India's Policy towards West Asia during the First Term of Prime Minister Narendra Modi

Abstract: Since Prime Minister Modi came to power, India's goal has been to "become a leading power, not just a global balancing force" and aimed to a "responsible global power" in international affairs. To achieve this strategic goal, along with the "Act East" policy being effectively implemented, the "Link West policy" with a focus on West Asia is also being implemented. This policy adjustment marks the expansion of India's "footprint" in West Asia, demonstrating a "strategic calculation" that has been taking shape with a comprehensive commitment to ensure both strengthening economic ties and institutionalizing long-term security cooperation with this region. India's policy towards West Asia under Prime Minister Modi is a modified succession to the previous governments. On the one hand, Prime Minister Modi continues the policy of neutrality, non-intervention, and non-alignment of the Congress Party since the Cold War. But on the other hand, Prime Minister Modi has made flexible adjustments in line with the fluctuations in West Asia and India. By policy analysis method, the article focuses on clarifying: (i) Objectives and content of India's policy towards West Asia; (ii) Policy implementation; (iii) Thereby, making assessments on the characteristics and results of policy implementation.

Keywords: India, West Asia, Link West policy, Modi, neutrality, non-intervention.

INTRODUCTION

India’s approach to West Asia is different from that of the Western countries. While the West uses the concept of "Middle East" in the view of Europe as the center of the world (Eurocentric), India uses the term "West Asia" to approach this region in the sense of the western region of ASIA. The term “West Asia” is also officially used by the United Nations and in the approach of Indian policymakers, the term West Asia is more geographically exact. West Asia in India's perspective includes Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Syria, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

1. The origins of “Link West” policy

Before Prime Minister Modi came to power, India's policy towards West Asia was "Look West" policy introduced by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in 2005. However, after officially taking office, Prime Minister Modi has emphasized that India not only needs to promote the Act East Policy but also implement a Link West policy, which focuses on three main axes: the Arab Gulf States, Israel and Iran. Thus, the Prime Minister Modi marks the continuation of India's policy towards West Asian countries: from the policy of "Look West" introduced by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in 2005 to a proactive policy, emphasizing more on the action in the "Link West" policy.

Under Prime Minister Modi, with the Link West policy with the focus shifting from Think West, Look West to a more proactive and active policy of Link West, India has expanded both hard and soft connection with West Asia.

1 Rajendra Abhyankar, Azadeh Pourzand (2013), Protests and Possibilities: West Asia and India, Indian Council on Global Relations.
4 Pramit Pal Choudhury, “Think West to Go West: Origins and Implications of India’s West Asia Policy under Modi (Part 1),” Middle East Institute, September 26, 2017.
In Prime Minister Modi's first phase of foreign policy (April 2014 to July 2015), West Asia was not a priority in India's foreign policy because his focus was on three main pillars: "Neighborhood is the number one priority", economic diplomacy and stable relations with great powers. To achieve these three goals, he made 9 foreign trips in 2014, 6 of which were globally multilateral meetings. In 6 early months of 2015, he made 17 foreign visits, including his attendance at the summits with 14 Pacific countries and visits to all Central Asian countries, but he did not pay any visits to West Asia. India's policy under Modi towards West Asia evidently started with Prime Minister Modi’s visit to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) (which has a long military relation with Pakistan) in 2015 and then a series of his next visits to other countries in this region. And this was followed by a statement from India's Deputy Foreign Minister, Mr. Shri Anil Wadwha, in April 2015, which emphasized India's interests in the Persian Gulf: maritime security (security for oil and gas transit routes), the Indian diaspora (remittances, employment issues of more than 7 million Indians living and working here), trade - investment relations and some security and defense relations.

Although the promotion of the "connectivity and outreach policy" with West Asian countries was stated in the speech of Indian Ministry of External Affairs, the phrase "link west" with the tendency to combine all the western regions of India including Europe and North America is often used by Prime Minister Modi. By the end of 2016, this phrase appeared frequently in official Indian reports and was considered as India's policy towards West Asia by Prime Minister Modi.

