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Will the Emerging India Ever Arrive?

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This article discusses the ingrained impediments which are likely to stifle India's rise and growth - a phenomenon which has figured prominently in scholarly and official assessments, in India and outside, for over a decade now. Intriguingly India's rise as a global power has already been adjudged a certainty in these assessments, but the author contends that there exists an apparent disjuncture between how the world sees India and the prevailing internal impediments. Therefore, any assessment of India as a global power without incorporating these impediments would be incomplete, misplaced and hyperbolic. Of late, in the light of India's growing internal and external socio-economic and political difficulties, more and more writings and proclamations by Indian and international experts indicate emerging scepticism over India's potential as a global power. This paper takes a rollcall of India's internal impediments including, human development, institutional and security challenges which according to the author have already begun restraining India's global ascent.

It is interesting to note that the debate is not anymore about whether India will rise, but about what impact that rise will have on the future of the 'Asian century'. The resurgence of Asia in the so-called 'Asian century' has become the pivot in government reports, media commentaries and academic publications, around which government policies and geopolitical stratagems are expected to unfold. The 'Australia in the Asian century' White Paper has outlined the future of Asia and the potential of various Asian states, including India, in shaping it and observed, 'We strongly support India's growing global

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and wider Asian engagements, including working closely with India and other partners to boost South Asian and wider Indian Ocean cooperation.¹ Ironically, the notion of the 'Asian century' has not yet received as much currency in the Indian foreign policy and academic discourse. Some experts are even reluctant to call it the Asian century yet, but do acknowledge the 'presence and weight' of Asia in the 'political, strategic, humanitarian, and environmental developments.'²

In retrospect, the notion of the 'Asian century' is underpinned by the rise of the Chinese and Indian economies and their enhanced influence in global politics. Their growing stature is seen as the catalyst for Asia's resurgence as the hub of global political, economic and security developments in the twenty-first century. In the Asian century discourse, the rise of India is foreseen with a fair certainty and grouped in magnitude with China's dominant military and economic presence in Asia - a supposition which this paper finds problematic. It is appropriate at this juncture to explore not what kind of impact India has as a global power in the Asian century but rather whether the emergent India will ever arrive in the first place. The likelihood of India faltering midway could also turn the future of the 'Asian century' itself on its head. This paper identifies and analyses the following key impediments standing in the way of India's global ascent: burgeoning human development and governance challenges, endemic corruption, internal security threats, foreign policy predicaments and neighbourhood compulsions.

The Rise of India

The rise of India has remained at the centre of international studies for over a decade now. Stephen Cohen's *Emerging power: India* (2001), Edward Luce's *In spite of the gods: the strange rise of modern India* (2006), Dietmar Rothermund's *India the rise of an Asian giant* (2008), Harsh Pant's *Contemporary debates in India foreign and security policy: India negotiates its rise in the international system* (2008), and Brahma Chellaney's *The Asian juggernauts: The rise of China, India and Japan* (2010) are some of the prominent accounts that have galvanised the discourse on India's rise. They have projected India's rise as a positive and constructive phenomenon for global politics, owing to India's adherence to

multilateralism over unilateralism, soft-power image, liberal and secular democracy, non-aggressive military modernisation and Nehruvian philosophy of peaceful co-existence. Consequently, swayed by India's economic success, growing global goodwill and deepening relationship with major powers, particularly the United States, a buoyant Prime Minister Manmohan Singh could not resist comparing India's rise with China's saying, '...the world takes a benign view of India's rise...The world wants us to succeed.'³ The United States President Barack Obama, during Manmohan Singh's visit in 2009, described the India-US relationship as 'one of the defining partnerships of the 21st century', based on a common political and strategic vision.⁴ Strategic experts, upbeat about the partnership, emphasised that 'after more than a half century of false starts and unrealised potential, India is now emerging as the swing state in the global balance of power. In the coming years, it will have an opportunity to shape outcomes on the most critical issues of the twenty-first century: the construction of Asian stability, the political modernisation of the greater Middle East, and the management of globalisation.'⁵ Similarly, a 2005 Deutsche bank research report also estimated India's global power potential very highly. The report mentioned, 'India's stable democratic political system, huge middle-class population, immense military clout in South Asia, rising economic fortunes and global ambitions make it a potential power that could play a very important role in global affairs.'⁶

