India Strategic Interactions

IDSA COMMENT

**Nonalignment 2.0: A Realist Critique of An Establishmentarian Perspective**

[[http://www.idsa.in/sites/all/themes/idsa2015/images/print.gif](http://www.idsa.in/idsacomments/Nonalignment2ARealistCritiqueofAnEstablishmentarianPerspective_rrajagopalan_010512?q=print/9151)](http://www.idsa.in/idsacomments/Nonalignment2ARealistCritiqueofAnEstablishmentarianPerspective_rrajagopalan_010512?q=print/9151" \t "_blank)

[Rajesh Rajagopalan](http://www.idsa.in/taxonomy/term/1063)

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One of the most significant problems that India has faced in its foreign policy is the lack of adequate debate about the underlying premises on which it is based. Now, for the first time ever, a group, which includes scholars as well as former officials, has attempted “to identify the basic principles that should guide India’s foreign and strategic policy” in a Report titled *Nonalignment 2.0*. This, by itself, is an important exercise. While the Report has garnered its share of both praise and criticism, it has also generated a significant debate around the core principles of India’s foreign policy.

The Report provides a Nehruvian/Liberal perspective on foreign policy, which is, by and large, the establishment perspective on foreign policy issues. Thus there are no great departures from what current Indian foreign policy is, though it sets out in somewhat greater detail an intellectual logic for policy. In the interest of continuing this debate, I outline a Realist critique of this perspective and its consequences for policy.

From a Realist perspective, the key problem with a Nehruvian/Liberal approach to foreign policy is that it misunderstands power and ignores the centrality of balance of power politics in interstate relations. This, in turn, leads to questionable analysis and doubtful policy prescriptions.

The misunderstanding of power is evident in the Report from the very beginning. The report declares in Paragraph 2 that “the fundamental source of India’s power in the world is going to be the power of its example”. This suggests that India’s influence is ideational and moral rather than material. The problem is that while ideas matter, it is less important than material power and usually its servant. Morality, “the power of example”, is even more problematic because it is inconsequential in international politics. The see-sawing Indian position in global affairs itself should be a good example: India’s influence went from a high in the 1950s to the lows of the 1960s and resurgence over the last decade. This correlates nicely with power—India was courted and listened to in the 1950s not because of India’s moral power but because it was seen as a potential great power. The 1962 border war exposed the hollowness of India’s potential, dismissing it from the global stakes for the next three decades. If India is back in the limelight today it is not because the world has suddenly recognised India’s righteousness but because its growth trajectory has rekindled its power potential.

This misunderstanding of the sources of power leads to the setting of utopian and self-defeating goals in foreign policy. The Report calls for India to “create a new and alternative universality” rather than succumb “to imperatives of power” (Paragraph 307). It is utopian because what it seeks is nothing less than a fundamental transformation of how states behave in the international realm; it is self-defeating because it feeds India’s long-held tendency of treating foreign policy as a ‘moralist running commentary’ as Shashi Tharoor once accurately characterised it. Such moralism is ineffectual both because it is impossible to live up to and because the moralism of the strong is always—understandably—suspicious. All great powers come up with their versions of morality— ‘the white man’s burden’, ‘*mission civilisatrice*’, ‘manifest destiny’, ‘the middle kingdom’ and so on—and they even internalise such myths, but that does not make such ideas any less a mask for power.

The misunderstanding of power is evident yet again when the authors argue that though norms often serve to mask raw power (Paragraph 157), norms are also responses to certain ‘moral imperatives’ (Paragraph 158) and these are mediated through formal international institutions as well as informal associations and networks. This is a common Liberal notion: the idea that norms somehow evolve in response to demands and that all that is required for ‘good norms’ to succeed is that we have good ideas. In other words, norm creation is almost a neutral exercise in which ideas battle it out until the best idea wins. Unfortunately, almost all norms in inter-state relations are determined by power. If nuclear non-proliferation or liberal trade have become the norm rather than nuclear disarmament or managed trade, it is not because the former were better norms but because they were backed by greater power than their competitors. Thus, India can develop and promote the ‘best’ possible norms but it will matter little if India does not have the power to promote it.

This does not mean that norms, ideas and morality are unnecessary: India does have to come up with some version of its own moral vision to promote its interests, but this needs to be somewhat credible and practical. Utopianism is easily dismissed because the loftier our rhetoric, the starker the difference between our preaching and our practice. Refusing to recognise this, and misidentifying the real source of India’s power, cannot but lead foreign policymaking astray, just as it did in the 1950s. Seeing foreign policy as a moral crusade for rights rather than as a pragmatic pursuit of interests is a self-defeating habit that we need to discard.

This self-righteousness also leads us to misunderstand how others see us, illustrated by how the Report characterises our neighbours. The Report suggests that our neighbours, unlike the rest of the world, do not recognise our non-threatening nature (Paragraph 20), that India is the ‘Other’ that they use “to secure their sense of self and identity” (Paragraph 45). Such blame-shifting leads to bad policy: we need to recognise that the disparity of power in the region is a source of suspicion and fear and that this cannot entirely be removed. Our problems cannot be resolved by blaming our neighbours for not recognising our greatness; it will only accentuate their insecurities.

The Report indicates that the Indian establishment’s discomfort with balance of power politics remains strong. Playing such power politics requires, most basically, accepting that some powers are more powerful and therefore more important either because they are a greater threat to be guarded against or a greater opportunity to be taken advantage of. Even the structure of the Report indicates that the authors refuse to acknowledge this disparity. Beginning with sections on China, Pakistan and India’s neighbourhood may be understandable, but what is not is that the US does not even merit a separate section, being dismissed in a couple of paragraphs within a section on ‘global engagements’. America’s relative decline is a fact but it still remains the world’s most powerful and influential state and it is not inevitable that it will be replaced. And as long as it maintains its position, dismissing its importance is strategically short-sighted.

**In addition, the Report only briefly covers India’s position on probably the most important balance of power issue over the next decade: India’s options in the emerging US-China competition. The assumption appears to be that if a new bipolar order were to be created with the US and China as the two polar powers, India could do what it did in the Cold War—take the middle path and play one off against the other.** The fact that India and China are rivals with active border disputes is dismissed. India and the US are better off being friends than allies, we are told. This is a red-herring because no Indian or American strategist or leader has suggested a US-India military alliance.

On the other hand, India and the US have common strategic interests regarding China that could lead to much closer US-India strategic cooperation short of a formal alliance. And there are good examples to base this on—Indo-Soviet ties in the 1970s and 1980s against the US and China, or the Sino-American partnership of the same period against Moscow. Indeed, even the Sino-Pakistan partnership is not a military alliance but serves the strategic interest of both countries in balancing India. These are the models that US-India relations should aim at, not a military alliance. The Report does a disservice by creating a straw man called ‘alliance’ to knock down without seriously considering India’s choices.

In addition to these conceptual problems, many of the policy recommendations are simply unhelpful. One example will suffice: India is advised to ‘adopt a pro-active stance against nuclear proliferation’ but the very next sentence refers to the ‘underlying drivers of insecurity’ that propel states towards nuclear weapons (Paragraph 239), a formulation that could justify nuclear weapons for every state in the world, including all of India’s neighbours. This is hardly the ringing endorsement of non-proliferation that is expected from a country seeking a new relationship with the non-proliferation regime and entry into key institutions such as the Nuclear Supplier’s Group.

Ultimately, this is a Report that fits well within the establishmentarian perspective, reflecting its strength (the dominant consensus) as well as its many weaknesses, only some of which are described above. But the Report has set a framework for debate and that makes it a valuable and necessary effort.

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**India: the warped history and geography of NonAlignment 2.0**

29 November 2012

Author: Vikas Kumar, Azim Premji University

In the aftermath of the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the Narasimha Rao government reworked India’s dysfunctional economic and foreign policies to improve India’s abysmal terms of trade with the rest of the world.

The latest global financial crisis seems to have shaken the United States’ global dominance and is forcing India to revisit its post-Soviet foreign policy. Choices Asian countries like India make in the near future will affect the chances of the emergence of an ‘Asian Concert’ that, in turn, will influence the United States’ ability to sustain its dominance by ‘rebalancing’ toward Asia. A second term for President Obama means that Asian countries may be compelled to respond to ‘rebalancing’ sooner rather than later. Obama’s [first foreign tour](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-20387131" \t "_blank) since his re-election is a case in point.

But as usual India is struggling to discover the right balance between strategic independence and alignment, and soft and hard powers. *[NonAlignment 2.0: A Foreign and Strategic Policy for India in the Twenty First Century](http://www.cprindia.org/workingpapers/3844-nonalignment-20-foreign-and-strategic-policy-india-twenty-first-century" \t "_blank)*, a document released in February 2012, is of interest in this context, as it is one of the most comprehensive contributions to the ongoing debate within India. It discusses India’s strategic opportunities and attempts to outline India’s foreign and strategic policy over the next decade. While the authors, including well-known academics, retired government officials, journalists and industry representatives, ‘were administratively supported by the National Defence College and Centre for Policy Research’, the usual disclaimers apply. Written over a year, [the document’s release](http://www.indianexpress.com/story-print/917954/" \t "_blank) coincided with the Chinese foreign minister’s visit to India and was attended by the current and past National Security Advisors, [who mostly disagreed](http://newsclick.in/print/2866" \t "_blank) with the document. The document indeed does not throw much light on India’s foreign policy conundrum — ‘to enhance India’s strategic space and capacity for independent agency’. It largely restricts itself to presenting a bulleted list of what ought to be done.

The authors were ‘driven by a sense of urgency… that we have a limited window of opportunity in which to seize our chances’ and the belief that ‘internal development will depend decisively on how effectively we manage our global opportunities’. But they seem to be torn between nostalgia for India’s earlier non-alignment policy and the belief in India as a quintessentially non-aggressive country, and the reality of an emerging multipolar world, where hard choices are unavoidable and hard power counts. *NonAlignment 2.0* then appears to be a convenient, if not ad hoc, solution to India’s foreign policy conundrum in the midst of the [growing chances of confrontation between the US and China](http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2011/05/24/is-the-south-china-sea-a-new-dangerous-ground-for-us-china-rivalry/" \t "_blank), as well as between Israel and Iran.

Three aspects of this document — which limit its usefulness — are striking. First, the document is devoid of idealism, which, irrespective of its impracticality, could have helped build overarching structures to reconcile the otherwise irreconcilable claims upon  foreign policy. Second, the discussion is not built upon any theoretical and strategic framework, given the ad hoc nature of the solutions presented in the document. Third, the document does not empirically substantiate the assumptions that inform the solutions. The discussion essentially happens in a vacuum without engaging in parallel or preceding debates. The document does not even refer to the [Non-Alignment Movement](http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2011/02/17/india-and-indonesia-trade-deals-realign-interests-in-asia/" \t "_blank). Unsurprisingly, the authors neither explain why and in what ways the earlier non-alignment policy needs to be changed, nor do they explain in what respects *NonAlignment 2.0* is different.

Moreover, [the authors think in largely non-institutional terms](http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2010/07/17/india-looks-east-as-history/" \t "_blank), which is surprising given their commitment to non-alignment that ideally entails multilateralism. This is evident from the absence of references to key organisations and blocs such as ASEAN, the EU and SAARC. With the exception of the IMF, UN and the G20, other international organisations are rarely, if ever, mentioned. And there is hardly any discussion on potential alternatives to the existing international organisations.

A narrow geographical focus compounds the historical and institutional vacuum at the heart of *NonAlignment 2.0*. Global pretensions notwithstanding, the document largely focuses on China and Pakistan — the only countries that have sub-chapters devoted to them. Most references to the US are related to [Pakistan, Afghanistan and China.](http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2012/04/11/the-india-us-china-pakistan-strategic-quadrilateral/" \t "_blank) Even Pakistan is thought of ‘as a subset of the larger strategic challenges posed by China’. SAARC members, excluding Pakistan and Afghanistan, are referred to merely seven times, of which five references are to Bangladesh. And Indonesia, another important neighbour, and Japan, an important partner, attract less attention than Iran. In fact, Iran completely overshadows the Middle East in the document.

Viewed alongside the lack of engagement with international institutions and India’s history, the skewed geographical focus of *NonAlignment 2.0* suggests two things that should disturb those who, for some reasons, hope that India will step up and play a larger role in the emerging international order in Asia. Firstly, a significant section of the Indian strategic community continues to be obsessed with Pakistan and, increasingly, China and, hence, is oriented toward India’s northern land borders. Such an orientation is obsolete given India’s ever increasing marine footprint and growing economic and strategic engagement with countries across the world. Secondly, they also continue to be unable to imagine international institutional solutions to perennial regional military and diplomatic concerns. For instance, *NonAlignment 2.0* informs us that in future, Chinese attempts to escalate the China–India border conflict ought to be countered through ‘effective insurgency in the areas occupied by Chinese forces’. This is a solution from another age. But as veteran journalist [BG Verghese pointed out](http://bgverghese.com/IndiaPolicy.htm" \t "_blank), this document is important insofar as it challenges others to think aloud.

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## Commentary by Jagannath Panda

Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA)

July 10, 2012

**As India rises and aspires to great-power status, does its foreign policy need an overhaul?**

This has been a frequently debated topic among Indian strategic thinkers since the February 2012 release of *Nonalignment 2.0: A Foreign and Strategic Policy for India in the Twenty First Century,* a policy paper by the Centre for Policy Research (CPR) in New Delhi, an independent, nonpartisan research institution and think tank. *Nonalignment 2.0* advocates crafting a strategic path for India without entirely rejecting the previously accepted path of “nonalignment,” which bespeaks the “strategic autonomy” the country has enjoyed over the years. The focus of the document is the Asian theater and India’s two most urgent security concerns—China and Pakistan—as well as India’s move toward multilateralism and its approach to international institutions.

*Nonalignment 2.0* comes within the context of India emerging as a major power in global politics and the United States acknowledging the country to be a “priority” in its regional and global designs. The paper notes that India’s current approach to constructing an international order is based on two essentials: partaking in the regional and global institutions and likely involvement with a group of countries (p. 31). Much of global multilateral politics is linked with current Asian politics, and most powers like the United States and China place emphasis on the regional facets. Compared to others, New Delhi has been cautiously guarded in its foreign policy approaches. This seems appropriate, since India first needs to become an Asian power and prioritize its regional thrust before striving for a great-power posture in the global arena. This is accented by a renewed U.S. focus on the Asia-Pacific and the regional reactions to China’s vigorous maritime drive in Asian politics. In addition, Asian regional multilateral bodies like the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) are on the ascendant.

The major paradox for Indian foreign policy is how to approach and balance policy toward the two most important countries of the world: the United States and China. While the United States is strategically closer to India at many levels, China remains a security challenge. Implementing a “balanced” approach toward China, as *Nonalignment 2.0* suggests, could be a desirable policy approach for India. U.S. defense secretary Leon Panetta, in a June 6, 2012, speech at the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA), corroborated this approach, speaking about both India and the United States “seeking to strengthen relations with China.” However, the greater dilemma in India’s broader strategic context is coping with China’s influence at the regional level while managing Sino-Indian relations without making a visible case of the India-U.S. alliance against China.

As *Nonalignment 2.0* advocates, India’s policy approach toward China should be a “balance” of “competition and cooperation” (p. 58). However, this may not be viable when China’s rise is the main hindrance to India’s regional objectives and ambitions. At the recent Shangri-La Dialogue, Indian defense minister A.K. Antony expressed concern over China’s increasing military spending by stressing the need to “protect maritime freedoms,” obliquely referring to the Chinese aggressiveness in the South China Sea. New Delhi needs to prioritize its regional policy, and conveniently, the United States is now approaching India as a “reliable” partner for its Asia-Pacific design. In his recent speech at IDSA, Panetta noted that America’s “defense cooperation with India is a lynchpin of this strategy,” while President Obama earlier stated that the India-U.S. partnership would be “one of the defining partnerships” of the current century.

Within this milieu, India must consider reordering its priorities toward China in both regional and global contexts. Managing issues such as the age-old boundary disputes and security concerns arising from the Tibetan front are undoubtedly vital facets of India’s China policy, but broader regional issues equally need urgent priority. This is important at a time when China is more serious about Asian maritime issues, such as disputes in the East China and South China Seas, than its land border issues with India. In addition, India’s Afghanistan policy will become more politically complex after U.S. and NATO troops withdraw in 2014. India needs a more intense and focused regional policy, as powers like China and the United States are already reviewing their policy approaches toward Afghanistan.

These developments need to be contextualized within upwardly mobile India-U.S. relations, without complicating the relationship with China and other countries like Russia. *Nonalignment 2.0* discusses India’s policy partnerships in a global context (p. 31), with exclusive discussion of the United States. The paper notes the “relative decline of the American alliance system,” which may be because the nature of multipolarity has made the U.S. alliance system more subtle. The United States’ recent posture in Asia-Pacific indicates that its influence is still vibrant, particularly compared to China, and although China has emerged as an economic giant, the United States is still a politically powerful nation. India is a vital power in the United States’ Asia-Pacific strategy and must take a decisive position on a strategy to meet both China and the United States, particularly in the context of Asia and also at the global level.

