

Atma-Nirbhar Bharat: Navigating Self-Reliance in a Globalized World

Yatan Sharma

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By

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FOREWORD

Samarthyamoolam Swatantram, Shrammoolam Vaibhavam

(सामर्थ्यं मूलं स्वातंत्र्यम् श्रम मूलं वैभवम्)

Ability is the source of freedom and strength of labour is source of progress. Prime Minister Narendra Modi quoted this shloka in his speech on 15 August 2020 while addressing the nation from the Red Fort in the backdrop of Covid crisis. With this he gave the call for ‘Atma-Nirbhar Bharat’ and launched many initiatives, programs and schemes. Even before the PM’s push for self-reliance, many in the seat of power had talked about this idea but the unprecedented challenges of year 2020 - that saw millions losing their jobs in cities and going back to their native places - made the idea of self-reliance far more compelling and contextual.

I am pleased to write this foreword for the monograph titled “Atma-Nirbhar Bharat: Navigating Self-Reliance in a Globalized World” by budding young scholar Yatan Sharma. This important piece of research work helps us understand the nature and scope of the idea of self-reliance in India particularly in light of the government schemes and programs under the umbrella of ‘Atma-Nirbhar Bharat’ during the Covid crisis. This research further explores the idea of self-reliance in a globalized world where the ideas of protectionism, nation first and glocalization are gaining ground. The author tries to gauge the applicability of Atma-Nirbhar Bharat in a globalised world where FDIs, FIIs, divestments, expanding horizons for private players and integration of Indian economy with the global economy are preferred over traditional approaches to self-reliance.

This monograph has been written from a fresh and exploratory perspective which will be useful for students, scholars, practitioners and policy makers. I would like to appreciate the India Foundation and its team for encouraging and supporting such scholarly research work.

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ABSTRACT

Until the official launch of the Atma-Nirbhar Bharat (ANB) initiative by the government of India in 2020, policies such as protectionism and import substitution have been assumed as the only means to make the country self-reliant. (Rousseau 1997; List 1841; Gandhi 1997; Nehru 1951; and Tickner 1986). However, ANB promises to make India self-reliant using measures that are fundamentally different from traditional approaches to self-reliance like inviting FDIs and FIIs, through disinvestments, expanding the horizons for private players and integrating the Indian economy further with the global economy. Therefore, an attempt has been made in this paper to examine whether the ANB initiative aligns with the principles and objectives of self-reliance (Laxman Kelkar, 1980; Godfrey, 2008; Galtung, 1976; Shaw, 1980) or is simply a political rhetoric. To achieve this, the paper employs archival research and case study analysis methods. Initial findings suggest that ANB aligns with the theoretical definition and objectives of self-reliance, despite using different methods to achieve its goals. Moreover, ANB is not simply an economic concept; it also has political motivations and implications. The most important among them is to maintain a fine balance between economic interdependence and political independence, where India is constantly working on the diversification of the global supply chains not only to balance (economically) against their security rival China, but also to re-globalize the world through ‘meaningful partnerships’ and ensuring fair and equitable benefits of globalization. Comparing the data on mobile phone manufacturing and manufacturing of defence equipment in the country for the couple of years before and after the launch of the ANB initiatives, testify the government's promises and intentions. Self-reliance, which was once seen as a relic of the past, but the unconventional methods employed by the Indian government to achieve this goal have revived the concept and opened up numerous research opportunities. Though the study is focused on the ANB initiative, the paper will certainly fill the gap in the existing scholarship of self-reliance.

INTRODUCTION

कष्टं च खलु मूर्खत्वं कष्टं च खलु यौवनम् ।
कष्टात्कष्टतरं चैव परगेहनिवासनम् ॥8॥

Kaṣṭam ca khalu mūrkhatvaṁ kaṣṭam ca khalu yauvanam.
Kaṣṭātkaṣṭataram caiva paragēhanivāsanam.

Chanakya, also known as Kautilya and Vishnugupta, served as the prime minister during the rule of Chandragupta Maurya, the founder of the Mauryan Empire (322-185 BCE), around 350-275 BCE. Renowned for his authoritative work on governance titled "Arthashastra" or "The Science of Material Gain," Chanakya compiled a comprehensive collection of knowledge available in India up to his era regarding 'artha', encompassing aspects of property, economics, and material success. In his book "Chanakya Niti," he emphasized the significance of self-reliance, a theme that persisted into modern history. When elucidating the significance of the Sanskrit verse mentioned above in his commentary found in 'Sri Chanakya Niti: Ancient Sense for Modern Success', Patita Pavana Dasa Adhikari asserted that "Chanakya Pandit advises that dependency causes a loss of self-respect, while dignity and confidence arises from self-reliance. And no money is sweeter than that which has been earned honestly by one's own hand." (Adhikari, 2015) Thus, it would be spurious to assume that the concept of self-reliance has been introduced in the modern times by Ralph Waldo in his essay on 'self-reliance' in the year 1841. Rather it has been a part of politics from the ancient history. With the passage of time, what has changed is the sphere of the implications of self-reliance i.e., from individual to community to the state. In terms of horizon, the scope and approaches to attain self-sufficiency have also broadened. For instance, achieving individual self-reliance involves tasks such as earning money and independently managing the livelihood. On a community level, self-reliance entails handling all aspects within the community, supporting one another without relying on external assistance. However, in the context of

achieving self-sufficiency for a state in the current 'globalized era,' it doesn't imply isolation. Instead, it involves striking a delicate balance between economic interdependence and political autonomy. Simultaneously, it requires ensuring the effective and efficient utilization of locally available factors of production. Various scholars have explained the causes and objectives that states try to achieve by setting up their aim to become self-reliant. In this exploratory paper, I've made an attempt to examine whether Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Atma-Nirbhar Bharat (ANB) initiative aligns with the established definitions and goals of self-reliance as outlined by various scholars.

As impressions of the colonial bruteness and exploitation were still fresh in the minds of the leaders of the third world countries during the Cold War, they decided to keep themselves away from the western bloc led by the USA and the eastern or the communist bloc led by the Soviet Union. Consequently, out of the fear of getting re-colonized, these countries decided to become self-reliant. Leadership of the newly independent India being no exception, also decided to make the country self-reliant and as a result, the maiden prime-minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru adopted the policy of import substitution industrialization. In addition, the government had also set up the import and export quotas in order to minimize their imports to the possible extend. However, the strategy didn't work as per the expectations of the government. Instead of reducing India's trade deficit, the policy propelled India into the huge financial debt. And the fundamental cause for this was that India had to import crude oil and heavy machineries to build up industries but at the same time, India was unable to produce quality goods locally and the exports of the final goods was almost negligible. Above all, the most fundamental event that exacerbated India's deteriorating economy was the disintegration of the Soviet Union and emergence of the liberal ideology, advocated and propagated by the US, as the hegemonic ideology. As a result, India encountered the severe balance of payment crisis in the year 1990-91 and thus, was compelled to abandon their goal of achieving self-reliance and to make structural adjustments to its economy by liberalizing, privatizing and globalizing the economy. Not only India, the entire global economic order faced the cascading effects of the Cold war and liberal world order was subsequently accepted as the dominant and defining

international order for the future. As a result, ‘self-reliance’ has been assumed as the thing of past almost by the entire world with the few exceptions like North Korea.

Since then, no ‘democratic’ country made any claims or promises to achieve self-reliance, although countries are trying to minimize their trade deficit in some way or the other. While one might point to countries like China and South Korea, which have made attempts to achieve self-reliance, there is a significant difference. Both China, currently, and South Korea, in the past, pursued their self-reliance goals under non-democratic regimes. This trend continued until the world faced an unprecedented health crisis in the form of the Covid-19 pandemic, which posed a significant threat to humanity. The pandemic, although primarily a health issue, had profound socio-economic and political repercussions across the globe. The highly contagious nature of the virus compelled governments to impose strict lockdowns to curb its spread. These lockdowns were not just confined to individual countries; they extended globally, causing widespread disruption to international trade. The impact was particularly severe on the trade of essential commodities, such as life-saving drugs and semiconductor chips, which are critical components in various industries. The global lockdowns led to a cascade of challenges, including supply chain disruptions, economic downturns, and increased political tensions. Countries that relied heavily on imports for essential goods found themselves in precarious situations, highlighting the vulnerabilities in their supply chains. The scarcity of vital medical supplies and technology components underscored the need for more resilient and self-sufficient systems. In response to these challenges, governments and international organizations were forced to adopt unprecedented measures. These included re-evaluating trade policies, investing in local manufacturing capabilities, and enhancing international cooperation to ensure the availability of essential goods. Surprise to all, the current Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi, in his address to the nation, declared his vision to make the country self-reliant and thus, launched the ANB initiative. The declaration was made during the time when the world was battling with one of the most severe crisis engendered by the spread of the corona virus. Revival of the self-reliance approach, which was considered as irrelevant in this globalized era, was the

surprise to the whole world but the most surprising is the unconventional trajectory like inviting foreign direct investments (FDIs) and foreign Institutional Investments (FIIs), privatization, disintegration etc. adopted by Modi government to achieve self-reliance. The first section of the paper discusses the meaning and objectives of self-reliance policies in depth and the following sections discuss how despite being conventional, ANB aligns with the core values and objectives of traditional self-reliance approach.