But India's former permanent representative to the United Nations Arundhati Ghose is less sanguine about India's rise:

What seems to have caught global attention on this occasion is India's rapidly growing market, and the West, characteristically specific, has clubbed India with other emerging markets, when the rate of growth and size, both actual and potential, of her market, seemed to merit putting Indian in a separate category of developing countries...In my view, emergent India is basically an India in transition and her strategic options are accordingly either constrained or open possibilities for previously closed courses of action.⁷

Likewise, other skeptical former diplomats also share misgivings about India's potential as a global power, highlighting the limitations of its traditional 'soft power' image. They believe that 'soft' power should not

be considered a component of the concept of power since it is not relevant to modifying the behavior of another country; it can, and does, serve as a model and indirectly – and over a period of time – to earn good will among sections of society of other countries for its culture. But it has no place in the discussion of power as a means to bring about a change in the attitude of another country.⁸

Several scholarly works in recent years also regard India's internal challenges as a major hindrance in its rise as a global power.⁹ They highlight poor governance, inadequate infrastructure, corruption, social tensions, abysmal human development and regional instabilities, and ask whether India is ready for super-power status?¹⁰ Additionally serious concerns pertaining to human development and rising social tensions now feature prominently in the speeches of the country's political leadership.¹¹ In 2013, a distinguished grouping of India's leading academics, heads of think-tanks, economists, former diplomats, military and naval commanders, business entrepreneurs and journalists published a report on India's internal challenges and foreign policy imperatives. The report concluded, 'Under no circumstances should India jeopardise its own domestic economic growth, its social inclusion and its political democracy...A range of factors—demography, the unleashing of domestic entrepreneurship, the rising aspirations and innovation of millions of marginalised people, technology - give India's growth prospects a sound foundation and provide competitive advantage that could sustain growth for some time to come. There is widespread consensus that the main thing that can hold India back is India itself.'¹² The External Affairs Minister, Salman Khurshid, has recently struck a similarly cautionary note in this context:

The important thing today for us is that we cannot but disagree that this century is to be the Asian century. When we said that in the previous century, that the 21st century will be the Asian century, that was said with hope, aspiration, determination and confidence. But as we have moved into the 21st century, we have to ask ourselves is that really going to be true. Will we be the Asian century and in being the Asian century will India have its significant participation and deep determination of the path that we take in the 21st century. And I do believe that there are questions, there are questions that have to be answered. And in answering those questions we will conceive the idea of India in the 21st century.¹³

In this context the paper analyses the following challenges to elucidate the abovementioned skepticism among scholars and government representatives, alike.

Human Development and Governance Challenges

The Human Development Report 2013 of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has ranked India at 136 out of 186 countries on the human development index (HDI) based on life expectancy, educational attainment and command over resources. The report mentions, 'India's economic performance has also been impressive, averaging nearly 5% income growth a year over 1990–2012. Nevertheless, India's per capita income is still low, around \$3,400 in 2012; to improve living standards, it will need further growth, since it is difficult to achieve much poverty reduction through redistribution alone at low income. India's performance in accelerating human development, however, is less impressive than its growth performance. Indeed, Bangladesh, with much slower economic growth and half India's per capita income, does nearly as well—and better on some indicators.'¹⁴

The India Human Development Report 2011 (IHDR) recognises the need for achieving 'inclusive growth' and ensuring that development programmes reach the economically and socially deprived sections of the population.¹⁵ The report also securitises the human development notion by linking deprivation among tribal groups with left-wing extremism, which has led to numerous developmental initiatives in the insurgency affected areas pertaining to governance, education, health and other basic amenities.¹⁶ A large section of the population, particularly the landless agricultural labourers, marginal farmers, scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other backward classes, continue to suffer from social and financial exclusion. According to the Economic Survey 2011-2012, in making the development process inclusive, the policies and programmes need to 'ameliorate the regional, social and economic disparities in an effective and sustainable manner'.¹⁷ The survey notes that unfolding demographic changes are likely to substantially increase India's labour force, largely in the age group of 20-35, making India the youngest nation in the world. However, this