While managing foreign relations needs a careful and well-planned strategy, India’s rise has compelled it to take seriously multilateral forums and politics and implement an evolving and sustained approach toward international institutions. An important focus of India’s current foreign policy is pursuing an open approach toward multilateral institutions, the prime target being permanent membership in the UN Security Council. Emphasis has also been given to other global bodies like G-20, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Bank. Given the multipolar nature of the current world structure, India’s openness to several levels of power relations and multilateral institutional politics and engagement is certainly a progressive step. However, there must be an objective reordering of India’s approach of adhering to various multilateral organizations and bodies. India’s approach could be constructed at three different levels: subregional or regional, cross-regional, and global. At the subregional or regional level, multilateral organizations like the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), the SCO, ASEAN, and SAARC need robust attention. These organizations are linked to various dynamics of Asian politics, and most of them shape China-India politics because China’s strong economic and political contacts within most of these organizations compel India to pursue a dynamic profile.

Cross-continental groupings like BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa), IBSA (India, Brazil, South Africa), and BASIC (Brazil, South Africa, India, China) are important for India’s global rise and profile. Through these bodies, India tries to advocate its “developing country” label. These groups are vital to India’s dialogue on climate change and reforming global financial bodies and institutions like the IMF, the World Bank, and WTO. The objective should be preparing a constructive and vigilant path for engagement with this variety of multilateral institutions, without seriously complicating the foreign policy posture.

On the whole, there has been a noticeable departure in India’s posture and approach to nonalignment in recent decades. New Delhi has moved away from the so-called neutral world to the world of power politics based on merits and priorities that benefit India’s objectives in foreign policy and heighten its global image. However, these priorities need to be reassessed and put in order at a time when issues like Afghanistan, the South China Sea, the Indian Ocean, energy politics, and regional organizations like ASEAN and the SCO are the key contours of politics in Asia today.

Arguably, India’s aspiration to obtain a permanent seat on the UN Security Council has prompted many to see and value India as a serious power (p. 34). Obtaining a permanent seat would require intense diplomatic endeavors. It might be more appropriate, however, that without becoming overambitious, India continues to be part and parcel of a multipolar, democratized, and rational world order and continues to become a leading developing countries, even if it brings about subtle changes in its current foreign policy approach. While pursuing intense multilateralism is a perspective that requires closer systematic attention, much will depend on how India decides to construct and approach its closer Asian periphery and the power politics at the regional level. The asymmetry inherent in Asian power politics means that India’s approach to ASEAN, the SCO, the South China Sea, the Indian Ocean, and Afghanistan needs vigor. That means, India not only should pursue an intense policy toward sensitive issues in regional politics but must carry forward a decisive approach toward multilateral bodies corresponding to those issues at the regional level. Establishing strong bilateral relations as well as engaging multilaterally with the Asian region must be a priority strategy. In short, while India would prefer a liberal, vis-à-vis stable order in Asia, central to India’s rise, one based on massive engagement and a stable and secured maritime region in Asia should be the main priority.

While intense multilateralism does require closer attention, much will depend on how India decides to see its closer periphery, mainly the power politics in Asia and its different subregions. India’s approach to subregional bodies, mainly ASEAN and the SCO, has been the defining feature of its foreign policy stratagem. Two current imperatives define India’s approach toward Asia: stabilizing the region through contributing to security multilateralism dialogues and maximizing economic and commercial contacts through regional trade and economic dealings. The key notions and beliefs through which India characterizes its regional identity are the constructs of “Asian power” and the “developing economy.” The “Asian power” dialogue has helped India associate with powers like Japan, while the “developing economy” dialogue helps it share the desk with adversarial powers like China. Any shift from this policy posture may affect India’s bearings at the regional level. This policy directive invites greater insight into the subregional or geographic politics. Bodies like the SCO, ASEAN, and SAARC have been the cornerstones of Asian politics for a long time, and India needs to attach great importance to these regional groupings. What enhances these regional bodies’ relevance in today’s context is the dynamism of geography and resource politics.

Further, India must seriously note that Asian regional politics and bodies are on the verge of transition. While the SCO is on the verge of expanding both its membership and mandate, China is becoming serious about SAARC and is asking for membership in this South Asian body. Despite India’s new “look east” policy, China has more diligently reached into the Southeast Asian region, dominated ASEAN both economically and politically, and maintained a decisive posture in the South China Sea. India must take serious note of this and prioritize its foreign policy not only toward individual powers but also the subregional bodies and their respective subregions.

Asia’s various regional facets and politics should be the first priority in India’s current and future foreign policy approaches. That calls for some reordering of priorities. The South China Sea, Indian Ocean, and Afghanistan are indeed vital regions for India and require robust attention. But hedging in various subregional and regional multilateral settings will still decide most Asian politics. *The geo-politics of the current century is more than a zero-sum game.* Power rivalry and competing cooperation are the two most important aspects of Asian politics today. It would be best for India to aim for pan-Asian leadership at the regional level without conceding much of an option to others, at least not to a power like China. Doing so will be a valuable revision of, and addition to, India’s age-old nonaligned principles without needless compromise.

**Foreign Policy Journal**

**Nonalignment 2.0 and India’s Strategic Direction**

By [Ali Ahmed](http://www.foreignpolicyjournal.com/author/ali-ahmed/) | May 28, 2012 | [Asia Pacific](http://www.foreignpolicyjournal.com/category/regions/asia-pacific/), [News & Analysis](http://www.foreignpolicyjournal.com/category/features/news-analysis/) | [1](http://www.foreignpolicyjournal.com/2012/05/28/nonalignment-2-0-and-indias-strategic-direction/#comments) |

An influential paper, *Nonalignment 2.0*, written by a galaxy of strategic thinkers is doing the rounds of the seminar circuit in New Delhi. A product of their collective opinion, the document was intended by its authors Sunil Khilnani, Rajiv Kumar, Pratap Bhanu Mehta, Lt. Gen. (Retd.) Prakash Menon, Nandan Nilekani, Srinath Raghavan, Shyam Saran and Siddharth Varadarajan, to set off a debate on the direction and content of India’s foreign policy and strategic orientation. In this the document can be said to have succeeded, with the authors, in defending their argument, making it more visible.

Though the group’s activities were administratively supported by the reputed National Defence College and Centre for Policy Research, New Delhi, a disclaimer has it that the views expressed in the document ‘are the product of collective deliberation by an independent group of analysts and policy makers’ and does not ‘represent the views of either of these institutions.’ The paper was  preceded by a collaborative net assessment between an economist, Rajeev Kumar, part of this group, and a strategic thinker, Raja Menon, *The Long View from Delhi: To Define the Indian Grand Strategy for Foreign Policy* (2010). It is soon to be followed by a similar document by the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi. The cumulative effort seems to be to push the government towards making its own strategic doctrine clear in a white paper or strategic review; the absence of which has been a long standing critique in India’s strategic literature of its strategic culture.

However, it is unlikely to succeed since the government would then have to contend with a storm of critique, much more than has greeted this document. Given the divisions in India’s polity and its weak government at present, the National Security Council Secretariat (NSCS), that would have the task, would unlikely be able to sustain a defence of such a hypothetical paper. The national parties, if their respective manifestoes are anything to go by, promise more of everything. The centrist ruling party does so out of fear of being taken as ‘soft’ on defence and the right wing nationalist party to buttress its credentials, earned in blasting India’s way into the nuclear club.  Therefore the NSCS will continue in its self-effacing style, drawing on such documents for inspiration in its deliberations in the absence of an over-arching strategic doctrine.

This is not to imply that there is no movement in the security field. An empowered task force under a bureaucratic heavyweight, Naresh Chandra, has overshot its timeline of deliberations on the second round of post Kargil War national security reforms. However, more significant change can be brought about in case India emulates the United States in passing its own version of the Goldwater-Nichols Act. The Act mandates a set of periodic reports to be tendered by the administration on various issues such as strategic review and nuclear posture review.

In India, precedent has it that Indian defence reforms have been initiated only when buffeted by external, such as the 1962 War and the Kargil War of 1999. Alternatively, they have been occasioned by internal political storms, such as were the reforms in the acquisition process, regularised in wake of scandals related to acquisitions such as the Bofors guns scandal of the late eighties and the sting operation, Operation West End, by a media group, *Tehelka*. The strategic circumstance compelling parliamentary initiative is not nigh given India’s relatively comfortable security indices at present. In other words, India’s pachydermic progression, that some regard as strategic adhocism, will continue.

It is for this reason that documents such as Nonalignment 2.0 gain in importance. They compensate for lack of transparency in India’s governmental processes on security. The realm being placed outside of the transparency related laws, such as the Right to Information Act, the thinking within the establishment is difficult to gain access to, leave alone fathom. In a society that culturally views knowledge as power, that the information space in the security domain has been jealously guarded by its minders is understandable. Therefore, when eminent strategists ventilate their concerns, it helps inform the democratic debate on issues of security.

For instance, it can be surmised that the section on hard power and its utilisation in the document has had the input of the general, Lt Gen Menon, who as head of the National Defence College provided the impetus to this exercise. He is currently Military Adviser in the NSCS. Therefore, while acknowledging the limitations of an individual’s influence in India’s national security system that is better interpreted by bureaucratic politics, access to his views in this document can provide some clue to India’s approach to hard power. This, though meagre, is better than having nothing to work on.

The hard power discussion is in Chapters 3, 4 and 5, covering conventional, subconventional and nuclear domains respectively. A significant parameter for the use of military force is given out as, ‘The challenge for the military establishment is to shape our hard power capabilities in tandem with India’s political objectives, while remaining within the ambit of the political and strategic logic imposed by nuclear weapons.’ This owes to the logic of nuclear thresholds and the escalation possibilities that the paper recognises, clear-eyed. The problem arises when the paper goes on to suggest that, ‘we will have to shape our capabilities so that we effectively expand the range of practical options available under the nuclear overhang.’ This is self-contradictory.

The nuclear overhang instead suggests that usable military options are passé. India’s pursuit of these in the perception of facing a ‘two front threat’ can result in the phenomenon of a security dilemma engulfing the three states: India, Pakistan and China. While this is currently being played out in the form of arms races, there is potential of inflamed nationalisms transforming future crises into conflict. The belief that doable options exist, that rumination such as this present in order to avoid being marginalised, comprises the first step up the escalation ladder.

The graver problem is that the government does not know any better.

**F. World**

**Is Non-Alignment 2.0 the way to check China and Pak?**

[**R Jagannathan**](http://www.firstpost.com/author/jagannathan)  Updated: Mar 21, 2012 17:59 IST

The world has become a more dangerous place with the decline of America, Europe and Japan, the rise of China, and the emergence of radical new forces – often violent - in every region from West Asia to our own neighbourhood.

So how should India prepare for this more dangerous world?

What should we do if China makes a grab for territories in Arunachal, given the Middle Kingdom’s extreme insecurities about Tibet? How should we respond to yet another terror attack from rabid groups in Pakistan that are supported by the army and the ISI? How do we make it costly for both China and Pakistan—both nuclear powers—to damage our interests, both separately and in alliance with each other? Is the US going to be our ally against China, or will merely be a fair-weather friend?

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A Pakistan army soldier on vigil. AP

If you were to ask a group of Indian academics to answer these questions, you would get a diversity of opinions that more or less cancel one another out. In other words, a stalemate. This is what our current level of strategic thinking has been reduced to anyway.

However, an "independent group" of analysts and (former) policy-makers has produced a monograph through a process of "collective deliberation" that suggests a more holistic framework for expanding India’s strategic space and room for action.

In reductionist terms, the answers to the questions posed above are the following: the riposte to a Chinese land-grab in Arunachal could be counter-grabs in areas where India has the greater tactical advantage. "A better way of responding to limited land-grabs by China is for us to undertake similar action across the LAC (line of actual control): a strategy of *quid pro quo*. There are several areas where the local tactical and operational advantage rests with us. These areas should be identified and earmarked for limited offensive operations on our part."

As for a terror-strike masterminded by Pakistan, the options proposed include an element of hard power, so that Pakistan knows there is a cost to its pro-terror policy. "The hard power strategy adopted by us will have to cover the spectrum that includes sending a political signal militarily at the lower end (through cyber or precision air attacks) to capture of territory considered feasible under nuclear conditions at the higher end. The important issue is that we will have to shape our capabilities so that we effectively expand the range of practical options available under the nuclear overhang."

However, if these answers sound too glib or something dreamed up by hardline security experts or warmongers, perish the thought.

In fact, the document has been blasted for exactly the opposite reason: being too wimpish. Titled *[Non-Alignment 2.0:](http://www.cprindia.org/sites/default/files/NonAlignment%202.0_1.pdf" \t "_blank) A Foreign and Strategic Policy for India in the 21st Century,* the document has received a lot of flak from intellectuals and strategic policy wonks partly due to its title – which is a throwback to the discredited Nehruvian policies of the cold war. The policy paper was authored jointly by Sunil Khilnani, Rajiv Kumar, Pratap Bhanu Mehta, Lt Gen (Retd.) Prakash Menon, Nandan Nilekani, Srinath Raghavan, Shyam Saran, and Siddharth Varadarajan.

A book is often condemned for its cover. And so it seems with this think-tank’s attempt to initiate a debate on strategic and foreign policy issues for this century. One wonders what the group was smoking when the cover title came up for discussion. How could an intellectually solid and diverse group have come up with a dud title like *Non-Alignment 2.0* when Non-Alignment 1.0 was far from a roaring success?

As Nayan Chanda, a former journalist and expert on Asian politics and security issues, points out in *[The Times of India](http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-03-17/edit-page/31202205_1_foreign-policy-iranian-oil-linkages" \t "_blank),* the authors did themselves a disservice by "digging up the ghost of non-alignment". He says: "Whatever glory, mostly self-congratulatory, non-alignment might have brought, evaporated like morning dew in the post-Soviet world. Why then drag it out of the musty archives to encapsulate a foreign policy approach designed to serve a new world?"

The put-off title has probably coloured comments on its core content, too. Ajai Shukla, writing in*[Business Standard](http://www.business-standard.com/india/news/ajai-shukla-get-realchinatibet/468274/" \t "_blank)*[,](http://www.business-standard.com/india/news/ajai-shukla-get-realchinatibet/468274/" \t "_blank) says he was "startled… to find an illustrious group of Indian thinkers recommending that Sino-Indian tensions be eased by ‘persuading China to seek reconciliation with the Dalai Lama and the exiled Tibetan community'". Shukla calls this proposal "quixotic" because “the notion that New Delhi can talk Beijing into engaging the hated ‘Dalai clique’ is entirely fanciful. Tibet, alongside Taiwan, remains the deepest of China’s many insecurities.”

This, of course, is not really the broad thrust of the policy paper.

Former diplomat Rajiv Dogra, writing in *[Daily News & Analysis](http://www.dnaindia.com/analysis/column_writing-policy-in-sand_1665164" \t "_blank)*, is suspicious even about the motives of the think tank. He writes: "It is an undeniable fact that there is a sudden proliferation of think-tanks in Delhi. It just so happens that many of their recommendations, directly or subtly, promote a line that the west may itself be advocating." In short, Dogra sees a foreign hand even in this attempt to enunciate a strategic policy doctrine for India.

To critique a paper by raising doubts about think-tanks in general is hardly a great argument.

But let’s hear the authors' own explanation of the title – which shows that *Non-Alignment 2.0* isn’t about exhuming that old ghost. In fact it is about strategic autonomy – the cornerstone of any dynamic and enduring policy. Says the document: “Strategic autonomy has been the defining value and continuous goal of India’s international policy ever since the inception of the republic.” A little later, it says: “The core objective of a strategic approach should be to give India maximum options in its relations with the outside world**—**that is, to enhance India’s strategic space and capacity for independent agency**—**which in turn will give it maximum options for its own internal development.”

In short, non-alignment, as defined by the authors, is not the discredited passive approach of not taking sides, but of taking the side or option that suits our best interests without foreclosing other options. Put simply, *Non-Alignment 2.0* is really that old saw that a nation does not have permanent friends or enemies, only permanent interests.

So what exactly does *Non-Alignment 2.0* say? *Firstpost* believes it is the one of the most important foreign policy and strategic approach ideas in a long, long time. Whatever its shortcomings, what it does not lack is depth in approach. While one cannot agree with everything in the report, its strength lies in the fact that it is an integrated approach to policy, not something said in isolation.

A caveat is in order: the initial paragraphs of this article might have given the reader the impression that the paper is all about military stuff and projection of power. It is all that, but hard power is only one element in the strategic vision outlined.

The biggest strength of the document is its multi-dimensional approach to foreign policy and strategy that is rooted, first and foremost, in building the country’s economic capabilities, the economic policies and governance structures that are needed for that, the internal and external alliances one must build for ensuring both, and the hard power capabilities needed to hold it all together.

The paper starts with a central premise that “the fundamental source of India’s power in the world is going to be the power of its example. If India can maintain high growth rates, leverage that growth to enhance the capabilities of all its citizens, and maintain robust democratic traditions and institutions, there are few limits to India’s global role and influence. The foundations of India’s success will, therefore, depend on its developmental model”.

A related premise is that if “our developmental model is successful, it will give us still greater legitimacy in the world**—**and it will enhance our capacity to act for ourselves”.

