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India as a global power: An appraisal

Vinod Saighal

ECO MONITORS SOCIETY
NEW DELHI-INDIA
vsaighal@vsnl.com

Abstract

India is fast emerging as a global power thanks to an economic resurgence that could propel it into the front ranks of global decision makers sooner rather than later. For all this country's ills, it is indubitably a vibrant democracy with a deeply held belief in non-violence –cherished by a large majority of the people, if not always by the ruling elite– which makes it a perfect partner in the search for global solutions to some of the intractable problems of today.

Keywords: India, global power, non violence, geopolitics, terrorism.

India como potencia mundial: Una apreciación personal

Resumen

India está surgiendo rápidamente como una potencia global gracias a su sostenido crecimiento económico, que la colocará, más temprano que tarde, en el grupo de quienes toman las decisiones clave en el ámbito internacional. A pesar de todos sus problemas, India es una vibrante democracia que atesora el legado de la filosofía de la no violencia –aunque ésto no es siempre tan evidente entre la élite gobernante– lo cual hace de ella un excelente socio en la búsqueda de soluciones a los difíciles problemas del mundo de hoy.

Palabras clave: India, poder global, no violencia, geopolítica, terrorismo.

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Introduction

India's gross domestic product (GDP) crossed the \$1 trillion mark in April 2007. A trillion dollar GDP, nearly \$ 300 billion foreign exchange reserves, a billion plus population, of whom more than 50% are in the working age group, point the way in which India is headed. As the 12th member of a select club of countries with economies over \$1 trillion, there is no question that India has emerged as a major economic power.

The fast growing Asian economies will be the prime contributors to the rising energy demand in the coming decades. China has already become the world's second largest energy consumer after the United States. India's projected energy requirements around 2030 will be five times those of today. India is already the sixth largest energy consumer. Energy availability and energy supply are increasingly intertwined with geopolitics. They will remain so for several decades. India and China are competing more and more among themselves for the world's oil and gas resources in addition to the established economies of the US, Europe and Japan. Adding uncertainty in such an environment is the volatile situation of most of the important energy suppliers.

1.- Looking back – the legacy factor

In spite of millennial domination by rulers of non-Indian denominations that came from across the seas and from across the formidable Himalayan frontiers, India's ancient heritage remained largely intact. Similarly, despite large-scale conversions at the hands of its foreign occupiers the vast majority of Indians continue to adhere to the faith of their ancestors. The ancient Rishis of India in the mists of antiquity revealed to the world the nature of *Brahman Chaitanya* (Cosmic Consciousness) several millennia before the rise of the Abrahamic religions that spread across much of the world in the last two thousand years. Vedic inspired denominations had also spread beyond Indian shores prior to that, mostly in the East. But, as distinct from the spread of Christianity and Islam, the sword had no part to play in the Eastward expansion of Vedic thought and Buddhism. Nor did the pacific expansion of Indic thought lead to bitter interdenominational strife in the regions where it spread. It is important to keep this subtle but important difference in mind when examining the influence that an economically resurgent India might wield as the world moves deeper into the 21st Century.

An aspect that needs revisiting is the manner in which India got its Independence in 1947, at the time when the 20th Century after having seen two world wars was nearing its mid-point. Historians in India have attributed the country's independence to Gandhi's *satyagraha*¹. While it may be soulfully satisfying in an age sickened by violence to believe that India marched to freedom on the frail shoulders of the Mahatma's philosophy of non-violence, such attribution strays considerably from reality. India got its freedom as a result of Britain's exhaustion after the two world wars and its replacement as a global power by the new superpowers, USA and Russia.

There is no way that Britain could have held on to its Indian empire much longer. The British Indian armies had played a significant role in the allied victories in the two world wars. Post-1947, had the British delayed the granting of independence, the battle-tested troops of the Indian Army –the Army that had underpinned Britain's world dominions for well over a century– would have soon rebelled, forcing an ignominious retreat on the British. There had already been a rebellion in the Indian Navy and the trial of returned INA (Indian National Army) prisoners of Subhash Chandra Bose had rekindled the spirit of fervent nationalism. The tinder being dry the call for an armed insurrection by a national leader would have led to a number of mutinies across the length and breadth of India. Had law and order broken down it would have engulfed the British. The two-century edifice of the British Raj would have crumbled overnight. It would have led to a large-scale massacre of the British, something which was visited instead on the Hindu and Muslim communities when partition of India took place with the announcement of the Radcliffe Award in 1947. Because they left when they did the British went home in a blaze of glory with abundant goodwill for the Crown. They even saw their last Viceroy, Lord Louis Mountbatten, appointed as the first governor-general of independent India. Such was the goodwill that obtained at the time of relinquishment of the colonial empire, that the leaders of free India went on to become the architects for the formation of the British Commonwealth of nations.

Ironic as it may seem it was the British who put a Hindu on the throne of Delhi for the first time after one thousand years of foreign rule. The Hindus never fought for it. In a manner of speaking it was bequeathed to Pandit JawaharLal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of independent India by an act of the British Parliament in London. Meanwhile, M.K. Gandhi, the apostle of peace, who had propounded

*ahimsa*² for nearly half a century, could only watch with horror the large-scale killings that took place when the subcontinent was divided into the nations of India and Pakistan. Gandhi died not long after from an assassin's bullet at a prayer meeting, hardly more than a mile from where Nehru, the anointed Prime Minister ruled the new nation. Had Gandhi not been killed by Nathu Ram Godse's bullet, he would have died of a broken heart, unable to bear one of the worst slaughters in Indian history, possibly the largest non-war slaughter in world history.