More than an economic policy, this paper tries to study the political motivations and implications behind implementing such measure and will eventually try to situate it in the broader framework of open economy politics (OEP) scholarship. OEP is a subfield of international political economy (IPE) that examines the relationship between domestic politics and international economic interdependence. OEP, which is based on three approaches- interests, domestic politics and international bargaining (Lake, 2009), offers an interesting lens through which one can understand the symbiotic relationship between business and government in an open economy.

The case study of India's approach to achieve self-reliance in this globalized era has not only the potential to make significant academic contribution but in practical terms, it also has the capability to show the world an alternative 'human-centric' path of economic growth and societal development. If we look at the timings of the launch of this policy i.e., in the year 2020, we can see that India was battling with various economic and political challenges. And the most prominent among them were- rivalry with China and rising inflation and unemployment rate due to the cascading effect of the lockdowns imposed to curb the spread of the Covid-19 virus.

ANB is a multi-sectoral initiative as Modi government is trying to achieve self-reliance in every possible sector. In the initial stages of the ANB initiative, priority was accorded to the smartphone, defence, and healthcare sectors. This choice is evident given India's sustained position as one of the world's fastest-growing economies, necessitating a parity with the evolving technology. The urgency for self-reliance in the healthcare sector has been underscored by the Covid-19

pandemic. During challenging times, nations prioritize safeguarding the lives of their citizens, and if there are surplus resources, they may extend assistance to others. Thus, achieving self-reliance in the healthcare sector is not merely a preference but a necessity. This study however specifically concentrates on smartphone related data and developments in the defence sector to scrutinize the government's assertions. The rationale for not really focusing on the defence and healthcare sectors for this study is twofold. Firstly, since this initiative is relatively recent, comprehensive data on defence production, including the exact nature of commodities and the value of equipment produced and traded, is not publicly available due to security concerns. Secondly, the healthcare sector encompasses a wide array of components, including high-tech machines, instruments, medicines, and equipment used for routine checkups. Analysing these diverse elements based on incomplete information and data would be both challenging and inappropriate for drawing meaningful conclusions. But when it comes to smartphone, data pertaining to imports, exports, and production is readily accessible. Hence, evaluating the validity of the government's claims in this sector would be straightforward.

In this paper I've made an attempt to not only examine Modi's ANB from the existing conceptions of 'self-reliance' but also to study and situate it in the context of OEP scholarship. Since ANB is a recent initiative, there is very limited literature available and out of those, none has explored it from the existing notion of 'self-reliance' for the state and neither has tried to contextualize it from the OEP perspective, where the political and economic challenges and objectives led to the implementation of this initiative. It's a reality that Modi government has launched the ANB initiative that at least promises to make the country 'self-reliant' in this globalized era. Whether it's a substantive initiative or merely apolitical rhetoric, as pronounced by the critics, whichever would be the case, the revitalization of self-reliance in the globalized era has opened up the avenues to study it from the lenses of OEP. Therefore, in the following paper, I've tried to identify the factors that worked as a motivation for Modi government to revive the 'self-reliance' (ANB) initiative. Dependent Variable for this study is the launch of the Atma-Nirbhar Bharat initiative and set of policies implemented to realize this ambition and there

are two independent variables: (1) Political challenges -security rivalry with China and (2) Economic challenges- rising unemployment, inflation rate and rising debt. The paper has been structured such that the first two section of the paper discusses the core values and objectives of self-reliance and the ANB initiative respectively. Following that, the paper discusses the political challenges (security rivalry with China to be more precise) and economic challenges (rising inflation and unemployment rate) that were not only possessing a challenge to India's sovereignty but also to the development of the country as a whole. And the last part of the paper discusses the broader implications of this research from the lenses of the OEP.

Understanding Self-Reliance

There is no single universally acceptable definition and objective of self-reliance, as the concept has been defined by various scholars in different contexts. A layman's understanding of the term 'self-reliance' is to reduce and eventually abandon the country's dependence on imports and to produce everything in the country, from a pin to a satellite. But this is not self-reliance, this is 'self-sufficiency', which is impossible for a country to attain because of the non-availability of economic factors of production, which are- land (and other natural resources), labour, capital, and enterprise, at one place. Thus, at any given point of time, every country is dependent on others for something or the other.

Before getting into what do we mean by self-reliance, it is important to look how this concept travelled from individual self-reliance as defined by Waldo Emerson and Chanakya to the arena of international relations. According to Ann Tickner, it was the dissatisfaction voiced by third-world nations towards the liberal capitalist development models, which is rooted in the belief that aligning with the international system, as assumed by these models, does not necessarily lead to enhanced economic growth and overall well-being for everyone. (Tickner, 1986) For List, developing countries, frustrated by the limitations of Northern-led development models, increasingly urge cooperation and unity among Global South nations. They believe that by forming a united front, they can amplify their voices

and challenge unfair trade practices, economic exploitation, and unequal distribution of global resources. This collective action, they argue, is crucial to resist external influence and achieve a more just and equitable world order. (List, 2012) According to Shaw, the non-aligned movement committed to deeper collaboration among themselves and other developing nations. This unity aimed to boost their economic standing and bargaining power on the global stage. They believed that by speaking with a unified voice, they could wield greater political influence and improve the overall situation of the Third World. (Shaw, 1980) And according to Galtung, by aiming to become self-reliant, countries are not trying to eliminate trade but to alter its course and structure by prioritizing collaboration with those facing similar circumstances. This involves favouring neighbours over more distant options, promoting cooperation over mere exchange, and emphasizing intra-sector trade over inter-sector trade. (Galtung, 1976) One thing which is common among the arguments presented by various scholars for why the concept of self-reliance gained currency during the Cold War is that the Third world countries want to protect their political autonomy and at the same time, wants to ensure the effective and efficient utilization of locally available resources.

Now coming to various definitions and objectives of self-reliance, there is no consensus among the scholars regarding the same. According to the communitarian school, represented by Rousseau, the main goal of self-reliance is to make sure that everyone in their community feels good about themselves and has enough to live on. Communitarians prioritize the impact of a self-reliance development strategy on the self-esteem and material prosperity of each individual. Consequently, the emphasis is on crafting a suitable political and economic framework to attain this objective. (Rousseau, 2018) This strategy, typically centered around the local community, advocates for the utilization of local resources and suitable technologies. Whenever feasible, meeting fundamental material needs is encouraged at the local level rather than relying on global markets. (Tickner, 1986) But on the contrary, the statist school, propounded by List, advocate for bolstering the nation-state, as they believe that maintaining national control over economic planning is possible only in a closed economy. This group is primarily concerned with using self-reliance as a means to attain national autonomy within the

international system. (List, 2012) However, it's essential to understand that self-reliance, in this context, does not imply a permanent disconnection from the world economy. Instead, it is considered a developmental stage used as a tool to renegotiate interdependence on more favourable terms. In contrast to communitarians, statisticians are generally less inclined towards the fundamental restructuring of society, a strategy perceived as a threat to existing elites. Instead, they focus on incremental policy measures aimed at promoting the sovereignty of the nation-state. (Tickner, 1986)

The Gandhian concept of self-reliance centered on the individual's responsibility in shaping a just society. Gandhi envisioned a diminishing role of the state as individuals, through their pursuit of truth and non-violence, became more self-reliant. (Gandhi, 2009) According to this model, independence was to be founded on a robust, self-reliant economy with minimal external interactions, meeting basic needs through agricultural subsistence and village-based production. (Gandhi, 2009) Gandhi held a profound skepticism towards large-scale distribution networks in satisfying fundamental needs and viewed the market as an inefficient allocator of goods. (Gandhi, 2009) In this perspective, both nation-building and individual self-reliance hinged on establishing political and economic structures primarily at the village level. On the contrary, the Nehruvian model was focused on achieving self-reliance industrialization and import substitution which promises to enhance the productive capacity of the country, instead of focusing on the village and the agrarian sector. (Nehru, 1950) Though the approach doesn't promise to address the issue of poverty and unemployment directly, it was expected that the trickle-down effect of the industrialization would not only generate enormous employment opportunities but also improve the standard of living of the people. (Nehru, 1950)

