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India's Contemporary Security Challenges: More Internal Than External?

India faces numerous contemporary security challenges, mostly internal, and this is nothing new. Given that domestic politics play a major role in determining which security challenges Indians believe to be the most pressing, this chapter, alongside the immediately following one (on the economic dimensions of Indian foreign policy), lays emphasis on internal factors in shaping Indian foreign policy post-independence. In order to grasp the relative weight of today's security challenges, this chapter first traces the evolution of India's domestic politics and foreign policy since independence. It then discusses various domestic, regional, and global security challenges relevant to India today, and concludes by re-examining the historical trend to determine if India is likely to manage these challenges effectively, as it negotiates its rise to great power status in the foreign policy sphere.

Historical overview: from preacher to pragmatist

India's journey from 1947 till the present day, both in terms of foreign policy and domestic politics, can be seen as a transition from idealism under Nehru, through a period of 'hard realism' (or *realpolitik*) lasting roughly from the mid-1960s to the mid-1980s (coinciding with the dominance of the Indian political scene by Indira Gandhi) to economically driven pragmatism today. These three phases provide an artificial but perhaps useful shorthand (doing little justice to the complexities of Indian policymaking) for understanding the significance of some of the changes India has witnessed, while also highlighting elements of continuity.

1950s and 1960s: unified idealism

The first period, from independence onward through the 1950s and 1960s, was a period in which India's foreign policy stance was framed for international consumption as one of some idealism. Simultaneously, Nehru tackled the tremendous domestic challenges of cohesion and economic revitalization that the British Empire had left as a ticking time bomb of a legacy. The Congress under Nehru, while adhering to democratic practice, essentially enjoyed one-party dominance at home and represented a more or less unified foreign policy ideology to the world, although the domestic political scene was a lively one with several Congress titans astride the political scene even after Mahatma Gandhi's assassination in 1948, and the Communist Party posing serious regionally-based challenges at different times (still reflected in its present-day strength within the important states of West Bengal and Kerala). Within India, the Congress was viewed as the architect of the freedom movement, and hence appealed to a large middle ground of interests and values that coalesced around its project of state nationalism.[1] Internationally too, Nehru chose the middle path of non-alignment in the bipolar order of the Cold War, arguing that India would have to 'plough a lonely furrow'.[2] Indian foreign policy of the time seemed moralistic to outsiders, defining the national interest as congruent with 'world co-operation and world peace'.[3] It was defended as 'the only honourable and right position' for India.[4]

Decision-making, in the Congress Party and hence in the government, was centralized in the office of the Prime Minister. Especially after the deaths of the great domestic politician Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel in 1950 and of the framer of India's constitution, B. R. Ambedkar, in 1956, Nehru increasingly relied on his own instincts in confronting internal challenges as he had all along in formulating foreign policy.[5] Although Nehru extensively debated the ideological moorings of India's foreign policy in Parliament and other public arenas, the Ministry of External Affairs maintained a monopoly on information, resulting in scant public scrutiny and accountability of its policies. In any event, the domestic challenges facing the country were such that few leading national figures wasted much time on the country's international relations and profile.

India's cohesion was severely tested not only by the fall-out of a murderous partition in 1947, but on its heels by the Kashmir crisis, the resistance of several princely states, notably Hyderabad, to joining the Indian union, and some left-over business with respect to decolonization (managed elegantly by France, which negotiated the return of Pondicherry and other minor dependencies to Indian sovereignty, and less so by Portugal, which had to be militarily expelled from Goa in 1961). Even language politics threatened the Indian Union when the state of Tamil Nadu threatened secession rather than contemplate the imposition on it of Hindi as the national language of India—in

due course winning its point. Above all, as documented in the next chapter, India's poverty proved the greatest burden passed on to independent India by the colonial era, producing many political implications, real and apprehended.

India's international actions during this period were consonant with its domestic situation and foreign policy outlook, though India's posture regarding various international crises (Indochina, Hungary) was seen by the US-dominated West as inconsistent with its purported idealism. The dissonance was aggravated by the brilliant but often grating (to Western ears) sermonizing of Nehru's preferred envoy and latterly Minister, V. K. Krishna Menon.[6] Wherever possible, India took sides with other 'Third World' countries against imperialist forces of the West, and eschewed those multilateral arrangements that seemed to compromise this objective.[7] This policy of international independence, eventually indistinguishable from that of 'non-alignment' (even though Nehru had not warmed to the latter concept early on), was followed until external events in the form of Chinese aggression in 1962 compelled the Indian establishment to face the realities of power politics in the international system. Even so, upon Nehru's death, Lal Bahadur Shastri upheld India's 'moral duty' to eradicate colonialism and imperialism.[8] Subsequently, having weathered further storms, notably an attack by Pakistan in 1965 and another leadership change in 1966, the domestic scene evolved with splits soon sundering earlier Congress unity, ushering in a new era of Indian foreign policy as well.

1970s and 1980s: intermittent realism

The general election of 1967 was a watershed for India's domestic politics, marking the beginning of the decline of Congress hegemony. The centralized nature of authority within the Congress party and within government, further complicated by the growing antipathy between the government and the Congress party organization, had left little room for the articulation of regional interests in the political system. As a result, the Congress won the 1967 elections, but with a much narrower majority than ever before. It lost control of eight state governments as regionally based actors started to gain significance. The following two decades were characterized by 'the politics of exit', whereby new regional parties were formed by groups breaking away from Congress.[9]

After Nehru's daughter Indira Gandhi came to the helm in 1966, the Congress party by 1969 split into two factions under the government and the party organization respectively. In August 1970, Mrs. Gandhi made a speech at a Congress seminar where, while paying tribute to her father's ideal of non-alignment, she asserted that the problems of developing countries

needed to be faced 'not merely by idealism, not merely by sentimentalism, but by very clear thinking and hard-headed analysis of the situation'.[10] This marked the growing realization that India's interests could not be fully protected by its averred international stance.

Domestically, Mrs Gandhi used every method possible—constitutional and unconstitutional—to centralize power and to bring state governments into line. For the latter purpose Article 356 of the Indian Constitution, allowing the centre to suspend state governments in case of constitutional crises, was increasingly used for political ends. The Sarkaria Commission reports that until 1969, this provision had been used on only twelve occasions (generally in truly chaotic circumstances), but was invoked thirty-nine times between 1970 and 1987.[11] It is a tribute to the roots developed by Nehru's democratic outlook that the damage to the democratic process inflicted by the Indira Gandhi government, reaching its nadir during the Emergency years (1975–7), was rewarded by a massive electoral defeat in 1977. As a result, the Congress party split again in 1978.

On the international stage, the realist turn engineered by Mrs. Gandhi in Delhi was evident as it veered away from non-alignment towards alignment with the Soviet Union, marked by the Indo-Soviet treaty of 1971, a few months ahead of India's military intervention in the Bangladesh War, allowing India to shatter Pakistan and halve its size and weight: the first proactive military intervention by India in a neighbouring country (although it was justified publicly by Pakistani atrocities and the influx of Bangladeshi refugees, which had aroused growing international concern). Subsequently, in 1974, India conducted its first nuclear test. In 1975, India intervened during internal unrest in Sikkim (that it had encouraged) and incorporated it into the Union. During this period, India, hitherto thoroughly committed to the Arab world, also began to adjust its view of West Asia with a clandestine visit of the Israeli Foreign Minister during the brief stint of the Janata government following Mrs Gandhi's electoral defeat.