A brief introduction to modern India's birth pangs becomes necessary to understand the psyche of its leaders when evaluating India's projected rise to the status of a world power in the 21st century. To what extent would India's economic might lead to a military might commensurate to its geographic size and population base? Will it emulate China's search toward hegemonic parity with USA, the unchallenged superpower of today? Are there limits to India's military power projection in the current century and beyond? If so who and what set those limits? These questions are addressed in the framework of the present global scene and its likely projection for the coming decades.

Although Gandhi continues to form an important part of the ongoing political and economic discourse of the country, it has to be said that in spite of the ideals of the Mahatma being quoted reverently at most forums where the future course of the country is debated, his economic and political philosophy has not found acceptance in so far as its practical application goes. Yet, at the end, it is difficult to think of an India that completely dissociates itself from the beliefs of the Mahatma, whether they relate to governance, sustainable development, harmony in pluralistic societies, or the conduct of nations in the global arena. It is not surprising that Gandhi continues to attract the attention of so many people around the world, both as the man and the ideals that he stood for. Unfortunately, the debate around the Mahatma rages mainly around elements that were never put into practice in the land where they took birth.

Looking back on the events of the 20th century, both pre-and post-independence in India, one cannot fail to get the impression that although he did not lose hope or his faith in his ideals, Gandhi might have died a disillusioned man; if not disillusioned, certainly heartsick at the turn of events. Did the bloodletting that took place at the time of partition in the land where for decades he had preached *ahimsa* indicate that his philosophy had failed? It did not end with partition. The bloodletting

continues to this day in every part of the subcontinent where the “father of the nation” traveled.

The increasing hiatus between Gandhi’s tenets and the policies followed by Gandhi’s successors in India, regardless of their political leanings, raises fundamental questions. For the people of India and for people around the world there can be no perception of India, real or imagined, where the ideals of the Mahatma do not loom large. How is this contradiction to be reconciled? Because, if it is not addressed and is merely glossed over at every public place within the country and without, where the name of Gandhi is taken, India will not be able to emerge unscathed from the troubling dissonance between the precept and its practice.

India having veered so far away from Gandhi’s teachings it should have been possible to reject his philosophy out of hand and move on without a backward glance at an ideal that was considered impractical; or one that could not be put into effect in a land where shallowness, hypocrisy and untruthfulness have become the order of the day in public life. In which case, getting rid of the baggage of Gandhi’s legacy and getting on with the governance of the country in the non-Gandhian pattern that prevails should have been easy.

This has not been the case. At the same time that untruthfulness and venality are in full cry, the very leaders who have propelled the country in that direction have not been able to dispense with the trumpeting of Gandhi’s legacy because of a lurking fear that should it be discarded altogether India would not only have lost its way, it would have lost its soul. Then there would be no turning back. The thought of that final and of chedding the pretence, troubles these peoples. They know that without the pretence they would not be able to face their countrymen, not at the hustings, not in public, possibly not even in private. At a deeper level they are not unaware that a final abandonment of Gandhi would be tantamount to condemning themselves to a karmic descent too horrid to contemplate. For, no matter how immoral the lot that governs the nation, in their heart of hearts they are deeply religious, albeit in a very warped sense of what their understanding of being religious should be. They also know that in India the vast majority of their countrymen revere the Mahatma and in spite of their poverty, deprivation and misery still closely adhere to the thoughts and ideals of Gandhi. For they are the ideals of Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo and so many other sages and seers who moulded the character and destiny of India through the ages. The

destiny that awaited India at midnight of 15th August 1947 has still eluded the country. Beneath the despair and turmoil that afflicts the land that destiny still awaits India.

India, many hope, might yet produce the leaders who would take the country to the pinnacle that the Mahatma and the sages before him dreamed of in their quest for global harmony. The ideal, therefore, cannot be lost sight of. The ideals of Mahatma Gandhi are far too important for the redemption of India, if it is to find its feet and its true destiny. For the very same reason they are important for the world as well.

It is necessary to go a step further. The reasons as to why when the majority of Indians believe in it and the political leaders profess to believe in it, Gandhi's teachings have not prevailed in the country of its origin have to be gone into. The main reason could be the difficulty of transplanting the Gandhian ideal of the early 20th century. An alien dispensation that ruled the country, because of it being alien, was instrumental in uniting the country ideologically (toward freedom) in the earlier decades before independence. The post-independence circumstances that obtained after the partition of India were not the same. As the years went by leading "after the failed decades of socialism" to the market economy in most parts of the world, the implementation of those ideas became even more difficult. Firstly, as brought out earlier, the conditions had altered radically, and secondly, having moved so far away from the Gandhian philosophy and its economic derivatives it became increasingly difficult to retrace the steps. Having said that, the attempts at strengthening *panchayati raj*³ and the adherence to the principle, if not the practice, of sustainable development would qualify as a bow in the direction of Gandhi.

Meanwhile a fundamental change has taken place in the makeup of the people of India and the world. Nearly sixty years after Gandhi's death, the capitalist model and the morality that goes with it have become the norm. Even countries most staunchly opposed to it earlier have embraced it whole-heartedly, notably Russia and China. Could people of those days when Gandhi was popularizing the *charkha*⁴ have anything in common with Deng Xiao Peng's famous exhortation to his countrymen that "it is glorious to be rich". If it were glorious to be rich there would be nothing left of Gandhi's philosophy. If not the masses, at least the political class and the elite of modern India have embraced Deng's dictum as fervently as the Chinese in Beijing, Shanghai and Guangdong; in many cases as strongly as the Americans themselves.