The group thus defines the foundational principle of India’s foreign policy and strategic thrust thus: “First, under no circumstances should India jeopardise its own domestic economic growth, its social inclusion and its political democracy. Its approach to the outside world must be to secure the maximum space possible for its own economic growth. But this economic growth will in turn require India to face up to new challenges - challenges whose roots and dynamics often lie in a volatile global environment.”

This is where India’s strategic thinking needs to develop its array of hard and soft policy options, including the ability to deter a rampant China or a self-destructing Pakistan from taking us down with it.

The paper, apart from the introduction and conclusion, is divided into seven chapters that deal with The Asian Theatre, the International Order, Hard Power, Internal Security, Non-Conventional Security Issues, Knowledge and Information Foundations, and the State and Democracy.

In Asia, the authors are clear that China is India’s biggest challenge – both diplomatically and strategically. Pointing out that China has settled its border issues with almost all its neighbours barring India, the authors believe it must be part of a larger gameplan that needs building up our capacity for reaction in case of aggression. Their suggested policy response is a mixture of playing the Tibet card (carefully, without unduly frightening the Chinese), increasing our naval power in the Indian Ocean, and beefing up our defences in the North East.

“It is important that we accelerate the upgradation of our border infrastructure (especially in terms of habitation and supply lines) to reduce the asymmetry in our capabilities and deployments. At the same time we must put in place operational concepts and capabilities to deter any significant incursions from the Chinese side.” Increasing habitation means populating the border areas with people or security personnel from elsewhere. That’s the new idea.

On Pakistan, the paper does not quite buy the argument put forth by liberals in India that the Pakistani civil elite are at variance with the army or the ISI on the value of terror as strategy – though recently there has been concern in Pakistan about what terrorism is costing them.

Says the paper: “The Pakistani establishment - including the Army, the ISI, and the bureaucratic and political elite - believes that it is only cross-border terrorism that compels India to engage with Pakistan and accommodate its interests. There may differences of emphasis, but there is no fundamental gap in the perception and attitudes among different sections of the Pakistani elite.”

This is why the group advocates the importance of “negative levers” in dealing with Pakistan. Among these would be a strategy of denial (strengthening India’s own internal security mechanism to counter Pakistani terror modules in this country), the capacity for quick punitive operations (cyber attacks, precision air attacks), and counter-propaganda on human rights violations in Pak-occupied Kashmir, Balochistan, etc.

Says the paper: “On the political front, we need to develop the ability to put Pakistan diplomatically on the back foot. We should not hesitate to point out Pakistan’s internal vulnerabilities. To begin with, we could express public concern over the situation in places like Balochistan and condemn human rights violations there. The level of our response could be gradually and progressively elevated. Our stance will fall well short of action on the ground, but it will gradually provide an effective tool to counter Pakistan’s public posturing on Jammu & Kashmir.”

It’s possible to look at many other aspects of the paper, but it is not the purpose of this article to get into every detail (Read the full paper [here](http://www.cprindia.org/sites/default/files/NonAlignment%202.0_1.pdf" \t "_blank)). Moreover, the paper is not a how-to on strategic policy, nor does it try to detail the options before India. But it is call to develop a comprehensive foreign and strategic policy doctrine.

In that aim, it has succeeded. Despite a loser title called “*Non-Alignment 2.0*”

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**Why Non-alignment 2.0 does us a disservice**

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**The document, prepared by an eminent 8-member group, has attracted both criticism and praise. The latter is mainly for drawing attention to India's innumerable foreign policy challenges and for generating debate thereon. On the negative side, a major shortcoming in the document is the failure to clearly spell out a vision for what India should aspire to be and how precisely should these aspirations be realised, says Satish Chandra.**

Non-alignment 2.0 -- unveiled in January -- is a 60-page document which purportedly outlines the principles that should guide India's foreign and domestic policy over the next decade.

Over a year in the making the document is the handiwork of an eight-member group comprising some well known Indian intellectuals like Shyam Saran, Sunil Khilnani, Nandan Nilekani, and Pratap Bhanu Mehta.

The authors are at pains to claim that the document represents only their views and that it is, therefore, an independent product. This is open to question because Shyam Saran, a former foreign secretary, heads a government-funded think tank and another author, General Prakash Menon is military advisor with the rank of secretary in the National Security Council Secretariat. Moreover, the National Security Advisor and his deputy actively participated in some of the deliberations of the group to which administrative support was provided inter alia by the National Defence College.

Nonalignment 2.0 has attracted both criticism and praise. The latter is mainly for drawing attention to India's innumerable foreign policy challenges and for generating debate thereon. The document is, of course, also studded with several nuggets of wisdom some of which may be enumerated as follows:

India must retain maximum strategic autonomy in order to enable it to pursue its developmental goals;

Since its economic growth requires deepened economic engagement with the world, India must strive to maintain an open global order;

It is unlikely that there will be enduring coalitions: these would require artful management;

India's great advantage is that, barring in its immediate neighbourhood, it is not seen as a threatening power;

Engaging with the Asian theatre will be a key concern for India with South Asia being the most vital;

India must put in place operational concepts and capabilities to deter China since the latter will be a significant foreign policy and security challenge for it;

Progress in India-Pakistan ties can only be incremental;

While seriously pursuing the complete elimination of nuclear weapons on a non discriminatory basis, India must beef up its nuclear weapon capability in particular the maritime leg.

On the negative side, a major shortcoming in the document is the failure to clearly spell out a vision for what India should aspire to be and how precisely should these aspirations be realised. In the absence of such on overarching unity of purpose Nonalignment 2.0 flounders and lacks coherency.

Many have also found fault with the title of the document on the grounds that it is backward looking rather than forward looking. The argument that the title was selected as 'strategic autonomy' was a core element of non-alignment as earlier practiced by India, cuts no ice as such autonomy is something which any self respecting country would like to exercise and as the non-alignment of yester year had many shortcomings.

Given the standing of the authors, one would have expected a much more tautly conceived and constructed document. It, however, disappoints. It is flabby, marred by inaccuracies, and on occasion displays a disquieting naivete. In this context, consider the following propositions contained in it:

India's internal development will depend on how well we manage our global opportunities. Comment: is not the converse truer? In the ultimate analysis progress is dependent more on management of internals than of foreign policy;

The fundamental source of India's power is its example. Comment: comprehensive national power rather than example is what counts for in the real world;

The main thing that can hold India back is India itself. Comment: This is a cliché applicable to all countries;

South Asia is holding India back at many levels and places fetters on its ambitions. Comment: While a fractious neighbourhood is a cause of concern it cannot subvert Indian ambitions as long as India is strong;

India has been granted Most Favoured Nation treatment by Pakistan. Comment: This is incorrect. Pakistan has only moved from a positive to a negative list in respect of its imports from India.

India should engage in cooperation with Pakistan on energy and water, leverage its economic relationship with China for political concessions and persuade the latter to seek reconciliation with the Dalai Lama. Comment: Even a nodding acquaintance with the dynamics of the polity of Pakistan and of China and their relationship with India would indicate that these propositions are non-starters.

Finally, perhaps the most serious flaw in Nonalignment 2.0 is that it reeks of pusillanimity. For instance, it suggests that India should continue to remain engaged with Pakistan even if there are further Mumbai like attacks. All that it contemplates in such eventualities is stand-off punitive operations and goes so far as to argue against deep thrusts into Pakistani territory for fear of nuclear attack missing the point that we have a nuclear deterrent.

Similarly, while suggesting that there can be no proportionate response to a Chinese attack on India it makes a case for an asymmetric response inter alia based upon the creation of insurgencies in areas occupied by China thereby acknowledging defeat even before battle has been joined. It also argues that India should focus more on accretion of its military capability at sea rather than on land. Indeed, the paragraphs relating to China are permeated by an unseemly fear and the thought that India should do nothing which may increase its anxieties, to the extent that we maintain equidistance between China and the US.

Even in respect of our South Asian neighbours the document would have India make unilateral concessions to them. The learned authors appear to have learnt no lessons from the fact that the countless unilateral concessions made by India to China, Pakistan and even Sri Lanka, have not earned it any positive results in terms of improved ties with those countries and only encouraged recalcitrant behaviour.

Ironically, while the document is mindful to a fault of Chinese sensitivities all such caution is thrown to the winds when addressing India. Indeed, it goes so far as to suggest that we need to build a credible state, promote inclusive governance and a political culture attuned to defusing conflict.

These homilies are not only quite out of place in a foreign policy related document but much more applicable to China and Pakistan than to India. Indeed our record on this count is better than that of many countries. The fact that they have found place in such a document is, therefore, not only unwarranted but also a singular disservice to the nation.

Satish Chandra

Indian Council on Global Relations

21 January 2013, Gateway House

**Non-Alignment 2.0: Running on fumes?**

*Lt. Gen. Prakash Menon and Prof. Gautam Sen delivered the keynote address at the two-day National Seminar on Non-Alignment 2.0 organised by the Department of Civics and Politics in the University of Mumbai. Gateway House’s Aakash Brahmachari blogs about the seminar, and India’s strategic rivals.*

BY *Aakash Brahmachari*

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After the Second World War, the winds of decolonisation swept aside the hold of war-weary European powers over their colonies. Spearheaded by Yugoslavia’s Josip Tito, India’s Jawaharlal Nehru, Egypt’s Gamal Abdel Nasser and Indonesia’s Sukarno, the Non-Aligned Movement (N.A.M.) was founded at the 1961 Belgrade Conference, and sought to chart a course independent of the two superpowers at the time – the U.S. and the Soviet Union. By the late 1980s, more than a hundred countries defined themselves as non-aligned. However, the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 robbed the N.A.M. of its raison-d’être.

The opening address at the [Non-Alignment 2.0](http://www.cprindia.org/sites/default/files/NonAlignment%202.0_1.pdf" \t "_blank) conference on January 21-22 – organized by Mumbai University’s Department of Civics and Politics – assured the audience that the essence of non-alignment remained relevant to India’s strategic interests. According to Lt. Gen. Prakash Menon, currently Military Advisor to the National Military Council Secretariat of India, non-alignment is rooted in strategic autonomy which allows India to form context-based bilateral partnerships and seize foreign policy initiatives for vital national interests.

This reminds me of India’s effort at strengthening bilateral ties with Vietnam, as demonstrated most recently by the I.N.S. Sudarshini’s four-day ‘friendship visit’ to Da Nang City in December 2012. In April 2007, Vietnam and India conducted joint naval exercises, and in 2011 India responded favourably to Vietnam’s offer to berth Indian naval ships at the Na Thrang port. An Indian naval presence at harbours in the South China Sea, such as the Na Thrang port, can provide security for Indian off-shore drilling companies such as the Oil and Natural Gas Corporation of India (ONGC) which is currently engaged in oil exploration in this geopolitically sensitive region.

Lt. Gen. Menon and Prof. Gautam Sen agreed that India faces two strategic rivals – China and Pakistan. India needs to find a way to secure both its northern boundary and maritime interests, keeping in mind its growing asymmetry with China. Since nuclear weapons have made capturing large swathes of Pakistani territory redundant, the speakers recommend re-orienting Indian forces towards China.

However, that shift has already commenced. Over the past decade, India’s conventional military capabilities have outstripped what is needed to contain Pakistan. More recently, there has been a growing focus on China. In February 2011, the Indian army raised two new mountain infantry divisions (15,000 soldiers each) in India’s North East and in September 2012, it deployed two armored brigades along the Chinese frontier – one in the North East, and another in Ladakh.

The Indian Navy’s latest acquisitions include the nuclear powered attack submarine the I.N.S. Chakra and the (yet-to-be-delivered) aircraft carrier I.N.S. Vikramaditya with a complement of 16 MiG-29K fighters. The Navy also plans to induct an indigenous nuclear submarine (the Advanced Technology Vessel) and another aircraft carrier, which will allow India to target choke points like the Straits of Malacca and Hormuz – vital to China’s maritime trade and energy routes.

Lt. Gen. Menon also recommends that India develop positive and negative levers to deal with Pakistan. The recent mutilation of Indian soldiers along the Line of Control demonstrated the need to add more arrows to India’s diplomatic quiver. Non-Alignment has been at the centre of India’s foreign policy for over four decades, and it can provide the impetus for partnerships that support India’s strategic interests well into the new century.

*[Aakash Brahmachari](http://www.gatewayhouse.in/expert/internal/researchers/aakash-brahmachari" \t "_self)* ***is a Senior Researcher at Gateway House: Indian Council on Global Relations.***

11 August 2016, Gateway House

**Maritime India’s Global Destiny**

*With the 21st century being heralded as the 'century of the seas', there is much need for India to reclaim its historically dominant maritime position in civilian and military endeavours.*

BY [*Vice Admiral Anil Chopra*](http://www.gatewayhouse.in/author/vice-admiral-anil-chopra/)

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India’s maritime roots are amongst the oldest in the world, traceable to the Harappan civilization more than three millennia ago. Indian mariners were active from the shores of Africa and Arabia in the west, to the lands of Southeast Asia in the east, well before the advent of the Europeans at sea. There is much archaeological and documentary evidence, highlighting both the extent and continuity of Indian maritime activity through the ages. Regrettably, this maritime impulse faded at a critical moment in history, during which period the world transitioned from the medieval to the modern. Let alone the Mughals, even the Marathas, and the kingdoms of the southern peninsula, failed to give impetus to sea power at that juncture.

In sharp contrast, European maritime emergence originated in the Iberian Peninsula in the 15th century, spurred by funding provided to explorers like Bartholomew Diaz and Vasco de Gama by a visionary prince, Henry the Navigator of Portugal. It was successfully taken forward by Spanish, English, Dutch and French monarchs during the 16th century, a period which coincided with the Mughals, the Mings, the Shoguns and even the Caliphs concurrently turning their backs to the sea, eventually leading to European domination of Asia through the innovative use of sea power.

The Mughals, coming as they did from landlocked Central Asia, and entirely ignorant of the seas, hastened the collapse of India’s maritime capabilities, which went into near terminal decline. The British created and sustained an Indian Army, separate from the British Army, but the maritime defence of India was outsourced to the Royal Navy, allowing indigenous maritime skills and experience to wither. Consequently, when India gained its freedom, the Indian Navy had to begin its innings with a motley collection of a few small sloops and gunboats, and virtually no industrial support.

The seven decades since Independence have, no doubt, witnessed a revival of maritime activity in both military and civilian spheres, but India’s ancient maritime impulse has yet to be fully unleashed. Progress in the maritime domain has been incremental, mainly on account of inadequate funding, coupled with sporadic and uncoordinated initiatives on the part of successive governments. Till very recently, the bulk of Indian politicians and mandarins, ensconced in inland New Delhi, continued to be afflicted by classical ‘sea- blindness’, a debilitating, inherited legacy of the Mughals.

On the economic front, India’s maritime trade and commercial interests have expanded manifold over the decades since Independence. This has been a natural consequence of the burgeoning population and the developing economy. However, marine infrastructure, from ports to ship-building yards, has suffered from lack of sustained impetus and coherent, holistic policies, till very recently. The Sagar Mala project, launched by the Modi government, and its maritime vision, articulated to the world at large at this year’s maiden maritime summit in Mumbai. The project promises to redress the neglect of the maritime sector, but it is to be seen whether the requisite funding priority will be provided to this initiative.

In so far as maritime security is concerned, the prevailing Westphalian international order continues to be essentially anarchic in nature, with military and maritime power still very much currencies of exchange in the equations between nation-states. Without military muscle, neither economic power by itself, nor even in combination with superior diplomatic finesse, can translate into heft in the existing global construct.

Sea power then, continues to remain as relevant as ever in today’s globalised world for both the security and prosperity of nations. This is clearly illustrated by the on-going imbroglio in the South China Sea. Despite the exploration and use of space, and the advent of a host of communication, surveillance and aerospace technologies, the 21st century has been termed as  the ‘century of the seas’, since the oceans, covering 70% of the planet, are central in the global balance of power, and vital for human economic activity.

History has clearly demonstrated that the destinies of nations and their navies are firmly intertwined. In the current world order, India’s security, its extensive maritime interests, its prosperity and its capacity to influence geopolitical outcomes, literally demands the possession of a strong and capable Navy.

Since Independence, the Indian Navy’s leadership has doggedly built a truly three-dimensional blue-water navy, despite a constant paucity of funds and lack of awareness of matters maritime in New Delhi. A far-sighted vision created early synergies between the Navy, the public-sector ship-building yards and the Defence Research and Development Organisation, as well as the acquisition of in-house warship and submarine design capability. The Navy also initiated a Coast Guard to address constabulary functions at sea, and established the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium or IONS to further maritime diplomacy in the wider Indo-Pacific region. India today possesses a potent, engaged and respected Navy, with aircraft carriers and nuclear submarines in its order of battle, capable of operating in the contemporary  network-centric warfare scenario despite some sophisticated equipment and capabilities still being imported.

To maintain this, to enhance strength, and simultaneously modernise its platforms calls for a long-term commitment beyond the 15%-18% of the defence capital budget currently allotted to the Navy. A vibrant indigenous defence industrial base also calls for more from the defence budget. No amount of private sector participation, PPP projects, FDI, FII, offsets, or joint ventures with foreign majors, will enable the success of the ‘Make in India ‘ initiative in the defence sector, if inadequate orders are placed by the Indian Armed Forces  due to intermittent or insufficient funds.

