

Opening remarks delivered by Dr. Jarosław Cwiek-Karpowicz, Head of PISM
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For my opening remarks today, I am going to start with the image of an anchor. I want you to visualize an anchor. Imagine it: What qualities does it have? How big is it? What is it made from? What is it anchoring?

Today's discussion is about two anchors: India and Poland.

While their standard form and appearance may diverge from that of a typical anchor, the allegory is nevertheless fitting. India and Poland are both venerable anchors of their respective regions. Poland is an anchor and representative of Central Europe – the “New Europe” that is quickly growing traction. India is an anchor and representative for South Asia, steadily renewing ties and engaging its neighbors in multilateralism. Both countries tether together the relations and goodwill of their neighbors, their economic advancement and the democratic will of their people.

Indeed, this year India had the distinction of recording the largest and most successful democratic election to date. The 2014 Lok Sabha election hailed 66.4% voter turnout – representing over 550 million total voters. The election propelled the Bharatiya Janata Party to power, and, with it, Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Likewise, this year Poland celebrated the 25th anniversary of its first democratic elections, which were held following the collapse of communistic rule in 1989. It was these elections that heralded a new age of Polish global relations and propelled the country to the accomplishment it witnesses today. Accomplishment manifested in events like the appointment of Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk to President of the European Council.

India's elections and Poland's election anniversary are a resounding success for democracy in modern world order. But the road to such success should not be taken for granted: India and Poland have confronted many challenges to stand where they are today. It is the narrative of each country's willingness to engage their trials head on that makes them such strong anchors.

For India, the road to such success was paved with the reclaiming of national independence in 1947 after years of nonviolent protests. These protests were later echoed in a similar struggle faced by Poland in the 1980s. The Solidarity movement – called “Solidarność” in Polish – harnessed nonviolent action to bring a puppet state to its knees, and bring negotiators to the round table of discussion.

Discussion is a key component of progress and, alternatively, regress. Discussion facilitates communication and allows two factions to express their interests and

views. The goal? To reach an understanding; to realize a common ground. Such common ground leads to objectives, plans and growth. And the absence of dialogue? That leads to regression: the anathema of progress.

India and Poland have clinched their place in global politics and economics by confronting and engaging in such dialogue.

It is through dialogue that Poland successfully navigated its post-Communist narrative to establish a cohesive, healthy democracy. It brought Poland into NATO in 1999 and into the EU 2004: two bodies that have secured Poland's central role in New Europe. Poland has not only achieved political success – its economy is enjoying success as well. Not only has Poland increased its nominal GDP by over sevenfold – from 64.55 billion USD in 1990 to 517.54 in 2013 – it was also the only EU member country to successfully navigate the 2008 economic crisis without falling into recession. Poland is seeing an increase in investment from countries such as China and, with the advent of the TTIP, the United States. The high quality of its human capital labor force welcomes investors, business, and growth.

India, also, has seen massive political and economic growth. As I'm sure most of you are aware, India's economy is the tenth largest in the world by nominal GDP, and the third largest in terms of purchasing power parity. It is a member of the BRICS and G-20. It is one of the top WTO traders. It also hosts the world's largest number of English speakers, and has become the go-to country for offshore business services. The list could go on. Such economic prosperity has given India great responsibility in its foreign relations – a responsibility that has been given a new dimension with the election of Prime Minister Modi.

Since gaining independence in 1947, India's foreign policy – resulting from its long subjection to imperial rule – has been very clear. The country was determined to avoid being under the direct influence of any other nation. Modi inherited this anchor of India's foreign policy: the deeply defensive approach to multilateralism. He has injected a new twist to this old tale – that of Asian regionalism. He is intensely focused on improving ties with immediate neighbors in South Asia – aptly named the “Neighborhood First” policy. But he is not pursuing this at the expense of old allies.

As C. Raja Mohan, a Senior Associate with the South Asia Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace affirmed, Prime Minister Modi is a valuable opportunity to end Delhi's defensive multilateralism and affirm the emergence of a self-assured India that can actively shape the international order in Asia and the world.

Undeniably, Modi has shown balance: since assuming office, he has thoroughly engaged with leaders of great powers and regional partners alike. His first scheduled appointments prioritized Asiatic neighbors – evidence perhaps that regional relations top the foreign policy agenda for India.