‘demographic dividend’ will be accrued, the survey suggests, only if the population is healthy, educated and appropriately skilled.¹⁸

Nobel laureate Amartya Sen, in his book *Development as Freedom*, associates human freedoms with economic poverty that erodes freedom and has argued that ‘development requires the removal of major sources of unfreedom: poverty as well as tyranny, poor economic opportunities as well as systematic social deprivation, neglect of public facilities as well as intolerance or over activity of repressive states’.¹⁹ In Sen’s view, India’s democratic institutions and political culture are both an advantage and potential disadvantage – much like any other democracy. Therefore, developing and strengthening India’s democratic system is essential for development.²⁰ Similarly, others have stressed the necessity for inclusive development with Ash Narain Roy, for example, arguing that:

...whether it is a shining star or a passing comet will depend on what India does to its two-thirds population who will appear to be still untouched by economic strides...India’s gains in the IT sector are impressive. Indian firms have two-thirds of the global market in offshore IT services and nearly half that in BPO. Now there is a manufacturing boom as well. But can India depend on the trickle-down effects to spread prosperity?²¹

Unfortunately, the disjuncture between government priorities and public interests is becoming greater as reflected in the growing civil-society protests. Pratap Bhanu Mehta says that these are signs that India is becoming a ‘Banana republic paranoid about its future and security at the expense of democratic freedom’.²² Mehta finds serious contradictions in India’s polity and governance lamenting that ‘India’s growth is slackening, its national deficit growing, and inflation is rising’.²³ He argues that ‘arbitrary interventions by the government will scare away the investors’, and domestically, government’s commitment to achieve inclusive growth has been inconsistent leading to government backing of mining, land development and infrastructure businesses, which are most corrupt.²⁴ In his assessment, public disgruntlement has been caused by three factors: ‘deeply fragmented politics impeding consensus’ (a point highlighted by the Prime Minister in his 2012 Independence Day speech); erosion of the ‘authority of politicians which

instead of recognising failures and restoring moral order has evaded responsibility'; and Congress' 'lack of touch with grass-roots movements and demands'.²⁵ Some academics argue that these political and structural impediments put India into a disadvantageous position, vis-à-vis China. According to Ashutosh Varshney:

India's democracy allows routine challenges to the government's plans. Big urban projects get entangled in legal or political contestations – over change of land use, compensation terms, rehabilitation plans, corruption. China is perhaps not less corrupt, but an Anna Hazare-style movement (a civil society mass movement against graft) is impossible...Chinese government can easily claim that urbanisation is in the public interest and individual interests must be sacrificed for the greater good of the society.²⁶

Endemic Corruption

According to the Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index (CPI) 2012 India is ranked 94th out of 176 nations surveyed.²⁷ The mass movement led by the septuagenarian Gandhian Anna Hazare symbolised the long-simmering public resentment against rampant corruption in the government machinery. Civil society advocates criticise the government for dragging its feet over the creation of a strong *Lokpal* (Ombudsman) office to curb corruption in the government, judiciary and bureaucracy. Academics lament government apathy too, arguing, 'Manmohan Singh could have appropriated the cause and channelled the people's movement to enact tough news laws...instead he has responded with vacillation and, by using the powers of the state to intimidate activists...'²⁸

Whilst financial scams are not unheard of in India, the scope of the Commonwealth games scam caught the public and media attention instantly. The games cost the government \$ 4.1 billion instead of the estimated \$270 million, yielding only \$38 million in revenues. Similar scandals such as a telecommunication scam (\$ 40 billion over 2G spectrum), foiled army bribery (\$2.7 million) bid by a defence industry lobbyist, coal blocks allotment scam (\$33.59 billion), Delhi international airport scam (\$32.22 billion) and Adarsh housing scam involving

prominent leaders have exposed the decay of India's political milieu.²⁹ A 2011 KPMG report stated:

It is not about petty bribes anymore but scams to the tune of thousands of crores (10 million = one billion) that highlight a political/industry nexus which if not checked could have a far reaching impact...Corruption is considered to be the major roadblocks in India's journey from a developing to a developed economy.³⁰