The prevailing dictum from more than a century ago has been: “Whoever controls the Indian Ocean, dominates Asia. This Ocean is the key to the Seven Seas in the 21st century. The destiny of the world will be decided in these waters.”[1] The shift of economic and military power to the East may well prove this right. It is vital that India’s maritime renaissance, presently primed and ready-to-go, be unleashed through sustained and bipartisan political support, translated into long- term provision of the considerable funding that both the civil and military maritime domains require. Anything less, and India may well miss the boat again.

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13 August 2016, Gateway House

**Acting East, with intensity**

*India’s East Asia policy has been a bedrock of the country’s foreign policy, and the Modi government has deepened ties with ASEAN and extra-ASEAN powers in a significant way. As India turns 70, it is worth assessing the few key bilaterals that will now become more important for regional security and prosperity.*

BY [*Rajiv Bhatia*](http://www.gatewayhouse.in/author/ambassador-rajiv-bhatia/)

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As India prepares to celebrate its 70th Independence Day, the country’s record of achievements, setbacks and challenges in the domain of national security and foreign policy – from the Nehru era to the Modi years — will come under the scanner. In this context, a review and assessment of the Modi government’s approach to East Asia through its Act East Policy (AEP), now completing two years, will be useful.

Overall, the East Asia policy has been largely successful, receiving a significant momentum under PM Modi’s leadership. East Asia is a region he knew well personally before becoming prime minister through his various visits there in the past as Chief Minister of Gujarat.

Thus, the investment of political capital that he has made to deepen and widen ties with ASEAN as well as extra-ASEAN powers has been quite remarkable. This is indicated by a series of high-level visits by top Indian leaders to the region and the reciprocal visits in the past 20 months.

Most significant has been the switch from the Look East Policy (LEP) to the Act East Policy (AEP) in November 2014. It was neither a mere rebranding exercise nor the launch of a new look at policy but was a notable policy upgradation. The new policy appropriately accords higher priority to a region which today is witnessing the sharpest international power play involving the U.S. and China.

Both the key components of AEP – ties with ASEAN and with other powers (e.g. China, Japan and the U.S.) – came into clear focus last month at the meetings of foreign ministers at the India-ASEAN Summit and the East Asia Summit, held in Vientiane (Laos) on July 25 and 26 respectively. The summits themselves will take place in September.

India’s representative at those meetings was Minister of State for External Affairs, General (retd.) V.K. Singh. Speaking at the meeting with ASEAN foreign ministers, he stressed that ASEAN-India relations were not just about   shared civilisations and history, but also about the strategic fundamentals of economic growth, prosperity, peace and stability. In this regard, a close look at a few specific issues should be indicative of the current state of play.

First, trade between India and ASEAN has been on the decline, whereas growth in investments is reportedly robust. The target for bilateral trade was $100 billion by 2015, but trade today is just $65 billion. Concluding the long negotiations for the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) by end 2016, will certainly help. However, this timeline may be slipping from the hands of governments. The ASEAN side has been nudging India for more active cooperation, while India is insisting, legitimately, that it wants “a balanced” RCEP agreement, one that shows ambition in goods, services and investments equally.

Then there is India’s offer of a new $1 billion line of credit for connectivity projects with ASEAN announced by the Prime Minister in November 2015, but which are yet to be identified. . Officials in Jakarta, where the ASEAN Secretariat is located, are engaged in crafting “modalities,” according to ASEAN diplomatic sources. Meanwhile, to provide a push, the Indian side presented in Vientiane three concrete proposals on digital connectivity: an optical transmission network, e-networks for tele-medicine and tele-education, and GPS-aided geo-augmented navigation.  ASEAN has yet to respond with alacrity to India’s constructive initiatives.

Thirdly, New Delhi’s idea of setting up a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV), with an initial capital of $100 million, for public-private-partnership projects in four CLMV countries (Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam) is turning into a tangible proposal, albeit at a slow pace. It will need proactive promotion by India so that, in keeping with AEP’s stress on action and implementation, a few projects actually become a reality soon.

Finally, strengthening the perception that most new proposals for cooperation emanate from the Indian side, Minister of State for External Affairs V.K. Singh spelt out the possibilities of forging new links to promote co-operation in science and technology (S&T) particularly in the domains of renewable energy, space and Information and Communication Technology (ICT). India has increased its contribution to the S&T Fund from $1 million to $5 million. A greater responsiveness by ASEAN member-states could result in early progress.

As regards the extra-ASEAN facets of AEP, India’s handling of issues of the South China Sea, in light of the recent award by the Permanent Court of Arbitration Tribunal, has been marked by patience and realism. Fissures within the ASEAN are viewed as a serious, though understandable, handicap. Nevertheless, ASEAN centrality and a dialogue-centred approach are integral components of India’s policy.

So, South Block continues to urge reform of the regional security architecture and promote, in particular, “synergy” among the East Asia Summit (EAS), ASEAN Regional Forum and ASEAN Defence Ministers’ Meeting with the hope of creating greater harmony in the region. With voices of triumphalism coming from Beijing, and the current U.S. President becoming a lame duck, little progress may be expected this year on turning the EAS into a truly effective institution.

Against this backdrop, a fresh focus on a few key bilateral relationships may become more important than before. After months of divergences and tensions, India’s ties with China now need to be marked by calibrated conciliation or measured improvement in relations. The next G20 and BRICS summits present useful opportunities for this purpose. The on-going visit of Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi to Delhi, therefore, assumes considerable significance.

Bilateral relations with Japan, both in the strategic and economic domains, need to be deepened further.

Indonesia certainly deserves greater attention at the high political level.  The visit by the Indonesian President to India is long overdue.

Interactions with Myanmar, a country at a critical stage of development, too must be enhanced. Aung San Suu Kyi, who is, de facto,  the highest leader and the choice and voice of her people, should be invited with due respect to visit India. A mechanical, protocol-oriented approach may not suffice. Arranging a high-profile address by her before the Indian Parliament could be a winning move. When she visits Washington in September, she will do so at the invitation of the U.S. president. She is also assured of a warm welcome when she visits Beijing next week.

Of late, the Indian government has given heightened attention to development and connectivity projects in the North East. This will play a critical role in building both physical and other engagements with South East Asia. Already, civil society interactions are on the rise, like the 8 August 2016 launch of the ASEAN Study Centre in Shillong. Linking these regions – essentially looking from our Northeast in order to Act East – can be a winner for India and Asia.

When the India-ASEAN and EAS summits take place in September, there will be an opportunity to score more gains for India. As the policy completes 25 years in 2017, expectations are for more tangible results. For this, a stronger endeavour for cooperation, both by India and the region, will be essential.

***Rajiv Bhatia is Distinguished Fellow, Foreign Policy Studies Programme, Gateway House, and a former ambassador to Myanmar.***

#### Guest Column

### ****China-India Maritime Geopolitical Dynamics: Looking Forward****

by Koh Swee Lean Collin

[](http://lkyspp.nus.edu.sg/cag/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2016/09/cib80_indian-naval-vessel.jpg)

The South China Sea (SCS) situation appears to have eased somewhat, following the much observed Philippines-initiated lawsuit with the Permanent Court of Arbitration. Beijing did not engage in further major provocations and instead had worked with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to soothe tensions during the Kunming meeting; the U.S. Navy did not stage freedom of navigation operations (FONOPS) following the announcement of the verdict (the Chinese and U.S. navy chiefs met soon after, evidently to discuss about stabilizing the SCS situation amongst other issues at stake); and Manila dispatched former president Fidel Ramos to Beijing to hold “icebreaker” talks.

In the midst of all these developments, one may easily overlook the long simmering, persistent maritime dynamics between China and India across the broad swathes of the Indian Ocean and Western Pacific waters, part of which being New Delhi’s role in the SCS following the arbitration, and Beijing’s reaction – not just its response to India in that particular flashpoint but also its strategic forays in the Indian Ocean. Clearly the latter does not want an Indian complication added to an already complex problem on its hands. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi had called upon India to take a position on the SCS issues, and Beijing appears keen to acquire New Delhi’s backing in exchange for supporting the latter’s Nuclear Suppliers Group membership in particular.

But it is likely, almost inevitable, that the SCS arbitral decision would only sharpen the Sino-Indian maritime rivalry. In view of China’s anticipated continuation of its SCS policies including in large part what Beijing calls “defensive” build-up in the disputed waters, it is becomes only natural – almost instinctive reflex – for ASEAN governments to engage other extra-regional powers to stabilize the SCS. Vietnam made clear its desire to do precisely just that; part of its game plan being to enhance its engagement with India. Hanoi granted an extension of license for India’s state-owned ONGC Videsh Ltd (OVL) to perform offshore hydrocarbon exploration work in the SCS waters – an offer the Indians accepted for “strategic reasons” – a prospect unwelcome in Beijing.

Simultaneously, New Delhi will continue to enhance its naval presence in the Western Pacific as part of its “Act East” policy. The maritime defence and security dimension constitutes a major facet of this “Act East” policy enthusiastically adopted by the Indian Government under Prime Minister Narendra Modi – yet also one viewed warily by China as part of grander American-led scheme involving Japan as well to contain its rise. Even though Beijing appears to have voiced no opposition to India’s “lawful” maritime presence, it clearly does not desire New Delhi to cross its “red line” in the SCS – similar to what Japan has already been warned against. Interestingly, India had demurred on the prospects of conducting FONOPS – unilaterally or with partners such as the U.S. and Japan, but left open the possibility of joint naval training exercises.

Yet notwithstanding whatever moves, positive or otherwise, India chose to adopt in the SCS, China will not recede from the Indian Ocean. The significant stakes involved – much of which so existential such as China’s uninterrupted and secure access to Middle Eastern and North African energy resources critical for its sustained socioeconomic development and in turn, domestic political stability – will continue to tie Beijing to the Indian Ocean. China’s burgeoning naval presence there, entrenched through its longstanding commitment to counter-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden, will be further enhanced once its military facility in Djibouti turns operational. In January 2015, Chinese military authorities said that “in future, Chinese military will send different kinds of naval ships to take part in the naval escort in accordance with change of situation and the requirement of the task. These are quite normal activities and there is no need to read too much into them.”

Once these “normal activities” fall into place, enabled by China’s rapid accumulation of bluewater power projection capabilities, India’s strategic concerns will be heightened, especially given that Beijing has already started to flex this newfound naval strength using the Indian Ocean as “testing ground”. One recalls the PLA Navy’s first Lombok Strait exercises in January 2014. More ominously, China paid its first submarine visit to Sri Lanka’s port of Colombo in November the same year, coinciding with brief Sino-Indian tensions along the disputed land border, further fuelling India’s worries. PLA Navy submarines docked twice in a row in the Pakistani port of Karachi during the April-July 2015 period, around the time their surface brethren conducted a high-profile evacuation of civilians from strife-torn Yemen.

Indeed, Beijing has insistently defended its naval activities as “legitimate and legal and follow the international practices”. The overarching context is that, even as they generally agreed with New Delhi’s special Indian Ocean role by virtue of its geostrategic position, Chinese military scholars argued against the perception of the Indian Ocean as India’s “backyard”. Just like India’s defence and security engagements with various Western Pacific – including ASEAN – countries, China will continually seek inroads into the same with India’s neighbours, a number of which desire China’s presence to balance against New Delhi’s dominance in the Indian Ocean.

Therefore, the Sino-Indian mutual suspicion looks set to persist in the long term – transcending the SCS disputes. There is little incentive for China to mute its activities in the Indian Ocean for the sake of assuaging New Delhi’s concerns, and so is the case for the latter with respect to the Western Pacific just to reassure Beijing. The evolving SCS situation will contribute by sharpening this maritime rivalry as ASEAN and other Indian Ocean governments seek to build upon existing bilateral defence and security interactions, or establish new ones, with China and India in order to hedge against the uncertainties ahead.

The Hindu

# India, China diagnose insensitivity to core interests as chief hurdle in ties

* [Atul Aneja](http://www.thehindu.com/profile/author/atul-aneja/)

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REUTERS

Chinese President Xi Jinping shakes hands with Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the G20 Summit in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, China on Sunday. Analysts say that the Prime Minister’s 35-minute talks with Mr. Xi were “highly significant” as the under-appreciation of each others’ core “strategic interests” was identified as the main obstacle, preventing the bilateral ties to reach the next level.

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## Modi raises with Xi the issue of terrorism emanating from the controversial China Pakistan Economic Corridor.

India and  China on Sunday sought to reboot ties, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi advocating in his talks with Chinese President Xi Jinping that New Delhi and Beijing must be sensitive to  each other’s “strategic concerns” — a theme which included a reference to terrorism radiating from the controversial China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

In response to a question whether the Prime Minister raised concerns regarding terrorism emerging from the area covered by CPEC — the 46-billion dollar connectivity project jointly undertaken by China and Pakistan — Foreign Ministry spokesperson Vikas Swarup said: “That issue was also raised.”

**Talks ‘highly significant’**

Analysts say that the Prime Minister’s 35-minute talks with President Xi were “highly significant” as the under-appreciation of each others’ core  “strategic interests”  was identified as the main obstacle, preventing India-China ties to reach the next level.

The spokesperson did not specifically affirm whether Mr. Modi raised India’s membership to the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), to which China has objected, with Mr. Xi: “I am not going into specifics, but if you read between the lines, you can pretty well understand that when we talk of strategic interests and aspirations, it is not that as if China is unaware of our strategic concerns and aspirations or we are unaware of their concerns. So this is something that both sides are very well aware.”

“**Direction to the direction of relations”**

Mr. Swarup added: “Meeting at the summit level is meant to provide ideas and direction to the overall direction of relations.”

Highly places sources had earlier told *The Hindu* that all contentious issues, including China’s reservations in sanctioning Jaish-e-Mohammad chief Masood Azhar and the CPEC, are expected to be discussed “openly and frankly” at the  newly formed dialogue mechanism between the Foreign Secretary and the Vice-Foreign Minister from China.

The forum was established during last month’s visit of Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi to India. A special mechanism has also been established that will focus only on China’s objections to India’s entry to the NSG, during Mr. Wang’s visit.

**NSG as “export control” mechanism**

 The Indian side has already conveyed to their Chinese interlocutors that New Delhi views the NSG as an “export control” mechanism, and not a “non-proliferation” initiative. Consequently, India’s entry to NSG cannot be tied with New Delhi’s signature to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) — the criteria set by Beijing — whose role is essentially to prevent the spread of atomic weapons.

Mr. Modi, nevertheless, stressed during talks with Mr. Xi that both countries must take “specific actions” in order to curb “negative perceptions” of each other.

“As a matter of principle, both countries would have to be sensitive to each other’s strategic interests. In order to promote positive convergences, we will also need to prevent negative perceptions. For this the specific actions by both countries would play the major role,” the spokesman paraphrased the Prime Minister as saying.

Mr. Modi also said that in order “to ensure durable bilateral ties, and steady development, it is of paramount importance that we respect each other’s aspirations, concerns and strategic interests,” the spokesperson observed.

**Tacit reference to Pakistan**

Despite the focus on bilateralism, the shadow of Pakistan hung over the talks. Without naming Pakistan —China’s “all weather ally” — the Prime Minister said: “Our response to terrorism must not be motivated by political considerations.”

The spokesman pointed out that speaking later at meeting of the Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa (BRICS) grouping on the sidelines of the G-20 summit, the Prime Minister observed that terror groups “in South Asia and for that matter anywhere do not own banks and factories”. “Clearly someone funds and arms them and the BRICS must intensify its joint efforts not only to fight terror, but to coordinate actions to isolate those who are supporters and sponsors of terror.” The “supply chains [of terrorism] and reach are global, [and] abuse of social media to promote radical ideology is a growing dimension of this threat.”

Focusing on counter-terrorism, the BRICS countries have welcomed the forthcoming talks of the National Security Advisers, as well as the meeting of the Joint Working Group on counterterrorism of the five countries.

The Hindu

# Terror, NSG should not be issues between India, China: Foreign Secretary

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Foreign Secretary S Jaishankar addressing a press conference in New Delhi on Thursday.

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India on Friday said sanctioning of well-known terrorist leaders and organisations besides developmental issues like access to cooperation and investments in the field of civil nuclear energy should not emerge as points of difference with a “partner” like China.

Foreign Secretary S Jaishankar said that China is expected to be appreciative of India’s interests, especially when they are not in conflict with those of Beijing, and noted that it is imperative for the future of Asia and the world, that the two nations approach each other with strategic maturity.

He admitted that bilateral ties with China were “complicated” but stressed that one should not approach the relationship as a zero sum game.

“There is an expectation in India that a partner like China would be appreciative of India’s interests, especially when they are not in conflict with those of China.

“Combating terrorism is one such area and sanctioning of well-known terrorist leaders and organisations should not emerge as an issue of difference. Nor should reservations on developmental issues, such as India’s predictable access to international cooperation and investments in the field of civil nuclear energy,” he said speaking at a conference here.

Dr. Jaishankar was referring to China blocking India’s bid to put Pakistan-based terrorist Masood Azhar’s on UN Security Council blacklist of groups linked to al-Qaeda or Islamic State and India’s entry in the Nuclear Suppliers Group.

