defence policy. So happy to take the conversation in that direction if we want to talk about kind of strategic issues and other things like that during the Q&A.

00:02:00 Speaker 2

But this this paper we have right now essentially tries to get at a question about what arising India's relationship with the present international system is likely to be right? Is India more likely to be a state that kind of supports and?

00:02:20 Speaker 2

Mattresses sort of current. International arrangements and the order as it exists now.

00:02:26 Speaker 2

Or will it be seen to kind of put its energies more towards challenging international order that is seen as constructed by say the West in general and the United States in particular?

00:02:37 Speaker 2

And I think when we set out on this project some of this stuff was, I think, a little bit obscure.

00:02:45 Speaker 2

Perhaps to lay audiences, I think the Ukraine war has brought questions around India into stark relief. At least judging by the fact that I now get whatsapps from my brother in law who's a farmer in central Kansas.

00:02:57 Speaker 2

Asking me what's going on with India, whose side is India?

00:03:00 Speaker 2

On what what?

00:03:01 Speaker 2

What's going on with India and Russia?

00:03:03 Speaker 2

So I use that as sort of 1 metric to say that I think this is kind of percolated a little.

00:03:07 Speaker 2

More into into.

00:03:08 Speaker 2

Popular consciousness, but it's certainly the case that this, you know, fundamental assumption of India, largely as a status quo power.

00:03:16 Speaker 2

Uhm, I think informs some of the the decision making by governments that are seeking to deepen their strategic partnerships with New Delhi, most notably the United States and the UK, both of which have made India a principal position in their respective Indo Pacific strategies. You know. Yet at the same time there are voices.

00:03:36 Speaker 2

Sceptical voices who point out that?

00:03:38 Speaker 2

Whether it's due to.

00:03:40 Speaker 2

You know underdevelopment anti colonial ideologies are simply different national interests that you know. India frequently opposes the agenda of Western States and.

00:03:50 Speaker 2

Institutions has entered into and joined new multilateral groupings that in some respects seek to kind of alter or supplant the role of the existing Bretton Woods institutions.

00:04:02 Speaker 2

Of it has ties with some so-called you know rogue states. It seems to flaunt international norms, and So what we're trying to do to kind of shed some possible light on on this question is analyse an original data set that we've created of the overseas travel of the Indian Prime Minister, the Indian.

00:04:22 Speaker 2

President and the Indian External Affairs Minister from 1992 to 2019. And so we think that examination of more than 1/4 century of India's high level personal diplomacy that goes over the course of six different governments can allow us.

00:04:39 Speaker 2

To to kind of pose some questions and draw some conclusions.

00:04:42 Speaker 2

About the factors that drive and shape aspects of India's foreign policy. And so the the analysis in this paper then kind of splits into two parts.

00:04:52 Speaker 2

The first is is trying to unpack and discover the drivers of this high level VIP diplomacy, right? There are some people who suggest that these kinds of things are driven by routine and bureaucratic.

00:05:04 Speaker 2

Which of course then it would be very difficult to really make reasonable inferences from what's going on there. If it's not necessarily purposeful or in intent, there are some scholars and observers who argue that over the last three decades, Indian foreign policy has really lacked coherence, has lacked a sort of a structured focus.

00:05:24 Speaker 2

You know, in contrast to that, we do actually find that strategic interest explanations.

00:05:30 Speaker 2

You know shape patterns of foreign travel. There are some domestic politics elements that we see as important as well in contrast principles and bureaucratic routine actually have very little explanatory power.

00:05:43 Speaker 2

So with it kind of solidified in our minds, at least that that this is a purposeful undertaking that we can sort of draw.

00:05:49 Speaker 2

Some inferences from there. We then look at.

00:05:54 Speaker 2

What some of these patterns of travel and engagement might mean for India's engagement with the international order? And we do find that that India based on the categories we're looking at can't be definitively placed into a status quo or a challenge or mould, so their behaviours in certain areas that comport with the former.

00:06:14 Speaker 2

Where's behaviours and others that would seem to be aligned with the latter? And you know, I think that this kind of outcome is is can be understood as representing the behaviour of a state that you know wants to see the emergence of a true multipolar international system as the best defender.

00:06:34 Speaker 2

Of its national interest so.

00:06:37 Speaker 2

At the end of the day, from a policy standpoint, I think we would say that those who advocate making a strategic bet on India's future are not necessarily wrong. But I do think that they've they've maybe overestimated the degree of strategic convergence that will occur in the future. And so some of the angst that we've seen exhibited in London in Washington and elsewhere.

00:06:58 Speaker 2

Over say, India's position on Ukraine is likely to be replicated on other topics and in other areas in the future. OK, so how do we get to that conclusion? I want to just first take a quick second.

00:07:11 Speaker 2

And just run you through a bit of this debate about, you know.

00:07:15 Speaker 2

Where where does India is sort of a future lie? I think you know as as Asia's other rising power, many observers have looked at India sort of increasing the growth of their power and influence. The international system and generally seen it to be a good thing.

00:07:32 Speaker 2

The United States in particular, has made a national policy going all the way back to the Bush administration of trying to accelerate India's rise on the world stage and increasingly integrated.

00:07:42 Speaker 2

In two on the international order, so you have this quote here by Ashley Tellis, who's sort of the key a.