However, Nehru's approach to self-reliance wasn't without its critics, who tried to propel the country on the path of self-reliance by implementing import substitution industrialization and protectionist measures. Deen Dayal Upadhyay emerged as a key voice of dissent, rejecting Nehruvian economic policies and the rapid industrialization they spurred. Upadhyay argued that this model was a case of uncritical mimicry of the West, disregarding the unique cultural and spiritual

heritage of the Third World countries like India. He believed a more balanced approach was necessary, one that considered India's dynamic society and its rich tapestry of traditions. The Nehruvian model, with its emphasis on rapid industrialization for material wealth, had unintended consequences. Upadhyay pointed out that it fostered a culture of consumerism, a stark contrast to the values of frugality and self-sufficiency traditionally emphasized. (Malik, 1994) Furthermore, this approach exacerbated social disparities and regional imbalances in economic growth. Perhaps most concerning, it failed to deliver on the promise of alleviating poverty, a critical challenge for the newly independent nation. (Malik, 1994) Upadhyaya argued for a homegrown approach to India's progress, one that prioritizes the well-being of its people. This model stands apart from both Western capitalism, which emphasizes individual gain, and Marxist socialism, which focuses on class struggle. (Téatreault & Denemark, 2004) Upadhyaya wasn't opposed to Western scientific advancements, but he believed India's development path should be unique. He envisioned a middle ground, appreciating the strengths of both capitalism and socialism while avoiding their extremes and aspects that wouldn't fit the Indian context. (Téatreault & Denemark, 2004) As an alternative, Upadhyay proposed Integral Humanism, a philosophy that rejected both the capitalist and socialist models of self-reliance. He envisioned an indigenous economic model with the human being, not just material gain, at the centre stage. Integral Humanism aimed to achieve harmony between individual and collective well-being, and between material prosperity and spiritual fulfilment. It drew inspiration from Gandhian ideals like Swadeshi (economic self-reliance) and Gram Swaraj (village self-governance), but reinterpreted them within a broader framework. (Rao, 2007) Upadhyaya believed that true development would come from empowering individuals and communities, fostering social responsibility, and preserving country's cultural heritage. (Rao, 2007) This approach aimed to address not just material poverty but also the spiritual and moral well-being of society.

While doing the comparative analysis of the aforementioned approaches to self-reliance in her article titled "Local Self-Reliance Versus Power Politics: Conflicting Priorities of National Development", Ann Tickner concluded that it is hard to achieve self-reliance in this globalized world without substantial domestic

structural reforms and a reorientation of a state's relationships with the international system. (Tickner, 1986) She adds that even if they want to achieve it at least at the local level, states may need to either dis-engage from the existing world order or reshape their connections with it in a way that aligns more with the principles of collective self-reliance. Weaker or newer states might need to isolate themselves sufficiently to take independent action, or simultaneous and complementary breakthroughs are required to prevent coordinated counter-reactions from older states, which act as custodians of the traditional world order. (Tickner, 1986)

Her analysis has made one thing clear that it is not possible to achieve self-reliance by implementing any single approach, especially in the contemporary globalized era where intricately entangled in a network of interdependence. Consequently, it becomes essential to examine the 'objectives' that state leadership holds in mind when opting to pursue self-reliance for their country.

Self-reliance is not about isolation or complete abandonment from global trade, rather, it is about maintaining “Symmetrical Interdependence” (Laxman Kelkar, 1980) among the countries. This is quite similar to what has been discussed earlier about how and why the concept of self-reliance travelled from an individual to the arena of international relations. Addressing the question of why states adopt self-reliance policies, Godfrey says that this is because of two reasons. First, states that are economically self-reliant have greater resilience in the face of negative economic shocks, as these policy measures provide a type of insurance against the disruptions caused by adverse economic events. Second, it provides a solid platform for development of the state and an opportunity to reach its full human potential. (Godfrey, 2008) Unlike in the case of self-sufficiency, import substitution industrialization is not a primary policy measure, instead, it is a cascading effect. According to Godfrey, a country can become economically self-reliant if it has factors of production in surplus to satisfy its daily requirements and inelastic needs. But there is no universally set limit to this ‘surplus’, thus making ‘self-reliance’ context specific. (Godfrey, 2008) Nonetheless, in this interdependent world, it would be folly to study the concepts associated with national or international economics without understanding or taking into account

the political dynamics that are intertwined with them. Highlighting the inversely proportional relationship between economic interdependence and political dependence, Shaw averred that the implementation of self-reliance policies is a means adopted by the developing countries to increase their bargaining power (in terms of enhancing their political autonomy) with the countries on whom they are economically dependent. (Shaw, 1980) There is a need to underscore the fact that a country can never become self-reliant by further intensifying their economic dependence on ‘a’ self-reliant country, as this excess economic dependence will eventually pose a threat to the political autonomy of the dependent country. (Galtung, 1976) At the same time, however, countries cannot afford to minimize their economic as well as political interactions with other states in this globalized era to become self-reliant. Instead, what they should do is set up their ‘own’ developmental goals, based on their ‘local needs’ and make endeavors to realize them by effectively employing the locally available factors of production and through ‘meaningful partnerships’, while being cautious about giving rise to “center-periphery” relationships. (Galtung, 1976)

While scholars have acknowledged that in this interconnected world, it is nearly impossible for a country to adopt either of the previously discussed model, but at the same time, they advise the states to learn to combine independence with interdependence, autonomy with equity (Galtung, 1981). Addressing the question of why states adopt self-reliance policies, Piboolsravut dispels the misconception that these policies are in opposition to the forces of globalization. Instead, states adopt such measures with the aim of modernizing their society and administration in harmony with the dynamics of globalization (as China did). It not only ensures ‘modernization’ (not to be confused with westernization) where states govern everything from motivation (utility, drives, etc.), to criteria (goals, objectives, etc.), to behavior (production, consumption, investment, etc.), to systems (collectivity, connectivity, etc.), without being influenced by external powers, but also ensures balance and readiness to cope with fast and extensive changes with respect to materials, society, environment, and culture. (Piboolsravut, 2004) Galtung has compared self-reliance ideology with capitalism and found that it might be similar to capitalism in its emphasis on creativity and initiative, but highly dissimilar in its

emphasis on mass participation (thus, the entrepreneur would not be a private individual or the top management in a private or state corporation, but the participants in the community) and an equitable relationship with other units. (Galtung, 1981)

While contextualizing self-reliance from the state's perspective, Dattopant Thengadi believed that excessive reliance on foreign goods weakened state's economic security and hindered domestic innovation. According to him, self-reliance (Swadeshi) is not just an economic strategy, but also a tool for national empowerment. He envisioned a vibrant indigenous economy driven by local entrepreneurship and catering to the needs of the people. In his view, this self-reliance would foster a sense of national pride and reduce vulnerability to external economic pressures. (Thengadi, 1998) For him, Swadeshi is more than just buying domestic products, but was a comprehensive strategy for achieving national self-reliance and fostering international cooperation on India's terms. He believed that Swadeshi could propel India's economic independence by promoting small and medium-sized businesses which were the backbone of a robust economy, creating jobs, fostering innovation, and catering to local needs. (Thengadi, 1998) Additionally, Thengadi viewed the western model of globalization with suspicion, concerned that it could lead to exploitation by foreign powers. He argued for an Indian economic model rooted in its own cultural values, emphasizing self-sufficiency, community well-being, and environmental stewardship. While not completely closed to foreign investment, he believed that it should be carefully regulated to ensure technology transfer, benefit local industries, and contribute to India's overall economic development. In essence, Thengadi's vision of Swadeshi aimed to create a strong, self-reliant Indian economy that could participate in the global marketplace on an equal footing. (Thengadi, 1998)

Coming back to self-reliance, Thengadi emphasized that a strong, self-reliant economy would not only improve the standard of living but also strengthen the nation's sovereignty and resilience against global market fluctuations. His notion of self-reliance differed markedly from both Western capitalism and Marxist socialism. He critiqued capitalism's emphasis on profit maximization and its tendency to create vast inequalities, arguing that such a system often led to social

fragmentation and economic disparity. He was equally critical of Marxist socialism, which he is focused too heavily on class conflict and state control, making it incompatible with India's unique social and cultural fabric. Both systems overlooked the human element and the importance of community and tradition. (Thengadi, 1998) As an alternative, Thengadi proposed a Third Way, advocating for a decentralized economic system that balanced individual initiative with social welfare. He envisioned an economy where local businesses thrived and where community needs were prioritized over corporate profits. This approach, he believed, would harness the entrepreneurial spirit of individuals while ensuring that economic progress did not come at the expense of social cohesion and environmental sustainability. (Thengadi, 1998) While differing from Nehruvian style of achieving self-reliance, Thengadi recognized the paramount importance of rural economy in achieving true self-reliance. He believed that development should not be solely focused on urban centers, which often exacerbated regional inequalities and neglected the rural heartland where a majority of Indians lived. He advocated for policies that would revitalize villages, promote cottage industries, and empower farmers. This included improving agricultural productivity, providing better access to markets, and investing in rural infrastructure. By doing so, a more inclusive and equitable economic landscape where prosperity was shared across all regions and communities can be created. (Thengadi, 2019) At the same time, Thengadi stressed the need for education and skill development tailored to the rural context. He believed that empowering rural populations through education would not only improve their quality of life but also contribute to the nation's overall economic development. (Thengadi, 1998) Thus, for him, a self-reliant nation should be economically robust, socially cohesive, and culturally vibrant.