Whatever be the reason for this departure from socialism to capitalism, it is undeniable that going back to the economic idealism contained in Gandhi's writings would relegate India to an economic decline from which recovery would be difficult in the world of today. May be, when the consumerism that is fast overtaking the globe makes life itself unsustainable on the planet, people across the world will start reappraising the economic philosophy of Gandhi. That is why the world is not going to forget Mahatma Gandhi in a hurry. By association India, rightly or wrongly, will benefit from that grand reversal, whenever it takes place on a global scale.

If India is to remain part of the global economy, without completely shedding some of the desirable aspects of its socialist past, it must start its own reappraisal for benefiting from the vision of Gandhi wherever it is possible to transform that vision on the ground under the prevailing conditions in the country and the world. If the world has to save itself from self-destruction Gandhi's non-violence must become the leitmotif of a globalised world, and a reformed UN structure should make non-violence between states the norm for the 21st century. The United Nations has adopted October 2, the birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi as World Harmony Day. It was possibly Mahatma Gandhi who said: "for my worldly needs my village is my world; for my spiritual needs the world is my village".

2.- The China factor

In the closing decade of the last century many analysts had started writing about the shift away of the center of gravity from Europe to Asia. It did not take long for the change to take place. Today, nobody doubts that Asia is the economic giant of the world. This situation is likely to continue for the best part of the 21st century, if not beyond. Moreover, Asia is also the playground—more appropriately, battleground—for the geopolitical sweepstakes of the coming decades. Japan and the Tiger economies were the forerunners of wealth creation in Asia. The emphasis here is on wealth creation through industrialization, globalization and market competition. Wealth has also been created in some parts of the Middle East and now Central Asia due to the hydrocarbon reserves located in those countries. Whether these run out in a few years, or a few decades, or last longer than presently anticipated, is a question of considerable debate. What is not being debated, however,

is the near-certain rise of China and India as the new economic giants of the century.

Indian planners are invariably drawn to comparisons with China. There is inevitability about it. China looms large, in fact much too large, on India's geopolitical, geo-economic and geo-strategic horizons. Almost anyone crystal-gazing about global geo-political polarities talks of a potential clash between the titans of mid-21st Century. Reminiscent of the Cold War titans of the 20th Century, the new global giants pitted against each other for global dominance are mentioned as USA and China, seldom, if ever, India. China's rise, linked to its phenomenal economic growth in the post-Deng Xiaoping era, has given it immense leverage beyond its frontiers. China has expanded rapidly into Latin America, Africa and Asia. It is the economic expansion into Asia, added to the capturing of energy sources in the region that will impact most heavily upon India. China has deepened its ingress into South Asia, bestriding India from the West as well as the East. To elaborate, China has significantly extended its influence into Pakistan in the West and Myanmar and Bangladesh in the East. As an example, China signed four accords including the umbrella Defence Cooperation Agreement in 2003 with Bangladesh. It was the latter's first defence agreement with any country.

Relations between India and China bifurcate themselves into security and economy. Security relates to the problem of boundary delimitation. Nevertheless, at the highest levels, leaders of the two countries tend to underplay their differences on the border issue, because people on both sides feel that a time could come when China might become India's main foreign trade partner supplanting the US. Economic integration at that level would automatically dilute the impact of differences that have been carried over for nearly sixty years.

A fair portion of the political space in the 21st century could be occupied by India and China. Their relations are characterized by alternating dialectics of rivalry and cooperation, the current status resting largely on the pace of their economic growth. The rapidly expanding economies of China and India could sustain world demand well into the future. To an extent India's tilt toward the US could be attributed to the perceived threat from China at some future date, owing largely to the asymmetric military capability between the two countries. India is conscious of the important place assigned to Pakistan in Beijing's geopolitical strategy, summed up by Chairman Hu Jintao's statement as

being “higher than the Himalayas, deeper than the Indian Ocean, and sweeter than honey” (AP and AFP, Nov 26, 2006).

The mutual suspicion between Beijing and New Delhi has not prevented the two countries from developing bilateral contacts. In 2006, the commodity turnover between India and China reached 20 billion USD. By the year 2010, this figure is likely to reach USD 50 billion. Beyond that, the growth could achieve an even more scorching pace. Lately these two countries have thought fit to adopt identical positions on a number of issues that include world trade, investments, establishment of a multi-polar world and many other proposals of a similar nature.

In India there is growing unease about the sharply increased activity of the Chinese Navy, spreading to the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf. According to some estimates the Chinese, by engaging in the modernization of ports in Myanmar in the Bay of Bengal and Gwadar (Pakistan) in the Arabian Sea, are actually preparing a foothold for subsequent geopolitical expansion. These assessments are supported by information about China’s growing activity along the entire eastern coast of Africa, with a view to establishing control over strategic mineral resources of the African continent. India is especially concerned about the fast implementation of the Chinese program for expansion of its long-range nuclear and conventional submarine force. The Indian strategic community apprehends that within the next decade China may challenge the country in the Indian Ocean. India, while it may endeavour to do so, might not be able to effectively neutralize China’s geopolitical offensive by deploying comparable naval strength in Southeast Asia and the Far East. Of course, India may yet be impelled to increase the outlay for expansion of its navy should the Chinese naval activities in and around the subcontinent continue as at present.

China had started its military modernization drive even before the end of the Cold War, towards this end playing off both the superpowers and providing, in the process, a kind of third pole stability in Asia. Although the theory might not have been seriously advanced to date, it is not inconceivable that when classified papers from the closed communist society see the light of day, they might reveal that China may have had a part to play, albeit on a lower scale, in the demise of the Soviet Union. What is undeniable, however, is that in the post-Soviet breakup China has aspired to replace its former communist ally of an earlier period as the second superpower of the 21st century.