00:07:48 Speaker 2

Architect of the US India Rock Rosh mall in the early 2000s. This is from some of his congressional testimony around the time of the US Indian nuclear deal, when essentially frames and understands India as being a status quo power, right? There's an acknowledgement that there will be occasional disagreements, but by and large it's seen that.

00:08:08 Speaker 2

India's interests and those of the United States will be on road to significant convergence. And there are other scholars who sort of.

00:08:16 Speaker 2

Express this this view as well, and so, from this perspective, New Delhi Stakes in the international system are expected to only grow and with it the incentives to collaborate with the world major democratic powers.

00:08:31 Speaker 2

That being said, there are those who question the degree to which India's foreign policy preferences really do align so closely.

00:08:38 Speaker 2

Of those in Washington, or whether Indian leaders are really that satisfied with the existing norms and rules that govern the international system.

00:08:47 Speaker 2

So of course, at the most extreme you do have Pakistani analysts who you know Brand India as a revisionist state that will seek to upend the current international order and as soon as they grow powerful enough to.

00:08:58 Speaker 2

Kind of push the United States out of the.

00:09:00 Speaker 2

Way and although that.

00:09:01 Speaker 2

That he seemed quite extreme. We've got at least one former U.S. ambassador and South Asia specialist who sort of more or less suggested something just along those lines in the pages of foreign affairs. Not too long.

00:09:14 Speaker 2

We go, we've got scholars of Indian foreign policy who identify a distrust of the international system as a reoccurring trend in the country's foreign policy and in international negotiations. Ranging from climate change to trade.

00:09:29 Speaker 2

You know the Indian?

00:09:30 Speaker 2

Position is often depicted as being kind of like a spoiler or an obstacle securing.

00:09:35 Speaker 2

Some kind of deal.

00:09:38 Speaker 2

And then, rather than having increasing alignments with the primary proponents of the status quo of the United States, it's argued by some that actually India's foreign policy preferences continue to manifest very significant divergences in both objectives and concerns from those of the US. So when it comes to say, voting on UN resolutions that have been identified.

00:09:58 Speaker 2

As important by the United States government over the past two decades, India has only concurred with the United States on about 20% of UN votes.

00:10:06 Speaker 2

So by contrast, just to give you some perspective, long term Asia Treaty allies in Asia, like Australia and Japan, the figure there is more like.

00:10:14 Speaker 2

80% right?

00:10:15 Speaker 2

So among states that are kind of considered to be strategic partners of the US, only Egypt and Pakistan have a lower rate of convergence with the United States than India does. Then of course we we have things like endorsement of Russia.

00:10:30 Speaker 2

As a intervention into Syria, the lack of condemnation over the annexation of Ukraine, subsequent invasion of Crimea and subsequent invasion of of Ukraine.

00:10:43 Speaker 2

All of which sort of raises questions about.

00:10:48 Speaker 2

As my brother-in-law put it, whose side is India on? Though I think this could be seen in the context of this very important and longstanding strategic partnership that has existed between Moscow and New Delhi.

00:11:00 Speaker 2

However, when seen alongside engagement with saying the theocratic regime in Iran, the Kim dynasty in North Korea, the military dictatorship in Burma and at various points and times the feting of sort of notorious African dictators like Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe or Omar, al Bashir of Sudan.

00:11:18 Speaker 2

But taken together, you could see how some would make a case that this is not behaviour that would necessarily mark one out as being a pillar of the Liberal international order.

00:11:27 Speaker 2

And then there are government affiliated, you know, researchers in India who suggest that actually the countries preferred international order is really poorly aligned with that of the present US LED.

00:11:38 Speaker 2

System and actually much closer to China's ideal vision of international politics. And so there's some go so far as to say advocates that you know, instead of cooperating with established powers, India should be looking to.

00:11:51 Speaker 2

Speaking as potentially a a natural partner and again in in areas ranging from climate change to trade negotiations with global financial crisis energy security often see India kind of navigating its position or coordinated position with China in opposition to, you know.

00:12:09 Speaker 2

The so called West.

00:12:11 Speaker 2

So the point of all this is simply to kind of illustrate the the range of disagreements over the degree to which Indian foreign policy preferences actually align with the current US LED international order. And of course we have to recognise it is not always easy to identify another state's intentions.

00:12:29 Speaker 2

Both because they may have incentives to misrepresent them, and particularly in the case of rising powers, we know that their aims and ambitions can change as their power increases. Moreover, like all major countries, India faces a range of situations that are thrust upon it.

00:12:48 Speaker 2

And it may demand them to deal with tricky situations in which there's no ideal solution. So, for example, it may not be the ideal preference of Indian leaders to have dealings with a military junta in Burma. They may not want that form of government to exist in that country.

00:13:04 Speaker 2

But we're talking about a state that's on India's border and has a government that's increasingly aligned with China.

00:13:10 Speaker 2

Interaction and engagement may be the lesser of two evils. And of course it can be even more complicated to divine intention.

00:13:18 Speaker 2

In the case of a state like India, where as I've already mentioned, there's an open debate amongst some observers or scholars as to whether the country.

00:13:24 Speaker 2

Has pursued a coherent foreign policy in the post Cold War world, or whether.

00:13:29 Speaker 2

It's simply in.

00:13:29 Speaker 2

The words of harsh pants drifts from international event to international events without any sense of direction.