On the home front, an unproductive mix of military and political strategies was deployed to counter the growing agitations in Kashmir, Punjab, and Assam. The Sikh Free Khalistan movement seeking the independence of Punjab, which had been met with fierce opposition by Delhi domestically and internationally, eventually claimed its most famous victim when Mrs. Gandhi was assassinated in 1984 by her Sikh bodyguards, a shocking event that triggered a massive anti-Sikh pogrom in Delhi that claimed up to 2,000 lives. Mrs. Gandhi's assertive style was reflected in Delhi's approach to the Sri Lankan crisis of the mid-1980s under her son, Rajiv Gandhi, who succeeded her as Prime Minister.

In sum, this era dominated by Indira Gandhi was characterized by lip service to anti-imperialism, Third World solidarity, and non-alignment abroad, and

secularism, democracy, and socialism at home. However, in both spheres, there was a marked drift in practice toward power politics, in spite of which Mrs. Gandhi remains a tremendously popular, indeed iconic, figure within her own country, remembered more fondly by many Indians than the historically more remote Nehru and Gandhi, who are more admired than loved.

1990s and onward: the birth of pragmatism

The year 1991 was a significant turning point in Indian politics, economic orientation, and foreign policy. It coincided with the collapse of the post-Second World War world order characterized by Cold War confrontation between West and East blocs, giving way to new configurations. The Gulf War that year witnessed the geostrategically significant and economically motivated invasion of one non-aligned country by another. In India, over four decades of socialist economic policy and poor fiscal management culminated in a severe balance of payments crisis. Serious political stress had resulted in three governments in quick succession at the centre between 1989 and 1991. The Mandal Commission in 1980 had brought to light the failures of the state in creating equitable development and unleashed powerful forces for social change. In 1989, the minority government of V. P. Singh sought to implement some of the commission's recommendations involving affirmative action for 'scheduled castes and tribes' and 'other backward classes', resulting in considerable political tension. Shortly thereafter, during the 1991 national election campaign, the Tamil rebels that India had shown sympathy for in Sri Lanka assassinated Rajiv Gandhi, the former prime minister who had sent Indian forces to the island state.

The beginning of the decade ushered in a new era of pragmatism for India, domestically and internationally. Most pretensions to idealized conceptions of India's society, polity, and role in the world were gradually discarded, although reaction against these changes remained lively.

The most remarkable feature of the new ordering of the domestic sphere was the growing pragmatism of political parties, which were compelled to engage in electoral alliances, more often ones of convenience than of ideological sympathy. Alliances were critical for the ascendent Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), until then the political wing of a relatively marginal cabal of Hindu nationalist organizations, in expanding its geographical base beyond northern India. For the Congress, the days of its national dominance were a distant memory. Although as late as 1998, Sonia Gandhi publicly stated that the party would not form any alliances, by 2001 it had bowed to the exigencies of the new politics and joined with other parties in state-level alliances and sometimes governments in which it was not even a senior partner, for example in Tamil Nadu and in West Bengal.[12] In 2004, the Congress' victory in

the national elections hinged entirely upon its ability to form coalitions with regional and identity-based parties. Although the Congress secured a more comfortable minority share of Union parliament seats in the 2009 election, it still fell far short of being able to form a government by itself, resorting again to coalition arrangements.

The change in outlook for political parties ran deeper than the expediency of alliances. At times it drew on conflicting interpretations of national identity. The BJP, in its successful bid at forming a national coalition government in 1998, chose to contest the election on a platform of development and governance, not its religious nationalist ideology of *Hindutva*, though many of its members remained committed to a Hindu nationalist ideology at variance with independent India's mostly secular past. Indeed the media repeatedly reported the growing rift between the *Sangh Parivar* institutions (the 'family of organizations' attached to *Hindutva*) and the BJP as a political entity. The Communist Party of India (Marxist), for decades a bitter opponent of Congress hegemony and policies, in 2004 chose to come out in support of the Congress-led coalition (albeit 'from the outside'), forming with it a loose alliance. Even identity-based parties learned to downplay at times their ideologies and local loyalties in the quest for political power, as was evinced repeatedly in the politics of Uttar Pradesh, where caste issues were manipulated in every conceivable way.

The ideological unmooring of the domestic sphere was reflected also in the international arena. Completing a process that had begun in the time of Indira and Rajiv Gandhi, India shed its non-aligned and anti-Western ideologies in favour of a pragmatic foreign policy. In stark contrast to the Nehruvian years during which India achieved considerable status in the international sphere with barely any achievements on the domestic front, chiefly by taking the moral high ground in foreign affairs, post-1990 India was no longer as convinced of its moral uniqueness and began to think of itself as a nation like several others in the quest of greater power. This favoured the normalization of traditionally antagonistic relationships with neighbouring countries, a greater commitment to international institutions that might legitimize its emerging power status, a positive approach to relations with the world's remaining superpower, and, importantly, greater focus on national defence, including in the nuclear sphere.

These shifts in India's foreign policy manifested themselves in various ways, including better relations with China; India's 'Look East' Policy (launched in 1992) aimed at improved relations with Asia and subsequent involvement with the Association of South East Asian Nations (1995 onwards); the nuclear tests at Pokhran (1998); India's relationship with Israel (after diplomatic relations were established in 1992) and simultaneously enhanced-energy diplomacy with West Asian countries; acquiescence in the US nuclear missile

defence programme (2001); support for the US invasion of Afghanistan (2002); the Indo-US nuclear agreements of 2005 and 2008; and India's votes against Iran at the IAEA, all examined later in this volume. The relationship with Pakistan remains vexed, particularly since the potentially dangerous Kargil war of 1999 and with Pakistani stability faltering worryingly at times.

Thus, Indian foreign policy in the twenty-first century is characterized by a marked shift towards pragmatism and a willingness to do business with all, resembling in none of its important specifics that of Indira Gandhi in the mid-1970s, and even less that of her father in the 1950s and 1960s. This radical change paralleled the change in domestic Indian politics sketched above.

Contemporary security challenges

The manner in which India's international relations evolved assisted India in creating higher levels of economic growth and earning greater global influence. However, India still grapples with a number of important security and political challenges at home, in its region, and globally. On the domestic front, while the opening up of the political space to new social groups has deepened democracy in India, it has also led to severe political fragmentation and often creates obstacles to effective policymaking. India's region is fraught with security threats arising out of unstable, often weak states such as Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bangladesh, Myanmar, and Afghanistan, a near-neighbour in which India is much invested.[13] Further afield, India could serve as a pivot in a new triangle (much promoted by geostrategic commentators) involving the USA, China, and India. Beyond the sphere of enjoyable geostrategic speculation, India has in recent times benefited from cooperation with the USA, while it grapples with perennial potential security threats emanating from China. India's regional and global security concerns are reflected in its policies relevant to military modernization, maritime security, and nuclear policy. But domestic security concerns overwhelmingly predominate.

Domestic security challenges

The central aim of post-colonial India's national project has been the accommodation and management of the country's extreme heterogeneity. Diversity is the dominant characteristic of Indian society. Over the centuries, India has been home to innumerable ethnic groups, various cultures, and followers of all the major world religions. Due to Hinduism's assimilative tendencies, the broad cultural trend has been one of coalescence and accommodation, often manifested in religious syncretism. However, the Hindu practice of stratification by caste has played a major role in creating social cleavages in

modern India that the state has been at pains to eliminate. The politicization of differences over how a prosperous, socially progressive democracy is to be achieved in modern India has produced or exacerbated a number of security challenges. Similarly, the political rise of Hindu nationalism, or *Hindutva*, since the 1990s has also raised questions about India's identity as a secular nation, at times producing inter-communal clashes, terrorist acts (and retaliations), and other forms of upheaval. While *Hindutva's* appeal today seems to be waning, circumstances could conspire to revive its success in years ahead with unpredictable consequences.