Experts place China's ascent to military superpower status at par with, or almost at par with, the USA, to the period 2025-2035. When that stage is reached China could very well announce, or tacitly start adopting, a Chinese version of the Monroe Doctrine in Asia. In some respects it is already doing so. Most countries in China's neighbourhood and especially Southeast Asia already factor in Chinese sensibilities in their foreign policy projections. In many respects, so does India, for that matter. If the Chinese domination is not more overt or marked it is solely due to the significant US presence in Asia. As to how long that presence lasts after alternate energy sources have been found, or the global dependence on Asian hydrocarbon reserves declines is anybody's guess. At whatever stage decline in American presence happens, the sole challenger to Chinese hegemony in Asia would be India.

Japan may be a powerful country. However, it neither has the landmass nor the natural resources, nor the population base to be a serious challenger to a resurgent China by the middle of the century. For demographic reasons, akin to those of Japan and Europe, Russia too would have suffered considerable erosion in its geopolitical mass. By that time it is well on the cards that China would have demographically expanded fairly massively into Asiatic Russia, Siberia, Kazakhstan and Tibet. By fair or foul means, Taiwan too would have come under Chinese sway, if not politically incorporated as a Hong Kong-like province of China. Outer Mongolia would have remained only nominally independent.

With burgeoning foreign exchange reserves (the Chinese forex reserves have almost touched \$2 trillion), both India and China are moving beyond their borders to deploy these reserves in other countries. Although China's reserves currently are nearly six times those of India there has developed a race between them to take over foreign firms, especially in the West. There is, however, a marked difference in the approach of China and India in this regard. China acquisitions made abroad are generally state mandated or state sponsored. In the case of India, the foreign takeovers are wholly entrepreneurial. They reflect the new dynamism of Indian enterprises, freed very recently from stifling bureaucratic controls that came to be known as the 'license raj'. Indian conglomerates have moved out boldly to acquire assets abroad. Some of these acquisitions have created a mini quake in the business world. To name just a few: Laxmi Mittal's takeover of Arcelor and the House of Tata takeover of Tetley Tea and Corus. The Birlas and Ambanis have not

lagged behind either. Not to be left behind, the Indian pharmaceutical sector has made spectacular foreign acquisitions and investments.

Reports coming from China indicate that the Chinese government is looking askance at the manner and speed with which Indian enterprises are spreading their tentacles abroad; more so, since Chinese attempts to take over UNOCOL were stymied by the US government. The race for foreign takeovers is of recent origin. Although China has by far the larger reserves it may not be able to match the dynamism of the Indian private sector. What is more, large enterprises in the West, especially in the USA and the UK are fairly comfortable with persons of Indian origin going to the very top. There are many examples: Arun Sarin till recently headed Vodafone; Indira Nooyi sits atop Pepsico; Rajat Gupta was leading McKinsey & Co. for 10 years running. There are several other examples. The trend appears to be irreversible. It is doubtful whether governments and enterprises in the West would be equally comfortable with persons of Chinese origin heading some of their topflight global consultancies or lead enterprises. The chances are they would not. At least not till China ushers in a democratic system and its judiciary displays the same independence as the judiciary in India. And last, but not least, till the Press in China becomes free, or much freer than it is presently. In contrast the Press in India is as vibrant as anywhere else in the world.

Finally, China, having been assured of India's acceptance of Tibet as part of China, should commence, in its own interest, the phased demilitarization of the Tibet Autonomous Region and permit the return of the Dalai Lama on the lines of the very modest proposals put forward by him. Failure to do so would automatically, in the not too distant future, reopen the entire Tibetan question. What is more, it would force India to militarize its borders with China far more meaningfully than at present. Militarization creates its own logic—mostly tragic. China's demilitarization of Tibet has now become an ineluctable ecological imperative as well. The sooner China gets going on this long delayed step the better it would be for Sino-Indian relations and for peace and harmony in Asia. Nevertheless, China remains paranoid about the Dalai Lama. It is a paranoia verging on dementia quite out of character with the reticence and inscrutability that was the hallmark of Chinese diplomacy. So much so that China has co-opted itself into the global "fatwa" duopoly of the two leading contenders of the world in this regard.

Only the USA had shown the inclination to issue global injunctions, threatening violators with dire consequences, like in the

case of trade embargos against entities dealing with Iran. There have been many other instances. In like manner, Osama bin Laden, Iranian governments, and several Muslim entities have also been issuing global *fatwas*—often going so far as to threaten reprisals against individuals as well as countries; frequently threatening to subject the latter to suicide bombing carnage or other terrorist activities. The Chinese have adopted similar postures in relation to the Dalai Lama. They have let it be known to everyone that world leaders meeting the Dalai Lama would have to reckon with the Chinese. In fact, they have gone well beyond the Americans and the Islamists. The Chinese directly warn *countries* as well as *leaders* not to meet the Nobel Peace Prize laureate or face consequences, often threatening trade penalties. They had earlier adopted a similar posture with regard to Taiwan. Many people have started wondering as to what the Chinese behaviour might be were they to actually become a superpower in the coming decades. It does not augur well for global harmony.

3.- Europe-India

Europe has never been as prosperous, secure or free as a continent as it is now. There is internal harmony between the States that form part of the European Union and external harmony with the whole world in the sense that barring non-state actors no state poses a direct threat to Europe. Looking well into the future it is difficult to see Europe being overly troubled due to internal rifts between its component states or the external world. Even the emerging giants of the new century, especially China and India look on Europe with great favour. Russia, its giant neighbour to the east, would like nothing better than to coordinate its policies with Europe for meeting fresh global challenges that may emerge.