00:13:37 Speaker 2

So what we're trying to do in this study, then, is is get to grips with India's diplomatic priorities by looking at official visits made by three figures at the top.

00:13:47 Speaker 2

Of the government. So you have the president, who's the sort of symbolic head of State fulfils. In some respects, the kind of the role that the Queen plays in the British system.

00:13:56 Speaker 2

The Prime Minister, who is of course the head of Government and the Real Centre.

00:13:59 Speaker 2

Of power and then the External Affairs Minister who is the chief foreign policy agent.

00:14:07 Speaker 2

So why you might be?

00:14:10 Speaker 2

Do we think this matters? Why do we think that where these people go in the world can tell us something about India's interests and priorities and the simple fact of the matter is is that these senior figures have very scarce amounts of time and investing it in travelling to a particular location to have face to face interactions with their?

00:14:31 Speaker 2

Parts represents, we argue, a costly signal of their intention and priorities. Right? High level diplomacy is extremely difficult to delegate.

00:14:39 Speaker 2

There are very few other figures who can really have the gravitas to fill the gap. When one of these apex leaders is missing, and we've seen this in the Indian Indian context, so in 2016.

00:14:51 Speaker 2

Prime Minister Modi skips the summit of the non aligned movement and sends the country vice president in his stead.

00:14:57 Speaker 2

Well, guess what that made news that became the story. The fact that this much lesser figure was being was being.

00:15:05 Speaker 2

And you know, it's not just a question of deciding where you're going to go internationally. It's when you're going to go, and the fact of the matter is particularly for the Prime Minister, there are important domestic competing interests and issues like being out of the country is costly, and we've seen a host of Indian prime ministers.

00:15:24 Speaker 2

Not just Modi going all the way back to to Ike Gujral who've been branded non resident prime ministers a play on non resident Indians for their frequent overseas travel right? So there is a domestic cost to doing this as well and then again in the case of.

00:15:42 Speaker 2

Of India we think it goes one step further in sort of seeing VIP time abroad as a scarce resource because the Indian Ministry of External Affairs is very limited in capacity for those of you who are not quite familiar, the NBA essentially has the same number of diplomats in the world.

00:16:01 Speaker 2

As does very tiny countries like New Zealand and Singapore, and are routinely described as being sort of overworked and overwhelmed, just maintaining a very basic programme of international engagement so.

00:16:15 Speaker 2

We argue then, that the choices these VIP's make the precedence that they give to certain states rather than others can reveal some real information about what is important.

00:16:26 Speaker 2

And this contrasts with sort of public statements. And, you know, diplomatic messaging, which is often seen as lacking real real credibility.

00:16:36 Speaker 2

Because this kind of talk is.

00:16:37 Speaker 2

Cheap right? So India has scores and scores of strategic partners around the world with countries ranging all the way from the United States.

00:16:44 Speaker 2

On the one hand, down to Tiny Rwanda on the other. So being a strategic partner of India, is not really a tell you all that much necessarily about the relationship.

00:16:55 Speaker 2

Just really quick key, caveat. I want to mention of course we think the volume of travel can tell us something about which countries are important to India, but that should not be construed as being a proxy for the health of the relationship, right? So you can imagine a scenario in which close partners trusted partners are visited frequently.

00:17:14 Speaker 2

It might also be the case that there's a particularly contentious relationship that needs to be managed actively, and that needs a lot of high level face to face face to face attention.

00:17:23 Speaker 2

So we're not saying that lots of visits equal good relations, no visits, equal bad relations. We're just saying that this is a marker of importance.

00:17:31 Speaker 2

OK, so.

00:17:33 Speaker 2

I've been talking at you for quite a while about this. I want to shift to kind of showing you showing you our data. So as I manage as I mentioned, we put together this original data set on overseas travel.

00:17:45 Speaker 2

We're looking our interest is post Cold War. We started in 92 I'll just kind of quickly explain that certainly if you're sitting in Europe you might think 1989 is a more logical starting point. But for India and much of Asia, this is where the kind of the shocks from the end of the Cold War came into being so 1991 Soviet Union collapses. India loses its kind of main patron in international affairs. It sorts of subsidised.

00:18:07 Speaker 2

Oil major trading partner and this also coincides with a severe economic crisis within India that leaves the Prime Minister of the day Prime Minister route to undertake a series of to begin a process of economic liberalisation.

00:18:19 Speaker 2

Mission that sort of comparatively opens India up to the world. So we have 92 then as kind of the starting point when when the effects of these these things would start to shape Indian foreign policy and we're looking strictly at bilateral travel, right?

00:18:33 Speaker 2

So because we're.

00:18:35 Speaker 2

Let me help.

00:18:35 Speaker 2

That back for a second because we're interested in in government to government interactions.

00:18:39 Speaker 2

And what going to a certain place tells us about what's important? You know, if a Prime Minister flies off to a G20 summit or non aligned movement, well, they don't control necessarily where that country.

00:18:49 Speaker 2

Or where that thing takes place. So if there's a separate bilateral meeting that happens before or after with that particular government, it's in our data set, but multilateral stuff is not captured, and then of.

00:18:58 Speaker 2

Travel, you know, for personal reasons is also not part of this, so you can see this gives us 213 trips by the Prime Minister, 120 by the President and 320 by the External Affairs Minister.