The heterogeneity of Indian society is to a great extent mirrored in the nature of its polity, which is deeply fragmented. After two decades of post-independence Congress-dominated government, in the years following Nehru's death, regional actors began to assert themselves against the excesses of the centre, and eventually mobilized in order to gain access to the resources and power of the state. Differences simmered through the 1970s and 1980s, ultimately boiling over and ushering in an era of coalition governments and political instability from the late 1980s onwards, including a tumultuous period when the nation endured seven successive coalition governments at the centre in the span of just ten years (1989–98). The 1990s also saw the rise of 'identity politics' in which identity, be it of caste, religion, or region, is equated with interest and so projected into the political sphere.[14]

The gradual shift to a more market-based economic policy (or, as Atul Kohli has argued, a pro-business approach) in the 1980s and the liberalization of India's economy precipitated by the balance of payments crisis of 1991 have resulted in high levels of economic growth in contemporary India, although poverty, particularly rural poverty, remains a major problem, with hundreds of millions of Indians adversely affected.[15] India's growth is driven primarily by the services sector (software and information technology in particular), though private-sector manufacturing has also revived significantly. Although a majority of the Indian population is engaged in agriculture, the sector does not enjoy significant growth and suffers from low productivity. Although poverty levels have fallen in the last two decades,[16] economic inequality is on the rise (as elsewhere in the world, including in communist China), but a confounding trend for socially conscious Indians.[17] The uneven nature of development has resulted in significant imbalances between social groups and regions, with potentially destabilizing future consequences.

POLITICAL FRAGMENTATION

The uneven distribution of gains from development is striking in India. These inequalities have provoked the political mobilization of hitherto excluded groups, sometimes through politically motivated violence and forceful struggle. This phenomenon has led to the fragmentation of the political space on

the one hand, and changing socio-economic relations on the other. Many parties continue to rely on identity politics, which results in the deepening of social cleavages and the persistence of political fragmentation. The end result has been a multitude of political parties with influence at the centre and mostly two- or three-party arrangements in the states.[18]

Indeed the party system since the early 1990s has seen a proliferation of parties that appeal exclusively to caste, ethnic, or linguistic identities. Chief among them are the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) and Samajwadi Party (SP) in Uttar Pradesh, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) and the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) in Tamil Nadu, the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) in Bihar, the Shiromani Akali Dal in Punjab, the Shiv Sena in Maharashtra, and the Trinamool Congress in West Bengal. In the 2004 general elections, state-based parties won 30 per cent of seats in the lower house of Parliament (Lok Sabha) with approximately 29 per cent of the vote;[19] up from 7 per cent of seats in the house, with 8 per cent of the vote, in 1951.[20]

The advent of coalition governments has arguably undermined the ability of the state to respond quickly and effectively to security threats. The ability of smaller regional parties to hold national governments hostage on key security issues is a new reality in Indian politics. In the 1980s, this was most evident in Tamil parties using their influence to sway policy on Sri Lanka. Caught between domestic pressure to assist Sri Lankan Tamils and a national imperative not to extend unconditional support to a movement for self-determination (lest it reflect unfavourably for India in Kashmir, and in some other states with secessionist movements), India launched a disastrous peacekeeping effort in the late 1980s that ended up exacerbating the conflict in Sri Lanka and souring India's relations with its neighbour. Similarly, Hindu nationalist parties have exacerbated tensions with Bangladesh over the large-scale illegal entry of Muslim economic migrants into India. Most recently in 2008, domestic political differences threatened to prevent India from capitalizing on the Indo-US nuclear agreement when Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's government was put to a crucial confidence vote in Parliament that it won with a narrow margin.[21]

DOMESTIC INSURGENCY

Uneven development between regions and social groups has created unrest and strife at times; political violence is nowhere starker than in the numerous insurgencies that have arisen on Indian soil in response to the severe neglect of certain regions and communities, and the state's response thereto. India's ethnically diverse northeast, composed of eight states—Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, and Tripura—is home to numerous insurgent groups that at different times emerged due to Delhi's neglect of that vital region.[22] Not only does the northeast collectively

provide a sizeable share of India's agricultural output, it is also located strategically in a region surrounded by China, Bangladesh, Myanmar, and Nepal. Yet despite pouring large (though some would still argue insufficient) sums of money into the development of the region, the central government has been unable to focus its policies in a way that might integrate the region better into the Indian Union. A Ministry for the Development of the Northeast Region, established only in 2001, remains relatively sidelined when it comes to regional policy.

As a result, tensions between ethnic groups in the northeastern states and the central government have proliferated and endured, with state governments sometimes caught in the crossfire and at other times turning the politics of ethnicity to their own advantage against Delhi. Various communities in the northeastern region—all more ethnically distinct from the rest of the country than from each other—have been waging war against the Indian state for a number of years with demands ranging from greater autonomy in local decision-making to the formation of new states based on ethnic lines (with a degree of success) to outright separation from India.[23] In 2007 there were an estimated thirty armed insurgent groups operating in the region, including the United Liberation Front of Asom in Assam, the United National Liberation Front in Manipur, and two rival factions of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland in Nagaland.[24] Between 1992 and 2002, insurgency and other types of armed conflict led to 12,175 deaths in the region.[25] Insurgents bordering on Myanmar frequently seek refuge across the international frontier, a densely forested and poorly patrolled one, and resupply themselves with weaponry and munitions.

Delhi has been seeking Naypyidaw's support in cutting off this lifeline and sanctuary for the insurgents—apparently with limited practical success to date, even though Naypyidaw would doubtless like to be helpful. The northeast of India is, in any event, awash with light weapons flowing in from China (without any hint of government support) and from further international trafficking through Myanmar and Bangladesh.[26] As one might expect, there also appears to be some leakage of weaponry and ammunition from the Indian armed forces to insurgents.

More internationally familiar than the insurgencies in the northeast is India's ongoing insurgent problem in its most troubled corner: Kashmir. Its current phase in the Kashmir valley began in the late 1990s, when, in one widely held Indian view, Pakistan, coming to somewhat of a dead end in its attempts to wrest the territory from India through overt military confrontation, stepped up covert support for insurgent groups to inflict 'death by a thousand cuts'[27] by channelling the *mujahideen* trained to fight the Soviets in Afghanistan toward the cause in Kashmir. Originally spearheaded by the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), the insurgency in Kashmir has

become a multi-pronged threat with new organizations such as the Hizb-ul Mujahideen, the Harkat-ul-Ansar, and the Lashkar-e-Taiba feeding considerable fighting capacity into the valley,[28] which experienced 26,226 fatalities at the height of the insurgency, between 1988 and 2000.[29]

In the aftermath of 9/11 and improving relations between the USA and India, Delhi was gradually able to induce Islamabad into admitting that terrorists were being trained in Pakistan and committing to curbing the cross-border infiltration of terrorists into India. However, progress has been painfully slow; although the incidence of fatalities is lower now than in the 1990s, Indian-occupied Kashmir remains in turmoil.[30] India's purchase on the valley is significantly weakened by the inability of its security forces—both military and police—to establish order without often egregious collateral damage in terms of civilian lives. Counter-insurgency operations have led to numerous civilian fatalities and—in some cases—extra-judicial killings, or 'fake encounters', as they have come to be known in the Indian media.[31] Local protests against the heavy-handedness of the security establishment often turn violent and are met with further brutality, highlighted by a number of incidents of security forces firing into crowds of demonstrators, most recently in mid-2010 when parts of the valley, including the state capital Srinagar, were placed under curfew as tensions rose among protestors, many encouraged by separatist organizations.[32] India's reflexive management of the very real security challenges in the valley have been profoundly unimaginative, essentially ineffective, and corrosive to the standards of its own security forces.