Against this background, the terror incidents unleashed by radical elements in Spain and in the UK and the killing of Mr. Van Gogh have shaken European society. More so, because as distinct from the 9/11 attacks in USA, the radicals carrying out the terror attacks in Europe were of the homegrown variety. Almost all of them were people who were long timers, i.e., they were born in Europe, had been living there, and were European passport holders. They could hardly be termed as outsiders.

For the average European citizen the paradox described above of a peaceful, prosperous and secure Europe becoming the spawning ground for terrorists from within individuals from immigrant communities who are mostly second and third generation citizens of Europe creates unease for which there does not appear to be any palliative, except to hunker down for the long haul with its partners in the Global War on Terrorism.

An enlarged European Union that might be willing to take on greater international responsibility would need partners for international cooperation. India and the EU have perhaps the strongest joint commitment to peace, stability, liberty and economic prosperity.

The EU remains India's top trading and investment partner. EU members account for nearly 22 percent of India's exports and just over 20 per cent of the latter's imports. These statistics when examined closely reveal a major asymmetry, with India accounting for less than 2 percent of both EU total exports and imports. The rapid expansion of a high spending consumer class in India, the diversified EU manufacturing base, and other growing complementarities offer big opportunities to build on the economic partnership, which is reflected in the nearly 20 percent growth rate registered by EU exports to India. It makes India one of the most promising customers of European products. The EU also remains one of the largest sources of FDI for India. In comparison to EU trade volumes with its major partners, India-EU bilateral trade, however, is a modest 40 billion plus.

The importance of enhanced co-operation in science and technology between India and the European Union was underlined in the first ever India-EU Ministerial Science Conference held in New Delhi in early February 2007. This was the first time that EU member states and the European Commission had met on a ministerial level science conference outside the EU. It was also the first time that European Nobel Laureates and other renowned European scientists engaged in a forum with students outside the European Union. The Conference agreed that joint work should focus on core areas such as energy, environment, global change and human health. Implementation of the conference's major recommendations is likely to impart dynamism to the growing partnership in a vital area that could serve as development multiplier.

Besides, India and the EU have the common objective of combating international terrorism, containing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and in resolving ethnic conflicts peacefully. The time has come when neither Europe nor Asia can afford to be mere

bystanders to events that could cause cataclysmic upheavals across continents. The lone superpower casts its giant shadow across the world. At the zenith of its power the USA has set in motion a train of events that could lead to global turmoil on an unmanageable scale.

After the demise of the Soviet Union, European nations had started reassessing their position vis-à-vis USA with respect to the rest of the world. 9/11 reunited them. It turned out to be a temporary interlude. Going beyond 9/11 Europe cannot blindly tread the American path. The proposed setting up of missile interceptor defences in Poland, the Czech Republic or elsewhere in Europe could exacerbate tensions with Russia, *without* commensurate benefits for Europe from a deployment whose efficacy is questioned by most experts.

The divergence in this case does not signify mistrust or hostility. The Western countries remain solidly allied to USA, but not in the manner in which they were allied during the Cold War years, or in the policies that they might pursue in the future to safeguard European interests and European security. Europe no longer faces a military threat, as was the case during the Cold War. Other threats have emerged. They may or may not require a military response. They certainly do not call for joint Europe-USA high-tech devastation of other parts of the globe.

The EU countries and India have a major role to play in easing global tensions in a manner that does not excluded the US from these formulations altogether. Both the EU and India share the view that while the US needs to re-examine some of its policies, a catastrophic decline in US power is not in the interest of overall global security at this juncture. Of all the countries that interact with or oppose the US on global issues, the Americans could become more amenable to advice from the EU and India in the coming years, if jointly rendered. One of the factors for a more ready acceptance from EU-India would be a lack of animus or innate anti-US feelings towards Americans in these countries, as distinct from fierce opposition to US policies in most other parts of the world.

As conventional wisdom goes, the USA is the only superpower likely to remain so for the foreseeable future, possibly up to the mid-21st Century. Evaluating the global situation at some remove from Washington or the other power centers of the world like London, Moscow and Beijing, another great player can be clearly discerned. In several ways resurgent Islam with its runaway demographic surge is emerging as a major challenger to the US global hegemony. Resurgent Islam is today the

only power entity that has the ability to challenge US “and Western” interests almost anywhere in the world.

The expansionist urge of militant Islam is its third expansionist wave in history since inception nearly a millennium and a half ago. Its first major expansion took place in the second half of the first millennium. It again expanded in the second millennium till the Turks were stopped at the gates of Vienna at the close of the 17th Century. Potentially, the third wave, the current demographic expansion wave, can neither be dismissed lightly nor wished away. As opposed to all other denominational strains, resurgent Islam has the demographic mass, the unity of the Muslim *ummat*, and the commonality of goals to aspire for dominant global presence. It has already established sizeable population bases in non-Islamic countries of Europe, USA, China, India, Russia and several other countries where it is expanding by the day, both through natural increase and immigration—legal as well as illegal. Moreover, colossal wealth is flowing into the coffers of Muslim countries that have large hydrocarbon reserves.

Typically, human security comprises two major elements i.e. freedom from fear and freedom from want. Taking these elements as the basis it will readily be seen that whereas in Europe freedom from want has diminished greatly in the decades following World War II, in Asia it remains the single most important concern for a large body of the population. Fear thereby gets subsumed into the basic concern for *survival*, in most cases subsistence survival. More recently, consequent to the rise of global terrorism in the form of Islamic *jihad*, many countries in Europe that felt safe under the military might of NATO and its nuclear umbrella are no longer so sure of their personal security. They too have experienced a rising surge of fear. More so, since it now requires much less effort to kill a larger number of people, or to shatter across-the-board the tranquility of people who felt safely ensconced in their post-Cold War security.