Admitting that India and China have a “complicated relationship”, the Foreign Secretary said one should not ignore the collaborative and convergent side of the ties as well.

Sino-Indian ties are a subject of heightened attention.

Part of the reason is the weight of history that this particular relationship carries on its shoulders, he said.

Some of it also arises from the great potential that it holds and the impact that its direction could have on regional and global politics.

“The report card of our ties for the last three decades is much stronger than many assume,” he said.

Noting that from a situation of limited contacts and content, India—China relations have on Friday transitioned out of their state of abnormalcy, Mr. Jaishankar said one must give due credit to the efforts of successive governments on both sides who have ensured peace and tranquillity on the border, even as negotiations on its settlement continue.

“Difficult problems, some of them pertaining to sovereignty, have not been side-stepped,” he said.

The Hindu

Updated: August 29, 2016 15:09 IST

# U.S. to help India in NSG entry

* [http://www.thehindu.com/multimedia/dynamic/02002/9uV9neXd_2002771j.jpgSuhasini Haidar](http://www.thehindu.com/profile/author/suhasini-haidar/)

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Richard Verma

## Washington will take up New Delhi’s case at ‘highest levels’: Richard Verma.

The U.S. will push for India’s membership of the Nuclear Suppliers Group when the issue is taken up later this year at the “highest levels”, U.S. Ambassador to India Richard Verma said.

In comments exclusively to *The Hindu*, ahead of U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry’s arrival in Delhi, which coincides with Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar’s visit to Washington on Monday, Mr. Verma said, “We were disappointed in [the NSG decision in June 2016], but will continue to work constructively with India and all NSG members on India’s accession in the months ahead.”

“We have pushed strongly on this issue with NSG members at the highest levels of our government,” he added.

The Obama administration will hold its last round of the Strategic and Commercial Dialogue (S&CD) with India on Tuesday, when Mr. Kerry and U.S. Commerce Secretary Penny Pritzker will meet with their counterparts Sushma Swaraj and Nirmala Sitharaman in Delhi.

Officials on both sides confirmed to *The Hindu* that the NSG membership issue will be discussed, including the hope within the government that the U.S. will take up India’s case at the “highest levels”, i.e. between President Obama and President Xi, possibly during their upcoming meeting at G-20 next week.

In 2008, former President George Bush’s phone call to former Chinese President Hu Jintao swung a waiver from the NSG in India’s favour.

Responding to a question from *The Hindu* on whether the U.S. hadn’t done the “heavy lifting” required, Mr. Verma rejected the concerns, saying, “I can reassure you we will continue high-level engagement in support of India’s membership.”

**Diplomatic efforts needed**  
  
Other former U.S. officials have also hinted that Indian diplomacy, not Mr. Obama’s intervention was needed to bring a shift in China’s stand, that India sign the Non proliferation treaty to join the NSG.

Indicating that China’s tough position on the South China Sea and the Indo-U.S. ‘Joint vision for the Asia Pacific’ will also be discussed during the S&CD meet, Mr. Verma said the talks would “continue to focus on U.S.-India initiatives that bolster the security of our global commons and help reinforce the rules-based international order.”

Asked if announcements during Mr. Kerry’s visit to Delhi would be significant, given that the Obama administration is drawing to a close, or “lame duck” period, Mr. Verma said, “This will be the last Strategic and Commercial Dialogue of the Obama Administration, and locks in the exceptional progress made in our bilateral relationship over the past eight years. It also places our relations on a solid footing to aim ever higher in the next Administration.”

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* Vietnam top leaders hail India’s position on disputed South China Sea

# Vietnam top leaders hail India’s position on disputed South China Sea

## Vietnam's top leaders on Saturday lauded India's position on the disputed South China Sea (SCS) and sought its participation in oil and gas sectors of the Communist nation.

By: [PTI](http://indianexpress.com/agency/pti/) | Hanoi | Published:September 3, 2016 5:40 pm

Prime Minister Narendra Modi meeting the President of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, Tran Dai Quang, in Hanoi, Vietnam on Saturday. (Source: PTI Photo)

Vietnam’s top leaders on Saturday lauded India’s position on the disputed South China Sea (SCS) and sought its participation in oil and gas sectors of the Communist nation, as they hailed the upgradation of bilateral ties to Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.

Vietnam appreciates India’s principled position on the South China Sea issue, Communist Party General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong told Prime Minister [Narendra Modi](http://indianexpress.com/about/narendra-modi) when the latter called on him, sources said.

“We must also intensify our coordination in regional and multilateral fora,” he told Modi, who reiterated that India always stood as a friend with Vietnam throughout history.

“It would be rare to find such a relationship which has lasted 2,000 years,” he told Trong and recalled the Vietnamese leader’s visit to India in 2013.

China is involved in a raging dispute with the Philippines, Vietnam, Taiwan, Malaysia and Brunei over ownership of territory in the SCS, a busy waterway through which India’s 50 per cent trade passes.

India supports freedom of navigation and over flight, and unimpeded commerce, based on the principles of international law, as reflected notably in the UNCLOS (United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea).

India believes that states should resolve disputes through peaceful means without threat or use of force and exercise self-restraint in the conduct of activities that could complicate or escalate disputes affecting peace and stability.

The Prime Minister said areas such as cyber security and information technology would benefit from the creation of a task force and help the two sides solve future problems.

Trong agreed that India-Vietnam relations were time tested and very durable. He said he had visited India twice in 2010 and 2013 and both visits had left very good impressions.

Noting that India is a major country with unique and age old civilisation and culture, he said Vietnamese people had never forgotten India’s strong support during Vietnam’s struggle for independence, sources said.

“The upgradation of relationship to Comprehensive Strategic Partnership was an indicator of the importance Vietnam attaches to India. It has strategic partnerships only with two other countries, Russia and China,” he said.

He also thanked Modi for India’s support to Vietnam’s armed forces and agreed with the Prime Minister that cooperation in cyber security was very important.

Prime Minister Modi also called on Vietnamese President Tran Dai Quang at the Presidential Palace on Saturday. “Our partnership will strengthen peace, development and security in the region,” President Quang told Modi.

Noting that Vietnam was a priority in India’s Act East policy, the Prime Minister lauded the strong foundation that had been laid for security and defence ties between the two countries, sources said.

President Quang said Vietnam fully supports India’s Act East Policy and thanked New Delhi for its consistent support to socio-economic development of this south east Asian nation.

He welcomed the upcoming 45th anniversary of diplomatic ties between India and Vietnam and 10th anniversary of the establishment of the Strategic Partnership which has been now elevated Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.

Prime Minister Modi recalled Quang’s visit to India in 2013 as Minister for Public Security. He said greater economic partnership would be a win-win for both countries. As ASEAN country coordinator for India during 2016-18, Vietnam can take forward relations between the two sides even further, he added.

President Quang called for frequent high-level exchanges to further strengthen political trust between the two sides.

He sought further support from India in investment, education, training and science and technology. He also sought more Indian participation in oil and gas sectors of Vietnam, sources said.

Both the leaders expressed great optimism for the future of India Vietnam ties. Prime Minister Modi invited Quang to visit India. President thanked him for the invitation.

Earlier, Prime Minister Modi met with Speaker of National Assembly Nguyen Thi Kim Ngan. The two leaders called for greater parliamentary exchanges between the two countries.

Ngan said she would be visiting India in December. She recalled long standing historical and cultural ties with India and said as a young girl she used to watch Indian films. The two leaders applauded the decision to upgrade the ties to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, sources said.

### Increased ties with Southeast Asia don’t detract from China’s goals in the CPEC

By Hu Weijia Source:Global Times Published: 2016/9/13 0:23:39

[27](http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1006157.shtml" \o "View more services" \t "_blank)

After a series of attacks targeting projects along the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), Pakistan has deployed 14,503 security guards to protect 7,036 Chinese nationals working on the ventures, the Times of India reported Monday.  
  
The CPEC has long been seen as symbolic of Sino-Pakistan economic cooperation. It is unlikely that China will change its supportive attitude on the CPEC in the short term, but the increasing cost of security is becoming a big problem in efficiently pushing forward the projects.  
  
The economic corridor, linking Kashgar in northwest China's [Xinjiang](http://www.globaltimes.cn/special-coverage/Xinjiang.html" \t "_blank) Uygur Autonomous Region and Gwadar Port in southwest Pakistan, passes through some turbulent regions, Kashmir included. It is unlikely to be plain sailing for China and Pakistan in their attempts to push forward the CPEC due to challenges such as a complex regional environment, and people in the two countries should be prepared for potential setbacks. The CPEC is a long-term project and its implementation calls for patience and effective measures to cope with ethnic conflicts and confrontations that may arise.  
  
Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was reported as saying last month that projects under the CPEC were the top priority for Pakistan's government. However, given the difficulty of protecting the personnel that are working in Pakistan, projects under the CPEC may need to be implemented and assessed step by step.  
  
This does not mean that China should give up on the idea of the CPEC because of the present challenges. However, China may not want to put too much focus on the region. At the very least, it would be unwise to put all its eggs in one basket.  
  
Beijing should consider giving more attention to its economic cooperation with Southeast Asian countries. The CPEC has long been seen as a flagship project in China's Belt and Road initiative, but the initiative's strategic focus may need to shift gradually toward Southeast Asia, where there is a wide infrastructure funding gap but a relatively stable regional environment that will enable China to efficiently push forward ventures under the Belt and Road initiative.  
  
China may need to start taking more gradual and steady steps in the CPEC, but at the same time the country should be more aggressive in seeking cooperation with various Southeast Asian countries, Vietnam included. Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc is currently on a six-day visit to China. Hopefully the two countries will be able to put aside disputes that have arose over the South China Sea and focus on promoting economic development. In past years, economic ties between China and Vietnam have maintained good momentum.   
  
These efforts to promote economic cooperation between China and Southeast Asian countries do not need to detract from the goals in the CPEC. Upgrading infrastructure in Southeast Asia is an important component of the efforts to initiate new trade channels in the region, a move which can benefit countries throughout Asia.

Global Times

### Is India heading toward alliance with US?

Source:Global Times Published: 2016/8/30 0:18:39

[35](http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1003574.shtml" \o "View more services" \t "_blank)

The US and India are expected to sign a logistics agreement which allows both sides access to each other's military facilities for refueling and replenishment. Indian Defense Minister Manohar Parrikar has departed on a visit to the US and will sign this historic pact with his US counterpart Ashton Carter.  
  
This is undoubtedly a leap forward in US-India military cooperation. US media highly applauded this deal, with Forbes hailing it as a "war pact" and believing that India is shifting away from Russia, its Cold War ally, toward a new alliance with the US.  
  
The Indian side has adopted a prudent attitude. Some defense analysts expressed worries that India may lose strategic independence and warned that the pact may render New Delhi a "follower" of Washington.  
  
India has practiced the principles of non-alignment since independence, which have been advocated by Indian elites. However, in recent years, Washington has deliberately wooed New Delhi to become its quasi ally so as to impose geopolitical pressure on China.  
  
It is possible that the Modi administration is trying an unconventional way to lean toward the US with the logistics agreement.   
  
But how close the US-India relationship can be and what geopolitical values it can get remains a question.  
  
India holds dear its independence and sovereignty after squeezing out of the UK's colonialism. It views itself as a major power and is developing on the wave of the emerging countries. It attaches high importance to national security. It feels it is an urgent task because its defense levels are a necessary condition of being a major power, rather than out of a sense of crisis that requires an intimacy to the US.  
  
If India hastily joins the US alliance system, it may irritate China, Pakistan or even Russia. It may not make India feel safer, but will bring strategic troubles to itself and make itself a center of geopolitical rivalries in Asia.  
  
Due to its non-alignment policy, India has been given attention from all the major powers such as the US, Japan, China and Russia in recent years.   
  
Now is arguably a time when India has the most room for strategic maneuvering. During Shinzo Abe's first tenure as Japan's prime minister, Japan hyped the concept of a quadrilateral alliance between the US, Japan, Australia and India; however, New Delhi remained cool to the idea.  
  
Therefore, India will not lean toward the US, because it will not only hurt India's self-esteem, more importantly, India can gain more strategic benefits by striking a balance between China and the US.  
  
Since China does not resort to regional expansion, the US' maneuvers in Asia will prove futile. The primary field of competition for China and the US is the economy. As long as China can keep its fast growth, the US' strategic deployment will go nowhere.

# The Indian Express

# Manufacturing sector: Make in India, but not the ‘China’ way

## The idea of export-led manufacturing as followed by China and some other nations might not be the only way for India to pursue growth, opine experts, considering the change in dynamics in global economy.

Written by [Sandeep Singh](http://indianexpress.com/profile/author/sandeep-singh/) | New Delhi | Updated: September 6, 2016 2:13 am

In July, India’s merchandise exports fell 6.84 per cent to .69 billion compared to .28 billion in the corresponding month of 2015.(Express Photo: Vishal Srivastav)

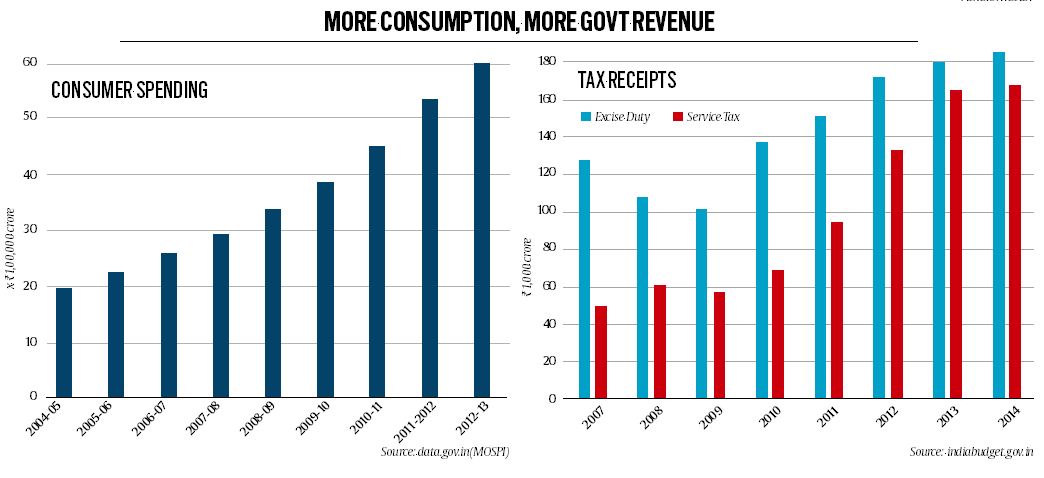
Notwithstanding the growing clamour for a concerted manufacturing push and the government’s efforts to woo global investors to set up industrial units in India, there is also an emergent counterview.

Close on the heels of former RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan’s December 2014 call for a rethink on the replication of China’s export-led manufacturing strategy, Nandan Nilekani, the former chairman of the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) and ex-chairman of Infosys, too, has argued in favour of a domestic consumption-led growth, alongside a concerted push in the services sector. In a presentation titled “An alternative view of the future — India in the age of technological disruption” delivered at the 10th anniversary of IDG Ventures in Bengaluru, Nilekani also pointed to the future growth and job creation being led by small businesses, backed by technology platform and not by large employers.

When China, South Korea and Japan took upon the manufacturing path to push their economic growth around two to three decades ago, their call was supported by global demand and also there was no established competition, Nilekani feels. He however, said that the dynamics of manufacturing have changed a lot now and that might not be the right path to tread as there are issues of overcapacity and disruption on account of the automation in manufacturing.

On the one hand China has massive overcapacity across sectors such as steel, aluminium and coal and on the other hand modern manufacturing is shifting towards automation with the use of robotics which will limit the job creation ability of manufacturing sector. In case of steel itself China’s capacity stands at 822 million tonnes which is almost 10 times to India’s capacity of 86 million tonnes. Citing the example of Adidas that is setting two plants in Germany for shoes to be manufactured by robots, he said that both the factories will employ an aggregate of just 320 employees as against the large number of employees it employed in its Asian factories. Even iPhone maker, [Foxconn](http://indianexpress.com/about/foxconn/) Technology is planning to set up highly automated factories in China and USA. “I think that manufacturing will not shift from China to India but from China to Robots,” Nilekani told The Indian Express adding that manufacturing can be an important part of growth but it may not be the job creator. This, however, comes as a counter to the broader narrative where slow pace of job creation in India has been attributed to lack of manufacturing prowess. Nilekani feels that while automation and robotics are making manufacturing a high-end and capital intensive activity, he said, “It will not lead to job creation.”

In his presentation, he further pointed that technology is a huge driver of change in manufacturing and Robotics, Internet of Things and 3D printing are changing manufacturing. “Automation will hit manufacturing before we catch up,” warned Nilekani.



Earlier in December 2014, Speaking at an event organised by industry body Ficci, Rajan had said that an export-led growth strategy will not pay for India as it did for Asian economies, including China, due to the tepid global economic recovery, especially in the industrial countries. “Other emerging markets certainly could absorb more, and a regional focus for exports will pay off. But the world as a whole is unlikely to be able to accommodate another export-led China,” he said.