Perhaps India's most insidious insurgent problem, one that was often overlooked until the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government came to power in 2004, is the Naxalite movement. Originally a student-led left-wing movement launched at Naxalbari in West Bengal in the late 1960s, today the 'movement' is composed of various insurgent groups acting under a loosely defined 'Maoist' ideology and 'Naxal' banner. The original aims of the movement—to bring about 'the physical annihilation of class enemies'[33]—have been superseded by a loose-knit set of grievances revolving primarily around land, unemployment, and socio-economic exclusion of *Dalits* (lower-caste communities) and *Adivasis* (indigenous tribal communities).[34] The cadres of the original Naxalite organization—the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist)—were all but wiped out by police action in West Bengal, or gave up the cause by the early 1970s. Over the following years, however, splinter groups of the CPI(M-L) established themselves in a number of Indian states, especially Bihar (and later Jharkhand), Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh (and later Chattisgarh). After a lull in the 1980s and 1990s, the new millennium saw the resurgence of Naxalite activity in these states, with the number of annual deaths associated with the movement rising steadily to 721 in 2008 from 482 in 2002.[35]

In 2004, two major Naxalite groups—the People's War Group and the Maoist Communist Centre—merged to form the Communist Party of India (Maoist), and in the process stepped up their attacks on government property and personnel.[36] In 2006, then Home Minister Shivraj Patil declared the Naxalite movement 'an area of serious concern' that had claimed approximately 6,000 lives in the previous two decades.[37] In the second term of the UPA government from 2009 onward, despite the exhortations of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Home Minister P. C. Chidambaram, the Indian state and affected state governments have been unable to develop a coherent approach to the Naxal problem, oscillating between heavy-handed military tactics in reaction to specific incidents and approaches based on dialogue.

Perhaps the most intractable feature of the Naxal movement is that aside from being a law and order challenge, it also calls into question, in symbolic and practical terms, the way economic development is progressing in India. By offering a militant response to acute problems of underdevelopment and neglect, the Naxals expose the schizophrenic path of development in India, where the economy registers impressive growth figures while hundreds of millions of individuals continue to live in extreme poverty. Until the government is able to address the stark deprivation characterizing about a third of India's districts (many of them with significant tribal populations), it is not likely to diminish the allure of the Naxal movement among India's disadvantaged youth.

Regional security challenges

By some measures, six of India's neighbours ranked in the top twenty-five dysfunctional states in the world as calculated by the Failed States Index of the Fund for Peace.[38] India is uniquely positioned to be a driver of interstate cooperation in South Asia, which is a 'predominantly Indocentric region' because in terms of religion or culture, or both. 'India has something in common with [each of] its immediate neighbours but the neighbouring states of India do not share similarities of such magnitude or depth among themselves'.[39] Yet India is unable to bring about such cooperation, and despite the great strides it has made in economic growth over the last two decades, it remains mired in security dilemmas in its own region. As Vikram Sood suggests, 'Globally, India is being recognized as a rising economic power but not in the region where economic development has become hostage to security issues.'[40] Another scholar describes India's regional status as one of 'contested dominance', with India dominant because it lacks a convincing regional rival, but not enjoying supremacy because 'its dominance in the region is not accepted and acknowledged by its neighbours'.[41]

As a result, India faces two main regional challenges. The first is a set of what might otherwise be classified as domestic law-and-order problems were it not for the involvement of India's neighbours. Challenges of sub-national ethnic identity, secessionist movements and insurgencies, the creation of new ethnic communities due to migration, and religious conflicts within India fall under this heading. The second relates to bilateral disputes between India and its neighbours over resources, particularly land and water. Territorial disputes (prominently, Kashmir and Siachen with Pakistan, and Arunachal Pradesh and Aksai Chin with China), disputes over the division of water resources, which have become more frequent and more consequential over the decades since India's independence, and other security challenges emanating directly from India's neighbours, conform to this category.

SUB-NATIONAL ETHNIC MOVEMENTS

Indian populations in border regions tend to share common ethnic bonds with populations in adjacent countries. This is true of Tamils and Sri Lanka, Muslims in Kashmir, Punjabis, Indian populations bordering the Tarai region of Nepal, and even Malayalis and their ties to Gulf countries. By corollary, Hindu minorities in Bangladesh and Pakistan share affinities with co-religionists across the border in India. Trafficking of all sorts across mostly pretty open borders (Pakistan's being the exception) presents particular challenges in these circumstances.

The broad territorial division of ethnic groups within India and the strength of regional ethnic identities ensure that Indian policy towards the countries in question is often attentive to the preferences of domestic actors in these regions, as with Sri Lanka, where, at one time, the Indian government acquiesced in the brutal armed tactics of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).[42] Similarly, there is 'widespread sympathy' in Indian border regions for the Madhesi campaign for autonomy in the Tarai region of Nepal and 'most [Indian] politicians and bureaucrats do not hesitate to express moral support' for it.[43]

SECESSIONIST MOVEMENTS AND INSURGENCIES

Due to India's vast size and heterogeneous society and polity, conflicts have proliferated between sub-national regions and the central government. Scholars have attributed this to the failure of the Indian state to ensure equitable development for large swathes of society. This, they argue, has resulted in the discrediting of state-sponsored nationalism and, *inter alia*, the rise of movements aimed at establishing separate sovereign status from the Union.[44] The history of modern India is replete with such movements, many of which are still in progress.

Movements in border areas are particularly problematic because they become flashpoints with neighbouring countries, mainly for two reasons. First, secessionist movements, especially armed movements, are likely to use the territories of adjacent countries (e.g. Myanmar, Bhutan, Pakistan, Nepal, China, and Bangladesh) to stage their attacks on the Indian state, making it harder to neutralize the insurgents. Second, they allow neighbouring countries with an interest in destabilizing India to interfere in its internal affairs in an adverse manner. (This would apply, in the minds of most Indians, mainly to Pakistan.) These are the considerations that have influenced India's policy toward Pakistan in the case of the Khalistan and Kashmir secessionist movements.[45] But they are also relevant to Burma, Bhutan, China, and Bangladesh in the case of multiple movements in the northeast.[46] And, while somewhat different, they would also apply to Nepal in the case of the widespread Indian Naxalite movement (although not strictly a secessionist movement, but vigorously anti-state nonetheless).

The separatist assertion of regional identities on Indian strategic thinking has sharply accentuated the importance attached by Delhi to territorial integrity of the Indian Union since independence.[47] Indeed, this theme first arose during the early months of independence when Sardar Patel made every effort (including the use of force) to integrate the 536 Princely States of India into the Indian Union.[48] It was echoed in the military action taken by India to wrest control of Goa and Daman and Diu from the Portuguese in the early 1960s; in India's successful efforts to incorporate Sikkim into the Union in 1975; and, ultimately, in the lack of official support given to the LTTE, first and foremost seen as a secessionist movement. It is also reflected in India's long-standing policy of eschewing involvement by non-South Asian nations in its neighbourhood.

The concern with territorial unity runs deep in Indian foreign policy.

NEW ETHNIC GROUPS

The cross-border movement of large populations from neighbouring countries into India over extended periods of time results in the creation of new ethnic groups in the border (and other) regions of India, thus complicating Indian policy towards the originating countries. Two examples stand out—the migration of Tibetans escaping Chinese persecution, and the steady inflow of immigrants (legal and illegal) from Bangladesh into West Bengal and the northeastern region of India (many of them subsequently moving well beyond these regions). These developments have impacted on India's relations with China and Bangladesh respectively.