00:19:10 Speaker 2

Uhm, OK, so where do they go in the world? So this shows you the the Prime Minister and the External Affairs Minister.

00:19:16 Speaker 2

I'll show you the president in a minute and the numbers on here. I pulled out the kind of five.

00:19:21 Speaker 2

In some cases it's six because there are ties most visited countries in.

00:19:26 Speaker 2

The world so.

00:19:27 Speaker 2

What we see is the Prime Minister.

00:19:29 Speaker 2

It's the immediate Indian immediate neighbourhood. And then, interestingly, Europe is the most visited destination with Eurasia and Southeast Asia also registering importance. Let's jump ahead for a.

00:19:40 Speaker 2

2nd and show you the.

00:19:42 Speaker 2

Oh sorry, that is the yeah, yeah and the External Affairs minister kind of does the same thing as well.

00:19:47 Speaker 2

Europe was the leading region for the president's official travel. Southeast Asia also gets some degree of importance. However, the head of state you know visited parts of Africa and the Americas with much greater frequency than the other two VIP's.

00:20:01 Speaker 2

And across all three, Oceania was was the region that was least visited, and so we do see a high degree.

00:20:08 Speaker 2

You can just see it even visually on the maps, although the top five are not exactly the same, there's a high degree of overlap between where the Prime Minister goes and where the external.

00:20:17 Speaker 2

Affairs Minister goes much less convergence with the President and now it's not strictly germane to kind of what we're doing in this study, but I think even just these descriptive statistics reveal some interesting things about Indian foreign policy. As I mentioned, you know, before the Ukraine war.

00:20:34 Speaker 2

Uh, sorry. As I mentioned before, the Ukraine War has served.

00:20:37 Speaker 2

Fist I think for a lot of people's minds, the importance of the Indian relationship with Russia. So when I showed this data to some scholars of Indian foreign policy previously, at least one was really quite shocked to see how much engagement there was with Russia.

00:20:52 Speaker 2

The assumption had been as he put it, there was a legacy issue that it was like leftover.

00:20:56 Speaker 2

That this wasn't such.

00:20:57 Speaker 2

An active relationship and it underestimated the importance.

00:21:01 Speaker 2

I think Southeast Asia is also kind of quite interesting. This is a region that has been at least rhetorically privileged in a lot of India's foreign policy, going all the way back to 1991.

00:21:11 Speaker 2

There was a first a look, East policy and then later an ACT East policy that really wanted to connect India to that very economically vital region more recently.

00:21:21 Speaker 2

It's been identified as being kind of the key point in which India would make its presence felt in the Indo Pacific, as it kind of grows into great power.

00:21:29 Speaker 2

In US, and the fact that that this region you know holds a subordinate position to to Europe, at least as far as VIP travel goes, was was really surprising to to my Co.

00:21:40 Speaker 2

Author and I and I think it, you know, might confirm some of those who have.

00:21:44 Speaker 2

Sceptical views about the degree of engagement.

00:21:47 Speaker 1

So if I'm reading right external affairs?

00:21:50 Speaker 1

Minister never visited China.

00:21:52

In that time.

00:21:53 Speaker 2

No no no. I'm sorry, I'm sorry so this is I think he made about 8 visits to China so I the the ones that are numbered.

00:22:00 Speaker 2

So basically the pattern is the darker is the more visited, the lighter the white ones are. No visits, and then I called out with specific numbers simply the top five or top six. So thanks for asking that question. No, absolutely.

00:22:12 Speaker 2

But you can see China was definitely not a top five top six destination for them.

00:22:19 Speaker 2

OK, so those maps are just aggregate summaries. Of course there's been a lot of. There's been a lot of chat about, particularly with Prime Minister Modi hitting the road so often.

00:22:29 Speaker 2

How frequently does this travel kind of happen? So this is sort of annual markers. The thick line is sort of all travel, the.

00:22:37 Speaker 2

Fragmented line is is bilateral.

00:22:40 Speaker 2

It's you can see again. Not surprisingly, the External Affairs Minister undertakes the most travel. Then we have the Prime Minister and then we have the President and you can see that sort of from the row government all the way up through to the end of the Second Sing ministry in the UPA 2 government. You have a pretty steady, sorry, pretty steady.

00:23:01 Speaker 2

Pattern of travel kind of falls within a very predictable realm and then a huge shoot up under Modi. And then again this happens again with to a lesser extent towards the end of Modi's first term with with the President of India but not necessarily the case with External Affairs Minister. You see peaks and troughs at various points in time under various Gov.

00:23:20 Speaker 2

Limits there have been reasons to be very active or not to be.

00:23:24 Speaker 2

So much.

00:23:26 Speaker 2

And this is just a kind of a quick. What did? What did each individual government Prime Minister get up to where they took the first trips?

00:23:32 Speaker 2

Most countries visited and again this kind of really highlights how much travel Modi did, but basically his you know total number trips are 70% higher than his predecessor did in in two full terms. As I said before, I think Modi is seems to be.

00:23:46 Speaker 2

Kind of a personal outlier. It's not necessarily reflected amongst other ministers.

00:23:50 Speaker 2

Of his government.

00:23:53 Speaker 2

OK, So what then first question, what is potentially driving?