Protectionist measures implemented by a country are not the right means to measure the level of country's struggle to become self-reliant. Instead, an economy qualifies as self-reliant or economically independent when its growth and capital accumulation are not 'controlled' by another economy or external economic entities, and its domestic politics largely remains unaffected by changes occurring in those other economies. (Laxman Kelkar, 1980) After assessing the

aforementioned definitions and motivations that evoke a country to adopt the trajectory of becoming self-reliant, we can infer that self-reliance is not just about maintaining fine balance between economic interdependence among countries and their political autonomy, but at the same time, it is also about reducing economic dependence on other countries by employing the locally available factors of production effectively and efficiently. And what I mean by ‘fine balance’ between economic interdependence and political autonomy that the former should not be in excess on one country as it may give them a leverage to start negatively influencing the political (which also include territorial sovereignty) independence of a country. This makes the concept of self-reliance relevant even in the contemporary global political economy, where economically powerful countries are trying to take leverage over the political autonomy of the dependent state/s.

Defining Modi’s Atma-Nirbhar Bharat

Having explored the concept of self-reliance, let's delve into what exactly Atma-Nirbhar Bharat initiative is. It is primarily a ‘set of’ economic-sectoral policy measures with both political and social implications. Though Modi government used the term for the first time in June 2014 in reference to start the manufacturing of some light defence equipment in the country, the idea was not presented as the vision or objective until May 2020, that the government is trying to achieve. (Press Trust of India, 2014) Examining the words used by PM Modi in his address to the nation, delivered on May 12, 2020 is very useful in comprehending his intended message and the goals he envisioned for India's self-reliance journey. While highlighting the potential of India and its people in addressing the global challenges, he averred that

“It seems that the 21st century is the century for India. This is not our dream, rather a responsibility for all of us. But what should be its trajectory? The state of the world today teaches us that a ‘Self-reliant India’ is the only path.”
(Modi, 2020)

However, he subsequently made it clear that though the initiative has been named as Atma-Nirbhar 'Bharat', it is not restricted to the development of India. Instead, it aims for the welfare of the entire world because India considers the world one family.

"Today the meaning of the word self-reliance has changed in the global scenario. The debate on Human Centric Globalization versus Economy Centralized Globalization is on. India's fundamental thinking comes as a ray of hope in front of the world. The culture and tradition of India speaks of self-reliance and the soul is 'Vasudhaiva-Kutumbakam' (one world, one family). India does not advocate self-centric arrangements when it comes to self-reliance. India's self-reliance is ingrained in the happiness, cooperation and peace of the world. This is the culture which believes in the welfare of the world, for all the living creatures and the one which considers the whole world as a family. Its premise is "माता भूमिः पुत्रो अहं पृथिव्याः" - the culture that considers the earth to be the mother. And when the Bharat Bhumi, becomes self-sufficient, it ensures the possibility of prosperous world. India's progress has always been integral to the progress of the world." (Modi, 2020)

In accordance to what Piboolsravut has discussed about self-reliance, Modi also stressed that it does not entail isolationism or disengagement from the global arena. Instead, the focus is on a transition towards re-globalization, which entails shifting from an economically-cantered globalization model to a human-centric globalization. (Raj, 2020) And what he meant by re-globalization- 1) diversification of global supply chains so that a fine balance can be maintained between economic interdependence and political independence 2) to ensure the effective and efficient utilization of locally available factors of production (with focus on India)

"Today we have the resources, we have the power, and we have the best talent in the world, we will make the best products, will improve our quality further, make the supply chain more modern, we can do this and we will definitely do it." (Modi, 2020)

Similarly, in the speech delivered on the occasion of India's Independence Day in 2020, he averred that:

“Today the world is interconnected and inter-dependent. So, it is the need of the hour that a vast country like India should increase its contribution to the world economy... We must make ourselves capable of contributing towards world welfare... Our country has plenty of natural resources. It is the need of the hour that we start the value addition of these natural resources and human resources; and to take the country to new heights... We will have to resort to value addition of our capabilities as per the world's requirements. It is our responsibility. We want to move ahead in the field of value addition to contribute to world welfare.” (Modi, 2020b)

Picture becomes more clearer when we look at the pillars on which the premises of this ANB initiative rests, as described by PM Modi in his May 12 address:

“First Pillar is Economy, an economy that brings Quantum Jump rather than incremental change. Second Pillar is Infrastructure, an infrastructure that became the identity of modern India. Third Pillar is Our System. A system that is based on the technology driven systems which fulfill the dreams of the 21st century and not the policy of the past century. Fourth Pillar is Our Demography. Our Vibrant Demography is our strength in the world's largest democracy, our source of energy for self-reliant India. The fifth pillar is Demand. The cycle of demand and supply chain in our economy, is the strength that needs to be harnessed to its full potential. In order to increase demand in the country and to meet this demand, every stake-holder in our supply chain needs to be empowered. We will strengthen our supply chain, our supply system built up with the smell of the soil and the sweat of our laborers.” (Modi, 2020)

His statements have made one thing clear, self-reliance is not about de-globalization, rather, it is about re-globalization i.e., from India to the rest of the world. The focus of the government is not on import substitution, instead, it is on enhancing the production capability and ensuring the effective and efficient ‘employment’ of locally available factors of production (with the emphasis on human capital and labor). Import reduction and export promotion are not the

primary objective, rather, they are the cascading outcomes. The implications of this initiative go beyond its surface. Unraveling the government's motives, explored in the next section, provides a crucial context for comprehending its full significance.

The then vice president of India, M. Venkaiah Naidu averred that

“India is a country blessed with a vast array of natural resources. We have got all the ingredients for success. The Atma-Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyan is a golden opportunity to transform our dreams of ‘local’ India into ‘Glocal’ India. Hence, Self-reliance or being ‘Atma-Nirbhar’ acts as a launch pad for fostering entrepreneurship, encourage innovations, and create a balanced ecosystem by using our resources wisely and strategically.” (Naidu, 2020)

For the finance minister of the country, Nirmala Sitharaman, ANB neither means isolationism nor protectionism, instead this initiative is designed to connect India more deeply with the international marketplace while simultaneously protecting it from disruptions in the flow of goods and services. (Sitharaman, 2021) Similarly, for the foreign minister of the country, Dr. S. Jaishankar, ANB means “whatever we can do, we should do. Why are you importing things which we can produce in our own country?... India is not trying to get more strength by building walls, but by engaging with the global community.” (Jaishankar, 2022) He further adds that “The underpinning to Atma-Nirbhar Bharat is its people-centric policies, as the most important resource of a country is its people. So, raising the quality of human resources is one of the goals which will be a game changer.” (Jaishankar, 2022) And for the home minister of the country, Amit Shah, it is an initiative which promises to uplift people out of poverty by generating enough employment opportunities and raising the standard of living for the middle class. (Shah, 2023)

Researchers and scholars have found common ground between policy objectives and ministerial pronouncements regarding the ANB initiative. This alignment suggests a cohesive approach, moving beyond mere political statements. For instance, D'souza acknowledges that for a country to achieve self-reliance, a significant portion of the workforce cannot remain unemployed. Relying on informal employment is not a solution to the issue of unemployment. Therefore, the ANB prioritizes accelerating investments to enhance manufacturing, upgrade

industrial infrastructure, and address the challenge of unemployment. She further adds that regarding the goal of turning India into a global manufacturing hub, protectionism is deemed inadequate, as it poses the risk of fostering inefficiencies in the economy. (D'souza, 2020) Similarly, Alam et al. averred that ANB involves the specific objective of enhancing self-efficiency, competing on a global scale, and contributing to the international community. Consequently, there has been a persistent requirement for reforms aimed at improving efficiency, enabling Indian producers to compete effectively in the global market. According to them, these crucial reforms are essential for developing domestic production capabilities and positioning India as a competitive force in the global arena. (Alam et al., 2021) And while analysing the impact of the ANB initiative on India's socio-economic development, Chinoy averred that as India grapples with a substantial shortfall in both physical and social infrastructure, a substantial increase in infrastructure development would yield numerous benefits. Firstly, it would stimulate overall demand, attract private investments, and generate a substantial multiplier effect on the economy. Secondly, given the labour-intensive nature of infrastructure construction, it would result in job creation, draw back rural migrant labour, and address the void left by the real estate sector. Thirdly, a substantial focus on infrastructure development would enhance the competitiveness of the economy and contribute to its medium-term growth potential. (Chinoy, 2020)

The discussion has made on this evident that ANB is neither just a political rhetoric nor it is about de-globalization or protectionist economy. There are various things going on in the country, few of them has been discussed in the later sections of this paper with the emphasis on achieving self-reliance in the smartphone sector. But just like any other public policy, its success depends on many factors like policy implementation, domestic politics, global economy, contribution of the common masses and other stake holders etc. But the primary objectives to launch this initiative are quite clear: 1) To ensure the effective and efficient utilization of locally available factors of production and 2) to maintain a fine balance between economic interdependence and political independence by diversifying the global supply chains.