The Hong Kong based Political and Economic Consultancy recently said that Indian bureaucracy is the worst in Asia behind Vietnam, Indonesia, Philippines and China, characterised by a huge backlog of files, minimal accountability and bureaucratic inertia which underpins a culture of bribe-taking. Alongside endemic corruption onerous taxes, environmental and other regulations have made business in India 'frustrating and expensive'.³¹ The enormity of curbing corruption can be discerned from Chief Justice of India, S H Kapadia's claims that the government 'does not have the resources to correct economic imbalances' and 'in a growing economy, nobody can say that corruption will be zero'.³² But, a former judge of the Supreme Court shows more optimism in saying that India is transiting 'from a feudal, agricultural stage to a modern, industrial stage' and 'that corruption will continue in India for another 15-20 years, but will considerably disappear when the process of industrialisation is complete after this period'.³³

Foreign Policy Predicaments

One of the most striking features of the Indian foreign policy is the periodic alteration triggered by the failure to harmonise the civilisational, idealist Nehruvian legacy with realist aspirations to be a global power. India's long association with idealism in foreign policy making was underscored by the 2012 *The Nonalignment 2.0* report which observed:

India has done all this (economic growth, citizens' participation and dynamism) while maintaining a commitment to a liberal, secular constitutional democracy. India has held together as a nation because of a commitment to these values...These values gave India enormous moral;

an ideological capital...the rest of the world has looked down upon India with certain admiration for holding onto these values...India's adherence to values will be a great source of legitimacy in the international system...India should aim not just at being powerful: it should set new standards for what the powerful must do.³⁴

Historians have reasoned that 'Nehru's understanding was that newly independent, poor countries of Asia and Africa had nothing to gain and everything to lose by falling for the temptation of joining the military blocs of the big powers...Non-alignment came to symbolise the struggle of India and other newly independent nations to retain and strengthen their independence from colonialism and imperialism'.³⁵ But some analysts are irked by the ideational overtones of the report. Ashley Tellis, for instance, strongly critiqued the report asserting that, 'India's foreign-policy establishment is in the process of disinterring a long-dead grand strategy from its cold war grave'.³⁶ He has described non-alignment as 'unrealistic' and 'dangerous' for a variety of reasons: First, 'India cannot rely on an ideal world or players that will respect its attempt at the power of example in pursuing development'; second, 'the quest for strategic autonomy is misplaced in an economically interdependent world with on-going, fast-shifting political competition and strategic alliances'; third, 'India lacks the material and political resources to chart an entirely independent foreign policy; and fourth, 'New Delhi should thus enter into preferential strategic partnership taking into the form of high-quality trading ties, robust defence cooperation and strong diplomatic collaborations'.³⁷

Apparently, Manmohan Singh's participation in the XVI Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) summit in Tehran was seen as a snub to US pressures to isolate Iran and support sanctions against it. India's participation has been interpreted as an exercise to undo the damage caused by India's vote against Iran in the UN on the nuclear issue, allegedly under US pressure. Besides, India's unanimous support for Iran's right to access to the peaceful uses of nuclear technology under the non-proliferation treaty guidelines, and refusal to reduce oil imports from Iran indicate another course correction in foreign policy. Manmohan Singh's remarks at the NAM summit that 'Today's structures for global governance remain driven by the power equations

of the past' that have 'proven inadequate in dealing with the economic and political crises of our present', signified India's traditional aversion to unilateralism and great power domination in world affairs.³⁸ Does this policy reversal denote the loss of steam in India-US relations³⁹, or simply an aberration? Or is it a consequence of the government's plunging domestic popularity and opposition's criticism of its foreign policy.⁴⁰

Some Indian foreign policy experts, like Tellis and Raja Mohan, have endorsed India's foreign policy course correction to move closer to the US, but not a reversion back to a Nehruvian foreign policy. They say Indian policies have transited from 'idealism to pragmatism' and 'India has moved from its past emphasis on power of the argument to the argument of power'.⁴¹ India's diplomatic history too contains instances of 'quick course correction' made under Indira Gandhi in 1966, under the Janata government in 1977 and later under Rajiv Gandhi, to come closer to the US and 'move away from the political foresight and pragmatism that informed Nehru's practice of non-alignment'.⁴² The US-based South Asia expert, Stephen Cohen, maintains however that:

In recent years there seems to be a new effort to resolve the realism-idealism conundrum and to determine priorities in India foreign policy...This will make India a more credible country, improve the quality of debate within the Indian foreign policy community, and make India a more predictable state, hence one that other major powers will find it easier to work with.⁴³

So, does India's restoration of its linkages with Iran and NAM symbolise its idealism-realism predicaments? Given these foreign policy changes, some analysts even ask—will the land of Gandhi become a conventional great power?⁴⁴ Subhash Kapila says that transitioning from idealism to pragmatism has made foreign policy 'unpredictable and uncertain' and created a 'strategic deficit'.⁴⁵ He says that after 'outsourcing its foreign policy formulations' to the US, under pressure India voted against Iran in the UN which derailed the Iran-Pakistan-India energy pipeline project, and twice against Sri Lanka on the 'US inspired UN resolution on human rights violations and war crimes in Sri Lanka'.⁴⁶ In basic material terms, the fact that India imports 12 per cent of its oil requirements from Iran and is dependent on pipeline/transit routes to reach Afghanistan and Central Asia, necessitates close relations

with Iran.⁴⁷ The recent course correction in foreign policy is suggestive of India's ideological predicaments which could jeopardise its relationship with both, traditional and new allies, making it an untrustworthy partner.

Internal Security

Home-grown terrorism (HGT) and left-wing extremism (LWE) are the two most serious threats impinging on internal security according to the Prime Minister.⁴⁸ The HGT is perpetrated by an indigenous group, the *Indian Mujahideen* (IM) that succeeded the proscribed Student Islamic Movement of India and has sought to avenge the demolition of the Babri Mosque in 1992 and the consequent killings of Muslims in communal riots, and the alleged failure of the judiciary to impart justice to India's Muslims.⁴⁹ India's HGT symbolises the deep communal differences between Hindus and Muslims which germinated during the Mughal period and intensified after India's independence in 1947. Some historians describe the Hindu-Muslim discord as a failure of secularism with the post-independence Indian state seen as failing to safeguard minority interests which provoked minority reaction, followed in turn by a backlash from right-wing Hindu groups.⁵⁰ The IM has carried out bomb blasts since 2007 across India and was declared a terrorist organisation in 2010 by the Indian government. In February 2013 another blast occurred in Hyderabad killing 13 people, in reaction to the hanging of Afzal Guru (the ringleader of the 2001 Indian Parliament attack).⁵¹

The LWE is perpetrated by over 40,000 Maoist insurgents, also known as the Naxals, demanding socio-economic rights for the tribal communities, over mining and mineral resources and better governance and development of the tribal regions of India. Over 6,628 people have been killed in LWE since 2002 in the region known as the *Red Corridor*, encompassing 400 police stations in 90 districts across 13 states.⁵² In one of the most deadly ambushes against the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) in Dantewada in April 2010, the Maoists killed 76 CRPF personnel. In response the government adopted a multifaceted policy

combining military operations, improved training and weaponry for the security forces, the opening of political dialogue with the insurgents and the introduction of large-scale welfare and developmental schemes in the tribal regions. According to government sources, the evidence of arms supply by China through the Nepal, Bangladesh and Myanmar border is a worrisome trend for India, although any ideological and political affinities linkages have not been traced so far.⁵³ The problems of interoperability between central security forces and state police forces, political differences between the central and state government, and the failure of welfare schemes in reaching the grassroots in its entirety due to systemic corruption will continue to fuel the LWE. Such internal security threats are recognised by the authorities to be major impediments to India's rise with Prime Minister Singh arguing in 2010 that, 'Our ability to develop at the pace and in the direction that we wish to will depend on how well we are able to maintain the internal stability and cohesion of our country.'⁵⁴ However, according to K.S. Bajpai, chairman of the National Security Advisory Board, India's ability to address these challenges is constrained:

Inward-looking India, which the world thinks is an emerging power, is being asked to show leadership while decay in governance, dysfunctional state institutions and poor decision-making have retarded delivery. Defence preparedness has been constrained by ineffective procurement procedures and strained civil-military relations.⁵⁵

Neighbourhood Compulsions

India's troubled relationship with its neighbours has always prevented it from playing a more proactive global role, sapping most of its political, diplomatic and economic energies regionally. Bilateral tensions, territorial conflicts and political differences underpin India's neighbourhood compulsions and are inimical to its global aspirations. However, given its military and economic capabilities it can deal with threats emanating from its smaller neighbours with relative ease, but with Pakistan and China the story is different.