00:23:57 Speaker 2

This travel right? How should we understand the factors that are that are shaping the way in which Indian apex leaders decide to spend their time?

00:24:06 Speaker 2

And so I think this requires us to sort of ask and answer some fundamental questions about the sources of a country's diplomatic priorities, right? To what extent are national interests static, and therefore diplomatic?

00:24:17 Speaker 2

Priorities unchanging. Irrespective of which government is in power in the day. So you know a realist or strategic interest model would posit that this diplomatic engagement should be fairly standard over time.

00:24:32 Speaker 2

You know foreign policy priorities of the country's top leaders will reflect the military, economic, or political importance of the partner state.

00:24:39 Speaker 2

And of course there's a number of scholars have argued that you know, since the end of the Cold War, that India's foreign policy has adopted a very pragmatic or a realist tenor, so to to sort of look at that. We look at countries that are major.

00:24:52 Speaker 2

Arms suppliers to India. Major export markets. Developed advanced economies energy producers. India's engagement with major powers and then if if you know strategic interests really explain things, we would expect that democracy and human rights is not going to really play much of a role in shaping.

00:25:08 Speaker 2

Where people go.

00:25:11 Speaker 2

Alternatively, we have what Rahul Sagar has termed the principled action approach which offers an alternative understanding of the way that India seeks to exercise its power in the international system.

00:25:23 Speaker 2

And that's kind of as the leader of coalitions that try to advance the interests of the developing world. So this would suggest that that Indian VIP's.

00:25:31 Speaker 2

Would focus their attention in personal diplomacy on the global South and its development agenda, and so we assess this by looking at, you know, interactions with states that are members of the G77 or those that have kind.

00:25:42 Speaker 2

Of close ties.

00:25:44 Speaker 2

With a close foreign policy alignment with India, which is itself seemed to be a, you know the voice of the developing world in the UN, we would not necessarily expect major powers and particularly major military powers that this holds to to receive that much attention. Of course, we should also ask.

00:26:04 Speaker 2

How much agency do individual leaders have right? How able are they to shape the country's foreign policy priorities and what other domestic factors play a role in shaping India's foreign policy?

00:26:18 Speaker 2

Public opinion is not traditionally seen as exerting a major influence over India's foreign policy direction. But you know, from a scholarly standpoint, we're only beginning to get to grips with the role and influence of, say, regional part.

00:26:32 Speaker 2

Political parties and coalitions, and the role that sort of other entities within the state play and in shaping the.

00:26:38 Speaker 2

The nation's approach to the world, so to assess the importance of domestic politics, we consider the existence of major variations across across different problems.

00:26:48 Speaker 2

The effects of travel on sort of impending elections, the health of the economy. We also look at the state of violence in Kashmir and the presence of overseas Indian workers in a particular country as a driver.

00:27:00 Speaker 2

And then finally, I think it's important to ask whether it's even correct to see high level personal diplomacy as an instrumental.

00:27:08 Speaker 2

Intentional act or is it as harsh and sceptically content?

00:27:13 Speaker 2

Means that diplomatic visits are the product of routine and bureaucratic necessity that they don't happen because there's a real purpose to them, and it's certainly the case that Lieberman Sanders had a study of the United States.

00:27:27 Speaker 2

That kind of did something slightly similar and they found that the US Secretary of State actually has a very predictable travel.

00:27:33 Speaker 2

Pattern right when there's a crisis in the world when there's an issue, the Secretary of State gets on the plane and goes to London.

00:27:38 Speaker 2

It goes to Paris and goes to Berlin and makes kind of the diplomatic circuit, and I think it's this last model that the reason we're taking the time to go through this is this is the one we're concerned by, right? Because if it's about routine.

00:27:50 Speaker 2

If it's about sort of path dependence issues, then it becomes really hard to divine A or extrapolate everything. Anything from this travel, right?

00:27:59 Speaker 2

It might have been the case if routine holds at one point in time, strategic interests, or bureaucratic or domestic politics shaped events. But now this has just become sort of the way things go.

00:28:12 Speaker 2

And it doesn't necessarily reflect conventional challenges.

00:28:17 Speaker 2

So with the occurrence or not of a bilateral visit to a given country in a given year as our dependent variable, we employ a series of logistical regressions to kind of evaluate these these different explanations.

00:28:28 Speaker 2

I'm not going to subject you to any of the numbers, we just kind of talk you through the results that we're getting so far, and we do find that the strategic interest kind of.

00:28:36 Speaker 2

Model and approach gets a fairly high degree of support. Major export markets for India and a status as a major political power in the international system. So this includes established powers which we we code as G7 members.

00:28:50 Speaker 2

And major rising powers, so members of the G20 attract visits, so holding all else constant, the Prime Minister is 9 times as likely to visit a G7 member state as a similarly positioned state that's not in the G7 and it's about three times as likely when it comes to these rising powers, but more economically.

00:29:10 Speaker 2

Develop the country is the more the Prime Minister is likely to visit.

00:29:14 Speaker 2

On contrast, being a major military power, being a major arms supplier to India does not actually move the needle very much, nor do major energy suppliers on their own attract a lot of high level attention, which is a kind of surprising finding, given that there's a robust literature on Indian foreign policy which emphasises energy diplomacy is a really important aspect.