Political and economic motivations that led to the implementation of ANB

The previous section provided a comprehensive overview of the ANB initiative, highlighting the specific objectives Modi government aims to accomplish with it. But at the same time, it is equally important to look at the challenges possessed by the Covid-19 pandemic, that worked as a motivation for the launch of this unconventional trajectory adopted by Modi government to make the country self-reliant.

The most devastating challenge of the 21st century's, the COVID-19 pandemic, emerged in late 2019 and gripped the entire world by 2020. India, along with countless other nations, faced immense hardship due to this unprecedented crisis. As a cascading effect of the nationwide lockdown, the Indian economy experienced a 24% contraction in the April-June quarter, which resulted in significant job losses, prompting a temporary and substantial reverse migration of unemployed individuals from urban areas to rural villages. (Sridharan, 2021) India's unemployment rate rose to 10.20 per cent and inflation rate rose to 6.62 per cent in 2020 (Trading economics, 2024). While the entire world was battling with the pandemic, on June 15, 2020, Indian and Chinese army engaged into a hand-to-hand combat in the Galwan Valley in eastern Ladakh, resulting in the deaths of 20 Indian soldiers and an undisclosed number of Chinese soldiers. These incidents marked the first fatalities on the LAC since 1967. In addition to the challenges engendered due to Covid-19, this new challenge added another layer of difficulty for Modi government. (Sen and Murali, 2021) As this chain of events had possessed a significant political and economic challenges, Modi government was propelled to come up with something multi-dimensional that not only promises to deliver a permanent resolution to the aforementioned political and economic, issues but also provide an optimistic vision of a bright future in the long-term.

This study however focuses on employing ANB as an economic measure, taken to retaliate against the repeated provocation of China at LAC and to employ India's human capital and other factors of production efficiently. While highlighting the role of economic leverage that China had over India in terms of trade, Alam et al

averred that a closer analysis of India-China trade statistics over the past few years reveals that the Indian economy (market) is excessively dependent on China. (Alam et al., 2021) China is Asia's largest and the world's second-largest economy with a GDP of about \$17.89 trillion whereas India holds 3rd position in Asia and 5th position in global GDP ranking with a value of \$3.9 trillion as of the fiscal year 2023-24. (Anon, 2020b; Kapoor, 2020; Nandi, 2019). From supplying industrial components and raw materials to making investments in India's startups and technology firms, China is India's biggest trading partner after the U.S (Kapoor, 2020; Makhdoomi, 2020; Saraswat et al., 2020). India has always maintained a trade deficit with China. Thus, despite being militarily competent and an emerging global power, India cannot venture to wage a political war China to an extent that it could hamper the economic relations between the two countries. The following data makes picture clear:

Financial Year	Value of Imports from China in Million \$	percentage of India's total import value
2014-15	60143.17	13.48
2015-16	61707.95	16
2016-17	61283.03	15.94
2017-18	76380.7	16.4
2018-19	70319.64	14
2019-20	65260.75	14
2020-21	65212.25	16.53
2021-22	94570.57	15.42

Figure 1: Import value in USD and percentage of India's total imports from China
Source: Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India

Thus, it was essential for Modi government to reduce its economic dependence on the security rival- China, not only in order to sustain the political autonomy but also to reduce its dependence on China, especially for the supply of essential commodities, so that a foreign country cannot leverage on its economic dependence to make attempts to alter the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the country. Ahmad and Gupta in their research found that banning the 59 widely used

mobile applications like TikTok, Bingo and PUBG that have a huge user base in India and would severely affect the overall profitability of the respective firm on June 29, 2020 by the Indian government was a response to the increased border tensions between the two countries. (Ahmed & Gupta, 2021) The repercussions of this incident extended beyond political arenas; they were also evident in social media discussions. While a segment of the Indian populace called for a boycott of Chinese goods and services, the Indian government raised concerns about China's substantial presence in critical sectors of the Indian economy. (Ahmed & Gupta, 2021) Thus, PM Modi gave the slogan 'vocal for local' during his independence speech of 2020 to discourage the purchase of the goods made in China and buy the goods that are made in India instead. (Modi, 2020b) To make things more explicit, in his monthly Radio broadcast of June 2020, Modi averred that Chinese aggression at the border led to the economic backlash against China by the common masses which will contribute to the ANB. (Correspondent et al., 2020) Moreover, the then Consumer Affairs Minister, Ram Vilas Paswan, while announcing the plans for stricter regulations to prevent the import of low-quality goods from China and other countries, urged the public to boycott all Chinese products. (S. Correspondent, 2020). And in June 2020, the Indian Telecom Ministry barred both state-owned and private telecom companies from entering new deals or upgrading equipment with Chinese vendors. Additionally, it excluded Chinese companies from bidding on future projects, potentially impacting upcoming 4G network upgrades. (Ellis-Petersen, 2020) The chain of events testify that Modi government used the ANB initiative as a tool to address the Chinese aggression at border which was possessing a significant challenge to the sovereignty of the country.

Coming to economic motivations, Prashant Jha in his article 'US support is central to Indian ambitions' asks a question- What's India's biggest economic challenge? And while answering that, he says it is generating enough employment opportunities for the 12 million-plus people who enter the workforce every year. (Jha, 2023) Analysis of the data related to the unemployment rate testify that indeed it is the biggest economic challenge that Modi government was facing and it was badly hurting the developmental plans and undermining the effective

employment of resources, especially during the pandemic and thereafter. A report by Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) shows that India lost around 11 million jobs between December 2017 and December 2018. CMIE, which started an employment survey back in March 2016, shows that the unemployment rate in India was 6.64 per cent of the labour force in December 2018. (BusinessToday.In, 2019) And in the year 2020, India's unemployment rate rose to 10.20 percent. While inflation stayed moderate between 2016 and 2019, averaging around 4.75 percent, it couldn't offset the burden of high unemployment during those years, especially for the poor. Then, in 2020, inflation jumped to 6.16 percent, further squeezing their finances. (Trading Economics, 2024) These developments directly challenged the 'inclusive' development of the country.

Therefore, as we have seen previously that in addition to the diversification of the global supply chain, employment of the locally available factors of production, especially the human capital and the labour are the primary objective that Modi government has been aiming to achieve through the ANB initiative, aforementioned data related to unemployment and inflation not only demonstrates the dire need to make structural changes to generate employment opportunities but also make it evident that the launch of the ANB initiative was motivated by these economic challenges. And even if we look at the timeline, it shows that during 2020, both the unemployment and inflation rate were beyond the managing level. It would have taken years for the government to get it under controlled in the absence of some significant policy shift that promises to address these issues timely. Thus, it can be inferred from the above discussion that in addition to the security rivalry with China, high unemployment and inflation rate, that were negatively affecting the development of the country, also worked as a motivating factor for the launch of the ANB initiative.

Atma-Nirbhar Bharat in Practice

The idea, the vision, the outcomes and of course, speeches delivered by the Prime Minister of India- Narendra Modi not only appears to be captivating but also very

promising. But does it contain any essence i.e., is something really happening on the ground level or it is just a political rhetoric?

The foremost challenge to the legitimacy and the goals that the ANB initiative aims to achieve doesn't come from the opposition. Rather it comes from the data presented by the Union Minister of State for Commerce and Industry, Anupriya Patel. In July 2022, she informed the Lok Sabha that the value of India's imports from China had increased by nearly 29 percent in the past five years. (Ani, 2022) This statement has sparked a debate about the government's commitment to making India self-reliant (Atma-Nirbhar) by reducing its dependence on China. It was argued that the government's promises to reduce India's dependence on the security rival- China were merely a political ploy to gain public support during the COVID-19 pandemic. The opposition pointed to the fact that India's imports from China have continued to increase in recent years, even as the government has implemented a number of policies aimed at reducing this dependence. So, here emerges a thought-provoking query: Is it feasible for India to discontinue its imports from China right away?