Enduring Rivalry with Pakistan

India's enduring rivalry with Pakistan is expected to remain one of its most problematical foreign policy and security challenges in the 21st century. Deeply rooted in history events dating back to the movement for the creation of Pakistan in the 1940s and the eventual partition of India in 1947 and later the creation of Bangladesh in 1971, India-Pakistan antagonism is manifested in the multiple forms, such as territorial disputes over Kashmir and Siachen glaciers resulting in four wars and periodic military skirmishes; resource disputes over river waters; and cross-border-terrorism. Due to strong anti-Pakistan sentiments in India generated by the terrorist attacks, Pakistan's inability in dismantling the Jihadi infrastructure, its deteriorating domestic security situation and the overbearing military influence in state affairs, any substantial change in bilateral ties is unlikely in the medium term, and so is Pakistan's preoccupation with the Kashmir dispute. Former General-President Pervez Musharraf had once declared in a speech:

Kashmir runs in our blood. No Pakistani can afford to sever links with Kashmir. The entire Pakistan and the world know this. We will continue to extend our moral, political and diplomatic support to Kashmiris. We will never budge an inch from our principle stand on Kashmir.⁵⁶

The Kargil war of May 1999 reaffirmed this mindset which was an abortive bid by the Pakistani military-jihadi nexus, to choke the supply routes to Siachen and then wrest it military.⁵⁷ Later, the brazen terrorist attack on the Indian Parliament on 13 December 2001 brought India and Pakistan closer to another military confrontation, although the crisis was ultimately diffused and a ceasefire agreed upon in 2003. Under the shadow of tranquillity on the border, bilateral relations continued to be battered by terrorist attacks in India, notably the 2008 attacks in Mumbai. The ceasefire violations in January 2013 along the Line of Control (LOC) and the beheading of two Indian soldiers again frayed political tempers in New Delhi demonstrating the volatility and enduring characteristic of the India-Pakistan rivalry.⁵⁸ Such uncertainties in ties remain strong due to civil-military contestations in Pakistan and the sway of the military and the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) over Kashmir and India policy. The ISI has allegedly created a 'parallel structure wielding enormous power over all aspects of the

government'⁵⁹ and will continue to employ jihadists as 'strategic assets' against India in the future.⁶⁰

Additionally India's deepening relations with Afghanistan have become another source of tension with Pakistan, given Islamabad's perception of Afghanistan as its 'backyard'. The attack on the Indian embassy in Kabul in November 2011, allegedly by the ISI-supported Haqqani network, is testimony to Pakistan's anxieties over India's emerging role in Afghanistan.⁶¹ As India buckles up for a long haul of reconstruction and development efforts in Afghanistan, its enduring rivalry with Pakistan will play out in yet another theatre for at least the next decade. This implies that bilateral tensions will continue to simmer, causing a further drain on India's resources, both in economic and human terms.

The China Bogey

The China bogey has loomed large over Indian policy making since the disastrous 1962 war. George Fernandez, former Defence Minister, once referred to China as a 'potential threat number one' suggesting 'tough decisions' were required to counter India's encirclement by China.⁶² Although a majority of Indian leaders and defence officials refrain from being so candid publically about China, they would share this perception privately, and for credible reasons. There exists a wide consensus in India amongst analysts and commentators over adopting a tougher posture vis-a-vis China in the light of increased Chinese land and air incursions (over 500 since 2010) along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) and in the Ladakh region of Jammu and Kashmir. In April 2013, the incursion by the Chinese troops in the Daulat Beg Oldi sector, 12 miles inside Indian territory, had lasted for three weeks, and was called off only after India agreed to dismantle some military structures which had been in place along the vaguely defined border, on its own territory for many years. The Indian government downplayed the incident as a 'localised' affair and the Foreign Minister Salman Khurshid said, 'We shouldn't destroy years of investment, years of contribution that we have made to this relationship because somewhere some little thing goes wrong. One little spot is acne, which cannot force you to say that this is

not a beautiful face... that acne can be addressed by simply applying an ointment.’⁶³ The restrained official reaction to Chinese incursions arguably emanates from India’s devastating loss to China in 1962, the scars of which have been etched permanently on the Indian psyche. The India-China border disputes in the Western sector in the Ladakh region and Eastern sector in Arunachal Pradesh remain unresolved resulting in Chinese incursions from time to time. Some academic experts also advise against New Delhi adopting a stronger response due to the lopsided power asymmetry in China’s favour. They contend:

...those who are jumping up and down calling for tougher action – by which they mean military action – should explain what action New Delhi can take when its overall weakness in relation to China is so massive. The fact is that China’s economy is four times India’s size. This is the measure of the difference between the two countries. In terms of the conventional weapons, there is a glaring mismatch. A fight with China would be disastrous – in every way.⁶⁴

Policy-wise India has pushed trade relations with China believing that high economic stakes would diffuse any potential Chinese threat to India’s security. Both sides also signed an agreement in April 2005 to foster long-term constructive and cooperative partnership.⁶⁵ Bilateral trade touched nearly \$US 76 billion in March 2012 and was projected to reach \$US 100 billion by 2015, although largely favouring China. But critics continue to question the logic of India’s soft approach towards China with Brahma Chellaney, for example, suggesting that, ‘India is discovering the hard way that politics and economics are going in opposite directions’.⁶⁶ He maintains that:

China’s “peaceful rise” is giving way to a more muscular approach as Beijing broadens its ‘core interests’ and exhibits a growing readiness to take risks...Yet, India remains focused on the process rather than on the substance of diplomacy. Process is important only if it buys time to build countervailing leverage. Unfortunately, a rudderless India has made little effort to craft such leverage...As China’s coercive power grows, it is beginning to use its capabilities against several neighbour to alter the status quo in its favour, without having to wage open war...India, thus needs a counter-strategy to tame Chinese aggressiveness.⁶⁷

Gopalswamy Parthasarathy, a former diplomat, concurs with such an assessment, noting that:

What has transpired is not merely 'acne', but a violation of India's territorial integrity. New Delhi has been so pusillanimous that it deliberately chose not to articulate how China has refused to agree to exchanging maps for determining the LAC and how it has gone back to the framework for a border settlement that Prime Minister Wen Jiabao agreed to in 2005.⁶⁸

China is seen as simultaneously pursuing a strategy of increasing bilateral trade while geopolitically containing India through the so-called 'string of pearls' policy that has seen China fund the construction of deep water ports in Gwadar (Pakistan), Hambantota (Sri Lanka), Chittagong (Bangladesh) and Sittwe (Myanmar). Some Chinese analysts justify this strategy to counter India's potential for using the Andaman and Nicobar Archipelago as a 'metal chain' to block Chinese vessels from accessing the Malacca Straits.⁶⁹ To ensure long-term access to these ports China 'has been active on all economic and political fronts in helping Pakistan, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh and so on'.⁷⁰ This strategy has certainly accentuated India's insecurity vis-à-vis China and generated tensions in the neighbourhood.⁷¹

In India's northwest, China's 'all weather' relationship with Pakistan remains a major source of concern for New Delhi. Former Pakistani Ambassador to the US, Hussain Haqqani, notes in this regard that, 'For China, Pakistan is a low-cost secondary deterrent to India', while 'for Pakistan, China is a high value guarantor of security against India'.⁷² China has also used its relationship with Pakistan to counter India-US relationship in the nuclear field, by offering two nuclear reactors to Pakistan.⁷³ China's territorial links with Pakistan through the Karakoram highway keeps India wedged in the Siachen glaciers at exorbitant human and financial costs. In the south, as Sri Lanka's largest military and economic provider China is gaining a foothold right underneath India's belly. China's arms supply to the Sri Lankan army was a key factor in the army's victory over the Tamil rebels. Internationally, China has supported Sri Lanka aid in the United Nations over human rights violations in the war.⁷⁴ Similarly in Nepal, China has forged closer relations with the Communist Party of Nepal (CPN) of the Maoists, to augment its military and diplomatic presence in Nepal. As the fifth largest investor in Nepal, and proposing to build a link road between Tibet and Nepal, China is building its image as a

stabiliser.⁷⁵ Given its historical indignation against India, from time to time Nepal would use the China bogey to extract greater concessions from India. This means India would need to 'refuse to be provoked by it (China), engage with other states without allying against our northern neighbour, build (its) economy and internal political resilience, and deter aggression across the Himalayas'.⁷⁶ Seemingly a simplistic prescription, it is nonetheless a herculean undertaking requiring enormous economic resources, flexible foreign policy thinking, and unceasing patience with neighbours – enough to stifle India's extra-regional role.