00:29:34 Speaker 2

Of the country's foreign policy and in line with what we'd expect from a realist. Sort of strategic interest. Approach the human rights situation or the democratic status of a particular country doesn't affect the degree to which it's Indian VIP's visit.

00:29:51 Speaker 2

Our second framework, this principal action model. We get very little support, so the Global South countries in global South are not privileged in bilateral visits.

00:30:00 Speaker 2

And actually, we find that the the Foreign Minister is actually less likely to visit a country if it's a member of the G77, and in fact, in contrast to the expectations of this principal action framework. Again, as I mentioned, it's the established powers.

00:30:12 Speaker 2

Who get much of the high level foreign policy attention?

00:30:16 Speaker 2

And interestingly, country sharing a foreign policy preferences with India. So countries that that vote alike with India at the UN.

00:30:23 Speaker 2

Also, that does not appear to be a big factor, so India is not trying to cultivate like minded states with.

00:30:29 Speaker 2

His overseas visits.

00:30:32 Speaker 2

The main hypothesis of the domestic politics model that we would sort of see radical changes from government to government, and he's really not born out.

00:30:40 Speaker 2

As I mentioned, the Modi Prime Minister Modi himself appears to be a very personally active traveller. But that's not true of the rest of his government per southeast, nor is it true across the other governments in our sample.

00:30:53 Speaker 2

On that being said, we do see a couple of a couple of different factors.

00:30:57 Speaker 2

The timing of elections certainly affects when and where. When people go, there's a, uh, a slight effect.

00:31:05 Speaker 2

Of the the.

00:31:07 Speaker 2

State of the economy.

00:31:08 Speaker 2

So the unemployment rate is high. These apex leaders seem to be likely more likely to get out on the road and do some international travel violence.

00:31:16 Speaker 2

In Kashmir or the lack of it does not affect the rate at which.

00:31:21 Speaker 2

These folks go.

00:31:21 Speaker 2

Abroad and only the president's sort of the symbolic head of state is.

00:31:28 Speaker 2

More inclined to visit countries that have high populations of overseas Indian workers and then finally the idea that that this is just simply retreating or bureaucratic process is rejected.

00:31:40 Speaker 2

The President travel is not influenced by where they've gone in the past and actually we see an active effort to diversify. So the Prime Minister.

00:31:47 Speaker 2

And External Affairs Minister are actually much less likely to visit a country that they've they've recently visited. We also don't see the External Affairs Minister is sort of laying the groundwork for a subsequent visit by either the President or the prime.

00:32:00 Speaker 2

Mr again, in contrast, in in Leibovitz and Sanders study of the United States, there was a definitive pattern whereby the Secretary of State visited a country and very soon after the American President followed.

00:32:10 Speaker 2

So these guys are all pretty independent, so now again this is just simply an independent an interim step in our analysis to try to get to.

00:32:19 Speaker 2

Do you know what this says about India's orientation to the international system? But I just want to flag. I think there are a couple of interesting potential implications for the study of Indian foreign policy.

00:32:30 Speaker 2

I think the fact that we found clear elements that can explain high level diplomatic engagement from 1992 back to 2019.

00:32:41 Speaker 2

Challenge those who suggest that sort of India lexical her foreign policy over the last three decades and just drifts from crisis to crisis.

00:32:49 Speaker 2

And you know, would would comparatively bolster the arguments that actually Indian foreign policy has been based on a broad national consensus that there are sort of regular patterns.

00:32:59 Speaker 2

Across various governments, I think the strategic interest model kind of being being most upheld again would also probably bolster those who who suggest that the Indian foreign policy since the end of the Cold War has had a pragmatic or a realist tenor.

00:33:14 Speaker 2

Of course, caveat ING that with with the fact that you know we're not looking at a prior period, we're not doing before and after.

00:33:19 Speaker 2

But certainly in this after period we can identify those realists.

00:33:22 Speaker 2

With that being said, we should not lose sight of the fact that you know high level personal diplomacy is only one aspect of foreign policy.

00:33:29 Speaker 2

Right, it might be the fact that by its nature this type of interaction is much more kind of strategic and realist, so it could easily be the case that India pursues its. You know its principled action approach via multilateral diplomacy or engagement in international institutions.

00:33:47 Speaker 2

Not saying that those who advocate this as being an important part of Indian foreign policy are are discredited, simply that, at least when it comes to the face to face stuff, the the realist strategic stuff holds out.

00:34:01 Speaker 2

OK, so let's now get to get to the real kind of questions that we want to ask, which is since we have confidence that Indian VIP travel is coherent, is purposeful is instrumental? What might it tell us about India's orientation towards the?

00:34:20 Speaker 2

International system and so. Building on some prior work by Krasner and Saunders study of China. We've done this by looking at four factors and I'm going to kind of just talk you through the logic of each of them in turn.

00:34:34 Speaker 2

So the first is the specific cultivation of relations with rising powers rising non core powers. So again, just to remind you what we're talking about here are members of the G20 who aren't members of the G7. So for a country that is has a challenger orientation or is dissatisfied with the present international system.

00:34:53 Speaker 2

This is kind of the.

00:34:55

The the the.

00:34:56 Speaker 2

Crowd of potential allies. This is potentially other states that are dissatisfied with the way things are ordered, and if you were looking to build coalitions to affect change, these might be the leading states that you would look to partner with, so we posit that a state which is kind of fundamentally status quo.