In the case of China, India has walked a tightrope between official recognition of Tibet as an integral part of China and granting asylum to the Dalai Lama and his followers on Indian territory. Tibetan migrants have integrated

relatively well into Indian society, finding geographic and economic niches that do not conflict with local arrangements to a great extent. By contrast, the domestic response to Bangladeshi immigrants has been much less forgiving, possibly due to their purely economic motivation for migration. The reaction has been particularly violent in Assam, where riots against migrant Bengalis date back to the 1960s and 1970s. This has produced a negative impact on Indo-Bangladeshi relations, which are further complicated by a host of other bilateral issues. As a result, India in 1984 initiated construction of a 4,000 km concrete barrier along the Indo-Bangladeshi border, a project that carries on still and has created controversy between the two countries while proving broadly ineffective in stemming the migrant flow.[49]

RELIGIOUS CONFLICT

Religion and its associated customs and practices have a significant impact on social stratification and political mobilization in India. The religious composition of Indian society influences social and economic policy, particularly with regard to minority rights. The frequent occurrence of violence between religious groups—predominantly Hindus and Muslims—in various parts of the country creates major law and order problems as well as a security threat. The latter is evident in the recent radicalization of some sections of India's Muslim population within such groups as the Students' Islamic Movement of India (SIMI). Religiously inspired terrorism took on a new dimension with the arrest of Hindu activists following serial bomb attacks in the predominantly Muslim town of Malegaon in 2006.

The rise of political Hinduism, or *Hindutva*, may be the most significant religious factor influencing Indian politics. The concept pre-dates India's independence, but its salience has increased since then due to the ascent of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) with its deep connections to radical Hindu organizations comprising the *Sangh Parivar*. The ideology of these groups is based on the ideal of Hindu nationalism and is inimical to Christianity and Islam, two religions that did not originate on the Indian subcontinent. Proponents of *Hindutva* initially thrived politically on controversy and benefited electorally, or appeared to, from several incidents of inter-communal violence, most notably the demolition of the Babri Mosque in 1992 and the Gujarat riots of 2002. The growth of Hindu nationalism has somewhat complicated India's relationships with Pakistan, Iran, and other Islamic nations at times. But its current lack of traction owes more to aging leadership and ideological fatigue than to worries over India's image abroad. In spite of some success in Karnataka, it has also been unsuccessful in capturing the imagination of south India.

BILATERAL ISSUES: PAKISTAN

Since independence, India has faced numerous bilateral disputes in its region. The most prominent among them have arisen from disagreements and frequent conflict with Pakistan. The last sixty years have witnessed two major wars (1965 and 1971) between the two countries and two major acts of aggression by Pakistan (1948 over Kashmir and 1999 in Kargil), in addition to numerous small-scale incidents across their borders. During the Cold War, Pakistan was the ally of choice for both the United States and China in South Asia, while India inclined towards friendship, and eventually alliance, with the Soviet Union. Pakistan received billions of dollars' worth of military aid and equipment over the years from its major patrons, much of which was employed in conflicts with India and to sponsor what India termed 'cross-border terrorism' in Indian-occupied Kashmir. Pakistan's abiding alliance with China since the 1950s, even more than Pakistan's erratic relationship of convenience with the USA, causes grave concern for India, especially due to China's transfer of nuclear weapons technology and missile systems to Pakistan.

The Indo-Pakistani rivalry, which had somewhat fallen into a manageable pattern from the mid-1970s to the early 1990s, intensified following India's (and then Pakistan's) nuclear weapon tests of 1998, the Kargil war of 1999, and a 2001 terrorist attack on the Indian parliament, the latter of which led to a tense military stand-off. Prime Minister Vajpayee and President Musharraf subsequently initiated a peace process that led to superficially improved relations between 2003 and 2007. However, internal events in Pakistan that precipitated the end of Musharaff's regime in 2008 created a leadership crisis and the process faltered. The deadly terrorist attacks in Mumbai in November 2008 created fresh challenges in Indo-Pakistani relations. However, the Indian government showed great restraint, initially supported by the BJP-led opposition in Parliament. International pressure eventually forced Pakistan to recognize Pakistani links to the attack, and after a long freeze in bilateral high-level contacts, they resumed in 2009 and intensified in 2010.

Prime Minister Singh was roundly criticized by many in the Indian media and defence and security establishment for his handling of the Mumbai attacks and his post-Mumbai overtures toward Pakistan.[50] However, influential commentators such as Siddharth Varadarajan of *The Hindu* and C. Raja Mohan of the *Indian Express* came out in favour of Singh's actions and the resumption of dialogue with Pakistan. Varadarajan suggested: 'Over time, India has realised the best way to deal with the threat of terror is by strengthening its internal capabilities while utilizing engagement as a lever for influencing Pakistan's behaviour over the long run.'[51] Mohan, while supporting Singh's overtures, worried about Pakistan as an interlocutor: 'Put simply, is Pakistan a country or a grievance? States negotiate with others on the basis of

an enlightened self-interest and are open to give and take. But revanchists consumed by real and imagined grievances find it hard to split the difference in a negotiation.'[52]

Indian restraint in this instance was doubtless motivated more by prudence than benevolence, at a time when the USA was increasing its reliance on the Pakistani army to fight its war on terror in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and China was in the process of stepping up nuclear cooperation with Pakistan. Further terrorist attacks credibly linked to Pakistan could, however, force Delhi's hand on targeted retaliation, were Indian opinion to become inflamed.

BILATERAL ISSUES: CHINA

Increasingly, China is more worrying for India than is Pakistan, whatever the provocations launched against India from within the latter's territory. While India has experienced significant economic success over the past twenty years, China initiated its economic reforms well before India did, and has consistently outstripped India's impressive growth by 2–3 per cent each year since then. The result is that China's economy has expanded to roughly three times the size of India's in 2010—which has allowed China to invest significantly in its military sector.[53] Thus, while China and India are often grouped together as 'emerging' countries, China is well on the way to establishing itself as the principal competitor of the USA, while India, for all its recent economic achievements, lags well behind.

If China and India were on comfortable terms with each other, these developments would not need to worry Delhi, but the relationship has been a tense one since the mid-1950s, as explored in greater depth in Chapter 6. Sino-Indian antagonism reached its peak with their border war of 1962, in which India suffered a humiliating defeat at the hands of the People's Liberation Army. The Sino-Indian border dispute remains unresolved and continues to be a thorn in the side of bilateral relations. The alliance between China and Pakistan rankles in India, not least because of continuing Sino-Pakistani cooperation in the realm of nuclear weapons and missile technology.

Tibet overhangs the bilateral relationship. After a tense decade in Lhasa following China's takeover of Tibet in 1950, India gave asylum to the fleeing Dalai Lama in 1959, and the Tibetan refugee population in India has steadily grown since then. Tibet is a hot-button issue for China, at least as worried about territorial integrity as is India, and the Chinese leadership keenly watches the Dalai Lama's activities in India. (Beijing's worries about a seemingly powerless Dalai Lama living in India may not be as irrational as they seem, based on history. In 1910, the thirteenth Dalai Lama, the immediate predecessor of the current incumbent, fled a Chinese Qing dynasty invasion of Tibet, establishing residence in India. Three years later, he triumphantly

reclaimed his throne and authority in Tibet, the Qing regime having collapsed in the meanwhile.)

Globally, India and China, while cooperating in a variety of multilateral processes ranging from trade negotiations to discussions on climate change, are increasingly competitors in a global race for wealth, energy, and influence as emerging (or, in China's case, now emerged) powers. Be it in factor and product markets in Africa, or the oil and gas fields of Central Asia, India and China are increasingly rubbing up against each other. To complicate matters, both nations espouse parallel nationalistic mythologies of civilizational greatness that breed a sense of entitlement to great power status. When these mythologies collide, as they sometimes do on the border issue, it takes careful management and painstaking diplomacy to calm nationalist sentiment in their respective polities.