There is another, less regional aspect to India's foreign policy, which is its cozy relationship with Russia. This is a historic legacy of India. Russia has always been a staunch ally and supporter of India, even in tough times. On the sidelines of the 6th annual BRICS summit in Brazil, Modi stated that "...if you ask anyone among the more than one billion people living in India who is our country's greatest friend, every person, every child knows that it is Russia." An anchor. Recently, with the ongoing unrest in Ukraine, India's strategic alignment with Russia puts it at odds with its western partners, including the US and EU.

This paradigm falls neatly into the age-old tug-of-war between two factions: the east versus the west and democracy versus authoritarianism. India can side with Russia; i.e., the non-West, or it can side with the US and EU; i.e., democracies. It's tricky, because India truly breaks the mold when it comes to pigeonholing. It doesn't precisely fit anywhere comfortably, which is what makes it such a fantastic magnet in its own neighborhood.

But there still remains this disparity between what the West can expect from India. And whether it should expect anything.

During his trip to India in August, US Secretary of State John Kerry lobbied India to join the US and EU in imposing sanctions on Russia amidst the Ukraine crisis. In response to the appeal, External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj replied by saying that there would be no change in India's policy. She said, "We think that foreign policy is in continuity. Foreign policy does not change with the change in government."

Such a response is part of the wider debate over whether – in the march to reprimand Russia for its actions in Ukraine – the West is pushing India into closer relations with Russia. Already India has declined to partake in imposition of sanctions against Russia – particularly arms, as India is one of the top recipients of Russian military equipment. India is also well-primed to fill the vacuum in Russia created by Western sanctions against Russia and reciprocal Russian sanctions against the West. Furthermore, Russia and India are amidst negotiations to replace the dollar and the euro with the rupee and ruble for trade between the two countries – something India already shares with China. Were this measure to be successful, it would represent not only a sizable reduction of the global influence for both the euro and the dollar but, more importantly, provide an easy loophole for Russia to evade Western sanctions. Such a move would strengthen rather than hurt Russia's global standing as it diversifies its partners and deepens ties with Asia.

So, what does this mean for the West? And Poland? There is nothing clandestine about Poland's support of Ukraine and it has been vocal in its criticism of Russia's moves to the east.

Well, I'm going to return to two themes of these remarks: the anchor and discussion. Think again about what an anchor is made from – something strong, something that

can withstand pressure. I would say that India and Poland share a common anchor of democracy. They both know what it's like to be under the pressure of a foreign power, and they both know the taste of freedom after such subjection. This is an important history for India to draw on as the events in Ukraine unfold. Perhaps India needs to focus not so much on turning its back on an ally – and I don't think the West is necessitating that India do that – but India could instead put its efforts towards the momentum of self-rule in Ukraine.

The second theme is discussion. No one wants to isolate Russia: the West doesn't want that, Poland doesn't want that, certainly India doesn't want that. Isolation represents a failure of diplomacy, which closes off a whole host of opportunities – economic, political, cultural, and the like. India, perhaps along with Poland, could represent a unique opportunity to bring its allies to the table together.

There's another option, which is simply that India does not want to focus its energy anywhere beyond its immediate neighborhood at the moment. Some critics contend that Western-Russian competition over India is a straw man argument that undermines and ignores India's real foreign policy objectives. To this, the appropriate response is not so much asking India to re-orient its objectives with Western objectives, but to be open to discourse on Ukraine and Russia. At times it can be easy to write off events that are happening thousands of kilometers away. The question is – why should we bother ourselves? What difference does it make to us? Poland has already encountered this attitude at home in the EU.

The answer is that – given the global nature of world order today – dealings between countries are not mutually exclusive; rather, they create a wider web of relationships. Events in Ukraine, and the global response to such events, send a clear message to others around the world about the values and systems in place today.

The slogan punctuating Modi's election was Sab-ka saath, Sab-ka vikaas. I'm sure there are many here who know it much better than I, but it roughly translates to “together with all, development for all”. It's a shortcut for inclusive growth. Inclusive growth inside India, and, outside. Looking towards the future, India, like Poland, needs to be prepared to accept its influential role and wield such influence to defend the values that shape India; the anchor of values that keep the country afloat.