2. The objective of the “Link West” Policy

For strategic goals, in terms of regional and international goals, West Asia is part of an expanded neighboring region, so the adjustment of West Asia policy is also in line with India’s goal of becoming a regional and global power because one of the most important pillars of India's great power ambitions is the expansion of strategic influence. Therefore, New Delhi needs to make policy adjustments compared to previous governments in order to “find out” common interests and strategic convergence in West Asia.

India's traditional priority for the Persian Gulf has focused on four main issues: the stability of oil and gas supply and prices; the emphasis that the US is the stabilizing factor in the instability in West Asia; the risk of Pakistan’s close relation with the Sunni democracies in the region; economic relations, especially the export of goods and finally, ensuring the amount of remittances from the large Indian diaspora in this area. Meanwhile, the Modi government has repeatedly emphasized that this region is not only a “source of energy but also an investment” which is crucial to the success of economic programs/projects and economic initiatives and domestic agenda. So it is not difficult to understand that India under Prime Minister Modi is increasingly active and proactive with its western region.

With regard to geo-economic and security objectives, West Asia is an important part of the Modi’s policy initiatives as an effort to strengthen ties with India’s western neighbours, especially the Gulf countries. This is an initiative to complement Prime Minister Modi's Act East policy. Although the so-called Link West policy refers to a broader geographical area, its scope is mainly concentrated on the Middle East; therefore, some Indian strategic thinkers call this Modi’s middle-east policy.

The main purpose of Prime Minister N. Modi's Link West policy is not simply a matter of remittances, security, and economic cooperation, but also a matter of energy supply. Energy security has become a vital issue for India's growth, development, and socio-economic development and defense strategies. In 2013, India became the third largest energy consumer in the world. This reality makes India look to West Asia as an energy supplier due to its geographical proximity and strategic importance. Even Indian strategists emphasize that cooperating with West Asia will help India exert its influence beyond the Indian Ocean.

3. Contents of the Link West policy

The whole contents of India's Link West policy to West Asia set forth by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of this country are: Maintaining cooperation policy to those beneficial to India; regarding regional contradictions/conflicts, India

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maintains the viewpoint of (i) non-intervened/non-participated; (ii) non-prescriptive and non-judgmental; (iii) neutral and (iv) objective. As for the involvement of external actors in West Asia, India maintains (v) a policy of balance.

3.1 Cooperation
3.1.1 Promoting economic cooperation
(i) Economic diplomacy, deepening economic cooperation, ensuring energy supplies: that India has been one of the fastest growing economies in the world since the 2000s has helped New Delhi gain leverage in increasing cooperation and attracting investment from Saudi Arabia, Iran and Israel. And energy trade remains an important anchor in the Indo-West Asian economic relation. India is also investing in large natural gas fields and is developing the port of Chabahar in Iran, which is expected to be a major turning point in the Iran-India trade relation and a strategic counterweight to the port of Gwadar administered by China in Pakistan. In 2017, Saudi Arabia was India's most stable source of oil, followed by Iraq, Iran, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Kuwait. India is also heavily dependent on natural gas from West Asia. Lately, Qatar has provided the majority of liquefied natural gas (LNG) supplies to India. In 2017, Qatar accounted for 52% of India's LNG imports.

According to forecasts, India is likely to overtake China as an oil consumer by 2024. India has also increased energy investment in the region. India's state oil company ONGC V Slideshow has bought 10% of the holdings in an offshore oil and gas concession in Abu Dhabi for $600 million.

(ii) Investment attraction: call for investments from wealthy Gulf countries in infrastructure and ambitious production plans of Modi Government. However, the Gulf States are not India's main source of FDI. In contrast, India has also invested in West Asian countries in a number of areas such as energy, transportation, food processing, and information technology.

3.1.2 Security-defense cooperation
For Prime Minister Modi, West Asia is important not only in terms of trade deals and investment capital, but the security aspect is also an important part of his government's agenda for the region. The main contents are: strengthening security presence and counter-terrorism cooperation, intensifying meetings between national security advisers, military exercises, and arms export issue, etc.

Under Modi Government, India has made many high-level visits to countries in the region, which has led to new developments regarding border security cooperation and intelligence cooperation with countries in both Western Asia and South Asia at the bilateral as well as multilateral level. India's arms trade with Israel has also become more exciting. India has also participated in the Blue Flag air exercise taking place in Israel, bringing 5 out of the top 10 military powers in the world together, including the US, Israel, Greece, Poland, Italy, France and Germany.