Incidentally, since the beginning of economic liberalisation in 1991, India has seen a significant jump in the share of trade (exports and imports) in the GDP. If it stood at around 15 per cent 25 years ago, it now stands at around 50 per cent. Stating that there may be a limitation to the quantum of growth in the trade to GDP ratio from here, Nilekani said, “If you want to grow at 8-10 per cent then hitch your wagon to growth drivers.” His prescription comes at a time when the world is witnessing a slowdown in trade. In fact, India too has seen a decline in trade and its exports have been falling. In July, India’s merchandise exports fell 6.84 per cent to $21.69 billion compared to $23.28 billion in the corresponding month of 2015.

Nilekani feels that India must look at its strengths for growth. “We can’t design our future by looking at the rear view mirror. Domestic consumption, services sector and productivity led by technology platform companies will drive growth,” he said.

Among the major service sectors Nilekani said that growth in the outsourcing space will benefit India as it is a young country in an aging world. He also pointed that growth in housing, health, education and tourism sectors will also drive growth. “Services are labour intensive and growth in the same will drive jobs too,” said Nilekani. Another major growth segment that the Nilekani sees can be potential growth driver for India is the technology driven platforms that aggregate small players across the country. So, rather than having large corporations driving growth, Nilekani views that small businesses will lead the growth and push job creation.

“Large employers will transition to networks of small businesses, micro entrepreneurs, built around new age platforms (aggregators / marketplaces) leading to broad based jobs growth,” said Nilekani. Citing the example of marketplace platforms such as Ola and Uber, Nilekani said that platforms such as theirs would create numerous jobs.

He said that while the new-age platforms will create a few, high-value jobs that can be leveraged to enable service providers, a large number of service providers in turn will create multiple jobs and these will be across various fields — services, retail, agriculture and hospitality among others. He also pointed to the role of evolving digital platform that will provide the enabling environment for these platforms to succeed. With a sharp rise in smartphone and internet penetration (331 million internet users) which is now the second largest in the world, Nilekani feels an integration of smartphones with the digital identity infrastructure such as Aadhaar (which can authenticate 100 million transactions per day), will allow individuals to do commercial transactions.

The Indian Express

# Raja Mandala: The myth of military neutrality

## With Chinese influence growing in the subcontinent, India needs greater engagement with the big powers.

Written by [C. Raja Mohan](http://indianexpress.com/profile/columnist/c-raja-mohan/) | Updated: September 6, 2016 12:16 am

During his visit to Vietnam last week, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his interlocutors agreed to elevate their long standing military collaboration to a “comprehensive strategic partnership”. (Source: File)

Political anxieties about India’s growing defence ties with Washington persist despite the NDA government’s repeated clarifications that the recent logistics support agreement is not about building a military alliance with the US. While the public debate on this issue is centred on high principles, Delhi’s policymakers are under compulsion to adapt to the rapidly evolving power shift in and around India’s neighbourhood. As a result, Indian foreign policy’s military dimension is likely to loom larger than ever before.

Consider the following developments in the last few days: During his visit to Vietnam last week, Prime Minister [Narendra Modi](http://indianexpress.com/about/narendra-modi) and his interlocutors agreed to elevate their long standing military collaboration to a “comprehensive strategic partnership”. In an intensification of India’s military commitment to Vietnam, the PM announced Delhi’s decision to extend a $500-million credit line to Hanoi for the purchase of Indian defence equipment. This is in addition to the $100-million defence credit offered some years ago.

Another was the Afghan Taliban’s strong public criticism of India’s reported plans to step up military assistance to Kabul. In a statement on Sunday, Zabiullah Mujahid, the main spokesman for the Taliban, demanded that India stop “prolonging the lifespan” of the Kabul regime with its military aid.

Meanwhile, in a report published in Pakistan on Sunday, The Express Tribune said that Islamabad is negotiating a new long-term defence pact with China. The news leak in Islamabad has come days after the signing of the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) between India and the US at the end of August during Defence Minister [Manohar Parrikar](http://indianexpress.com/about/manohar-parrikar)’s visit to Washington.

While Pakistan’s concern about deepening military cooperation between India and the US is understandable, the Congress party’s reaction to the LEMOA captures the continuing confusion in India. It was indeed the UPA government that opened up India to substantive defence cooperation with the US by signing a 10-year framework agreement in May 2005. But the Congress leadership soon developed cold feet and held back from signing agreements like the LEMOA.

In the statement issued in New Delhi on August 30, the Congress declared that the signing of the LEMOA is a “fundamental departure from India’s time-tested policy of “strategic military neutrality”. The surprising phrase, “strategic military neutrality”, however, sits uneasily with the proposition that it is “time-tested”. The drafters of the press release perhaps were probably constructing this neologism as a synonym for the more popular terms “strategic autonomy” and “non-alignment”.

The idea of “neutrality” nevertheless grates. In defining non-alignment as the leitmotif of India’s foreign policy, Pandit [Jawaharlal Nehru](http://indianexpress.com/about/jawaharlal-nehru) was not seeking to turn India into a giant Switzerland, the exemplar of “neutrality” in the Westphalian world. For Nehru, non-alignment was about retaining the independence of judgment and freedom of political action. For India’s first PM, non-alignment was not about equidistance between major powers but of taking positions based on India’s interest and building military partnerships when necessary.

The Congress added that the LEMOA will “cause serious misgivings, unless explained and justified, among India’s traditional partners and time-tested allies, regionally and globally”. One wonders how “time-tested strategic military neutrality” squares with the idea of “time-tested allies”? The problem for the Congress, it would seem, is not really with the break from the principle of “non-alignment”, but of a strategic embrace with the US. There might be few objections from it, if Delhi were to sign a LEMOA agreement with say Russia or Japan.

While there are good reasons for this discomfort with the US — its alliance with Pakistan is one of them — India’s apprehensions of Chinese power are even stronger. In the wake of the 1962 war with China, Nehru turned to Washington for military assistance and considered a long-term strategic partnership. As the US drew closer to China at the turn of the 1970s, India aligned with the Soviet Union.

Like the LEMOA now, the Indo-Soviet Treaty of 1971 was criticised by many as a departure from the principles of “non-alignment”. But what India did with Russia was a classic balancing act against the Sino-American entente and their special relations with Pakistan. Forget the formal claims of Delhi and Beijing that they don’t do alliances. India could not but view China’s nuclear and missile cooperation with Pakistan as an “alliance”. China was not going to be impressed by Delhi’s claims that its relationship with Moscow was not an alliance.

Whatever the myth of “strategic military neutrality” might be, Delhi today cannot be neutral between China and Vietnam or between the Taliban and Kabul. As China’s military power radiates into the subcontinent with ever greater vigour, Delhi has begun to react. Relying on old myths is not going to help India avoid a potential conflict with China. Delhi must instead try and build a stable balance of the power system in the region. That would demand greater military engagement with all the major powers, and not “military neutrality” between them.

Forbes

# China And India To Build Sri Lanka's Colombo Financial City Together?

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[](http://www.forbes.com/sites/wadeshepard/)

[Wade Shepard](http://www.forbes.com/sites/wadeshepard/" \t "_self) ,

Contributor

I travel to emerging markets around Asia and report on what I find.

Opinions expressed by Forbes Contributors are their own.

Colombo Financial City has so far been one of the most [geopolitically derisive and controversial](http://thediplomat.com/2016/05/chinas-jewel-in-the-heart-of-the-indian-ocean/" \t "_blank) of all of China’s international development projects.

Formerly called [Colombo Port City](http://www.forbes.com/sites/wadeshepard/2016/08/12/a-look-at-colombo-port-city-the-frontline-of-china-and-indias-geopolitical-showdown/" \t "_self), the 269 hectare business district that is being built on reclaimed land off the coast of Sri Lanka’s capital has drawn the ire of India since the project commenced for the first time in 2014. The reason for this reaction is simple: the $1.4 billion new city of skyscrapers, hotels, and shopping malls is nearly 100% Chinese foreign direct investment and the original plan (since revised) had 50 hectares of permanent freehold rights going to China.



Work getting ready to begin again on Colombo Financial City. Image: Wade Shepard.

The possibility of the upstart superpower to the east having its very own outpost just off the shores of Tamil Nadu didn’t resonate well with India. This was in no small part due to the fact that Colombo Financial City was to become a major station along China’s 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, which also includes new Chinese-backed ports in Myanmar, Bangladesh, the Maldives, and Pakistan — essentially surrounding India in what has been dubbed a “[string of pearls](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/String_of_Pearls_%28Indian_Ocean%29" \t "_blank).” India’s apprehension about the hypothetical strategic nature of Colombo Financial City was in no way assuaged when Chinese military submarines and a warship pulled into port near the project area in 2014.

“So there China would be, a Chinese company would be getting land that is reclaimed from the sea and equal rights to part of it and so on. So that was controversial in India and they felt that there was a risk that China is going to have naval interests and a security presence there and how that would affect India’s own geopolitical position,” explained Deshal de Mel, a senior economist at Hayleys Plc in Colombo.

For the next couple of years, Colombo Financial City would become the [frontline of China and India’s geopolitical showdown](http://www.forbes.com/sites/wadeshepard/2016/08/12/a-look-at-colombo-port-city-the-frontline-of-china-and-indias-geopolitical-showdown" \t "_self), with one side always trying to whittle down the influence of the other. But it no longer has to be this way.

Yi Xianliang, China’s ambassador to Sri Lanka, invited India to participate in the Colombo Financial City project last month.

“We welcome any third party to join Sri Lanka and China. We are not opposed to India or any other country. China already has many business relationships with India,” [Yi said](http://www.atimes.com/article/china-invites-india-join-sri-lanka-offshore-city-project/" \t "_blank).

While India remains hesitant about taking hold of the olive branch just yet, joining in on the financial city project wouldn’t necessarily be too far outside of their established ambitions in Sri Lanka. The [Asia Times reported](http://www.atimes.com/article/china-invites-india-join-sri-lanka-offshore-city-project/" \t "_blank) that just last month India’s Commerce and Industry Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced that over the next few years India would be investing upwards of $2 billion in Sri Lanka — and Colombo Financial City is the biggest investment project that Sri Lanka has going.

China has already vouched an additional $8 billion to pump into the financial city project and Sri Lanka expects the FDI total to top $13 billion, in what is the largest infrastructure project in the country’s history. When it is all said and done Colombo Financial City is projected to become a game changing financial center that could rival Singapore to the east and Dubai to the west.

India was never necessarily excluded from this project or any other along China’s Belt and Road initiative, which includes the Maritime Silk Road. In fact, the leading nation of South Asia has [been invited to participate](http://thediplomat.com/2015/07/why-india-should-join-chinas-new-maritime-silk-road/" \t "_blank) on numerous occasions, which would further develop and enhance the diplomatic and financial links between the world’s two largest emerging economies.

After a series of starts and stops, years of geopolitical jockeying, and the [threat of a massive law suit](http://in.reuters.com/article/sri-lanka-china-portcity-idINKCN10D18B" \t "_blank), [Colombo Financial City is back online](http://thediplomat.com/2016/05/chinas-jewel-in-the-heart-of-the-indian-ocean/" \t "_blank) — land is being reclaimed and it’s looking as if the new city is actually going to be built. And maybe, just maybe, this time it won’t be a source of contention between two of Asia’s heavyweight economies, who could potentially join forces in what is certainly one of the biggest and most dynamic development projects happening in the world today.

I'm the author of [*Ghost Cities of China*](http://www.amazon.com/Ghost-Cities-China-Populated-Arguments/dp/178360218X/). I'm currently traveling the New Silk Road doing research for a new book. [*Follow by RSS*](http://www.forbes.com/sites/wadeshepard/feed/).

### ****Security Discussions between China and India: A Two-level Logic****

by David Scott



Between April and September 2016 China and India engaged in a variety of security discussions involving their special representatives, national security advisors, defence ministers, foreign ministers and heads of government. These discussions show a two-level logic of some global agreement, but more evident regional disagreements.

**Special Representatives**

From 20-21 April, the 19th Special Representatives’ Meeting on the India-China Boundary Question, a mechanism running since 2003, brought India’s National Security Advisor Ajit to China for discussions with his Chinese counterpart Yang Jiechi. Chinese Foreign Ministry [comments](http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/t1357438.shtml" \t "_blank) were positive, that “the two sides enhanced mutual trust and expanded consensus through this meeting which is of great significance in promoting settlement of the boundary question, maintaining peace and tranquillity of the border areas and securing sound and stable development of bilateral relations”. However, vagueness surrounded what was actually discussed and agreed/disagreed since barring the opening remarks, officials on both sides maintained total secrecy on the proceedings and Doval himself declined to speak to the media. Chinese [comments](http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/t1357438.shtml" \t "_blank) that “extensive, in-depth and candid exchange of views on the boundary question, bilateral relations, and regional and international issues” were opaque, candid being often a euphemism for blunt private disagreement. No progress was evident on incoming Indian border and regional concerns, though cooperation against terrorism was reaffirmed, including intelligence-sharing.

From 30-31 August, at the 9th meeting of the Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination on China-India Border Affairs, Ouyang Yujing, China’s Director-General of the Department of Boundary and Ocean Affairs of the Foreign Ministry, had discussions in New Delhi with Pradeep Rawat, the Joint Secretary of the East Asia Division of the Ministry of External Affairs. A peaceful border was trumpeted despite heated Indian media [comments](http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/in-uttarakhand-land-and-air-incursions-chinese-troops-harish-rawat-peoples-liberation-army-pla-chamoli-district-2939419/" \t "_blank) the previous month about Chinese land “incursions” and airspace “violations” in the Chamoli district of Uttarakhand. Chinese [rhetoric](http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjbxw/t1395422.shtml" \t "_blank) was positive in terms of the Working Mechanism being “to create favourable conditions for boundary talks … at the next stage”; but again this represents border management rather than border resolution since sovereignty dealing boundary talks remained unstarted.

**National Security representatives**

China and India share common global-level concerns on counter-terrorism. This was [evident](http://mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/27401/Meeting_of_the_BRICS_High_Representatives_Responsible_for_National_Security" \t "_blank) on 15 September, at the Meeting of the BRICS High Representatives Responsible for National Security, which brought together China’s State Councillor Yang Jiechi with India’s National Security Adviser Ajit Doval, with a newly-established BRICS Working Group on Counter Terrorism [meeting](http://mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/27400/First_Meeting_of_the_BRICS_Joint_Working_Group_on_Counter_Terrorism_September_14_2016" \t "_blank) the day before.

**Foreign Ministers**

On 17 April, China’s Foreign Minister Wang Yi and India’s Minister for External Affairs Sushma Swaraj met in Moscow for the Russia-India-China (RIC) Foreign Ministers meeting in which the [RIC Joint Statement](http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1356652.shtml" \t "_blank) expressed common ground on pushing for a “multi-polar international system”. With regard to regional affairs, the three RIC Foreign Ministers also agreed to establish a new trilateral Russia-India-China Consultation on Asia Pacific Affairs that would meet in late-2016

Although [Wang Yi](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-04/18/c_135290754.htm" \t "_blank) was keen to [stress](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-04/19/c_135290847.htm" \t "_blank) that for the future “China and India should work together through the alignment of each other’s development strategies, in order to facilitate the earlier realization of the Asian century”, current friction over South Asia was apparent in further bilateral discussions between Swaraj and Wang, where Swaraj [raised](http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Sushma-Swaraj-raises-Masood-Azhar-issue-with-Chinese-counterpart/articleshow/51875452.cms" \t "_blank) the issue of China’s blocking on 31 March of Indian attempts at the United Nations to add Masood Azhar, the leader of the terrorist group Jaish-e-Mohammed linked to the attack on Pathankot airbase in January 2016, to the list of banned persons under UN Security Council resolution 1267. China’s reasons for blocking India’s UN move were linked to its support for Pakistan, an ongoing security issue for India.

In late August, Wang Yi visited India to hold bilateral talks with Sushma Swaraj. The Chinese Foreign Ministry’s [sense](http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjb_663304/wjbz_663308/activities_663312/t1389330.shtml" \t "_blank) of the significance of Wang’s trip was that China-India cooperation was “facilitating multi-polarization progress” which was a pointer to constraining any US unipolar order. The ongoing border issue was joined on the agenda list by apparently candid but unreleased discussions over China blocking India’s bid to join the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), over the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), and over New Delhi’s move to bring about a UN ban on Masood Azhar. Indian [sources](http://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/india-china-relations-nsg-episode-foreign-minister-wang-yi-delhi-visit-2969091/" \t "_blank) claimed this was “an occasion to start a conversation with Beijing”, but it was difficult to see any tangible movement on specific security issues. A two-level logic was [suggested](http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjb_663304/wjbz_663308/activities_663312/t1389329.shtml" \t "_blank) by official Chinese comments that the two countries would “never allow specific differences to affect the overall bilateral friendship and not let individual [border and regional] problems hold back the steps of bilateral [economic] cooperation”.  It seemed an exchange of (divergent regional) views alongside some common global points of agreement on anti-terrorism and anti-piracy security issues. On the institutional front, one further development of Wang’s visit in August was the announcement of a new Foreign Secretaries Mechanism, to be led by the India’s Foreign Secretary and China’s Vice Foreign Minister.