Indian analysts fear a Chinese strategy of encirclement in Asia. This refers to China's numerous investments in building up port facilities in the Indian Ocean, such as at Bandar Abbas in Iran, Gwadar in Pakistan, Chittagong in Bangladesh, and Hambantota in Sri Lanka.[54] China's booming exports industry and hunger for international markets have also led it to develop substantial trading relationships with India's neighbours, especially Pakistan and Bangladesh. China's rise in India's neighbourhood presents a sensitive challenge to Indian foreign policy, seen by some as deriving from the following calculus: 'Restricting India to the Asian subcontinent remains Chinese policy. The tactics are simple: keep borders with India tranquil but do not solve the [border] dispute, trade with India but arm Pakistan and wean away Nepal, Bangladesh, and Myanmar.'[55]

BILATERAL ISSUES: SRI LANKA, BANGLADESH, NEPAL

India's relationships with other nations in its region are far from settled. India's hegemonic status—or at least perceived aspiration to it—creates threat perceptions among its smaller neighbours. They see India's military (and other) interventions in the neighbouring countries in 'terms of the outward projection and demonstration of military might'.[56]

In the case of the Sri Lankan conflict, India's justifications for military intervention were based on the security imperatives associated with the influx of Tamil refugees, the risk of disrupting commerce in the vital Palk Straits, and the danger of external great powers involving themselves in the conflict, but India's military (formally peacekeeping) action proved counterproductive, alienating the Tamil community, the LTTE, and the Sri Lankan government. Similarly, India's action in 1971 in East Pakistan to relieve West Pakistan's military oppression, while justified in humanitarian terms and on the basis of massive refugee flows to India, was widely viewed as primarily an attempt to dismember an arch-rival. Moreover, contrary to India's expectations, its

assistance to Bangladesh did not win it an ally in the region: Bangladesh long provided safe haven for leaders of the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA), which operates in India's northeastern region.

While some in India saw the hand of Maoists in Nepal behind the early success of its own thriving multiple Maoist insurgencies, this is today far-fetched. However high-handed India's past approach to Nepal has been, and however hostile Maoists in Nepal may have been towards India, the Naxalite movement in India is home-grown and driven by local factors. It has developed today into the country's foremost internal security challenge.[57]

BILATERAL ISSUES: AFGHANISTAN

Aside from smaller nations such as Bhutan and the Maldives, perhaps the one country in the region where India's involvement has not played against it—to the Pakistani establishment's distress—is Afghanistan. Indians tend to see Delhi's policy as altruistic, in the words of a recent editorial: 'Delhi's partnership with Kabul has thrived because Delhi has neither geographic access to Afghanistan nor a political agenda of its own. What India wants is a moderate and stable Afghanistan that is in harmony with its neighbours.'[58] This assessment glosses over a simple calculus in Delhi's policy toward Afghanistan—to prevent Kabul from tilting excessively towards Pakistan, and allowing itself to be subsumed by Islamabad into its security space. Delhi worries that when the US-led NATO forces begin to pull out, as several NATO members have signadled they wish to do soon, Kabul could submit to the combined influence of Pakistan (supported by China) and the Taliban, leaving India as the loser in a geostrategic tug-of-war. These worries as of mid-2010 are not ill-founded: desperate for an exit strategy of its own, Washington appears to be encouraging a 'negotiated' solution to the conflict that could only strengthen Pakistan's hand locally. India consistently cultivated Prime Minister Hamid Karzai as an ally, but recently is rumoured to have opened up channels of its own with the Taliban, despite maintaining that there is no distinction between 'good' and 'bad' Taliban.[59] A Western withdrawal from Afghanistan would leave numerous Indian assets highly vulnerable; even under present circumstances the Indian embassy was attacked twice in fifteen months in 2008–9.[60] Delhi's remaining option, were that scenario to unfold, of seeking (perhaps with Moscow) to revive the Afghani Northern Alliance, would doubtless prove a disappointing and expensive consolation prize.

Global security challenges

There is a category of security challenges facing India that originate and play out in the international arena, but often overlap with regional issues and

actors. These include international terrorism, nuclear proliferation, and India's relations with the USA.

INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM

India has long been a victim of what it calls 'cross-border terrorism' in its territory committed by groups that India alleges to be based in and sponsored by the Pakistani military and intelligence establishment. Most prominent among these groups is the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), which has either claimed responsibility or has been held responsible by the Indian government for numerous incidents including: attacks on civilians and military personnel in Indian-occupied Kashmir, bomb attacks in various Indian cities, and a few high-profile incidents targeting the Red Fort in Delhi, the Indian Parliament, and the 2008 Mumbai attacks. Although Al-Qaeda has not been directly involved in attacks in India, the LeT has established links with the international terrorist network and India is now considered a potential target for further attacks following the incidents in Mumbai.[61] India also worries about links between domestic terrorist groups such as SIMI and like-minded elements in Bangladesh, Nepal, and Pakistan.

India's domestic response to terrorism has been less than satisfactory. Excluding left-wing extremist groups, terrorist activity in India claimed the lives of over 18,000 civilians, 6,700 security personnel, and almost 23,000 terrorists between 1994 and 2005.[62] The 2008 Mumbai attacks were the most visible in a long line of incidents that reveal the overall inability of the Indian state to control its borders, collect and process relevant intelligence and develop security protocols to pre-empt terrorist attacks, and in many cases to react convincingly to terrorist attacks when they occur. Indeed, Indians were furious over the inept security response to the 2008 events in Mumbai, forcing the resignation of the Home Minister and over time a number of shifts in Delhi's machinery of government. Although India has initiated cooperation with other countries on counterterrorism strategies and intelligence sharing, progress has been limited. A stark case in point was that of Pakistani American David Headley, who was instrumental in planning the Mumbai attacks. Until April 2010, Delhi had been unable to convince Washington—a strategic partner—to let Indian officials interrogate Headley, let alone extradite him to India.[63] Quite simply, other powers have little confidence in Delhi's security and intelligence apparatus, a perception Delhi could work harder at addressing. Alas, the Mumbai attack is unlikely to be the last.

INDIA–USA RELATIONS

The tangle over David Headley raises an important global issue for India: its relations with the world's sole superpower, the USA.

For most of the period between India's independence and the end of the Cold War—with the brief exception of the 1962 Sino-Indian war—India and the USA remained at loggerheads over matters of principle and national interest. Like China, but less reliably, the USA used Pakistan as a military ally in the Cold War, especially during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s. America's 'hyphenated' South Asia policy, which essentially viewed the India–Pakistan relationship as a zero sum game and often came down in Pakistan's favour, was a major problem for India over many decades.[64]

The 1990s were a period of gradual rapprochement between the USA and India through increased trade and private sector ties, encouraged by a growing India lobby in the US Congress. India's nuclear tests of 1998, while sharply criticized and met with sanctions by the USA, were overlooked when the Clinton administration preferred to view India as a growing market for US companies and a potentially helpful player in South Asia soon after Pakistani adventurism at Kargil in 1999 induced a regional rethink in Washington. The upward trend in India–USA relations continued through the fallout of 11 September 2001, which brought Pakistan back into sharp focus in the American view of South Asia. Since then, the USA has provided Pakistan with more than $15 billion in economic and military aid as incentive and resources for fighting its war against the Taliban and Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and parts of Pakistan.[65] However, this has not significantly hampered India–USA relations.[66] Despite some initial missteps by the Obama administration on the Kashmir issue, the USA–India relationship has progressed on a relatively even keel, though relations are clearly not as warm as they were under George W. Bush, who sought to make radically improved USA–India relations one of his chief foreign policy legacies—indeed it is probably his only significant one.