The big powers of the Europe-Asia region that have the ability to reshape the world order should they coordinate their approach on the major global issues, can bring durable peace to their respective continents as well as the adjoining continent of Africa. Their joint approach does not *ipso facto* translate into anti-Americanism. It would merely mean that these entities have come to the conclusion that, unless they take a stand on some of the major issues in the larger interest of humankind, the planetary stresses being generated by the global policies in the

ascendant –largely at the behest of the remaining superpower– could lead to an irreversible global decline well before the turn of the new century.

Finally, The EU and India, more than most other countries, have to take into account the demographics of global terrorism, as both of them will continue to be threatened by this phenomenon on a scale higher than the other nations. The single biggest factor sustaining Islamic *jihād* is the runaway population growth in Muslim societies, creating its own problems in the social domain for host countries and wherever else an expatriate base has been established. Therefore, both the EU and India have a major stake in coordinating their policies in areas related to health care and women’s literacy and emancipation. Similarly, the stabilization *in* Afghanistan as well as the stabilization *of* Afghanistan is an issue that can be better coordinated. EU countries have forces deployed in Afghanistan, most of them involved in tackling the growing menace of Islamic radicalism.

4.- Looking ahead

A basic error that the global community has been committing in confronting global terror since its dramatic advent on the global scene on 11 September 2001 has been the collective descent into a denial mode. The time has come to call a spade a spade. What is being witnessed today is most definitely a “clash of civilizations”. It started well *before* Samuel Huntington came on the scene in 1993 to articulate a hypothesis that earned him accolades and criticism in equal measure. In practically every country, almost every action tends to accentuate or sharpen this divide –on a denominational basis and more recently on a demographic basis as well. By acknowledging it to be a clash of civilizations, obfuscations and euphemisms can be avoided. By being straightforward there is a better chance of finding a solution, failing which the clash of civilizations could lead to an *extinction* of civilization.

In the true meaning of the word the young homegrown Muslims in the West who are rallying to the cries of militant Islam cannot be called criminals, nor should they be treated as such. They are responding to a call that resounds from hundreds of millions of throats across an entire arc that earlier stretched from the southern shores of the Mediterranean to Indonesia and even The Philippines. Their incarceration or vilification is not going to mollify their future behavior. The call of the *ummat* exceeds their loyalty to the nation whose citizens they have

become on account of an earlier phase of migration by their parents. That they would be more disillusioned were they to go back to their countries of origin and worse off in the living conditions obtaining back home is hardly the point at issue. Where the confrontation, which has become denominational, if not civilisational, will ultimately lead is anybody's guess.

The opposing sides are hunkering down for the long haul. How long would long be is again a point rather far away on the horizon. Till that point is reached, provided it does not recede further as it is approached, mayhem on a worldwide scale is likely to remain the order of the day.

When India looks at its security in the timeframe 2015 onward, it will be seen that the way things are shaping up its security in an independent—or standalone manner—could be cause for considerable anxiety. Today, largely due to the US presence in and around the subcontinent, India does not face short-term threats from abroad, other than externally inspired Islamic terrorism. Currently India's security threats are mostly internal. Besides the externally abetted terrorism from both the Western and Eastern borders with neighbouring countries India's internal threats relate to the rise of Naxalism and civil unrest resulting from divisive vote bank politics that exacerbate caste, religious and ethnic divides as well as a marked increase in corruption and decline in good governance. As regards the internal security threats, India *has* the capacity to overcome these with the abundant resources at its command. The difficulty in dealing with these threats arises from constitutional lacunae and irresoluteness of the government.

When looking at the long-term external security horizon there are only two countries and one entity that could have the will as well as the wherewithal to attempt the destabilization of India. Although the order of the potential threat from these countries and this entity may change in the coming years, as of now they can be enumerated as follows: (i) Pakistan-China abetted threat from cross-border infiltrations taking place via Pakistan, Bangladesh and the Northeast; (ii) large-scale demographic changes on the sub-continent due to differential rates of growth as also large-scale illegal influx into India from practically all its neighbours; (iii) threat from China; (iv) a possible threat from the USA should the present geo-strategic alignments in Asia or global geoeconomics undergo substantial modifications.

India has always considered its relationship with Russia—successor to the Soviet Union— as a special one, especially since the cementing of the treaty in 1971 prior to India's action in Bangladesh (formerly East Pakistan), which resulted in its independence. The military-strategic potential of Russian-Indian cooperation remains important for both sides. An increased Indian military presence elsewhere in Asia, at whatever stage, would not be looked upon unfavorably by Russia. A stronger Indian military potential could produce a restraining effect on China. Russia considers India a showcase of Russian modern weapons technologies. Whatever other alignments or shifts in foreign policy might take place in the coming decades, India's strategic relationship with Russia remains inviolable. Both countries have arrived at a comfortable understanding whereby each country pursues its own interest without allowing the strategic relationship to be impaired or eroded.

India's relations with the USA and, by extension, with USA's traditional allies have undergone a significant change in the new century, especially after September 11, 2001. Presently there are many areas of geopolitical convergence between the USA and India. Nevertheless, India cannot forget the hostile environment around its periphery during the Cold War, mostly at the behest of the USA. While the exchanges between India and the USA are becoming more and more friendly the fact remains that the USA has so militarily positioned itself via its bases and bilateral agreements with countries around India as to have virtually surrounded it from most sides, even if the surrounding that has taken place may not have been deliberately patterned in a hostile manner.

The developing partnership between USA and India has many conditions attached to it. Even if not implicit, the superpower is able to exert pressures, which its partners do not find easy to resist. From the point of view of the USA, one of the cornerstones of its Asian strategy remains the setting up of India as the counterweight to China so that China is not able to unduly influence the foreign and economic policies of its neighbouring countries, especially in Southeast Asia, through its economic and military might. A strong India, with strong economic ties to ASEAN, automatically becomes the balancer and stabilizer for an Asian equipoise. A strategic balance between China and India in Southeast Asia, and possibly beyond, is good for the region and good for the world.