**Defence Ministers**

On 16 April India’s Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar flew into China for a 5-day visit. The context, of concern to China, was the visit to India the preceding week by US Secretary for Defence Ash Carter, in which Parrikar had signed an “in-principle” acceptance of a logistics support agreement with the United States, which was widely [interpreted](http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/us-defence-secretary-ashton-carters-india-visit-opens-up-challenges-too/article8486679.ece" \t "_blank) in India as China-related, and which was fully signed on 30 August. Parrikar raised various friction points with China; namely the Masood Azhar issue, China’s inability or reluctance to provide LoC (Line of Control) delineation maps along their disputed borders, and the Chinese presence in Pakistan-controlled Kashmir – on all of which China gave little ground. Admittedly, a couple of Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) were agreed in principle, including establishing a hotline between the defence ministries and increasing local border meeting points. However, again this represented border management rather than border resolution. Parrikar’s own trip to the US in August 2016 brought further security strengthening and announcement of tacit China-centric balancing measures between India, the US and Japan in the shape of regular MALABAR naval exercises.

**Heads of Government**

Modi had discussions with Xi at the SCO Summit in July and the G20 summit being hosted by China in September 2016. China-India cooperation to defeat “[the scourge of terrorism](http://mea.gov.in/media-briefings.htm?dtl/27366/Transcript_of_Media_Briefing_by_Official_Spokesperson_in_Hangzhou_on_Prime_Ministers_visit_to_China_September_04_2016" \t "_blank)“ was agreed in their bilateral meeting in September, having been a similar shared concern at their SCO discussions. With regard to the G20 meeting, Indian sources [argued that](http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Tough-negotiations-expected-during-PM-Modi-Xi-Jinping-meeting-at-G20/articleshow/53984884.cms" \t "_blank) “India is expected to go along with China on several [global-level] trade and climate change issues during the discussions at G20, which opens on Sunday. But the devil is in bilateral meetings, and it is here that geopolitical issues would crop up”. The geopolitical issues are precisely those border and regional issues where the two countries remain locked in acute security competition.

**End-2016**

Global-level agreement, on issues like multipolarity, anti-terrorism and common economic development, is likely between China and India at the BRICS summit due to be held in India on 15 October. However, undercurrents of their regional friction are likely to be present at the RIC Consultation on Asia Pacific Affairs and their bilateral  Maritime Affairs Dialogue scheduled for late-2016; where it will be revealing if the South China Sea is discussed or more likely brushed under the carpet. A similar two-level logic is also likely for the Foreign Secretaries Mechanism when it meets.

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Global Times

### China should reduce production costs for manufacturers as competition with India grows

By Hu Weijia Source:Global Times Published: 2016/9/20 0:08:39

[17](http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1007154.shtml" \o "View more services" \t "_blank)

The competitive pressure on China's manufacturing sector from India is perhaps much bigger than China imagined. China's actual salary has grown 10.6 percent since 2008, while India has seen a salary growth of just 0.2 percent during the same period, the Times of India reported recently, citing a report from the Hay Group.  
  
The report comes after the news that some Chinese smartphone vendors, Huawei Technologies Co included, would soon start manufacturing handsets in the South Asian country and as India's low labor cost advantage forces China to make more efforts to maintain its competitive edge in the global manufacturing landscape.  
  
As China commits itself to developing its service and high-tech sectors, such as the nuclear power industry, the nation certainly will not give up developing its manufacturing sector, which plays a particularly important role in creating jobs. With a population of 1.4 billion and an expanding domestic demand for employment, China will be unable to rapidly turn into an economy highly dependent on its service sector. For the foreseeable future, the manufacturing sector will remain the backbone of China's economy.  
  
However, China's low-end manufacturing industry is experiencing hard times as some multinationals move production from China to other Asian countries, India included. The increasing competition from India raises a tough question for China's manufacturing sector of how to keep its competitive edge at a time when the nation's labor cost advantage is shrinking rapidly.  
  
India's low labor cost advantage has rung an alarm for China's manufacturing sector. Now it is time for China to map out concrete measures to reduce production costs for manufacturers. For instance, it seems the overheated real estate market has already had a spillover effect on the development of China's manufacturing sector, as plans to build new plants in Chinese coastal cities have proven to be costly. In this regard, the Chinese economy has to reduce its reliance on real estate and strive to create a favorable investment environment for manufacturers.  
  
Additionally, as some foreign-backed companies show an increasing interest in India over China, the country should promote the development of its local manufacturers and encourage them to build plants in less-developed central and western regions where labor costs are relatively lower.  
  
However, global manufacturing should not be considered a zero-sum game. Despite India being more attractive to manufacturers than ever, it will be difficult for the country to build a complete industrial chain overnight. India may still need to expand its imports of Chinese-made components and parts to support the development of its nascent and growing manufacturing sector. Hopefully this would lead to a new cross-nation industry chain and closer economic ties between China and India in the future.

### Political mistrust between China and India threatens booming business ties

By Liu Caiyu Source:Global Times Published: 2016/9/19 20:38:39

[7](http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1007104.shtml" \o "View more services" \t "_blank)



**Indian passengers hang on an overcrowded train as it departs from Loni town, in Uttar Pradesh, India, on June 29. Photo: IC**

Business ties between China and India are booming, but uncertainty over India's future policies and India's resistance to China's sweeping initiative to create the infrastructure for a pan-Asian trade bloc poses risks to the profitable alliance.  
  
Following Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "Make in India" initiative, a great number of Chinese ventures began to break into the South Asian nation's mammoth market, with a six-fold increase in investment between 2014 and 2015.    
  
Beijing-based phone makers Xiaomi, Huawei and e-commerce giant Alibaba all paved lucrative roads to India, whose manufacturing potential is still an open canvas.  
  
**Friendship cities**However, booming cooperation in business is at risk, due to the restless territorial tensions in Kashimir with Pakistan, and India's reluctance to embrace China's One Belt and One Road initiative, said Hu Shisheng, the director of the Institute of South and Southeast Asian and Oceania Studies, during a panel discussion held by think tank Pangoal in Beijing.   
  
One part of the Belt and Road initiative, the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), runs through the disputed Kashmir region, where India and Pakistan have been in conflict since 1947.  
  
"If India recognizes the Belt and Road initiative, it means India recognizes the CPEC, and further it means it surrenders its claims to Kashimir," Hu said.  
  
This has added an economic and political dimension to the already close relationship between Beijing and Islamabad, which is the last thing India wants to see, Hu explained.  
  
Lin Minwang, a researcher from the Institute of International Studies at Fudan University, said the sweeping reform pushed by the Bharatiya Janata Party led by Modi is at risk during India's next general election in 2019, which will focus on foreign investment.  
  
It is difficult to predict the results of India's election, Lin said, but one thing for certain is that the wave of market reforms advocated by Modi and supported by intellectuals and elites is likely to continue in the future.   
  
"Bilateral business cooperation can avoid the political mistrust through establishing friendship cities and states," Hu said.   
  
For example, India has set up sister cities with China since 2013. A total of three pairs were established: Delhi-Beijing, Bengaluru-Chengdu and Kolkata-Kunming.  
  
"What does the Kashimir matter to them? What does the territory matter to them?" Hu said. "What they need is what we are good at."  
  
India, the world's fastest growing economy, cannot develop based solely on its service sector, and China is undergoing a development transition, a period that sees foreign enterprises moving out of China to India because of increasing labor costs, said Zhao Jianglin, a researcher from the National Institute of International Strategy.  
  
**Overall strategy**China recently set up a trade body, the China-India Business Council, based in Changsha, Hunan Province, to promote business and investment with India, which shows China's determination to cooperate with the second-most populous country in the world.  
  
Bilateral trade between India and China reached $70 billion in 2015-16, statistics indicated. But some experts warned that questions of efficient business cooperation between the two neighbors still remain.  
  
Lin Dajian, a former inspector for the [National Development and Reform Commission](http://www.globaltimes.cn/db/government/3.shtml" \t "_blank), said China lacks overall strategy when entering into the Indian market and that could possibly hinder cooperation.  
  
Rapid economic growth will turn India into a major energy consumer, in which China could have a bigger role to play.   
  
However, Lin said there is no sense of presence in the Indian power market for Chinese investors including the power grid, network reconstruction and electrical equipment, for instance.   
  
It is necessary to balance the interests of all parties when doing business in India, Lin noted. "I think we have to rank the bodies: Indian enterprise comes first, Indian society second and the government third. Don't try to earn money if Indian companies are not making money too."   
  
Lin pointed out social organizations in India could be an opening for Chinese investors in tapping the potential market because these groups help meet the needs of local people.  
  
"You have to respect the needs of Indian people. You cannot decide on their behalf," Lin said. If you don't respect their choices, in the end you will have to redo projects anyways, causing extra expense.   
  
Parts of India's reforms are already reaping concrete benefits that represent opportunities for Chinese companies.  
  
Potential projects open for foreign investment range from infrastructure, and agricultural modernization to Modi's visions known as "Digital India," "Clean India" and "Skill India," Hu noted.  
  
India, for the first time, is now functioning as one integrated market with a standard sales tax, making it much simpler to do business. According to the New Delhi-based think tank National Council of Applied Economic Research, the new standardized tax could increase the economy by between 0.9 percent and 1.7 percent annually.  
  
In summary, "The rise of India is irresistible," Hu said.

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# Sino-Indian Maritime Affairs in the Asian Century

October 3, 2016

Sourabh Gupta

On 4 February 2016, China and India held the first round of their “Maritime Affairs Dialogue” in New Delhi. As these great civilizational spaces, and modern-day nation states, open a new chapter in bilateral maritime relations, it is instructive to distil the lessons of an earlier age.

First, Asia was one, united by bonds of commerce, culture and civility; Second, the spread of Buddhism from South Asia along the ‘belt’ and ‘road’ wove a common world of religious-cultural ambiance and sensibility that signified both integration and cosmopolitanism; Third, China and India had once been the great originators of globalization. The political and economic architecture of such contact was never closed off or exclusive but rather was open and inclusive; Fourth, Asia’s seas were genuinely res communis (common heritage of mankind) that belonged to all and was denied to none; these waterways were not an arena of geopolitical contestation. Further, each sovereign entertained a vested interest in preserving the freedom of these waterways and which no sovereign sought to dominate.

The key features and wisdom of the old must inform the guiding principles that shape the modern characteristics of the new in Asia’s 21st century maritime order.

First, China and India must firmly tether their maritime interactions to the Panchseel/Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence – i.e., to the principle of sovereignty and mutual respect for core/primary interests; to the concept of peace and opposition to war, war-mongering, aggression and threat of use of force; to the promotion of cooperative and collaborative (win-win) patterns of cooperation that eschew adversarial zero-sum contestation and exclusive alliances; and to the concept of justice, including the fair application of international law and principles of democracy in bilateral and regional engagements. The aim of the Five Principles is to embed China-India interests and aspirations in the maritime sphere within a cooperative, comprehensive and sustainable architecture that realizes an Asian community of common destiny.

Second, China and India must restore Asia’s seas to their former purpose as win-win economic passageways rather than arenas of zero-sum contestation. In February 2014, at the 17th round of Special Representative talks in New Delhi, China formally invited India to join its ambitious Maritime Silk Route (MSR) project. The Narendra Modi government should actively seek out synergies with its “Sagar Mala” port development and transport infrastructure project and exert its influence to craft the contours of MSR’s South Asia blueprint to make it complementary to New Delhi’s own neighborhood policy. Further, it must not pass up the opportunity to build matching cross-border connectivity links that bind India to its periphery and integrate the latter via the ‘belt’ and the ‘road’ to global networks. By recreating the famous land and sea routes along which commerce and cosmopolitanism once traversed, ‘One Belt, One Road’ will also re-awaken India in no small measure to its own golden age of cross-border contact.

Third, China and India must continue to jointly nudge the thrust of oceanic law and global oceans governance towards sustainable economic, developmental and conservation-related ends and to the relative disfavor of military and other non-peaceful uses of the sea. Both countries hold similar or identical views on foreign user state rights, particularly on military navigation and related activities, within their exclusive maritime zones – be it innocent passage rights through their territorial seas or active intelligence gathering as well as hydrographic surveys within their EEZ.

China and India should initiate a dedicated bilateral dialogue on the development of the UNCLOS (United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, 1982) regime, with a view to harmonizing opinions to push the perimeter of such ‘threat-based’ activities further away from their coastlines. Taking the long perspective, the two countries along with their Asian partners should also develop soft law that catalogues permissible and non-permissible threat-based activities in a coastal state’s EEZs and thereafter seek to elevate that norm, by way of state practice over time, into the body of local customary law.

China and India should economically complement this UNCLOS policy dialogue with an agreement to share technological knowledge on seabed research and mining for polymetallic nodules. A joint application to the International Seabed Authority (ISA) to secure exclusive mining rights in both the Indian Ocean and the Western Pacific could also be considered.

Fourth, China and India must seek out areas of strategic congruence in their Asia-Pacific-wide maritime engagements, while grappling with – and managing – their differences with frankness and sincerity. For the most part, both countries fundamentally share common interests in maritime Asia, yet would rather pursue these interests – and frame strategies – separately. Both China and India share an interest in keeping their overlapping sea lines of communication open to free navigation, yet both seek to exercise control – and leverage via the veiled threat of interdiction – over the chokepoints through which these sea lanes pass.

Both China and India retain an interest in securing sea-borne access to ensure the economic viability of their landlocked, underdeveloped regions (Yunnan; Northeast India), yet both would prefer to design connectivity initiatives that run at odds with their counterpart’s. Since 2014, both China’s and India’s navies have begun to bump-up more frequently in the proximity of each other’s naval bastions (in the East China Sea, South China Sea and Eastern Indian Ocean/Bay of Bengal), yet neither has initiated a conversation on reassuring its counterpart of its intentions.

As a first step, both China and India must commit to respecting each other’s ‘core’ or ‘primary’ interests in their respective backyards. To the extent that either country possesses a vital interest – be it navigational, oil and gas, or access – in the other’s ‘core’ or primary’ geographical area of interest, the former should seek to transparently communicate its purposes and intentions.

Conversely, both countries must respect each other’s maritime engagements with third parties in Asia’s seas – so long as these engagements do not impinge on the other’s ‘core’ or ‘primary’ interests. To the extent that both countries seek to sanitize and secure their respective naval bastions (to ensure the future integrity of their second-strike deterrence capability), both countries bear an obligation to defer to their counterpart and keep their surface fleets at some distance from these locations.

To the extent that both countries seek to exercise control—and leverage—over the chokepoints through which the critical sea lanes of Asia pass, both countries would rather be better-off exploring a broader bargain that resists the temptation to challenge each other’s growing power, influence and authority east and west, respectively, of the island of Sumatra.

Parenthetically, it bears noting that no sustained and economically significant campaign to interdict the maritime trade of a major power has been mounted since the 18th century – except in the case of a general war. A veiled threat of choke-point interdiction, then, that is only as good as its non-activation makes for good theater but reflects poor policy.

Finally, China and India must functionally elevate their operational interactions across the length and breadth of Asia’s seas. Much like the Wako pirate raids along the eastern seaboard had invited the Yongle Emperor’s initial turn to the sea, so also the Convoy Coordination Working Group featuring China and India among others, as part of the anti-piracy mission in the Gulf of Aden, has served as a useful initial basis for bridge-building and cooperation.

Both countries must utilize this precedent to deepen navy-to-navy engagement across a range of non-traditional security missions, including notably but not limited to humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HA/DR) activities. Ideally, such China-India HA/DR cooperation should hew to the spirit of openness and be situated, in deference to ASEAN centrality, within the emerging practice of Asian security multilateralism.

Over time, China and India should also aspire to operationally devise a multilateral, cooperative sea-lane security regime for Asia. Both countries should pick-up the exploratory ideational threads of recent years in this regard and formulate a framework for a joint or cooperative sea-lane command which, again, should be housed within the emerging practice of Asian security multilateralism. The positive-sum gains from such collaborative, operational action would be a tangible expression of the willingness of Asia’s major and rising powers to share the burdens and benefits of global and regional stakeholder-ship, while restoring Asia’s seas at the same time to the res communis that it had once been which belonged to all and was denied to none. Cooperative sea-lane security will also draw the curtains down for good on that remnant of the Vasco da Gama interlude in Asia’s seas, which had deliberately introduced state-controlled (threat of) violence along strategic passageways to secure politico-economic ends.

China and India stand on the cusp of a new and promising chapter in bilateral relations. The many lessons learnt during the course of interactions to stabilize their disputed land boundary offer useful pointers as they chart out a rules-of-the-road framework to guide their interactions at sea. Both countries must resolve to address each other’s legitimate interests with a sense of sincerity. Both countries should prioritize peace and tranquility during the course of maritime interactions that impinge on each other’s ‘core’ or ‘primary’ interests. As a measure of mutual trust is devolved, both countries should enumerate – and capture by way of a framework agreement – a lucid set of principles-based parameters of bilateral naval cooperation that obey the injunctions of the Five Principles, is consistent with the open, inclusive, and transparent security architecture of Asia, and fortifies the on-going developmental orientation of global sea law.

Keeping Asia’s seas open to free passage and closed to major power contestation must be the foundation for China-India cooperation at sea over the near and long-term. Together, China and India can re-create a new regional and international maritime order that is inspired by the virtues of the old while embodying the promise of the new Asian Century.