One of the key motivations of the Bush administration's courting of India with various incentives, especially the game-changing deal on nuclear cooperation, was that it was likely to bolster India as a reliable democratic counterweight to authoritarian China's growing influence in Asia and the world. The USA has supported India's inclusion in restricted elite decision-making groups in various international forums on multilateral trade, climate change, and management of the international economy following the global financial crisis of 2008. India's much improved relationship with Washington has not gone unnoticed by Beijing, and, mostly, Sino-Indian relations began improving noticeably in the new millennium. However, India's relevance to Washington may have diminished somewhat in the wake of the 2008–9 global financial crisis, during which the USA adopted a more conciliatory approach toward China, while prodding it to allow the Renminbi to float up to a more realistic level. Indian commentators have observed with some alarm renewed cooperation between China and the USA in tackling the global economic

crisis, as well as increased interdependence of Chinese creditors holding large amounts of US Treasury Bills and the US debtors providing the single largest market for Chinese manufactured goods. This has prompted some Indians to question the logic of picking a side in the unpredictable Sino-US relationship:

> Our strategic gurus were whistling in the dark when they dreamt up India's future as a 'balancer' in the Asian power dynamic. The . . . government's willingness to be drawn into a 'quadrilateral alliance' against China, it now seems, was an embarrassing goof-up, unprecedented in its naivety.[67]

Another Indian writer has observed less caustically: 'the Bush-Rice doctrine of containing China is being replaced by the Obama-Clinton doctrine of co-opting China to deal with the economic crisis'.[68] The best strategy for India would appear to be an interests-based balancing act between the USA and China. India has much to offer both, actively and passively, even if the USA and China, in the medium term, jointly take on the task of managing the international system.

NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION

While the Bush administration saw and justified the USA–India nuclear deal as a way to draw a troublesome and self-interested conscientious objector into the non-proliferation regime through the back door by imposing various safeguards and monitoring mechanisms on its civilian facilities, Indian leaders viewed it as a vindication of India's clean record on non-proliferation and self-imposed moratorium on nuclear testing after May 1998. Ultimately, the US Congress, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG, formed after India's first nuclear test in 1974 to ensure that such incidents would not occur again) all voted in favour of amending existing rules to allow India to step out of three decades of nuclear *purdah* in 2008. Having separated its military and civilian facilities and put the latter under IAEA safeguards, India can now access global supply chains of nuclear fuel and technology for civilian purposes (while maintaining an indigenous nuclear weapons programme of its own).

Although India has reason to celebrate the USA-backed global recognition of its status as a responsible nuclear weapons power, it also has reason to worry about nuclear proliferation, particularly in relation to China and Pakistan. China is a known proliferator of nuclear weapons technology to Pakistan,[69] and Pakistan a known proliferator to North Korea, Iran, and Libya. More recently, following the USA–India nuclear deal, China was expected to notify the NSG, which it joined in 2004, of a similar deal between itself and Pakistan for the transfer of civilian nuclear technology. And India can hardly complain about exceptional treatment being provided by a major nuclear power to a non-NPT member. In the context of US–Pakistani nuclear

cooperation, Prime Minister Singh was quoted in April 2010 admitting, 'Who am I to interfere with what goes on between the United States and Pakistan?'[70] However, any move that bolsters Pakistan's nuclear weapons capacity worries India as this simply encourages some in Pakistan to pursue a 'sub-conventional war that Delhi is yet to find effective ways to cope with'.[71] In all-out war, which would be damaging to both, India, given its weight and assets, would prevail. But in any conflict less total, relative strength matters in deterring escalation, and India knows this well.

The Bush administration's most important achievement in USA–India relations had a useful kicker—to shake up the international non-proliferation regime. The Obama Administration has picked up the challenge, notably with respect to credible enforcement of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and promotion of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), which the USA has yet to ratify. However, coping as it has had to do throughout 2009 and 2010 with serial financial, economic, and other crises, it is too early yet to predict whether anything meaningful will come of its enthusiasm for reform and strengthening of the global non-proliferation system.

Addressing India's security challenges

Given the evolution of its domestic politics and foreign policy over the past sixty-odd years, what lessons can be drawn on India's ability to manage effectively key domestic and international security challenges? Sumit Ganguly relates the important challenge of 'developing a long-term strategic vision, one that is not subject to the vagaries of regime changes, minor, adverse developments in the country's immediate neighbourhood and periodic crisis' to the development of 'institutional mechanisms . . . and planning capabilities' he sees as deficient:

> [India] has, for the most part, been unable to develop a professional cadre of personnel who are knowledgeable about questions of defence budgeting, acquisitions, capabilities and policymaking. The absence of such a body of skilled personnel has ill-served Indian defence policymaking, and has rendered many decisions subject to political whims and financial constraints.[72]

Institutional resources

As outlined earlier in this volume, the Indian official institutions for foreign policy formulation broadly encompass the Cabinet, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), the Indian Foreign Service (IFS), the Ministry of Defence (MoD), the Indian Parliament, and various

manifestations of the defence and intelligence establishment (the armed forces, the Defence Research and Development Organization, the nuclear establishment, the Research and Analysis Wing, the Intelligence Bureau etc.). While the defence of India's territorial sovereignty is viewed as paramount by virtually all of these, the defence establishment has historically played a selective role in wider foreign policymaking (except at times of military crisis), instead understandably choosing to focus on immediate threats from within India's neighbourhood. The broader conduct of diplomacy that spans the gamut of interstate relations (and more recently, a range of instruments underpinning India's 'soft' power) has traditionally been the domain of the PMO and MEA, which are accountable to Parliament. With domestic political life ever more fractured and fractious, Parliament's focus on strategic issues has declined over the years, with little attention being devoted to debating the larger goals of Indian diplomacy (a notable exception being the topic of India–USA relations since 2005).

Aside from the traditional concerns of inter-ministerial and intra-ministerial coordination, two main issues stand out with regard to the contemporary foreign policy establishment: the principal–agent problem and institutional capacity.

PRINCIPAL–AGENT PROBLEM

The first pertains to a disjuncture that sometimes exists between the policymaking centres in Delhi and the policy implementers on the international stage. Indian officials, when in international forums, occasionally are observed to pursue outcomes or adopt positions that are contrary to the objectives of Indian foreign policy set at the political level.[73] This was an acute problem soon after the end of the Cold War, when the Indian foreign policy bureaucracy found it hard to shed its ideological baggage and traditional diplomatic attachments and to accept the changed circumstances of the international order. Most desired continuation and rejuvenation rather than a fundamental shift in their historically close relationships with Russia.[74] In contemporary times, it has been exemplified by unseemly turf battles between high-ranking members of the foreign policy establishment whose bureaucratic politics at home at times impact their behaviour abroad.[75]

Likewise, the defence establishment in India writ large (senior civilian and military retirees more than active service personnel) promote a number of their own policy preferences and flog their *bêtes noires* in the media with great skill and tenacity. This is notably the case with China, which they continue to see as the principal threat to India (not least given its friendly ties with Pakistan). The run-up to the visit of Chinese President Hu Jintao to India in November 2006 was marked by near-hysterical attacks from these quarters and their political allies in the media against Beijing's trustworthiness as a

neighbour, eventually spilling over into an unattractive debate in Parliament. Unsurprisingly, the visit proved only a moderate success.

INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY

The second issue is that of bureaucratic capacity. At a time when a degree of specialization is highly prized in the administration of foreign affairs in many capitals, some analysts believe that an abundance of talented generalists are spread (all too thinly) across the spectrum of Indian diplomacy.[76] Indeed, the shortage of Indian government trade negotiators is such that in recent years Delhi has increasingly and sensibly resorted to private sector lawyers and sectoral experts to buttress the bureaucratic cadre. Inevitably, the limited number and capacity of personnel, combined with a plethora of international and multilateral demands and commitments, results in 'the best [having] unbelievable demands placed upon them', yielding an overworked, under-paid, and under-appreciated bureaucracy.[77]

A challenge of a different order arises from the questionable performance of both India's internal intelligence apparatus (mainly, the Intelligence Bureau) and the once-fabled external intelligence operatives of the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), whose leadership increasingly became an embarrassment in the years 2007–8. The failure of Indian intelligence to anticipate a number of murderous terrorist attacks within India, notably in Mumbai in November 2008, or apprehend most of those responsible over the years, speaks not just to weak, under-motivated, and under-equipped police forces but also to dubious intelligence capabilities.