That perception is increasingly being shared in Japan, resulting in much greater co-operation between Japan and India in the recent past.

This cooperation, which is multi-dimensional, is picking up momentum. Among other things, Japan would be happy to balance its investments in China with those in India, provided the latter is able to improve its infrastructure (the Japanese are willing to provide assistance) and ensure fast track, single window clearances for proposals submitted to the government in New Delhi. Seeing the benefits that have accrued to both China and Japan from large Japanese investments on the former countries, Japan is entering into a new relationship with India which could become the next domain for large investments by Japan, both as a countervailing strategy and also as the harbinger of new geo-strategic equations that guarantee stability in the eastern half of the Asian continent in an arc going from New Delhi through-Singapore-Jakarta-Hanoi-Tokyo-Beijing-Seoul- Pyongyang up to Vladivostok. None of the likely outcomes need to be viewed with disfavour by the USA. They would be of special interest to the EU. In the long-term they would become the cornerstone of a new global stability, which could be underpinned by Russia and the European Union to the North and by USA as part of its global outreach.

India is *naturally* a soft power. Its recent, post-independence history belies any pretensions to being other than a sub-continental lightweight. But, by about 2020, if not earlier, China could feel strong enough, both economically and militarily, to flex its muscles in Asia. Unless assisted by Russia, it might never develop, at least in the 21st century, the ability to project forces around the world in the manner that America is capable of doing. In Asia it would be able to easily withstand and offset US pressure or surmount any US challenge in its immediate neighbourhood, East Asia, Central Asia, Southeast Asia and parts of South Asia. In the years to come practically all of China's neighbors (other than those in South Asia) would be happy to see India develop into an economic *as well as* a military counterpoise to China. Should it fail to live up to these expectations, India would have given a free run to China to dominate most countries in Asia, especially Southeast Asia. To some extent Africa, Japan and Europe too could start feeling the heat. In sum, unless India becomes conscious of its responsibility to itself, its neighbourhood, Asia and the world, and improves its military capability in a significant way, it might suffer military setbacks on its borders and loss of standing all around.

When India and China further increase their outlays on armaments because of the reasons just enumerated, will it signify another arms race

of a magnitude similar to the American-Soviet arms race of an earlier era? As a consequence will Europe and a few other countries have to follow suit? How will this affect the global economy and the state of the planet's health? These are no longer questions that can be wished away. The world can only be spared the misery issuing from this if there is a rapprochement between China and India. For this to take place China will have to settle the long-standing boundary question with India and gradually ease up on its assistance to countries in South Asia deliberately being propped up by China in their hostile actions against India. To date, India has not paid back China in kind. It has been extremely sensitive to China's sensibilities. To this day it has not opened up fully to Taiwan, thus denying itself Taiwanese technology and investments. Taiwan is just one example. There are others, should India be impelled to decide that "those two people *must* play the same game". China could be vastly incommoded were India to pay back to China in the same coin. To exercise such an option, India will first have to put its own house in order and considerably augment its military reach.

To be allowed to live in peace and harmony India will have to increase its defence spending for the foreseeable future. It should be realized, however, that no matter how much it advances in the economic field, i.e., even if it were to overtake China at some point in time, India does not nurture the ambition to become a military superpower. Historically, India eschewed such a role. There has *never* been any defence paper, from the very beginning, that would indicate that India aspired to become a *great* military power. Even in the future, for generations to come, India's strategic reach would be limited to the Indian Ocean region and the subcontinent and its neighbourhood. Seeing its size, in not nursing a larger or strategic global military vision India stands unique in the comity of nations.

In the years to come big power conflicts of the type that the 20th century witnessed can be practically ruled out till at least 2020-2025. Beyond that as well, full-scale big power conflicts with the use of mega weapons of mass destruction are also not likely to take place on account of the planetary annihilation that such a conflict would entail. WMD if used would be released by non-state actors. Thereafter, retaliation with weapons causing large-scale destruction might take place against failed states harboring rogue forces operating outside the states' system.

Once China is able to incorporate Taiwan—peacefully or otherwise—it might feel that it had reached its optimum size: that which would be

possible for China to digest without developing uncontrollable indigestion or fissiparous tendencies. After the incorporation, whenever it takes place –if it is allowed to take place by the USA–China, may go in for a strategic pause lasting several decades. It would coincide with the period that could be utilized by Russia, the EU and India to put in place a non-confrontational system that acts as a barrier to further Chinese inroads into the surrounding countries and regions.

It is estimated that the USA might retract the bulk of its extra-territorial bases in Asia by about 2025, it being the time by which its own dependence on Asian energy resources might come down or the discovery of renewable energy resources could replace the existing dependence on hydrocarbons. The other reason forcing a US pullback might also be the need for concentrating resources and energies on the American continents, where, going by present trends, insuperable challenges to US unilateralism could develop, giving a final burial to the Monroe Doctrine.

Once again, the nations that might feel most apprehensive about a total or near total pullback of the USA from the Eurasian landmass would be India, Southeast Asian countries, Japan, Australia and to an extent the EU. Mechanisms between the European Union and India for chalking out joint, non-confrontational strategies for maintaining peace in Asia, Africa, and the European neighbourhood could be set into motion in the near future. It has to be taken into the reckoning that India's special relationship with Russia would not gel and that India sees this relationship as a contributory factor to the global Equipoise of the Third Millennium.