00:35:15 Speaker 2

In orientation, would either not really show any great preference for these states over others.

00:35:23 Speaker 2

Or perhaps avoid them. However, if we find that there's a specific effort to cultivate relations with those kinds of states, it's hard to see that as being compatible with a status quo orientation, whereas it would appear to be much more compatible with with a challenger orientation. And what we find is I've already sort of noted.

00:35:41 Speaker 2

All three VIP's the president, the Prime Minister and the foreign minister are all significantly more likely to visit these rising power state.

00:35:49 Speaker 2

Than than other countries, and again, just to give you some context. Crosscurrent Sanders, when they looked at overseas travel by Chinese leaders.

00:35:58 Speaker 2

So it was James men and who Jintao? So the the set of leaders before Xi Jinping came to power. They found no evidence of a Chinese orientation towards rising powers.

00:36:09 Speaker 2

Now I should say that there's a slight caveat. The Prime Minister is yet more likely to visit an established power than a rising power, but on balance we kind of coded this as behaviour that is sort of more inclined or leaning towards more of a challenger status than not.

00:36:28 Speaker 2

The second factor that we then looked at was was relations with so-called rogue states, which we operationalize as those subject to UN multilateral sanctions.

00:36:38 Speaker 2

As I noted earlier, India has been criticised by a number of observers for supposedly having these kinds of dalliances, and so again in terms of the logic.

00:36:49 Speaker 2

I think you know seeking out relations with these states or even not taking their status into account would be hard to explain as being kind of in line with with the status quo.

00:37:01 Speaker 2

Whereas you know avoiding them.

00:37:03 Speaker 2

Would would probably show a.

00:37:04 Speaker 2

Consistent pattern and what's really interesting here, given how much opprobrium that India seems to get for supposedly interacting with with rogue states.

00:37:12 Speaker 2

We find that the Prime Minister is a lot less likely to to visit a country that that is is under UN multilateral sanction. And actually, there's not a single case where the Indian president has ever visited.

00:37:26 Speaker 2

So actually that kind of behaviour really points more towards kind of a a status quo orientation. The External Affairs Minister does not necessarily take this into account, which is a a bit of a point in in the challenger camp, but when you dig into the data, you find that every single instance where this occurred, the country.

00:37:45 Speaker 2

In Iran.

00:37:47 Speaker 2

And so there is literature, including by my my coauthor sumitha, who.

00:37:54 Speaker 2

Which suggests that that Iran needs to be seen as a special case in Indian foreign policy so that engagement with Iran is due to its geographic location is due to past history, not to be seen as sort of some coherent effort to sort of challenge and undermine international norms. Now that being said, there is also another finding we have that the more authoritarian.

00:38:14 Speaker 2

The state is the more likely the External Affairs Minister is to visit.

00:38:19 Speaker 2

Again, this could be the case that the EM is basically the guy who has to get his hands dirty that that his or her job is to go to the countries that are sort of less ideal, while the president and the Prime Minister are allowed to sort of stand back. That's one possible explanation today.

00:38:36 Speaker 2

We've coded this as because of the the behaviour of the Prime Minister and the President. We've coded this as sort of a a leaning status quo, but with some important caveats behind it.

00:38:46 Speaker 2

So just two more.

00:38:47 Speaker 2

To go, we then look at states that are both friendly and hostile to the United States.

00:38:53 Speaker 2

On the one hand, is sort of the leading.

00:38:55 Speaker 2

Proponent of the.

00:38:55 Speaker 2

Status quo and then Russia and China, on the other hand, which are frequently kind of identified as the as the leading revisionist in the system.

00:39:04 Speaker 2

So seeking out states that are kind of hostile to these.

00:39:08 Speaker 2

Ours we would think would be sort of rather inconsistent with a status quo orientation, whereas doing the same that are with countries they're in a hostile relationship with Russia and China would raise questions about whether a state was really a challenger. We we code this kind of conflictual relationship as being subject to unilateral sanctions by these.

00:39:28 Speaker 2

Kinds of.

00:39:29 Speaker 2

We find it quite interesting is that although successive Indian governments have absolutely deplored the use of unilateral sanctions.

00:39:38 Speaker 2

The Prime Minister doesn't, you know, is simply less likely to go to countries that are under U.S. sanctions.

00:39:46 Speaker 2

External Affairs Minister and the President, you know, doesn't really make a difference. Having a hostile relationship with Russia does not, does not change things at all, but the foreign minister is more likely to go visit a country that has a difficult relationship with China. So on balance.

00:40:06 Speaker 2

We have this kind of pointing more towards a status quo oriented.

00:40:09 Speaker 2

Mission and then the final kind of factor we look at is relationship with states that are friendly to these guys and again seeking out trying to build partnerships with partners of the US more consistent with the status quo. Trying to do this with countries like friendly to Russia and China. More inconsistent with the status quo.

00:40:29 Speaker 2

And what we find is this one is particularly mixed, so the the more countries foreign policy preferences align with those of the US, the more likely the Indian Foreign Minister is to go there.

00:40:45 Speaker 2

So there's a preference for countries that are close to the US, but US Treaty allies. U.S. military clients don't get anymore attention or or lack of attention. Military allies of Russia get presidential attention. Those states whose foreign policies differ from Russia.