The reputation of India's Armed Forces has fared better, not least because of their controlled response to a number of potentially very dangerous crises (e.g. Kargil), the professionalism of their contributions to UN peacekeeping, and the care they take with training. India's navy has been a great asset in building Indian military ties with partners around the world. That said, even the Armed Forces, never keen on police duties, have not always performed gently, wisely, or effectively in domestic theatres of conflict such as Kashmir and Assam.

Often, confusion relating to organizational roles and jurisdictions between leading institutions (the PMO, the National Security Council, the MEA, and the MoD) exacerbates the challenges of decision-making faced by the foreign policy establishment. These were critically highlighted in its handling of the Kargil crisis with Pakistan.[78] Over time, the disproportionate concentration of authority within a small PMO relative to other actors, a reflection of wider international trends, in India's case may be problematic as Delhi juggles more diplomatic and security-related balls than do all but a very few capitals.[79] That said, the creation of a National Security Adviser providing forward impetus and in a position to arbitrate differences between other foreign policy actors

has doubtless been helpful and is indispensable as India emerges as a relevant player on the geostrategic stage.

Nevertheless, bureaucratic factors as well as political distractions are largely responsible for a sense among Indian authors (and some others) that the country lacks effective coordination at the international level. The same factors have also produced a foreign policy that some view as reactive and bereft of strategic vision, highlighted in charges of 'ad hocism' and 'drift'.[80]

Strategic vision

Indian foreign policy following the Cold War has been pragmatic, but it has also been devoid of the kind of strategic vision required for India to achieve great power status.[81] As political fragmentation has progressed in the domestic sphere, foreign policymaking has suffered from the cacophony of voices espousing contrasting ideas of India's place in the world, sometimes at the most senior levels.

A trace of this was evident in the Indian response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. The Janata government reacted with strong disapproval of Moscow's actions in the United Nations. A month later, Indira Gandhi regained power and, more committed to India's relationship with the USSR, substantially toned down the Indian stand in the UN.[82] Similarly, Rajiv Gandhi's approach to regional cooperation led him to pledge an Indian peacekeeper force (the IPKF) to oversee the devolution of power to the local Tamil government as part of the Indo-Sri Lankan Agreement of 1987. Subsequently, the V. P. Singh government in 1989 ordered the immediate withdrawal of the IPKF from Sri Lanka. This resulted in a power vacuum as India withdrew prematurely, leaving the LTTE rebels to fill the political space vacated by the Indian forces.[83]

India's biggest reversal, however, occurred during the second Gulf crisis of 1990–91. India (under V. P. Singh as Prime Minister and I. K. Gujral as Foreign Minister) initially took a strong stance in the UN in September 1990 counter to the USA's position against Iraq and to the UN's related decision-making. By November, the Singh government had been replaced by another minority coalition, led by Chandra Shekhar. The new government immediately condemned Iraq for its actions and, in a highly controversial decision, allowed American and Australian airplanes to refuel on Indian territory en route to the Gulf.[84]

Arguably, as a result of the incoherence that characterizes a fragmented political system expressing itself in foreign policy (a familiar feature of foreign policy in several Western democracies), Indian foreign policy has become largely reactive in nature. It is criticized at home and abroad for lacking vision and a unified strategy for India's role in the world.[85] But while some Indians

argue that the country needs a strategic vision on which to project its power, there is no prospect of wide internal agreement on what such a vision should embody.

THE RISE OF ECONOMIC DIPLOMACY

In the absence of a unifying strategic vision, and with India's economic performance improving significantly each recent decade, economic diplomacy provides the path of least resistance for coalition governments struggling to pull their members along on foreign policy decisions. Difficult strategic decisions, when couched in the language of economic growth and prosperity, are made more palatable to the power elite and a growing Indian middle class reaping the benefits of economic liberalization. This was evident from the USA–India nuclear deal—a hot-button political issue in India—which was sold far less as a strategic alignment with the USA than a quest for energy security that would benefit the Indian economy and the masses.

Political parties of all stripes agree, albeit for different reasons, that economic growth is a good thing for India (although rising inequality is flayed by parties of the left as a national scandal). From a foreign policy perspective, economic prosperity (the 'tide that lifts all boats')[86] is now seen as the key to India's attainment of great power status, and it is the driving argument behind India's current worldview. No longer willing to lead the poor nations of the Third World in a struggle against imperialism, and no longer wishing to project its power merely within the conflicted confines of its own neighbourhood, India is pressing its suit on the world stage. This is evident, not least within the World Trade Organization, in the company of other rising powers such as Brazil, South Africa, and sometimes China.

Indeed trade and bilateral economic cooperation have become the cornerstones of India's relations with the world, even with China, today India's largest trading partner. India no longer discriminates significantly between Russia, America, Israel, Iran, and the ASEAN countries (although restrictions on Chinese investment remain significant, driven by security considerations). It is willing to do business with all. Both moralizing and power politics on the international stage are now viewed as potentially bad for business, whereas economic linkages are seen to promote stability. Thus India is currently engaged in promoting economic development in Africa, securing oil fields in Central Asia, promoting trade and nuclear cooperation with the USA, receiving remittances from its 3.5 million workers in the Gulf and acting as Israel's biggest arms market at times.[87]

This is not to say that ideology and power politics are no longer important. India still accords priority to security issues and retains its nuclear weapons option. However, at the NAM summit in Havana, 2006, Prime Minister Singh's speech focused on anti-terrorism, 'inclusive globalization', nuclear

disarmament, energy security, and investing in Africa: issues that are vital to India's global agenda but not necessarily top priorities for developing countries worldwide.[88] On balance, modern India prefers to articulate and prioritize its own national interests over the collective interests of developing countries. In other words, 'the long-sustained image of India as a leader of the oppressed and marginalized nations has disappeared on account of its new-found role in the emerging global order', rather the same metamorphosis China underwent some years earlier.[89]

Conclusion

India's security challenges are mostly structural in nature: Pakistan's grievance, the China threat, the US partnership, and other challenges are likely to remain largely beyond India's exclusive control. It is thought that those challenges that are within reach, such as the economic exclusion of certain regions or ethnic groups, can be addressed through better allocation of the gains from economic growth. Prime Minister Singh's repeated words of concern about the strength, resiliency, and extent of the Naxalite insurgency seem to have made only a limited impression on public opinion, while the problematic performance of India's internal security forces, particularly the undertrained and poorly led Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), is both deplored and taken somewhat for granted with a degree of resignation, in spite of the appointment, post-Mumbai 2008, of an energetic Home Minister, P. Chidambaram.

Economic diplomacy does not only provide a way for India to harness global opportunities for the benefit of domestic constituents in the hope of ameliorating poverty (which is how elections are won in India) and alleviating discontentment. It also acts as a pathway to great power status.

Expanding economic relations can also provide a channel of cooperation with potential competitors or rivals, as India has done in securing oil fields in Central Asia with China.[90] By pursuing economic relationships with major powers, some Indians believe the country can progressively build up its own institutional capacity to develop and execute a grander strategy internationally and better tend to its burning internal security challenges. However, as the following chapter argues, economic growth alone will not solve all of India's problems. While continuing to remain a useful international calling card, it will not alone secure much greater power status, which will remain a priority for India's security establishment, unhappy with the predominance of economic themes in the discourse of the Union government.