Concluding remarks

Several millennia ago Kautilya in his *Arthashastra* had written: "It is the nature of power to assert itself". The truism of that pithy statement has manifested itself through the ages. It is being demonstrated today in the shape of the superpower hegemony and the lesser hegemonies being witnessed around the world, by nations and by individuals. The process of nuclear disarmament has for too long been dominated by the Western powers. A major shift to the East, based on a strategic dialogue between China, India, Russia, Japan, and at some stage the EU could become the linchpin for creating a fresh universal nuclear disarmament framework.

China, Russia, India and Japan, acting in unison could become the initial guarantors of the nuclear disarmament process in Asia, as a prelude to universal disarmament. These nations have centuries of

accumulated wisdom behind them, which could now be tapped to find answers to problems that have defied solution. In inviting the great Eastern civilizations to take the lead in the search for global solutions it is not intended to diminish the centrality of USA to effective resolution modes. The world's unstinting support of the US was unequivocally demonstrated after the 9/11 attacks in USA. Even now, no world power can be viewed as hostile to America—which offers a golden opportunity to sit together and resolve issues that threaten global harmony.

The paramount concern of the world has to remain the spread of nuclear weapons. While the chances of proliferation –both horizontal and vertical– are greater than they were a decade earlier, paradoxically the world has in fact got a breather as far as the likelihood of use of nuclear weapons is concerned. Barring some unforeseen developments there is very little chance of nuclear weapons being used in the foreseeable future between countries and certainly not amongst the larger, more stable countries.

Today only two entities threaten each other and the world with the threat of weapons of mass destruction, these being the superpower USA and its principal adversary the shadowy radical elements out to hit USA wherever they can. At least for the next ten to fifteen years the nuclear exchange at the lowest kiloton yields is more likely between these two adversaries. This period becomes the window of opportunity to effectively roll back the nuclear peril. The cataclysmic holocaust that could have resulted from an exchange between the two superpowers during the Cold War decades when the doomsday clock in New York came very close to midnight can be practically ruled out for at least the next decade or two. However, as far as the planet is concerned, the bigger danger to planetary decline stems from massive deforestation, population proliferation, species extinction, breakdown of the inter-species genetic barriers, global warming and, most importantly, the likelihood of the pursuance of the capitalist consumption patterns by the developing world, being propelled by the forces of globalization into this cul-de-sac at a self-energizing pace. If the remaining virgin forest tracts disappear and the capitalist consumption patterns become the norm for the bulk of the human race the damage to the Earth would be far more than a suitcase bomb or a few low yield nuclear bombs going off.

It is above all the U.S. public that must appreciate that at the end of the day the course that America takes in the coming years will depend largely on how the USA deploys its wealth. For example, should it persist

with the planet-destroying star wars programme, with outlays of tens of billions of dollars, leading up to possibly half a trillion dollars or more over the life of the programme, then America will surely get firmly sucked into the negative spiral of decline and decay. The rest of the world would be dragged down as well. The Great Game is over. It has nearly gotten out of the hands of the powers that be. In the era of weapons of mass destruction almost all the big games are over. Only foolish people, die-hard diplomats from an earlier period, or the uniformed fraternity can really think of playing games on a global scale. It is time to take stock.

Nearing the end of the first decade of the new millennium, when one looks around, it becomes abundantly clear that the spiral of violence within societies, and between nations, has reached self-energizing momentum that might only be stilled by a cataclysmic event, the likes of which has not been witnessed before in human experience.

Between societies and groupings that cohere to form nations the ideal situation that must be worked towards would be one where the need for primacy does not arise. Non-violence appears to be the antithesis of the global reality in today's world. Nevertheless, the concept of non-violence which can be deemed to be the most profound contribution that ancient Indian thought made to the world must regain its primacy, within India and without, if human society is to continue to retain a civilized face. That the essential harmony of all sentient beings, indeed sentience itself, as put forward by Mahavira, Gautama Buddha and many others, was made the basis for India's freedom struggle by Mahatma Gandhi should not be looked at in isolation, as a mere reiteration of non-violence. By introducing the ancient precept into the mainstream of the anti-colonialism struggle in India, Gandhi may have been looking well beyond to the universal projection of his innate belief in the virtue of non-violence as a survival imperative for humanity, just when scientific breakthroughs were placing immensely destructive capabilities into the hands of mankind.

Notes

- ¹ **Satyagraha** is a philosophy and practice of nonviolent resistance developed by Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi who deployed it in campaigns for Indian independence and also during his earlier struggles in South Africa. Satyagraha theory also influenced Martin Luther King, Jr. during the campaigns he led during the civil rights movement in the United States.

- ² **Ahimsa** is a rule of conduct that bars the killing or injuring of living beings. It is closely connected with the notion that all kinds of violence entail negative *karmic* consequences.
- ³ The **Panchayat** is a *South Asian political system* mainly in *India, Pakistan* and *Nepal*. ‘Panchayat’ literally means assembly (*yat*) of five (*panch*) wise and respected elders chosen and accepted by the *village* community. Traditionally, these assemblies settled disputes between individuals and villages. Modern Indian government has decentralised several administrative functions to the village level, empowering elected *gram panchayats*.
- ⁴ The **charkha** (etymologically related to Chakra) was both a tool and a symbol of the Indian independence movement. The charkha, a small, portable, hand-cranked wheel, is ideal for spinning cotton and other fine, short-staple fibers, though it can be used to spin other fibers as well. The size varies, from that of a hardbound novel to the size of a briefcase, to a floor charkha. Mahatma Gandhi brought the charkha into larger use with his teachings. He hoped the charkha would assist the peoples of India achieve self-sufficiency and independence, and so used the charkha as a symbol of the Indian independence movement and included it on earlier versions of the Flag of India.

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