Let's see what the data has to say. China sees India as its seventh-largest export destination, contributing around 3% of its total exports. Therefore, if India chooses to curtail its imports from China, the resulting impact on China's economy would likely be minimal. (Hv, 2020) Conversely, India ships approximately \$16 billion worth of goods to China, accounting for roughly 5 percent of China's total imports. Consequently, India maintains a notable reliance on China in this regard. Any disruption in this trade relationship would have far-reaching consequences across multiple sectors, potentially leading to elevated costs for consumers and industries alike. Shifting to alternative, more expensive sources of imports could exacerbate these challenges. (Hv, 2020) While giving clarifications for this rise in imports and type of goods imported from China, an official from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry averred that the increase in imports from China has predominantly been fuelled by the influx of capital goods and intermediate goods. Consumer goods and raw materials, on the other hand, constitute a smaller proportion of the overall imports from China. He further mentioned that significant items, such as industrial chemicals sourced from China, play a vital role in fulfilling the

escalating requirements for industrial inputs. Importing items like active pharmaceutical ingredients and drug formulations not only supplies the Indian pharmaceutical sector with essential materials for producing final products but also contributes to the subsequent export of these finished goods. (Dutta Mishra & Seth, 2022) Similarly, Anil Bhardwaj, secretary general at the Federation of Indian MSME, expressed that India's manufacturing sector is heavily dependent on China. He emphasized that the introduction of PLI schemes in various sectors like chemicals and electronics aims to tackle this dependency. Consequently, in the foreseeable future, India's reliance on China is likely to persist in the short to medium term. (Dutta Mishra & Seth, 2022) For instance, PLI scheme has been extended to sectors like medical devices, solar PV modules, textiles, food processing, drones and their components etc. If we look at the components imported from China like microchips, lithium batteries, camera lenses etc., that are used in the manufacturing of a smartphone, India Cellular & Electronics Association (ICEA) rightly highlighted India's indispensable dependence on China for the import of aforementioned key components to keep production process continue and production costs low, at least in the short run, makes it quite evident that there is a very high possibility that India could unintentionally harm its own interests by halting or imposing unreasonable tariffs and duty on the imports of 'all' goods that are being imported from China, at least in the immediate future. (Hv, 2020)

A more effective strategy involves collaboratively focusing on the national, state, and industry levels to enhance domestic production and create more intermediate goods and products within the country, or identifying alternative sources. However, these choices should be made from a commercial standpoint rather than being influenced by emotions or regulations. (Hv, 2020) In the meantime, Modi government is trying to reduce its dependence on China by diversifying its import sources. This means working more with other countries, such as the United States, Europe, South Korea, and Japan. These countries are all major economies with strong manufacturing sectors. They can provide India with the raw materials, machinery, and equipment that it needs without being reliant on China. Therefore, abandoning or reducing the imports of the essential components used in the

manufacturing of a final product like smartphone, which can be exported further, is not a feasible strategy. If India's imports of the raw material from China increases for the year or a two, it should not be taken as the failure of the ANB initiative.

Has something changed significantly for the smartphone industry since the launch of the ANB initiative? And the answer is yes. The PLI scheme, launched by the government under the Atma-Nirbhar Bharat initiative, has had a significant impact on the Indian mobile phone industry. The scheme has resulted in a sharp increase in exports of Made in India mobile phones, while imports of mobile phones have plummeted. India's mobile exports were close to 'zero' in 2015 and reached a mark of ₹ 270 billion in 2019-20 (a year before the implementation of PLI). (Ani, 2023) The real game-changer has been the PLI Scheme. According to the IT Ministry, mobile phone manufacturing saw a 66 percent rise to ₹ 450 billion within the first year of the roll-out of the scheme in April 2020. And if we look at the import value of mobile phones to India before PLI, it was around ₹ 100 billion in the year 2018-19. (Ani, 2023) Additionally, the research conducted by Credit Rating Information Services of India Limited (CRISIL) on mobile devices revealed that India experienced a 33 percent decline in mobile imports during the fiscal year 2022 compared to the previous year. (Kar, 2022) The report also highlighted that the country's reliance on China decreased from 64 percent in FY21 to 60 percent, with expectations of further reduction in the medium term. (Kar, 2022) The current scenario includes the presence of around 260 companies engaged in the production of cellular mobile handsets, a significant increase from the initial count of 3 companies.

The ICEA estimates that the mobile phone manufacturing industry in India will employ over 5 million people by 2025. (TIMESOFINDIA.COM, 2022) According to market intelligence firm Cyber Media Research (CMR), imports of iPhones to India are likely to come down to 15% in 2023, from 50% in 2019. This is because Apple is increasing its domestic manufacturing in India. CMR estimates that domestic manufacturing of iPhones in India is set to go up to 85% in 2023-24. (Telecom, 2022) Furthermore, the contribution of domestic iPhone manufacturing in India has also increased significantly in recent years. In 2019, domestic manufacturing of iPhones in India accounted for 50% of total production. In 2021,

this figure increased to 73%. (Kharpal, 2023) These policies started bearing result as the manufacturing unit of Apple is not only producing iPhones for the domestic market, but also exporting the 'Made in India' iPhones. In the first two months of the fiscal year 24-25, they've exported over \$2 billion worth of iPhones, which is a staggering 81% of India's total iPhone production. (Gupta, 2024) The credit goes to the PLI scheme, launched under the umbrella of Atma-Nirbhar Bharat, which has made it more attractive for foreign companies to manufacture products in India. Consequently, India's dependence on imports from China for final goods has been significantly reduced.

However, the former Reserve Bank of India Governor, Dr. Raghuram Rajan raised serious questions on the PLI scheme. In an interview given to a journalist, Karan Thapar, he averred that through PLI scheme, which is launched under the umbrella of ANB, government is simply incentivizing the manufacturing units for acknowledged disabilities like poor infrastructure, less qualified workers, no emphasis on R&D (research and development) etc. (Rajan, 2023) He further adds that by doing this, the government is simply giving an incentive of 6 percent of the invoice price to manufacturing units which are simply assembling the imported components to make a working smartphone. He lashed the government for not doing any real value addition to the product and for not investing in the previously mentioned disabilities. (Rajan, 2023). However, the minister of state for electronics and IT- Rajeev Chandrasekhar argued that Raghuram Rajan referred to the initial years of the PLI scheme which doesn't account the value added to the older model of the smartphones. He adds that since the launch of the PLI scheme, the mobile production is up nearly 1,400 percent and mobile exports are up nearly 4,200 percent. (Pti, 2023) Keeping these political debates aside, there's a lot going on in the Indian smartphone sector that promises the brighter path for the 'Made in India' smartphone. For instance, in September 2023, Foxconn teamed up with STMicro to set a microchip plant in India, which are used in the manufacturing of smartphones and cars. (Bloomberg, 2023) In October 2023, Sahasra Semiconductors emerged as the first Indian company to produce memory chips in India. The company has already started its operations and taking consignments from ecommerce giants. (Lohchab, 2023) Similarly, the most recent Google's

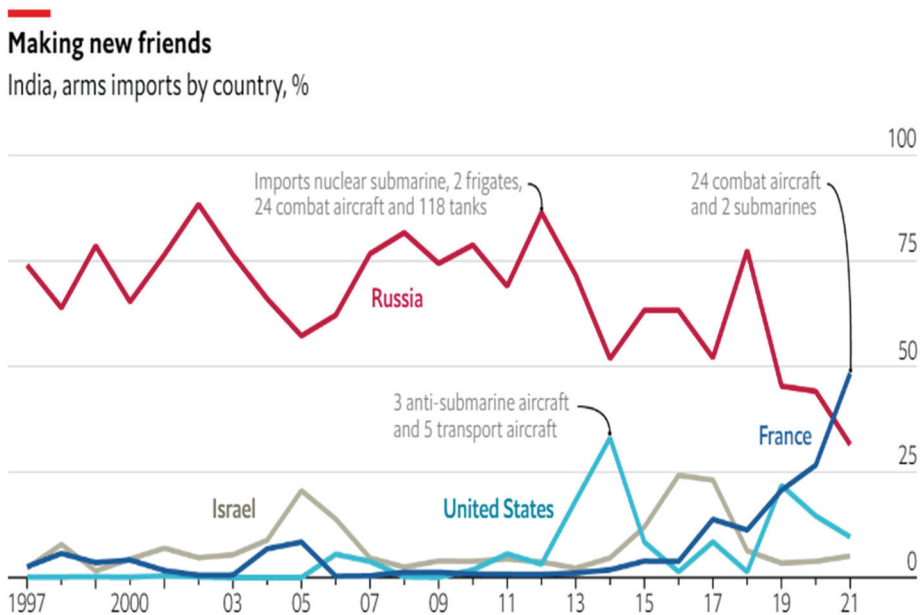
Pixel-8 has a Tensor chip which is designed in India and its production is expected to start within the next three years in the country. (Aryan, 2023) In total, PLIs has brought the foreign investments worth more than ₹ 1000 billion in the country (Pti, 2023b) and in January 2024, India recorded its lowest urban unemployment rate and the credit goes to these investments which have generated enormous job opportunities. (Jha, 2024) These set of data testify that PLI scheme, which is launched under the umbrella of ANB has generated positive results for the Indian economy and seems very promising for the long-term growth. However, the above-mentioned data is not sufficient enough to conclude that it will make India self-reliant. In order to reach any concrete conclusions, study of prioritized ANB sectors need to be conducted.