Unlike former Indian prime ministers, especially those of the Gandhi dynasty, who always closely followed the Palestinian cause, Prime Minister Modi has been proving an India's new image of the 21st century to the world as well as to actors in the West Asia. In particular, India is currently the largest market for Israeli military weapons, also India has spent about 1 billion USD/year on military goods from this West Asian country in recent years. Israel is considered an important military technology partner, topping the list of its military technology partners, of which India was the market that accounted for more than 40% of exporting Israel's defense industry from 2012 to 2016. Lately, India has purchased 54 attack drones, the Barak 8 long-range air-to-air missile system for more than $6 billion, and a medium-range surface-to-air missile system for $2 billion.

In addition, the security aspects that India is interested in are related to the conflict in Afghanistan (due to the trade route through Iran to Afghanistan), the participation in military activities in the region (mainly in the counterterrorism) to reduce Pakistan's military presence; being against the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS); Next is the military cooperation relation with Israel with a focus on arms sales, military training, technology exchange and maritime security. However, in defense-security cooperation with actors in this region, India still maintains a cautious stance in increasing its military presence in areas with many religious or national conflicts.

In May 2016, Manohar Parikkar as the first Defense Minister of India to visit the UAE. India has also established a Strategic Partnership with Saudi Arabia, which affirms New Delhi’s priorities in the region. In July 2018, five key agreements were signed addressing issues ranging from anti-money laundering to drug trafficking when Prime Minister Modi paid a visit to King Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud in Riyadh. The two countries also agreed on the need to strengthen bilateral defense cooperation mainly through the exchange of visits of military experts and officials and proposed to conduct joint military exercises and provide weapons and ammunition.

India has also signaled its readiness to strengthen the security partnership with the Gulf States – those who have close ties with Pakistan. These efforts of India seem to be achieving good initial results. In 2018, the UAE extradited three individuals wanted in India on corruption to New Delhi and this year, India signed a treaty with Oman allowing the Indian Navy to use the strategic port Duqm, overlooking the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean.

Regarding maritime security cooperation at a strategic level, along with South Asia, Southeast Asia and Central Asia, West Asia is part of India's strategic calculation to strengthen maritime cooperation throughout Asian territory. On the basis of its claim to be a “net security provider” in the Indian Ocean, Indian Navy has expanded its security operations in its immediate vicinity and extended. The Indian navy is increasing its presence in the Arabian Sea. Through regular presence operations and providing hydrographic training and support, the Indian navy has succeeded in building close and friendly relations with maritime forces in the Gulf. From the national interest perspective, the increase in visits by Indian naval ships to the Gulf also stems from India's need to protect important sea lanes in the Western Indian Ocean. On the other hand, India also cooperates with West Asian countries in non-traditional security issues such as combating armed robbery, drug/human trafficking, illegal fishing and maritime terrorism in the West Indian Ocean. Even with the United Arab Emirates (U.A.E.), Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar and Saudi Arabia, India maintains very strong naval ties. During Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s visit to Saudi Arabia in April 2016, an agreement on enhancing maritime security in the Gulf and Indian Ocean was signed by the two countries. In May 2016, maritime vessels of Indian troops visited Manama in Bahrain for exercises with the Royal Bahraini Navy. A year earlier, Indian ships visited Doha, Qatar. Especially in February 2017, after an Indian Coast Guard ship had visited the port of Dubai, the Gulf States become members of India's Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS).

### 3.2. No intervention

This policy is motivated by ensuring the economic and trade development, the investment relations and energy security between India and West Asian countries. India also cooperates with West Asian countries to combat terrorism. After the event of September 11th, India's policy towards West Asia was mainly based on the principle of "Silence is golden". Under Prime Minister Modi, the instability in regional security is posing new challenges to the cooperative relations within the framework of the Link West policy as well as the global goals of India, because West Asia is considered an influential region and plays an important role in shaping the current multipolar world order. In this context, the medium and long-term policy options for India in this region are: to consider West Asia as a prior region (based on the potential for economic, cultural, and political cooperation), on which statements on the “Link West” policy should be announced, like the implemented “Act East” policy; with political effectiveness, political ties with the region need to be deepened, the image of a neutral “India” on issues in the region.