Conclusion

Along with China, the rise of India is seen as a major driver of the making and shaping of the 'Asian century'. India's rapid economic growth in the last ten years, leading to a deeper relationship with the major powers, particularly the US, was the catalyst for buoyant optimism in India, and outside, over its rise. Several past academic works and government assessments, including in Australia, have endorsed India's emerging global power status. However, recent studies and commentaries on India's failure to deal effectively with its internal challenges have begun to alter such perceptions. This paper has explored the key human, internal and regional security impediments which are currently stifling India's rise. Of all these impediments, it is India's human development challenges and their associated security implications that pose the most potent risk to India's rise. Due to economic and state resource limitations, state human development policies have failed miserably to have the desired effect. Deprivations and 'unfreedoms', as Amartya Sen characterises them, have led to violent social conflicts, as exemplified by the on-going LWE in the 'Red Corridor', exposing the state's failure after 60 years to achieve human development efficaciously. India must realise that its demographic dividend (60 percent of the population is under the age of 25) could become the worst demographic disaster that the world has ever seen should state policies continue to falter in achieving inclusive growth. It is now incumbent upon future governments to enact tough laws to reduce corruption in the political and official spectrums and ensure all

welfare schemes reach the grassroots in entirety. Tardy governance due to bureaucratic red tape has made business for international investors an expensive and frustrating venture in India. Economic growth has already plummeted to under 5 percent in 2012 from over 9 percent in 2010, which may further erode state capacities to implement the human development agenda.

On the security front, the next major threat for India stems from the HGT and LWE which symbolise the state's dismal performance in providing good governance and safeguarding the interests of the minority and tribal/rural communities. The securitisation of the human development discourse is an encouraging development that seeks to address the problem not just as a law and order but also as a governance problem which may help smother the drivers of the LWE. Unfortunately, with reference to the minority community, no tangible government policy is in sight to alleviate their core grievances, and therefore the HGT is estimated to disturb India's social cohesion in the near future.

Externally, India confronts a restive neighbourhood plagued with political instability and differences with India. Although India is quite capable, politically and military in dealing with threats posed by the smaller neighbours, the situation vis-à-vis Pakistan and China is another matter entirely. The India-Pakistan enduring rivalry remains volatile as always, nosediving periodically after a terrorist attack in India, derailing the gains of the peace process. Due to Pakistan's own political instabilities and systemic contradictions, there is little hope that cross-border terrorism will cease permanently and India does not have the military or political wherewithal to curb it completely. This makes Pakistan a permanent source of concern which will continue to sap India's political, diplomatic, economic and military energies. However, it is China from whom India faces its most formidable long-term challenge due to their conflictual history, pending border disputes and lopsided power asymmetry in the former's favour. China's 'all weather' relationship with Pakistan and the 'string of pearls' strategy is aimed at confining India to the South Asian neighbourhood itself. Reports of border incursions by China are always downplayed through a muffled Indian government response which in turn exposes India's policy and

military infirmities in relations to China. India strategises to counter the China bogey by building relationships with both regional and major powers including the US. Yet the idealism-realism conundrum that has plagued India's foreign policy makes it an untrustworthy partner in the eyes of such powers. India's failure to balance its relationship with both, the US and Iran is an example of its foreign policy predicaments.

But the biggest concern for India emanates from within, which necessitates utilising the demographic dividends of an increasingly younger looking India through inclusive growth, education, and skilled training for its youth. Ultimately, as Ash Narain Roy argues, 'Whether it is a shining star or a passing comet will depend on what India does to its two-thirds population who appear to be still untouched by economic strides'.⁷⁷

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