To touch upon the impact of the ANB initiative on prioritized sector, it has been observed that the scheme has had a positive impact on the pharmaceutical sector, especially in the area of critical key starting materials (KSMs) and active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs). In 2020, India was 80 percent import-dependent for KSMs and APIs. However, this number has fallen to 60 percent in 2023. The PLI scheme is expected to help India achieve self-sufficiency in KSMs and APIs by 2025. (Nair, 2021) The government has earmarked over \$2 billion worth of incentives for the PLI scheme, which is expected to help India reduce its dependence on China for APIs. (Jayakumar, 2022) India's pharmaceutical sector is worth \$42 billion, and it is estimated that India relies on China for 70-90 percent of its APIs. The PLI scheme is a major step towards making India self-sufficient in APIs and reducing its reliance on China. (Jayakumar, 2022) Furthermore, Incentives provided to the automobile sector under the PLI scheme, have been successful in attracting huge investments. The scheme has received proposed investments of ₹ 679 billion, which is significantly more than the target estimate of ₹ 425 billion. (Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Schemes in India, 2021) It is estimated that in the next five years, 750 thousand additional jobs and incremental production worth ₹ 2315 billion will be created in the automobile sector. (Press Trust of India & Business Standard, 2022) This is a positive development for the ailing automobile sector, which was hit hard by the pandemic.

In addition to large industries, Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) have also been making an essential contribution to making India self-reliant. This is evident from the data released by the Ministry of MSME, which states that there are around 6.3 crore MSMEs in India, contributing approximately 29 percent of GDP in 2021. (SIDBI, 2021) They also play a major role in exports, accounting for around 45 percent of India's total exports, which constitute an essential part of the government's mission of an Atma-Nirbhar Bharat. (India, 2023) And while addressing the decades long problem of unemployment that the Indian economy was battling with, around 110 million people are employed in MSMEs. As per the government data, 13 percent of registered MSMEs provide 42 percent of the total jobs. (India, 2023) They contribute around 30 percent towards all-India GDP in FY 2019 and constitute around 49.7 percent of total exports during the FY 2021. (SIDBI, 2021) In addition, India consolidated its third spot in the Hurun Global Unicorn Index 2023 with 68 unicorns, thanks to the incentives and support provided by the government to startups under the Atma-Nirbhar Bharat initiative. (Hurun Research Institute, 2023) Online educator BYJU'S used to be the most valuable unicorn in India, with a valuation of \$22 billion, followed by on-demand delivery start-up Swiggy and fantasy sports platform Dream11, which were both valued at \$8 billion each. (Sharma, 2023) India's ranking in the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Index improved significantly from 142nd in 2014 to 67th in 2023. And in the global Innovation Index (GII) 2022 rankings released by the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO), India was ranked 40th out of 132. India was ranked 46th in 2021 and 81st in 2015. (Team, 2023) These sets of data substantiate the credibility of the ambitious Atma-Nirbhar Bharat initiative, despite adopting an unconventional paradigm.

Regarding the broadening of the global supply chain through the ANB initiative, the Indian defence industry serves as a compelling example. Previously, Russia held the dominant position as India's primary arms supplier for many years. However, recent data from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute indicates a notable shift. From 2013-17 to 2018-22, India's reliance on Russian arms decreased significantly from 64% to 45%. (Wezeman et al., 2023) Conversely, imports from France experienced a remarkable surge of 489% during

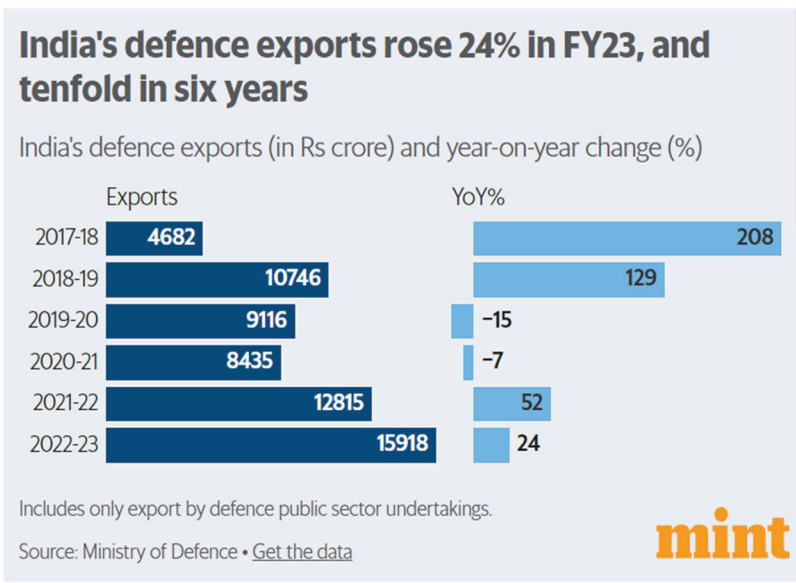
the same timeframe. (Wezeman et al., 2023) Notably, the collaboration between Lockheed Martin and Tata Group to manufacture fighter wing shipsets in India signifies a substantial stride towards diversifying the supply chain and fostering self-sufficiency in defence procurement. This partnership is just one of several such initiatives; Boeing and Tata have also joined forces to produce Apache attack helicopters and S-92 Sikorsky choppers domestically. (Philip, 2023) Furthermore, companies like Adani Defence and Lohia Group are actively engaged in manufacturing fuselages for various Israeli drones. This increasing trend of meaningful alliances between Indian entities and foreign defence manufacturers to localize military equipment production is poised to enhance India's defence manufacturing capabilities and diminish its dependence on imports. (Philip, 2023)



Source: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute

Source: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute
Visual representation: Politics- Stackexchange: 14 April 2022

Being an arms importer for decades, India is striving to emerge as a reliable global supply partner. In today's volatile global landscape, nations are actively seeking to broaden their supply chains and establish reliable economic partnerships while remaining vigilant against potential exploitation by overly dependent economic allies. Consequently, the initiatives and programs launched by the Indian government under the ANB initiative have presented the international community with the sought-after alternative. Through initiatives like Make in India, India has emerged as a fresh arms supplier to nations worldwide, offering a viable alternative to traditional major arms exporters such as the United States, Russia, France, and China. This transformation has been facilitated by the development of India's indigenous defence industrial base. The diversification of supply chains has proven beneficial for developing nations like the Philippines, Indonesia, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, and Nigeria, among others, by narrowing the gap between economic interdependence and political sovereignty. India's exports now reach 85 countries, encompassing a wide array of systems, including helicopters, patrol vessels, personnel protective gear, surveillance systems, radars, and various components. (Nanda, 2023)



Source: Ministry of Defence;
Visual Representation by Mint: 03 April 2023

So, is this policy restricted to India or there is something for the world as well? In the current era of uncertainty, nations are seeking to broaden their supply chains and establish dependable economic alliances while remaining cautious of partners who may exploit their reliance for political influence. The government of India has initiated various programs under the Atma-Nirbhar Bharat initiative, presenting the global community with alternative options they've been seeking eagerly. For instance, India has emerged as a new supplier of arms to nations worldwide, offering an alternative to major suppliers like the United States, Russia, France, and China. This shift has been facilitated by initiatives such as Make in India, fostering the development of India's own defence manufacturing capabilities. This diversification has assisted developing countries such as the Philippines, Indonesia, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, and Nigeria in balancing their economic interdependence with political sovereignty. India is now exporting a wide array of defence systems to 85 countries, including helicopters, patrol vessels, protective gear, surveillance systems, radars, and components (Nanda, 2023).

Additionally, the Indian government has introduced various initiatives like Production-Linked Incentives (PLI), tax breaks, and the establishment of Special Economic Zones (SEZs) to attract higher levels of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and Foreign Institutional Investments (FIIs). This strategic manoeuvre not only provides an alternative to China but also offers significant partnership opportunities to the global community. For example, the United States, traditionally a significant recipient of FDI and FII from China, has been actively exploring alternative investment destinations due to escalating tensions between the two nations. India emerges as a promising substitute for China, boasting strengths such as a large and expanding market, a skilled workforce, and a commitment to free trade.

Furthermore, there has been a noticeable shift in the proportion of total goods and services imported from India and China by the United States. While the overall value of US imports from China has continued to grow, imports from India experienced a substantial 17% increase in 2022, compared to a modest 7% alteration in imports from China in the same period (Trading Economics, 2024).

While discussing the potential benefits of India's self-reliance endeavors for the global community, Piyush Goyal, the Union Minister for Commerce and Industry, emphasized the importance of India being perceived as a reliable partner and a steadfast ally in the international market, particularly in the context of global supply chains. He underscored the significance of engaging in discussions from a position of strength, maintaining competitiveness, and delivering high-quality products to the global market (PIB, 2020). Notably, one of the commendable initiatives undertaken by the Indian government is the provision of COVID-19 vaccines to the world, including free distribution to impoverished nations in Africa and Asia that are unable to afford them. This gesture reflects the government's commitment to governance based on the principles of Vasudhev Kutumbakam, signifying "the world is one family" (Ministry of External Affairs, 2022).