### 3.3 “No prescription and no judgment”

West Asia was prominently mentioned in the foreign policy of the Modi administration by Indian Secretary of State for External Affairs Shri Anil Wadhwa in April 2015. He again mentioned India’s fundamental interests in the Persian Gulf, including: security of oil and gas supply routes, remittances and employment for about 8 million Indians living here, trade relations and investment as well as other defense and security relations. In addition, he also expressed concerns about political and security instability in the region, but affirmed that India is "non-prescriptive and non-judgmental" of events in this area. He emphasized, India “has been relatively successful in securing bilateral relations with important actors in the region... we always try to protect our core interests from negative fluctuations in the region... the West Asian countries in our policy is, in fact, a "bundle" of relations at the individual leadership level and

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14 Rajendra Abhyankar, Azadeh Pourzand (2013), *Protests and Possibilities: West Asia and India*, Indian Council on Global Relations
India's goal is to ensure that there are no conflicts or obstacles for our bilateral relations with countries in this region\(^{15}\). He further affirmed that, while implementing policy in this region, India should keep the following points in mind: (i) it is the homeland of the world's third largest Sunni and Shia community, therefore “We need to be extremely delicate with the complex mixture of religions and ethnicities in this region.” India needs to be “cautious” when approaching the region to ensure that its core interests are not misinterpreted as an actor “for or against or in favor of” any community in the region. (ii) In addition, India needs to play an active role in West Asia. However, to do this, “we need to evaluate and review based on strategic levers and realistic consideration of India’s strengths and limitations”. He also said that (iii) the Arab Spring has “aggravated the problems in the region, increased competitions of ideologies as well as the imbalance of power in the region.”

In addition, India's approach under Prime Minister Modi is very clearly expressed in the speech of the Director General of the Oriental Department, Ministry of External Affairs of India in 2016 during the 2nd Annual Workshop on West Asia with the topic: Linking India and West Asia: Policy, Perspectives and Challenges, emphasizing that to India, (i) West Asia is part of our expanding region and therefore peaceful and continuous stability in the region is in our strategic interest… India's policy towards this region is rooted in our traditional longstanding relation with the region and adheres to the principle of being non-prescriptive and non-judgmental.

3.4 Neutrality

India emphasizes its "middle ground" stance on conflicts and divisions in this region. India's policy towards West Asia is deployed across a broad framework to maintain its balance in regional conflicts.

According to the Director General of the Indian Oriental Department, despite the ever-changing political environment, India's bilateral relations with most of the countries in the region have structurally progressed through a neutral approach towards conflicts/disagreements among countries in the region, in particular. Firstly, India recognizes that political upheavals between countries need to be resolved by the themselves and should be free from any outside interference or influence\(^{16}\) and that India's "neutrality" should not be construed as a devoid of decision-making or political passivity, "In fact, we're more involved in the region than we've ever been in the past. We do not want to create parallel mechanisms that will affect our bilateral relations"; Secondly, our neutral approach should be understood that we are not partisan or sectarian in the region as India is “outside”not participating in any alliances based on sects or similar issues in the region; Thirdly, India pursues a neutral approach so as to continue to pursue advanced G2G mechanisms with all countries in the region to ensure security benefits for the Indian diaspora, energy and India's greater security interests in the region; Fourthly, India believes that the increasing tensions in the region regarding Saudi Arabia and Iran, as well as the diplomatic response of the alliance of these countries do not bring positive results for the region as well as the world.

India's neutral policy towards West Asia is mainly due to two reasons: First, India spreads the investments across most of the countries in West Asia. If India has a trade deficit in some countries, it will be "compensated" with other benefits by those countries. This factor is the policy-forming framework for India to respond and balance its relations with countries that are at odds with each other in the region. Second, the Indian diaspora is widespread and distributed in large numbers throughout most countries in West Asia. This is an important factor driving India's policy towards conflicting countries in the region.