00:41:04 Speaker 2

Get less attention from the president and both the External Affairs Minister and the President are more likely to visit Russian military clients, so the more military gear that gets sold to a particular country, the more likely those those countries are to get visited by those people having close foreign policy preferences. With China being an arms client of China.

00:41:23 Speaker 2

Yeah, nothing down there. So on balance again, this this really is the most contradictory points in in differing directions, so there's some evidence of an inclination towards the United States.

00:41:34 Speaker 2

There's much more evidence of an inclination towards Russia, but whether you would you know, view this as as significant challenge or behaviour, I think, is really mitigated by the fact.

00:41:43 Speaker 2

That there's not single pattern of behaviour.

00:41:45 Speaker 2

Vis a vis China.

00:41:47 Speaker 2

So what do we let me just offer some kind of quick thoughts and this is the part of the paper where we're still definitely working is what the implications of all this are, and I think as I said at the outset, I think based on these four factors we would not place India definitively in either a status quo or a challenge or Pam. There are elements of behaviour.

00:42:07 Speaker 2

In foreign policy orientation that could be explained or sought to be aligning with either think on balance, it's our thinking now that there are slightly more elements that point towards a status quo rather than a challenger.

00:42:21 Speaker 2

Preference, but it's hardly unambiguous, and so I think this in turn suggests to us that you know, on balance, those who advocated over India's partners in the West who sort of advocated making a strategic bet.

00:42:33 Speaker 2

Uhm, have probably made a uh, generally correct assessment of the country priorities. At the same time, however, I think they've they've really underestimated the potential range of divergences, and these are not things that should be seen as being kind of temporary or passing phenomenon in in particular the the embrace of of non core.

00:42:53 Speaker 2

Rising powers really reflects the fact that Indian leaders have consistently said.

00:42:57 Speaker 2

I thought the emergence of a multipolar international order with a broader distribution of power, and I think that fact has not always been appreciated or fully understood by Western analysts, and you know, there are times when I feel like I'm talking to people in whether it's in London or DC or elsewhere, and they're like, you know, they here.

00:43:18 Speaker 2

Indian counterparts saying multipolar order and be.

00:43:20 Speaker 2

Like, yeah, we don't want China in charge either. Great, we're all on the same page when they really are sort of talking past each other and I think there are real differences.

00:43:29 Speaker 2

In the way that, say India on the one hand in the United States, on the other conceives how power should be distributed across the international order.

00:43:38 Speaker 2

So if we look really narrowly in the context of a bilateral kind of US, China rivalry as the evidence I've shown, I think we can see markers of alignment.

00:43:49 Speaker 2

Not alliance, but markers of alignments towards the US and really very little towards China. But that is far from the whole story and I think.

00:43:58 Speaker 2

This then helps surface the role of importance of Russia to India and the role that sort of Russia plays in this kind of imagined multipolar order.

00:44:10 Speaker 2

A lot is made of the arms relationship and certainly when talking about India's position on Ukraine, many have pointed to you know this buyer seller.

00:44:19 Speaker 2

Relationship and the fact that India gets so much of its frontline defence hardware from Russia. And I'm very happy to talk about that in more detail if you want.

00:44:26 Speaker 2

But the things we see, like the embrace of Russian military clients and the engagement with its allies and countries whose foreign policies are more closely aligned with Russia, suggest this relationship is much bigger and much broader than simply a buyer seller, right?

00:44:39 Speaker 2

India wants Russia to play a role in bringing about a multipolar Asia, if not a multipolar world, and of course.

00:44:45 Speaker 2

A very different view than than you have at present in say Western Europe or or the United States. So consequently I think our findings suggest that much of concern that you see over India's commitment to US goals and by extension.

00:44:59 Speaker 2

And alignment with the US led international order will continue to be a source of frustration for people in Washington, and I think it's not likely to completely disappear. So on that note, I think I will stop speaking and invite some conversation discussion questions.

00:45:22 Speaker 1

Thanks very much. When we were first talking about doing this event, I said, you know, seems to be one of the things we try and.

00:45:28 Speaker 1

Do every year, but sort of.

00:45:31 Speaker 1

CW strategy and statecraft. We try and get and discuss some great powers every year. We haven't discussed in.

00:45:37 Speaker 1

You for awhile so they.

00:45:38 Speaker 1

Will both do this today?

00:45:39 Speaker 1

And and the 2nd aspect for this, which was so dumb.

00:45:43

Enriching, really.

00:45:44 Speaker 1

Was just that, I think we've all got this sense that personal diplomacy matters.

00:45:48 Speaker 1

But we struggle.

00:45:48 Speaker 1

To actually get from there to actually put into actual research.

00:45:52 Speaker 1

But while you were talking, I looked.

00:45:53 Speaker 1

Up a a quote that I remember from Biden.

00:45:57 Speaker 1

Which was that?

00:45:57 Speaker 1

All foreign policy is the logical extension.

00:45:59 Speaker 1

Of personal relationships, which seems.

00:46:01 Speaker 1

To sum this up quite nicely and on.

00:46:03 Speaker 1

On that note, just to say thank you.

00:46:05 Speaker 1

So much for coming up.

00:46:06 Speaker 1

Today and giving us this very interesting.

00:46:08 Speaker 1

Research thank you. Thank you all very much.

00:46:11

Thank you.