Furthermore, India has proactively shared its Unified Payments Interface (UPI) payment model with other countries. UPI is a real-time payment system enabling users to make instant payments to any individual with a bank account by scanning a quick response (QR) code. This innovation eliminates the need for physical cash or cards and streamlines transactions, making them quicker and more convenient. India has extended its UPI payment model to countries such as France, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Singapore, the Maldives, Bhutan, and Oman. These nations are considering adopting UPI to modernize their payment systems and facilitate easier transactions for their citizens (Gautam, 2023).

In addition to the instances outlined earlier, there exists a myriad of other illustrations demonstrating India's commitment to leveraging locally available resources to cater to the needs of the global community. For instance, India has established itself as a hub for manufacturing high-quality smartphones at competitive prices, subsequently exporting them to markets such as the United States. Furthermore, India has emerged as a significant supplier of medical equipment and life-saving pharmaceuticals to nations worldwide. These examples underscore India's proactive utilization of its own capabilities to contribute positively to the global landscape.

The Atma-Nirbhar Bharat initiative encapsulates a mutually beneficial arrangement for both India and the international community. Not only does it promise to bolster India's economic prosperity, but it also holds the potential to foster a more equitable and sustainable global economy. By promoting self-reliance and harnessing domestic resources effectively, India not only strengthens its own economic resilience but also enhances its capacity to serve as a reliable partner in addressing global challenges. As India continues to harness its potential and invest in self-sufficiency, it stands poised to emerge as a beacon of progress and cooperation on the world stage.

Implicitly, there is a lot of scope to make things better whether it is in terms of import reduction or improving the quality of the locally produced goods. However, taking into consideration the fact that the ANB, which is a multi-sectoral multi-dimensional initiative, is relatively a new initiative of its kind, more than 4 years old, achievement till now seems plausible and makes one thing quite clear that it is not just a political rhetoric and thus, having the potential to metamorphose the dynamics of the global politics.

Looking at the academic contribution of the Atma-Nirbhar Bharat

It would be folly to assume that this revised version of self-reliance is an exclusionary case and is merely restricted to India. In fact, the above discussed motivations that led to the implementation of this initiative not only aligns with the values of the Open Economy Politics (OEP) but also contributes in making self-reliance a part of the OEP scholarship.

As David Lake rightly underscored that “interests are themselves political constructs, the product of some past or present set of political choices.” (Lake, 2009), this nexus between economic policy of self-reliance (both conventional and unconventional) and political challenges of the government, is truly demonstrated by the policies launched by Modi government to achieve the pre-determined objectives. If we look at the motivations for the launch of the ANB initiative, that I’ve discussed previously, from the lenses of OEP, the initiative seems a perfect fit

to the theoretical conceptualization of OEP. For instance, being cognizant of the fact that clashes with the Chinese army at borders and increasing unemployment and inflation rate were badly hurting India's overall development, Modi government employed this multi-sectoral economic policy to address both economic and political challenges. At the first place, they run "Vocal for Local" campaign and simultaneously encouraged people to prefer goods that are produced locally but ICEA constantly highlighted the fact that higher import tariffs are making it difficult for the smartphone industry to manufacture the product at the competent rates and subsequently requested Modi government to reduce the import duty for the raw material. Playing diligently by building the relationship based on 'meaningful' partnerships, the government reduced the tariffs, realizing the domestic costs involved in it (discussed in detail previously in the section elucidating the reason for sudden pike in the imports from China). And the most surprising part is that Modi government tried to retaliate to the Chinese aggression at the border with the ANB initiative (discussed previously in detail) by reducing imports but in the following years, India's imports from China touched new heights. (refer to table 1) While defining the nature and determining factors of tariff policies, Oatley averred that "differences in tariff rates reflect differences in the way domestic institutions transform private demands into policy outcomes." (Oatley, 2011) Thus, providing a theoretical OEP perspective to the relationship between government's tariff policy and domestic economic interests of the country. The instance makes a clear case of OEP politics where Lake pointed out that domestic interests are consolidated through institutions into a national ideal point, guiding states to negotiate and influence each other's actions to achieve a 'collective' outcome. (Lake, 2009)

Economic openness is shaped by political factors, making it a dependent variable while politics serves as the independent variable. (Lake, 2009) The core components of OEP theory – interests, domestic institutions, and international bargaining – are fundamentally shaped by the intricate interactions between domestic political dynamics and macroeconomic processes. (Oatley, 2011) So the way it works is that at the first place, actors, whether they be political entities or private players in the market, who stand to gain from a particular policy, push to

allocate resources in the political sphere to secure the implementation of that policy. (Lake, 2009) This process continues until the point where the additional cost of these efforts equals the additional benefits. It is crucial to note, before delving into other aspects, that "interests are inherently political constructs, shaped by past or present political decisions." (Lake, 2009) Following interests, domestic institutions act as intermediaries between competing societal interests, often with inherent biases, and influence the dynamics of negotiations between opposing groups. (Lake, 2009) Furthermore, institutions shape the bargaining process by establishing a default policy position in the absence of an agreement and by defining potential side payments and cross-issue deals. These institutional factors significantly impact the outcomes of economic policy decisions. (Oatley, 2011) And finally, once domestic interests are consolidated into a national policy or ideal point through institutional mechanisms, nations engage in bargaining processes to shape each other's behavior and determine the overall outcome of their collective actions. (Lake, 2009)

In addition to political challenges, positive motivations i.e., to employ locally available factors of production effectively and efficiently, Ruggie rightly observed that under embedded liberalism, domestic interests are expected to exert their influence on government policies. (Ruggie, 1982) His dictum resembles with what has been discussed about the policy reforms made by Modi government under the ANB initiative as an outcome of what is in the favor of the domestic economic players. Policies like introduction of the PLI scheme, with the emphasis on providing incentives to the foreign manufacturing units for setting up their manufacturing units in the country and that too with the objective of making the country self-reliant and allocating more areas to special economic zones in order to attract more manufacturing units in the country clearly makes the case for what OEP scholars averred about the relationship between the domestic political-economic interests and the government policies, as discussed in the previous passage.

Based on the preceding discussion, a connection emerges between the concept of OEP and Modi's ANB initiative, as the former offers a theoretical framework to understand the underlying motivations and dynamics of the latter. Therefore, study

of self-reliance measures, which is a kind of approach for designing economic policies, from this new perspective will not only be a value addition to the concept which was considered dead but will also open up several avenues to study this approach from the lenses of OEP. Furthermore, examining the recent vision of the United States' state leadership, it is evident from the instance that the Biden administration aims to bring semiconductor production back home through research and development investments. (House, 2024) Similarly, the European Union is contemplating sanctions on Chinese companies believed to have aided Russia in bypassing Western penalties. This move marks the EU's first attempt to impose measures on mainland Chinese businesses since the commencement of the war. (Amaro, 2024) In both instances, the respective entities aim to maintain a fine balance between economic interdependence and political autonomy for decision making by diversifying the global supply chain, aligning with the fundamental goals of self-reliance. Therefore, although it seems that the study is focused exclusively on India, it has wider theoretical, political and economic implications.

Conclusion

With the advent of the unprecedented forces of globalization, it was generally assumed that self-reliance is a thing of past and it is not possible for country, especially democratic country to isolate themselves from international trade and become self-reliance. Though ‘isolationism’ and ‘protectionism’ are not an integral part of ‘self-reliance’ as a political-economic approach, the concept often understood in light of these measures due to the past policy implication by countries like Russia and India. But as we have seen in this paper that among many ways to achieve self-reliance, protectionism and import substitution are just a few among many. But aforementioned definitions of self-reliance and objectives which this umbrella policy (multi-dimensional and multi-sectoral) tries to achieve in a broader perspective i.e., from the state’s perspective, ANB seems to be in accordance with the basic premises of self-reliance, at least on the basis of data and information that I have used to examine the claims of the government. However, this cannot be claimed a universal fact, unless majority, if not all, of the policy initiatives launched under the umbrella of ANB have not been examined thoroughly.

Since ANB is a quite recent initiative, it is difficult to draw any substantive conclusions. Despite that, there are a couple of things that make this paper interesting. First, ANB promises to make the country self-reliant through unconventional means. South Korea for instance adopted a similar strategy to reduce their import bills but what made ANB a unique case is that unlike South Korea, which laid emphasis on developing their local companies, Modi government is trying to become self-reliant by inviting FDIs and FIIs and India is a democratic country when it decided to become self-reliant while South Korea transitioned to civilian-led democratic governance in 1987. The second intriguing aspect of this paper is the political and economic motivations driving the launch of this initiative, and the potential to position this renewed approach to self-reliance within the context of OEP scholarship. Lastly, the paper highlights that India is the only ‘democratic’ country in the contemporary era that has announced a vision to achieve self-reliance through unconventional means. When South Korea declared its goal to achieve self-reliance, it was not a democracy. Similarly, North Korea

and China, who claim to be a self-reliant country are an authoritarian regime. Therefore, India's case is a unique case which not only sets a model for other democratic world to achieve self-reliance without making any compromises with the democratic values but also paves the way for the humanitarian re-globalization of the world.

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