India's neutral policy towards this region is expressed in the following ways:

India is very careful in balancing its relations with countries that are "at odds" with another in this region. The balanced approach is evident in the India-Iran-Israel triangle. Accordingly, India has not abandoned its relations with Iran, even as relations with Israel begin to improve significantly and India is one of the few countries in the world that has good relations with both countries\(^{17}\). This can be attributed to a pragmatic approach adopted by all three countries. For example, Israel welcomes China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), although India has strongly condemned it for

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15 Shri Anil Wadwha, “Address by Secretary (East) at the Inaugural Session of Second ORF-MEA West Asia Conference in New Delhi,” April 27, 2015, Government of India, Ministry of Foreign Affairs,

16 Ministry of External Affairs (2016), Remarks by Secretary (East) at 2nd Annual West Asia Conference - India’s Links with West Asia: Policy, Prospects and Challenges, https://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/26285/Remarks_by_Secretary_East_at_2nd_Annual_West_Asia_Conference__Indias_Links_with_West_Asia_Policy_Prospects_and_Challengeshttps://www.mea.gov.in/lok-sabha.htm?dtl/25601/qno2609+strategy+on+west+asia

encroaching on the disputed Kashmir region with Pakistan. Likewise, Iran cannot "give up" its relation with India due to the Israeli, as India remains a major purchaser of its oil.

**About the triangle of India - Iran - Saudi Arabia.** India's dynamic balance with both countries stems from the role of the port of Chabahar in Iran, and a large Indian diaspora in Saudi Arabia.

On the balance in the India-Iran-GCC triangle and the India-Qatar-Saudi triangle during the diplomatic crisis in the GCC countries in mid-2017. During the political and diplomatic crisis of Qatar, "The quartet" Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain and Egypt "boycotted" Qatar and accused it of close ties to Iran and its support for anti-government uprisings in the Arab Spring events. India responded to the Qatar situation by declaring it an internal matter of the GCC through the statement of Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj, and despite maintaining relations with Qatar, India did not "criticize" the actions of the "quad". India's neutral approach to the GCC countries and Qatar stems from two main reasons: (i) First, the diplomatic crisis of the GCC countries does not include all of India's partners, but mainly the "quartet" Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain and Egypt. In addition, the United States is an external power that maintains relations with Qatar while continuing to sell weapons to both Qatar and Saudi Arabia. And as a natural law in international relations, India also follows the footsteps of regional and global actors who maintain a neutral approach to countries in the region. (ii) Second, Qatar is India's main supplier of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG).

On the other hand, the Government of India has refrained from providing aid to any military or political alliance in the conflict. As the crisis escalated, the government conducted an evacuation in Yemen called Rahat Operation in 2015. India started evacuating and rescuing hundreds of citizens on 2 April 2015 with the help of a commercial ship docked in the port of Aden.

3.5 **Objective**

This policy is embodied in: First, India is committed to supporting a stable, peaceful and democratic Yemen - which is in the interest of global and regional peace and security. India has called on all parties involved in the conflict to resolve their differences amicably and in compliance with the United Nations resolution; Second, India has an objective approach to the Palestinian issue. India strongly supports the Palestinian cause and maintains good relations with Israel at the same time. India supports a comprehensive solution of the Palestinian issue, leading to a sovereign, independent, workable and unified State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital, living within safe and recognized borders, and stands with Israel in peace; Third, firmly support Iraq in the struggle against international terrorism and make efforts to protect the unity and territorial integrity of Iraq; India supports the fight against terrorism in this region.

Different from the neutral, non-involved, balanced approach to conflicts/contradictions/tensions in West Asia, India maintains an assertive approach in the Israeli-Palestinian issue. Although there are still many high-level visits to Israel, India has voted against the US decision to move the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. One thing in particular, the move did not generate negative reactions from Israeli lawmakers as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stated that this India's vote would affect India-Israel relations. This proves the strong foundation of the bilateral relation. Moreover, this move of India comes from India's objective approach, which is also consistent with the world's view and approach to the Palestinian issue. In that context, it makes no sense for a rising country like India not to take a strong stance on either side.

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3.6 Balance

With regard to the involvement of external states in regional affairs, India maintains a balanced approach and asserts that the US remains an important factor for the regional stability and that Russia is also a positive factor in this area,...