Sourabh Gupta is a Senior Fellow at ICAS. This commentary first appeared on [*China-India Dialogue*](http://chinaindiadialogue.com/#/post/an-indian-view-of-sino-indian-maritime-relations).

LKY

#### Guest Column

### ****Systemic Balancing and Regional Hedging: Russia’s Relations with China and India****

by Alexander Korolev

The Russia-China-India triangle represents a puzzle for the international relation experts. On the one hand, in the context of deteriorating Russia-US relations in the wake of the Ukraine Crisis, Russia has steadily increased its defense cooperation with China that has pushed China-Russia strategic partnership to a new level indicating that Russia aligns with China on a range of international issues.[**[1]**](http://lkyspp.nus.edu.sg/cag/publication/china-india-brief/china-india-brief-89#1)  On the other hand, however, Russia has been trying hard to enhance its economic and defence links with India by selling advanced arms system to New Delhi so as Narendra Modi stated that Russia was and would remain to be India’s “most important defense partner[**[2]**](http://lkyspp.nus.edu.sg/cag/publication/china-india-brief/china-india-brief-89#2).”  Given the troubled nature of China-India relations, Moscow’s policies of enhancing military and economic cooperation with both Beijing and New Delhi add layers of complexity to the Russia-China-India interactions making them poorly amenable to simple explanations.

To untangle this complexity and to understand the implications of Russia’s policies for China-India relations, one has to “zoom out” to encompass both international systemic and non-systemic (regional and domestic) prongs of Russia’s foreign policy. The former is “systemic balancing” against the US-led unipolarity, whereas the latter is “regional hedging” – a non-system-level “insurance policy” that is driven by causal forces other than the distribution of power within the international system. The trends unfolding at these two levels of great power politics are not in direct dependence on or confrontation with each other, and they can perfectly coexist while evolving in opposite directions.

As a systemic balancer, Russia challenges the American hegemony in multiple ways: it thwarts the American geopolitical projects in what is now called the “post-Soviet space,” as evidenced by the Russia-Georgia war of 2008 and the Ukraine Crisis of 2014; it intervened in Syria in 2015 with the subsequent “butting heads” with the United States over how to settle the Syrian crisis; it uses various multinational institutions to promote its own vision of multipolarity. Moreover, the Russian leaders perceive the United States as an imminent threat to its national security and fundamentally reject the current US-led global order by calling it a “unilateral diktat”[**[3]**](http://lkyspp.nus.edu.sg/cag/publication/china-india-brief/china-india-brief-89#3) that has “no moral foundations for modern civilization[**[4]**](http://lkyspp.nus.edu.sg/cag/publication/china-india-brief/china-india-brief-89#4).”

These global policies of challenging the Unipole drive Russia’s alignment with China, which, like Russia, also resents American unipolar dominance, especially in the context of US’s Asia-Pacific rebalancing strategy, aimed at creating containment lines around China using American allies in Asia. In terms of material capabilities, China is the only ally for Russia that can add enough power to mount a consequential challenge to the unipolarity. At the same time, China and Russia have a shared vision of global threats that are related to the United States and, in addition to NATO’s eastward expansion and US rebalancing to Asia, include the American National Missile Defense agenda, “colour revolutions,” and the US potential energy intrusion in Central Asia. The pressure originating from the contemporary international system and the resultant incentives to resist the American global hegemony is the bottom line that drives China-Russia strategic cooperation. This does not imply that other non-systemic considerations are irrelevant for China-Russia relations. They are, in fact, relevant and important. However, they do not determine the general dynamics of China-Russia comprehensive strategic partnership.

Russia’s relations with India are of different order and related more to Russia’s regional hedging rather than systemic balancing. Unlike relations with China, they do not directly originate from the “balance of power” or the “balance of threats” within the international system. Nor are they aimed at balancing the United States; India does not share Russia’s anti-unipolarity pursuit.   
Rather, they exist at the levels other than the system level and are tied more closely to regional (interactional) or Russia’s domestic economic circumstances and aimed at securing Russia’s economic and geopolitical goals in Asia. Even more so in the context of Moscow’s “turn to the East” strategy, aimed at diversifying Russia’s Asia policies and accelerating the development of Russia’s Far East and Siberia. Thus, by selling weapons to India, Vietnam, and China, Russia tries to diversify its military export portfolio. A similar logic applies to Russia-India energy cooperation, which promises significant benefits for Russia’s nuclear, oil, and gas industries and helps Russia diversify its energy politics.

These parameters of Russia-India relations can be interpreted as hedging against China from the regional perspective. However, they lack the system-level causal force that underlies China-Russia relations. This does not make Russia-India relations unimportant. This simply makes them different – following different operational logic. Being a phenomenon of a different level, Russia-India relations can grow and prosper without challenging Russia-China relations, and vice versa, the global politics of Russia-China alignment does not necessary trespass into the regional hedging logic of Russia-India relations.

Such two-level configuration works well for the three countries and enhances stability of China-India relations. While Beijing does not embrace Russia’s transfers of most advanced weapon systems to India, it recognizes that a decline or termination of such transfers would make India shift from its current policy of diversifying military and military-technical links to a stronger leaning towards the United States. Russia-India partnership enables Beijing to utilize good relations with Moscow to facilitate its own dialogue with New Delhi in both bilateral and multilateral formats. Most importantly, it helps slow down the dangerous strengthening of a military and political alignment between New Delhi and Washington. For India, partnership with Russia, while valuable in its own right, also generates a good channel for developing cooperation with China. Russia, in turn, benefits from the diversification of regional contacts.

**[1]** Ankit Panda, “[Chinese, Russian Navies to Hold 8 Days of Naval Exercises in the South China Sea](http://thediplomat.com/2016/09/chinese-russian-navies-to-hold-8-days-of-naval-exercises-in-the-south-china-sea/" \t "_blank),” The Diplomat, 12 September 2016

**[2]** Nirmala George, “[Putin turns to India to clinch new deals](http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2014/dec/11/putin-turns-india-clinch-new-deals/?page=all" \t "_blank),” The Washington Times, 11 December 2014

**[3]** President of Russia, [Meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Club](http://eng.kremlin.ru/news/23137" \t "_blank) (Moscow: the Kremlin, 24 October 2013)

**[4]** “[Speech and the Following Discussion at the Munich Conference on Security Policy,”](http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/24034" \t "_blank) President of Russia, 10 February 2007

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NYT

### [Asia Pacific](https://www.nytimes.com/pages/world/asia/index.html)

# India, Long at Odds With Pakistan, May Be Rethinking Nuclear First Strikes

[The Interpreter](https://www.nytimes.com/column/the-interpreter)

By [MAX FISHER](https://www.nytimes.com/by/max-fisher) MARCH 31, 2017

Photo



A test of India’s long-range, nuclear-capable missile in 2013. India is said to be considering allowing for pre-emptive nuclear strikes against Pakistan in the event of a war. Credit Pallava Bagla/Corbis, via Getty Images

[India](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/india/index.html?inline=nyt-geo) may be reinterpreting its [nuclear weapons](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/science/topics/atomic_weapons/index.html?inline=nyt-classifier) doctrine, circumstantial evidence suggests, with potentially significant ramifications for the already tenuous nuclear balance in South Asia.

New assessments suggest that India is considering allowing for pre-emptive nuclear strikes against Pakistan’s arsenal in the event of a war. This would not formally change India’s nuclear doctrine, which bars it from launching a first strike, but would loosen its interpretation to deem pre-emptive strikes as defensive.

It would also change India’s likely targets, in the event of a war, to make a nuclear exchange more winnable and, therefore, more thinkable.

Analysts’ assessments, based on recent statements by senior Indian officials, are necessarily speculative. States with nuclear weapons often leave ambiguity in their doctrines to prevent adversaries from exploiting gaps in their proscriptions and to preserve flexibility. But signs of a strategic adjustment in India are mounting.

## [Fearing U.S. Withdrawal, Europe Considers Its Own Nuclear Deterrent MAR 6](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/06/world/europe/european-union-nuclear-weapons.html?rref=collection%2Fcolumn%2FThe%20Interpreter)

This comes against a backdrop of long-simmering tensions between India and Pakistan — including over state-sponsored terrorism and the disputed territory of Jammu and Kashmir — which have already led to several wars, the most recent in 1999.

The new interpretation would be a significant shift in India’s posture that could have far-reaching implications in the region, even if war never comes. Pakistan could feel compelled to expand its arsenal to better survive a pre-emptive strike, in turn setting off an Indian buildup.

This would be more than an arms race, said [Vipin Narang, a Massachusetts Institute of Technology professor](http://web.mit.edu/polisci/people/faculty/vipin-narang.html) who studies nuclear powers.

“It’s very scary because all the ‘first-strike instability’ stuff is real,” Mr. Narang said, referring to a dynamic in which two nuclear adversaries both perceive a strong incentive to use their warheads first in a war. This is thought to make nuclear conflict more likely.

#### Hidden in Plain Sight

Hints of a high-level Indian debate over the nuclear doctrine mounted with a recent memoir by Shivshankar Menon, India’s national security adviser from 2011 to 2014.

“There is a potential gray area as to when India would use nuclear weapons first” against a nuclear-armed adversary, Mr. Menon wrote.

India, he added, “might find it useful to strike first” against an adversary that appeared poised to launch or that “had declared it would certainly use its weapons” — most likely a veiled reference to Pakistan.

Mr. Narang presented the quotations, along with his interpretation, in Washington last week, during a major nuclear policy conference hosted by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

“There is increasing evidence that India will not allow Pakistan to go first,” he told a gathering of international government officials and policy experts.

Mr. Menon’s book, he said, “clearly carves out an exception for pre-emptive Indian first use in the very scenario that is most likely to occur in South Asia.”

The passage alone does not prove a policy shift. But in context alongside other developments, it suggests either that India has quietly widened its strategic options or that officials are hoping to stir up just enough ambiguity to deter its adversaries.

After Mr. Narang’s presentation generated attention in the South Asian news media, Mr. Menon [told an Indian columnist](http://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/will-india-nuke-pakistani-cities-or-go-for-its-nuclear-arsenal-117031700921_1.html), “India’s nuclear doctrine has far greater flexibility than it gets credit for.”

Mr. Menon declined an interview request for this article. When told what the article would say, he did not challenge its assertions. India’s Foreign Ministry did not respond to a request for comment.

Whether these signals indicate a real shift or a strategic feint, analysts believe they are intended to right a strategic imbalance that has been growing for almost a decade.



A nuclear-capable missile was displayed in the Republic Day Parade in New Delhi in 2009. Credit Daniel Berehulak/Getty Images

#### The Pakistan Problem

Should India sustain a nuclear attack, its doctrine calls for a major retaliation, most likely by targeting its adversary’s cities. When this policy was announced in 2003, it fit the threat posed by Pakistan’s arsenal of long-range, city-destroying weapons.

Since then, Pakistan has developed smaller warheads designed for battlefield use. These were meant to address Pakistan’s India problem: The Indian military is much larger, virtually ensuring its victory in an all-out war.

Such weapons could be used against invading Indian troops, halting a war before it could be lost. This would exploit a gap in India’s doctrine: It is hard to imagine that India would escalate to total nuclear war, as its doctrine commands, over a small battlefield strike on Pakistani soil.

This created a Pakistan problem for India: Its chief adversary had made low-level nuclear war thinkable, even potentially winnable. Since then, there have been growing hints of debate over modifying the Indian doctrine.

B. S. Nagal, a lieutenant general who led India’s nuclear command from 2008 to 2011, argued in [a 2014 article](https://www.armscontrol.org/ACT/2015_05/Features/India-Nuclear-Anxieties-The-Debate-Over-Doctrine) for a policy of “ambiguity” as to whether India would launch a pre-emptive nuclear strike.

Also that year, the Bharatiya Janata Party said it would consider changing India’s doctrine, but then [abandoned](http://in.reuters.com/article/uk-india-election-nuclear-idINKBN0D20QB20140416) this position. It took power in national elections a few weeks later.

Last November, Manohar Parrikar, then the defense minister, said India’s prohibition against nuclear first use was too restrictive, though he added that this was only his opinion.

Another reason analysts suspect change: India’s doctrine initially served to [persuade](https://www.thequint.com/opinion/2017/03/27/why-a-rethink-of-india-no-first-use-nuclear-doctrine-may-be-necessary) the United States to drop economic sanctions it had imposed over nuclear tests. Given President Trump’s softer stance on proliferation, that impetus may no longer apply.

#### ‘The Seductive Logic’

Mr. Menon, in his book, [seemed to settle on an answer](https://books.google.com/books?id=GduACwAAQBAJ&pg=PA117&lpg=PA117&dq=%22comprehensive+first+strike%22&source=bl&ots=K4GjlS2SJ9&sig=j0GxpxKD5gkC_lb7eRgZNkt6sDY&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwipwK3ku_fSAhUL-2MKHQCXD4IQ6AEIPzAJ#v=onepage&q=%22comprehensive%20first%20strike%22&f=false) to India’s quandary: “Pakistani tactical nuclear weapon use would effectively free India to undertake a comprehensive first strike against Pakistan,” he wrote.

The word “comprehensive” refers to a nuclear attack against an adversary’s arsenal, rather than its cities. It is meant to instigate and quickly win a nuclear exchange, leaving the other side disarmed.

Taken with a policy of pre-emption, these two shifts would seem to address India’s Pakistan problem, in theory persuading Pakistani leaders that a limited nuclear war would be too dangerous to pursue.

For India, Mr. Narang said, “you can really see the seductive logic” to such an approach. This would be “really the only pathway you have if you’re going to have a credible nuclear deterrence.”

It is impossible to know whether statements like Mr. Menon’s are intended to quietly reveal a policy shift, while avoiding the crisis that would be set off by a formal change, or merely stir doubt.

Either way, the intent appears the same: to create just enough uncertainty in the minds of Pakistani leaders that they become restrained by the potential threat of pre-emptive Indian strikes.

But if that threat is plausible, then the distinction between a real threat and a feint blurs.

[Continue reading the main story](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/31/world/asia/india-long-at-odds-with-pakistan-may-be-rethinking-nuclear-first-strikes.html?hp&action=click&pgtype=Homepage&clickSource=story-heading&module=second-column-region&region=top-news&WT.nav=top-news&_r=0#story-continues-20)

Photo



Indian soldiers patrolling the Indian-Pakistani border in 2013. The dispute over the territory of Jammu and Kashmir adds volatility to long-simmering tensions between the nations. Credit Tauseef Mustafa/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

#### Use It or Lose It

[Shashank Joshi, a fellow at the Royal United Services Institute,](https://shashankjoshi.wordpress.com/) said he suspected that Mr. Menon was signaling something subtler: a warning that India’s strategy could adapt in wartime, potentially to include first strikes.

That distinction may be important to Indian officials, but it could be lost on Pakistani war planners who have to consider all scenarios.

Mr. Joshi, in [a policy brief](https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/indias-nuclear-doctrine-should-no-longer-be-taken-granted) for the Lowy Institute, an Australian think tank, tried to project what would happen if India embraced such a policy, or if Pakistan concluded that it had.

First would come the arms race.

The fear of a first strike, Mr. Joshi wrote, “incentivizes Pakistan to undertake a massive nuclear buildup, in order to dispel any possibility of India disarming it entirely.”

India, whatever its strategy, would feel compelled to keep pace.

Second comes the tightening of nuclear tripwires, Mr. Joshi warned, as “this reciprocal fear of first use could pull each side in the direction of placing nuclear forces on hair-trigger alert.”

Finally, in any major armed crisis, the logic of a first strike would pull both sides toward nuclear escalation.

“If Pakistan thinks India will move quickly, Pakistan has an incentive to go even quicker, and to escalate straight to the use of the longer-range weapons,” Mr. Joshi wrote.

This thinking would apply to India as well, creating a situation in which the nuclear arsenal becomes, as analysts dryly put it, “use it or lose it.”

#### ‘That Can Blow Back Real Quick’

The most optimistic scenario would lock South Asia in a state of mutually assured destruction, like that of the Cold War, in which armed conflict would so reliably escalate to nuclear devastation that both sides would deem war unthinkable.

This would be of global concern. A [2008 study](http://climate.envsci.rutgers.edu/pdf/MillsPNAS.pdf) found that, although India and Pakistan have relatively small arsenals, a full nuclear exchange would push a layer of hot, black smoke into the atmosphere.

This would produce what some researchers [call](http://thebulletin.org/climatic-consequences-nuclear-war) without hyperbole “a decade without summer.” As crops failed worldwide, the resulting global famine would kill a billion people, the study estimated.

But nuclear analysts worry that South Asia’s dynamics would make any state of mutually assured destruction less stable than that of the Cold War.

For one thing, Pakistani leaders view even conventional war with India as an existential threat, making them more willing to accept nuclear risks. For another, a large-scale terrorist attack in India could be perceived, rightly or wrongly, as Pakistan-sponsored, potentially inciting war. The disputed territory of Jammu and Kashmir, where conflict sometimes boils over, adds a troubling layer of volatility.

“Maybe it is this Reaganesque strategy,” Mr. Narang said, comparing India’s potential strategic shift to President Ronald Reagan’s arms race with the Soviet Union. “But Pakistan has a much bigger security problem than the Soviet Union did. And that can blow back real quick.”