And affirming that if New Delhi has any solution to the unrest in West Asia, then we hope that Washington will continue to play its traditional role in the region and restore the order for the region, because “India believes that the US remains an important factor for the regional stability, and China is also emerging with an attractive economic power to regional actors but as a counterweight to the West in West Asia”. In general, the Indian press and media often refer to a balanced and stability-oriented approach in West Asia in the context of India’s growing regional influence and efforts to assert its role and interests which are closely associated with Gulf countries, Iran and Iraq.

To India, maintaining a balanced strategy in relations with major regional and non-regional countries present in West Asia (the US, China, and Russia) is to ensure its economic and trade objectives as well as to avoid conflicts with countries inside and outside the region. And the reality is proving India's ability to balance relations with actors of opposing interests in the region, typically the balance in the relations between the US - Russia, Israel and Palestine, as well as other Gulf Cooperation Council countries and Iran.

To balance the relations with regional actors, Prime Minister Modi's approach is subtle and pragmatic. In his recent visit to West Asia, Prime Minister Modi stated that India “will always support the path of Palestinian development”, explaining that, “the friendship between India and Palestine” has stood the test of time” and “the Palestinian people have shown courage in the face of many challenges.” He also made similar remarks during a three-hour visit to the headquarters of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA). He is skillful in handling relations with these two countries. He refrained from any criticism of the Palestinian land occupation activities or the expansionist policy of Israel.

CONCLUDE

Prime Minister Modi's Link West policy is the result of the combined influence of internal and external factors at the international, regional, national and individual levels of the Indian government. Interestingly, the change of the government in India did not make a change in the stance and approach of India's policy towards West Asia. India's policy towards West Asia under Prime Minister Modi, despite the adjustments, is a strategic rather than a tactical shift, and these changes all inherit from the legacy of previous governments to adapt to the new context. Prime Minister Modi’s policies towards the region further confirm and reinforce that, in the short to medium term, India will continue its current pragmatic approach to West Asia. This not only helps India to ensure its national interests which are related to this region, but also helps India not to be “pulled” into the quagmire of conflicts in the region.

During Prime Minister Modi's first term (2014-2019), India took a proactive approach to West Asia. In order to attract investment and foster deeper security partnerships, he has forged a strong partnership strategy with Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Israel. Since 2014, he has visited 8 countries and territories in West Asia, which is counted more than the total visits of all his four predecessors.

It can be seen that despite the adjustments and changes with many new features in the way of calling as well as the approach and especially skilful handling of relations between major countries in this region, India's policy towards West Asia under Prime Minister Modi is a continuation of past policies. The Modi administration's shift in perception of the role of West Asia from its predecessors has led to a policy adjustment and a change in the nature of India's bilateral and multilateral relations with the region, in which West Asia is seen as a “long-term strategic energy and investment” for economic growth and the Gulf countries as potential partners to achieve India’s strategic goals in the long term.

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25 Ministry of External Affairs (2016), Remarks by Secretary (East) at 2nd Annual West Asia Conference - India’s Links with West Asia: Policy, Prospects and Challenges.
26 Ministry of External Affairs (2016), Remarks by Secretary (East) at 2nd Annual West Asia Conference - India’s Links with West Asia: Policy, Prospects and Challenges.
27 Shri Amil Wadwha, “Address by Secretary (East) at the Inaugural Session of Second ORF-MEA West Asia Conference in New Delhi,” April 27, 2015, Government of India, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
29 How Narendra Modi’s foreign policy manages competing strategic interests, https://www.thenational.ae/opinion/comment/how-narendra-modi-s-foreign-policy-manages-competing-strategic-interests-1699496
India’s policy towards West Asia is not out of the current Indian foreign policy trend; that is to pursue pragmatism, in which, to West Asia, it is more concerned about the economic interests rather than ideological differences. Many Indian policymakers also assert that India’s “footprint” in this region is gradually taking the initiative in strategic calculations as the Indian government has recognized the need to develop a comprehensively involved strategy, and one of which is to seek ways to strengthen economic ties and institutionalize cooperative relations with important actors in this region.

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